



Strategic Plan 2022-25
Dashboard Assessment Report to the Stratford Library Board
June 30, 2024

Mission & Vision

Our mission: The mission of the Stratford Library is to empower and enrich our diverse community by providing access to innovative services, information and ideas.

Our vision: Our Library will be a welcoming and dynamic community center for a diverse and evolving Stratford, recognized as the Town's essential partner in guiding all residents to access the informational, educational, and cultural resources they need to thrive.

Introduction

In June 2022, the Stratford Library Board adopted a new strategic plan for 2022-25.

This plan is framed by four key goals—statements of expected outcomes or impacts—that the Library aims to achieve in the next three years. The goals are supported by 12 objectives designed to implement each goal. Library management and staff have developed a tactical plan for each objective, charting our course of action in meeting each objective.

This dashboard charts our progress toward achieving these goals by identifying measurable outcomes and defining success. For each measure, we set performance benchmarks and rate our progress with a color-coded system.

- Green indicates that we are performing on target in this area
- Yellow indicates that work is progressing in this area, but we are performing below target
- Red indicates that work is just getting started in this area

The purpose of this dashboard is to provide the Library staff and board with a tool to assess the progress we are making toward achieving the goals set forth in our strategic plan.

Goals & Objectives

Goal I: Advancing our Community.

The Stratford Library will advance the social, economic and educational needs of residents through programming and resources that support their success.

1. DIVERSITY Reflect the diverse composition of the community through collections, programs, public spaces, and cultural celebrations.
2. ECONOMY Provide access to educational and entrepreneurial opportunities that support economic and personal advancement.
3. SCHOOLS Collaborate closely with the school community to provide complementary educational content, programs, and support for faculty, students and their families.

Goal II: Gateway to Stratford.

The Stratford Library will expand community outreach and engagement so that every Stratford resident feels connected to the Library's and Town's rich resources.

4. WELCOME Welcome residents, new and established, through informational materials, programs, and initiatives that provide orientation to the Library, the Town, and available resources, and that encourage the open exchange of ideas.
5. ACCESS Ensure that all residents have access to the Library by strengthening outreach programs, language availability, and new program initiatives.
6. MARKETING Develop and implement a marketing plan to reach more Stratford residents with news and information about the Library through investments in marketing tools and the people to do the work.

Goals & Objectives

Goal III: Addressing Human Needs.

The Stratford Library will partner with human service providers to connect residents in need to resources that ensure their well-being.

- 7. HUMAN SERVICES Facilitate patron access to services offered by relevant community providers and partner with them to ensure a seamless response to patrons in need.
- 8. TRAINING Train library staff to respond to human service needs and make appropriate referrals.

Goal IV: Investing in the Library's Future.

The Stratford Library will strengthen both physical and organizational infrastructure to position it for continued excellence in its programs and services.

- 9. FACILITY Remake the Library facility for Stratford today and tomorrow as a welcoming and inspiring place to learn, create, and share.
- 10. FUNDRAISING Initiate an advocacy and development strategy to secure funding for long-term capital improvements.
- 11. STAFFING Work to broaden the competencies of the staff through professional development and a hiring plan to reflect the community and address patron needs.
- 12. GOVERNANCE Structure the board to ensure it reflects the community it serves, operates efficiently, and is positioned to attract a diversity of candidates.

Performance Benchmarks for Objective 1 DIVERSITY

Reflect the diverse composition of the community through collections, programs, public spaces, and cultural celebrations.

Desired Outcome

- Patrons see people who look like them and their family in the books, movies, programs and staff of the Stratford Library.

	Collections	Programming	Spaces
FY 22-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated collection management procedures include selecting materials with diverse viewpoints & people of various socioeconomic backgrounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs specifically highlighting multicultural themes/topics. Programs for children regularly feature characters from a variety of backgrounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representation of diverse writers and topics is incorporated into all displays, year round.
FY 23-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Collection Development Policy, adopted 10/23 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program scheduling strives to avoid significant cultural and religious holidays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented displays featuring artists of color, artifacts from the African American Collection & Hispanic Heritage Committee.

Collections:

Collection Development Policy codifies the Library's commitment to selecting materials in which all members of the community are represented.

Programming:

Programs included Three Kings Day celebration of Hispanic heritage, African Mask Making for children, 'On Juneteenth' with Dr. Immacula Cann featuring Haitian culture/history. Youth programs regularly highlight materials representing diverse cultures. Little Gems Book Club intentionally showcases Asian, African and Latin American writers.

Spaces:

In addition to Library curated book displays, artifacts on loan from local museums provided insight on the lives of persons of color, women and veterans. The Library continues to expand availability of fliers in Spanish.

Performance Benchmarks for Objective 2: ECONOMY

Provide access to educational and entrepreneurial opportunities that support economic and personal advancement.

Desired Outcome

- Library is a known and popular nexus of community for skills acquisition, offering programs, resources, and space where patrons can learn meaningful skills and build helpful networks.

	Programs	Resources	Space
FY 22-23	● Teen volunteer program provided opportunities to develop skills needed in the job market. One-on-one technology assistance helped develop skills for jobs.	● Circulating Chromebooks and wifi hotspots available for check-out. The Studio used by patrons for job interviews, classes and meetings. NorthStar digital literacy online training for basic computer skills.	● Recognizing the limited space available for hands on training, utilized the CT Dept. of Labor Career Coach to provide hands on computer skills training.
FY 23-24	● Adult volunteer program with 21 participants assisting with the Annual Book Sale. New resume & job search program initiated this year.	● A Small Business Resources page was created providing a clearinghouse of information and contacts for local small businesspeople.	● A Nook Solo pod was purchased to provide space for individuals needing privacy for remote meetings, phone calls, etc.

Programs:

The Adult volunteer program, benefited from publicity through the Stratford Volunteer Corps. website. The Teen volunteer program continued with 537 Teens volunteering 5578 hours this year. Adult Services created a one-on-one resume & job search program which is utilized 2-3 times a month.

Resources:

The [Small Business Resources web page](#) includes local, state and nationwide information for small business owners. Promoted through local social media, the Chamber of Commerce and on site at the Library. This year, 10 NorthStar training sessions were hosted by the Library and patrons are utilizing this useful training tool. The Library iMac is used almost daily for job interviews and meetings as well as work related activities.

Space:

Career Coach Job trainers provided 5 hands on resume, Word and Excel workshops for 40 participants this year. Teen Librarians provided two workshops in collaboration with the BOE 21st Century Afterschool Program, coaching teens in creating resumes and with online applications for the Town of Stratford Recreation Department summer jobs program.

Performance Benchmarks for Objective 3 SCHOOLS

Collaborate closely with the school community to provide complementary educational content, programs, and support for faculty, students and their families.

Desired Outcome

- The community recognizes the partnership between the Library and Stratford schools in enhancing the educational experience for students of all ages.

	Support for Families	Support for Educators	Collaborations
FY 22-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools/daycare providers share library calendars & promotions. Library offers Homework Help tutoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd and 6th Grade Class Visits provide orientation for students and teachers in support of school curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust working relationships with schools with increased focus on SECC this year.
FY 23-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework Helpers free tutoring services for families is a much sought after resource. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Books to Your Door service for preschools & daycares successfully piloted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosted tables at inaugural SPS Back to School Family Partnership and Preschool Readiness Fairs

Support for Families:

Cross promotion of Library programs and services helps get the word out to busy families. Increased availability of Spanish language translations of flyers through the schools has helped spread the word about library services. Homework Helpers program, supported by the Vicky Soto Foundation provided teens with valuable tutoring experience while assisting families with no-cost tutoring. 179 children participated in 84 tutoring sessions this year.

Support for Educators:

60 Elementary and middle school classes with 1,175 participants visited the Library this year. Conversely, Librarians visited 145 classrooms and shared Summer Reading information with 3203 students in grades K-5. The new Books to Your Door program loans a selection of age-appropriate books to supplement and refresh preschool and daycare collections.

Collaborations:

Existing relationships with schools, preschools, daycares, camps & afterschool programs are strong. The Library continues to provide recommended summer reading lists for all grade levels and is represented on the Stratford Partnership for Youth & Families (SPYF), School Readiness & Childcare Advisory Council and Community Accountability Program for Stratford Students.

Performance Benchmarks for Objective 4 WELCOME

Welcome residents, new and established, through informational materials, programs, and initiatives that provide orientation to the Library, the Town, and available resources, and that encourage the open exchange of ideas.

Desired Outcome

- The Library serves as a known source for information about Town services, organizations, volunteer opportunities, events, and programs.

	Information Source	Programming	Outreach
FY 22-23	● Efforts to collaborate with community partners to create a welcome kit were shifted to the local Welcome Wagon	● Welcome week, in the Children's Department provided opportunities to learn about Stratford. Stratford Talks series held its inaugural meeting at the Library.	● The Library participated in 225 outreach opportunities, reaching more than 6,000 participants, attracting 28.3% more visits to the Library this year.
FY 23-24	● Provided materials for SPS packets for new families.	● Welcome week expanded to include all Library Departments this year.	● The Library participated in 231 outreach opportunities, reaching more than 6,600 people, attracting 10% more visits to the Library this year.

Information Source

The Library provided information to the SPS for inclusion with their new families packets (in both English & Spanish). Efforts are underway to secure a grant and/or sponsorship so that the Library can compile information packets for people who register for new cards.

Programming

Year two of Welcome Week expanded to include all Departments. This resulted in our door count going up 15.98% above Welcome Week of last year.

Outreach

Identifying opportunities to be present in the community, continued to be a priority this year. Face-to-face communication about library services helps non-users connect with the library in ways they were not previously aware of.

Performance Benchmarks for Objective 5 ACCESS

Ensure that all residents have access to the Library by strengthening outreach programs, language availability, and new program initiatives.

Desired Outcome

- Language, physical and cultural barriers which discourage people from utilizing Library services are removed.

	Language	Physical	Cultural
FY 22-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pocketalk translators are available at service desks. Spanish language cheat sheets are in use. Introduction of CTLAB hub services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizing CDBG funds, the Library replaced and upgraded the Main Street entrance ramps and stairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issuing library cards at the SECC Food Pantry and at the Latin Music Festival introduced services to a broader audience.
FY 23-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new collection of Spanish titles has been established for Teens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A signage audit was completed, to plan for future upgrades. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preschool Sensory Storytime and a social for Adults with special needs were piloted.

Language

Google Translate has been a very effective tool for translation in many languages. Availability of Library flyers in Spanish is on the rise, with room to grow. Although small, the Adult, and Children’s Spanish language collections have been updated, and the addition of a small collection of Teen titles in Spanish bridges the gap.

Physical

A signage audit was completed, with plans to update all interior signage throughout the building when Phase 3 of the Lighting/Ductwork/HVAC Project is completed.

Cultural

This year, a Sensory Storytime for preschoolers, geared toward children on the autism spectrum, was reintroduced after several years’ hiatus. The well-attended social for Adults with special needs provided an opportunity to play bingo, watch videos and participate in crafts. This audience does not always have the attention span for traditional adult programs, but benefited greatly from this social.

Performance Benchmarks for Objective 6 **MARKETING**

Develop and implement a marketing plan to reach more Stratford residents with news and information about the Library through investments in marketing tools and the people to do the work.

Desired Outcome

- Increased awareness and use of Library programs and services by a broader segment of the population.

	Initiatives	Awareness	Usage
FY 22-23	<p>● Marketing plan program paused for the year, but current efforts continue.</p>	<p>● Sharing library social media posts to local groups helps to increase awareness of library events and services.</p>	<p>● Program attendance up 59% Building attendance up 59% Borrowing activity up 6%,</p>
FY 23-24	<p>● Proposals for Marketing Consultants are under review.</p>	<p>● A new Stratford Moms FB group has provided additional opportunities to share Library posts. Networking with homeschool families has boosted awareness as well.</p>	<p>● Utilizing the Mayor's weekly newsletter, we reached people who have not been using Library services. Building attendance is up 10% and Borrowing activity increased by 9%.</p>

Initiatives

With the hiring of a Development Director, consideration of proposals from Marketing Consultants is underway.

Awareness

A concerted effort to re-post Library news on social media continues to put our information out to an audience that we don't always see in the building. Our use of Constant Contact continues to be effective, with an open rate that exceeds similar organizations. A clean-up of old/inactive email addresses will set us up for more accurate usage reports in the coming year. In addition to social media outlets, the Library is reaching a broad audience by utilizing the Mayor's weekly newsletter as a promotional tool.

Usage

Following the significant post-pandemic bump in activity last year, we continue to see growing interest in library programs and services for patrons of all ages.

Performance Benchmarks for Objective 7 & 8 HUMAN SERVICES & TRAINING

Facilitate patron access to services offered by relevant community providers and partner with them to ensure a seamless response to patrons in need. Train library staff to respond to human service needs and make appropriate referrals.

Desired Outcome

- People who come to the Library seeking assistance with issues related to their basic needs are provided with current and accurate information about available services.

	Partnerships	Resources	Staff Training
FY 22-23	● Stratford Strong Task Force has been effective in bringing together a variety of local service providers.	● Created a database of local human services available.	● Communicating directly with local social workers, Ryan Dowd Training, webinars
FY 23-24	● Social workers from Operation Hope and Thomas Merton Center have regularly scheduled service hours at the library.	● Staff created Freshen-Up Kit program using donated personal care items.	● Staff participated in CPR/AED Certification, Narcan training, Mental Health First Aid & Suicide Intervention training.

Partnerships

With trained social workers conducting site visits, patrons have access to professional assistance.

Resources

Created using donations from staff, 25 Freshen-Up kits were distributed this year. Signage in the public restrooms directs patrons to request a kit at the Reference Desk.

Staff Training

This year marked the return of the Mental Health and Suicide prevention training opportunities through the Health Department. The Town no longer provides free CPR/AED training, so we hired trainers who also taught us about Narcan. In addition to the AEDs on the main floor and lower level, the Library now stocks Narcan.

Performance Benchmarks for Objective 9 FACILITY

Remake the Library facility for Stratford today and tomorrow as a welcoming and inspiring place to learn, create, and share.

Desired Outcome

- A Library building where people of all ages have comfortable spaces for individual & collaborative work; flexible programming and work spaces; and a collection that is housed in a welcoming and accessible way.

	Short-Term	Long-Term
FY 22-23	● Staff space planning task force identified service area priorities and developed a new floor plan .	● Capital request for Architectural Services was not approved for funding. The Board is exploring a variety of options to move forward with building expansion.
FY 23-24	● Project documents for Phase 3 of the HVAC/Lighting/Ductwork/AHU were updated and the project went out to bid.	● Capital request for Professional Design Services was approved for funding in July 2024.

Short-Term

Following up on the staff task force recommendations, the Library worked with an Architect to ensure that Phase 3 Lighting/Ductwork/HVAC plans aligned with near-future space configurations. The plans also included alternates which would create a more secure Teen area and a larger uCreate Space. The base bids received in June 2024 exceeded the Capital Budget funding available and the Town plans to re-bid the project in the fall. There is also a need to secure funding to replace the flooring, which ideally would take place along with Phase 3.

Long-Term

With the Capital request for Professional Design Services for Library Optimization & Expansion now approved, along with the Stratford Library Board match we will proceed with long term planning.

Performance Benchmarks for Objective 10 FUNDRAISING

Initiate an advocacy and development strategy to secure funding for long-term capital improvements.

Desired Outcome

- The Library has a clear path forward to expand and support Development initiatives.

	Fundraising Initiatives	Endowment Initiatives	Planning
FY 22-23	● Successful Associates, Gala and Book Sale fundraisers this year.	● Endowment fund value is up significantly this year. Updated endowment information available online and in print.	● Engagement of professional Development services was delayed to year two.
FY 23-24	● Successful Associates, Gala & Book Sale fundraisers along with grants this year.	● Endowment fund continues to grow. Updated endowment information for donors is available online and in print.	● The new Development Director was hired in April and is just getting started with a variety of initiatives to build capacity.

Fundraising Initiatives

The Associates campaign, Gala and Annual Book Sale raised 10% more than last year. PEGPETIA grant revenue was used to replace the Library phone system.

Endowment Initiatives

The value of the endowment fund increased by 12% this year. Website materials outlining the library's endowment program have been simplified and updated.

Planning

The Library's Development Director is working on several projects including: selection of a donor management software package, creating a Gifts Policy, identifying funding needs, updating the fundraising calendar, reaching out to businesses to share sponsorship opportunities and sending inquiries to grants programs.

Performance Benchmarks for Objective 11 STAFFING

Work to broaden the competencies of the staff through professional development and a hiring plan to reflect the community and address patron needs.

Desired Outcome

- A workforce that has the skills to provide the evolving array of services the Library provides and which reflects the diversity of the community we serve.

	Professional Development	Hiring
FY 22-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff are encouraged to participate in workshops, webinars and conferences related to their work at the library. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job descriptions and postings updated to expand inclusivity in education & experience. Utilizing Indeed platform and area cultural groups to share job postings to a wider audience.
FY 23-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff attended a variety of conferences, workshops and webinars related to their work at the library, including the national PLA and ALA Conferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to utilize area cultural groups to share job postings to a wider audience. Persons of color represent 14% of the Library workforce. 38.2% of Stratford residents are persons of color.

Professional Development

Our current workforce regularly participates in online and off site training opportunities and conferences. Staff members also engage in a variety of professional leadership opportunities outside of Stratford Library including: Board Memberships on the State Library Board and Hagan Memorial Library Board in East Haven; CT Education Network council, CLA ListServ Task Force, CT Library Consortium Assistant Directors Round Table Co-Chair, Department Heads and Supervisors Round Table Co-Chair, CLC Set the Stage Planning Co-Chair, Nutmeg Book Award Committee, Take Your Child to the Library Day Steering Committee, CT Association of School Librarians Representative and State Library E-Resources Task Force.

Hiring:

Updated job descriptions and expanded posting practices have resulted in an increase in the number of applicants. Two of the Library's new hires this year, are persons of color, moving our organization toward having a workforce that better reflects the community we serve.

Performance Benchmarks for Objective 12 GOVERNANCE

Structure the board to ensure it reflects the community it serves, operates efficiently, and is positioned to attract a diversity of candidates.

Desired Outcome

- A Board that is passionate about the Library, operates efficiently and is comprised of members who possess a diversity of skills, a variety of interests and a broad range of life experiences.

	Membership	Skills/Experience	Efficiencies
FY 22-23	● The appointment of four new Board members increased the capacity of the Board to accomplish year two goals.	● Board has identified deficiencies in skills and experience including: finance, arts, legal and fundraising.	● Four Board committees merged into the Governance Committee.
FY 23-24	● No new Board members were appointed this year.	● Board members participated in a retreat which helped define their role and to develop an action plan for improvement.	● With a goal to reduce the number of Board meetings, the February meeting was cancelled.

Membership

With three expired Town Appointments and 2 vacancies along with three Endowment Appointments vacant, the Board Governance Committee is actively recruiting individuals to apply for Board membership.

Skills/Experience

In addition to identifying skill gaps, the Board participated in a retreat facilitated by Maureen Sullivan, to develop a plan to improve Board function. Action items include: firm use of Roberts' Rules, update the format of meeting agendas, and expand the use of volunteers in implementing fundraisers.

Efficiencies

This year, the Board reduced their monthly meeting schedule by one (eliminating the February meeting), providing more time for committee work between meetings. Board members focused on communicating with elected officials both during and outside of budget season, sharing impact stories as well as conveying needs.



Thank you for your interest in the work of the Stratford Library Association.

The Library Board and Staff are committed to creating a welcoming and dynamic community center for a diverse and evolving Stratford, recognized as the Town's essential partner in guiding all residents to access the informational, educational, and cultural resources they need to thrive.

We welcome questions and feedback on our work.
Please contact the Library Administration at slaask@stratfordlibrary.org or call 203-385-4166