

**Ramsey County Library
Board of Trustees Meeting
December 14, 2022
4560 Victoria Street North
Shoreview, MN – 6:30 PM**

CONNECT community
INSPIRE curiosity
CULTIVATE learning

The meeting is available for public viewing at
<https://zoom.us/j/96696534304?pwd=S2ROd1FYUE8vcHBWWVhtSkpNU1lzZz09>
Phone: 651 372 8299; Webinar ID: 966 9653 4304; Passcode: 023509

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of Agenda**
- IV. Consent Agenda**
 - a. Approval of the November 16, 2022 Meeting Minutes
 - b. Ratify Past Gifts to the Library
- V. Action Items**
 - a. Strategic Plan
- VI. Discussion Items**
 - a. Deputy County Manager Update
 - b. Ramsey County Board Liaison Report
 - c. Ramsey County Library Friends Update
 - d. Performance Measures Discussion
 - e. 2023 Board of Trustees Meeting Dates
- VII. Adjournment**

Scheduled Upcoming Meetings

January 18, 2023 TBD
6:30 p.m.

Library Board of Trustees

Steve Woods, Chair
Sylvia Neblett, Vice Chair
Claire Chang, Secretary
Grace Atkins
Sida Ly-Xiong
Andrea West

Ramsey County Board Liaison

Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt

Minutes of the Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees
November 16, 2022

LIBRARY TRUSTEES PRESENT:

Grace Atkins, Claire Chang, Sida Ly-Xiong, Sylvia Neblett, Andrea West, Steve Woods.

STAFF PRESENT:

Pang Yang, Deputy Director; Chuck Wettergren, Digital Services Manager; Maggie Soukup, Library Board Coordinator; Julie Comine, Clerk Typist.

OTHERS:

Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County Commissioner; Johanna Berg, Deputy County Manager; Antonio Montez, Racial Health Equity Administrator, Ramsey County; Mary Worley, Executive Director, Ramsey County Library Friends.

CALL TO ORDER:

Woods called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Neblett made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. West seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Neblett requested that her name be removed from the October meeting minutes as she was not present. The request was noted, and the minutes were updated.

Neblett made a motion to approve the consent agenda items, including the updated meeting minutes. West seconded the motion, which passes unanimously.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Atkins shared that the Strategic Planning workgroup identified 3 strategic priorities and a total of 9 sub-priorities, 3 for each priority. She explained that the workgroup is in the process of developing definitions for each sub-priority and success measures but that they were not ready in time for the November meeting packet. Atkins asked the Trustees to review the priorities and sub-priorities and provide feedback for the workgroup so a finalized document can be shared at the December meeting.

To view the entire discussion, follow this [link](#). (01:50)

DEPUTY COUNTY MANAGER UPDATE

Presented by Deputy County Manager Berg. Her update can be found by following this [link](#). (20:03)

RAMSEY COUNTY BOARD LIAISON REPORT

Presented by Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt. Her report can be found by following this [link](#). (22:00)

RAMSEY COUNTY LIBRARY FRIENDS UPDATE

Presented by Mary Worley, Executive Director. Her update can be found by following this [link](#). (22:22)

TRUSTEE SURVEY

The Trustees reviewed the results from the 2022 survey. The survey was sent to the 8 individuals who served on the Library Board in 2022. The 6 members active in November 2022 responded.

The Trustees agreed that it would be helpful to review and compare past years results with the current results. Chair Woods suggested that the results from this year be included in the meeting packet next year for comparison. He added that it would be helpful for Trustees to review the survey throughout the year as a reminder of where key areas of focus should be.

To view the entire discussion, follow this [link](#). (24:40)

MAPLEWOOD CLOSURE UPDATE

Yang shared that a preferred satellite site at the Maplewood Mall is going to the County Board for approval next week and the location will be disclosed tomorrow in the County Board meeting packet. The alternate site will provide limited library services for patrons and will be opening mid- January. In addition to the satellite site, North St. Paul and White Bear Lake will be extending building hours for patrons.

Beginning December 5, services at Maplewood will become limited and additional communication efforts to patrons and visitors will begin. The Ramsey County Communications team is working on signage, social media, etc. for broader message to the county and the library will connect directly via email with patrons about the service updates and changes.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

During the October 25 between Trustees and the Ramsey County Board the group discussed about what should be measured/monitored throughout the year to better support the upcoming strategic plan. Antonio Montez helped facilitate a discussion with the Trustees about what reports, metrics, and measures are helpful during the monthly meetings and what reports, metrics and measures do not add value to the discussion. The Trustees also discussed what they'd like to see at future meetings.

To view the entire discussion, follow this [link](#). (53:40)

ADJOURNMENT:

Neblett made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:31pm. Chang seconded the motion, which was approve unanimously.

Request for Library Board Action

Meeting Date
December 14, 2022

Action Requested
Information & Discussion,
Recommendation

Presented By
George Hardgrove,
Service Team Controller

SUBJECT:

Gifts to the Ramsey County Library.

BACKGROUND:

In 2021, the Interim Library Director ascertained the Ramsey County Library Board had delegated gift acceptance authority to the Library Director. The Ramsey County Board has delegated authority to the Library Board to accept gifts to the Ramsey County Library of up to \$5,000. The Library Board has no authority to delegate gift acceptance authority to others. Corrective actions have been implemented to align Ramsey County Library Board practices to county policy.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

Ratify past gifts to the Ramsey County Library accepted by county staff.

Request for Library Board Action

Meeting Date
December 14, 2022

Action Requested
Discussion and
Approval

Presented By
Pang Yang,
Deputy Director

SUBJECT:

Strategic Plan review and approval.

BACKGROUND:

The Ramsey County Library, along with the services of the external consultant, ACET, Inc., led a strategic planning process and community engagement events with internal and external stakeholders. The strategic priorities were developed in partnership with Trustees Sida Ly-Xiong and Grace Atkins, and staff persons Jeff Eide, Erica Redden and Pang Yang.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

To review and approve the strategic priorities and sub-priorities as presented.

**Ramsey County Libraries Strategic Plan
2023-2025**

Priority 1

Extending our welcome

We strive to grow welcoming spaces, to be more anti-racist, equitable, responsive, and effective for all communities.

Sub Priority 1.A: Amplify the voices of communities who have been marginalized

Sub Priority 1.B: Empower staff and strengthen customer service

Sub Priority 1.C: Diversify workforce

Priority 2

Growing our partnerships and community presence

We will be deliberate in igniting our communities and forging partnerships to maximize positive impact.

Sub Priority 2.A: Learn from current partnerships to build new ones

Sub Priority 2.B: Co-create library programs and services with partners in a continuous feedback loop

Sub Priority 2.C: Create programs that bring libraries to community and community to libraries

Priority 3

Building resources to create positive change

We will build our services, programs, spaces, technology, and collections to reflect the needs of the residents we serve, and to celebrate diverse cultures across our communities.

Sub Priority 3.A: Invest in our youth through responsive programming

Sub Priority 3.B: Reflect interest and needs of the communities that have been most marginalized

Sub Priority 3.C: Provide dynamic spaces and opportunities that bring people together

Priority 1

Extending our welcome

We strive to grow welcoming spaces, to be more anti-racist, equitable, responsive, and effective for all communities.

Sub Priority 1.A: Amplify the voices of communities who have been marginalized

Sub Priority 1.B: Empower staff and strengthen customer service

Sub Priority 1.C: Diversify workforce

Priority 1

Extending our welcome

Sub Priority 1.A

Amplify the voices of communities who have been marginalized

Description

We recognize the strength of community perspectives and community partners. By engaging with community members who have not traditionally had a seat at the table, we will contribute to the growth, advancement, and prosperity of Ramsey County.

Context Rationale

We recognize that there are communities that have been marginalized due to structures and systems that makes access and participation difficult. This priority is about centering perspectives of those historically marginalized.

Potential Success measures

- Increase *Ramsey County Residents First Economic Growth and Community Investment's* strategic priority #2 performance measure. This performance measure requires four elements to be met to signify success. The measure is a review of any major programs, services and projects:
 - ask residents to help define the problem or opportunity
 - include targeted outreach to Black/African American, American Indian and other racially/ethnically diverse communities resulting in substantive participation
 - compensate residents for their time and ideas based on County guidance for community engagement compensation, and
 - share the tangible action steps taken by the County based on these conversations with participants within 6 months of completion Incorporating residents to help define the problem or opportunity.

Priority 1

Extending our welcome

Sub Priority 1.B

Empower staff and strengthen customer service

Description

We create supportive and responsible spaces that are radically welcoming to staff of all backgrounds and identities, and disenfranchised communities. We commit to providing a reflective, proactive, and responsive approach to Ramsey County residents, library users, and to our communities.

Context/Rationale

This priority is about tapping into and supporting staff to serve the diverse communities of Ramsey County.

Potential Success Measures

- Increase numbers of training available to staff
- Reduction of complaints about customer service
- Increase fearless display of diverse collections and culturally diverse programming
- Consistent review of hiring process
- Creation of equity work group

Priority 1

Extending our welcome

Sub Priority 1.C

Diversify workforce

Description

We develop a team that reflects the community, meets the needs of evolving demographics, and is diverse in thought, race, gender, language, and ability.

Context/Rationale

To ensure a welcoming space for residents and to meet the needs of a dynamic, changing community, we need staff who reflect our communities. This priority specifically focuses on the developing a team reflective of communities that have been disenfranchised or have experienced mistrust with institutions that prevent them from using resources.

Potential Success Measures

- Increase percentage of staff persons who have fluent language skills in addition to English.
- Increase Ramsey County's Department Performance Measure 1a: percentage of department staff who are racially and ethnically diverse and/or American Indian
- Increase Ramsey County's Department Performance Measure 1b: formal leaders who are racially and ethnically diverse
- Consistent review of Ramsey County's Department Performance Measure 1c: review of staff turnover

Priority 2

Growing our partnerships and community presence

We will be deliberate in igniting our communities and forging partnerships to maximize positive impact.

Sub Priority 2.A: Learn from current partnerships to build new ones

Sub Priority 2.B: Co-create library programs and services with partners in a continuous feedback loop

Sub Priority 2.C: Create programs that bring libraries to community and community to libraries

Priority 2

Growing our partnerships and community presence

Sub Priority 2.A

Learn from current partnerships to build new ones

Description

We leverage the strengths of our current relationships to develop new ones with perspectives that are currently not present. We rethink how we deliver services and invest in our communities to reach all of Ramsey County.

Context/Rationale

We recognized that an array of partnerships with valuable and important stakeholders already exist, and have proficient processes in place to continue strong growth. This knowledge should also be used to nurture partnerships with organizations that are underutilized.

Potential Success Measures

- Integration of community engagement process in long-term services and resources
- Increase number of new partnerships
- Strengthened relationships with current partners

Priority 2

Growing our partnerships and community presence

Sub Priority 2.B

Co-create library programs and services with partners in a continuous feedback loop

Description

We approach decision making in partnership with community organizations and members.

Context/Rationale

Library services and resources for residents should involve stakeholder voice with equal membership at the table. This priority is about ensuring that in the life cycle of decision making, stakeholders and partners are kept in constant communication and are a part of decision making.

Potential Success Measures

- Review programs and services provided in excess of \$50,000, such as the Summer Learning Program to integrate community engagement.

Priority 2

Growing our partnerships and community presence

Sub Priority 2.C

Create programs that bring libraries to community and community to libraries

Description

We work towards the destruction of obstacles and barriers to library services and resources, physical and intangible.

Context/Rationale

Beyond books, most residents do not know what a modern public library has to offer; however, most residents do rely on the support of their communities. By embedding ourselves in community spaces, communicating through community networks, and inviting communities into our spaces, we can reach Ramsey County residents we haven't yet been able to.

Potential Success Measures

- Increase number of staff engaging outside of library facilities
- Increase in communications and marketing methods that reflect how targeted communities prefer to receive information
- Increase number of library events held at other community spaces
- Increase number of community events held in library spaces

Priority 3

Building resources to create positive change

We will build our services, programs, spaces, technology, and collections to reflect the needs of the residents we serve, and to celebrate diverse cultures across our communities.

Sub Priority 3.A: Invest in our youth through responsive programming

Sub Priority 3.B: Reflect interest and needs of the communities that have been most marginalized

Sub Priority 3.C: Provide dynamic spaces and opportunities that bring people together

Priority 3

Building resources to create positive change

Sub Priority 3.A

Invest in our youth through responsive programming

Description

We foster an environment where youth and families supporting youth are able to feel valued and are able to contribute.

Context/Rationale

School readiness, literacy, social-emotional development are all instrumental to the development of young people, and are the foundations for growth in every community. This priority is about giving opportunities for young people, and families with young people, to prosper.

Potential Success Measures

- Increase in Summer Learning Program participants by school district.
- Increase in youth participation in programming
- Increase in partnerships with organizations that hire youth
- Increase in satisfaction of teens with programming offers

Priority 3

Building resources to create positive change

Sub Priority 3.B

Reflect interest and needs of the communities that have been most marginalized

Description

We provide resources where all residents are able to not only survive, but also thrive. We connect residents to opportunities to advance and to access the highest level of health and well-being.

Context/Rationale

We recognize that there are communities that have been marginalized due to structures and systems that makes access and participation difficult. This priority is about the development of programs and services centering those historically marginalized.

Potential Success Measures

- Determine interests and needs of the communities who have experienced the most marginalization
- Increase services through partnerships with organizations that serve individuals who have been historically marginalized
- Develop of community engagement pilot process around collection development

Priority 3

Building resources to create positive change

Sub Priority 3.C

Provide dynamic spaces and opportunities that bring people together

Description

We create environments that residents are able to physically access, intellectually identify with, and emotionally engage in. These environments will meet varying needs as well as celebrate community and connect people.

Context/Rationale

Libraries are one of the few spaces residents can occupy without having to make purchases or adopt certain beliefs. In addition to free spaces for residents, libraries have an opportunity to connect people to people, and to their community.

Potential Success Measures

- Increase digital learning spaces
- Increase public availability of up-to-date and accessible technology
- Plan strategic renovations to host a variety of communities
- Increase visits to library buildings
- Increase room bookings, and study room use
- Increase number of meeting and engagement spaces

RAMSEY COUNTY LIBRARY

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH PLAN

The Ramsey County Library, along with the services of the external consultant, [ACET, Inc.](#), is leading a strategic planning process and community engagement events with internal and external stakeholders of the library for 2022. The Ramsey County Library's mission is to "CONNECT community, INSPIRE curiosity, CULTIVATE learning" through its seven locations, online services, and community events and services. Each year, the library serves 1.4 million onsite visitors and 3.6 million web visitors at www.rclreads.org.

The library operates under the [Vision, Mission, and Goals](#) set by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners. The library is a department within Ramsey County's Economic Growth and Community Investment service team. A seven-member Board of Trustees, who are appointed by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, governs the library. An interim director currently leads the Ramsey County Library.

The Ramsey County Library updates its [strategic plan](#) every three years. Strategic plan deliverables include:

1. Drafting a plan of the strategic approach that specifically addresses how to involve key stakeholders, the timeline, key activities, and costs.
2. Providing a detailed community engagement plan.
3. Presenting initial findings from the conducted engagement methods.
4. Drafting a strategic plan that incorporates feedback from key staff, the Board of Trustees, and stakeholders.
5. Providing final strategic plan recommendations based on stakeholder input.

The community engagement aspect of this work entails engaging with current stakeholders and those experiencing barriers to access. This work will utilize an equity lens.

Current Stakeholders	Those Experiencing Barriers to Access (Including But Not Limited To)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ramsey County Library staff• Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees• Ramsey County Library patrons• Friends of the Ramsey County Library• Community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communities of color• Those who are incarcerated/formerly incarcerated• Those experiencing poverty• Those with limited transportation• Those with ability and mobility challenges• Youth and young adults• Families• Those experiencing unstable housing

Core Project Team. The core project team for this effort includes members of the Ramsey County Library and ACET, Inc. The three core project team members of the Ramsey County Library include: Jeff Eide, Senior Library Manager, Planning and Analysis and Manager of the Roseville Library; Pang Yang, Deputy Director (Public Services and Human Resources); and Erica Redden, Teen Services Coordinator for the Maplewood Library. For ACET, Inc., the core project

team includes: Stella SiWan Zimmerman, President; Jolene Roehlkepartain, Senior Manager, and Max Davis, External Consultant. In addition, the ACET team also involves Carlos Gallego, Senior Coordinator, who is ACET's Outreach and Cultural Connector. The core Ramsey County Library and ACET team meet on a regular basis. The main email contacts are Jeff Eide from Ramsey County Library and Jolene Roehlkepartain from ACET.

Core Project Team Contacts

Position	Name	Contact
RCL: Senior Library Manager, Planning and Analysis and Manager of the Roseville Library	Jeff Eide	jeffrey.eide@co.ramsey.mn.us 651-724-6061
RCL: Deputy Director (Public Services and Human Resources)	Pang H. Yang	pang.h.yang@co.ramsey.mn.us 651-724-6010
RCL: Teen Services Coordinator for the Maplewood Library	Erica Redden	erica.redden@co.ramsey.mn.us 651-724-6137
ACET: President	Stella SiWan Zimmerman	stella@acetinc.com 952-922-1811
ACET: Senior Manager	Jolene Roehlkepartain	jolene@acetinc.com 952-922-1811
ACET: External Consultant	Max Davis	max@acetinc.com 952-922-1811

Communication Kick-Off. The core project team held a kick-off meeting on January 6, 2022, to start the project and identify next steps. Stella SiWan Zimmerman gave a brief presentation to the Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees on January 19, 2022, and the team met again on January 25, 2022. A lot of the discussions for the first two January meetings have been around identifying organizations that work with communities that experience barriers to access since Ramsey County Library places a high value on reaching out to the community and making the library services accessible to all. At the first meeting, Jeff Eide had shared a list of the Ramsey County Library partners. Then we discussed the list of eight possible organizations to reach out to (that experience barriers) with the goal of prioritizing the list to eventually finalize a list of four organizations to conduct focus groups with organizational staff and to conduct focus groups with the community at large through these four organizations.

Following the January 25 meeting, Erica Redden sent out an introductory email to all seven of the Ramsey County Library branch managers. The team discussed how staff meetings are often in the morning, and that often they're before 10 am before patrons arrive.

Ramsey County Library Contacts

Library	Address	Manager	Contact	Hours of Operation
RCL: Maplewood	3025 Southlawn Drive Maplewood, MN 55109	Monica Stratton	monica.stratton@co.ramsey.mn.us 651-724-6063	M-Th 10am-8pm; F-S 10am-5pm; Su 12pm-5pm
RCL: Mounds View	2576 Mounds View Boulevard Mounds View, MN 55112	Marcus Lowry	marcus.lowry@co.ramsey.mn.us 651-724-6097	M, Th 1pm-8pm; W, F-S 10am-5pm; T&Su Closed
RCL: New Brighton	400 10th St. NW New Brighton, MN 55112	Meg Robertson	margaret.l.robertson@co.ramsey.mn.us 651-724-6050	M-T, Th-S 10am-5pm; W 1pm-8pm; Su Closed
RCL: North St. Paul	2300 North St. Paul Drive North St. Paul, MN 55109	Ann Wahlstrom	ann.wahlstrom@co.ramsey.mn.us 651-747-2701	M, W, S 10am-5pm; T, Th 1pm-8pm; F&Su Closed
RCL: Roseville	2180 North Hamline Ave Roseville, MN 55113	Jeff Eide	jeffrey.eide@co.ramsey.mn.us 651-724-6061	M-Th 10am-8pm; F-S 10am-5pm; Su 12pm-5pm
RCL: Shoreview	4560 Victoria St N Shoreview, MN 55126	Carol Jackson	carol.l.jackson@co.ramsey.mn.us 651-724-6090	M-Th 10am-8pm; F-S 10am-5pm; Su 12pm-5pm
RCL: White Bear Lake	2150 2nd Street White Bear Lake, MN 55110	Therese Sonnek	therese.m.sonnek@co.ramsey.mn.us 651-724-6130	M 10am-8pm; T-W 1pm-8pm; Th-S 10am-5pm; Su Closed

Another key internal stakeholder is the Director of the Ramsey County Library. Right now there is an interim director, Karen Saltis (karen.a.saltis@co.ramsey.mn.us; 651-486-2201). The Board of

Trustees is in the process of interviewing candidates for the permanent position to be filled by Spring 2022.

Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees

A key internal stakeholder for this project is the Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees (also known as the Library Board). This board typically meets on the third Wednesday of each month, starting at 6:30 pm. The Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees is the Library's governing board, and we've been having discussions about their involvement. It is yet to be determined whether one will join as part of the core project team or whether the Library Board will create a subcommittee for this initiative.

Members include:

Steve Woods (Chair)

Sylvia Neblett (Vice Chair)

Claire Chang (Secretary)

Mary Jo McGuire (Ramsey County Commissioner)

Victoria Reinhardt (Ramsey County Commissioner, Board Liaison)

Gwen Willems

Marisol Chiclana-Ayala

Sida Ly-Xiong

For more information: <https://www.rclreads.org/management/>. For upcoming meetings, visit: <https://www.rclreads.org/library-board-minutes-2022/>

Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries

Another key stakeholder for this project is the Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries. The nonprofit organization recently hired a new Executive Director, Mary Flynn Worley. The Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries is dedicated to supporting the libraries in making information, books, music, and programs available to the public. This organization has some key stakeholders as well, including: 1) the Executive Director and staff, 2) the Board of Directors, 3) Volunteers, and 4) Members (which has about 700 people).

The core project team discussed that it may be most strategic to work with the Executive Director, the staff, and the Board of Directors. That would entail about 22 people with about 17 on the [Board](#).

The Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries is located at 4560 North Victoria Street, Shoreview, MN 55126; 651-486-2213; friends@rclfriends.org.

Potential Organizations for Outreach to Those Experiencing Barriers to Access

The Ramsey County Library Core Project Team has identified eight potential organizations to reach out to with the goal of prioritizing the list to eventually finalize a list of four organizations to conduct focus groups with organizational staff and to conduct focus groups with the community at large through these four organizations. The core project team discussed this list at the January 25, 2022, meeting. We discussed how all of these organizations are key organizations, and we want to connect with the most marginalized groups while being aware that there are many marginalized groups.

From a racial/ethnic perspective, we prioritized connecting with 1) Black/African American voices, 2) Karen, 3) Somali, and 4) Latinx with groups that also fit the intersectionality of other key marginalization, such as poverty, food insecurity, housing instability, and so on. We also discussed how the Harriet Tubman Center may be a key organization to reach out to.

Another key consideration is the Ramsey County Library goals for outreach. The Assalam Mosque has many great attributes, and it will tend to collect information from males. We also discussed the Somali Child Care Provider Network to reach Moms and children.

Potential Organizations for Outreach

Organization	Location	Leadership	Primary Populations Served	Programs
The Arc Minnesota	St. Paul	Andrea Zuber, CEO	People with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families	Advocacy, Housing Abuse Prevention and Scholarships Employment Services, Social Services and Community Health
Community Action Programs of Ramsey and Washington Counties	St. Paul	Kevin Adams, Interim Executive Director	Ramsey and Washington County Low-income individuals and families	Energy, Housing, Food, Head Start Advocacy, Housing Abuse Prevention and Scholarships Employment Services, and car ownership
Karen Organization of Minnesota (KOM)	Roseville	Co-Executive Directors - Eh Tah Khu and Alexis Walstad	Karen, Kareeni, Mon	Employment Services, Social Services, Community Health
Twin Cities Hmong Alliance	Maplewood	Rev. Tom Tswv Hlau Yang, Senior Pastor	Hmong Christian families and individuals	Worship, youth and family programs
Ralph Reeder Food Shelf	Mounds View	TBD	Individuals and families suffering food insecurity in their service area	Food Shelf, food for seniors i.e., NAP program, for kids during out of school time
Harriet Tubman Center, East	Maplewood	Jennifer J. Polzin, CEO	Abused individuals mostly women	Shelter/ Housing, Mental Health, Legal Services, and Youth Programs

Twin Cities Senior Center	Maplewood/North St. Paul, New Brighton, Roseville, Shoreview, White Bear Lake	Depends on location	Seniors	Senior programming
Assalam Mosque	Maplewood	TBD	Muslims	Worship, education, school, counseling, marriages, funerals, burials

Communication and Outreach Plan. All emails, project instruments and data-collection tools, scripts for instruments and data-collection tools will all be assessed and approved by the Ramsey County Library core project team. ACET will create drafts of all of these items. These include creating outreach materials, translating outreach materials (and deciding which languages for translation), and identifying data-collection tools.

Currently, these are the proposed data-collection tools:

- Library staff at the seven locations, focus group
- Library patrons at the seven locations, a survey with a one-week window (or possibly two)
- Board of Trustees, a digital survey distributed by email with a two-week window
- Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries, a survey with a two-week window
- Four organizational locations, focus group with agency staff
- Community at large through the four organizational locations, focus group

These tools require participant recruitment and the finalization of logistics. ACET will document and share tools and processes, all of which will be assessed and approved by the Ramsey County Library core project team.

Once all the data-collection tools are designed and approved, we'll begin the process of collecting engagement data, which includes: gathering feedback from library staff and the Board of Trustees, obtaining feedback from library patrons and the Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries, and conducting four focus groups with community agencies.

Then once the engagement data is collected, ACET will review the survey, interview, and focus group data and provide an analysis. All this will provide essential information for creating the strategic plan.

Considerations for Next Steps. We discussed a number of next steps:

- Aligning the branding of this project with the Ramsey County Library branding.
- Starting with doing focus groups with library staff. The Ramsey County Library has an in-service day on March 31. Otherwise, library staff tend to meet before the library opens.
- Identifying easy ways for library staff to reach out to patrons while being intentional about outreach criteria. For example, maybe each part-time library staff could reach out to two people for filling out surveys, and full-time staff could reach out to four people.

Ramsey County Library Strategic Planning Process Board of Trustees Engagement Opportunities

ACET, Inc. facilitates monthly meetings with the RCL Strategic Planning Project Team:

- The first meeting was held on 1/6 to finalize the work plan, review the online portal to monitor planning progress, and discuss next steps. This meeting was held with the initial RCL Strategic Planning Project Team consisting of Jeff Eide, Pang Yang, and Erica Redden.
- The second meeting with the initial RCL Strategic Planning Project Team was held on 1/25 to identify the list of community partners to engage for feedback, and to identify data collection methods for each stakeholder group.
- The third meeting was held on 2/28 with the RCL Strategic Planning Project Team and a member of the RCL Board of Trustees—Sida Ly-Xiong—to discuss outreach and processes to engage library staff and patrons.
- For future meetings, the RCL Strategic Planning Project Team will consist of Jeff Eide, Pang Yang, Erica Redden, Sida Ly-Xiong, Ramsey County Library Trustee Grace Atkins, and the Library Director once the position is filled.

Feedback from the RCL Strategic Planning Project Team, which now includes 2 members of the Board of Trustees, will be critical in each component of ACET's work plan. This includes feedback on the development of data collection tools, processes identified to collect engagement data, and on various draft documents.

We envision the entire RCL Board of Trustees to be further involved as follows:

- Provide feedback on Strategic Planning update items at Board meetings (when scheduled)
- Complete a survey sent by ACET, Inc. to provide input (scheduled to be distributed in May 2022)
- Review memos produced from engagement sessions to prioritize strategic plan priorities
- Review and provide feedback to the RCL Strategic Planning Project Team on Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) for identified strategic plan priorities
- Model the commitment to support the new 3-year Strategic Plan

We are grateful for the opportunity to engage the RCL Board of Trustees with the strategic planning process. Thank you for taking the time to provide valuable input.

Memorandum



To: Pang Yang, Jeff Eide, Erica Redden, Sida Ly-Xiong, and Grace Atkins
Ramsey County Library Strategic Planning Project Team

From: Max Davis, Carlos Gallego, Sandy Donovan, and Stella SiWan Zimmerman
ACET, Inc.

Date: August 11, 2022

Re: Ramsey County Library (RCL) Community Organizations Focus Group Findings

As part of their strategic planning process, Ramsey County Library (RCL) wanted to hear from a range of constituencies including current patrons, library staff, Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries, RCL Board of Trustees, and community members. To ensure they heard from community members, connections were made with four community organizations who did not currently collaborate with RCL. ACET recruited clients and staff at each organization and facilitated focus groups to gather feedback. In total, three of the organizations were able to recruit participants to participate in focus groups¹: The Arc Minnesota, supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families; MORE, supporting refugees and immigrants; and The Urban Village, supporting Karen and Karenni youth. A total of five focus groups with 32 participants were conducted between April and June 2022. They included:

- Three in-person meetings with 25 clients from three organizations; and
- Two in-person meetings with 7 staff from two organizations.

Both client and staff participants were asked to discuss their perceptions of the library's role in the community, their use of libraries, and their ideas for how RCL could better support their unique constituencies. Overall, participants described the library as a safe and welcoming space for learning, accessing resources, and connecting with community. They provided examples of how RCL already meets these ideals. They also identified barriers that their communities experience in terms of accessing the libraries, and offered suggestions for how RCL could help overcome those barriers and better meet the needs of the communities.

¹ ACET also worked with a 4th organization, serving residents of an affordable housing community, but was unable to conduct focus groups due to circumstances (clients did not show up for a scheduled group, and staff did not have capacity to schedule or attend a group). However, community members who have experienced homelessness or lived in affordable housing were represented in the completed focus groups.

Libraries in the community. Participants were asked to describe what they think the role of the library should be in community, and they were asked about their own personal experiences with libraries. They described the libraries as safe and welcoming places of community connection, and as access points for information and resources. In addition, participants described overlaps between their organizations' missions and the library's missions.

Several specific themes arose from the discussions:

- **Safe, peaceful, and welcoming space.** Participants used words including *safe*, *quiet*, *peaceful*, and *welcoming* to describe libraries. One summarized this feeling, recalling what Roseville library had long represented to them: *"It was a place where I could go and be among books and retreat and learn things and it always felt like it was this really safe, warm sanctuary to come to. Quiet and peaceful and I think that's one of the qualities of libraries that is so important for everyone."* Another described a library as *"a calm and peace[ful] place"* and another noted, *"If I come in and I want a certain book. . . I want to be welcomed. I want to feel like I'm a part of the community."* And another who was a refugee described how unfamiliar New Americans can be with the idea of a community library: *"Back in our country, we have a big library that is all owned by the government and run by the government. So, most of the books are government propaganda and this kind of things. So we, mostly, people don't go to that place."*
- **Access point for information and resources.** Many participants also described the role of the library as providing access to books; movies and other multimedia materials; the internet and other technology; and general information and referrals. Participants identified several circumstances when they tend to refer clients to libraries: for creative activities to do with children, for finding spaces to hold meetings, for accessing the Internet, for job search assistance, and for other community information or referrals. One participant described how appreciative other people were when they find representations of diverse communities in library materials: *"You can tell that the parents are enthusiastic about having a representation, having someone that looks like them, that wrote a book in Karen and in English both, and that their younger kids can learn from and see and read it as they're growing up."*
- **Community space for learning and meetings.** Participants also mentioned the idea of a community gathering space. As one summarized, *"It feels also like it should be a gathering place where people can come together and collaborate and be part of and in community."* The value of spaces for holding meetings and events, for hosting children's activities, and for offering an area for students to do homework were also identified by participants. Participants described the opportunities that libraries have to facilitate learning about new cultures. One participant described a time when they had witnessed the library playing this role: *"I remember they had story time . . ."*

connected to a particular culture. So when I experienced it, one was with the Native American community and one was with the Latinx community, but they had story time and it was incorporating dance. I was at a resource fair and it was happening on that night and I just so happened to kind of nudge my way into the room and sit crisscross applesauce with the kids and just observe. But it was a very cool opportunity for cultures to learn about other cultures."

Barriers to accessing libraries. Participants were asked to identify barriers they experienced or anticipated in accessing libraries. Their responses were focused on three themes: transportation, accessibility (for the participants with disabilities), and language or cultural understanding (for the immigrant or refugee participants).

- **Transportation.** Getting to the library was the most-mentioned barrier to access. One explained, *"With Metro Mobility, I know they are short drivers, so sometimes you get a ride; sometimes you don't."*
- **Disability accommodations and access.** Participants mentioned accessibility as a barrier. As an example, one participant described how they think of the issue: *"Since I use a wheelchair, I think accessibility is a really big thing. Will I be able to reach the books? Will I be able to get between the bookshelves? Is it going to be easily accessible for me that way? If there's a lot of people there, then that can be challenging as well, so just thinking about those things."*
- **Language and cultural understanding.** Participants (both those with disabilities and those whose first language is not English) described language as being a barrier to accessing the library and the importance of having signage, information, and resources in simple form and in other languages. One described other nuances of being new to the United States: *"It's like do we need to become a member or do we need to register whenever we went to the library? Kind of like if you want to borrow a book or something, do we have to be a member in the library?"*

Suggestions for RCL. Participants offered several suggestions for how RCL could help them better access the libraries as well as what types of services and resources they are most interested in. These included:

- **Hosting community gatherings and cultural exhibitions and events:** Participants mentioned specific ideas such as holding cultural or historical exhibits, or storytelling events. One said, *"Community gatherings, like for example, we have a lot of elderly in our Karen community. Sometimes, they don't know— have anything to do at home. If we have maybe programs or events for them, they probably can go to that."* Another described how attending one event can help clients learn more about what the library has to offer, and encourage them to come to the library more. *"Having reading sessions in Karen, [parents] will show up to those, and they're going to see other programming that is happening around the library that they will bring their kids to."*

And so some smaller things like that will attract even more families to come because the Karen culture is very much, you talk to this person, then this person talk to this person, they spread by word-of-mouth. It's not very much like you post on social media and they see it."

- **Targeting marketing and outreach.** Participants noted that increasing marketing efforts would help more community members to learn about the library system and encourage them to use its resources. As one participant noted, *"I feel like if you advertise more, people will know eventually. Not a lot of us know what the library can offer, unless we actually go to it."* Another elaborated: *"A lot of our youth doesn't utilize the resources because maybe they don't know. If parents or if students know about those resources, they would go there."* Another suggested that attending diverse community events would be a good outreach and marketing strategy: *"I'd say the libraries to go to the cultural events to advertise. If you want to outreach to the community, you have to go within their events."*
- **Providing more staff training for reaching diverse community members.** Participants discussed training staff as an opportunity to better reach diverse community members. As one said: *"I think it's important to make sure that staff have diversity and equity training. . . especially with disability training, understanding different disabilities and that sometimes you do have to take the extra mile for people so that they understand what it is that you're trying to explain to them. Teaching [staff] skills like how to say things in a more simple, easy-to-understand way is really important."* Participants also emphasized the importance of recognizing not just physical disabilities but also hidden disabilities and learning disorders. As one elaborated: *"So [someone in a] wheelchair, she's getting all the help she needs, and then I'm getting what I need. And let's say we both came together, and we were like, 'Wow. This is a real cool library. People appreciate us here, appreciate helping us and letting us enjoy how we can do the best we can.'" Another suggested that a Community Day for people with specific disabilities (such as the airport hosts for people with autism) would be a welcome resource to help people learn about and feel more comfortable using the libraries.*
- **Prioritizing clear and multilingual signage and staff.** Participants noted that having signs and other information about how to use the library in different languages would encourage more visitors. One noted the diverse population of Ramsey County: *"Different kinds of languages, depends on the people who live in Ramsey County, may be Spanish, might be Karen language, some might be Burmese and some might be like Ethiopian, or this kind of Arabic. So it seems like it might be more welcoming and the people will be more engaged."* Others noted that having staff who speak different languages or represent different cultures and information in plain language would be important as well.

- **Establishing partnerships with community organizations.** Participants offered ideas to enrich partnerships. As summarized by one participant: *"I would totally welcome some partnerships from the Ramsey County Library to say, 'Hey, what kind of stuff are you utilizing in your cultural preservation campaigns? What books do you have? What books could we maybe co-create even? I think there's a lot of opportunity.'" They provided more details: "There's people in the community that we could connect the library to, who would be able to co-create those books or audio tapes or history lessons or, you know, that's all stuff that we would really love some help with because it's not so much our main focus. It's something that is a part of what we do. But definitely think if a group like the Ramsey County Library could provide some resources or just knowledge in that area, that would be a huge service in the community as far as cultural preservation goes, too."*

Continuing focus on children's activities. Participants mentioned this topic when asked for suggestions for the library system. Specifically, they identified: activities for kids of all ages, sensory rooms for kids with disabilities, child care during events (and also including children with disabilities), and a mobile library to reach more families. One participant described this idea: *"Maybe we can also give access to the children to read more books with these small kind of mobile . . . maybe once in a week, or especially when we have the weekend days. So they can all just go and grab some book. Then maybe next week they can just return it back when the truck comes. So, normally, sometimes their parents have trouble with work and they cannot bring them to the library, so I mean, sometimes this happens."*

Focus Group Script - Partner Agency Community Members (Non-Library Users)

Hi everyone! My name is [Name]. Thank you for being here with me to talk about Ramsey County Library. I also would like to introduce my colleague [Name] who will be helping with note-taking and keeping us on track with time. We are with a company called ACET, who has been contracted to help design a new strategic plan for Ramsey County Library. There are seven library branches in the Ramsey County Library System. [Post board with list of libraries and the mission statement.] The closest branch to this agency is [Name of closest library]. I also want to share with you Ramsey County's mission to CONNECT community, INSPIRE curiosity, CULTIVATE learning.

I am going to be asking about your experience with libraries, what kind of resources you are looking for in your community, and what if anything the Library can offer you. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. Even though we are taking notes, we will not use your name or tell anyone what you said specifically. We are going to record this session to better transcribe your feedback. Does anyone have any questions before we start? [pause]. Ok, we will start the recording now.

Opening Question

1. *Can we go around and have each of you say your name and if you are comfortable doing so, you can either snap, clap or whistle.*

Core Questions

2. *When you hear "library" what comes to mind?*
 - a. *[probe] What kind of place do you imagine?*
 - b. *[probe] What do you imagine there is for you at a library?*
3. *For those of you who have not been to a library, or not recently, why not?*
 - a. *[probe] What stopped you from visiting a library?*
 - b. *[probe] Have you visited the library's website or attended any digital events?*
4. *For those who have used libraries, what kinds of things did you go to the library for?*
5. *What would make libraries a more inviting place to visit?*
 - a. *[probe] What makes you feel welcome and comfortable in a public space?*

6. *The library offers a variety of resources, like free classes, free use of computers, meeting rooms, in addition to books, magazines, newspapers, and digital media. Are there other services you wish the library offered?*

[Put up poster board with “What I wish Ramsey County Library could offer me”]

If you could please take a few minutes to write down all the different things you wish the library could offer you or your family. Things you don’t see anywhere in the services offered by the county. Then anyone who wants to can share what they added.

Concluding Question

7. *How would you like to see the Ramsey County Library use the feedback you expressed today?*

Thank you all so much! That is all of our questions.

Focus Group Script - Partner Agency Staff/Volunteers

Hi My name is [Name]. Thank you for being here with me to talk about Ramsey County Library. I also would like to introduce my colleague [Name] who will be helping with note-taking and keeping us on track with time. We are with a company called ACET, who has been contracted to help design a new strategic plan for Ramsey County Library. There are seven library branches in the Ramsey County Library System. [Post board with list of libraries and the mission statement.] The closest branches to this agency are [Location]. I also want to share with you Ramsey County's mission to CONNECT community, INSPIRE curiosity, CULTIVATE learning.

I am going to be asking about your work and clients, and your thoughts on the Ramsey County Library's role in this community. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. Even though we are taking notes, we will not use your name or tell anyone what you said specifically. We are going to record this session to better transcribe your feedback. Does anyone have any questions ok, we will start the recording now.

Opening Question

1. *Can we go around and have each of you say your name and what your role is at [insert name of organization], and if you are comfortable doing so, you can either snap, clap or whistle.*

Core Questions

2. *What do you imagine a library should provide to a community?*
3. *Are there areas where your work overlaps with library work?*
 - a. *[probe] Do you ever refer clients to the library for resources?*
 - b. *[probe] Are there obstacles to using the library for the clients served by this agency?*
4. *What needs do you see among clients served by this agency?*
5. *Are there ways that the library could assist with meeting those needs?*
 - a. *[probe] In what ways would you like to collaborate with Ramsey County Library?*
6. *What changes are you seeing in the communities and geographic areas in which you work?*
 - a. *[probe] How do you see the communities you work with changing in the next three years?*

Closing Question

7. *Are there any other feelings you would like to share about your work, Ramsey County Library, your clients, and how they seek community help to achieve their goals?*

Thank you all so much! That is all of our questions.

Memorandum



To: Pang Yang, Jeff Eide, Erica Redden, Sida Ly-Xiong, and Grace Atkins
Ramsey County Library Strategic Planning Project Team

From: Max Davis, Carlos Gallego, Sandy Donovan, and Stella SiWan Zimmerman
ACET, Inc.

Date: August 11, 2022

Re: Ramsey County Library Patron Survey Findings

As part of their process of crafting a new three-year strategic plan, Ramsey County Library (RCL) contracted with ACET, Inc. to design a survey of patrons. A paper survey was administered by library staff at all seven library branches during an approximate three-week period from June 13 through June 30. A total of eight hours of surveying took place at each branch, covering weekday mornings, mid day, and evening hours. One weekend survey period took place at each library. The survey included space for patrons to respond to open-ended prompts, requests for demographic information like age, zip code, and race and ethnicity, and one scaled response section. A total of 717 surveys were collected across the seven branches including 2 in Spanish.

Patrons described things they love about the library, why they came to the library on that particular day, and what they wished the library could offer them. Patrons responded at length, and recurring themes appeared in many of the responses.

Who the survey reached.

Survey respondents reported ages ranging from 4 years old to 96 years old. The average age reported by respondents was 50. Respondents visited the library an average of 39 times in the twelve months preceding the survey. When asked to state their race and/or ethnicity, the majority (72%) identified as white or caucasian, including some (1%) who reported another race or ethnicity in addition to white/caucasian. 7% of respondents identified as Black or African American, 5% as Asian or Asian American, 2% as Latino/Hispanic, 1% as African, and 1% identified as Native or Native American (see Table 1 on the next page).

Table 1. Race and Ethnicity of Patron Survey Respondents.

Race or Ethnicity	Number of respondents identifying	Percent (out of 717)
White	518	72%
Black/African American	47	7%
Asian	33	5%
Latina/Latino/Hispanic	14	2%
African	8	1%
Native or Native American	6	1%
South Asian/Indian	3	0.4%
Middle Eastern	1	0.1%
"Biracial" or multiple race/ethnicities listed	11	2%
White and another race/ethnicity	7	1%
Other	3	0.4%
Blank/no answer	90	13%
Total	737	103%

*Totals will be over 100% as some respondents identified multiple race/ethnicity categories.

What I wish this library could offer me.

When asked what they wished the library could offer them, a significant number (n= 115) of patrons said they were happy or satisfied with the library's offerings and wished for nothing more. As one wrote, *"I honestly can't think of any service we can't get that we need from our library - you all are fantastic!"*¹ Another wrote, *"offers more than one could possibly hope for. We are very fortunate to have it as it is."* Others noted hoped-for adjustments or increases to the library's collection. Some mentioned programming they would like to see and desires for changes to the library space or environment. To a lesser extent, patrons expressed a wish to see adjustments to opening hours and checkout and return policies. Some patrons also called for additions to the technology offerings, and others expressed a wish to see a co-located coffee shop. Patrons also described an interest in the library providing information about local and community events, and a book recommendation system. A few mentioned increased diversity among staff members and partnerships with museums or other institutions to offer passes for checkout. More detailed themes included:

¹ Quotes throughout the memo are taken directly from handwritten surveys without edits or corrections.

Collection and materials (n = 154). Patrons stressed the importance of the library's collection, and the wish that the library would continue to offer plentiful and wide-ranging materials. They also emphasized a desire to see more of certain types of books, dvds, and ebooks, as well as other non-traditional items for check out. Patrons called for adding non-English materials to the collection and further diversifying the collection with Black authors and LGBTQIA+ material. Some wanted shorter wait times.

- *"more LGBTQ+ comic books."*
- *"more copies of current books so the waiting lists are not so incredibly long"*
- *"more bilingual books (spanish)"*
- *"Libros En Espanol." [Books in Spanish]*
- *"Library of 'things' - seeds, equipment, tools"*
- *"More books from black authors"*

Programming (n = 110). Many patrons noted that they wished there were more events or programs for certain age groups like children up to middle school aged and older. Some asked for programming and classes for adults and seniors, particularly technology training. Others suggested additional ways to improve accessibility through programs like bookmobiles.

- *"I wish there was bookmobile services that could pick up and drop off books. I don't have a car, so my ability to visit is based on how the weather is and how urgent my needs are."*
- *"bring tech [] program back program for over age 60 to participate in a program like tech [] to have internet access at home."*
- *"more Art STEM events for school age kids. Reading group for school age kids. The reading group can share, reading books together."*

Hours and Policies (n = 72). Patrons called for additional hours or more consistent hours. Some also asked for leniency with fines and fees and more flexibility to check out books as non-county residents, or for others.

- *"Hours are confusing/limited wish it could be open more (I understand staffing/\$ issues, but this is such a valuable resource)"*
- *"Additional hours on the weekends & more evening hours"*
- *"Maybe the ability for parent to check out kids books w/o their library card."*
- *"As a WA Cty resident, but feel closer to this library, I wish I could have a library pass here."*

Quiet areas, study rooms, and other space concerns (n = 56). Patrons described a desire for adjustments to the physical space, especially increased availability of quiet spaces, whether through increased access to study rooms, designated quiet areas, or adding policies around cell phone use and talking. Some also described wanting adjustments to tables and seating.

- *"A better reading environment. Often it's noisy with teenagers acting up and people on cell phones"*
- *"more work spaces so I could sit in the library for extended periods of work."*
- *"perhaps a kids area where noise doesn't reach others."*

Technology (n = 23). Mentions of technology included a desire for more and newer computers or equipment like keyboards and graphic cards, updated technology like the ability to scan a library barcode to sign in, or additional software. Some respondents noted that allowing more time on computers would be helpful.

- *"Newer computers. Larger screens, bring back extra time on computers if time allows."*

Coffee Shop (n = 27). At some locations, patrons lamented the loss of a coffee shop, and others expressed a desire for the ability to get coffee at the library.

Community and Library Information (n = 12). Patrons asked for more or improved communication from the library about community events. Some also wished for more accessibility or ease of use from the library website.

- *"Maybe it does already, but info about local things to do. Events with local leaders, entrepreneurs, etc."*
- *"Community calendar? Events going on nearby"*
- *"A web site that is easier to navigate."*

Staff (n = 5). A number of respondents said they wished for a more diverse staff, and, in a few cases, friendlier staff.

- *"More black and brown employees. (Somali too)"*
- *"Diverse Employees"*
- *"friendlier staff. sometimes staff are not always welcoming"*

Other (n = 34). Many respondents used the section on *What I wish this library could offer me* to ask that the library continue to provide existing services. A few responses mentioned providing food and snacks, and bags to carry books in. Others took the opportunity to highlight how much they enjoyed the library or staff without specific wishes or suggestions.

What I love about this library.

Patrons expressed a strong love of the library branch at which they took the survey. In particular, they noted the physical space, including the layout and cleanliness. Many patrons also expressed appreciation for friendly and helpful staff. Respondents also appreciated the materials, especially the selection and variety. Many respondents noted the importance of the library's location, the library's online system for holds, and the ability to check out books through interlibrary loan. A number also mentioned programming, including the activities and toys available in the children's area. Patrons also highlighted the welcoming atmosphere, access to technology resources, and the evening and weekend hours.

Physical space (n = 290). Across branches, patrons described a strong affection for the physical space of the libraries. They highlighted the children's areas, lighting, architecture, and cleanliness. Patrons also noted the convenient organization of materials, the setup of displays, and accessibility.

- *"Handicapped parking close to door"*
- *"Physically - it is ample but not overwhelming in size. Bright... Easy to navigate - sections well marked."*
- *"I appreciate the varied seating options, love the large windows and natural light, and like that the space is always neat and clean :) I also think it's great that we have space dedicated to teens as well the versatile programming space."*

Staff and service (n = 219). Patrons highlighted the friendliness and helpfulness of staff. In particular, the staff's ability to provide technical assistance, and to recognize when they need help. Many respondents also appreciated that staff recognize and know them when they visit the library.

- *"I love the people. I love that they recognize me & my kids."*
- *"The staff are friendly, helpful and very approachable."*
- *"The staff! So helpful; answer questions + recognize when someone could use help."*

Collection and materials (n = 212). Patrons highlighted the variety and availability of physical and digital materials.

- *"excellent selection in all materials, selection is in good condition and good order"*
- *"Wide selection of DVDs and fiction books... many copies of new and popular titles."*
- *"Extensive and current catalogue of books across all genres of fiction & non-fiction & current events."*

Location (n = 130). Proximity to home was central to many of the comments in this section. Many mentioned the ability to walk or bike. That it was close to shopping was also important.

- *"It's close to our house, we love the location!"*
- *"Just 2 miles from my home. I can bicycle if I wish to."*
- *"Walking distance from home."*

Processes for checkouts and holds (n = 85). The ability to place holds and make requests across the library system was an important feature of the library noted by patrons.

- *"being able to borrow from all the branches & pick up locally - seems pretty easy to get ILLs if Ramsey Cty doesn't have an item"*

- *"Can request a book/ movie online. Usually short wait."*
- *"ILL access to books and music is unparalleled."*

Programming (n = 74). Patrons noted that they appreciated the children's area, particularly the activities and toys available. Patrons also noted story times, craft and STEM kits, and the summer reading program as highlights of the library's offerings. Some also mentioned adult programs and events.

- *"I come with my kids (ages 2&4) for all the great children's amenities, activities, and offerings - exploratory play, books, DVDs for the long car rides, storytime, etc. "*
- *"Since 1975 and with children ... take part in your annual summer reading program. Your "kick-offs" have been fabulous! I appreciate the weekly young adults ... to help me with computer 'stuff' that I struggle with."*

Welcoming atmosphere (n = 47). Patrons described a positive experience when visiting the library in terms of the welcoming atmosphere.

- *"That it is a neighborhood welcoming place for everyone"*
- *"Family friendly - Well used by community"*
- *"The atmosphere is very welcoming"*

Technology (n = 29). For some, technology resources such as computers, printing, and wifi were an important service.

- *"I do not have a home computer, so I visit the library when I need to go online."*
- *"stable and good internet connection"*
- *"I can use WIFI/computer even when library is closed"*

Hours (n = 14). While some patrons called for expanded hours of operation, there were those for whom the existing schedule worked well.

- *"Open Saturdays!"*
- *"Evening hours on M-W--"*
- *"it has flexible hours that work with my schedule."*

Other (n = 66). Some patrons also used the space under *What I love about this library* to state that they loved everything or note their affection for the community more generally.

Why I came to this Library today

Most respondents noted that they were at the library at the time of the survey to return borrowed materials, pick up holds, or browse the collection. Others reported coming to the library to use the space for other purposes like leisure or study. Many specified using the technology resources available such as printing or using the computers or wifi. Some identified a library program as their reason for visiting. Respondents also came to do work, volunteer, or for an event in a meeting room.

Collection and materials (n = 462). Patrons came to the library to check out books or other materials, whether picking up holds or browsing the physical collection or catalog. They also came to return items, and use the available reference material or newspapers.

- *"Pick up some DVD's, + check out the Japanese language section."*
- *"Pick up pre-ordered books, get reference books"*
- *"Pick up a book on hold. See what 'new selections' there were"*

Use of space for leisure, study, or purposes beyond materials (n = 100). An important reason for visiting the library for many respondents was to use the space to play or bring others to play, read, relax, or study. Some also noted the air conditioning and the temperature outside as a factor in their choice to visit the library.

- *"I came to this library because I needed a quiet place to think for a bit."*
- *"cool A/C."*
- *"Get a book for grandkids + play on rainy afternoon"*

Technology (n = 75). Use of technology was a draw for many patrons. In particular the wifi, computers, and the availability of printers. In many cases, patrons noted that these resources were not available at home.

- *"I brought my grandson... so he could practice skills on the computer he was so excited and ready to come here."*
- *"To work on the computer since I do not have one at home."*
- *"I needed to use the computer to print something I don't have a printer @ home"*

Programming (n = 45). Patrons described visiting the library to engage with children and youth programming like story times and reading programs, and also passive programming activities like toys and experiential learning in the children's area. Adult programs were also cited as a reason for visiting the library.

- *"My kids love to play with toys that are available and to do the scavenger hunt and get prizes :)"*
- *"My son is in the STEM camp (it's awesome)"*
- *"Knitting for good group"*

Job related activities (n = 16). Some patrons described using the library for jobs, business activities, or to look for work.

- *"Printout paperwork from my transporting company."*
- *"To use the computers and a pen to fill out an application for employment"*
- *"Print out a Powerpoint Presentation that I need to do for work."*

Other reasons for visiting the library. Some patrons (n = 11) noted that they came to the library to get a new library card or resolve an account issue. A number of patrons

described visiting the library to donate books or to buy books at the library bookstore (n = 10). Others were there to volunteer (n=9). A few noted using the meeting rooms for community events or other reasons (n =4). Some respondents (n = 72) also used this space to describe their reasons for choosing a particular library, citing hours of operation, proximity to home, being in the area already, or that visiting the library is part of a daily or weekly routine.

Experience at the Library. Patrons were asked whether they felt welcome at the individual library at which the survey was administered. They were also asked whether they get what they need when visiting that library, and whether they feel comfortable approaching staff at that library. The vast majority reported feeling welcome at the library, getting what they need when visiting, and feeling comfortable approaching staff.

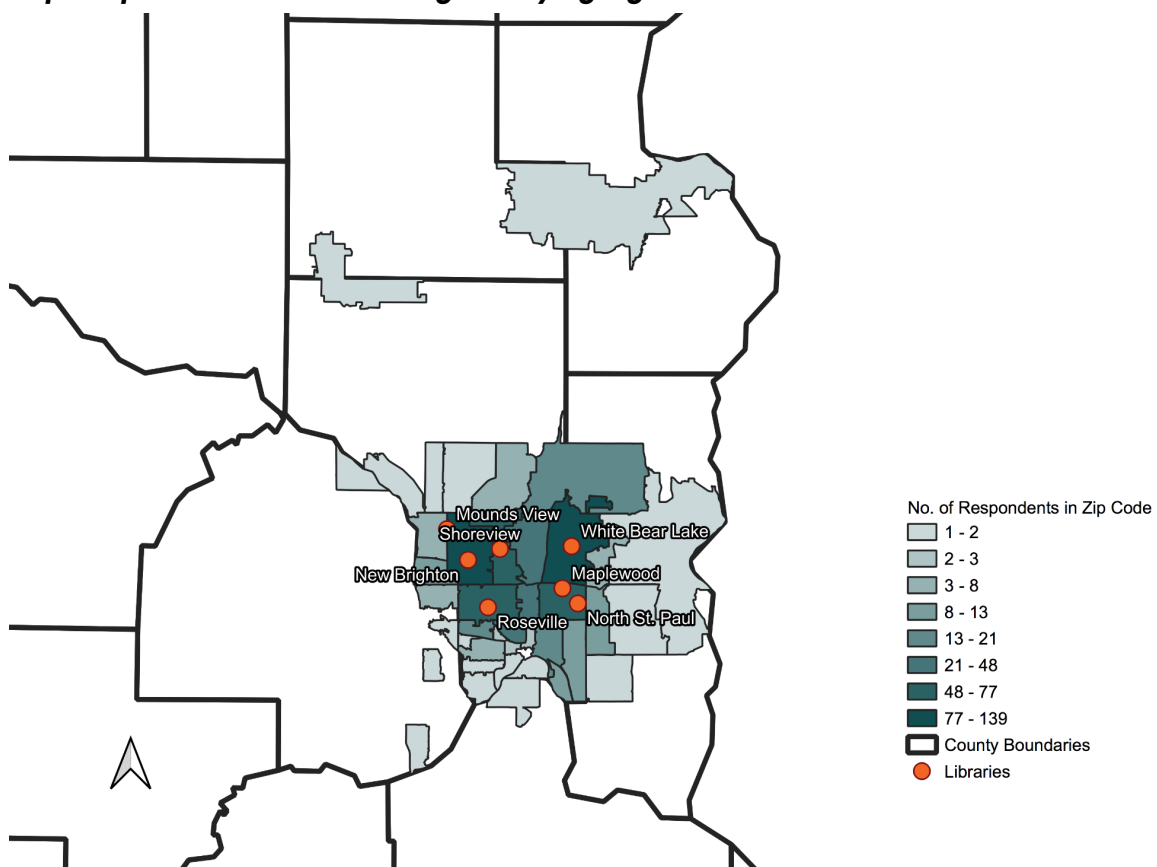
Table 2. This is How I Experience this Library

	Yes	Somewhat	No
I feel welcome at this library.	703(98%)	6(1%)	1(0%)
I get what I need when visiting this library.	656(91%)	50(7%)	1(0%)
I feel comfortable approaching staff at this library.	690(96%)	18(3%)	1(0%)

Appendix:

Patrons were asked to write in the zip code at which they currently live or stay. The following map visualizes the number of respondents from each zip code. 7 responses could not be geocoded, including one that stated "car" and another "car or hotels". One respondent wrote a zip code in northern Minnesota's St. Louis County which is not included in the map.

Map 1. Zip Code Where I am living or Staying Right Now



Tables 3-5 show the number of times each theme appeared for each open-ended prompt.

Table 3.

What I wish this library could offer me		
Theme	No. of responses that mention this theme.	Percentage of responses that mention this theme.
Collection and materials	154	21%
Nothing	115	16%
Programming	110	15%
Quiet areas, study rooms, and other space concerns	56	8%
Hours	52	7%
Coffee Shop	27	4%
Technology	23	3%
Policies	20	3%
Community and Library Information	12	2%
Recommendations	10	1%
Employees	5	1%
Passes to museums	4	1%
Other	34	5%

Table 4.

What I love about this library		
Theme	No. of responses that mention this theme.	Percentage of responses that mention this theme.
Physical space	290	40%
Staff and service	219	31%
Collection and materials	212	30%
Location	130	18%
Processes for checkouts and holds	85	12%
Programming	74	10%
Welcoming atmosphere	47	7%
Technology	29	4%
Hours	14	2%
Other	66	9%

Table 5.

Why I came to this library today		
Theme	No. of responses that mention this theme.	Percentage of responses that mention this theme.
Collection and materials	462	64%
Use of space for leisure, study, or purposes beyond materials	100	14%
Technology	75	10%
Programming	45	6%
Job related activities	16	2%
Library card or account questions	11	2%
Volunteer	9	1%
Donate or buy	10	1%
Use for non-library gathering	4	1%
Other	72	10%

We want to hear from you!

Ramsey County Library is developing a new strategic plan and invites you to use this form to anonymously share your feedback.

What I wish this library could offer me

What I love about this library

This is why I came to this library today

About Me

My age

My Race/Ethnicity

Zip code where I am living or staying right now

How many times I came to this library in the past 12 months

This is how I experience this library:

	Yes	Somewhat	No
I feel welcome at this library.			
I get what I need when visiting this library.			
I feel comfortable approaching staff at this library.			

North St.Paul

Today's date

Please feel free to continue your responses on the back and return this survey to library staff when you are finished.

Memorandum



To: Pang Yang, Jeff Eide, Erica Redden,
Sida Ly-Xiong, and Grace Atkins
Ramsey County Library Strategic Planning Project Team

From: Max Davis, Carlos Gallego, Sandy Donovan, and Stella SiWan Zimmerman
ACET, Inc.

Date: June 3, 2022

Re: Ramsey County Library (RCL) Staff Focus Group Findings

As part of their process of crafting a new strategic plan, Ramsey County Library (RCL) contracted with ACET, Inc. to facilitate focus groups with library staff and supervisors. Participants were asked to discuss their work, their perceptions of the library's role in the community, and their ideas for RCL's future. Seven focus groups were conducted between April 18 and 28, 2022. They included:

- Five in-person meetings with a total of 49 staff representing seven library branches;
- One online Zoom meeting with 14 supervisors; and
- One online zoom meeting with 5 staff of color.

Overall, staff described pride in working for the library and in the services that the library provides to the community. They also identified several areas of challenge and provided suggestions for how they hope RCL will grow over the next five years.

Areas of pride and success. Staff described their work with pride and shared that they had made the choice to work for the library because they had valued the library as a place of refuge and and/or a stable presence in their lives (particularly those who said they grew up in poverty). Others related anecdotes of times when they knew they had made a difference in the lives of community members. They also identified ways in which they feel RCL adds value to its community:

- **Meeting community members where they are.** Staff described how fulfilling it was to have community members come in and be able to ask for assistance, whether it's for finding books or information, or connecting with other community resources. As one

staff shared, *"I think we all take great pride in being a source of information and assistance to community members—when we look something up for them, go in the back to find a resource for them, or just letting them know about other resources."* Another staff added, *"We strive always to be able to find something that meets the needs of people who come in."*

- **Computer access.** Providing community members with computer, internet, or printing access as well as general information technology (IT) assistance was the most-cited positive connection the library makes with the community. This included circumstances where, *"... their printer broke down and they need something for the next day and they come in and it's a real service to the community to have a place to come and get some help with whatever they need to do."* Another staff shared, *"I really find the availability of any computer help at all is really good. And I think people who come in and get computer help certainly are growing trust in the library."*
- **Welcoming and available spaces.** Staff also mentioned the value of being able to provide meeting spaces for formal or informal community groups, and said that not being able to provide this service was one of the big losses during the pandemic. As one staff recalled, *"I know there are people who first came to the library because they came to a scheduled event or discussion, and then they learn what else we have to offer. It's a great service to be able to offer that space for important community connections."* Another staff shared, *"We can be the place that offers any group a place to meet. Groups that can't afford to find anywhere else, groups that feel they're not welcome anywhere else."*
- **School visits.** Staff mentioned that the outreach visits to schools were a particularly impactful program, and said that they have often had students bring their parents to the library for the first time after a school visit.
 - **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) activities such as Maker's Space.** Staff said that Maker's Space was the most popular feature offered at their branch.
 - **Homework help.** Staff said that homework help was the most frequently received request. They also reported that even in branches where homework help was offered, it was limited by staffing shortages and that community members wanted more. As one staff member explained, *"There's so much demand for homework help I wish we could offer it every day—but of course we don't have the staff or the resources."*
 - **Storytimes.** Staff also reported that Storytimes were one of the most-attended events at many branches, and they noted their importance for both families with small children as well as for community members with disabilities (and their families). As one staff shared, *"It's great to be able to offer something where adults who have disabilities can feel welcome as well."*

- **Collections.** Staff noted that having varied and current collections was at the heart of the library's mission. One staff said that RCL had *"a collection to be proud of."* Others noted that the Inter-library Loan (ILL) system provided a great service to community members who can't make it to larger branches. As one staff member put it, *"Sometimes we forget that books and learning are really a central service that the library does. We do computer and tech help and that's super important, and we can partner and do social services, but I do think that the books and the lifelong learning is what we specialize in."*
- **Other resources.** Staff mentioned resources including state park passes, museum and other cultural space passes, cards and stickers for kids, translation services (though limited), and multimedia resources.

Areas of challenge and suggestions for improvement. Staff identified many areas of challenge for RCL as a whole or their branches specifically and focused on the mission of connecting with community members. Several of these areas were directly related to programming that staff felt were already working well—they noted that popular offerings were limited due to a lack of resources. Discussions included the following topics:

- **Marketing and outreach.** Staff described a need for increased marketing and outreach efforts, both to reach new communities and to explain more about available resources to existing users. The idea of reaching immigrant and other underserved communities was a common theme, and suggestions included having more outreach staff who could attend community gatherings, utilizing social media and other forms of advertising, and thinking *"outside the box"* about other venues such as bus banners or YouTube videos. Staff noted that the RCL newsletter was not successful in helping them reach the community, in part because the article submission dates were so far in advance and also due to limitations on personalizing information to specific branches. Quotes to illustrate this need included:
 - *"We need to communicate who we are and what we do. Some communities don't know what we offer."*
 - *"Going into the communities, talking to individuals who are not traditional or non-users of libraries."*
 - *"I know for a fact that a lot of people that have recently migrated to this community really aren't aware that libraries do so many different things other than you can borrow a book. So I think for sure, advertising, you can borrow a book, but you can also have all of these other things that we have recently added throughout the years really helps."*
- **Overlap with county services.** Staff members noted that the overlap with county services can be confusing, for both staff and community members. Some said that when the county resource centers were co-located within some branches, there was a lack of clarity about how the two would co-exist. They described incidents when

community members were told to “go to the library” for certain assistance, but the assistance was actually available via the county resource center, which had different hours than the library (and in some cases did not have a phone number for community members to reach them). Other examples mentioned included additional training on mental health to better serve clients. Other staff said that they recognized great community need, but were not themselves equipped to act as social workers, so they wanted a better process for referrals. Related quotes included:

- *“Connecting with existing Ramsey County resources is important for communities—but it’s not always easy for them to do or for us to help with.”*
- *“Community members come here wanting access to the WorkForce centers, the court, human services, and law enforcement.”*
- *“Staff as social workers is not realistic, or answering types of questions that we, as library staff, are not equipped to handle.”*
- **Offering more virtual and offsite programming.** Staff noted that virtual services became popular during the pandemic and they recognized that they were an important tool for reaching community members who could not otherwise access library services. Suggestions for offsite programming included bookmobiles, pop-up story times, expanding school visits, and attending multicultural community festivals. As one staff member shared, *“Book mobile or something that is readily available and equipped to go into communities and actually provide the services and the resources.”* Another staff offered, *“When you can have a pop-up storytime or something and it’s in the community center where the families already feel comfortable coming, then you can introduce them to the idea of the library and what it has to offer.”* Another staff mentioned that some in-person services to check-out were underutilized.
- **Expanding student assistance.** Staff reported that homework help was not offered as frequently as community members would like. Staff also offered suggestions for additional student assistance—especially for teenagers—including college and testing preparation assistance, formal tutoring, more frequent homework help, and study rooms. One noted the limitation of offering *“homework help only on Monday nights, and every week someone asks for a different night. Parents also see private tutors helping other students and ask if we have tutors.”* Another staff added reaching out to youth as *“a big priority—we can do it by offering more services like college prep, help with life skills, employment help, resources for transitioning to adult.”*
- **Offering more language assistance and translated materials.** Staff discussed how providing more signage and printed material in more languages would help new residents feel more comfortable using the library. As an example, *“Individuals are coming into the library maybe for the first time and they’re not seeing either anyone who looks like them or anything that they can read and understand immediately, it’s off-putting, it’s not a welcoming environment.”* Another staff said, *“We had quite a few*

people who were fairly new immigrants and they wanted to use the library. And we didn't have any system to explain things. It was clear for me that they just didn't understand how the library works. People that would bring their books back really late and they didn't understand about the borrowing and bringing it back on time. And they didn't understand the system, and then they weren't able to utilize the system the way they could have."

- **Increasing Internet access and tech support.** Staff identified Internet access as a big community need that the library could fill. Staff noted a high demand among patrons for checking out hot spots but faced limited availability and complex requirements. Others said that when they offered limited tech support to clients, they were overwhelmed with requests for more detailed assistance. While many staff members agreed that it was not the library's role to provide in-depth tech assistance, they also brainstormed ideas for how they could better meet those needs, including hosting community events focused on technology or offering more targeted one-on-one assistance at specific times. As one staff explained, *"I can't tell you the number of times I've arrived at the library and seen cars outside, pulled up close to try to access the Internet. Sometimes it's children, sometimes it's their parents who need it."* Another experience included, *"I have people bringing in the computers, their laptops, their printers, asking for help or how to get them working."*
- **Coffee shop.** Staff members identified a co-located coffee shop on their list of how they would like to see their branch change in the next five years.
- **Increased staff and hours.** Staff noted that budget cuts have led to decreased opening hours and a shortage of staff. One group discussed how current staff was not adequate to meet demand and another noted that they hoped RCL would "add staff before adding services" and "restore hours and balance the budget in a different way."
- **Charging to check out some books.** Staff mentioned that charging even a small amount to check out some items was an equity issue and also defied patron expectations that library books are free to borrow.

Personnel issues. While outside the scope of this analysis, many staff members discussed personnel issues that frustrate them. These included:

- Need for higher wages;
- Desire for improved benefits including more paid time off;
- Pay inequities among branch staff as well as between RCL staff and staff of neighboring systems;
- Desire for more autonomy;
- Desire for more voice in decision-making at both the branch and system level; and
- Desire for more recognition of staff skills.

Focus Group Script - RCL Branch Staff

Hi everyone! My name is [insert name]. Thank you for being here with me to talk about your work at the library. I also would like to introduce my colleague [insert name] who will be helping with note-taking and keeping us on track with time. We are with a company called ACET, who has been contracted to help design a new strategic plan for Ramsey County Library.

I am going to be asking about your work in general, the library's role in the community, and the future course that you would like to see Ramsey County Library taking. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. Even though we are taking notes, we will not use your name or tell anyone what you said specifically. We are going to record this session to better transcribe your feedback. Does anyone have any questions before we start? [pause]. Ok, we will start the recording now.

Opening Questions

- 1. Can we go around and have each of you please tell us your name, position, and what is your favorite fruit?*
- 2. What first drew you to working in a library?*

Core Questions

- 3. What are you proud of in the work that you do at the library?*
 - a. [probe] Can you relate a time you had a really positive impact on a patron?*
- 4. How has the nature of your work changed over the course of your employment at RCL?*
- 5. Can you share a time that you felt your suggestions were really listened to by the library administration?*
- 6. In pairs, I would like you to take 5 minutes to discuss and jot down some notes on how you imagine the role of the library in this community changing in the next five years?*
 - a. [probe] What areas of service do you hope the library will grow into or add?*
 - b. [probe] What areas of service do you hope the library will avoid or eliminate?*
 - c. [probe] How would you like the library to be more present in the community?*
- 7. How do you connect residents to the library who might not find it on their own?*
 - a. [probe] How can Ramsey County Library support you in making these connections?*
 - b. [probe] What can RCL do more to better reach underserved communities?*
- 8. What do you think Ramsey County Library should prioritize when planning its future direction?*
 - a. [probe] How can Ramsey County Library gain and grow trust in the community?*
 - b. [probe] How can Ramsey County Library better support its staff in the work of engaging the community?*
- 9. Take the next five minutes to consider the three-part Ramsey County Library mission to "CONNECT community, INSPIRE curiosity, CULTIVATE learning", [Co-facilitator puts up three large white sheets of poster paper.] What comes to mind for each of these? Write down anything you think of on a post-it note. This could be any elements*

of your work or future work that fit in these three areas, and put your note up on the corresponding poster.

Concluding Question

10. Is there anything else you think would be helpful to consider as Ramsey County Library works on its strategic plan?

Thank you all so much! That is all of our questions, feel free to come up and look at what others wrote and posted.

Focus Group Script - RCL Staff of Color - Online

Hi everyone! My name is [insert name]. Thank you for being here with me to talk about your work at the library. I also would like to introduce my colleague [insert name] who will be helping with note-taking, time-keeping, and technical assistance. We are with a company called ACET, who has been contracted to help design a new strategic plan for Ramsey County Library.

I am going to be asking about your work in general, the library's role in the community, and the future course that you would like to see Ramsey County Library take. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. Even though we are taking notes, we will not use your name or tell anyone what you said specifically. We are going to record this session to better transcribe your feedback. Does anyone have any questions before we start? [pause]. Ok, we will start the recording now.

Opening Questions

- 1. Can we go around and have each of you please tell us your name, position, and what is your favorite fruit?*
- 2. What first drew you to working in a library?*

Core Questions

- 3. What are you proud of in the work that you do at the library?*
 - a. [probe] Can you relate a time you had a really positive impact on a patron?*
- 4. How has the nature of your work changed over the course of your employment at RCL?*
- 5. Can you share a time that you felt your suggestions were really listened to by the library administration?*
 - a. [probe] In what ways does Ramsey County Library succeed at listening to staff of color?*
- 6. In breakout rooms of two people, I would like you to take 5 minutes to discuss and jot down some notes on how you imagine your library's role in the community changing in the next five years. Please consider the following questions as you discuss [Paste three probes into chat window]:*
 - a. [probe] What areas of service do you hope the library will grow into or add?*
 - b. [probe] What areas of service do you hope the library will avoid or eliminate?*
 - c. [probe] How would you like the library to be more present in the community?**Now will someone from each pair please share with the group what you discussed?*
- 7. How do you connect residents to the library who might not find it on their own?*
 - a. [probe] How can Ramsey County Library support you in making these connections?*
 - b. [probe] What can RCL do more to better reach underserved communities?*
- 8. What do you think Ramsey County Library should prioritize when planning its future direction?*
 - a. [probe] How can Ramsey County Library gain and grow trust in the community?*

- b. *[probe] How can Ramsey County Library better support its staff of color in the work of engaging the community?*
9. *Take the next five minutes to consider the three-part Ramsey County Library mission to “CONNECT community, INSPIRE curiosity, CULTIVATE learning”. What comes to mind for each of these? This could be any elements of your work or future work that fit in these three areas, write it into the chat or add a digital note to the digital whiteboard.*

Would anyone like to comment on what they wrote?

Concluding Question

10. *Is there anything else you think would be helpful to consider as Ramsey County Library works on its strategic plan?*

Thank you all so much! That is all of our questions.

Memorandum



To: Pang Yang, Jeff Eide, Erica Redden,
Sida Ly-Xiong, and Grace Atkins
Ramsey County Library Strategic Planning Project Team

From: Max Davis, Carlos Gallego, Sandy Donovan, and Stella SiWan Zimmerman
ACET, Inc.

Date: August 2, 2022

Re: Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees Survey Findings

ACET, Inc. facilitated an online survey for board members of the Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries to provide feedback to help inform the library system's three-year strategic plan. In all, nine members of the nonprofit organization's board of trustees participated in the survey in June 2022. They responded to seven open-ended questions about their experiences working with Ramsey County Libraries (RCL), Areas of potential growth for RCL, RCL's Partnerships, and the future of financial support for RCL.

Overall, board members described taking great pride in being involved with RCL. They also indicated they were proud of RCL's community connections, the inclusivity and diversity of resources, and the dedication of the staff. They agreed that RCL should continue to focus on reaching diverse clients such as older adults, new immigrants, LGBTQIA+, and BIPOC, and suggested expanding services, especially those outside the library. They also identified marketing initiatives and partner opportunities to provide continued support to RCL.

Areas of pride and success. Board members provided many examples of what they love about working with RCL, and what they appreciate about the library system and its resources. These included:

- **Connections with local communities.** Board members described the sense of connection with the broader community as one of their most-loved aspects of the libraries. One noted, *"I like the events that help build community and the technology resources that help provide access for those who can't afford the technology or who face barriers in making the best use of technology. I appreciate that the Library is a safe, welcoming space for those who need a quiet place to study or relax."* One noted,

"As a frequent Library user, of course I appreciate the collections. However, the sense of community through various clubs and Library spaces – and the programming available to both education and entertain all ages and members of our community is equally important." Another commented on the events and other programming that draw in community members: *"I love the events and I love looking at the calendar and knowing about all of the things happening at the library. I LOVED the story times when my children were little."*

- **Inclusiveness and diversity of resources.** Board members appreciated RCL's commitment to serving diverse community members with resources and services. One said, *"I love . . . how resources and opportunities are made available to everyone and everyone is encouraged to participate."* Another noted that *"The Library is a hub serving so many purposes, and is open to ALL."* While another described, *"I love that there's something for every segment of the community, from kids to elders, from new immigrants to the homeless."* Another described being "amazed" at the variety of offerings: *"They provide resources for people on so many socio-economic, psycho-graphic levels. It amazes me the variety of offerings. The most moving event I attended was a Naturalization Ceremony at Shoreview."*
- **Dedication of library staff.** Several members mentioned the dedication of the library staff to their work and to *"the people who use the libraries"*. One noted, *"All of the RCL staff are so helpful and willing to help us with whatever we are doing. We sometimes interrupt them with in their jobs but they are always so generous with their time and information to help."* Another described how the library staff was instrumental in re-imagining services during the pandemic: *"In particular during the pandemic the library flexed and formed to deliver support to the community. Needs varied and there was no 'playbook' for these times. I was very proud to see the creativity in figuring out solutions to needs as they unfolded."*

Areas of growth potential. When asked about areas that RCL could grow in, members focused primarily on the ideas of reaching diverse communities and increasing accessibility for all community members. As one member noted, *"Accessibility will always be one of the biggest challenges for a brick and mortar institution – I'm interested in creative ways to continue providing collections and programming to everyone within the RCL geography."* Members also offered several specific suggestions:

- **Continue to reach diverse communities such as new immigrants, LGBTQIA+, and BIPOC.** Survey respondents identified these communities as important future clients for RCL. One suggested *"Surveying what these new/growing/evolving audiences need and how they want to be served"* and mentioned the potential for *"Library help pages/pamphlets and check-out kiosks in languages other than English (including Hmong, Somali, Karen, and Spanish)."* Another suggested continuing to focus on DEI initiatives within the community.

- **Continue to reach older adults.** Board members also identified older adults as important RCL clients. As one said, *"More and more there are elderly apartments, living facilities with citizens who could benefit from the library...how to serve this group?"* One suggested *"partnering with organizations like historical societies to create check-out memory portfolios or presentations for elders to reminisce and connect past with present."* And another said, *"I hope the Library will add more programs for adults - maybe a game night, film night, or trivia event, poetry reading, author talks, etc. I am glad to see the Library is starting to permit adults to use the maker equipment."*
- **Provide services outside the library buildings.** One member suggested *"Maybe finding a way to bring library resources/programs to community/local places where people are most comfortable."* One specifically suggested taking Maker Spaces and DIY workshops "on the road." Another said they loved the idea of a Book Mobile and another suggested more local events. As one summarized, *"The flexibility to deliver technology, collections and programming outside of the brick and mortar will continue to be something that maintains RCL leadership in the community - and will probably also drive higher participation rates at the traditional libraries through building awareness of what we offer."*

When asked about services that could be eliminated, most members said they could not think of any. However, one mentioned wanting to ensure RCL avoided any *"politicization of library services such as book banning."* Another said, *"There seems to be a lot of programming for families with young children, to the exclusion of other demographics."*

Increasing community presence. Friends members also expanded on their ideas for growing RCL's reach in the communities. Suggestions included:

- **Pop-up services.** Mobile libraries were raised by respondents as a method of getting RCL out into the community more; one said the vehicles could attend events such as Rosefest, Little Canada Days, and Slice of Shoreview. One clarified: *"The ability to 'pop up' around Ramsey County - for example, at festivals w/ family programming, Ralph Reeder food shelf and job fairs w/ resume and other related assistance, senior housing with technology classes and other programming, ECFE sites with programming and collections - to me the list could go on and on."*
- **Marketing initiatives.** Board members identified marketing strategies that they felt could increase RCL's reach in the community. One suggested email reminders for events. Another suggested attending community events to explain or with the goal of explaining what the library has to offer. Another suggested a specific *"marketing initiative to all K-12 schools in our library communities."*

Partnerships and financial support. Friends board members also had several suggestions for expanding partnership opportunities and for future financial support.

- **Partner opportunities.** As one member described, *"I believe the Friends is uniquely situated to partner with RCL to continue to expand partnerships with businesses, civic groups and more. This is an area I would love to see us explore further in the years to come."* Other members identified several potential partnerships including local schools and school districts, Lions clubs, Rotary clubs, the MN Horticultural Society, and Ramsey County Master Gardeners.
- **Future funding opportunities.** When asked about potential changes to RCL financial support, respondents offered suggestions for increasing membership and patronage of the Friends nonprofit. They noted that this would in turn benefit the RCL system. As one noted, *"Continued awareness campaigns about Friends membership, Legacy Circle, fundraisers and the benefits of these (ie. publicity for programs, collections, etc supported by these efforts) should help us help you. We are all in this together, and the partnership we've developed over the years is strong. Let's continue to grow this and build awareness of the Friends w/ patrons and local businesses and civic groups in order to continue growing financial support!"* Specific suggestions for increasing financial support included:
 - *"Work with the Friends to create a clear and consistent plan to publicize the Friends sponsorship. There have been gains made in the Explore newsletter that does a pretty good job of noting Friends support for programming, also some library staff have been helpful in noting support from the Friends – Judy Woodward has been good at stating Friends support before/after events."*
 - *"Look for state and federal grant opportunities (e.g., Legacy and IMLS) as well as from private foundations and non-profits to support proof-of-concept pilots for new programs and services that can then be leveraged into requests for increased budget lines."*
 - *"The County has to reinforce the value of the library the community and increase use of tax revenue, rather than relying on finding a few wealthy patrons to make donations."*

Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries - Survey of Board Members

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts in this survey of board members of the Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries. Ramsey County Library has contracted ACET, Inc. to help design a new three-year strategic plan. Your answers to the following questions will not be shared with Ramsey County Library, and any quotes from your responses used to illustrate themes will not be attributed to you.

1. What do you love about working with Ramsey County Library as a member of the Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries?
2. What do you love about the resources offered to the community by Ramsey County Library?
3. What areas of service or programming do you hope Ramsey County Library will grow into or add in the future?
4. What areas of service or programming do you hope Ramsey County Library will avoid or eliminate?
5. How would you like Ramsey County Library to be more present in the community?
6. Are there partnerships with certain organizations or community groups you would like to see?
7. Are there any changes you would encourage Ramsey County Library to make in how it grows its financial support system in the next three years?

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey! If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Max Davis (max@acetinc.com).

Memorandum



To: Pang Yang, Jeff Eide, Erica Redden,
Sida Ly-Xiong, and Grace Atkins
Ramsey County Library Strategic Planning Project Team

From: Max Davis, Carlos Gallego, Sandy Donovan, and Stella SiWan Zimmerman
ACET, Inc.

Date: August 8, 2022

Re: Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees Survey Findings

As part of their process of crafting a new three-year strategic plan, Ramsey County Library (RCL) contracted with ACET, Inc. to survey members of the RCL Board of Trustees. Trustees were asked to discuss strengths and weaknesses, their perceptions of the library's role in the community, and their hopes for RCL's future.

The online survey included a series of open-ended questions and was available to trustees from June 16-30, 2022. All six current trustees responded.

Trustees described areas of service where the library succeeds, plays an appropriate role in the community, or is otherwise on the right track. At the same time, trustees took the opportunity to share examples of areas where the library can improve or better refine its role in the context of Ramsey County.

Areas of strength and success. In their responses, trustees emphasized how accessible the library is, the way it offers the community opportunities for lifelong learning, the strong community focus, and the wide variety of services provided by RCL.

- **Providing accessible resources.** Trustees stressed that Ramsey County Library does critical work in providing free and universal access to learning, resources, and physical space. One trustee noted the important role that libraries have in "*democratizing information*". Several trustees highlighted the value of providing **access to resources and information**. As one respondent wrote, "*the role of the library is to be a trusted resource for anyone and everyone.*" Another noted that the role of libraries is to "*provide free resources to all residents regardless of income (unlike many other govt*

services).” Another trustee described the library as an *“‘opportunity institution’ for people: in danger of being left behind, in need of help to navigate complex world, driven for self-improvement.”* Others highlighted the value of providing **access to physical space**. One trustee described a Ramsey County Library as “one of the few places where you can see so diverse people regularly gathering (vs community events) just to do their own thing. These informal, regular interactions help people normalize ‘how to be part of community’.”

- **Serving as a welcoming, safe community hub.** Trustees identified a strong **community focus** that they feel Ramsey County Library has and should continue to build on. One described RCL’s strength as providing *“Brave and safe places for people to connect.”* Another noted, *“RCL is seen as a resource and welcoming place for families of all income levels, ethnicities and educational backgrounds.”* Several trustees agreed that **serving diverse community members** is central to the library’s mission, and in particular identified the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, and the LGBTQIA+ community as high priorities. Some indicated that they feel the library already does a good job of prioritizing diverse communities and should continue to do so, while others noted they were less clear on how the library currently prioritizes those communities. Another trustee highlighted the importance of the highly local community: *“We are at our best when we combine a highly local focus responsive to our sub-communities. . . supported by the resources and leadership of the county network.”* Other trustees commented on the importance of partnerships and the role of the library in connecting county government to local communities. *“As a govt agency, the role of libraries is to connect to community and community services.”*
- **Offering a variety of resources.** Trustees also stressed the importance of the variety of approaches and resources offered by RCL. When asked to name the strengths of Ramsey County Library, one trustee wrote: *“the libraries provide a wide range of services and opportunities to Ramsey County citizens and communities.”* One respondent summarized the importance of variety in this way: *“We have many ways of making meaningful connections across ages, incomes, cultures, languages. We respect there are many ways of learning, living and being and grow to meet varying needs (youth and adult makers, taking services/resources to correctional facilities, adjusting to virtual, classes, and more).”*

Areas of challenge and suggestions for improvement. Trustees identified several challenges arising from the complexity of aiming to provide a broad range of services to the diverse communities of Ramsey County. Among specific suggestions and calls to build on what is currently successful, trustees raised questions about how to permanently and meaningfully extend accessibility, how to better define the library’s relationship with Ramsey County as a

whole, and how to monitor and measure the work the library does in a way that can be understood and shared.

- **Access limitations.** While trustees highlighted that accessibility of information and gathering spaces is a strength of the library system, they raised the concern that accessibility would be more meaningful if outreach and communication were done in a way that better accounts for the diverse communities in Ramsey County. One trustee wrote that *"RCL (and the county overall) should work more cohesively and consistently to be adding multi-lingual and language specific programming as an accessibility requirement...if we don't intentionally include, we unintentionally exclude these communities"*. Another trustee noted other community-specific barriers to access, *"it is frustrating that many digital resources for the Queer and Allied community are blocked! This lack of digital resources can send a mixed message to the patron - am I welcome or not?"*
- **Communicating value to communities.** Trustees pointed out that there is room to improve communication about what the library has to offer. *"...unless you're already pretty familiar with the libraries and what they have to offer, it's probably difficult for the average citizen to know what services, resources, and spaces are available to them through the libraries."* Another trustee posited that RCL does not *"communicate our value and services well enough to the taxpayers."* This concern applied to individual residents, but trustees also included missed opportunities with community organizations. As one trustee conveyed, *"orgs want to partner with the libraries -although it is not always clear how or who to connect with beyond library-sponsored programming."* Trustees recognized that communication and outreach strategies affect accessibility. One trustee asked: *"Is there a way you can better reach new residents who may not know to seek out library resources, services, and spaces?"* According to trustees, while services are accessible, no cost, and everyone is welcome to them, the current state of outreach and communication is such that some are better positioned to make use of the library.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.** Trustees noted areas for improvement related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As one trustee wrote, *"RCL needs to be a safe and welcoming place for the most marginalized groups."* Respondents offered several suggestions for creating the type of welcoming environment that they highlighted as critical. One noted, *"We need to increase the consistency and frequency of highlighting diverse content in our programming and collection across all branches and library staff. We need to foster staff of color into leadership positions and be more attentive to recruiting and retaining staff of color."* Improving collections to reach a more diverse audience was a recurring theme, as was staffing, raised by a trustee in this way: *"I think we need more staff that reflects the community that it serves... If you had more diversity, it would allow for real understanding of other*

cultures instead of just talking about diversity at a training session.” Another trustee described this issue in terms of RCL’s place in county government: “While community partnerships and racial equity continues to be a priority for Trustees, it’s unclear how county depts view or utilize RCL’s strengths in this area. At times, it feels that RCL’s emphasis on racial equity is overlooked by our county service team/county leadership, and equity is more a talking point than a resourced, actionable priority.”

- **Relationship with the County.** Trustees identified the relationship between the library and the county as needing work. As one trustee stated, *“There is room to improve the Trustee/Ramsey County management relationship.”* Trustees examined the library’s position as a county entity, and the challenges and opportunities that come with that role. One trustee acknowledged this as a *“balancing act between the local and the whole; And it’s not just the county library centralized leadership and the local branches (which seems to be going well!), but the library system and the broader Ramsey County structure.”* When asked about the library’s weaknesses, one trustee wrote: *“A public library can be a starting point for residents to access county services; is that true of this library system?”* Trustees emphasized that library work should be better integrated with other county departments and other service providers outside of the county, *“Collaboration allows us to focus on our core offerings and drop less effective stuff while directing using to alternative (and better) sources for assistance.”* Speaking about the community relationship-building role of libraries and how it should be reciprocated by the county, one trustee wrote: *“This relationship building role is an asset to other county departments and govt agencies, but other agencies also have a role in building and maintaining those relationships.”*
- **Opportunities for Collaboration.** When asked to comment on which of the Ramsey County strategic priorities the library could help advance. Trustees used the opportunity to call for more collaboration. *“I would love to see Trustees intentionally invited or included on Countywide initiatives,”* one wrote. *“It would be great to connect with other boards, committees and task forces.”* Acknowledging that the role of the library is to be a part of the work that the county does, a trustee wrote, *“I think the libraries already do advance Ramsey County’s strategic plan. I think the libraries just need to better align their terminology with the county’s when highlighting library work that supports the county’s strategic priorities.”*
- **Methods of monitoring.** Trustees acknowledged their inability to fully comment on some of the questions or suggest a path forward. They cited deference to library staff, but also called for monitoring to better understand the library’s impact in various areas. When asked to discuss areas of service to avoid or eliminate, one said: *“Difficult to answer as Trustees have not received data tying costs, space, and staff hours of program/services to the amount of usage they get.”* Trustees also acknowledged that improved monitoring could be a path to improved communication and outreach.

Appendix: Survey questions and complete responses. Note: not all questions were responded to by all respondents.

1. What strengths does Ramsey County Library bring to the community?
<p>Brave and safe places for people to connect with each other, connect with groups, vote, learn, and more.</p>
<p>Staff are knowledgeable, welcoming, and partner well with patrons, other departments, and Trustees.</p>
<p>We have many ways of making meaningful connections across ages, incomes, cultures, languages.</p>
<p>We respect there are many ways of learning, living and being and grow to meet varying needs (youth and adult makers, taking services/resources to correctional facilities, adjusting to virtual, classes, and more).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- open access to our shared culture, history and knowledge regardless of ability to pay- "opportunity institution" for people: in danger of being left behind, in need of help to navigate complex world, driven for self-improvement- tie together multiple organizations/departments via partnerships so each does its part of the job a little better
<p>We are at our best when we combine a highly local focus responsive to our sub-communities -- the different villages and towns within our area, the communities within each town -- supported by the resources and leadership of the county network.</p>
<p>As a space, the libraries provide one of the few indoor places in Ramsey County that don't require inhabitants to purchase something. As a resource, the libraries provide a wide range of services and opportunities to Ramsey County citizens and communities.</p>
<p>RCL is seen as a resource and welcoming place for families of all income levels, ethnicities and educational backgrounds. The diversity of patrons at Roseville and Maplewood (maybe other branches) is heartening to see - its one of the few places where you can see so diverse people regularly gathering (vs community events) just to do their own thing. These informal, regular interactions help people normalize "how to be part of community" without directly saying "remember: diversity is a good thing- you should be more tolerant, etc" The library does this by setting the welcoming tone/environment and in its policies and practices of inclusion with patrons, and the diverse content we choose to highlight in our programming, public spaces/art/signage, collection, and staff (although staff diversity is an area we need to work on).</p>

AVAILABILITY. ACCESS.

2. What are some weaknesses or shortcomings of Ramsey County Library?

There is room to improve the Trustee/Ramsey County management relationship.

While staff has created a safe and brave space for all, including Queer folks and Queer allies, it is frustrating that many digital resources for the Queer and Allied community are blocked! This lack of digital resources can send a mixed message to the patron - am I welcome or not? Are you here to help me or not?

- don't communicate our value and services well enough to the taxpayers
- too many offerings for public to understand or for us to excel at
- not all facilities integrated well into their immediate neighborhoods (trails, targeted communications, etc.)
- not vital enough to our communities yet (should be swamped such that hours must expand)

It's a balancing act between the local and the whole; when either aspect gets out of alignment, that's when we struggle. And it's not just the county library centralized leadership and the local branches (which seems to be going well!), but the library system and the broader Ramsey County structure. Still, I think weaknesses are relatively minimal.

A public library can be a starting point for residents to access county services; is that true of this library system? Also, unless you're already pretty familiar with the libraries and what they have to offer, it's probably difficult for the average citizen to know what services, resources, and spaces are available to them through the libraries.

Not all branches foster a welcoming environment all the time... We need to increase the consistency and frequency of highlighting diverse content in our programming and collection across all branches and library staff. We need to foster staff of color into leadership positions and be more attentive to recruiting and retaining staff of color.

RCL is seen as a leader/champion in the county on racial equity and orgs want to partner with the libraries -although it is not always clear how or who to connect with beyond library-sponsored programming. While community partnerships and racial equity continues to be a priority for Trustees, it's unclear how county depts view or utilize RCL's strengths in this area. At times, it feels that RCL's emphasis on racial equity is overlooked by our county service team/county leadership, and equity is more a talking point than a resourced, actionable priority. for example, the Trustee board composition is less diverse now (Trustee

appointments are made by commissioners and with less involvement from Trustees in the selection/outreach process.)

Staff. I think we need more staff that reflects the community that it servers. If you had more diversity, it would allow for real understanding of other cultures instead of just talking about diversity at a training session.

3. What do you see as the role of libraries in the community?

The library system is the places and people who cultivate and co-create safe and brave spaces where diverse individuals, groups, and communities can gather, learn, and grow to be their best with the supports needed to help them create the lives and communities they deserve.

collaborating with multiple organizations, governments, and departments to provide services citizens need in a stigma-free community center.

Collaboration allows us to focus on our core offerings and drop les effective stuff while directing using to alternative (and better) sources for assistance. it is a benefit of being stigma-free!

Libraries are a hub for knowledge of all kind, including that critical shared knowledge within and between groups of a wide variety of sorts. Information is sorted and organized and provided in ways that people can access it as easily as possible, with "access" construed in a number of different ways. Democratizing information; providing infrastructure for ideas and connection.

I think the strategic priorities from the previous round of strategic planning summarize well what I think the role of libraries in Ramsey County is and should continue to be:

- Facilitate access by removing barriers.
- Foster literacy and lifelong learning.
- Maximize learning and exploration through dynamic use of technology, library space and community space.
- Work proactively with partners to support community well-being.

For patrons, the role of the library is to be a trusted resource for anyone and everyone - which means RCL should foster relationships with communities not currently utilizing those

resources. We are an access point to information and resources, especially for resources people didn't know about or know how to get what they needed.

As a govt agency, the role of libraries is to connect to community and community services and provide free resources to all residents regardless of income (unlike many other govt services). RCL is a front line to residents of all incomes – not just when they "need services" or have leisure time to read/browse. This relationship building role is an asset to other county departments and govt agencies, but other agencies also have a role in building and maintaining those relationships.

A place of learning. A place where you can go to find information. A place where you can go to feel and be safe. It is a place where community can gather. A fun place to bring your children. A place you can go and relax without the hassle of someone telling you to get out and go somewhere else.

4. What areas of service do you hope Ramsey County Library will grow into or add?

Make sure our systems (such as IT, digital access etc.) are truly available to staff and community such as unblocking digital resources for the Queer and Allied community.

- invest hard in pre- and elementary school ages to start them well
- upgrade facilities and grounds to be more inviting and devote floor space to those services highest in demand
- enhanced collaboration with school districts and cities

That's less clear to me, but there's always room to bring the library out of the building and into the community (digitally or in person), and more ways to bring new and diverse members of our communities into the building.

I see the digital divide and lack of access to technology training as a pressing issue in Ramsey County. I know the libraries are doing great work with providing access to technology and supporting individuals in their tech use, and I hope the libraries will continue to grow in this area. I believe tech access and support is important for all communities in Ramsey County.

expand multi-lingual and language-specific programming;
increase partnerships with community programs/groups so RCL is seen as a point of entry into community and community-building opportunities like volunteering, neighborhood

groups, clubs, social groups, meet ups, etc (so residents can "check out their community" like checking out a book)

more library-sponsored community gatherings/events that engage/facilitate community conversations (not just featured speakers/presenters);

creating and facilitating co-learning opportunities and environments - so we are a place of learning and we inspire - in addition to offering traditional library resources

I know we as a county are trying to bring services out into the communities, and I am not at all opposed to the idea, I just want them to be included in a way that does not diminish the libraries (will people know that this is a library or will they think it is just a service center?)

Roseville had a great coffee shop before the pandemic, it was such a nice addition, and it would be nice to offer something like a coffee at each of our libraries, with an ability to offer maybe a smaller free coffee to our homeless/poorer patrons.

5. What areas of service do you hope Ramsey County Library will avoid or eliminate?

I love all we do and am loathe to eliminate services and programs. I'd rather prioritize, the look at budget and make adjustments.

Its important to remember that budget tell the true story of what we value. Ideally values, bugets and program/service are all telling the same story.

Difficult to answer as Trustees have not received data tying costs, space, and staff hours of program/services to the amount of usage they get. I suspect teens have a plethora of competing diversions and activities that means we should invest relatively "less" than we do on younger ages, for example.

As streaming technologies have now matured, we should cease purchase of CD and DVD platforms now, signal our intentions now, liquidate the collections eventually, and recover the floor space for higher priority uses.

Unclear at this time, but there are always tradeoffs within limited resources.

Avoid a "drop in" approach: In these times of uncertainty, I hope the libraries will invest in providing more stability for library users. I hope the libraries will change the first come, first serve policy for study rooms and instead make those spaces reservable. An individual who

needs a space to do a Zoom interview for a job at a specific time can't rely on first come, first served.

By approaching library resources as "services," we reinforce the sense of govt program. RCL should not feel like a govt building or typical govt program. We need to pay attention to and avoid making programs and interactions with staff feel transactional as we increase access and self-services.

No comment

6. The Ramsey County Library Strategic Planning Team has identified the following communities as important stakeholders to consider when developing the new Ramsey County Library Strategic Plan. Please describe how you hope Ramsey County Library will prioritize outreach and engagement with the following communities in Ramsey County and use the space provided to explain your reasoning.

6a. Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people.

Priority: High, to help corrections staff order materials with their collection budgets. High to augment their collections with weekly RCL staff and portable collections.

Formerly incarcerated: Low priority given their access to other re-entry services provided by others. We should continue to provide digital access, job search help, and regular reference assistance.

I am not going to weigh marginalized groups against each other; instead, I would like more information on the extent to which we are serving which groups and the current Ramsey County areas of greatest need.

Not sure what else could be done but it sounds like the libraries are already starting to do good work in this area through their outreach librarians.

This is a population that most needs library resources, other services, particularly connection to community. This is a high priority to expand existing services and to co-create targeted services to this population.

From what I know is being done, I would hope that this program will continue and do more outreach to those formally incarcerated, become integrated back into society with help finding jobs and housing.

6b. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

Because of the pervasiveness of Racism, BIPOC, Indigenous and POC are the HIGHEST Priority. When data is disaggregated by race in most instances, BIPOC, Indigenous and POC are disproportionately disadvantaged by systems that actively work to marginalize them. Examples from this list include housing instability, disability, educational outcomes for children and youth, employment, income, people for whom English is not their first language.

Priority: Medium, continue efforts to have staff and Trustees eventually mirror community demographics while expanding collection and programming now with a similar goal. No big deal--just making inclusion our business as usual.

I am not going to weigh marginalized groups against each other; instead, I would like more information on the extent to which we are serving which groups and the current Ramsey County areas of greatest need.

Greater visibility Black, Indigenous, and People of Color collections and communities. Increased programming and resources around opportunities for equity. Libraries can serve as a starting point to access county services.

I think we probably do a good job here but do not measure or promote our successes in this area enough.

When we talk about BIPOC communities, my frustration is always looking at each individual BIPOC community with a homogenist lens. There is no one group of Black people, just like there is no one group of Asian or Indigenous group that represents ALL in that community! Or the fact that the Hispanic community while standing alone, could also have Black Hispanics or Asian Hispanics. . . .When you start talking about reaching out to BIPOC communities, please, please, PLEASE be specific as to whom you are planing to reach out to and remember, no one group represent All Groups in that community. Having staff or even volunteers from as many racial groups as possible always helps with your thinking when talking about out reach.

6c. People who experience housing instability and homelessness.

Priority: Low, other organization/departments are on the front line of dealing with this vexing problem. We should collaborate and ask what these organization need from us. We should ask them which organizations we should be referring people to.

I am not going to weigh marginalized groups against each other; instead, I would like more information on the extent to which we are serving which groups and the current Ramsey County areas of greatest need.

Not sure. What is the county doing in this area and how can the libraries support them?

homelessness is an area that RCL should partner closely with other agencies to provide onsite navigators and health advocates

This is one of those areas that I think having a housing specialist located in the library would be beneficial. Families as well as individuals struggling with housing instability need to know there is somewhere or someone who has information about housing opportunities in the city, who can connect them to services close by would be fantastic.

6d. People with ability and mobility challenges.

Priority: Medium, continue our mailing service and look for ways to enhance ADA compliance as we undertake renovations of buildings and grounds.

I am not going to weigh marginalized groups against each other; instead, I would like more information on the extent to which we are serving which groups and the current Ramsey County areas of greatest need.

Not sure.

No comment

6e. People with transportation limitations.

Priority: Low, continue our mailing service, walking path linkages to branches, and ample bike racks in visible locations. Other providers address mobility such as Metro transit, Metro Mobility, Lyft.

I am not going to weigh marginalized groups against each other; instead, I would like more information on the extent to which we are serving which groups and the current Ramsey County areas of greatest need.

Not sure

RCL should coordinate book mobile stops with mobile groceries.
RCL should look into partnerships for direct delivery lending with programs like meals on wheels, homevisiting, and block nurse-type programs.

No comment

6f. Youth and young adults.

I don't know as Trustees have not seen data about this. Having said that...

This is an area where it APPEARS we spend a lot of money and floor space to attract relatively few users. If attracting few is 'normal' for the industry then maybe invest less or market it better. Or refer teens to other providers who are having success.

I am not going to weigh marginalized groups against each other; instead, I would like more information on the extent to which we are serving which groups and the current Ramsey County areas of greatest need.

Not sure.

I think we do a good job here.

I think above anything, we should do better partnering with our school district. I am not sure what we do now other than the Kindergarten Round-up (which is very important), but not sure what else we do. Maybe there is a lot going on, that I just not aware of.

6g. Families.

Not sure what you mean here--this is not the same as pre-K or senior citizens...

IF you mean programming for mutiple age audiences I give it a low priority. We're more into assistance tailored for the specific patron rather than multi-age entertainment.

I am not going to weigh marginalized groups against each other; instead, I would like more information on the extent to which we are serving which groups and the current Ramsey County areas of greatest need.

Not sure.

I think we do a good job here.

No comment

6h. People experiencing poverty.

Priority: Low, we should continue free access to materials, programs, and computers; continue without fines; and continue with job search assistance. Other organizations are on front lines of this problem and we should collaborate with them to so together we serve this community most efficiently and better.

I am not going to weigh marginalized groups against each other; instead, I would like more information on the extent to which we are serving which groups and the current Ramsey County areas of greatest need.

Not sure. What is the county doing in this area and how can the libraries support them?

No comment

6i. The LGBTQIA+ community.

HIGH - Bullying and suicide rates are higher for Queer youth.

Priority: Medium, I sense we should do a spike of additions to our collection, then settle into a regular level of additions to the collections and programming. No big deal--just making inclusion our business as usual.

I am not going to weigh marginalized groups against each other; instead, I would like more information on the extent to which we are serving which groups and the current Ramsey County areas of greatest need.

Greater visibility of LGBTQIA+ collections and community.

this community is largely invisible at RCL – RCL needs to be a safe and welcoming place for the most marginalized groups, and this is one of them.

When we talk about community outreach either in white communities or when talking about people of color, this should be the umbrella over each community outreach program. People are not either or, sometimes they are many intersecting things and if we don't know "how" to talk/reach out to the Queer community, we just don't and act like they don't exist. Umbrella.

6j. People for whom English is not a first language.

Priority: High, all branches should have access to teletranslators for a finite number of languages (Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Karen??).

We should also confer with ESL community coordinators in these languages for their help in purchasing the most effective materials that will assist patrons.

I am not going to weigh marginalized groups against each other; instead, I would like more information on the extent to which we are serving which groups and the current Ramsey County areas of greatest need.

When possible, hiring librarians and staff with language skills. Libraries can serve as a starting point to access county services.

Expanding our collection in other languages feels like an easy and underused way to reach these communities.

RCL (and the county overall) should work more cohesively and consistently to be adding multi-lingual and language specific programming as an accessibility requirement... what county resources are we not tapping into and/or should advocate for? eg we should be consistently offering and providing ASL interpreters and other translators as be a normal part of our programming – if we don't intentionally include, we unintentionally exclude these communities

I am sure we can do better here, but we have been making good concerted efforts in this regard. My hope is that you have asked the people for whom this is an issue to get some real feedback on how the library is doing.

6k. Other communities that Ramsey County Library should better engage.

Taxpayers Priority: High, we need to communicate our value and cost-effectiveness to the communities. Failure to do so leaves us vulnerable to those who would mount a coordinated single-issue misinformation campaign to demean for ulterior reasons.

Newcomers. Is there a way you can better reach new residents who may not know to seek out library resources, services, and spaces?

employees – particularly BIPOC staff within the libraries and across the county. We also need to do a better job creating a sense of wholeness across the libraries instead of branches. I think this can encourage staff to connect to patrons to other resources and support staff to develop leadership and career paths in public service (not just library services).

I just worry about how you become everything to everyone when your mission is pretty clear.

7. What are specific ways individual trustees or the Library Board as a whole can support the new RCL strategic plan?

Understand the new strategic plan and be available to have conversations about it with community members. Be a good liaison and builder of connections.

Fully understand and fulfil our role as Trustees in the planning and implementation process.

Support the Library Director and staff.

Model the values in our actions and behavior.

1. shape it in 2022 with our and stakeholder input
2. understand the tradeoffs we make (not everything can be a priority)
3. adopt it when we are happy with it
4. expect ED to keep schedule and provide context for workplan decisions
5. champion the system now and look to the horizon (more than this month)

I would like trustees to take responsibility for liaising with specific branches, getting to know the staff there as trustees, and hearing from them about how they'd like the board to better serve and support them.

I would like the libraries to take the lead on the strategic plan. I think the librarians, staff, and administrators have the most expertise on the communities they serve. I believe the Library should draft their own strategic plan, and the board can provide some feedback in an advisory capacity.

I hope to see more intentional trustee and community engagement related to the large donation to one of branches... curious what and how the strategic plan will address or impact this. It feels like a test/benchmark of how we think of the whole system vs branches. eg demographic and economic trends that impact Moundsvie are the same trends that impact Shoreview and North St. Paul.

No comment

8. Which priorities from the Ramsey County strategic plan can the Ramsey County Library help advance? How?

While the Library system and help advance every Ramsey County strategy, the Library System is especially poised to advance these strategies:

Resilience: Building Capacity to Respond, Adapt and Thrive Under Changing Conditions
Residents First: Effective, Efficient and Accessible Operations
Advancing Racial and Health Equity and Shared Community Power
Aligning Justice System Outcomes with Community Values
Advancing a Holistic Approach to Strengthen Families
Stability Starts with a Place to Call Home
Talent Attraction, Retention and Promotion

The Library System can advance these strategies by:

- Consistently bridging from our intentions about valuing equity & inclusion into actions and behaviors
 - Invite and welcome feedback, stories, and input AND responding in a timely manner
 - Make adaptations as needed nimbly in response to changes in environment (such as COVID)
 - Create a culture of innovation and continuous improvement
- Leading by example

Pretty much all. See above.

Along with advancing equity by making sure that all communities find themselves represented in the library, with programming designed to reach across identities and

connect people, the library is a place that models resilience and adaptability. Its response to the pandemic, shifting from an in-person to a more remote model, is a clear example of this.

I think the libraries already do advance Ramsey County's strategic plan. I think the libraries just need to better align their terminology with the county's when highlighting library work that supports the county's strategic priorities.

I would love to see Trustees intentionally invited or included on Countywide initiatives. It would be great to connect with other boards, committees and task forces, eg Transforming systems together, Maplewood properties site planning, Ramsey connected (because our digital services are growing but not keeping pace with community demand)

Not sure at all. To answer this question fully, would take a new survey broken down into the specific areas.

Electronic Survey for Trustees of Ramsey County Library

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts. Please do not include your name in any responses below.

1. What strengths does Ramsey County Library bring to the community?
2. What are some weaknesses or shortcomings of Ramsey County Library?
3. What do you see as the role of libraries in the community?
4. What areas of service do you hope Ramsey County Library will grow into or add?
5. What areas of service do you hope Ramsey County Library will avoid or eliminate?
6. The Ramsey County Library Strategic Planning Team has identified the following communities as important stakeholders to consider when developing the new Ramsey County Library Strategic Plan. Please describe how you hope Ramsey County Library will prioritize outreach and engagement with the following communities in Ramsey County and use the space provided to explain your reasoning.

a. Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people.	
b. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)	
c. People who experience housing instability and homelessness.	
d. People with ability and mobility challenges.	
e. People with transportation limitations.	

f. Youth and young adults.	
g. Families.	
h. People experiencing poverty.	
i. The LGBTQIA+ community.	
j. People for whom English is not a first language.	
k. Other communities that Ramsey County Library should better engage.	

7. What are specific ways individual trustees or the Library Board as a whole can support the new RCL strategic plan?
8. Which priorities from the Ramsey County strategic plan can the Ramsey County Library help advance? How? (A list of the Ramsey County strategic priorities can be found here: <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/projects-initiatives/strategic-priorities-vibrant-community#:~:text=The%202020%20Strategic%20Plan%20is,into%20service%20teams%20in%202015.>)

Closing page: Thank you for your input in the development of the Ramsey County Library Strategic Plan.

Priority A: **Extending our welcome**

Commitment

We strive to be a welcoming resource for all community members.

Rationale

This priority highlights a commitment to extending the sense of welcome to all Ramsey County residents, especially those from historically underserved communities.

Sample Quotes

“We can be that place that offers any group a place to meet.” Staff

“If I come in and I want a certain book..I want to be welcomed. I want to feel like I’m a part of the community.” Community member

Does this priority resonate with you? Why or why not?

Priority B: Promoting our value and commitment

Commitment

We are deliberate about communicating our value and commitment to all community members.

Rationale

Some community members may be unaware of the variety of resources the library offers. This priority is about ensuring that all community members know what the library has to offer them.

Sample Quotes

“I feel like if you advertise more, people will know... Not a lot of us know what the library can offer...”
Community member

“programming outside of the brick and mortar will... drive higher participation rates at the... libraries.” **Friends of RCL**

Does this priority resonate with you? Why or why not?

Priority C: Programs that connect to community

Commitment

We create programs that bring people to the library and bring the library to the community.

Rationale

Many existing library programs are indispensable. This priority is about making the kind of programming that works for some work for everyone. Whether building on existing programs, or taking the library into new communities.

Sample Quotes

“I wish there was bookmobile services that could pick up and drop off books.” Patron

“...work more cohesively and consistently to be adding multilingual and language specific programming as an accessibility requirement” Trustee

Does this priority resonate with you? Why or why not?

Priority D: Access to information and learning

Commitment

We offer a physical and virtual place for people to learn, work, and play.

Rationale

Access to information is critical to community members. This priority is about pushing through geographic, linguistic, cultural, and digital literacy barriers.

Sample Quotes

“I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve arrived at the library and seen cars out front... to access the Internet.” Staff

“The Library is a hub serving so many purposes, and is open to ALL” Friends of RCL

Does this priority resonate with you? Why or why not?

Priority E: Inclusive and exciting resources

Commitment

We amplify diverse voices in our resources and collections.

Rationale

Stakeholders want to ensure that, moving forward, the collection draws in and meets the needs of all community members in terms of language, accessibility, age, and interests.

Sample Quotes

“There’s something for every segment of the community, from kids to elders, from new immigrants to the homeless”
Friends of RCL

“[Wish] Some cultural classes for the kids in our community.” Patron

Does this priority resonate with you? Why or why not?

Priority F: Growing community partnerships

Commitment

We aim to create and maintain strong partnerships with other community services and organizations.

Rationale

The library is a part of a thriving local community. Organizations want to collaborate with the library, and the library values partnerships. This priority is about learning from current collaborations, and reaching out to nurture new ones.

Sample Quotes

“orgs want to partner with the libraries –although it is not always clear how...” Trustee

“I would totally welcome some partnerships from the Ramsey County Library... I think there's a lot of opportunity.” Community member

Does this priority resonate with you? Why or why not?

Priority G: Empowering staff

Commitment

Our staff are empowered to represent and serve the diverse communities of Ramsey County.

Rationale

RCL staff are the key to unlocking resources and answers. It is through staff that RCL offers its variety of resources and services. This priority is about tapping into and supporting staff to serve the diverse communities of Ramsey County.

Sample Quotes

“I think we need more staff that reflects the community that it serves...” **Trustee**

“I think it’s important to make sure that staff have diversity and equity training. . . especially with disability training.” **Community member**

Does this priority resonate with you? Why or why not?

Priority H: At one with Ramsey County

Commitment

We work together to better and more efficiently serve all community members.

Rationale

For some, the library is the first and perhaps the only access point to the county. This priority is about clarifying the library's role in the county and minimizing overlap while maximizing satisfaction for people seeking services.

Sample Quotes

“Connecting with existing Ramsey County resources is important... but it's not always easy for them to do or for us to help with.” Staff

“A public library can be a starting point for residents to access county services; is that true of this library system?” Trustee

Does this priority resonate with you? Why or why not?

Appendix B: Quotes illustrating strategic priorities.

"We can be that place that offers any group a place to meet." **Staff**

"If I come in and I want a certain book...I want to be welcomed. I want to feel like I'm a part of the community." **Community member**

"I feel like if you advertise more, people will know... Not a lot of us know what the library can offer..." **Community member**

"programming outside of the brick and mortar will... drive higher participation rates at the... libraries." **Friends of RCL**

"I love the people. I love that they recognize me & my kids." **Library Patron**

"I wish there was bookmobile services that could pick up and drop off books. I don't have a car, so my ability to visit is based on how the weather is and how urgent my needs are." **Patron**

"unless you're already pretty familiar with the libraries and what they have to offer, it's probably difficult for the average citizen to know what services, resources, and spaces are available to them through the libraries."

Trustee

"Not a lot of us know what the library can offer, unless we actually go to it." **Community Member**

"...work more cohesively and consistently to be adding multilingual and language specific programming as an accessibility requirement...if we don't intentionally include, we unintentionally exclude these communities" **Trustee**

"I can't tell you the number of times I've arrived at the library and seen cars out front... to access the Internet." **Staff**

"The Library is a hub serving so many purposes, and is open to ALL" **Friends of RCL**

"[Wish] More black and brown employees. (Somali too)" **Patron**

"There's something for every segment of the community, from kids to elders, from new immigrants to the homeless" **Friends of RCL**

"[Wish] Some cultural classes for the kids in our community." **Patron**

"orgs want to partner with the libraries -although it is not always clear how..."
Trustee

"The staff! So helpful; answer questions + recognize when someone could use help." **Patron**

"I would totally welcome some partnerships from the Ramsey County Library... I think there's a lot of opportunity." **Community member**

"[Wish] more LGBTQ+ comic books." **Patron**

"[Wish] more bilingual books (spanish)" **Patron**

"[Wish] More books from black authors" **Patron**

"I think we need more staff that reflects the community that it serves..."
Trustee

"I think it's important to make sure that staff have diversity and equity training. . . especially with disability training." **Community member**

Ramsey County Library Board Update December 2022

Friends 2022 Grant Acceptance

Karen Saltis, the former Interim Library Director, discovered that the Ramsey County Library Board could only accept gifts up to \$5,000 and that any gifts in excess of \$5,000 would have to be approved by the County Board of Commissioners. The Friends Annual Grant to the Ramsey County Library exceeds this threshold, so the Friends Executive Committee has been meeting with Ramsey County Officials since August to address this issue. The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners accepted a Request for Board Action (RBA) on November 15, 2022 and the 2022 Ramsey County Library Friends Annual Grant of \$130,000 was received by the Ramsey County Library on November 18, 2022.

Friends Fundraising

We participated in the Give to the Max, statewide day of fundraising on November 17, 2022. We received 53 donations totaling \$4,353 and a Golden Ticket of \$500.

The Friends year-end fundraising consists of two initiatives: sending a letter to a purchased list from our service area with the following criteria: income, age, charitable giving and interest in books/reading and a second letter to current and lapsed Friends members. The Friends Board of Directors generously provided a \$9,500 matching grant opportunity to support the year-end appeal letters. In December, year-end appeal letters were sent to both lists.

The Friends are planning a fundraising breakfast in April of 2023 .

Maplewood and Shoreview Book Sales

The Maplewood Book Store volunteers held a one-day book sale on November 16, 2022 and raised \$270. The Shoreview Book Store volunteer team held a two-day book sale on December 3rd and 4th, 2022 with sales of \$3,500. We are very appreciative of the time and effort the Friends book store volunteers give to make these book sales successful.

Friends Strategic Plan 2023-2026

The Friends will be developing their strategic plan for 2023-2026 after reviewing the Ramsey County Library's finalized strategic plan.

Friends Used Bookstore and Book Carts

We are accepting gently used donations of books and media at our Roseville and Shoreview locations only. The Maplewood book store has been closed due to the Maplewood Library renovation.

Request for Library Board Action

Meeting Date
December 14, 2022

Action Requested
Review and Discuss

Presented By
Johanna Berg,
Deputy County Manager

SUBJECT:

Performance Measures.

BACKGROUND:

This second year of Ramsey County's two-year budget process focuses on performance metrics.

Three tiers of performance measures were developed across the organization that measure progress at the countywide, service team and department levels. This work includes ensuring that all 3 levels of measurement are interwoven into the organization's culture so that performance measurement goes well beyond the budget season. This is an intentional approach to heighten our accountability to our residents by measuring performance continually and with greater transparency to all who have a vested interest in the progress of our organization and community.

In September 2022, EGCI service team performance measures were presented to the County Board. In October 2022, Library Department performance measures were presented to a joint meeting of the Library Board and County Board.

In November 2022, the Library Board discussed the Library Department performance measures reported in the October joint meeting as well as the reports currently provided to the Library Board. The ToP Focused Conversation Planning Sheet and staff notes from that discussion follow.

In preparation for the December meeting discussion, Trustees are asked to:

- Review the notes and identify anything missing or misstated
- Identify your 2 highest priorities to advance

The outcome of the discussion will be to identify areas of traction where the 2022 Library Board recommends staff focus attention, and where they do not, moving forward. This information will be cross-walked to the Library Strategic Plan Potential Success Measures as an updated portfolio of performance measure reporting to the Library Board and the broader community is developed.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

To review the notes from the ToP conversation and identify the 2 highest priorities to advance.



ToP FOCUSED CONVERSATION Planning Sheet

CONVERSATION TOPIC: RCL PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
RATIONAL AIM: TRUSTEES WEIGH IN ON MEANINGFUL PERFORMANCE MEASURES	EXPERIENTIAL AIM: SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MEASURES MATTER AND HOW TO USE DATA TO MAKE GAINS IN IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES
<p>OPENING: At the 10/25 joint mtg, the top tier measures were shared with Trustees, Commissioners and County managers. Given anticipated approval of a new strategic plan to guide our work, it's important for us to have a conversation on what are the most important things to measure and monitor so that we can successfully accomplish our goals.</p> <p>The Executive Committee's consensus is that we focus on a limited number of KEY metrics that are both Quantitative (numbers) and Qualitative (what's the impact). We also want to continue to build alignment with the County's desire to move from staff-driven to resident-driven measures.</p> <p>How will Trustees know about how the activities and usage and efficacy of library program offerings and facilities?</p>	
OBJECTIVE: "FACTS" & INFORMATION	As you reflect on the various reports
REFLECTIVE: PERSONAL REACTIONS, INTERNAL RESPONSES, FEELINGS & ASSOCIATIONS ABOUT "FACTS"	Related to your role as a Trustee: -What are the most useful reports, metrics and measures? -What reports, metrics, measures and reports do not add value that can be skipped?
INTERPRETIVE: MEANING, VALUES, SIGNIFICANCE & IMPLICATIONS	How well do the current reports help you to understand the impact libraries and programs are having on patrons? -What's missing, that if it were present, would give you the information you need?
DECISIONAL: RESOLUTION, CONSENSUS, DECISIONS & FUTURE ACTIONS	-What changes do you recommend to reports, metrics and measures?

Here's what typically what Trustees receive related to reports:

-Trustees are updated each month on Library activities, attendance, incident reports etc.

-Each Branch also reports to Trustees annually with data about physical facility, day & hours open, # of computers, size of collection, staff/volunteers, circulation, reference, # computer hours used, wireless users, annual visits, program attendance (children and adults)

-Annually Library as a County Department reports jointly to the County Commissioners and Trustees

November 2022 Library Board ToP Focused Conversation Notes

Overarching Comments:

- Keep “to what end” in the forefront of thinking: what is the ultimate goal for each measure
- Drop most quarterly reports to the Library Board that aren’t budget-related; annual reporting preferred
- Verbal reports that provide context/color are more valuable than quarterly reports; like to hear how we’re solving problems encountered
- Incident reports are not necessary

Additional areas of interest:

- Go beyond Measure 4 (Advancing racial and health equity and shared community power- Percent of library materials purchased which were by or about people of color) and get data on programs, partnerships *and* materials purchased which were by or about people of color – more holistic approach
- Peer comparisons for key measures: county to county is very helpful
- Patron surveys
- Explore options to share and collect feedback on what patrons liked or didn’t like. Results can vary depending on the program or event the patron attended.
- Social media follower data. How are we increasing our social media presence/ how do we better interact with followers?
- Annual 3rd grade literacy data for 4 suburban Ramsey County school districts
- Better understand who we are serving /who are we reaching out to and where – look harder at our community/how to better serve
- Rolling 10-year tabulation of Ramsey County budget / inflation indexed. Helpful to see where the support comes from and/or when purchasing power is decreasing
- Program offerings by or about people of color
- Space utilization: programming vs resources
- Meeting spaces: who uses the spaces and why did they choose a library site for a meeting (e.g. on bus line or community partner?) What age group is using available spaces?
- A stronger understanding of where our outreach is will help identify areas for us to expand on
- Data on partnerships that may or may not be connected to programs
- Demographic data: who is using the library and what resources are they utilizing? (e.g. tech help, programming, safe space)
- Implement tracking to enable the Library Board to monitor that patron feedback data is consistently requested. Ramsey County’s impact/influence on other counties and vice versa

Request for Library Board Action

Meeting Date
December 14, 2022

Action Requested
Approve Schedule

Presented By
Maggie Soukup,
Library Board Coordinator

SUBJECT:

2023 Annual Schedule of Meetings

BACKGROUND:

The Ramsey County Library Board currently meets at 6:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month. Additional meetings may be scheduled on the first Wednesday of a month or any other date as necessary.

2023 Library Board

Welcome and Orientation
Workshop

January 18, 2023

TBD

Board of Trustees Meeting

February 15, 2023

Ramsey County Library, Shoreview

Board of Trustees Meeting

March 15, 2023

Ramsey County Library, Shoreview

Board of Trustees Meeting

April 19, 2023

Ramsey County Library, Shoreview

Board of Trustees Meeting

May 17, 2023

Ramsey County Library, Shoreview

Board of Trustees Meeting

June 21, 2023

Ramsey County Library, Shoreview

Board of Trustees Meeting

July 19, 2023

Ramsey County Library, Shoreview

Board of Trustees Meeting

August 16, 2023

Ramsey County Library, Shoreview

Board of Trustees Meeting

September 20, 2023

Ramsey County Library, Shoreview

Board of Trustees Meeting

October 18, 2023

Ramsey County Library, Shoreview

Board of Trustees Meeting

November 15, 2023

Ramsey County Library, Shoreview

Board of Trustees Meeting

December 13, 2023

Ramsey County Library, Shoreview

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

To approve the 2023 Annual Schedule of Library Board Meetings.