

Pierce County Library System Strategic Plan 2025-2029 Development Overview



Introduction

In 2023-2024, the Pierce County Library System created a new strategic plan with input from people served by the Library System, community leaders, and staff. The Library used several tactics to engage residents and community leaders including:

- Online and print surveys in English, Spanish, Korean, and Ukrainian
- Focus group meetings with community leaders and teenagers
- Interviews with community leaders

A Project Planning Team led by Deputy Director Connie Behe with team members Customer Experience Director Alison Eckes and Marketing and Communications Director Mary Getchell developed an overarching plan to develop a new Strategic Plan. The team, along with Business and Compliance Director Cliff Jo, created a request for proposals to select a strategic planning consulting firm. Through a competitive process, the team selected Coraggio Group.

A Project Kickoff Team, with the staff who selected the consulting firm, along with Regional Services Managers Chrissy Knoelke and Steve Carmody and the consultants met and further developed the scope of work and charted the course for the project.

In total, the Library received input from nearly 3,000 people. It learned important information about the lives of Pierce County residents and the library services they value. The Library System gained an insight of what was happening in individuals' lives and their families' lives, as well as what was happening in communities throughout unincorporated Pierce County and the 15 cities and towns annexed to the Library System for service, to understand how to prioritize library services to meet community needs.

Charting the Course of the Project

The Project Kickoff Team completed the following tasks:

- Determined Planning Team members.
- Provided an overview for the project need and goals.
- Gathered big picture context for the plan to be created.

Along with these tasks, the consultants reviewed background documents and data to gain a further understanding of the Pierce County Library System and people living in its service area. Those materials included:

- 2016 Strategic Plan
- Organizational charts
- Program descriptions and performance
- Public surveys
- Community demographics
- Trends in library services and access

The Project Planning Team and consultants divided the project into three phases:

- Get Clear.
- Get Focused.
- Get Moving.

Get Clear

Needs Assessment

The Project Team worked with the consultants to develop the needs assessment for the plan and completed:

- Reviewed background data.
- Assessed the evolution of the communities the Library serves.
- Identified potential areas of exploration or need.
- Leveraged the background information and data and identified challenges, opportunities, and objectives.

Community Engagement

The primary community engagement tools included:

- One online and print survey for the public; One online survey for staff
- Six stakeholder focus groups
- Ten community leader interviews
- One all staff meeting
- Ongoing meetings with Board of Trustees

The Library System used multiple tactics to engage the community:

- Talking Points
- Internal e-newsletter
- “Cover to Cover” articles
- Web page
- Home page web content
- Flyer, poster, content ad for digital interior signs in libraries
- News release
- External e-newsletter articles
- Social media marketing posts
- Advertising in print and digital in the News Tribune
- Advertising on targeted websites
- Advertising on Pandora
- Advertising on Spanish radio
- Direct mail to all households in service area
- Content for local government and community organizations’ communications channels

Survey


Designed to learn what was happening in people’s lives and then with that input, align library services to meet those needs and interests. Survey distributed online and in print in libraries and in communities, in English, Spanish, Korean, and Ukrainian. In all 2,875 people completed the survey.

In addition, Coraggio worked with the Project Planning Team to create a staff survey. In all, 149 staff responded to the survey.

Focus Groups

Coraggio consultants conducted the focus groups, which were virtual. In total, 45 people participated.

- Government
- Nonprofits (2 sessions)
- Businesses, civic organizations
- Friends organizations and Pierce County Library Foundation
- Teenagers



What’s happening in your life?

Please complete a brief survey and share what is important to you, your family, your community.


Complete a survey at any Pierce County Library or online at mypcls.org/new-strategic-plan now through March 31, 2024.

The Pierce County Library System needs input from you and your neighbors to help the Library System develop a new strategic plan. Share what matters to you and your neighbors:

- What do you enjoy?
- What complicates your life?
- What’s important to you?
- How can the Library System be part of your life and your neighbors’ lives?

With the community’s input, the Library System will match its services to what matters in people’s lives

Thank you for sharing your interests and opinions!




Pierce County Library System
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Community Leader Interviews

Coraggio consultants conducted the individual interviews, which were virtual or phone and in 30 minute periods.

Objectives:

- Understand concerns/criticisms.
- Tap into knowledge from influential people in the community.
- Garner new perspectives.
- Gather diverse input.



All Staff meeting

The meeting solicited input from staff to develop a new vision, mission, and values.

Get Focused

Community Input Review and Plan Draft

The Project Kickoff Team determined the Core Planning Team members, with review by the Library's Administrative Team and approval by the Library's Executive Director Gretchen Caserotti:

- Katie Baker, Service Desk and System Support Supervisor
- Connie Behe, Executive Director*
- Alison Eckes, Customer Experience Director*
- Mary Getchell, Marketing and Communications Director*
- Chris Hamilton, Facilities Coordinator
- Barbara Hilderbrand, Senior Collection Management Librarian
- Tim Sage, Regional Services Manager
- Darien Torbert, Customer Experience Specialist
- Mejin Turner, Supervising Librarian
- Kari Van Baalen, Librarian

*Project Planning Team

The Core Planning Team reviewed the community input and synthesized the development of the strategic plan.

Situation Assessment/Survey Report

The consultants created a situation assessment and survey report for review and discussion by the Core Planning Team at a Strategic Clarity Retreat. The assessment and report included input from the focus groups, community leader interviews, all staff day, staff survey, and public survey.

Strategic Plan Development

With the input from the surveys, focus groups, and interviews, the consultants created a draft strategic plan. The Core Planning Team met several times—in person and virtually—to synthesize the plan. The Administrative Team also reviewed key elements of the plan, with the Executive Team giving final review.

The team surveyed staff for input with an online survey, with review of the draft plan.

Throughout the development of the plan, the Deputy Director, who was leading the project, and the consultants informed and engaged the Library's Board of Trustees with the plan elements. In November 2024, Coraggio consultants presented the draft plan to the Board. In December 2024, the Board approved the plan.

Final Strategic Plan Distribution

In December 2024, the Library System shared the plan internally and externally, using many of the communications channels it used to engage the public and staff with the plan, and used the following communications cascade and tactics:

- Talking Points
- Internal e-newsletter "Cover to Cover" article
- Printed handout and poster of the plan in libraries
- Website
- Email to stakeholders who participated/were invited to participate in focus groups/interviews
- Digital screen ads in libraries
- News release
- Social media marketing
- E-newsletter
- Video

Get Moving

Implementation

In December 2024, the Administrative Team and Management Team began implementing the plan. The Core Planning Team and Executive Team, along with input from the Administrative Team, identified the strategies to work on beginning in 2025. In the first quarter of 2025, plan implementation began to involve additional staff.

Addendum

Survey to Community



Pierce County Library System Strategic Planning Survey

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the Pierce County Library System's strategic planning survey. Your perspective and ideas will provide valuable input into the Library's strategic planning process.

Please keep in mind:

- All responses are confidential.
- The survey will take approximately seven minutes to complete.
- Please submit your candid and confidential responses by March 31, 2024.

If you have any questions about this survey or the process in general, please contact Jeremiah Koshy at jeremiah@coraggiogroup.com.

Thank you once again for your participation.

~ Coraggio Group

Pierce County Library System Strategic Planning Survey

Community Resources

Please consider your and your community's resource needs as you answer the questions within this section.

1. Please indicate how important it is **to you** that you have free public resources, such as support, spaces, programs, print and visual materials, etc. to:

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Very unimportant
Learn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be creative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relax	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Connect with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Please indicate how important it is **to your community** that there are free public resources such as support, spaces, programs, print and visual materials, etc. to:

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Very unimportant
Learn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be creative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relax	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Connect with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. What value does the Pierce County Library System add to your community?
(Please provide one-word responses)

Word 1

Word 2

Word 3

Pierce County Library System Strategic Planning Survey

Your Library Experience

Please share about your experience(s) using the Pierce County Library.

4. What I love most about my library is:

(please provide one-word responses)

(a) I love...

(b) I love...

(c) I love...

5. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I do not use or need library services
Learn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be creative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relax	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Connect with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. How likely are you to recommend the Pierce County Library System (PCLS) to a family member, friend, or colleague?

Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not likely	Very unlikely	I do not use or need library services
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Pierce County Library System Strategic Planning Survey

Your Library Experience

This part of the survey seeks to understand how accessible Pierce County Library is to you.

7. Are the Pierce County Library's **physical or in-person services** accessible?

(select all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I get everything I need from the internet. | <input type="checkbox"/> Current library operating hours do not work with my schedule. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not know what the library offers. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel unsafe at the library. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I find it difficult to book an appointment to meet with a librarian. | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical materials are not available in my desired language. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> There are long wait times to access physical books. | <input type="checkbox"/> I face no challenges when accessing the Pierce County Library. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel unwelcome. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not use or need library services. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have limited or no transportation to get to the library. | <input type="checkbox"/> Others: (please elaborate) |

8. How accessible are Pierce County Library System's **virtual or digital services**?

(select all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not possess a device that can access online library services. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not know how to use the resources available online. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not know what digital services the library offers. | <input type="checkbox"/> I face no challenges when accessing the library's digital services. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not have an internet connection at home or mobile data to access the online library. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not use or need the library's digital services. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to access the library physically/in-person in the building. | <input type="checkbox"/> Others: (please elaborate) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am not confident in my ability to use technology. | |

Pierce County Library System Strategic Planning Survey

Learning more about you and your community

This section is an opportunity for you to share more about yourself and your community. Your input in this area will help the Pierce County Library better understand how to tailor library services to meet your needs and your communities needs.

9. What do you feel hopeful about for the future of your community?

(please provide one-word answers)

Word 1

Word 2

Word 3

10. Please select the **top three issues facing your community.**

(select all that apply)

☐ Unemployment or layoffs

☐ Poor transportation infrastructure

☐ Political division and polarization

☐ Unreliable internet

☐ Economic and income disparities

☐ Food insecurity

☐ Access to affordable healthcare

☐ Availability and affordability of childcare

☐ Substance abuse

☐ Others: (please elaborate)

☐ Lack of affordable housing

☐ Prefer not to answer

Pierce County Library System Strategic Planning Survey

Library Usage

11. How often do you visit the Library or use digital library services?

- ☐ Once a week or more
- ☐ Once a month or more
- ☐ A few times a year
- ☐ Once a year or less
- ☐ Never

Pierce County Library System Strategic Planning Survey

Closing Thoughts

12. Is there anything else you would like to share that you feel would be important for the Pierce County Library to consider as it develops its new strategic plan?
