



HALIBURTON COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Strategic Plan: 2022–2027

Presented to the Haliburton County Public Library Board
September 2022

Table of Contents

Strategic Plan: 2022–2027

Message from the Library CEO & the Library Board Chair	2
Mission Statement	3
Vision Statement	3
Tagline	3
Our Statement of Values	4
Executive Summary	5
Strategic Directives	7
The HCPL Action Plan	14
Directive 1: Communicate the Library's Value	14
Directive 2: Build and Maintain Partnerships	16
Directive 3: Advocate for the Library and Connect with the Community	17
Directive 4: Develop Staff and Strengthen the Library	18
Directive 5: Establish Consistency and Exceed Expectations	19
HCPL's Strategic Plan at a Glance	20



Message from the Library CEO & the Library Board Chair

Public libraries continue to change rapidly in the twenty-first century, and the Haliburton County Public Library (HCPL) has been evolving in step. In our last strategic plan, we identified the need to cultivate dynamic partnerships, and we continue to thrive in this area.

As well, we've made progress in creating a technology plan and improving library communications. This has been strengthened by the formation of two new positions, as we now have a full-time Technology & Systems Coordinator and a part-time Marketing & Communications Coordinator to support us into the future.

The focus of our new plan may best be summarized by the word "modernization." Each area of the library is being reassessed for how we can make progress and improvements along five areas of direction. These relate to: communicating our value, honouring our relationships, engaging in advocacy and community connection, investing in staff, and creating consistency across the library system.

This is an exciting time in libraries and the information sector generally, but significant change has occurred specifically at HCPL leading up to the publishing of this strategic plan. In applying this plan as presented, we're confident that the next five years will lead to sustainable and positive change for patrons and visitors in each of our communities.

Sally Howson, Library Board Chair
Chris Stephenson, Library CEO/Chief Librarian



Mission Statement

The Haliburton County Public Library supports and empowers our communities by connecting people with free services, programs, collections, and information.

3

Vision Statement

Committed to empowering our communities through lifelong learning, inclusivity, and creative partnerships, while adapting and being resilient.

Tagline

Committed to empowering your community.



Our Statement of Values

Service Excellence

- We believe each patron of the library is unique and important.
- We commit ourselves to excellence.
- We support individual growth and organizational development.

4

Collections

- We believe each patron should have access to a well-rounded collection.
- We encourage the process of lifelong learning.
- We understand the need for information and leisure materials to be available in a variety of formats.

Availability

- We undertake to liaise with all partners.
- We believe patrons have the right to clean, well designed, and accessible facilities.
- We believe patrons should have access to our resources at any hour of the day through electronic media.

Responsiveness

- We understand we need to meet the changing needs of library services and patrons through innovation and technology.
- We provide access to our resources through our facilities and our electronic services.

Integrity

- We encourage the wise use of resources.
- We promote open and equitable access to information.
- We value our community and choose local resources whenever possible.

Respect

- We believe all patrons and their individual needs are worthy of respect.
- We believe by respecting each other we create a productive and satisfied team.
- We believe our patrons should treat us with respect.

Sustainability

- We believe the library is an essential service that requires sustainable funding.
- We believe the library provides significant economic value to the community.
- We believe sustainable facilities and staff are critical to the delivery of quality services.



Executive Summary

Considerable community engagement occurred in the creation of HCPL's 2022–2027 strategic plan. A Strategic Plan Committee was formed, stakeholder interviews took place, consultants helped drive the process at two crucial points, and staff and students distilled dozens of pages of statistics.

The result was that we gained clarity about what aspects of the library matter to our patrons and community members, and we better understood the demographics that use and enjoy our services and programs.

From the initial PEST analysis to the environmental scan, from the internal review and staff focus groups to the collection of our circulation data, some eighty pages of information was generated to tell the story of who we are and what we do in service of Haliburton County.

It's worth noting that this important work was done in the midst of a lengthy pandemic, and through a period of administrative change as a new library CEO arrived to continue work that was started in early 2021.

We are grateful to all those who participated, and those who had a hand in the development of this document. This includes the 722 survey respondents who took the time to elaborate on their library experiences at HCPL.

Following the research stage, a literature scan was conducted. A call out to library CEOs on the Ontario Library Service's (OLS) Listserv requesting copies of recent strategic plans was issued, and we received nearly 20 plans from library systems of a similar size.

The writing began shortly after our new library logo, branding, and website were launched. Through this period, we began to reevaluate our foundational documents, too: the library's Mission, Vision, and Values. We recognized an opportunity to revamp all the core elements of the library and develop a future plan at the same time. It's been a busy year!

During a series of council presentations in each municipality this summer, a local mayor described our recent efforts as a "renewal and rebirth" of the Haliburton County Public Library. We want to continue this momentum.

What follows is a description of the five strategic directives we aim to take over the next five years. Each directive has a series of actions identified to help us continue our work in modernizing the library.





We hope our patrons, staff, and board members continue to engage with us in the coming years to see how we build on this initial work we did together.



Strategic Directives

1. Communicate the Library's Value

- 1.1. Use all available media to actively promote our new Mission, Vision, & Values.
- 1.2. Run dynamic programming that engages and challenges the community all year long.
- 1.3. Develop a Marketing and Communications Plan to support library activities on all channels.
- 1.4. Train staff in cultural awareness via courses that foster empathy and understanding.
- 1.5. Surprise patrons and visitors by regularly creating innovative programs and services.

2. Build and Maintain Partnerships

- 2.1. Publicly appreciate our Friends of the Library group, volunteers, and library partners.
- 2.2. Actively seek new opportunities and say yes to new connections whenever possible.
- 2.3. Identify local talent and enthusiasm, and invite people to participate in program creation.

3. Advocate for the Library and Connect with the Community

- 3.1. "Pop up" in a variety of places to offer programs and services: Take our show on the road.
- 3.2. Collect impact statements along with our statistics, so we're attuned to community need.
- 3.3. Find new ways to communicate with our diverse visitor and patron base.
- 3.4. Assess what our community learning needs are and seek partners to share expertise.

4. Develop Staff and Strengthen the Library

- 4.1. Improve community learning by investing in our staff; find relevant new training.
- 4.2. Prepare for an always-changing workforce and succession plan pre-emptively.
- 4.3. Evolve the ways in which we communicate internally. Refine communication tools.
- 4.4. Consider our reach regularly to ensure the library represents everyone equitably.



5. Establish Consistency and Exceed Expectations

- 5.1. Track statistics consistently in all library departments.
- 5.2. Standardize the style of branches and develop consistent merchandising.
- 5.3. Incorporate the new Mission, Vision, & Values into the branch manuals and training.
- 5.4. Maintain team morale and review our mandate with more regular all-staff meetings.
- 5.5. Review program and service impacts mid-year when we draft our Annual Reports.



Directive I: Communicate the Library's Value

Haliburton County Public Library offers dynamic and always-changing services and programs designed to meet the needs and desires of our community members. We also work with individuals and partner organizations to try new things throughout the year and build on our past successes.

A young library visitor recently told us that our new logo looks like eyebrows raised in surprise. That's a succinct way of describing what we aim to do for our patrons and visitors.

Building a community hub takes commitment and human resources. Ensuring that our facilities are lively and well used is the other half of the work. With our new part time Marketing & Communications Coordinator, we are already transforming the ways we inform and engage others. This additional capacity to spread the word about how libraries improve the lives of our residents and visitors will make an immense difference in the coming five years.

Although we use multiple channels of communication and regularly evaluate their effectiveness, we intend to formalize our efforts with a Marketing and Communications Plan.

In coming years we're also budgeting for additional staff training funds. Creating an inclusive environment takes ongoing work and learning. Our frontline staff are a direct link to the public and each interaction is an opportunity to demonstrate this value. Continual training and professional development ensure our staff are representative of this value.

Investing in staff and creating a plan to communicate our value should build trust for our regular users and our newcomers. A busy library is also a safer library, and in our efforts to be known as a safe gathering space we're always looking for ways to maintain and improve community well-being. By collaborating with Haliburton County's Climate Change Coordinator, the new Community Safety & Well-Being Coordinator, and many others, we aim to be an information destination supported by expertise and knowledge-sharing across our region.

Our second directive describes this strategy in greater detail.



Directive II: Build and Maintain Partnerships

Our library branches, as gathering places, bring people together for myriad reasons. The variety—and success—of the programs and services we offer depends significantly on the partnerships we develop.

We work hard to say “Yes!” to new opportunities that align with our mission, our vision, and our library values. We remain open to new ideas and opportunities pitched by community members and organizations, and we strive to build things that benefit many.

We seek to address social challenges and celebrate the work of our partner organizations by bringing people together for presentations and discussions, providing a place for the conversations happening in our communities. We endeavour to recognize the diverse demographics of our county and provide something of value for everyone, ensuring that people see themselves reflected in our collections and in our programs and events.

We are deeply grateful for the dedicated work of the members of the Friends of the Library group. Their advocacy and support in managing in-branch book sales and hosting ongoing community book sales, book events, and galas lifts us up all year round. Their work allows our library board and staff to thrive and deliver when we say we’re “committed to empowering our communities.” And that the library is for everyone.

Similarly, local community groups that identify HCPL as a chosen recipient of their fundraising efforts support our public library system year after year. Donations, grants, and other funding expand the scope of what is possible. We have often been told we are “punching above our weight,” in terms of what we’re able to offer. While we are a small system spread over a large geography, the support of generous partners is both evident and appreciated.

The public library is a place where people come together from multiple perspectives and backgrounds, and they work to make things happen. In the coming years, we will actively identify talent and expertise in Haliburton County to expand the scope of what is possible and adapt with the changing needs of our communities. We’ll do this bridge-building through advocacy and by soliciting regular feedback from our patrons and users.



Directive III: Advocate for the Library and Connect with the Community

Two notable successes we celebrated in 2022 were the refreshed logo and branding of the Haliburton County Public Library, and the exciting decision that was made to purchase our own library courier vehicle.

We aim to send a clear and recognizable message to everyone entering our branches that we're a connected and unified library system. It's our strategy to ensure that the experience you're having in each of our locations is familiar and consistent throughout the county.

And beyond updating our brick and mortar facilities, we'll soon be able to bring library services and programs to you and your community like never before.

The courier van will be outfitted with print resources, portable devices and learning kits, and wi-fi that can be broadcast at county events and other locations. In addition to the thousands of pounds of books and other materials circulating throughout our service area each month, it's our intention to develop a nimble staff team so that our in-house programming expertise can be enjoyed by people everywhere.

These modernizing efforts and purchasing decisions were well-timed to help us deliver on our strategic outlook described in these pages.

We want to show up in new ways and reach people who may not be familiar with HCPL. We hope that people will see our logo on the van as it drives to and from our eight service points, and at the community events we'll attend with them.

And with our ability to issue new library cards via this "mobile library branch," we hope to increase not just our profile, but also our membership.



Directive IV: Develop Staff and Strengthen the Library

As in many organizations, the past several years have radically altered the way we work and serve our communities. The pandemic period provided an opportunity for us to reassess what works well, and perhaps what could be improved. In many ways, it's been an ideal time to gather input from the community, our staff, and the library board, and to develop a strategic plan towards a new future.

What emerged is the recognition that we need to document and refine work processes that have developed informally. We are a growing library system, and two new positions were added this year. As our staff grows, it's important to assist team members in defining their role within the library.

Performance appraisals will be conducted for all library staff so that we have frequent opportunities to gain feedback and insight on the organization from the inside.

We're also trained in outcome-based evaluation, so we have methods to track and measure how our human resources are being used when delivering programs and services. This is an especially important area of our focus, so that we can routinely check that what we're doing is in alignment with our foundational documents (the Mission, Vision, & Values of the library.) And to ensure that we're impacting our patrons and visitors in a meaningful way.

As well, we've had many former staff depart over the past three years due to retirements, resignations, and new life plans. We are fortunate to have recruited enthusiastic and committed staff to fill these positions. A way to support people in the roles we're filling is to create succession plans and ensure that we understand the scope of each position as it changes over time.

Many libraries are currently experiencing the departure of skilled staff. To build and maintain a consistent and resilient team at Haliburton County Public Library, we have increased the training budget and begun strengthening the internal communication within the library.

Our collection is a point of pride for us, but it is our staff which makes the library special and brings value to each personalized interaction with a patron.



Directive V: Establish Consistency and Exceed Expectations

At our service desks we often hear the expression, “Wow, I didn’t know the library offered that.” We are always evaluating our resources and using circulation statistics to make informed choices about what we offer library users.

We welcome feedback and suggestions for items we should purchase or make available on our shelves. We use data to inform our library board, our Collections Development Coordinator, and the Technology & Systems Coordinator. We respond to residents who bring ideas for what they’d like to see in their branches, and we try new things.

As information professionals, we rely on this feedback loop to evolve and launch initiatives which will pique the interest of newcomers and continue to engage and excite long-time patrons.

Next summer we’ll begin creating a Facilities Needs Assessment to identify branch deficiencies and find ways to refresh our interior spaces. We also endeavour to borrow from retail best practices to showcase our collection in new ways, something our new Marketing & Communications Coordinator has already started.

As library workers, we belong to several provincial and Canada-wide library organizations. Our operations in Haliburton County are informed by ideas and methods that are being discovered and refined in other jurisdictions. This professional sharing at conferences, on library listservs, and by consulting colleagues, helps further what’s possible in a growing county such as ours.

We don’t yet know what the library of 2027 is going to look like, but we’ve charted a course with a new vision and a lot of enthusiasm.

We hope what you find in the pages of this plan resonates with you—much of the data collected about what we do and why it matters originally came from you, our valued patrons and visitors.

Thank you for your support, your membership, and for using the library.



The HCPL Action Plan

Directive 1: Communicate the Library's Value

Action 1: Regular newspaper columns & updates on the local radio stations

Timing: Ongoing

Responsibility: Library CEO/Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Method/Evaluation: Foster relationships with local editors and radio hosts.

Action 2: Host or attend events to highlight library initiatives

Timing: Ongoing

Responsibility: All

Method/Evaluation: Actively seek opportunities such as fairs and Bookapalooza.

Action 3: Develop a 2023 Marketing and Communications Plan

Timing: Begin Fall 2022

Responsibility: Marketing and Communications Coordinator/Library CEO

Method/Evaluation: Establish consistent-looking branches and messaging.

Action 4: Complete a technology inventory & promote our non-traditional collections, kits, & equipment

Timing: Begin Fall 2022

Responsibility: Tech & Systems Coordinator/Library CEO

Method/Evaluation: Organize tech so it's used equitably across the system to support programming.

Action 5: Host two all-staff meetings per year

Timing: Ongoing

Responsibility: Admin Staff

Method/Evaluation: Learn together and review practices; build morale and confidence.

Action 6: Encourage conference attendance so staff connect with trends & developments in the field

Timing: Annually

Responsibility: All

Method/Evaluation: Staff present library initiatives and attend virtual or in-person events on a rotational basis.



Action 7: Present to municipal councils each year

Timing: Annually

Responsibility: Library CEO/Board Chair

Method/Evaluation: Update and present the Annual Report.



Directive 2: Build and Maintain Partnerships

Action 1: Tag our partners on social media; thank them in our website newsletter and in the media; invite them to the library

Timing: Ongoing

Responsibility: Marketing and Communications Coordinator/Library CEO/Deputy CEO

Method/Evaluation: Attend partnership meetings and events; discuss how we can work together.

Action 2: Identify & invite new partners to create programs in all branches

Timing: Ongoing

Responsibility: All

Method/Evaluation: Staff report new ideas or opportunities to the programs@ email account.

Action 3: Show up in new & established community locations to offer dynamic programs

Timing: Begin in 2023

Responsibility: All

Method/Evaluation: Utilize the new library van to take programs on the road.

Action 4: Investigate ways in which we can learn from partners how to serve patrons better

Timing: Begin Fall 2022

Responsibility: Collections Development Coordinator/Library CEO & Deputy CEO

Method/Evaluation: Work with CELA and vendors to improve accessibility for patrons needing extra help.

Action 5: Address community growth & support enhanced library programs with a portable makerspace

Timing: 2023 & Beyond

Responsibility: All staff as well as summer students

Method/Evaluation: Gradually increase staff confidence and competence with technology; learning partnerships with other libraries.



Directive 3: Advocate for the Library and Connect with the Community

Action 1: Outfit & utilize the new library van to bring programs & services to all communities

Timing: Begin 2023/Ongoing

Responsibility: Programming & Outreach Coordinator/Plan developed by admin staff

Method/Evaluation: Take non-traditional collections, tech kits for demonstrations and lending, offer free wi-fi en route. Meet people where they are.

Action 2: Solicit impact statements & feedback in all branches

Timing: Between Mar-Apr/Ongoing

Responsibility: Admin staff create surveys/branch staff collect them

Method/Evaluation: Use annual library evaluation to help determine where we focus program/service resources.

Action 3: Investigate new communication trends in libraries & on social media; adapt as necessary or trial new methods & styles

Timing: Annually/Ongoing, OLA conference & forums

Responsibility: Marketing & Communications Coordinator/Admin staff team

Method/Evaluation: Keep up with the conversation happening outside our county to stay attuned to new ways of reaching our patrons.

Action 4: Connect with early years professionals, school board, & adult learning to find the local gaps we can fill

Timing: Bi-annual conversations

Responsibility: Library CEO/Deputy CEO/Outreach Coordinator

Method/Evaluation: Probe library partner relationships & ask questions at County Service Providers Network meetings.

Action 5: Engage the Board and our volunteers to develop advocacy initiatives

Timing: Ongoing

Responsibility: Library Board/Friends of the Library

Method/Evaluation: Regularly invite and inform members so that they may assist with advocacy.



Directive 4: Develop Staff and Strengthen the Library

Action 1: Seek new training & direct staff learning based on a blend of library guidelines & personal interests

Timing: Annual/part of all-staff performance appraisals (new)

Responsibility: Deputy CEO in consultation with Library CEO

Method/Evaluation: Use library listservs to identify what is offered; solicit input and goals from all staff members during annual appraisal meetings.

Action 2: Plan ahead for staff departures by maintaining an active list of tasks & duties for key positions

Timing: 2022–2024

Responsibility: Library CEO in consultation with admin team members

Method/Evaluation: Develop library-driven exit interviews, workflow descriptions, and a succession document so a record of these roles exists.

Action 3: Normalize the process for staff inquiries & responses; adapt as needed

Timing: Ongoing

Responsibility: Admin staff

Method/Evaluation: Sustain virtual, in-person, or large group meetings to better connect with all library staff.

Action 4: Consider ways we can better reach all community members & improve equitable library service

Timing: Ongoing

Responsibility: Driven from all staff members

Method/Evaluation: Continue Truth & Reconciliation meetings and training, follow AODA, learn more about our vulnerable populations, and consult local professionals and organizations such as Minden Pride.

Action 5: Seek out appropriate crisis or harm reduction training to develop social skillsets to understand and serve our community as it changes

Timing: Starting in Fall 2022/Ongoing annual review

Responsibility: Mandatory all-staff training/some optional training

Method/Evaluation: Examples include: Librarian's Guide to Homelessness, Naloxone training from John Howard Society, Crisis & De-escalation training.

Directive 5: Establish Consistency and Exceed Expectations

Action 1: Ensure statistical records are maintained in each area of the library

Timing: Committee work beginning in Fall 2022/Ongoing

Responsibility: Collections/programming/tech

Method/Evaluation: Standardize record-keeping practices and engage with the county on new records management practices.

Action 2: Conduct a Facilities Needs Assessment

Timing: Begin Summer 2023

Responsibility: Library CEO/Deputy CEO in consultation with municipal CAOs

Method/Evaluation: Prior to budget 2024, identify branch deficiencies developing and make recommendations

Action 3: Update the branch manuals

Timing: Winter 2022–2023 & review each winter annually

Responsibility: Deputy CEO/Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Method/Evaluation: Refresh the digital version and make it available in hard copy at all branches

Action 4: Roll out merchandising & branding systematically in all branches

Timing: 2023–2024

Responsibility: Library CEO/Deputy CEO/Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Method/Evaluation: Use the new Marketing and Communications Plan to guide improvements: paint colour, vinyls, furnishings, and signage.

Action 5: Increase all-staff meetings & training opportunities as per ARUPLO guidelines

Timing: Begin with Budget 2023/Ongoing

Responsibility: Admin staff & professional consultants

Method/Evaluation: A recommended one per cent of library budget should be maintained to fund staff training and conference attendance each year.

Action 6: Review impact statements and feedback in all branches; incorporate outcomes in our Annual Report

Timing: Each May/Begin 2023

Responsibility: Branch staff submit results to the office/admin staff act on the data

Method/Evaluation: Use community feedback to shape future programs/services and continue established initiatives when data supports it.

HCPL's Strategic Plan at a Glance

Communicate the Library's Value

Boost our image: Promote a positive image and represent the library in exciting new ways.

Draw attention: Project the library's strong reputation by developing a Marketing & Communications Plan.

Model warmth: Cultivate a community hub with warm reception and emphasize that our spaces are safe and neutral.

Seize opportunity: Recognize opportunities for offering programs and services in new ways and take action when we can.

Teach ourselves: Continue learning to become more aware, diverse, and inclusive.

Build and Maintain Partnerships

Celebrate support: Articulate appreciation for the Friends of the Library, other volunteers, and local champions!

Look & reach out: Liaise with new groups and conduct outreach for unique partnerships. Get to know our communities.

Show up & tell: Encourage all staff to take a great idea to a library conference and represent us.

Partner & succeed: Create shared programming: we provide the space and bring in community expertise.

Address disparity: Refine tools and resources to lift the community up and confront poverty.

Advocate for the Library and Connect with the Community

Promote with flair: From the library board to the staff: champion library initiatives in creative ways.

Plan for change: Understand the library's demographics so we're prepared for changing patron needs and desires.

Develop a plan: Activate a Marketing & Communications Plan to support initiatives and find ways to tell our story.

Use strategies: Plan and reevaluate based on the feedback we receive when conducting patron surveys.

Improve access: Intersect with learners to bolster community skills and access to technology.



Develop Staff and Strengthen the Library

Train & support: Inspire lifelong learning so staff evolve with the tools they need to support the community.

Be future-proof: Create a succession plan and refine our on-boarding/off-boarding process.

Manage change: Refine internal communications so staff understand short- and long-term expectations.

Measure: Regular performance appraisals for all staff members.

Financial plan: Develop and activate a business plan for special purchases.

Establish Consistency and Exceed Expectations

Use our statistics: Apply evidence-based librarianship practices to make good choices about our focus and our purchases.

Branch aesthetics: Procure consistent furnishing and features to ensure a familiar look and feel across the system.

Define our role: Become clear about what we do and how we do it, so our staff communicate the same message.

Knowledge share: Regular all-staff meetings to connect, listen to others, and affirm the work we do.

Reassess services: Consult the data and our municipal partners to make sound service decisions.

