

Beaman Memorial Public Library



Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2023–2027



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION3

PLANNING PROCESS3

KEY LEARNINGS.....4

 AREAS OF FOCUS4

THE PLAN.....5

 COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT.....5

 MISSION STATEMENT5

 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES5

 ANNUAL ACTION PLANS.....6

 MEASURING AND COMMUNICATING PROGRESS.....6

TRUSTEES’ APPROVAL.....6

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....7

FINAL THOUGHTS.....7

APPENDICES.....8

INTRODUCTION

The Beaman Memorial Public Library serves a community of 8,000 people in West Boylston, MA. Located in Central Massachusetts, the Library is located near the Wachusett Reservoir.

The Library began the strategic planning process in January 2020. The Library had originally intended to complete its strategic plan by October of 2020. As a result of the Covid-19 global health crisis, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (M.B.L.C.) granted an extension, allowing the Library to revise its targeted completion date to the Summer of 2021.

The Library's success is due in large part to the staff's ability to continually respond to the needs of the community. To this end, the Library developed a strategic plan to guide the Library's success throughout the next five years. The Plan covers fiscal years 2023-27 and is designed to be flexible. Its ambitious goals will guide the Library as we seek to provide outstanding library services to the community.

PLANNING PROCESS

In March of 2020, the Library hired strategic planning consultant Barbara Alevras of Sage Consulting Services to guide us through our planning process, to facilitate a series of planning exercises, to oversee the collection and analysis of internal and community feedback, and to help draft the strategic plan document.

To begin, we established our planning goals, including being as inclusive, transparent, and objective as possible. We identified specific activities and key community stakeholders we wanted to engage and created a detailed process flowchart to serve as a visual project "roadmap" (see *Appendix A—BMPL Strategic Planning Process Flowchart 2020-21*).

Over the course of several months, we conducted a series of virtual feedback exercises, including:

- **One Community Visioning Exercise** (results presented in *Appendix C—BMPL Community Vision Statements 2021*)
- **One Focus Group** (results presented in *Appendix E—BMPL Focus Group Summary Report 2021*)
- **Two Strengths-Opportunity-Aspirations-Results (SOAR) Exercises** (results presented in *Appendix D—BMPL SOAR Exercise Summary Report 2020*)
- **Three Surveys** (results presented in *Appendix F—BMPL Boards Survey Results Report 2020*, *Appendix G—BMPL Community Survey Summary Results 2020*, and *Appendix H—BMPL Staff Survey Summary Results 2020*)

In addition to analyzing the internal and external subjective feedback it received, we compiled hard data related to the community and Library activities. We identified trends, summarized the information collected, and drafted a document that presents an overview of community demographics and the Library's offerings. The *Community and Library Profile* includes information about the Library's

history, governance, and operations, as well as recent activity statistics (see *Appendix B—BMPL Community & Library Profile*).

After collecting feedback and statistics, the data was analyzed, synthesized, and summarized.

KEY LEARNINGS

Feedback from more than 200 community members provided insights regarding their perceptions of the current Library and expectations for its future. Their input contributed to a Strategic Plan that results in the Library meeting the community's needs over the Plan's term and beyond.

Areas of Focus

During the planning process, hundreds of community members submitted many, many suggestions for improvements and new initiatives. Feedback fell into the following seven categories:

- **COLLECTIONS:** Interest in cultivating a larger, more diverse collection; increasing the available children's books, materials, and resources; and expanding the non-traditional "Library of Things" collection.
- **FACILITY:** Requests for additional parking and improved parking lot safety greatly exceeded ideas submitted in all focus areas. Additional popular potential facility improvements included adding meeting rooms; providing more interior and exterior seating; creating a dedicated teen space; enhancing the Library grounds and landscaping; developing functional exterior space; and improving the configuration of shelving and space.
- **MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS:** The most popular ideas in this focus area included eliminating or reducing late fees and/or changing the fee assessment process; expanding the operating hours; and adding teen volunteer opportunities.
- **MARKETING:** Respondents suggested the Library pursue additional outreach and collaborations as well as improve and increase its messaging.
- **PROGRAMS:** Respondents contributed dozens of ideas related to offering more diversity/multi-cultural-based programs; intergenerational and family-friendly programs; and additional programs for all ages. Additional suggestions touched on desirable program times and numerous specific program ideas.
- **SERVICES:** Interest expressed in convenience-based services, like curbside pick-up, homebound delivery, more general outreach/off-site access to Library offerings. Other ideas included enhancing the process to access museum passes; offering tutoring; and providing reading recommendations.
- **TECHNOLOGY:** Respondents expressed interest in more general and specific technology classes, more access to devices/hardware (hotspots, 3D printer, additional computers), and self-checkout.

Where possible, ideas received were incorporated into the Library's *Strategic Plan*.

Feedback results are available for review as appendices to this document (see *Appendices* on page 8).

THE PLAN

Community Vision Statement

The Library's strategic planning project's community visioning committee drafted, prioritized, and ranked 24 community vision statements. The following statement was selected as the one the Library can best support and positively impact.

West Boylston provides and promotes academic, vocational, and hands-on learning opportunities that expand and enrich residents' lives at all ages.

Mission Statement

The Beaman Memorial Public Library enriches the community by connecting people and information via access to resources, programming, and services in the heart of West Boylston.

Goals and Objectives

The following strategic goals and supporting objectives specify how the Library will support its community vision statement and mission statement. Meeting these ambitious goals and objectives will enable the Library to effectively prioritize and allocate resources (funds, staff time, etc.) during the Plan's five-year term.

GOAL 1: Support literacy, life-long learning, and community connections.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1.1:** Develop programs, services, and resources that meet the community's needs.
- 1.2:** Provide education and enrichment opportunities for all generations.
- 1.3:** Offer the community access to technology programs, services, and resources.

GOAL 2: Curate a collection of materials and resources that reflects the community's interests.

OBJECTIVES:

- 2.1:** Maintain diverse, popular, and classic books and materials in multiple formats.
- 2.2:** Expand collection of non-traditional materials (Library of Things).
- 2.3:** Collection supports schools' K-12 curriculum.

GOAL 3: Maintain a safe, welcoming, comfortable facility and grounds.

OBJECTIVES:

- 3.1:** Optimize Library space to meet evolving operational and community needs.
- 3.2:** Improve safety and accessibility of building and grounds.

GOAL 4: Increase community engagement and use of Library.

OBJECTIVES:

- 4.1: Develop a comprehensive, consistent presence in the community.
- 4.2: Promote Library programs and services to all members of the community.
- 4.3: Expand outreach efforts and strengthen community partnerships.
- 4.4: Solicit feedback and respond to community needs and interests.

GOAL 5: Cultivate an organizational culture of continuous improvement.

OBJECTIVES:

- 5.1: Support ongoing professional development of staff.
- 5.2: Pursue technology that improves operations.
- 5.3: Cultivate a strong volunteer network.
- 5.4: Provide positive, helpful, and friendly customer service.

Annual Action Plans

Annually, the Library develops an *Action Plan* for the following fiscal year. The *Action Plan* identifies new, discrete initiatives and activities that support the Library's efforts to meet its strategic goals. It does not include ongoing operational or continuous administrative tasks.

The *Action Plan* is designed to serve as a flexible, short-term document that accommodates changes, as needed. It enables the Library to address the organization's evolving needs and variable resources.

The Library's *Action Plan* for next fiscal year will be submitted to the M.B.L.C. as a separate document.

Measuring and Communicating Progress

Quarterly, the Library Director will review progress made towards achieving the *Strategic Plan*'s goals and objectives with the staff. In addition, the Director will include strategic plan performance highlights in the annual report.

To ensure convenient access, the *Strategic Plan* will be available for download on the Library's website.

TRUSTEES' APPROVAL

On June 8, 2021, Beaman Memorial Public Library's six-person Board of Trustees approved this *Strategic Plan* unanimously.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Katherine Halpin
- Karen Hennessy
- Patrick Novia
- Stephanie Hannum
- Sharon Hennessey
- Tammy Hubbard

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Library appreciates the valuable input provided by the staff, Board of Trustees, and Friends of Library Board. We are especially grateful for the time, invaluable feedback, and support received from hundreds of West Boylston community members. We sincerely thank everyone who contributed in any way to the development of our *Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2023–2027*.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Library remained committed to serving the West Boylston community as fully and safely as possible. We developed a variety of modified and new ways to provide access to materials, programs, and services (e.g., curbside pickup, virtual programs, take-home activities).

These contingency processes enabled us to continue delivering valuable and popular services, but we missed seeing our many patrons in person. We're excited to invite everyone back to a fully accessible building. We encourage you to visit us soon.



APPENDICES

1. **Appendix A—BMPL Strategic Planning Project Process Flowchart 2020-2021:** The flowchart visually depicts the Library’s planning methodology, including the timeline, assessment mechanisms, and process participants.
2. **Appendix B—BMPL Community and Library Profile:** This document presents a demographic profile of West Boylston, the Library’s history, and information related to the Library’s services, programs, and governance.
3. **Appendix C—BMPL Community Vision Statements 2021:** After the Library’s community visioning committee brainstormed a series of vision statements reflecting the ideal West Boylston, it identified and prioritized the vision statements that the Library can best support and positively impact.
4. **Appendix D—BMPL SOAR Exercise Summary Report 2020:** This report documents the results of an environmental assessment conducted of the Library’s strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. Library staff, the Board of Trustees, and the Friends of Beaman Memorial Public Library board members participated in this exercise.
5. **Appendix E—BMPL Focus Group Summary Report 2021:** The overview presents highlights of the feedback and ideas about the Library’s collections, services, and staff generated in a focus group of local retirees.
6. **Appendix F—BMPL Boards Survey Summary Results 2020:** The Board of Trustees and Friends of Beaman Memorial Public Library board survey was conducted in December 2020 via SurveyMonkey. A summary of the comments and ideas is presented herein.
7. **Appendix G—BMPL Community Survey Summary Results 2020:** The community survey was conducted in mid-October through early December of 2020 via SurveyMonkey. A summary of the results is presented in addition to graphs and charts.
8. **Appendix H—BMPL Staff Survey Summary Results 2020:** The staff survey was conducted in December 2020 via SurveyMonkey. A summary of the results is presented in addition to graphs and charts.
9. **Appendix I—BMPL Ideas and Input Report 2021:** This report presents an itemized list of ideas and miscellaneous feedback collected throughout the strategic planning process. It summarizes and prioritizes the input received based on each item’s relative significance.