



2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan

Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County Library

June, 2022

Message from the Board Chair and Director of Library Services

We are proud to present SDG Library's new 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan. As the acute effects of the COVID-19 pandemic began to ebb, we took a moment to step away—from the relentless change and pivoting that has been required of us—to pause, reflect, and strategize.

The Board-led strategic planning process began with thorough engagement, with input from over 270 community members, patrons, staff members, partners, volunteers, and municipal stakeholders. We listened to the good and the hard-to-hear, to what our stakeholders value in our organization and where they see room for improvement.

We also looked inward, with an internal assessment of our operations, capacities, trends, and goals for the future.

With this information at hand, we came together to map out new strategic directions for the next four years, directions we believe leverage our best qualities, respond to the challenges of our time, and aspire to significant but realistic accomplishments.

We will continue to pursue what we do best—and what our stakeholders have told us they value most—by maintaining our print collections; continuing to expand our digital collections, services, and programming; and acting as a trusted, welcoming community hub. We will redouble our work to build awareness of SDG Library across the counties, ensuring many more are aware of how we offer so much more than just books. And we will strengthen our organization, ensuring it is a place where our staff and managers can grow and thrive.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the journey and took the time to share their thoughts and ideas. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with our communities on our journey ahead.

Sincerely,

Karen Franklin, MLIS APLL
Director of Library Services

Margaret MacDonald
Chair, Stormont, Dundas and
Glengarry County Library Board

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1. Organizational Snapshot

1.1. How We've Grown

Established in 1970 and open since 1971, the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County Library has grown to include:

- Over 14,000 registered members
- Over 332,000 library materials in circulation
- 15 branches
- An administration office
- Three (3) “Express Depots”
- Three (3) ‘Little Free Library’ locations
- Inter-branch courier service
- 10 full-time staff
- 32 part-time branch services staff

Current Services

Access to Information: Public access computers, books, DVDs, printed periodicals and eMagazines, eResources, online Learning platforms, Library of Things.

Programs: Virtual and in-person.

Circulation of Library materials: Print material, eBooks and eAudiobooks, DVDs, musical instruments, magazines, eResources, portable WiFi hotspots.

Other: Printing (including 3D) and fax services, exam invigilation, book clubs, MakerLab (media transfer, vinyl and laser cutting, robotics, etc.), Commissioner of Oaths.

1.2. Strategic Foundations

Mission

To connect communities through innovative services, literacy resources, independent learning, creative expression, leisure, and civic engagement.

Vision

To be “The Place” in SDG for learners, seekers, and explorers.

Values

Accessible: We strive to continually identify and reduce barriers to service and be responsive to the diverse needs of residents of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, or levels of socioeconomic status.

Equitable: We seek to provide an inclusive, non-judgmental environment in which everyone in the community feels safe, welcome, and comfortable, by focusing on building trusting, supportive connections.

Open: We commit to being honest and authentic in all our interactions, listening intently and supporting the development of genuine connections.

2. Strategic Directions

An effective **strategic plan** sets the foundation for a clear and focused future, uniting the organization under a common purpose and strategy.

Our strategic plan is given shape by our **strategic directions**, which provide clear focus and direction while still allowing us to respond and adapt as circumstances evolve over the coming years.

Each of our strategic directions include a corresponding set of tangible **commitments** and **targets** (aka “We will know we are successful when”).

Taken together, our strategic directions, commitments and targets will provide a strong framework for developing **annual operational plans** with **measurable goals** and **achievable objectives**.

A Board-Led Strategic Planning Process

SDG Library's Board of Directors led a strategic planning process based on best practice for non-profit organizations. The process included stakeholder engagement, research, a document review, and an environmental scan that situated the SDG Library within the larger context. Ongoing meetings were held with the Board, Director of Library Services, and staff, to work towards the development of the final strategy.

A Four-Year Plan

SDG Library is committing to a **four-year strategic plan with three (3) strategic directions.**

- **Growing Our Physical and Digital Infrastructure**
- **Conducting Community Outreach**
- **Strengthening Our Organization**

These directions are broad and oriented to the future—providing a clear focus and direction while still allowing us to respond and adapt as circumstances evolve over the years. These directions provide a strong framework for developing annual operational plans with measurable goals and achievable objectives.

2.1. **Strategic Direction: Physical and Digital Infrastructure**

The SDG Library has long been a pillar of the local community, acting as a source of knowledge and a hub of social connection. As the community around the library continues to evolve, the SDG Library will adapt to the emerging needs and interests by further adjusting, developing, and strengthening its physical and digital infrastructure.

Related Commitments

*Over the next four years, we will **grow our physical and digital infrastructure** by*

...

- **Digital Collection:** Investing in the library’s growing digital collection of eBooks, eAudiobooks, online periodicals, and other digital services and programming.
- **Print Collection:** Recognizing patrons’ diverse interests and differing levels of connectivity, ensuring the print collection is not left behind and contemporary material continues to be added.
- **Community Hub:** Exploring new, innovative opportunities to expand and enhance the in-person experience, recognizing the value of providing a free and public space where the individuals and groups can be together in community.
- **Facility Improvements:** Strategically exploring ways to best leverage and improve the facilities we have while exploring opportunities to centralize elements of SDG Library’s operations and increase efficiencies, such as the creation of a central administrative branch.
- **Accessibility:** Regularly exploring opportunities to make the library more accessible and its programs and services more equitable, including increases to our digital collections and services, expanded geographic coverage, varied opening hours, and additional bilingual collections and services.

We will know we are successful when –

- A clear communications strategy—to increase awareness and membership—has been developed and implemented.
- We see an increase in the number of “active members.”
- An asset management plan is in place to monitor the conditions and needs of the physical buildings.

2.2. Strategic Direction: Community Outreach

Those who know the library understand and appreciate the wide variety of benefits it brings to community. Those who are less familiar with the library could benefit from learning that the library has so much more to offer than just its physical collection of books.

SDG Library will invest in communication strategies and tactics to raise awareness of the wide variety of collections, services, and programming it has to offer, to support the attraction of new members and to raise engagement levels.

Related Commitments

*Over the next four years, we will **conduct community outreach** by ...*

- **Messaging:** Developing messaging that will showcase the library's role as a community and knowledge hub with a wide variety of resources, programming and services—extending far beyond their physical collection of books.
- **Outreach:** Remaining in the public eye by prioritizing regular, consistent communications, ensuring these efforts are bolstered by the necessary resources, including adequate staffing.
- **Community Engagement:** Exploring innovative ways to engage new audiences, including youth, and investing in mutually-beneficial partnerships to help spread awareness of the library and upcoming programs and events.

We will know we are successful when –

- New membership rates are growing at rate that matches the pace of community population growth.
- We experience an increase in the number of partnerships with community organizations and stakeholders.

2.3. Strategic Direction: Organizational Strength

To support and grow the library's collections, programs, and services, and to communicate them to the wider community, SDG Library will improve its organizational health and resilience. This will involve reviewing the current resource structure, ensuring the SDG Library is able to attract and retain quality staff, listening to its team members' priorities and concerns, and making sure that they are supported in their professional growth and development.

Related Commitments

*Over the next four years, we will **strengthen our organization** by ...*

- **Organizational Review and Improvements** Committing to conducting an organizational review and implementing the resulting strategies, with the goals of clarifying roles and expectations, balancing responsibilities and capacities, and potentially creating efficiencies through centralization and/or partnerships.
- **Great Place to Work:** Exploring opportunities to ensure that the SDG Library continues to be seen as an attractive place to work, incorporating innovative, low-cost options.
- **Monitoring and Feedback:** Implementing processes to regularly gather feedback and input from staff, to proactively identify and address any challenges and improve staff retention.
- **Professional Development and Succession:** Prioritizing budget-supported opportunities for professional development, to support recruitment and retention of staff and to develop in-house leaders who can be prepared to rise into management positions.

We will know we are successful when –

- All key staff positions have been filled.
- Communications and marketing priorities have been incorporated into the staffing structure and are functioning effectively.
- Budget-supported opportunities for professional development—to help bring people up through the organization—have been implemented.
- Quarterly staff “pulse” surveys have been implemented on an ongoing basis.
- A succession plan for senior management is in place.

3. Appendix: Stakeholder Engagement

3.1. Why Engage?

Leadership Through Genuine Engagement

Strategic plans that provide meaningful direction over the course of their stated duration rely on an authentic engagement process, one that genuinely seeks input and allows for those invested in the success of an organization to provide ideas, input, and feedback.

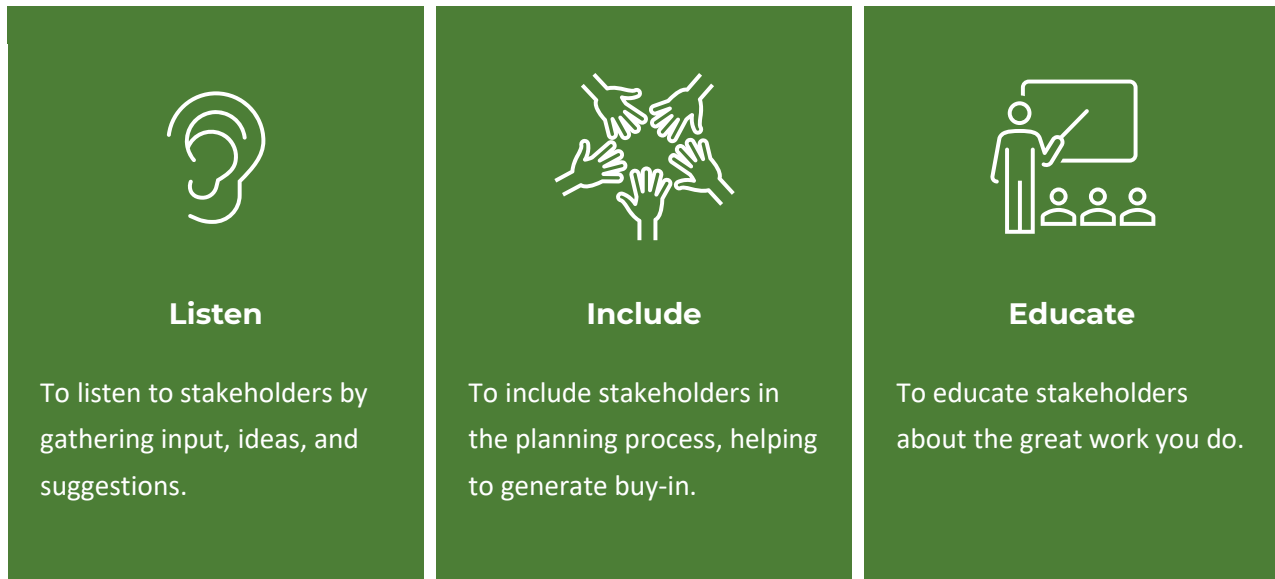
Properly conducted, stakeholder engagement is in no way an abdication or devolution of leadership.

It's the opposite.

Leaders who reach out to and seek the input of the people delivering or receiving services every day are far more likely to craft future strategic

directions that will resonate with those they affect, and those who must implement them.

The Multiple Purposes of Engagement



3.2. Engagement Process

Engagement served as the foundation for the process, informing subsequent discussion, deliberation, and decision-making.

The engagement process—developed and facilitated by Laridae, undertaken from February to March 2022—was designed to engage with and listen to the individuals who interact with Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County Library on a regular basis.

As a result of this engagement, our strategic plan is informed by experience, evidence, and the most broadly held perceptions of all those we serve.


Audiences

During the engagement process, we engaged SDG Library’s primary stakeholders.

Member and Non-Member Patrons	Management	Board Members	Municipal Stakeholders
Staff	Volunteers	Partner Organizations	Community Members

Stakeholder Participation

Participation during the engagement process was enthusiastic and honest.

 <p>Online Survey 250 Participants</p>	 <p>Focus Groups 19 Participants</p>	 <p>Key Person Interviews 3 Participants</p>
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3.3. Common Themes

The following themes capture some of the common sentiments we heard during the stakeholder engagement process.

Perceived Areas of Strength

Library staff are highly valued: The stakeholders consistently praised SDG Library staff's hard work, dedication, and friendliness. The staff are seen by the community as one of the library's greatest assets.

The community enjoys and supports SDG Library's collections, programs, and services: On the whole, stakeholders see the SDG Library as an asset to the community. Many noted that it significantly contributes to their wellness.

SDG Library's collection of physical books is appreciated: Stakeholders shared that they value SDG Library's collection of books and appreciate that, upon request, they can access materials from any branch. They felt it was important to maintain this physical collection, even as the digital collection continues to expand.

The growth of the digital collection—accelerated by the pandemic—is welcomed and encouraged: Stakeholders have expressed awareness and appreciation for SDG Library's growing digital collection. The convenience and accessibility of a remote catalogue is appreciated.

SDG Library is a valued, inclusive community hub: Stakeholders see SDG Library as a community hub whose value goes beyond the collections, services, and programs it offers. It is viewed as a place where community members can come to socialize and connect with their community. Especially in the context of the pandemic, it is seen as an antidote to the social isolation that many have experienced over the past two years. With the resources being available for free, it is seen as a space that all can access as equals.

Staff appreciate the support they receive from SDG Library: Staff expressed that they appreciate the support they receive—that SDG Library looks out for

their health and safety, they receive high-quality training, and SDG Library has done a good job listening to them and being responsive.

Supporters of SDG Library know it well: There is a recognized divide between those who are familiar with SDG Library and those who are not. Those who are familiar with SDG Library know that it has a lot more to offer than simply books.

Identified Challenges

Physical infrastructure has room for improvement: The importance of the physical presence of libraries within communities was frequently noted. That being said, several stakeholders noted that the **small size of some of the buildings** is a limiting factor, and that some of the buildings are in relatively poor condition.

In response, participants raised the following suggestions:

- Moving some programming to other locations, such as parks or other community spaces.
- Purchasing their own buildings, so that they can take care of their own maintenance.
- Partnering with other service providers to share new or existing spaces.

Accessibility: Geography, Language, Hours & Technology

- **Geography:** Ideally, stakeholders would like physical branches close to their location. A presence in Morewood was frequently requested. If a full branch isn't possible, stakeholders would like drop-off and pick-up depots.
- **Opening Hours:** Patrons are interested in more accessible hours, which sometimes means keeping libraries open longer, and in other cases means ensuring that they are open outside of standard business hours.
- **Language:** Several stakeholders brought up the importance of bilingual services.
- **Technology:** Although many stakeholders appreciate the growth of the digital collections, as well as the improved access that comes with it, others are

concerned that individuals could be left out if they are not as comfortable with technology, or if they lack the technology they need to get connected.

Staff and management are motivated, but at risk of burnout: Many stakeholders from inside and outside the organization praised the hard work of staff throughout the pandemic, as they pivoted to provide new kinds of programs and services. At the same time, they cautioned that—as patrons return to the branches and require in-person support—staff could become increasingly overloaded. Staff echoed this concern.

There is a desire to improve internal communications: It was a common theme amongst staff and management that they felt internal communications could be improved. In particular, they felt they were not always receiving information in a timely fashion, considering the rate of change and staff in part-time roles.

Suggested Responses

Outreach to those who are unfamiliar with SDG Library is difficult, but important: Stakeholders believe that those who are unfamiliar with SDG Library think of it as just about books.

One of the chief challenges of the library's outreach efforts has been to reach audiences who are largely unfamiliar with the wide range of programs and services the Library offers.

Stakeholders value the outreach that SDG Library has done over the years but see it as an important area of focus moving forward. In the online survey, communications was the highest ranked area of focus, selected by 54% of respondents, followed by community profile/presence (50%).

Youth outreach and engagement is encouraged: The desire to engage youth was another common theme. It is recognized both that a) youth interest has dropped and that b) engaging individuals when they are young can create life-long patrons.

With respect to younger children, stakeholders recommended increased outreach and engagement, e.g., more field trips, pop-ups in schools, library card

giveaways, etc. They also expressed support for eliminating or loosening the policy that prevents unaccompanied children from using SDG Library.

There is an opportunity to develop a strategy to reach and further include teenagers, which could involve creating a physical space that they feel comfortable in.

There is an opportunity to connect with new community members as they migrate to the area. An additional consideration is that the local population is growing as more people move to the area. There is an opportunity to introduce new community members to SDG Library as they are welcomed to the area. At the same time, SDG Library should bear these emerging demographics in mind and adapt accordingly.

There is interest in expanding into new kinds of programs and services: Several stakeholders have suggested that SDG Library further leverage its space and its staff by expanding programming and services to further expand awareness and draw in new people.

Existing programs and services could be assessed and potentially pared down: Stakeholders, especially staff, managers, and community partners, felt that there was an opportunity to evaluate existing programs and services to avoid a) continuing to provide services that have a high cost and low impact; and b) overloading staff by adding more and more programs and services without taking any existing ones away.

By eliminating low-impact services and services that could be better provided by other organizations, SDG Library will be better able to thrive in its own niche and deliver services that fall within its mandate.

An organizational review would be welcomed: Several stakeholders close to SDG Library have identified opportunities for efficiency by centralizing some roles and responsibilities. It was noted that since the SDG Library is run at the county level, there is an opportunity for coordination across branches.

For example, in the areas of programming and communication, staff sees duplication, as individuals at different branches each independently work to create their own programming and communications initiatives. If this work were

centralized in cross-branch roles, it could free up the time of branch staff and increase the impact of the efforts.

Staff and management identified an opportunity to further clarify their responsibilities and job descriptions. With the pandemic receding, and a new “normal” emerging, it was felt that now is a good time to re-evaluate capacity and expectations to help support staff and management’s work-life balance.