

Buffalo & Erie County Public Library 2017 - 2021 Strategic Plan

“Libraries Transform”

The thirty-seven (37) libraries and the Library on Wheels bookmobile of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (B&ECPL) System are transforming lives throughout Erie County and beyond. Through access to resources and technology, programs and events, educational activities for all ages are critical to our communities, our lives and our livelihood.

A strong Strategic Plan is necessary to ensure the B&ECPL’s continued role in the success of our communities. The B&ECPL spent approximately 12 months gathering information and developing a multi-faceted strategy to fulfill the need for traditional library services, address demands for new initiatives and support emerging technologies. The resulting **B&ECPL 2017 - 2021 Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan)** highlights strategic focus areas and projects to address community needs as well as transforming the future of the Library.

Overview of the Strategic Planning Process

In 2016, the B&ECPL conducted an exhaustive needs assessment and data analysis process over a several month period evaluating library services, programs and technology. This included in-house, online and in-person surveys involving staff, trustees, partners, stakeholders, library users and library non-users. Focus Group “live input” sessions were held for the public, library trustees and staff. Operational data including circulation, program attendance, door counts, collection development activities, public access computer use, year-round public survey results and an internal *2015 B&ECPL Value Assessment Team Report* were reviewed.

A Working Group consisting of staff representing the Central Library, Buffalo branches, contract member libraries and B&ECPL administrators worked collaboratively to develop several planning documents as a result of the evaluation process, including this **Strategic Plan**.

B&ECPL Planning and Supporting Documents

The **Strategic Plan** service initiatives are strongly aligned and integrated with, and supportive of, the *B&ECPL Five-Year Plan of Service 2017-2021* and the *2017-2021 Central*

Library Plan approved by the New York State Division of Library Development (DLD). In addition, it supports the *Free Direct Access Plan for the Period 2017-2021*. Complementing these plans is the *B&ECPL Technology Plan 2017-2021* which will help ensure technology needs are supported at the System level.

The **Strategic Plan** also reinforces the tenets set forth in the *B&ECPL Mission and Vision Statements*:

Mission

Connecting our diverse community with library resources that enrich, enlighten and entertain.

Vision

The Vision of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library is to be deeply rooted in the community: promoting partnerships, fostering the development of a literate and informed citizenry through free and equal access to cultural, intellectual, recreational and informational resources, planning for the future, and making the most effective use of taxpayer funding.

Scope

The **Strategic Plan** has been developed as a System plan and, as such, will impact System services and initiatives on all levels and at all locations. Physical outlets currently include the Central Library, 8 Buffalo city branch libraries and 22 contracting member libraries (operating 28 outlets). In addition, the B&ECPL maintains a significant presence beyond the library buildings which includes the Library on Wheels (bookmobile services), community partnering opportunities and virtual access through the B&ECPL website, as well as social media outlets.

The B&ECPL plays a critical role in the quality of life and continued growth of our community and this **Strategic Plan** serves as its blueprint for Library services and resources. It is intended to be a guide, but more importantly a stimulus to promote awareness, change and growth. While we continue to provide information access, resources, programs and services to address user needs, we must remain diligent about attracting new users and adapting to evolving needs and changing priorities of those we serve.

Strategic Vision and Focus Areas

Public libraries need to provide comfortable and inviting physical spaces as well as user-friendly virtual environments. They need to provide resources that surpass the traditional along with innovative programs that spark imagination, creativity and discovery. They need to excel in quality public service. They need to reach beyond the

brick and mortar to engage the community, foster collaborations, increase awareness and advocate for improved funding.

This **Strategic Plan** targets five key focus areas:

1. Community
2. Resources
3. Growth and Learning
4. Innovation and Technology
5. Adaptability

Addressing each of these areas will help position the B&ECPL to proactively manage evolving needs and promote long-term viability.

Target Area 1: COMMUNITY

Strengthen community through collaborative engagement and neighborhood empowerment.

Connect people, neighborhoods and libraries:

- Expand community and civic engagement to nourish spirit, imagination and culture;
- Establish a coordinated outreach program to ensure B&ECPL participation in the life of the communities and neighborhoods we serve.

Establish B&ECPL libraries as versatile community centers around which neighborhoods can thrive:

- Align priorities with community wants and needs;
- Strengthen community awareness and highlight the value of B&ECPL libraries;
- Extend the reach of the B&ECPL to non-users, the underserved and people with special needs.

Cultivate partnerships to connect community members with information and services:

- Collaborate with community organizations and educational institutions to support the interests and needs of neighborhoods and communities;
- Engage local leaders, elected officials, and stakeholders in support of community growth, development and civic awareness.

Support economic development:

- Cultivate programs, services and collections promoting business growth and entrepreneurship;
- Increase the visibility and use of B&ECPL resources to advance employment opportunities;
- Assist job seekers to develop skills and maximize capabilities;
- Partner with economic development agencies at federal, state and local levels.

Target Area 2: RESOURCES

Foster and enhance access to information and ideas.

Develop and provide engaging, inspiring and relevant resources that address evolving community interests and expectations:

- Provide equal access to B&ECPL resources;
- Interact with the community to ensure collection relevance;
- Build and expand traditional, digital, and digitized collections to best meet demand;
- Introduce new sources of ideas, education and entertainment through timely and dynamic collections.

Explore, develop and implement alternative and innovative models of access and delivery:

- Engage with the local community and beyond using digital communication and social media;
- Ensure virtual access by providing a responsive website and catalog;
- Bring B&ECPL resources to where people live, work and play by using alternative service options.

Target Area 3: GROWTH AND LEARNING

Stimulate and inspire learning, growth and transformation.

Strengthen reading readiness and advance educational objectives:

- Provide materials, services and programs designed to help ensure children will enter school ready to learn;
- Provide resources designed to support and strengthen the Common Core Curriculum and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) initiatives;
- Cultivate enthusiasm for reading and discovery.

Maximize opportunities for lifelong learning, personal growth and well-being:

- Establish the B&ECPL as a first source for information on daily life, living and learning;
- Re-envision programs and services to ensure a dynamic and enriching experience;
- Create interactive displays and exhibits that showcase the B&ECPL's treasures and the community's rich cultural heritage;
- Champion a culture of books and reading.

Target Area 4: INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Create and promote discovery through innovation and imagination.

Advance and strengthen the B&ECPL's leadership role in the utilization of technology and expansion of digital literacy:

- Adapt to new and changing technology to address community interests and needs;
- Be a catalyst for innovation and idea sharing;
- Maximize opportunities to increase digital proficiency and nurture next generation skills.

Position the B&ECPL as a learning lab for creativity:

- Improve access and exposure to new and innovative technologies;
- Create engaging and interactive spaces to inspire innovation and imagination;
- Offer programs featuring innovative technologies that foster creativity and exploration.

Target Area 5: ADAPTABILITY

Adapt and evolve to cultivate a sustainable future.

Maximize visibility to promote the value of B&ECPL's libraries:

- Strengthen advocacy and B&ECPL marketing initiatives;
- Optimize communication using traditional strategies and social media platforms;
- Increase outreach to new audiences and at nontraditional venues.

Ensure fiscal responsibility:

- Practice due diligence;
- Maintain transparency and accountability;
- Explore creative and alternative funding opportunities.

Position B&ECPL libraries as welcoming places:

- Create comfortable and inviting environments;
- Provide gathering spaces that encourage positive community interaction;
- Explore green initiatives to promote environmental sustainability.

Develop an adaptive and responsive culture of service:

- Respond to patron needs and preferences that maximize the user experience;
- Pioneer new services that transform the customer experience.

Adopted July 20, 2017 per Resolution 2017-31.