

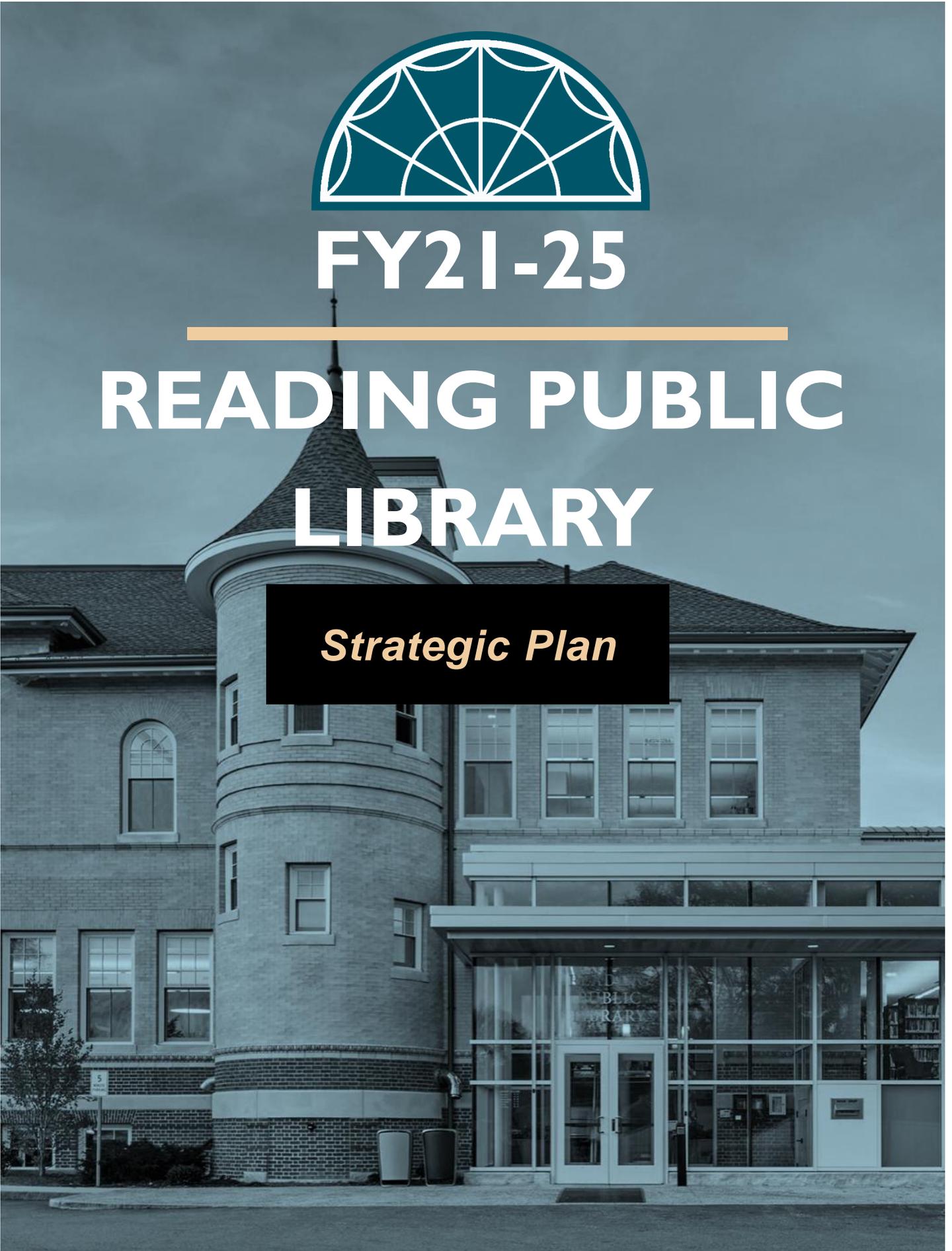


**FY21-25**

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**READING PUBLIC  
LIBRARY**

***Strategic Plan***





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Reading is a gracious, vibrant, and affluent community, bolstered by a stable tax base, strong public institutions, and active civic engagement. Its gem of a library plays a significant role in sustaining high literacy levels and academic achievement. At a time when all institutions struggle with maintaining service while promoting healthy distancing, Reading Public Library has been responsive and innovative.

Just as the Town is at a geographic crossroads, the Library found itself at a cultural crossroads at the onset of planning. How satisfied are Town residents with their Library? What unmet needs might the Library fulfill? And what would its role be in promoting literacy, community dialogue, equity, and social justice? The market research underlying the planning decisions—an online survey of Town residents and market segmentation study of the Library's service area population—revealed areas of high performance and customer satisfaction. Analysis also identified underserved pockets of the Town's population. Some residents question the need for libraries in the age of Amazon and Google while others find themselves too time pressed to avail themselves of the Library's assets and services. The prospect of the Library adding arts and creativity-centered programs is very appealing, and there is high demand for more digital assets and communications.

# 1. MISSION AND CORE VALUES

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## Mission

The Reading Public Library is a center and resource for learning and civic engagement. We provide a place and platform of, by, and for the people who can benefit as individuals as well as contribute to the well-being of the community.

## Core Values

Education and Equity, Accountability and Access

*NOTE: On November 10, 2020, the Board of Library Trustees approved the Mission, Core Values, and Strategic Areas of Focus. The Trustees and library staff are working on a Vision Statement that better reflects the aspirations of the library and Reading community.*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

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The planning process incorporated a review of Town demographics and documents, including Reading's *Master Plan* and the School Superintendent's latest *State and District Report Card Letter* as well as the Library's previous strategic plan. A market segmentation study, using Claritas psychographic data detailed the lifestyles and consumer behaviors of Reading residents as the basis for decisions regarding collection and program development. A community online survey gauged satisfaction with the Library's current offerings, barriers to using the Library, and interest in potential programs and services. Planning sessions began with a review of the research as the basis for formulating key areas of strategic focus. Staff work groups met to develop the strategies for each focus area. The final plan represents consensus decisions around responsive strategies and their tactical implementation.

## 3. STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

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### A. Customer Convenience and Personalization

#### 1. Apply user-centered design principles to facilitate access to physical and digital resources.

- a) Implement “One-Stop Shopping” with single sign-in to 3rd party resources with app for phones and tablets.
- b) Design and implement a subscription service.
- c) Test the feasibility of points of contact outside the physical library or regular library hours, such as after-hours holds pick-up lockers and/or mobile and deposit collections.
- d) Expand homebound services beyond books to include technology and hands-on arts and cultural resources.
- e) Partner with Dementia-Friendly Reading to expand services to families experiencing dementia.
- f) Develop special physical and digital collections and services for low-literacy, ESOL, challenged, or non-traditional learners.
- g) Evaluate all policies, fees, and collection access tools for barriers to service for special or in-need patrons.

#### 2. Provide “Outside the Box” services through new forms of content, content creation, and access.

- a) Reposition “Reader’s Advisory Services” as “Resource Advisory Services”.
- b) Bundle materials to cross-sell physical and digital resources.

### **3. Revise collection policy.**

- a) Apply data and assessment tools to develop and manage a responsive collection and reduce wait time.
- b) Incorporate new trends in leasing and licensing digital materials.
- c) Adapt service strategies for integrating physical and digital collections.
- d) Implement Overdrive automation and customization (automatic holds by author, e-notices, digital bookshelf displays).
- e) Retain a full-time digital collections manager (Librarian I) - currently 25 hrs., increase to 32.5 or 37.5 hours.

### **4. Acquire and apply assets that address the “Digital Divide”.**

- a) Provide loaner laptops, tablets, Wi-Fi hotspots.
- b) Increase third-party and in-house online learning resources and tutorials.
- c) Create content that adds value to live library programs (e.g. booklists, videos).

## **B. Community Learning and Engagement**

### **1. Reaffirm the Library's civic and educational responsibilities within the community.**

- a) Partner with Town departments, local businesses, and community groups to facilitate collaboration across the community.
- b) Partner with schools to meet the needs of traditional and non-traditional learners.
- c) Offer and support equity and social justice programming to strengthen Reading's infrastructure and build a more just community.
- d) Hire a full-time Equity and Social Justice Director.

### **2. Encourage community collaboration and connections.**

- a) Facilitate online meeting space for residents and community groups.
- b) Expand the local history collection through the recording and archiving of current and past lived experiences in Reading.
- c) Establish the Library as a Community Networking Resource Center to build civic awareness and promote local government resources and volunteer opportunities.
- d) Develop facilitation expertise and resources to expand Community Conversations to include listening forums, debates, and town halls, etc.
- e) Network with community members to share their expertise in developing or leading programs, discussions, etc.

## C. The Library as Space and Place

### 1. Optimize facility use.

1. Assess large and small group meeting spaces for optimal allocation for equitable resident and community use.
2. Support Reading's Green Community initiative by creating and sustaining an outdoor learning space, such as native plant, sensory or victory garden and/or eco-friendly rooftop garden.
3. Investigate feasibility of installing a generator so that the Library may serve as an alternate command center for the Emergency Response Team, as well as an emergency heating/cooling/power-up location.

**READING IS  
EDUCATION AND EQUITY  
ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACCESS**

