

**Mountain Regional Library System
Strategic Plan 2026 - 2029**



**Mountain Regional
Library System**

Final White Paper

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MRLS Director**

Message from the Director:

The development of this Strategic Plan for the Mountain Regional Library System has proven to be a deeply rewarding endeavor. The collective efforts of the MRLS Board of Trustees, staff, and patrons were instrumental in shaping this vision. We extend our sincere gratitude to those who contributed to the research and development phase and look forward to their continued partnership during the upcoming implementation. Our primary rationale remains the cultivation of a dynamic, diverse, and balanced library system that will serve our community for years to come.

While this plan includes aspirational elements, its core is grounded in the belief that these Areas of Focus and Objectives are paramount to the continued development of the library system our communities deserve. Through the ongoing dedication of our staff, strong community buy-in, and the expert leadership of our Trustees, we are confident the system will realize the goals outlined in this document and continue to evolve beyond them.

The creation of this plan represents a journey of collaborative information gathering, encompassing staff meetings, community-facing surveys, and trustee deliberation. We look forward to continuing this journey in the years ahead, ensuring that our planning and assessment processes result in the most versatile and effective version of the Mountain Regional Library System for our patrons.

Sincerely,



Executive Summary

The primary rationale for this Strategic Plan is to articulate a clear and definitive trajectory for the organization's strategic direction.

This document adheres to a traditional strategic framework, characterized by overarching Areas of Focus that are systematically supported by measurable Objectives and individual Action Items. To ensure a collaborative understanding throughout this endeavor, the following definitions have been established:

Areas of Focus: These represent the foundational concepts that encapsulate our mission, vision, and values, effectively charting our course for the upcoming three to four years.

Objectives: These function as measurable milestones that indicate our progress toward broader Areas of Focus; while they undergo annual review, they are intended to remain constant throughout the plan's duration.

Action Items: These are the distinct activities and individual projects instrumental to attaining our Areas of Focus, satisfying our stated Objectives, and fulfilling the mission and vision of the Mountain Regional Library System.

The development of this Strategic Plan represents a collaborative effort involving numerous contributors who deserve profound recognition. The invaluable input and feedback garnered from Mountain Regional Library System patrons, the Board of Trustees, staff, and administration were essential to the project's successful realization. Without the dedicated time and transparent perspectives shared through surveys, staff meetings, and board deliberations, the creation of this comprehensive document would not have been achievable.

To ensure diligent documentation of our progress toward the Areas of Focus and Objectives, we will establish specific target measurements. These metrics and their corresponding results will undergo annual refinement based on previous outcomes and successes. Furthermore, Mountain Regional Library System staff and administration will identify and update realistic targets and tactics, articulating how these individual efforts contribute to our broader priorities and objectives.

System Values

Patron-centered

Accountable

Trustworthy

Responsive

Open-minded

Necessary

Vision: To be the community hub for engagement and connection

Mission: Committed to providing our communities access to core resources focused on life-long learning, literacy and personal enrichment

Areas of Focus:

Branch Progression

- Prioritize staff training
- Offer diverse programmings for all ages
- Grow our patron base

Community Engagement

- Extend outreach efforts in all our communities
- Build lasting partnerships with local organizations
- Focus efforts to enhance community awareness

Regional Resources

- Match communities and library materials
- Enhance our library spaces and environments
- Adopt technologies to improve branch and patron experience

Organizational Stewardship

- Refine communication channels
- Maximize operational processes
- Improve working environments for all staff

Objectives

The list of objectives are tied to the primary Areas of Focus and not necessarily one or two particular goals. Individual action items will be implemented and tracked by the system.

Branch Progression:

- Expand staff training to be more comprehensive and focus driven
- Use available programming time and resources to offer more adult focused programs
- Create customer service standards for all MRLS employees
- Use accessible data to determine how to increase library card holders
- Implement strategies to quickly adapt to patrons' overall usage of the library

Community Engagement

- Ensure all MRLS communication mediums are accessible to all users
- Engage with community organizations and companies to expand community outreach
- Evaluate and implement focused marketing efforts to expand community awareness
- Become more integrated into our communities by taking part in community events and organizations
- Engage with each community to ensure what is being offered is meeting patron needs

Regional Resources

- Use accessible usage data to focus materials purchases with usage trends including non-English materials
- Expand the usable spaces at current library facilities
- Ensure the library environment is welcoming to all visitors at all times
- Expand how patrons can access the library and materials
- Eliminate materials and processes that are ineffective

Organizational Stewardship

- Maintain healthy relationships with all community funding partners
- Provide the best working environments for MRLS staff as possible
- Ensure regional policies and operational procedures meet community needs
- Evaluate and adjust any administrative inefficiencies

- Adjust communication procedures throughout MRLS ensuring effectiveness
- Encourage MRLS trustees to participate in relevant training

Next Steps

To sustain the momentum established by this Strategic Plan, the Library System will initiate a continuous framework for governance, resource allocation, evaluation, and strategic refinement.

Our methodology commences with the identified **Areas of Focus**; recommended **Action Items** will be systematically incorporated into the organizational business plan and refined through the budgetary process to fulfill defined **Objectives**. Staff and administration are tasked with the implementation, maintaining transparent dialogue with all stakeholders. We anticipate the implementation phase will reveal challenges and innovative opportunities.

Engaging in ongoing deliberation and collaborative information gathering will likely facilitate the emergence of new Objectives. During the annual business planning cycle, personnel will evaluate these evolving priorities while measuring progress. This iterative approach allows for the identification of areas requiring analysis or revised decision-making.

We will conduct at least an annual review of budgetary priorities, service requirements, and the overall feasibility and efficacy of current Objectives and Action Items. In this regard, the plan functions as a living document, subject to constant evaluation and systematic updates.

Acknowledgements

The realization of this project represents a collaborative effort involving numerous individuals and groups whose instrumental support and dedicated involvement from the project's inception through to its successful completion deserve profound recognition.

Mountain Regional Library System Board of Trustees

Jim Reynolds, Chair
Robert Head, Vice-Chair
Ron Bolin
Renee Deibert
Pon Shaw
Nick Wimberley

MRLS Patron and Public Responses

MRLS Leadership Team

Heather Welch, MRLS Branch Services
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Vanessa Pittman, MRLS Technical Services
Librarian
Marlene Cannon, Union County Library Manager
Monica Clark, Fannin County Library Manager
Kevin Kirby, Towns County Library Manager
Shawna Rose, Mountain Regional Library
Manager
MRLS Staff for their shared opinions and
responses

Resources:

Website - mountainlibrary.com/strategicplan2026