



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO  
PUBLIC LIBRARIES  
SLOLIBRARY.ORG

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019–2022

**CHRISTOPHER BARNICKEL, DIRECTOR OF LIBRARIES**

Effective January 1, 2019

2019 - 2022

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## **MISSION**

Connecting the community to knowledge, culture, and creativity through exceptional service.

## **CORE VALUES**

Service

Equity

Access

## **CORE SERVICES**

Public service

Programming

Literacy

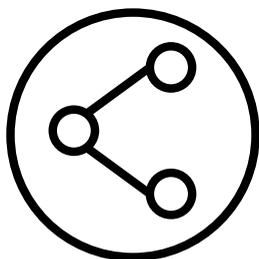
Resources

Outreach

## **VISION**

To become a community hub by providing flexible spaces, lifelong learning, and community partnerships.

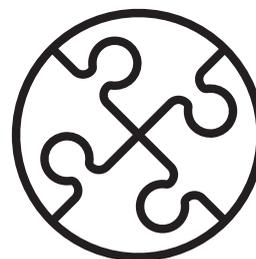
# GOALS



**MAINTAIN  
CORE  
SERVICES**



**REIMAGINE  
LIBRARY  
SPACES**



**CULTIVATE  
INNOVATION  
& CREATIVITY**



**BE A  
COMMUNITY  
CONNECTOR**



**DELIVER  
EXCEPTIONAL  
SERVICE**



**ENSURE  
FINANCIAL  
HEALTH**



**Objective: Maintain core exceptional circulation services.**

**STRATEGY 1 Provide exceptional customer interactions that shape visitors' experiences at the Library.**

Why: Providing exceptional service is a core value of the Library. As the most front-facing service, circulation staff have the ability to shape patrons' first impressions of the Library and guide them through their visit.

**STRATEGY 2 Ensure accuracy of customer records and items checked out.**

Why: Patrons trust the Library with the responsibility of maintaining their personal information and information about what they currently have checked out. If these records are not accurately maintained it can create hardships for Library patrons.

**STRATEGY 3 Efficiently replace items on shelves and displays to encourage discovery.**

Why: Patrons must be able to find materials they are looking for. Quick and accurate reshelving allows patrons to find recently returned materials, and attractive displays create interest in materials that might be unknown to a patron.

**STRATEGY 4 Provide feedback to other Library departments about unmet customer needs or potential customer service enhancements.**

Why: Circulation staff face the bulk of patron interactions and in the process receive comments or questions. By communicating the results of patron interactions to other staff and library departments, circulation staff can play a role in shaping the Library's policies and procedures.



**Objective: Maintain core youth services.**

**STRATEGY 1 Support early literacy for 0-5 year olds.**

Why: Studies show that children develop most of their literacy skills before the age of five. Libraries provide a critical educational opportunity for children in these early years.

**STRATEGY 2 Provide programming for children and teens.**

Why: As community members transition from childhood to adulthood, libraries can play a significant role in building life-long learners, engaged volunteers, and Library advocates.

**STRATEGY 3 Support families by developing and strengthening relationships between parents, children, and staff.**

Why: Families need community partners who can help them both provide a good experience for their child and support their own development as parents and caregivers in order to support children's learning and success.

**STRATEGY 4 Foster outreach services.**

Why: Whether providing services to those who can't come to the Library, or reaching out to those who are underserved, Library outreach and community engagement ensures equitable delivery of Library services to all people.



**Objective: Maintain core adult services.**

- STRATEGY 1     **Support current technology as well as discovery and understanding of emerging technology.**  
Why: To ensure digital literacy.
- STRATEGY 2     **Foster outreach services and programming by linking adults to opportunities that enhance lifelong learning, literary, and cultural opportunities.**  
Why: To provide adults free, cultural and educational opportunities county wide.
- STRATEGY 3     **Provide access to public-facing databases and digital collections.**  
Why: So customers have 24/7 seamless access to virtual branch services.
- STRATEGY 4     **Ensure reference support for traditional and virtual Library services.**  
Why: To ensure informational literacy.
- STRATEGY 5     **Preserve our local history and genealogy through collections and partnerships.**  
Why: So future generations have access to local history.



**Objective: Maintain core audio-visual services.**

- STRATEGY 1 **Provide a depth/breadth of cataloged media options: CD/DVD/Blu-ray/Digital.**
- Why: A well-rounded, deep audio visual collection exposes customers to a world of ideas, culture, and literacy outside of books.
- STRATEGY 2 **Support Creative Lab services.**
- Why: To provide the equipment needed for customers to create audio and visual art projects and partner with local maker spaces for further education in AV creative endeavors.
- STRATEGY 3 **Host engaging film programming.**
- Why: Free, curated film programs can provide a valuable service and are very popular events for customers of all ages.
- STRATEGY 4 **Maintain awareness of emerging AV techniques and services.**
- Why: So that new technologies that our customers want and expect can be evaluated and incorporated into our audio visual services and collections.



**Objective: Maintain exceptional support services.**

**STRATEGY 1    Order materials efficiently and process materials effectively.**

Why: Efficient ordering gives customers timely access to materials and provides support to programming. Effective processing ensures that the materials can be located by customers and staff in libraries. It also helps customers independently use non-traditional Library materials, like MakerKits.

**STRATEGY 2    Catalog materials effectively to enable customer discovery in the PAC.**

Why: Customers need to easily find what they are searching for in order to locate materials in libraries or place requests.

**STRATEGY 3    Process delivery accurately and efficiently.**

Why: Efficient and accurate delivery allows for maximum usage of the collection by getting materials where they need to be.



**Objective: Upgrade public IT infrastructure by providing reliable, state of the art power, data and automation.**

**STRATEGY 1    Improve access to power by installing electrical outlets at all public workspaces.**

Why: Patrons are bringing more personal devices to use at Public Libraries as their primary work space, and often require additional power during their visit. To meet our patrons' needs, Public Libraries should look to provide power outlets in locations where patrons need them without inconveniencing others.

Intended Outcome: Outfit Public Libraries' work spaces with multiple outlets in places that can be used by the public to charge devices that are both convenient and safe to use.

**STRATEGY 2    Improve Library access to services using automation with public access to:**

- **Wireless printing**
- **Hold items lockers for access during closed hours**
- **Materials vending machines during closed hours**
- **Expand service outside of Library buildings using wireless hotspots or other technology in new locations (Makerspace, bus transit stations, SLO Airport kiosk)**

Why: Provide service and access to people who are unaware of Public Libraries' services and/or may not be able to visit a library building.

Intended Outcome: Expand Library services outside of our buildings to reach an underserved population.



**Objective: Review and repurpose public and private spaces to maximize usage and efficiency.**

**STRATEGY 1 Design at least one quiet area in every Library.**

Why: Historically, libraries have been known as quiet areas where visitors can study or read. With advances in technology, libraries now offer programming and makerspaces services. While patrons enjoy the technological aspects of today's libraries, they also desire traditional quiet spaces. In fact, the desire for quiet spaces was one of the highest ranked amenities mentioned in the Library Survey completed in September 2018.

Intended Outcome: Define what a quiet space means and effectively communicate this to architects and designers for each existing Public Libraries branch and as future libraries are planned and constructed.

**STRATEGY 2 Design at least one Programming area in every Library.**

Why: Dedicated programming areas will assist in providing relevant services to the community without disrupting patrons who utilize other library services and areas of the library.

Intended Outcome: With input from staff, define programming space, size, and amenities to be included in any future designs for libraries. Provide guidelines for architects and designers to use when creating a new Library or remodeling a space.

**STRATEGY 3 Consider outdoor spaces such as patios, gardens, picnic and play areas as optional library spaces to facilitate programming.**

Why: With a favorable climate there are opportunities to make more use of our libraries' outdoor space. Comfortable exterior spaces can be used for programming, additional work space for patrons, and utilized outside business hours.

Intended Outcome: Identify current opportunities to add functional outdoor space to existing buildings. Provide guidelines for architects and designers to use when creating a new library or remodeling a space.

**STRATEGY 4 Review current branch layouts for optional book sale spaces.**

Why: Library cafés and book sale spaces are popular space with the public. Book sales provide Friends of the Library groups opportunities to raise money which supports Public Libraries' programs and services.

Intended Outcome: Provide welcoming, clearly defined café and book sale spaces patrons will want to regularly visit while investing in their library.



**Objective: Provide a balanced approach to wayfinding at each Library that uses both intuitive signals and signage to help the public navigate the building and locate what they need.**

**STRATEGY 1**      **Form a subcommittee to explore what signs are essential to Library services, given that each location may be slightly different in ease of navigation. Review literature on wayfinding and design consistent signage.**

Why: To provide a unified sign program that gives clear directions and allows customers to navigate each branch as easily as possible. Sign language, symbols, and colors should match throughout the county system and will be tailored for the respective branch.

Intended Outcome: To create a self-service Library, thereby freeing up staff to help people that need expert help rather than answer simple directional questions. A patron should be able to enter the Library and navigate freely without having to ask for directional help.



**Objective: Provide Library spaces that are welcoming, clean, and safe.**

**STRATEGY 1 Working with County Custodial Services, evaluate existing service levels at each Public Libraries branch and seek to provide optimal and sustainable service levels.**

Why: Libraries see a large number of visitors each day who expect and deserve clean, attractive spaces.

Intended Outcome: Working with Custodial and Public Libraries staff, create a plan that outlines detailed custodial service expected at each Library. Explore and document options to improve custodial services for little added costs.

**STRATEGY 2 Working with County Maintenance and via the Facilities Condition Assessment process, evaluate existing maintenance and service repairs at each Public Libraries facility and seek to provide optimal and sustainable service levels.**

Why: Maintenance costs are high, and Public Libraries must seek the best value for dollars spent. Deferred maintenance often leads to higher costs of repair. Libraries staff should request repairs and maintenance in a timely manner without falling behind in routine maintenance.

Intended Outcome: A plan of action to keep Director of Public Libraries advised of pending routine maintenance at each location in order to budget in advance accordingly.

**STRATEGY 3 Working with County Safety Officer and Risk Management, evaluate each Public Libraries branch and seek to improve safety for staff and patrons.**

Why: Safety is paramount to staff and to the public we serve. Having a safe space was one of the highest concerns the public ranked in the Library Survey completed in September 2018.

Intended Outcome: Create a safety plan, including building safety improvements and staff training and awareness, to assist with emergency preparation and public safety.

**STRATEGY 4 Working with County Risk Management, evaluate each Public Libraries location and implement recommendations to improve ergonomics for staff and public.**

Why: The daily work activities and repetitive tasks staff and patrons perform can cause physical damage if carried out improperly due to "one-size-fits-all" workstations.

Intended Outcome: Properly outfitted ergonomic workstations will reduce injuries and illness, and loss of productive time.



**Objective: Invoke innovation among all staff.**

STRATEGY 1 **Define innovation in accordance with our strategic plan, and then guide a “no wrong answers” culture by creating a shared online, anonymous idea collector where staff can informally list innovative ideas.**

Why: We believe staff at all levels have great ideas that can spark a creative project or innovative service. This strategy is designed to provide staff a judgement-free forum to present raw ideas that may be built upon by other staff.

Intended Outcome: To create an internal forum for inspiration accessible to all staff who can freely “park” initial ideas.

STRATEGY 2 **Create a micro-learning idea generator to inspire staff with resources linking to articles, data, and trends related to customer service, books, programming, innovation, reference, and other Library related topics; and update curriculum contents at least monthly.**

Why: We encourage professional development. We also understand that finding time to read professional literature or to survey the Library landscape can be challenging. We want to provide a clearinghouse of resources easily accessible to all staff to stay informed, to benchmark with other libraries, and to broaden our potential.

Intended Outcome: To save staff time sifting through multiple professional development channels.



**Objective: Deliver innovative and creative programs and services.**

**STRATEGY 1 Sustain and grow Library of Things/Mobile MakerKits pilot project by adding at least three new Mobile MakerKits per year to LoT.**

Why: Libraries are the center of the “sharing economy” and we want to provide diverse opportunities for learning and engagement. We also believe it is socially beneficial to reduce and reuse items.

Intended Outcome: To expand the Library of Things pilot project into a mainstream service.

**STRATEGY 2 Sustain and grow Library of Things/Programs in a Box pilot project by adding at least three new Program Boxes per year to LoT.**

Why: To support staff in the branches with innovative and easy to do programs.

Intended Outcome: Easier programming for staff.

**STRATEGY 3 Explore feasibility of increasing Creative Labs in other branches, either by implementation at select branches or via shared resources. Increase partnership with SLO MakerSpace to provide trainings for staff and customers.**

Why: To provide equitable service and access to innovative technology in the branches.

Intended Outcome: Branches who can support Creative Labs will have resources and training to offer them.

**STRATEGY 4 Explore feasibility of offering traveling exhibits in branches.**

Why: To bring knowledge, culture, and discovery to our communities. To stimulate conversation and experiences for our customers.

Intended Outcome: More opportunity to attend branch events.

**STRATEGY 5 Increase innovative services for adults.**

Why: Library surveys show that adult and senior respondents would like more programs.

Intended Outcome: Identification and reduction of gaps in desired program offerings.



**Objective: Measure impact of and sustain innovative and creative programs and services.**

STRATEGY 1 **Develop program goals outcome measures based on best practices and also specific to our community needs.**

Why: To ensure we are meeting the needs of our unique and diverse communities.

Intended Outcome: Meeting community needs.

STRATEGY 2 **Find or create data focused outcome collection tool.**

Why: Use these tools as a barometer of the needs of our unique and diverse communities.

Intended Outcome: Maintain consistency in our program and service goals.



**Objective: Develop stronger community partnerships with senior serving agencies.**

**STRATEGY 1    Develop Books by Mail/Homebound.**

Why: One in five residents of San Luis Obispo County is over the age of 65 and this percentage is growing as is the need to provide Library access to homebound patrons.

Intended Outcome: Create a delivery method for seniors to access Library materials from home.

**STRATEGY 2    Expand retirement facilities partnerships.**

Why: According to 2016 US Census data, the estimated population of persons aged 65 and older is 49.2 million. In California, 13.6% of the state's population is aged 65 or older. The Library wants to reach out to this growing segment of the community who may face barriers in visiting a physical and/or digital Library collection.

Intended Outcome: Establish partnerships with senior centers and retirement communities throughout the County to engage seniors and to identify robust programs that serve their needs.



**Objective: Connect to schools in meaningful ways.**

**STRATEGY 1 Expand school outreach.**

Why: Alignment between schools and public libraries improves students' access to educational resources and academic achievement. By expanding outreach the Library is able to meet students where they are and remove barriers to access.

Intended Outcome: Develop regular meaningful outreach to schools and track outreach on an ongoing basis.

**STRATEGY 2 Continue to develop Student Success Initiative (Library cards for all students).**

Why: Alignment between schools and public libraries improves students' access to educational resources and academic achievement.

Intended Outcome: To provide Library cards to students in a sustainable way through the Student Success Initiative.



**Objective: Strengthen connections to new adults.**

**STRATEGY 1    Develop partnerships with Cal Poly & Cuesta College.**

Why: One in ten people in San Luis Obispo County attends Cal Poly or Cuesta College. Our libraries currently provide only a few targeted programs with the two campuses.

Intended Outcome: Maintain the Cuesta Book of the Year partnership with Cuesta College and develop additional partnerships with Cuesta and Cal Poly.



**Objective: Develop stronger partnerships with community serving agencies.**

STRATEGY 1 **Form partnerships with mental health/homeless assistance providers.**

Why: According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, approximately one in five adults in the US experiences mental illness in a given year. Persons who suffer from mental illness are more vulnerable to homelessness/home instability than those without a mental illness. Libraries are safe spaces and as such, staff routinely encounter persons who suffer from mental illness and/or homelessness.

Intended Outcome: Establish partnerships with mental health/homeless assistance providers to provide Library staff with resources to better assist and communicate with mentally ill/homeless customers.



**Objective: Enhance staff training and development.**

**STRATEGY 1 Train staff on Library databases at regional locations.**

Why: Staff who are more familiar with Library databases can be more effective in training and assisting customers.

Intended Outcome: Use of databases will increase by both staff and customers.

**STRATEGY 2 Reconfigure staff rotation for enhanced, targeted training.**

Why: The training benefits of the original staff rotations have been accomplished. Changing to a more targeted, staff-driven rotation process should build upon these training goals.

Intended Outcome: During the evaluation process or at other times of the year, staff and supervisors will identify useful rotation opportunities that will enhance professional growth and result in a highly trained, responsive staff.

**STRATEGY 3 Leverage staff strengths.**

Why: Staff working towards their strengths will lead to superior levels of engagement and productivity.

Intended Outcome: Enhanced customer service, increased staff morale, and increased job satisfaction.



**Objective: Focus on user experience.**

**STRATEGY 1 Conduct an online community user survey.**

Why: Understand community needs and preferences.

Intended Outcome: Improve and customize services based on customer input.

**STRATEGY 2 Pursue regular feedback via comments cards, micro surveys, focus groups, etc.**

Why: Ongoing community feedback informs data driven decision making.

Intended Outcome: Services will be based on customer input and community derived data.

**STRATEGY 3 Explore Collection Options.**

Why: The Library's core values are to provide service, equity, and access for our customers to quality Library materials.

Intended Outcome: Enhance the collection, circulation and customer satisfaction.

**STRATEGY 3 Expand Readers Advisory Services.**

Why: Reader's advisory effectively markets the Library's collection to our customers.

Intended Outcome: Customers will become aware of titles related to their reading interests resulting in increased circulation and customer hold requests.



**Objective: Remove barriers to access.**

STRATEGY 1 **Remove fines from library materials.**

Why: The Library's vision is to provide lifelong learning and by increasing access for our youngest customers, create a community of lifelong learners.

Intended Outcome: Increased circulation of library materials and customer satisfaction.



**Objective: Form a contingency plan for external revenue loss.**

**STRATEGY 1 Analyze the impact of Diablo closure.**

Why: The closure of the Diablo Power Plant has a significant impact on the property tax funding.

Intended Outcome: To ensure that additional revenues are available when the Diablo Power Plant is closed.

**STRATEGY 2 Continued approach to allocation of materials and personnel.**

Why: Materials and personnel costs are the main discretionary expenses the Library has control over.

Intended Outcome: Quality spending.



**Objective: Find new sources of revenue.**

STRATEGY 1 **Investigate Bond measure or sales tax increase.**

Why: A potential revenue source for the Library.

Intended Outcome: Additional revenue source for the Library.

STRATEGY 2 **Increase gift funds, grants, and private partnerships.**

Why: Utilization of a valid source of additional Library revenue.

Intended Outcome: Additional revenues.



**Objective: Explore operational opportunities.**

STRATEGY 1 **Additional use of volunteers / student interns to support staff and enhance services.**

Why: Opportunity to provide Library staff additional time to work directly with customers.

Intended Outcome: Improved customer service.

STRATEGY 2 **Maximize and enhance the use of automation technology.**

Why: Automation technology enables staff and library customers to utilize materials to the maximum extent possible.

Intended Outcome: Streamlined workflows for staff to enable them to deliver exceptional customer service.



# COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO PUBLIC LIBRARIES

[slolibrary.org](http://slolibrary.org)



- 1** SAN MIGUEL  
254 13TH ST.  
SAN MIGUEL, CA  
805-467-3224
- 2** CAMBRIA  
1043 MAIN ST.  
CAMBRIA, CA  
805-927-4336
- 3** SHANDON  
195 N. 2ND ST.  
SHANDON, CA  
805-237-3009

- 4** CAYUCOS  
310 B ST.  
CAYUCOS, CA  
805-995-3312
- 5** ATASCADERO  
6555 CAPISTRANO  
AVE. ATASCADERO, CA  
805-461-6161
- 6** CRESTON  
6290 ADAMS ST.  
CRESTON, CA  
805-237-3010

- 7** MORRO BAY  
625 HARBOR ST.  
MORRO BAY, CA  
805-772-6394
- 8** SANTA MARGARITA  
9630 MURPHY AVE.  
SANTA MARGARITA,  
CA 805-438-5622
- 9** LOS OSOS  
2075 PALISADES AVE.  
LOS OSOS, CA  
805-528-1862

- 10** SAN LUIS OBISPO  
995 PALM ST.  
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA  
805-781-5991
- 11** SHELL BEACH  
230 LEEWARD AVE,  
PISMO BEACH, CA  
(805) 773-2263
- 12** ARROYO GRANDE  
800 W. BRANCH ST.  
ARROYO GRANDE, CA  
805-473-7161

- 13** OCEANO  
1551 17TH ST.  
OCEANO, CA  
805-474-7478
- 14** NIPOMO  
918 WEST TEFFT ST.  
NIPOMO, CA  
805-929-3994