

Item: WLS Strategy Committee Final Report

Background: The Westchester Library System (WLS) Strategy Committee was formed in 2021, and the overall charge of the committee was to provide guidance on strategic directions and broad policy recommendations that will help WLS to support the member libraries and the Westchester community. The Committee met several times throughout 2021 and early 2022 to focus on this work. They revised the Mission, Vision and Overview of Services that were incorporated into the 2022-2026 WLS Plan of Service and most recently into the WLS Bylaws.

Status: The final meeting of the Committee was held on March 7th and completed a draft of their final report. This includes the revised Mission, Vision and Overview of Services as well as the three strategic goals recommended for WLS:

- Promotion of Equity and Access;
- Expand Community Engagement among member libraries and patrons; and
- Updating and Improving the overall WLS Infrastructure.

Per usual procedures, the document is being brought before the WLS Board as an Information Item with official approval being sought at the next regular board meeting in May.

Once approved, it is recommended that the document should be circulated as much as possible and shared with various audiences including library directors, staff and trustees as well as local legislators and community partners. Following that, routine procedures should be established for getting feedback, and it is recommended that the Executive Team evaluate implementation and impact with relevant organizations and units within WLS.

April 26, 2022

Westchester Library System (WLS)

2022-2024 Strategy Committee Final Report

Committee Members:

Karen Zevin (District 1)
Jonathon Marshall (District 2)
Susan Morduch (District 6)
Denise Matthews-Serra (District 11)
Karen Kelley (District 12)
Julie Mills-Worthey (District 13)
Francis Okelo (District 14), Committee Chair
Terry Kirchner, WLS Executive Director

Committee Charge:

To provide guidance on strategic directions and broad policy recommendations that will help WLS to support the member libraries and the Westchester community.

Outcomes:

- Overview statement
- Mission Statement
- Vision Statement
- Strategic Plan

Recommendations:

1. The revised mission, vision and overview statements and the updated strategic goals should be shared with a broad audience to raise awareness. Audiences to be reached include WLS staff, member library directors and trustees, and county and state legislators.
2. The WLS Executive Committee should be charged with ongoing review of strategic goal implementation. The WLS Executive Director will provide quarterly updates on the strategic goals to the full board.
3. The strategic goals should be reviewed and updated no later than early 2025 by a special committee of the Board.
4. Each WLS Board committee should review the strategic goals and explore ways that the committee could best support the strategic goals and actions.

WLS Overview, Mission and Vision Statements

Overview:

A focus on community engagement and outreach provides the framework for programs and services at the Westchester Library System (WLS). It is through partnerships with the member libraries, governmental agencies, service organizations, community members, Westchester County and others that WLS is able to assist them in their efforts to create and grow welcoming, inclusive services and programs for all residents of their community and the County.

WLS works to provide cost-effective approaches for administrative and technology support, cataloging assistance, delivery of materials, training of library staff and trustees, the sharing of digital resources. We do our work with a disciplined focus on equity, diversity and access, which gives our outreach programs and member library activities the broadest reach and relevance. We are committed to providing services for the interest, information and enrichment of all people in the communities we serve.

WLS is one of New York State's 23 public library systems and was established by State Education Law in 1958. WLS is a membership organization comprised of the 38 independent public and association libraries within the geographic boundaries of Westchester County. Each of the member libraries is an independent organization with its own board of trustees, director, staff, policies and chartered service area. WLS strives to help each member library support the specific needs and interests of its community, while also encouraging the development of partnerships that result in more effective and cost-efficient library services throughout the County. To that end, WLS provides ongoing training and professional development for library directors, staff, and library trustees fostering best practices in library services, community engagement, and fiscal responsibility. WLS also provides expert guidance in complying with NYS rules and regulations to member libraries. Additionally, WLS offers robust, community centered outreach programs collaborating with libraries, community agencies and nonprofits to serve the County's most vulnerable populations.

Mission Statement:

The mission of Westchester Library System (WLS) is to empower lives and communities by connecting people in Westchester County with the resources, services and programs available through WLS and the member libraries.

Vision Statement:

Westchester Library System (WLS) will promote the love of learning, discovery of new ideas and opportunities for all in Westchester County. It will strengthen the member libraries of Westchester County by enhancing their ability to share information and resources and by supporting a welcoming environment to everyone in the community.

WLS Strategic Goals 2022-2024

As WLS moves forward on these strategic goals, it recognizes that ongoing communication and engagement is a critical and required activity that must occur within each of the goals to achieve success.

Promote Equity and Access

Statement: Hold equity and access as core values and advance those values within WLS and through our partnerships

Action Items:

Provide equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and trauma-informed professional development opportunities for WLS and member library staff and trustees.

Review existing WLS policies and procedures, as well as programs and services, to identify and remove biases to assist in the attraction and retention of staff and trustees reflective of the diverse populations in Westchester. Ensure a welcoming and supportive work environment for staff.

Advocate for and provide leadership and partnership on digital equity and literacy for all residents of Westchester County.

Expand Community / Member Library / Partner Engagement

Statement: Be actively engaged with communities throughout Westchester, especially the unserved and underserved.

Action Items:

Help create awareness of and connections to services and resources provided by WLS, the member libraries, and partners such as local nonprofits and County government.

Use Census and other data sources to identify community needs and shifts in demographics as a way of developing and sustaining relevant programs and services.

As an organization (trustees, staff and volunteers), communicate and embody the mission and vision statements.

Update and Improve our Infrastructure

Statement: Continuously update and improve the WLS operational and technological infrastructure.

Action Items:

Update and expand the business continuity plans for WLS to incorporate short-term and long-term operations and sustainability of all aspects of the organization.

Consistently review and update the administrative, community engagement, and technology services provided to the member libraries and the communities served.

Maintain and support an agile environment that proactively increases awareness of and responds to trends, external factors and social issues that impact public libraries.