

For this assignment, I chose to focus on our local Hillsborough County Library System's Strategic Plan (The Plan) from 2020. The planning for the 2020 strategic plan began in the Spring of 2016 which led to the following three and a half years of programming and outreach to the community to include them in its formation. To begin, the plan outlines the outline of their plan and how they came to gather its information, focusing on the important input that was sourced from the local community. I found it interesting that instead of just using a standard surveying method to collect this information, the library took the extra step in this data collection process to host different open houses for its local users and other community partners to speak with the library staff and observe the use and operation of the libraries. Because it is a public library, with multiple wings across the county, reaching into the community I feel is one of the best moves for this specific plan as it can capture a wide array of likes, dislikes, ideas, needs, and comments from the people it serves. This library system seems very in tune and aware of what it is their patrons need and want, and seeks to honor that in their development. Other than describing its data collection process, the plan does not go into much detail as to other factors how this plan became structured, or what input the internal staff had in its final product. However, they were very apparent in their environmental analysis when constructing this plan, so not including their potential SWOT analysis was most likely due to wanting to avoid confusion from field-specific lingo or decisions. As I have mentioned in my previous discussion post, I find that one of the biggest issues within librarianship is the lack of understanding of our needs and importance within communities by our users and partners. Libraries have seemingly held a standard and basic definition to those outside the field and are constantly undervalued for the programs, services, and information we have to offer. Our informational institutions have come far from just being a warehouse for borrowable books and print.

The plan also provides a quick snapshot on its first page as to the aspirations that it aligns with and how that aligns with the goals of its community. Having this message front and center helps readers understand what the premise of the plan is going to be about without getting caught up in specific terminology and shows how their feedback is being internally developed. The three main aspirations for the Hillsborough County Libraries are: (1) Discover: Well-organized and easily accessible materials in a variety of formats; (2) Engage: Assistance and instruction on using library collections, technology instruction, and cultural events; and (3) Transform: Meaningful engagement in the community by bringing our resources and services directly to our citizens. The three aspirations as then attributed to four key functionalities of the libraries, which are: (1) Culture and leisure; (2) Technology and information; (3) Education; and (4) Community engagement. They show a lot of dedication to their programming and growth throughout the rest of the document, showcasing on each remaining page the tangible steps and goals they have. Each of the different aspirations demonstrates a commitment to the community by offering easily read bullet points that encompass the general ideas of what they will be doing throughout this strategic plan. They describe points such as "support[ing] local creativity through [their] collections, collaborative spaces, events, and classes," and "[by] extend[ing] opportunities to bring technology and the internet home through laptop and tablet lending programs". They also provide smaller mission statements for each of the four functionalities of the library, giving further explanation as to their overall goals. Another part of the plan that I

thoroughly enjoyed was the quotes from local public library directors on each page, each of them showing their dedication and passion behind their library counties and their communities. I feel as though this is a very nice touch added by the library administration to show involvement from all levels.

I believe that this strategic plan hits all of the major points needed for its success and that it did a very good job of presenting this plan in a digestible manner. They are clear about their mission how they are going to reach it, they set clear goals and opportunities for patron and community partner involvement while already showcasing their established programs, and why they find these steps of development important for their growth as well as the communities. I did not expect them to lay out their financial budget, however, I think it would have been a good incentive to promote the donations they have received (if any) and how that money has benefited some of the non-profit efforts they have made, such as their Young Reader's Initiative, the Mobile Interactive Literacy Opportunity, and the Children's Library Foundation. They also could have been more in-depth as to the upcoming projects or programs that they would be offering to generate excitement and engagement within the community. Some of the bullet points are a bit general in their description of plans for the library, whereas having more concrete examples could provide better outreach. Lastly, providing a time frame as to when certain changes were occurring or programs would be happening would have also been a great addition to add more palpability to the plan, as again I previously mentioned, it remains a tad general in some areas. This overall plan was quite comparable, if not a little more in-depth, than the other public library strategic plans that were offered in this assignment. Orange County's Library System plan was quite bare compared to Hillsborough's, barely spanning a page and being very cut and dry with their goals, and West Florida had a shorter, but similar strategic plan. My assumptions based on the generalities of these plans have to do with the funding they receive and their inability to set any hard promises given that library use and popularity is not 100% predictable from year to year. Academic libraries can be more predictable given they can more specifically read the needs of their students and faculty.

Resources:

Administration, L. (2018, July). *Strategic plan: 2020 VISION HCPLC*. Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative. <https://hcplc.org/2020-Vision.pdf>

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Board of Governance, W. (2019, November). *West Florida Public Libraries: Informing people. empowering lives*. MyWFPL.com. <https://mywfpl.com/>

Moran, B. B., & Morner, C. J. (2017). *Library and information center management, 9th edition*. ABC-CLIO, LLC.