



MICHIGAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

2023 - 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

BACKGROUND

Libraries throughout Michigan are centers for learning and self-discovery, providing free and open access to information to all residents. Libraries are simultaneously community centers, tourist destinations, places to read, places to gather and socialize, places to study, and places to learn – cultural institutions in the heart of every community, and on every campus, throughout Michigan.

With a goal to help public, academic, cooperatives, school and special libraries and library professionals succeed, the Michigan Library Association (MLA) is recognized statewide and nationally as the leading statewide association with a 132-year record of quality services and programs focused on ensuring the health and vitality of these key cultural institutions. MLA serves as a forum for collaboration, cooperation and partnerships, cultivating cutting-edge ideas and awareness of best practices in an open and supportive culture.

MLA has advocated for libraries on behalf of the state's residents since 1891 and is uniquely positioned to be a service and advocacy organization. Our membership is comprised of more than 2500 library professionals, institutions, trustees, students and library supporters who come from urban, suburban and rural areas throughout Michigan. Although some services are exclusive to members, MLA's oversight of professional development, education and advocacy services assists all who are invested in building healthy and dynamic communities in all 83 Michigan counties.

Moving toward a fully remote workforce by 2024, MLA is led by an executive director with four additional full-time and one part-time staff members. MLA's 17-member Board of Directors is comprised of a geographically diverse group of library professionals who oversee strategic planning and policymaking.

As a service and advocacy organization, we derive and define the quality of our programs and services by a) meeting specific member and community needs; b) designing systems to meet those needs; and c) developing measurement systems to evaluate quality. The Board and staff pride themselves in gaining diverse member and community feedback through an inclusive planning process. The current strategic plan was adopted in 2020 (updated in 2021, 2022 and 2023) and continues to guide and bring clarity to the quality of our programming and services – allowing learning experiences, assistance, advocacy and community impact to be rich and complex.

Additionally, we form strong inclusive work groups and standing committees representing diverse community partners who guide and contribute their expertise to a collective vision. We mold and shape their ideas so the quality of the final product and/or service incorporates many perspectives and matches our constituents' needs.

Above all else, MLA serves as a champion of access and stands strong to protect Intellectual Freedom as a core value of the library profession and a basic right in our democratic society. Our goal is to protect Michiganders' right to read by opposing attempts to ban books from Michigan libraries, educating the public about the right to read, opposing any legislation that infringes upon First Amendment rights and ensuring that librarians across Michigan will be entrusted to continue to do their jobs and serve the needs of ALL individuals and communities.

We are deeply committed to the statewide agenda to leverage the library profession in Michigan to spur economic growth and build community prosperity. By continuing our work in education, advocacy and direct assistance in rural, suburban and urban areas, we will continue to build services around the special and unique needs of all libraries in every region of our state.

OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING

In June 2019, the Board of Directors began the process of developing a new, three-year strategic plan for the Michigan Library Association (MLA). The desired goal of the planning process was to clarify and guide MLA in how best to utilize our time and resources in advancing the library community and meeting the future needs of all of our key stakeholders.

- Mission and vision development sessions were held at the June 2019 Board retreat and the September 2019 Board meeting led by NEW Center in Ann Arbor. Discussion took place around the challenges facing the library community and the trends we must be aware of in advancing the library profession.
- A survey of MLA members was sent out in September 2019 with 480 responses within a 10-day period which equates to an 18% response rate.
- NEW conducted five strategic interviews with leaders of key library service organizations including the Library of Michigan, Michigan Academic Library Association (MiALA), Michigan Association for School Librarians (MASL), Michigan Cooperative Directors Association (MCDA), and Midwest Collaborative Library Services (MCLS).
- Between June 2019 and November 2019, the MLA Executive Director arranged 12 site visits with Board members to ask them individually about their feelings of success and concern. In addition, 15 additional site visits/listening tours were held at libraries throughout the state to gather input.
- A small sub-committee of the Board was selected to help the MLA Executive Director analyze the findings and help guide the writing of the initial plan from December 2019 to March 2020.
- Adoption of the revised strategic plan by the MLA Board of Directors took place at the March 13, 2020 Board meeting and affirms the intent and direction articulated by the mission, vision and goals.
- The Board also affirmed that this is a “rolling” plan and will be assessed and updated annually to make sure we remain relevant, continue to address the needs of the field, and address achievements of MLA.
- This strategic plan is not intended to be a “to-do” list nor is it a comprehensive description of the MLA portfolio of activities. This is a directional document and statement of priorities for the future.
- Accomplishing these initiatives will move the association closer to its envisioned future. The goals are deliberately broad to enable our association the flexibility to be nimble in response to rapid change and new opportunities that support the foundational goals.
- In July 2021, July 2022 and August 2023, MLA gathered a small group of key stakeholders who reviewed the planning document and made updates that addressed achievements and changes for 2021-2023, 2022-2024, and 2023-2025.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

We can't do this alone. It is only by shared influence and learning that the Michigan Library Association can affect greater change and build the value and importance of all libraries through the entire state. While we work with many decision makers and influencers, our primary stakeholders include:

- Library staff working at public, school, academic, tribal and special collection libraries, regional consortia and the Michigan Cooperative Directors Association.
- Governing bodies at public, school and academic institutions.
- Students at the University of Michigan, Wayne State University School of Information Science, as well as Oakland Community College Library Services and Technology Associates program.
- Retired library staff and trustees.
- Leaders of other statewide and national library service organizations and cultural institutions.
- Private sector leaders from businesses and foundations.
- Public sector leaders/elected officials including mayors, city/county managers, city/county council members, commission members, legislators, and others at the federal, state and local levels.
- Influencers including philanthropists, patrons and civic leaders.

MLA MISSION & VISION

VISION

The Michigan Library Association is an indispensable resource and valued leader, partner and advocate for Michigan libraries.

MISSION

The Michigan Library Association leads the advancement of all Michigan libraries through advocacy, education and engagement.

BELIEFS & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We believe that all libraries are central to the intellectual and creative lives of the people they serve.
- We believe in a member-focused environment –where members’ opinions are gathered, vetted and analyzed to establish the direction and priorities of MLA.
- We believe that across all library types, we share a deep commitment to the enduring value and role of libraries in our communities, in our schools and campuses, and within our businesses.
- We believe in equal and free access to information and knowledge.
- We believe in an individual’s right to privacy.
- We believe in the spirit of collaboration and building strong, diverse alliances, and that greater impact is made when we work together toward a common goal.
- We believe in life-long learning – being well-informed and well-trained to address and cultivate cutting-edge ideas and best practices in the 21st Century.
- We believe in being transparent, fair and ethical. When we are transparent, we invite trust by revealing we have nothing to hide.
- We believe that by investing in equity, diversity, accessibility and belonging that all our members will feel welcomed by MLA and will be energized and empowered to embrace an information-driven world with open eyes, hearts and minds.

TAGLINE: “STRONGER TOGETHER”

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Strategic planning and setting priorities assume that we will be quick to respond to a dynamic, changing environment, which may require changes in the future. Following an internal assessment of our programming and resources, as well as an assessment of community and stakeholder needs, we determined the following strategic priorities that will enhance and guide our work within all of our goals and objectives on the following pages:

EMPOWERING MEMBERS:

We know that any organization's health and prosperity is directly influenced by the mental and physical health, well-being and safety of its employees. We believe that it is critical for MLA to promote and expand our work to bring focus to a library's human resource and knowledge which will result in a healthier and more productive workforce. We are ready to identify, engage and mentor those newer to the field who are shaping it for the future.

PROTECTING THE FIRST AMENDMENT:

Intellectual freedom is a core value of the library profession and a basic right in our democratic society. We must protect Michiganders' right to read, oppose attempts to ban books from Michigan libraries, educate the public about the right to read, oppose any legislation that infringes upon First Amendment rights and ensure that librarians across Michigan will be entrusted to continue to do their jobs and serve the needs of ALL individuals and communities.

FUTURE READY LIBRARIES:

We are ready to let go of outdated or restrictive practices. We are open to innovation from inside and outside of the library field. Becoming future ready means being visionary and scaling up capabilities and capacity relevant to future global and societal trends. Libraries must proactively embrace advancements and make regular shifts in their practices in order to stay ahead of and meet the needs of the community.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND BELONGING:

We are committed to ensuring that all individuals who apply to, work with or otherwise interact with MLA are treated with fairness and respect and accorded equal opportunity. As a statewide organization, it is important that our programs and services are inclusive of all library personnel in all cities, townships, and villages, in rural, suburban and urban areas in both the Upper and Lower Peninsula. MLA will embrace, respect and adhere to the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act as it guides our work.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS:

We share a deep commitment to strengthening all libraries in the ecosystem – libraries serving residents from the very young to the very old – and valuing and promoting how they intersect and contribute to each other's success. It is our work to build bridges and advance critical conversations with other service partners including the Library of Michigan, MASL, MiALA, FOML, MCLS, MCDA and regional consortia, as well as cultural organizations, publishers, advocacy organizations and other state and national library associations. We recognize that by working collaboratively among ourselves, and in partnership with those outside the library profession, we will be successful in creating a strong, united library field.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following strategic priorities will enhance and guide our work within all our goals and objectives – Empowering Members; Protecting the First Amendment; Future Ready Libraries; Equity, Diversity, Accessibility and Belonging; and Collaboration and Partnerships.

GOAL I: ADVOCACY

MLA will form a collaborative statewide advocacy network, amplifying the importance and value of all libraries throughout Michigan.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Position MLA as a legislative advocate, authoritative source of information, and the collective voice for all Michigan libraries on issues impacting Michigan's libraries.

- Proactively identify and analyze current issues and emerging trends that impact libraries.
- Actively engage more members, library personnel and supporters to serve as advocates at the local, state and national levels to increase local and statewide elected official's knowledge of and support for library services.
- Develop training and messaging to increase engagement.
- Effectively use an array of communication vehicles to communicate quickly and efficiently issues of concern and importance to the library field.
- Seek and identify other statewide partners to identify and respond to shared goals as we promote issues and challenges facing libraries.

OBJECTIVE 2:

MLA will champion access for all and be a stalwart protector of First Amendment rights as provided by the U.S. Constitution.

- Maintain and update the MI Right to Read website with appropriate content, tools, and communications that elicit immediate action.
- Continue to build a statewide coalition of citizens to address the growing challenges.
- Implement a robust media campaign to address censorship and book challenges as well as campaign values of candidates
- Continue to connect with legislators, legislative staff members and candidates for office about the facts that protect intellectual freedom.
- Work with library service partners, like the Michigan Cooperative Directors Association to be responsive to requests for assistance.
- MLA will promote and support resources, programs, services and initiatives that are inclusive of our diverse community, abilities, identities and voices.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Advocate the interests of Michigan's libraries through legislation and a commitment to ensure robust state and federal funding.

- Promote the interests of Michigan's libraries and the essential services they provide to citizens throughout the state.
- Protect and increase state funding during state budget deliberations.
- Ensure that the Governor and legislature understand the value of libraries, the role they play in their local communities, and the importance of library funding.
- Research, promote and implement alternative funding options for Michigan libraries.

OBJECTIVE 4:

MLA will communicate the value and importance of libraries to the general public.

- Increase public awareness of the value of libraries and position them as an essential public service.
- Establish a sustained and meaningful discourse on the value of libraries to Michigan residents – through public relations campaigns and other marketing initiatives – resulting in stakeholder ambassadorship and engagement.
- Increase outreach to the mainstream media about the importance and value of libraries and add their achievements through op-eds, letters to the editor, articles, etc.
- MLA will celebrate and share stories of libraries and library workers' successes and challenges.
- Promote statewide and national events geared to residents to appreciate what libraries, authors and illustrators offer.

The following strategic priorities will enhance and guide our work within all our goals and objectives – Empowering Members; Protecting the First Amendment; Future Ready Libraries; Equity, Diversity, Accessibility and Belonging; and Collaboration and Partnerships.

GOAL II: KNOWLEDGE

MLA will inspire and inform all library personnel through high-quality professional development, educational workshops and leadership opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Develop high-quality, unsurpassed education and training and position MLA as the producer of premier statewide educational events.

- Deliver knowledge-based information that is essential to the effective governance, administration, promotion, and operations for Michigan’s libraries.
- Identify and support the evolving skill sets needed to operate and lead dynamic and vibrant library services.
- Create and deliver a comprehensive array of value-added, high quality educational content and programs that address members’ needs, develop outstanding library staffs, and enhance the services of their libraries.
- Utilize technology and alternative formats to deliver education content including webinars, online, self-guided, webcasts, etc.
- Create cost-effective educational programming that meets the needs of Michigan’s libraries and respects their geographic location, size, and limited economic resources.
- Provide sessions/events that address the intellectual freedom and the health and well-being of library staff members.
- Support accessibility needs of participants.
- Strive to host events in a sustainable and accessible manner.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Create professional development opportunities to build future ready cohorts of library administrators, staff members, trustees and students.

- Create and deliver a comprehensive array of value-added, high quality educational content and programs that address and highlight members’ needs based on their positions.
- Create and promote content development that aligns to the strategic priorities of MLA.
- Explore and expand opportunities to partner with other statewide library service organizations as well as other statewide municipal organizations.
- Strive to host events in a sustainable and accessible manner.
- Elevate library work as a valued profession and engage students in developing a commitment to the library profession.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Position MLA as a clearinghouse for assistance, consulting, mentorship and resources to library personnel on challenges faced in their daily work.

- Explore the development and production of a comprehensive multi-year salary and benefits survey.
- Utilize the MLA websites to categorize research and resources for MLA Members.
- Strengthen and continue to identify and engage a network of mentors that can help strengthen the field.
- Create opportunities for informal connections/relationships to flourish member-to-member.

The following strategic priorities will enhance and guide our work within all our goals and objectives – Empowering Members; Protecting the First Amendment; Future Ready Libraries; Equity, Diversity, Accessibility and Belonging; and Collaboration and Partnerships.

GOAL III: COMMUNITY

MLA will be a welcoming and inclusive professional community of key stakeholders.

OBJECTIVE 1:

MLA will be a forum for collaboration, cooperation and partnerships.

- Identify, define and prioritize shared opportunities with other library service organizations including Library of Michigan, Michigan Cooperative Directors Association, Regional Consortia, FOML, MASL, MiALA and MCLS.
 - Identify, define and prioritize shared opportunities with other statewide and regional professional and cultural service organizations.
 - Work in partnership with faculty at schools of library and information science to advance the profession.
 - Work in partnership, when necessary, with the Michigan Municipal League, the Michigan Township Association, the Michigan Association of Counties and others with a focus on governmental organizations' needs.
 - Through our work, MLA will position Michigan as a library leader, including participating as an active chapter with the American Library Association (ALA).
 - As book challenges become more pronounced, develop new relationships with auxiliary organizations like EveryLibrary, Equality Michigan, the ACLU, GLAAD, the Freedom to Read Foundation, PEN America, the National Coalition Against Censorship, etc.
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OBJECTIVE 2:

Increase cross-cultural competencies among MLA staff, directors and members.

- Explore best practices from inside and outside of the library community.
 - Review the committee and volunteer system for functionality, diversity and inclusivity.
 - Establish a core group from MLA members to develop an Equity, Diversity, Accessibility and Belonging action plan in compliance and in accordance with the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.
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OBJECTIVE 3:

Increase opportunities for networking and informal professional development.

- Schedule informal site visits and listening tours throughout Michigan.
- Create opportunities for informal gatherings when attending national and regional conferences for Michigan members.
- Create opportunities for informal connections/relationships to flourish member-to-member.
- Facilitate membership engagement and mentorship through member-to-member interactions.

The following strategic priorities will enhance and guide our work within all our goals and objectives – Empowering Members; Protecting the First Amendment; Future Ready Libraries; Equity, Diversity, Accessibility and Belonging; and Collaboration and Partnerships.

GOAL IV: ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

MLA will be an innovative and creative association that maintains the highest professional standards in its internal operations in order to advance its mission.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Organizational Structure

- Sustain an organizational structure that is flexible, sustainable, inclusive and responsive to members' needs, inspires member engagement, and reinforces organizational success.
 - Continue to build and promote a strategic, mission focused organization through robust discussion, review of strategic plan, and training for Board members.
 - Seek and adapt to new trends and models for association and membership organizations.
 - Promote organizational and operational decision-making that is data-driven.
 - Cultivate leaders and ambassadors within MLA who aspire to guide the organization and actively engage in growing and strengthening the professional association.
 - Establish an organizational culture that recognizes and promotes equity, diversity, accessibility and belonging.
 - Move the organization from a physical location to a fully remote organization by July 2024.
 - Build internal camaraderie and pride in MLA leadership.
 - Develop a succession plan for Board and staff leadership.
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OBJECTIVE 2:

Financial Sustainability

- Increase opportunities for non-dues revenue, grant funding and promotion of donations and legacy gifts.
 - Promote organizational and operational decision-making that is financially sound.
 - Assure that the appropriate resources are in place to retain a competent staff to accomplish organizational goals and objectives.
 - Increase opportunities and engagement of vendors and sponsors through programs and events.
 - Continue to build a strong membership base.
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OBJECTIVE 3:

Membership Recruitment and Retention

- Adopt strategies for recruiting, maintaining and retaining members to increase membership at all levels.
- Create multiple opportunities and pathways for member involvement.
- Explore and implement ways to increase membership satisfaction.
- Evaluate and offer new and increased benefits to members.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Technology

- Effectively use new technologies to meet members' needs for fast and efficient access to valuable information and resources.
 - In preparation to move to a fully remote workforce, maintain up-to-date equipment and provide assurances for robust data integrity.
 - Provide accessible alternatives for program/events/communications utilizing new technologies that are cost effective.
 - Increase use of the learning management system (LMS) on MLA website for on demand programming alternatives.
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OBJECTIVE 5:

Communications

- Implement an overall marketing plan/brand that increases visibility of MLA through its "human" face – our members.
 - Support communication/marketing consistency in branding and writing styles.
 - Maintain a vibrant, relevant and intuitive web presence and social media platform. Increase high-quality social media presence.
 - Increase public relations opportunities through speaking opportunities, blogging, and by contributing articles.
 - Celebrate MLA milestones with appropriate communications.
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OBJECTIVE 6:

Staffing

- Support and increase staff interactions with the library community and at library conferences.
- Invest in increased professional development training for staff to strengthen their capacity to meet member and library field needs.
- Explore and operationalize ways to utilize interns in delivering programs and services.
- A succession plan will be developed for key leadership positions, taking into consideration the values of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in any decision making in the future.
- With all staff replacements, MLA will develop job descriptions that take into consideration the values of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and throw out a broader net for recruitment.

MLA LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Dillon Geshel, President-Elect

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Lisa Waskin, Secretary/Treasurer

Superior District Library

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Library of Michigan

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West Bloomfield Township Library

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*Grand Rapids Community College Library
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