

Strategic Planning

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The Shenandoah County Library System includes the main branch located in Edinburg, Virginia, and five smaller branches that are located in the various towns throughout the county. The library serves the residents of Shenandoah County with a population of 44,000. Shenandoah County is located in the Shenandoah Valley and is a small town community with a lot of agriculture.

Moran & Morner (2017) stated that the “mission statement is a short, succinct statement focusing on the purpose of the organization, reason for existence, and what it hopes to accomplish” (p. 91). The mission statement of the Shenandoah County Library (See Appendix) does describe why the library exists with a purpose: “To enrich the quality of life in the community” (Shenandoah County Library System). It plans to achieve this “by providing residents with access to the world of ideas, information, and creative experience” (Shenandoah County Library System). The mission statement should answer who it serves (residents), what services are provided (enriching the quality of life), and how it plans to do this (providing access to the world of ideas, information, and creative experience). I do think the mission statement answers this in a very broad perspective. Public libraries mission includes “education, information, recreation and entertainment, and library’s services to emerge as a vehicle to serve a broader mission” (Moran & Morner, 2017, p. 91). This is very much true for the Shenandoah County Library’s Mission Statement. The mission statement is based on the values identified in the vision statement. (Moran & Morner, 2017).

Moran & Morner (2017) state that the vision of a library “focuses on a better future by communicating enthusiasm and excitement” (p.85). Shenandoah County Library’s Vision states

that it is “an organization that fosters lifelong habits of learning, self-improvement, and self-expression” (Shenandoah County Library), this is a very open statement that implies a better future for all patrons. The vision of a library is “aspirational and not likely to be achieved” and describes what could be in a perfect world (Moran & Morner, 2017, p. 90). I disagree with this standard regarding the Shenandoah County’s vision; it does “provide the space and resources to support the educational, informational, and recreational needs of the community” (Shenandoah County Library). This is not an unrealistic expectation of the library and it can be achievable. The vision statement for the Shenandoah County government gives a bullet point stating the following “Serves its citizens with public facilities and services that enhance their quality of life” (Shenandoah County Government). The vision statement of the library does align with the local government which is the overseeing organization that funds the library.

The Shenandoah County Library System’s 5 year plan states goals but not objectives to accomplish. Velasquez explains that objectives are “Precise statements that outline what is to be accomplished by the marketing activities” (p.130). They are measurable and should answer the what, when, where, how, and who questions of the mission statement. Moran & Morner (2017) explain that goals are “broad aspirations defined in operational terms leading to measurable objectives” (p.93). Goals need to be flexible and lead to identifying the objectives. Goals provide direction and are intended to produce effectiveness in the strategic plan of the library. In the five year plan of the Shenandoah County Library there are goals but there are no objectives. The goals give a time frame for each goal and list several actions to meet the goals but they continue to be vague in their descriptions. The plan does provide a rationale for the goals with a description of each area of the plan.

The vision and mission statements use easy to understand language and are to the point so the reader will understand that the intention of the library is to provide materials and resources that will support the patrons of Shenandoah County. I feel that the five year plan does not give a clear idea of how they plan to achieve the goals. There needs to be objectives that are measurable and the marketing plan should be included as a separate document within the plan. Currently the marketing plan is a small area to be addressed as a goal in the five year plan. As a patron or stakeholder my biggest concern is the difficulty of finding the mission and vision statement; it was stated on the 5 year plan and I had to click the Board of Director's link at the very bottom of the home page and then click another link stating the five year plan. I feel that most patrons would not be able to find it on the website due to not being stated on the home page or at least a tab to easily access it. As a future employee or stakeholder I would want more details in the plan to feel more confident that the library will make progress to accomplish its mission.

Part 2

The Shenandoah County Library is in need of and should staff a part time or full time Social Worker. This position would include a Licensed Mental Health Professional (LMHP) that could provide Mental Health Assessments and OP Counseling in addition to organizing much needed programs and/or guest speakers on topics that will aid all populations of the community. Programs such as how to sign up for Medicaid and Medicare benefits, shelters that assist domestic abuse victims or homelessness, different resources for food in the area such food pantries and churches, the various resources for the aging in the community including educating

them on scams that they are vulnerable to, programs that educate on the safety for at risk populations, mental health topics with resources, and many more. There are about three dozen public libraries across the United States that have social workers staffed in their libraries using different models to meet the needs of their community. They offer services such as referrals and assistance for housing, employment, legal support in addition to programs. One approach would be to utilize the local universities to have interns to assist in the goal to have a staff in the library (Lambert, 2022).

Staffing a social worker would be a direct reflection of the vision of the Shenandoah County Library. A social worker on staff would provide the “lifelong habits of learning, self-improvement, and self-expression” (Shenandoah County Library) with the support of their services and the staff of the library to aid in these goals on many levels. The mission statement of the library addresses the need “to enrich the quality of life in the community by providing residents with access to the world of ideas, information, and creative experience.” (Shenandoah County Library). A social worker will work with patrons to meet the overall goal of self determination which brings a quality level of life and results in better outcomes for individuals and the community as a whole. The five year plan of the Shenandoah Library currently has goals to “expand the use of its resources” and to “provide physical spaces to . . . present opportunity for community engagement” . Another goal is to “develop awareness of Library resources in the community via partnerships with the Chambers of Commerce, Schools, County Agencies and nonprofit organizations” this goal will be activated to ensure that other agencies will work together with the library to provide the much needed programs in this identified need and to ensure the success of this new program.

This program will meet the needs of every resident of the county directly or indirectly. The populations mostly impacted directly will be those in poverty, mentally ill, children, and the elderly who are all at risk in our community. The poverty level in Shenandoah County is 12.2% which is 2% higher than the state average with 18% of this group being children and about 9% being the elderly of the county. The average income is \$24,000 lower than the state average according to the 2020 U.S. Census. The rate of the population identified as having a disability is 3.5% higher in Shenandoah County than the state of Virginia with types of disabilities that could be assisted by these programs are: Cognitive difficulties 6.2%, self-care difficulties 3.7%, and independent living difficulties 7.3%. The individuals in the county without health insurance is 7.4% which is slightly higher than the state average (U.S. 2020 Census). The need for access to mental health providers is even higher and often individuals can not get access to the Community Service Board (CSB) without Medicaid or they pay out of pocket which demonstrates a barrier that the library can assist with. At this time there is a waiting list for services at the local CSB for children and many of the adult services are being dropped. “Expanding outreach and a more inclusive array of resources has become an intentional focus for libraries around the country” (Lambert).

References

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Appendix

Mission and Vision Statements for Shenandoah Library System

Mission

To enrich the quality of life in the community by providing residents with access to the world of ideas, information, and creative experience.

Vision

The Shenandoah County Library System is an organization that fosters lifelong habits of learning, self-improvement, and self-expression. All library locations provide space and resources to support the educational, informational, and recreational needs of the community.