

# Bedford Free Public Library

## Strategic Plan FY2018 – FY2022

**Mission and Purpose:** The Bedford Free Public Library provides free and open access to information, knowledge, and the pursuit of ideas in an environment that is comfortable and welcoming to patrons of all ages, abilities, and cultures within and beyond its walls.

### 1. Be the primary place for community members of all ages to search for information and ideas.

A. Continue to provide high quality reference service utilizing all available resources.

Activity:

- Continue to expand online reference resources including remote access to a core collection of online reference tools and web resources.
- Develop aids for staff and patrons to locate Bedford History Collection materials.
- Maintain a reference staff blog and evaluate other online tools.
- Continue to utilize state reference sources to best serve our patrons.
- Investigate ways to fully staff all public service desks.

B. Offer training for the public on the use of library resources.

Activity:

- Continue to provide training sessions for patrons on the use of popular websites, apps, the public catalog, electronic databases, eBooks, access to digital magazines, music, film, Internet searching, and the use of email.
- Continue to make instructional materials available to our patrons in both print and digital formats.

C. Continue to promote public awareness of reference resources available in the library and from home.

Activity:

- Identify and promote authoritative and helpful websites for patrons of all ages.
- Promote outreach to community organizations and local online groups.
- Maintain and update database brochure.
- Actively enhance the collection to support research needs of our patrons.

D. Provide meeting & study space for patrons, non-profit organizations and town government committees.

Activity:

- Explore space use possibilities for study, meeting and storage areas.
- Expand study space for small groups.
- Explore redesign of quiet study room for better use of space.
- Implement online study room reservation system.

E. Maintain the physical environment in a manner that assures safety and comfort for users and staff.

Activity:

- Facilitate or promote an ADA (American with Disabilities Act) barrier-free environment.
- Enforce policies to ensure the safety of patrons and staff.
- Explore safety and security measures for patrons, staff, and the collection.
- Support upgrade of HVAC system for better temperature control.
- Respond to ergonomic needs of the staff.
- Update and refine disaster plan.
- Continue improvements to the grounds & exterior of the building.
- Explore ways to use alternative energy sources to power the building in conjunction with the Facilities Department or other Town agencies.
- Enforce designated quiet zones.
- Maintain and replace library furniture on a regular basis.

**2. Develop a collection of resources responsive to community needs.**

- A. Continue upgrading collections in various formats with special emphasis on areas identified as needing attention.

Activity:

- Monitor reserve requests and acquire additional copies of materials (print & electronic) to meet demand.
- Continue periodic weeding of the collections.
- Monitor foreign language collection needs in the community, with input from patrons on scope where needed.
- Maintain special collections.
- Expand the “Library of Things”.

- B. Identify and implement new models for providing digital content in response to user demand.

Activity:

- Monitor trends in downloadable and streaming audiobooks, music, videos and eBooks.
- Expand downloadable and streaming audio, e-book, music, and video collection.
- Continue annual digitization of Bedford High School Yearbook.
- Digitize the Bedford Minuteman Newspaper.
- Explore the possibility of digitizing unique holdings (ex. Mansur Papers) in the Bedford History Collection.

**3. Stimulate the discovery and encourage the development of the pleasure of reading.**

- A. Provide readers' advisory support to patrons of all ages.

Activity:

- Continue producing and updating online book lists.
- Improve one-on-one reader's advisory through additional training and resources.
- Provide multiple copies of popular titles.
- Investigate methods to increase author visits.

- Assist independent reading groups with book selection, resources and meeting space.

B. Provide a wide range of programs for children of all ages.

Activity:

- Continue to plan lively and interactive storytimes.
- Review storytime schedule for patron convenience.
- Educate ourselves in new trends in Summer Reading Clubs.
- Continue to monitor and explore new ideas for children's programming in library literature.
- Focus on programs for elementary school age patrons during the school year.

C. Provide resources and programs for Young Adults (YA)

Activity:

- Explore program options and schedules.
- Continue programs for Wednesday early dismissal.
- Continue to provide programs based on books and reading.

**4. Make materials well-organized and attractive to the community.**

A. Provide effective customer service.

Activity:

- Continue to produce book lists on selected subject areas based on genre, age level and subject and add to library website.
- Monitor use of space to ensure that all physical collections are easy to access and discoverable by all patrons.
- Investigate methods, such as digital displays, to assist patrons in using the Library.
- Continue weekly themed lobby displays and promote accordingly.
- Encourage staff to be more proactive and visible in assisting the public with using the Library.
- Investigate methods (digitization for example) to make materials in the Bedford History Collection more accessible.
- Develop subject/genre specific collection areas as needed.

B. Promote the online availability of library resources.

- Use the Library's homepage to promote subscription electronic resources and other information tools.
- Evaluate additional electronic methods of providing reference services.

**5. Investigate and implement appropriate new technologies which enhance library services to the community.**

A. Monitor and evolve alongside new and changing technologies.

Activity:

- Provide high-speed broadband, Wi-Fi Internet access, and technological equipment to meet the demands of our users.

- Implement mobile friendly website on WordPress platform.
- Investigate the feasibility of implementing RFID (radio frequency identification) and/or other technologies to provide cost-effective inventory control.
- Explore automation of routine tasks, such as returns and network transfers.
- Install additional self-check stations as needed.
- Contemplate the impact of changing technologies on building space needs.

**6. Maintain a well-trained, engaged, & enthusiastic staff.**

A. Provide general library orientation and training for all new staff with emphasis on their roles as guardians of patrons' privacy and intellectual freedom.

Activity:

- Review Library Policy on the Confidentiality of Library Records.
- Review Massachusetts laws and regulations regarding Confidentiality of Patron Records.

B. Provide support for ongoing staff development opportunities.

Activity:

- Continue to offer in-house training sessions for all staff.
- Continue cross training for librarians in reference and children's departments.
- Continue to hold departmental staff meetings and library department head meetings as needed.
- Encourage collaboration of staff members across departments.
- Analyze training needs and provide at least one all-staff training program per year.
- Review training needs regularly and make full use of training opportunities at MLN, MLS, MLA, PLA, NELA and the Town of Bedford.
- Encourage participation in professional associations such as MLA and NELA.
- Actively participate in state and national conferences.

C. Provide a stimulating and supportive work environment.

Activity:

- Continue to provide an atmosphere of open and respectful communication among all staff members.
- Encourage staff feedback and input for new ideas and improvements.
- Select and train volunteers to support staff with routine library tasks.

D. Provide opportunities for input from volunteers and conduct volunteer appreciation activities.

Activity:

- Hold annual events and meetings.

E. Support competitive wage rates for Library staff.

Activity:

- Compare wage rates of local libraries to Bedford
- Support competitive wage rates in library budget to increase staff retention.

**7. Work collaboratively with other libraries and service agencies to enhance and promote library services.**

A. Work with other community agencies to identify patron needs and provide services.

Activity:

- Continue dialogue with extended day care providers (e.g. Kid's Club) to discuss services and facilitate cooperation.
- Work with Bedford child-care programs to promote library services to child caregivers and parents.
- Continue to work with town departments by supplying resources and information as needed.
- Continue contacts with Hanscom Air Force Base.
- Work with Veterans Administration hospital on services to their residents.

B. Work in cooperation with library staff in other libraries, schools, and agencies.

Activity:

- Continue relationships with school librarians and school personnel.
- Offer storytelling to elementary schools.
- Continue to provide interlibrary loan services.
- Continue to cooperate on school summer reading programs.
- Continue to exchange information and ideas via MLN interest group meetings.

**8. Anticipate and respond to the diverse populations in the community.**

A. Continue outreach to senior citizens.

Activity:

- Continue to utilize the Council on Aging (COA) newsletter and cable television program to promote services of particular interest to seniors.
- Work with COA Director to provide programs for seniors.

B. Expand outreach to children, young adults, and parents.

Activity:

- Continue to visit each Bedford day care center and nursery school at least once each year.
- Continue programs and contacts with Bedford Family Connection.
- Continue to use Bedford Family Connection, school-parent, and parent association newsletters to promote Library services.
- Continue to support families who are home schooling.
- Continue to support the Teen Advisory Group.

C. Explore outreach and services for diverse community groups.

Activity:

- Maintain Chinese collection.
- Expand World Language collections.
- Improve library experience for non-native English speakers.

- Work with community groups to offer diverse programming to the public.
- D. Seek ways of improving accessibility for patrons with special needs.  
Activity:
- Maintain audiobooks and large print collection to increase accessibility for those patrons with special vision needs.
  - Refer patrons to the Perkins School for the Blind when appropriate.
  - Explore devices to increase accessibility for patrons.
  - Maintain homebound delivery of library materials.
  - Expand Nickerson collection of special needs materials and programs.
- E. Seek ways to promote library services to underserved populations  
Activity:
- Use survey results to identify underserved.
  - Identify what will attract these patrons to the library.

**9. Provide programs to stimulate ideas and supply information of interest to the community.**

- A. Provide an active schedule of programs at the Library.  
Activity:
- Continue town wide community events when appropriate.
  - Continue to provide a robust schedule of library programs for patrons of all ages.
- B. Work with the Friends of the Library to fund programs with outside performers.  
Activity:
- Attend periodic meetings of the Friends.
  - Continue regular communication with the Friends.
  - Support the Friends efforts to fund programs.

**10. Promote community awareness of library services.**

- A. Fully utilize existing avenues for public relations.  
Activity:
- Continue to provide a monthly calendar of events at the Library.
  - Encourage wide distribution of our e-Newsletter.
  - Continue regular newspaper (print & electronic) column submissions on library services.
  - Use current social media for patron outreach.
  - Submit articles for each quarterly Bedford By-Line.
  - Offer outreach about library services to local organizations and Town departments.
  - Extend contacts to Hanscom Air Force Base when feasible.
  - Continue live appearances on local cable television.
  - Encourage the community to refer to the Library's website for regular updates on library resources, programs and events.
  - Install flat screen monitors in circulation and reference areas to inform patrons of current programs.

- Establish a logo that is easily identifiable and meets existing Library criteria.
- B. Conduct periodic mailings to the community.
- Activity:
- Do town-wide mailing on library services, especially electronic services at home and special programming events.

**11. Be a cultural destination for the Community**

- A. Maintain and Promote the Bedford Flag
- Activity:
- Promote visits to the Flag in Library publicity.
  - Insure security and maintenance of the Flag.
  - Develop recorded audio/video tour of the Flag.
- B. Maintain and promote the Art Gallery and the Community Art Wall
- Activity:
- Assist the Art Steering Committee in presenting curated exhibits in the Art Gallery on a regular basis.
  - Provide exhibit space for young & emerging artists on the Community Art Wall.
  - Host receptions for artists whose work is on display.

**12. Work to insure the financial stability of the Library.**

- A. Pursue appropriate grants as needed.
- B. Maintain town support for library services.
- C. Utilize Library Corporation assets to support the Library.
- D. Support the Friends of the Library in their fundraising efforts.

**13. Investigate the feasibility of establishing quantitative measures to assess the library's progress toward certain long-range goals.**

- A. Review existing tracking measures.
- B. Maintain effective patron-counting software/hardware.
- C. Review usage data on new website.

## **Methodology**

After a discussion with the Board of Trustees, the library hired facilitator Deb Hoadley in March of 2016 to lead the strategic planning process. Deb met with the staff, Board of Trustees and a focus group of town residents to gather input for a survey to be distributed to Bedford residents and other library users. An online survey was conducted in the summer of 2016. Postcards were mailed to each household in town to notify them about the survey. Print copies of the survey were available at the library. Of the 5000 postcards mailed we received 550 survey responses. Overall, 96% of those surveyed responded that they were either extremely satisfied or satisfied with the library's customer service.

The results from the online survey were reviewed by focus groups, the staff and Trustees. Input from the survey, the staff, focus groups, and the Board of Trustees was used to formulate the Strategic Plan for FY18-22.

**Prepared by the Staff and the Board of Trustees: October 2016.**

**Adopted: Approved by the Board of Trustees - November 15, 2016.**

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