MOUNTAIN REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM STRATEGIC PLAN

FY23 - FY25

Mountain Regional Library System

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR:

The process of creating this strategic plan for the Mountain Regional Library System has been a rewarding and eye-opening experience for many involved including myself. The efforts of MRLS trustees, staff, and patrons have been instrumental in the development and creation of this plan. I would like to thank everyone who has participated in the research and development phase and will soon begin working in the implementation phases to come. It is my hope that this plan will lead to a more dynamic, diverse, inclusive and balanced library system for years to come.

There are certainly some aspirational components to this plan, however, most of what is hoping to be accomplished is grounded in the belief that these objectives and strategic priorities are paramount to evolving into the library system our community desires and deserves. We choose to believe that through continual tremendous efforts from staff, community buy-in, and the expert leadership of our trustees this system will achieve all that follows on this strategic plan and more.

The creation of this plan has been a journey consisting of meetings, community facing surveys, trustee input and more. We look forward to continuing the journey, planning for the future, and presenting the very best version of MRLS to our communities.

Sincerely,

Heath Lee - Library Director
Mountain Regional Library System

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to **provide clarity on the strategic direction of the organization.**

The strategic plan takes the form of a traditional strategic plan with large, overarching goals supported by objectives and tactics. For the purposes of this plan, we used the following definitions:

Strategic Priorities: Strategic Priorities are the big ideas that support our mission, vision, and values. They set the course for the next 3 years. These are the destinations.

Objectives: Objectives are measurable milestones that indicate we are reaching our goals. Objectives are reviewed annually, but should rarely change. These are the agreed-upon routes that will get us to the destinations.

Tactics: Tactics are the specific activities we will do to accomplish the strategic priorities, meet the stated objectives, and fulfill the mission and vision of MRLS. Tactics are the individual stops along the process, providing more individualized measurable stops throughout the journey.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT. :

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to **provide clarity on the strategic direction of the organization.**

This Strategic Plan was the result of combined efforts from many contributors who all should be recognized.

Input and feedback from the patrons of Mountain Regional Library System, Mountain Regional Library System Boards of Trustees, staff and administration was invaluable to the creation and success of this project. Without each individual's time, input and honest feedback in surveys, staff meetings, and board meetings, the production of this document would not have been possible.

To document our progress towards reaching our Strategic Priorities and Objectives, we will be developing target measurements. The target measurements and results will be updated on a yearly basis based on previous successes and outcomes. Also, realistic targets and tactics will be added and updated by Mountain Regional Library System staff and administration to indicate how they will contribute to specific priorities and objectives.

Mountain Regional
Library System

VISION

Improve the quality of life for our communities by providing focused services and materials.

MISSION

Be available, important and welcoming to our communities

SYSTEM VALUES

Mountain Regional Library System will be:

- Community Focused
- Educational and Entertaining
- Good Stewards of Our Resources
- Inclusive
- Patron Centered

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SUMMARY OF OUR RESEARCH FINDINGS

Population and Growth Expectations

The Mountain Regional Library System will be challenged to provide services to an expanding population.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 2010 and 2020, the population of Fannin, Towns and Union Counties increased 13.9% from 54,830 to 62,444.

By 2030 the population of the 3 counties is projected to be at least 65,000 resulting in an increase of an additional 4.1%. This is the current projection of the Georgia's Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. The projection includes no growth for Fannin County over the next 8 years while Towns and Union will see growth consistent with the overall growth of the state of Georgia.

Population growth will happen across all age groups without any specific segment pushing an abnormal percentage of the population expansion.

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SUMMARY OF OUR RESEARCH FINDINGS

Results of the SWOT Analysis

On the following page are the summary responses of the SWOT analysis generated by the surveys completed by staff, trustees and patrons. The top 4 areas of each SWOT quadrant are listed along with the top result for each category.

The results of SWOT analysis were heavily used in the creation of and direction of this strategic plan.

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SUMMARY OF SWOT ANALYSIS

Strenghts	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Staff- Biggest asset	Technology - Public Computers	Programs - Children's Programs	External Threats - Covid-19
Materials - Great selections	Access - Need personal spaces	Materials - Diversity of collection	Finances - Committed funding
Programs - Literacy programs	Materials - eBooks	Access - More operational hours	Internal Threats - Lack of programming space
Tech -Wi-Fi access	Programs - Children's programs	Community Focus - Partnerships	Staffing - Lack of specializations

Mountain Regional Library System

MRLS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

ACCESS AND EQUITY

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Strategic Priorities are the big ideas that support our mission, vision, and values.

The priorities were established by the MRLS Executive Committee and Administration.

Mountain Regional Library System

Mountain Regional Library System Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025

Mountain Regional Library System
Connect • Learn • Enjoy

Our Strategic Priorities

Mission

Improve the quality of life for our communities by providing focused services and materials

Vision

Be available, important and welcoming to our communities

System Values

Community Focused
Educational and Entertaining
Good Stewards of our Resources
Inclusive
Patron Centered

Access and Equity

- Maintain and expand the diversity of offerings
- Provide great library environments and spaces
- Increase library cards access for all
- Focus on underserved areas and patrons

Community Connections

- Expand community partnerships
- Increase outreach efforts
- Increase visibility in community

Operational Excellence

- Improve communications across all operational channels
- Improve administrative performance and outcomes
- Enhance customer service to meet community needs
- Provide safe and engaging workspaces

Technology Integration

- Embrace technologies that improve our library services
- Maintain and expand access to digital information
- Implement digital services to meet expectations of our communities

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Strategic Priority 1 - MRLS strives for Access and Equity

- Objective 1.1 - Expansion of Current Diversity of Offerings
  - Tactics:
    - 1.1.1 - Greater focus on materials written by underrepresented groups in our current holdings
    - 1.1.2 - Expand Bilingual collection
    - 1.1.3 - Improve focus on collection additions for younger populations such as Manga and graphic novels
    - 1.1.4 - Conduct periodic surveys to gauge diversity in offerings
    - 1.1.5 - Complete a collection audit with the focus on diversity of current holdings

- Objective 1.2 - Provide Great Library Environments and Spaces
  - Tactics:
    - 1.2.1 - More private areas for patrons, like study carrels
    - 1.2.2 - Incorporate themed displays and welcoming decorations
    - 1.2.3 - Add study rooms to the Union County Library
    - 1.2.4 - Complete the Fannin Library Building Project
    - 1.2.5 - Offer a variety of learning tools and resources for patrons of all ages

Strategic Priority 1 - MRLS strives for Access and Equity

- Objective 1.3 - Increase Library Card Access for All
  - Tactics:
    - 1.3.1 - Remove barriers to getting and using a library card
    - 1.3.2 - Have sign-up days at festivals, farmers markets, etc.
    - 1.3.3 - Improve ways that homeless can access library resources, for example, if they have no i.d. to use computer or get digital card
    - 1.3.4 - Student access to library cards for Towns County students via Student PLAY cards

- Objective 1.4 - Focus on Underserved Areas and Patrons
  - Tactics:
    - 1.4.1 - More outreach to areas such as nursing homes and assisted living facilities to sign people up with library cards and/or Libby
    - 1.4.2 - Provide outreach to daycares / preschools for children who have working parents

Strategic Priority 2 - MRLS will seek out new and strengthen current Community Connections

- Objective 2.1 Increase Visibility in Community
  - Tactics:
    - 2.1.1 - Expand our current advertising campaigns
    - 2.1.2 - Add consistent branding for the system and individual branches
    - 2.1.3 - Have representation in community groups and organizations

- Objective 2.2 Strengthen and Expand Relationships with Community Partners
  - Tactics:
    - 2.2.1 - Continue working one on one with schools and their media specialists.
    - 2.2.2 - Locate new partnerships to reach new audiences
    - 2.2.3 - Create and update Memorandums of Understandings with funding agencies and local organizations

- Objective 2.3 Increase Outreach Efforts
  - Tactics:
    - 2.3.1 - Develop a system outreach kit that can be used by all branches.
    - 2.3.2 - Attend community events where large groups will be attending

Strategic Priority 3 - MRLS will strive for Operational Excellence

- Objective 3.1 - Improve Communications Across All Operational Channels
  - Tactics:
    - 3.1.1 - Improve upon more frequently communicating with our boards of trustees
    - 3.1.2 - Improve upon timely communication from administration that affects branches and front line staff
    - 3.1.3 - Develop shared documents containing information about services that have been used before, contact info, and review of their performance
    - 3.1.4 - Improve upon timely communication from administration that directly affects managerial staff
    - 3.1.5 - Implement a channel to allow any staff to make suggestions on areas of improvement

- Objective 3.2 - Improve Administrative Performance and Outcomes
  - Tactics:
    - 3.2.1 - Incorporate more data analysis in decision making processes
    - 3.2.2 – Offer additional professional development opportunities for staff
    - 3.2.2 - Create a dedicated Financial Services Assistant position
    - 3.2.3 - Create a permanent Technical Services Assistant position
    - 3.2.4 - Continue to train and inform boards of trustees on responsibilities and expected outcomes of the boards
    - 3.2.5 - Focus on areas important to retaining current and future system employees

Strategic Priority 3 -
MRLS will strive for Operational Excellence

- Objective 3.3 - Enhance Customer Service To Meet Community Needs
  - Tactics:
    - 3.3.1 - Enhance training on certain procedures & policies
    - 3.3.2 - Provide access to surveys focused on community needs
    - 3.3.3 - Examine the On-Boarding checklist to determine if updates are needed
    - 3.3.4 - Increase operational hours at branch locations

- Objective 3.4 - Provide Safe And Engaging Workspaces
  - Tactics:
    - 3.4.1 - Perform site evaluations and determine if areas of vulnerabilities and lack of security exists
    - 3.4.2 - Improve HVAC performance at Mountain Regional Library
    - 3.4.3 - Improve HVAC performance at Union County Library

Strategic Priority 4 - MRLS will blend contemporary Technology Integrations with existing service offerings

- Objective 4.1 Embrace Technologies That Improve Our Library Services
  - Tactics:
    - 4.1.1 - Introduce Self-Checkout Machines and Processes throughout the system
    - 4.1.2 - Add STEAM, literacy, and imaginative play kits, games that can be checked out
    - 4.1.3 - Digital Signage added to areas of high traffic
    - 4.1.4 - Integrate RFID technology into our circulation processes

- Objective 4.2 - Maintain And Expand Access To Digital Information
  - Tactics:
    - 4.2.1 - Offer technology classes for patrons
    - 4.2.2 - Formulate a Technology Plan
    - 4.2.3 - Expand our current digital offerings including providing more funding for digital offerings

Strategic Priority 4 -
MRLS will blend contemporary Technology Integrations with existing service offerings

- Objective 4.3 - Implement Digital Services To Meet Expectations Of Our Communities
  - Tactics:
    - 4.3.1 - Implement wireless printing across all branches
    - 4.3.2 - Continually improve the system website
    - 4.3.3 - Review what is being offered as a service on the public computing machines
    - 4.4.4 - Expand Wi-Fi services

OUR NEXT STEPS

The best plans are dynamic, flexible tools for continuous improvement. To build on the momentum generated by the Strategic Plan, Mountain Regional Library System will implement an ongoing program of oversight, resource development, assessment, and adjustment. With the system's mission as primary rationale, its vision as the purpose, and its core values as guides to decision making, the system is ensuring accountability, versatility, and rational decision-making.

The process begins with the Strategic Plan's areas of strategic priorities. The recommended tactics will be integrated into the system's business plan and shaped by the budget process. Library staff and administration will have the responsibility of overseeing implementation and consulting with groups directly involved in or affected by decisions. In the course of implementation, new issues, challenges, and ideas will undoubtedly emerge.

Through a process of deliberation and information gathering, new areas of primary objectives will emerge. In the course of annual business planning, staff will consider these new objectives while assessing overall to the date progress and reviewing output and outcome measures from the initial and previous years' initiatives. Staff may also identify issues that call for a fresh look or additional study and decision making.

Subsequently, the process never ceases and continual assessment will be prevalent. Reviews of budget priorities, service demands, feasibility and the effectiveness of the current list of Objectives and Tactics will happen at least annually. In a sense, the plan is always being constantly reviewed, evaluated, and updated.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is important to mention all the individuals and groups who were vital and played a huge role in the development of this project and have supported the project from infancy to completion.

Mountain Regional Library Board of Trustees

Executive Committee

Trish Allen, Chair
Kaye McCann, Vice-Chair
Nick Wimberley

Dionne Berrong
Carol Crawford
Stacy Head
Shirley Miller
Judy Slaton
John Thompson
Kathleen Tickner

MRLS Staff Leadership Team

Vicki Adkison, MRLS Assistant Director
Heather Welch, MRLS Public Services Coordinator
Vanessa Pittman, MRLS Technical Services Librarian
Susan Shook, MRLS Administrative Assistant
Susie Brendle, Union County Library Manager
Marlene Cannon, Towns County Library Manager
Monica Clark, Fannin County Library Manager

MRLS Staff for their shared opinions and responses

MRLS Patron and Public Responses

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