

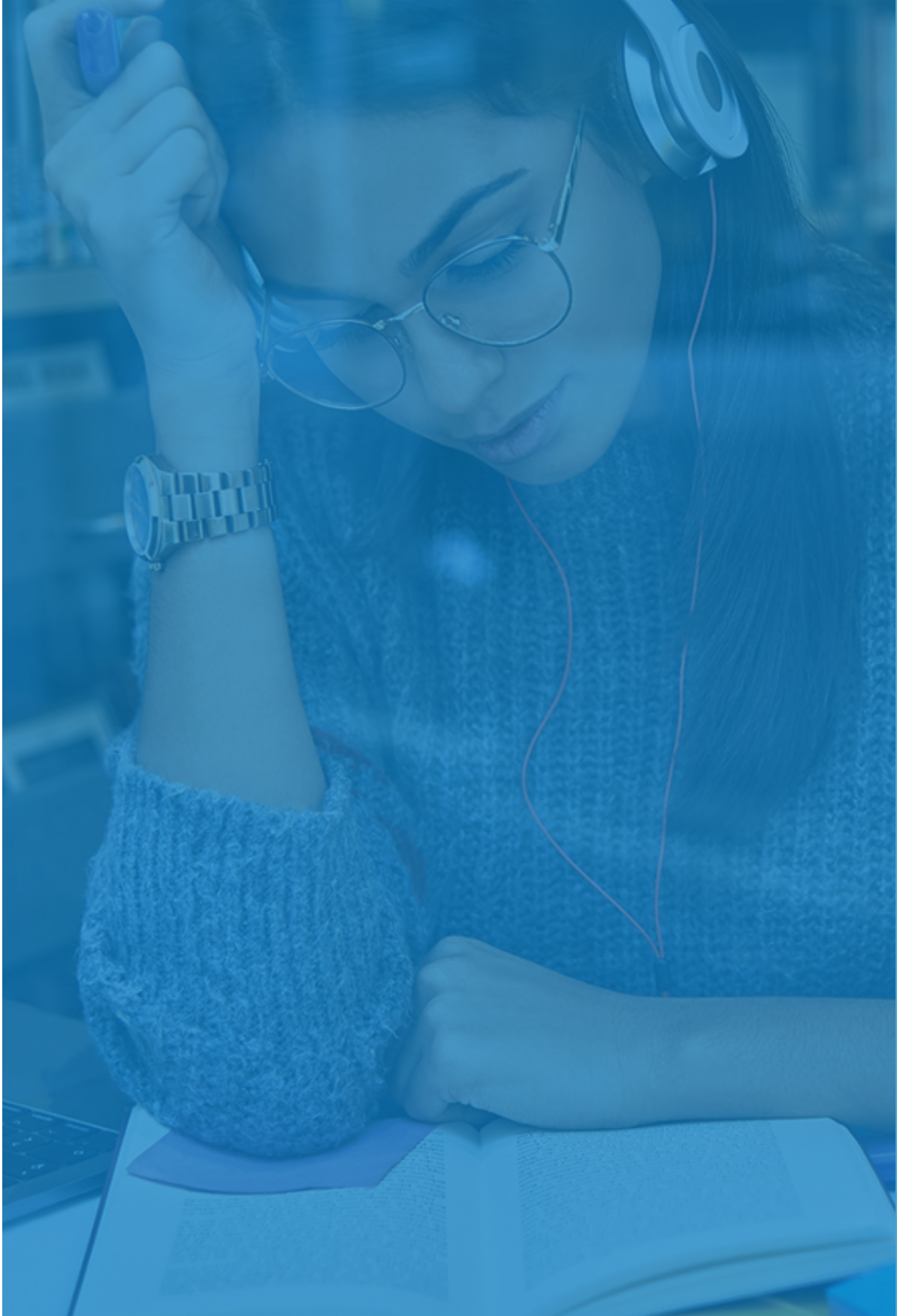


2022



STRATEGIC

2025



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Letter from the Library Director

On May 10, 2022, I celebrated one year as the Director here at Cumberland County Public Library (CCPL). It has been a busy and wonderful year! During the past year we have accomplished so much – together. As I reflect on all that we have achieved, there are a few notable items I want to mention:

- In August 2021, the Board of Commissioners for Cumberland County unanimously approved for the library to become late fee and fine free.
- We launched our first Student Access Cards.
- We implemented the Cumberland County READS program.
- We created our Community Engagement Division.
- We expanded our Programming Division.
- We expanded Library hours to include Sundays and weekend programming.
- We hosted Successful Storytelling and NC Science Festivals.
- We installed Library Pick-Up Lockers in Godwin, NC.
- And so much more!

Each day, our staff have continued to show up and to diligently serve our community. I cannot express the depth of my gratitude to our team for showing up each day. It takes each one of our team members, library family members, stakeholders and friends to achieve the goals of the library and serve our community.

Over the past year I have spent time listening – to staff of all levels, library Trustees and Friends, to community leaders, stakeholders and members – to as many people as I can. I’ve listened to hear their concerns, challenges and ideas. This information, paired with the results of an in-depth analysis of the 2019-2020 Community Needs Assessment and a planning session with Library Leadership and Library Trustees, has led to the development of our Strategic Plan.

This document outlines CCPL’s strategic planning process from ideation to implementation. It includes the library’s new vision, mission and goals as well as objectives, action steps and indicators of success.

All of us have a part to play in this plan – Together, we can achieve anything!

Faith B. Phillips



Library Board of Trustees

Irene Grimes, Chair
Ann McRae, Vice-Chair
Pamela Story
Dennis Cedzo
Bart Fiser
Daniel Montoya

Cumberland County Administration

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Community Needs Assessment Acknowledgements

The Needs Assessment Report was made possible by funding from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) as administered by the State Library of North Carolina, a division of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The report was prepared by Dr. Anthony Chow, CEO of Strategic Performance Systems.

Letter from the Library Director

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Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Our Vision

Explore, Connect and Renew – Together

Our Mission

We embrace innovative, traditional and transformational approaches that Support, Encourage and Engage our diverse community. The library provides free and equitable access to resources and experiences to all.

The library SEEs you!

Our Core Values

Cumberland County Public Library follows Cumberland County's Core Values of

PRIDE

Professionalism

Respect

Integrity with Accountability

Diversity

Excellent Customer Service

Recognizing that all people are different, we treat everyone with dignity and serve our diverse population with professionalism, respect, integrity, diversity and excellent customer service (PRIDE).

Cumberland County Public Library Needs Assessment Report

Between June 2019 and December 2019, a Community Needs Assessment was conducted for Cumberland County Public Library (CCPL), funded by a grant from the State Library of North Carolina. This study's mixed method approach utilized both qualitative and quantitative data collection through interviews, focus groups, online and print surveys and included approximately 2,300 Cumberland County community members, staff and stakeholder participants. In addition to information from the community, 10 years of performance data from all CCPL locations was analyzed along with GIS and demographic data.

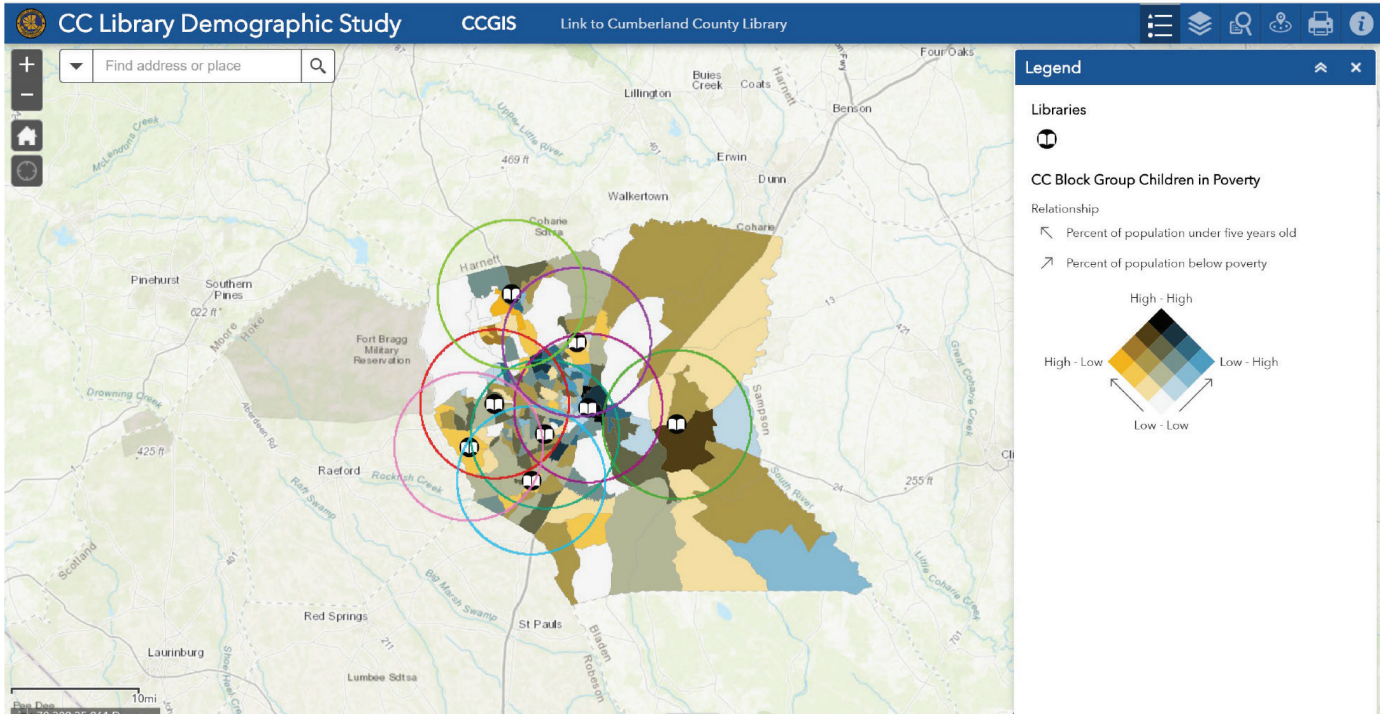
The Needs Assessment Report found that libraries are being used more than ever and in different ways than before. Libraries are now community gathering places, places to interact with technology and places to seek programming for children, employment assistance and adult literacy. While traditional print circulation is decreasing, digital circulation is dramatically increasing. The Assessment demonstrated that CCPL excels in its commitment to serving the community and in its services to children.

The assessment also identified several areas of improvement and continued service to the community for the library. These included reaching a wider audience through marketing and outreach, innovative initiatives that align with needs of the community, technology training, expanded services and spaces for teens and adults and helping families with literacy and tutoring to improve education.

The report noted the significant challenge facing CCPL is the pervasive stereotype that libraries are no longer used or are no longer needed in the community. Resulting statistical data, however, found that lack of usage and relevance is far from the truth. The report also found that the southern and northeastern parts of the County are underserved by library efforts and services. Finally, the report provided 13 main recommendations for the library in the new strategic plan:

- Continue services to pre-K children and youth with a focus on children in poverty.
- Partner with the County and School District with an emphasis on 3rd grade reading and math proficiency.
- Dramatically increase the percentage of county residents with a library card.
- Emphasize community engagement and outreach beyond the library, with an emphasis on innovations like smart lockers and student access cards.
- Ensure fast and reliable internet and Wi-Fi at all library locations.
- Expand adult programming and services for job and workforce development, entrepreneurship, technology and digital literacy.
- Expand services to members of the military and their families, with emphasis on spouses and partners of military members when their partners are deployed.
- Structure programming, services and resources based on the following priorities for Cumberland County: Economic Development, Affordable Housing, Homelessness, Educational Quality, Poverty and Socioeconomic Mobility, Health and Human Services and Veteran Affairs and Military Services.
- Provide services to those experiencing homelessness and continue to monitor the use of libraries by this population on a local and national level.

- Align services and programming around the community's top daily activities and interests. Non-library users want meeting and conference room access, job/career related programming, services and workspaces.
- Prioritize working to address staff's identified areas for improvement: more resources, improved communication, more outreach, more programming and improved leadership and administration.
- Improve training and support for all staff working with people experiencing homelessness and substance abuse, as well as communication, teamwork and leadership and management



Cumberland County Public Library Compared to Other Libraries

The Community Needs Assessment compared statistics with peer libraries in North Carolina over a five-year period. The comparison found that use of CCPL's collection is higher than the average, though overall print material circulation has decreased when compared with historical system data. CCPL is below state average for adult material circulation but is a leader for juvenile material circulation. The assessment also identified that CCPL's digital usage increased by 104% over the five-year period, but CCPL lags behind peer libraries in electronic material holdings.

Programming is an area where CCPL excels, having increased over a 10-year period. Young adult and children's program attendance has been above the state average. The study also found that job and career programs were a strength of CCPL, while adult literacy programs were to be improved upon. Additional areas for improvement were services, spaces and programming for teens as well as reaching community members through marketing and outreach.

The information from the Community Needs Assessment of 2019-2020 for CCPL greatly contributed to the renewed vision, mission, goals and the 2022 – 2025 Strategic Plan.



Objectives

CCPL STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2025



Overview of Strategic Planning Process

The Community Needs Assessment was completed in February of 2020 and was set to be implemented shortly thereafter. As a part of the Needs Assessment, library staff and leadership began drafting a plan to meet the needs outlined in the Assessment. Information from this process is included in the descriptions below. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent library shut-down and pivot to provide services as safely as possible, the planning and implementation process was delayed. With transitions of library leadership and staff during this period, additional information for the strategic planning process was obtained through conversations with staff and Library Family Members; internal communications surveys; and visioning sessions with the Library Board of Trustees.

Draft Plan Elements Pre-Pandemic

Goal 1 of the initial draft plan was to increase community access to library services.

Target metrics included:

- Developing a plan to go fine free
- Developing student access cards
- Investigating issuing no-cost library cards to all county employees regardless of county of residence
- Expanding access to military personnel regardless of county of residence
- Expanding outreach

Goal 2 of the draft plan focused on strong partnerships and collaborations aligned with the community's highest priorities. The draft metrics included reviewing library procedures and ensuring staff were aware of resources in the community.

Goal 3 of the draft plan included an emphasis on strong resources, services and programs for all ages. Metrics and targets included exploring the installation of offsite kiosks for library check outs, the purchase of white boards for advertisement, a grant-funded outreach vehicle and other items.

Finally, Goal 4 emphasized high-quality technology access and assistance. This draft section focused on evaluating statistical reports, training and surveys.

The draft strategic plan created prior to the pandemic included many aspects of focus and need for the library to serve the community, as well as many metrics and targets for completion. future plans.

This plan has formed the foundation of the current plan, which focuses on active accomplishments with progress and outcome-based evaluation metrics. Additionally, many of the items in the plan, such as going fine and fee free, have since been achieved.



Conversations with Library Staff and Library Family Members

In May and June 2022, Library Leadership met with most library staff, Trustees and Friends of the Library board members. In these conversations, staff and family members were asked three questions:

- What do you love about working for Cumberland County Public Library?
- If you could see the library provide any program or service, what would it be? (Respondents were told not to consider budget.)
- And finally, what advice do you have for the new director?

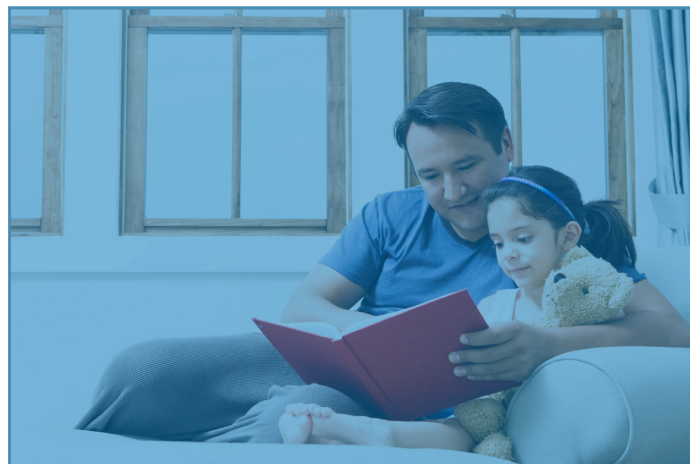
In answering the first question, library staff and library family members unfailingly demonstrated their deep dedication to serving community members to the best of their ability by ensuring access to information, programming and library spaces for all.

In answering the second question, library staff put forward several services and programs, many of them consistent with the information found in the Community Needs Assessment: expanded teen programming, programs and services with a focus on families and early literacy, as well as entrepreneurship and job development, to name a few. These conversations exemplified the extent to which library staff and library family members are responsive to and aware of community wants and needs for their locations.

In their advice for new library leadership, staff members voiced their desire to honor tradition while introducing innovation, for working collaboratively and increasing diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in the system. Staff emphasized the importance of a well-trained, visionary library system dedicated to communication, accountability and excellent customer service.

Internal Communication Surveys

In June 2021, CCPL issued its inaugural Internal Communications Survey post-reopening. This anonymous survey was assigned electronically to all staff and posed a series of questions regarding communication and morale within the system. Survey responses included many of the same themes: collaboration, innovation and increased emphasis on diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion. There were also many suggestions regarding the cultivation of an informed, diverse staff who championed access and customer service, both internal and external.





Visioning Sessions with Library Board of Trustees and Library Leadership Team

In Fall/Winter 2021/2022, a series of strategic visioning sessions were held with the Library's Board of Trustees to gain information and develop a shared vision for the library in the coming years.

Trustees were asked the following questions:

- Where do you want the library to go?
- What do you want to see in our libraries?
- If there were one thing you could get and do for our library/community, what would it be?
- If you could think of a way to increase visitors to the library and increase circulation, what would it be?
- Where is one area the library excels?
- Where is one area where they library could improve and what solutions do you suggest?

Trustees shared programs, goals and services that echoed both the Needs Assessment Report and staff conversations. They are included in this plan. Concurrently, the library's Leadership Team held weekly meetings where discussion of the strategic plan was a focus topic. The Team combined historical knowledge, information from the draft plan and the Needs Assessment, and developed the library's new mission and vision statement. These were vetted by County leadership and Trustees and were unveiled on May 4, 2022.

Goals and Objectives

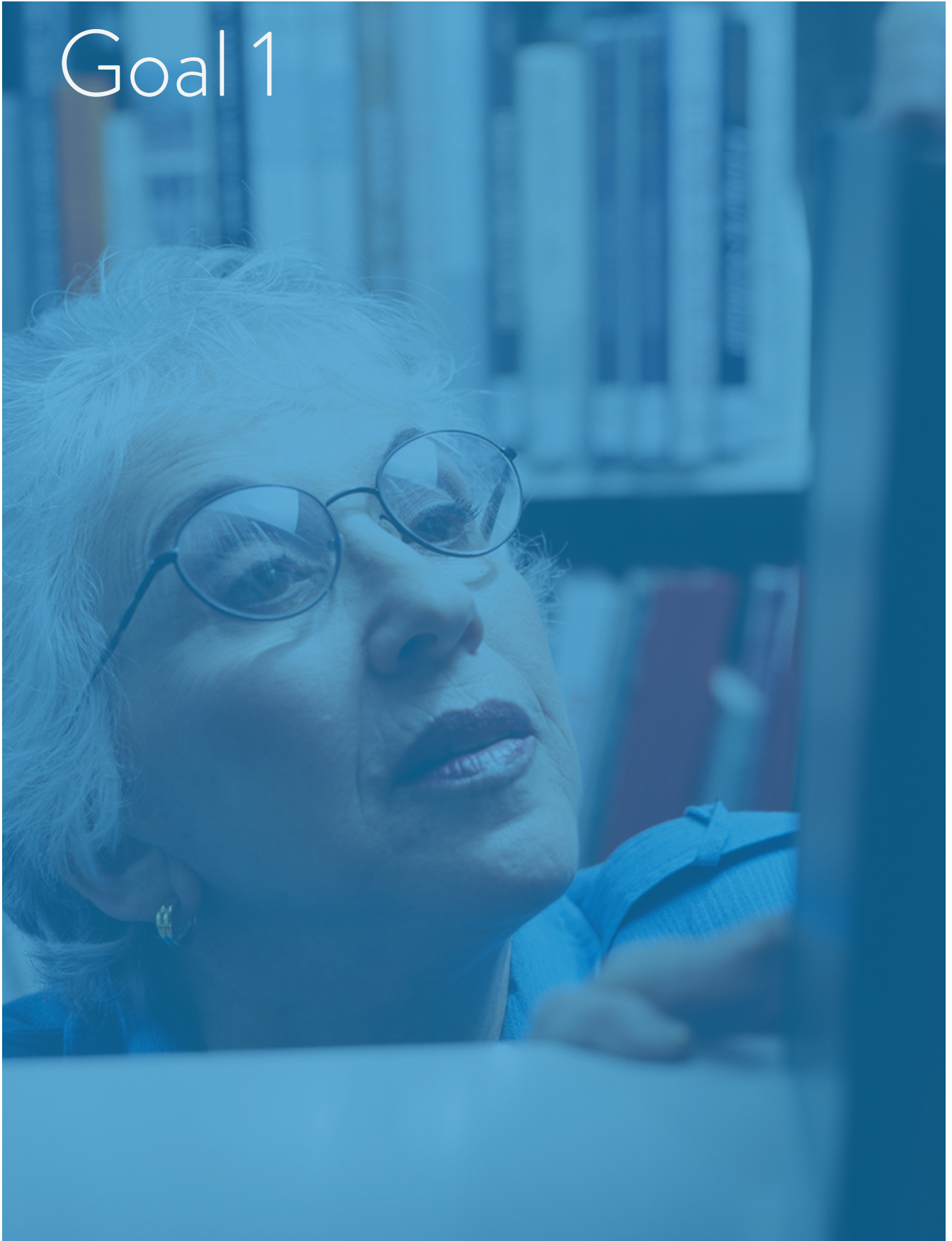
The library's strategic plan includes three long-term goals and corresponding objectives. They are the criteria by which we will measure the plan's success. All library programs and services will be informed by, and address, one or more of the goals or objectives. These objectives are statements that describe the results we aim to achieve, and the ways in which we will achieve them. The library used SMART attributes in the formulation of objectives, which must be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant or Realistic and Time-bound.



Goal 1

CCPL STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2025



Goal 1: Support Our Community

Objective 1: Reduce language barriers during the plan period by increasing language diversity in programs by 10% and by increasing materials and publications in the three most common languages spoken in Cumberland County.

Step 1: Use GIS, census and other data to determine the three most spoken languages in Cumberland County.

Step 2: Work with County and others to determine process and procedures for translating materials.

Step 3: Increase bilingual programming and services through partnerships with community agencies, staff and other stakeholders.

Step 4: Increase language diversity on staff through trainings and recruitment.

Objective 2: Improve greater digital equity and access and reduce the digital divide through innovative, purposeful and specific partnerships, programs and services. Increase access to and programming dedicated to removing digital barriers by 10% during the plan period.

Step 1: Identify and secure funding, purchase and successfully deploy a mobile vehicle to serve as a bookmobile and hotspot/digital access point.

Step 2: Implement yearly review of policies and procedures to ensure removal of barriers related to technology and technology access.

Step 3: Improve connectivity and technology at locations.

Step 4: Enhance access to maker and other innovative technologies through the creation of dedicated spaces and related programming.

Objective 3: Create an informed, knowledgeable customer and staff base during the plan period by promoting awareness of library services and programs by increasing use of services by 5% each fiscal year.

Step 1: Develop and implement marketing initiatives for the library that encompass a variety of media and platforms to advertise the library's programs and services.

Step 2: Create a cohesive, knowledgeable staff who are informed and able to engage in promoting through cross training, system-wide initiatives and campaigns. Ensure staff are trained and equipped to promote programs and services through LibraryAware, social media, outreaches and daily interactions.

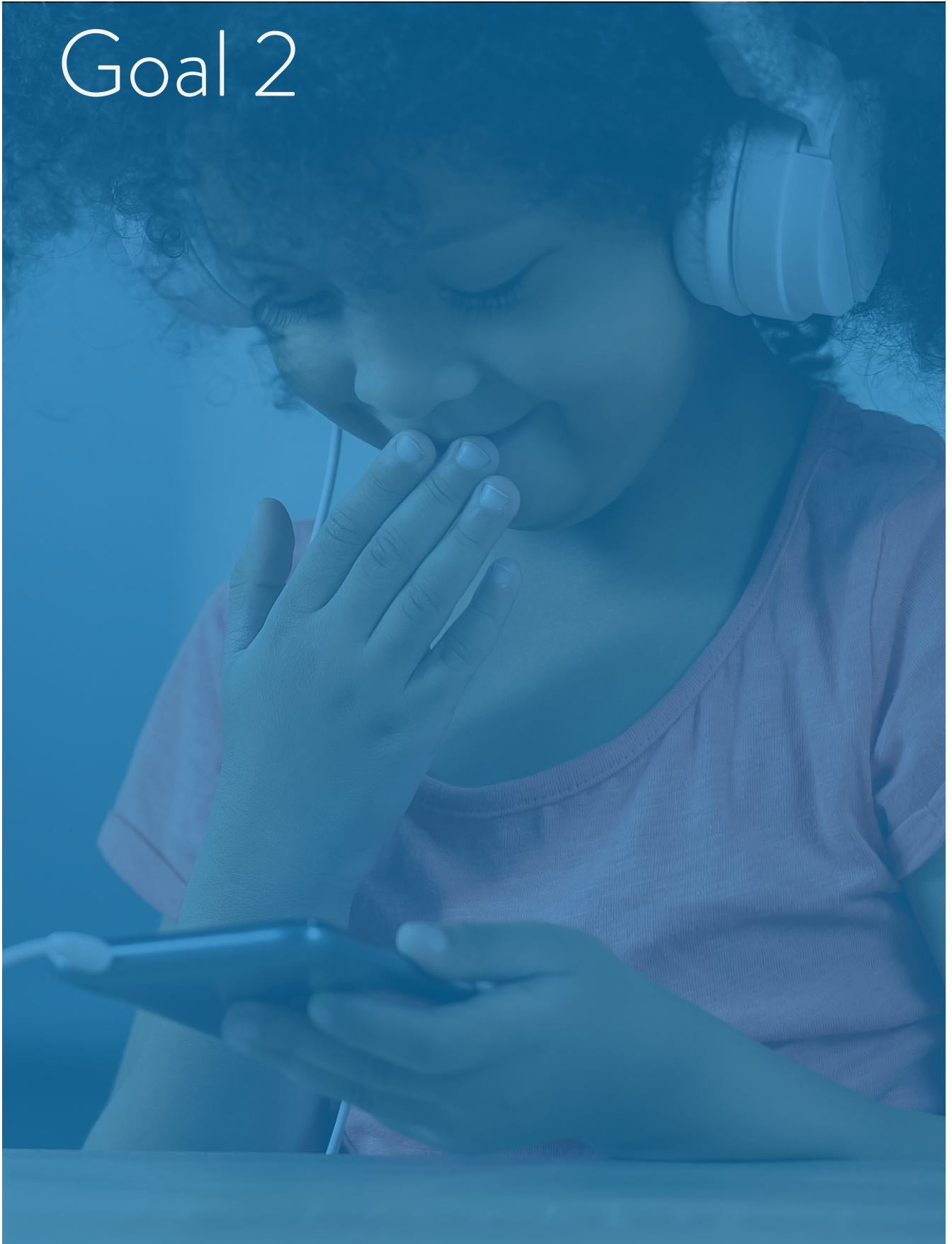
Step 3: Promote library services through active outreach to Cumberland County Government Employees, Cumberland County School employees, students and families. Implement the Student Access Card Initiative with CCS.

Step 4: Promote library services through active outreach and partnerships focused on increasing access and supporting the military community.

Goal 2

CCPL STRATEGIC PLAN

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Goal 2: Engage Our Residents

Objective 1: Continually update and improve datasets on active and engaged library users and card holders with the goal of achieving a 95% accurate dataset by the end of the plan period.

Step 1: Improve technology and methods for collecting data ensuring accuracy and relevancy.

Step 2: Develop a comprehensive dashboard highlighting real time metrics utilizing GIS data, Basecamp, Evergreen, collectionHQ and other resources to identify gaps in service.

Objective 2: Using collected data, identify populations and areas that are underserved by the library and develop and implement strategies to promote library engagement to those citizens with the goal of increasing engaged library users by 5% during the planning period.

Step 1: Conduct environmental scans of identified areas.

Step 2: Create asset maps to gain knowledge of existing services and community infrastructure.

Step 3: Conduct surveys within target areas on a yearly basis to discover potential barriers to library use.

Step 4: Identify and engage community centers, spheres of influence and leaders to establish partnerships and outreach opportunities to serve citizens not utilizing library services.

Objective 3: Expand capacity for serving the community through enhanced programs, services and facilities, with the goal of a 5% increase in program participation and door count each fiscal year.

Step 1: Expand spaces, services and programs dedicated to teenagers and their education, social needs and development by 5% each fiscal year.

Step 2: Build upon existing programming and partnerships to support early childhood development and early literacy initiatives, with an emphasis on expanded storytime and family programming opportunities.

Step 3: Develop strategic programs and partnerships to situate the library as a learning hub for homeschool families.

Step 4: Encourage lifelong learning through engaging, relevant and innovative programs for adults of all ages.

Step 5: Position the library as a hub for entrepreneurship within the community, as well as supporting and developing the workforce within Cumberland County.



Goal 3



Goal 3: Encourage diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and belonging.

Objective 1: On a yearly basis, review all library policies and procedures to ensure relevancy and consistency of enforcement with the goal of equitable, relevant, and understandable policies and procedures.

- Step 1:** Complete a review of all policies and procedures, placing updated documents in one centralized location with the goal of creating Library Handbook with all relevant information for staff by the end of the plan period.
- Step 2:** Foster collaborative feedback from library staff by creating a solutions-focused committee that reviews initiatives and procedures, improving communication and buy-in from all levels of staff.
- Step 3:** Ensure staff are equipped and empowered to enforce library procedures and guidelines with confidence and respect through relevant training.

Objective 2: Maintain libraries as vital community hubs that welcome, accept and include all residents and visitors.

- Step 1:** Enhance services for those with disabilities and neurodiversities by 10% during the plan period through dedicated adaptable technologies, sensory spaces and programs.
- Step 2:** By the end of FY24, pilot a coffee shop at West Regional Library and an internship program in some locations that focus on hiring emerging and young adults with disabilities to provide workforce development and job opportunities in nurturing, welcoming environments.
- Step 3:** Promote mental health awareness and trauma-informed public service through relevant staff training and related initiatives by the end of FY23. Create a dedicated resource for customers suffering from addiction, homelessness, and/or mental illness by the end of FY24.

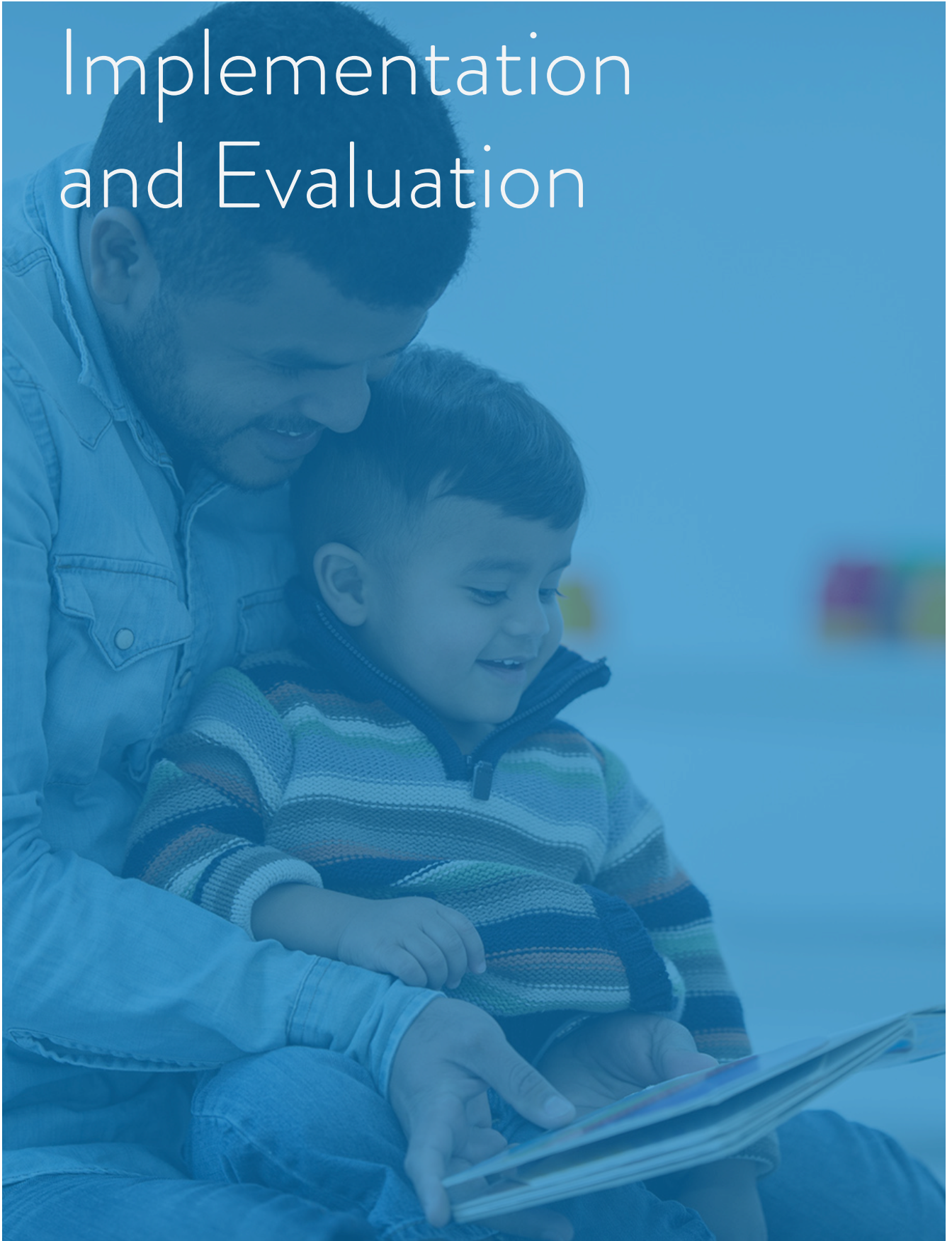
Objective 3: Foster a diverse, visionary, accountable and collaborative staff environment.

- Step 1:** Continue to emphasize DEI priorities in recruitment processes and library initiatives, continuously evaluating effectiveness of methods to support accessibility, inclusion and belonging.
- Step 2:** Foster a culture of collaboration, open dialog, accountability and innovation through upholding and emphasizing core values of PRIDE through words and actions, recognizing staff for a job well done and having open conversations to address areas for improvement and growth.
- Step 3:** Emphasize training and development of staff through the creation of an internal mentorship program.
- Step 4:** Encourage staff performance, feedback, growth and accountability through the implementation of NeoPerform by FY24 for the evaluation process, emphasizing continuous feedback and dialog between employee and supervisor.
- Step 5:** Continue fostering methods for staff collaboration and feedback, utilizing tools such as the library's annual Internal Communications Survey and staff committees. Foster an atmosphere of transparency in decision-making by library leadership through implementing staff suggestions when possible and explaining why some suggestions may not be feasible.

Implementation and Evaluation

CCPL STRATEGIC PLAN

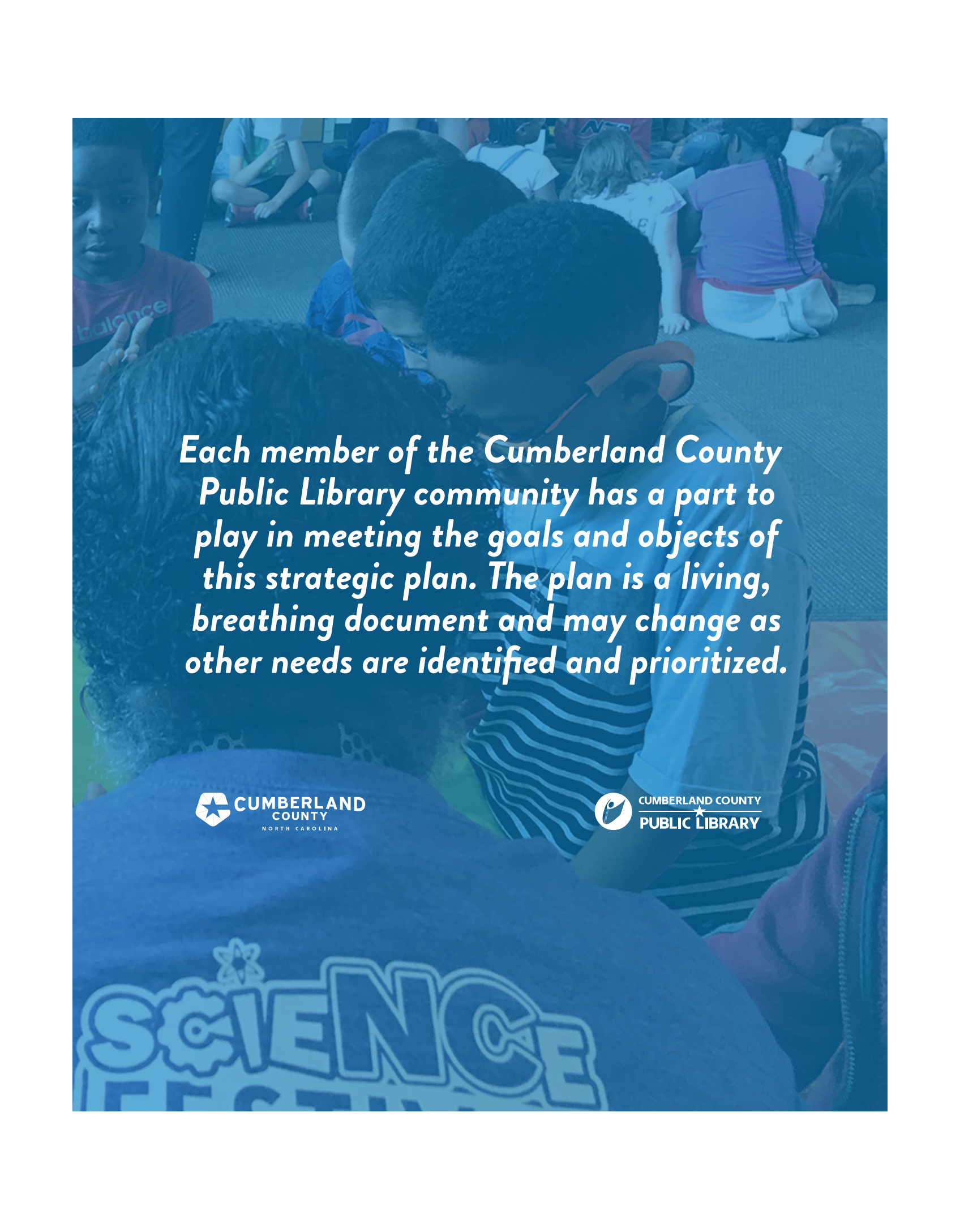
2022-2025



Implementation and Evaluation

Each Branch and Division Manager will work with their staff to develop location-specific tasks (e.g., weekly story times or other programs) that support outlined steps toward established goals. Plans will be discussed during quarterly Director visits and with managers and Leadership Team on a regular basis.

The library will implement a strategic planning review team to meet regularly throughout the year to assess progress toward our targeted metrics and to identify areas of emphasis and growth. This group will report findings to stakeholders at regular intervals, and the library will publish an annual report each fiscal year detailing progress towards the plan's goals and objectives.



Each member of the Cumberland County Public Library community has a part to play in meeting the goals and objects of this strategic plan. The plan is a living, breathing document and may change as other needs are identified and prioritized.



SCIENCE