IMAGINEIF LIBRARIES OF FLATHEAD COUNTY
STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 - 2028

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MISSION STATEMENT

ImagineIF Libraries provide educational and recreational materials, programs, and resources to promote literacy, inspire lifelong learning, and enrich the community.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Reader,

After several months of research, evaluation, and preparation, ImagineIF Libraries embarks on the exciting new journey that is mapped out in this Strategic Plan for years 2023 through 2028. Flathead County has undergone changes, including substantial growth of population. While working on this plan, I found myself contemplating how to proceed. At the heart of the matter: "What does the future of ImagineIF Libraries look like?" This document reflects much hard work from both library staff and board as well as a great amount of input received from dedicated library supporters. Their commitments reaffirm the importance of services and opportunities provided by ImagineIF Libraries for the facilitation of Flathead County's future development.

I'm extremely proud of this strategic plan. It embodies the innovative, pioneering spirit of ImagineIF Libraries that you have come to know, whilst honoring the traditional library services all of us love. Now it's time to roll up our collective sleeves and make our dream a reality.

Sincerely,
Ashley Cummins
Director, ImagineIF Libraries of Flathead County

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

As of 2023, Flathead County has a population of approximately 109,000 people. The employment rate is 61.8%, the high school drop-out rate is 4.5% and the percentage of residents living below the poverty level is 13.6%.-1 out of 3 school age students has access to the internet at home. 2% of residents in Flathead County are educating children at home. Tourism related to Glacier National Park results in between 2.7 and 3.3 million visitors to the county annually.

ImagineIF Libraries house a wide selection of approximately 105,000 books along with audio books, CDs, DVDs, eBooks, Audio mp3s, and technology items, as well as non-traditional items like telescopes and more. There are 16 computers available for patron use at our main facility in Kalispell, as well as ten in Columbia Falls and Bigfork, offering Internet access and word processing as well as a public access WIFI network. Our book collections include biographies, non-fiction, reference, Montana history, maps, microfilm, fiction, graphic novels, manga, as well as large print. Sections of the library are set aside specifically for children and teens.

The Executive Director and Executive Assistant, along with eleven library managers, 14 library advisors, eight materials handlers, a library courier, and a library janitor oversee and maintain the library facilities and serve library patrons. Five Trustees, appointed by the County Commissioners, govern the library.

CORE VALUES

Our Core Values describe how we operate at the library. In particular, our Core Values define expectations for library conduct, communication, and the quality of services that the public can expect to receive from ImagineIF Libraries of Flathead County. Moreover, our Core Values describe the organizational culture that the library will embrace throughout the implementation of this strategic plan.

- Goodwill and commitment to excellence in library service for all members of the community.
- Focus on individual growth and personal accountability for organizational outcomes.
- Having the humility, insight, and flexibility to evolve through times of change, even when it's neither easy nor expected.
- Welcoming community input while practicing fiscal responsibility with public resources.

A WELCOMING SPACE

ImagineIF Libraries provide welcoming spaces for all library users to make lasting community connections, or to sit quietly and read, as well as virtual spaces that support social connection online.

LITERACY AND LIFELONG LEARNING

ImagineIF Libraries provide resources, services and programs that foster literacy and a love of reading, encourage lifelong learning, and support the exploration of personal interests and hobbies.

CONNECTION WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY AND BEYOND

ImagineIF Libraries create opportunities for residents to connect with each other through in-person programming, community partnerships, and by offering technological resources to connect virtually.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIVITIES

FACILITIES

MAINTAIN THE CURRENT FACILITIES
- Review lease agreements for all ImagineIF Libraries facilities.
- Continually assess space allocation within each location.
- Improve signage for ease of use.
- Continually assess furniture for maintenance needs.
- Implement LED lighting.

ESTABLISH NEW FACILITIES
- Maintain a strong working relationship with Flathead County Commissioners.
- Establish mutually beneficial partnerships with local businesses and organizations in Flathead County
- Continue working with the ImagineIF Library Foundation on the Bigfork project.
- Create capital campaigns for Kalispell and Columbia Falls as time, community support, and budget allow.
- Review the history of all library facilities and related projects including past community surveys, feasibility studies, and architectural renderings.
- Update the Facilities Master Plan.
- Research alternative locations for the Kalispell and Columbia Falls locations.
- Research new revenue streams to cover the increased operating costs for the new Bigfork facility.
- Research grants and other funding opportunities for capital projects.
- Add New Facilities to the Capital Improvement Plan with Flathead County and allocate annual budget funds towards the goal of new facilities.

EXPAND SERVICE LOCATIONS IN FLATHEAD COUNTY

- Increase the number of Holds Pickup locations in Flathead County to reach residents living far away from current facilities.
- Review existing interlocal agreements for needed updates.
- Consider alternative solutions to expand services to the further reaches of Flathead County.

INCREASE SAFETY AND SECURITY
- Continually assess facilities for staff and patron safety and suggest improvements to the Board.
- Update bathroom facilities at the Kalispell branch for ADA compliance and patron safety.
- Apply for grants to fund safety and security projects.
- Create a site-specific Safety/Security Plan for each location.
- Update the existing Disaster Plan to create a site-specific plan for each location.
- Ensure that the Disaster Plan is available in print and digital format and easily accessible at all times.
- Evaluate existing contract with a security firm regularly. Make adjustments as necessary.
- Maintain a searchable incident database to allow easy identification of trespassed individuals.
- Track incident reporting to identify areas of improvement and respond proactively to developing trends.

COLLECTIONS

EXPAND CURRENT COLLECTIONS
- Analyze the strength of the library collection and identify areas for improvement.
- Evaluate library collections to ensure they support the library's mission, services, and programming.
- Continually work to increase circulation of existing library materials.
- Apply for collection development grants to supplement the library budget.
- Weed library collections annually according to library needs and best practices to maintain their vitality and relevance.
- Expand library collections for the visually impaired.
- Expand the local history collection.
- Expand the local author collection.
- Expand the local map collection.
- Expand the collection of non-traditional lending items.

PROGRAMS / OUTREACH

PROMOTE LITERACY
- Maintain and expand current early literacy programs and resources and explore partnership opportunities with other existing literacy programs in Flathead County and beyond.

IMPROVE SERVICES
- Solicit input from community members for program topics.
- Respond to demand for innovative, new library services.
- Create a comprehensive community resource guide for library users in need of community services.
- Continually evaluate library services to identify needed changes and areas for improvement.

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT

- Provide high quality programming to library users.
- Empower library users by providing access to information and resources.
- Plan library programs with a focus on fun, community connection, personal enrichment, community interest, and potential for community collaboration.
- Practice continual evaluation of library programs to identify areas for improvement.

PROVIDE OUTREACH SERVICES
- Work to identify unique audiences and those underserved by the library in the community and to bring new users into the library.
- Explore community outreach opportunities to take the library out into the community to better engage with potential library users.
- Create strategic community partnerships to expand the library's reach, resources and services.
- Practice continual evaluation of library outreach to identify areas for improvement.

IMPLEMENT A PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN
- Build strong working relationships with The ImagineIF Library Foundation, Friends of ImagineIF Library, elected officials and county management, the Montana State Library (MSL), the Montana Library Association (MLA), and local media outlets.
- Continue to work towards a strong library presence in the community.
- Develop a policy for crisis communication.
- Create a strategic marketing plan for the library.
- Update the library's merchandising guidelines.
- Continually evaluate the library's website and social media presence to identify areas for improvement and work to raise awareness of the library's resources.
- Implement regularly scheduled Public Service Announcements with local media organizations.

BOARD / STAFF DEVELOPMENT

EMPHASIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- In June, create an annual board training calendar.
- In June, create an annual staff training calendar.
- Offer staff opportunities to gain Continuing Education credits through in-service planning.
- Continue to send members of the management team through the Leadership Flathead program.
- Create an annual travel calendar prior to the completion of the library budget.

EXPAND STAFF TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE GROWING POPULATION OF FLATHEAD COUNTY
- Hire an additional Professional Librarian.
- Hire an additional Library Advisor.
- Hire two additional Material Handlers.

PRACTICE CONTINUAL EVALUATION
- Explore additional funding sources and evaluate all expenditures.
- Evaluate all existing contracts as they come up for renewal to determine if continuation is justified.
- Solicit RFPs (requests for proposal) from competing vendors and compare to current vendor pricing.

- Continually evaluate library user demographics, circulation of library materials, program attendance, to identify areas of improvement for collections, programs, and services.
- Identify current primary and secondary library stakeholders and create/ maintain a digital database.
- Perform an annual community survey, continue to offer patron comment cards and AskLib services, consider the implementation of community listening sessions to facilitate ongoing community feedback.
- In the last quarter of the calendar year, perform an annual inventory at all branches.
- In the last quarter of the calendar year, perform an annual SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis with the library management team.
- In the first quarter of the calendar year, put together an Annual Report for the Board of Trustees and the County Commissioners.
- Hold an annual Library Board retreat in April to evaluate the Strategic Plan and to identify needed updates.

TECHNOLOGY

PROMOTE DIGITAL LITERACY
- Maintain up-to-date equipment for on-site access to online resources at all branches.
- Provide technology training to patrons to encourage use of online resources.
- Maintain and support the tech connect program at all ImagineIF Libraries
- Continue to assist library users individually with their use of technology through the book a techie program

PROMOTE DIGITAL EXPERIENCES
- Provide the tools and direction for library patrons to create and share ideas and explore their passions.
- Evaluate and update library website to make library services easier to find.

PROVIDE COST EFFECTIVE ACCESS TO COMPUTER AND ELECTRONIC RESOURCES
- Continue to expand, maintain and simplify secure technological tools for use by library patrons and staff.
- Continually monitor network usage statistics to help measure success.

PROVIDE A SAFER WORKPLACE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY
- Deploy surveillance equipment to support investigations as necessary.
- Utilize the phone system to implement an emergency notification process.