ARROWHEAD LIBRARY SYSTEM

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beginning in July 2022, the Arrowhead Library System (ALS) engaged Northspan to conduct a strategic planning process. The process began with the following planned goals:

- Develop a three-year strategic framework including a practical vision, underlying contradictions, strategic directions, and action planning to guide its implementation
- Include succession planning as one of the strategic directions in the strategic plan that positions the organization for a leadership transition during the three-year period

During the process, the ALS strategy committee defined the following mission, vision, core values, and strategic directions:

VISION: Preserving yesterday, enhancing today, imagining tomorrow.

MISSION: To support libraries, through leadership and collaboration, in fostering lifelong learning and community enrichment.

CORE VALUES:

We are...

Accessible. We provide free and equitable access to information and ideas across the region we serve, bridging technological and economic barriers.

Transparent. We are diligent stewards of public resources and operate using clear and open processes.

Innovative. We adapt to changing trends in library services and patron needs and use technology to provide solutions and fill gaps in service.

Inclusive. We recognize the inherent value of individuals, community, and culture and strive to create settings that appreciate diverse points of view.

Helpful. We help libraries and patrons find solutions to questions they raise and barriers they encounter through timely, thoughtful service.

Connected. ALS brings together libraries of all types and sizes from across a large region, bridging across boundaries to create a supportive network of shared information.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS:

1. Empowering Libraries' Staff Through Collaboration and Professional Development
2. Determining Staffing, Structure, and Workflow Needs
3. Expanding Community Outreach Services
4. Coordinating Marketing Efforts for Library Programs
5. Enhancing Library Support Through Focused Advocacy

OVERVIEW

The Arrowhead Library System (ALS) is a federated library system covering a 7-county region in northeast Minnesota. It was founded in 1965 and ever since has adapted its services to meet the needs of its member libraries and patrons. ALS currently works with 27 public libraries, an array of school and academic libraries, and numerous special libraries across the region. See the appendix titled Background Information for a thorough overview of the backdrop against which ALS undertook this plan.

In July 2022, ALS engaged Northspan to facilitate a new three-year strategic plan. The plan included a significant engagement period that tapped ALS staff, library patrons, and partner libraries. The 27 community libraries in the region also participated in two focus group listening sessions. In anticipation of the upcoming retirement of its director, ALS staff and current and former board members took part in a facilitated session called a Wall of Wonder that sought to capture historical knowledge about the organization.

The group's strategic planning process brought together this extensive stakeholder input ahead of four strategic planning workshops held over two days in November 2022 and January 2023. An 11-member strategy committee included seven ALS board members and its four supervisory staff met to develop a practical vision for the process, identify the underlying contradictions that would hold back progress, and identify new strategic directions for the organization. The participants also updated the organization's vision, mission, and core values and laid out a timeline for the accomplishment of key actions for each strategic direction. The plan went before the board for approval in February 2023.

The new strategic plan seeks to bring together many of the ALS's activities behind a common vision, mission, and core values and provide concrete, measurable steps with which to make the vision a reality. By unifying this new framework with considerable stakeholder input, ALS was able to build a plan that accurately reflects its current reality and sets the stage for the organization to flourish over the next three years.

STRATEGIC PLAN

This strategic plan is the culmination of a planning process conducted from December 2022 to March 2023. The planning established a new vision, mission, core values, and strategic directions for the Arrowhead Library System. It also established action steps and outcomes to advance the strategic directions.

VISION: Preserving yesterday, enhancing today, imagining tomorrow.

MISSION: To support libraries through leadership and collaboration, fostering lifelong learning and community enrichment.

CORE VALUES:
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Connected. ALS brings together a diverse group of libraries across a large region, bridging across boundaries to create a supportive network of shared information.

STRATEGIC PLAN, CONT.

PRACTICAL VISION

- Inclusive, Consistent Support
- Collaborative Professional Development
- Intentional Community Engagement
- Strong Organizational Leadership
- Responsive, Sustainable Resources
- Equitable, Available Technology

UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS

- Service Area and Structure Challenge Collaboration
- Competitive Funding Restricts Innovation
- Staff Roles & Expectations Limit Flexibility & Responsiveness
- Limited Resources Restrict Technology Utilization
- Unfocused Marketing Hinders Understanding
- Broadband Infrastructure Limits Access to Services

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. Empowering Libraries' Staff Through Collaboration and Professional Development
2. Determining Staffing, Structure, and Workflow Needs
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5. Enhancing Library Support Through Focused Advocacy

SD 1

EMPOWERING LIBRARIES' STAFF THROUGH COLLABORATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DEFINITION:

This strategic direction recognizes that libraries thrive when staff can learn from one another and use education opportunities to grow professionally. It expands ALS's role as a central hub for all libraries in its service area and seeks to rebuild connections after limitations imposed by Covid-19 and substantial staff turnover. If successful, libraries will feel well-supported by ALS and will be better able to advocate for themselves.

ACTION STEPS:

1. Schedule site visits, approx. 2-3 per month for staff team

2. Include superintendents, city administrators, and provosts in training and advocacy opportunity communications

3. Create new public library director, staff, and board member mentor or orientation program

4. Evaluate preferred participation methods (face-to-face, Zoom, or other) and revise as needed

5. Develop funding stream for scholarships, including potential mileage reimbursement

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OUTCOMES:

- Increased number of attendees for training
- Increased number of site visits
- Continuing education feedback showing benefit
- Continuing education increased attendance and certificates
- Increased usage of professional collection
- Higher participation in regional and state library organizations and advocacy

SD2

DETERMINING STAFFING, STRUCTURE, AND WORKFLOW NEEDS

DEFINITION:

This strategic direction works to review and streamline ALS's structure to ensure all employees are in positions where they can thrive. With the ALS Director's impending retirement, a tight labor market, opportunities to adapt positions to a changing reality, ALS faces an important opportunity to reconceive its internal workings. It aims to provide for a smooth transition, greater transparency, and an internal structure and guiding documentation that makes sense for the organization as it exists today and into the future.

ACTION STEPS:

1. Board develops director transition plan

2. Include superintendents, city administrators, and provosts in training and advocacy opportunity communications

3. Create consistent review process for policies and continuous policy review

4. Implement staff and director review process

5. Implement monthly staff meetings

6. Conduct employee engagement and satisfaction study

7. Consult with other regions on their internal practices

8. Conduct staffing study and organizational review

OUTCOMES:

- Organization chart updated
- Standardized updated personnel processes, policies, and documentation
- Smooth transition to new director
- High levels of staff engagement and satisfaction
- Services stay consistent during staff absences

SD3

EXPANDING COMMUNITY OUTREACH SERVICES

DEFINITION:

This strategic direction strives to broaden ALS's reach into the communities it serves. It coordinates with member libraries, the Bookmobile, and Mail-a-Book to implement innovative methods and build partnerships to foster an ALS presence at community events, thereby highlighting its services. If successful, ALS and its member libraries will have stronger networks of partners across the region and see increased usage of its services.

ACTION STEPS:

1. Identify non-library community partners who can use and promote ALS services

2. Designate ALS staff and board members to participate in outreach events

3. Purchase a hotspot for outreach events

4. Develop and promote outreach kits to assist libraries with borrower signup

5. Provide training to libraries on how to recruit volunteers

6. Create method to communicate value provided by outreach

OUTCOMES:

- Increased number of library cards and patrons
- Increased number of outreach events and programs attended by ALS outreach services
- Increased number of partners
- Outreach kits available and circulating

SD4

COORDINATING MARKETING EFFORTS FOR LIBRARY PROGRAMS

DEFINITION:

This strategic direction strengthens ALS's efforts to tell its story and produce engaging content. It works with the existing financial reality to guide resources into targeted events and planning efforts that maximize ALS's marketing tools. If successful, it will create a virtuous cycle of greater coverage of ALS resources and push more people to use ALS's offerings.

ACTION STEPS:

1. Produce content and resources that explain programs and services to member libraries

2. Hold annual open house events with vendors on services

3. Create budget, job description(s), and staffing process for marketing efforts

4. Develop plan for communication to member libraries

5. In coordination with member libraries, develop plan for communication to general public

6. Reevaluate existing pieces for relevance and accessibility

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OUTCOMES:

- Higher volume of traffic on digital platforms
- Higher circulation and usage of programs and services
    - Track ALS-specific campaigns
    - Library card holders
    - Library users
- Print shop tickets increase
- Outreach/marketing coordinator position created
- Increased coverage in regional media

SD5

ENHANCING LIBRARY SUPPORT THROUGH FOCUSED ADVOCACY

DEFINITION:

This strategic direction seeks to augment library resources through targeted outreach and funding requests. It engages with state and national library associations, strengthens regional relationships, and seeks to educate partners on how they can support these efforts. Successful efforts will lay the foundation for longer-term increases in ALS and member library financial resources.

ACTION STEPS:

1. Attend legislative day, encouraging board member representation

2. Clarify funding sources (counties) and evaluate effectiveness

3. Determine reserves balance policy and spending plan for better budgeting

4. Share grant opportunities with member libraries

5. Request more money from counties and state

6. Host advocacy and awareness training for libraries trustees and library staff

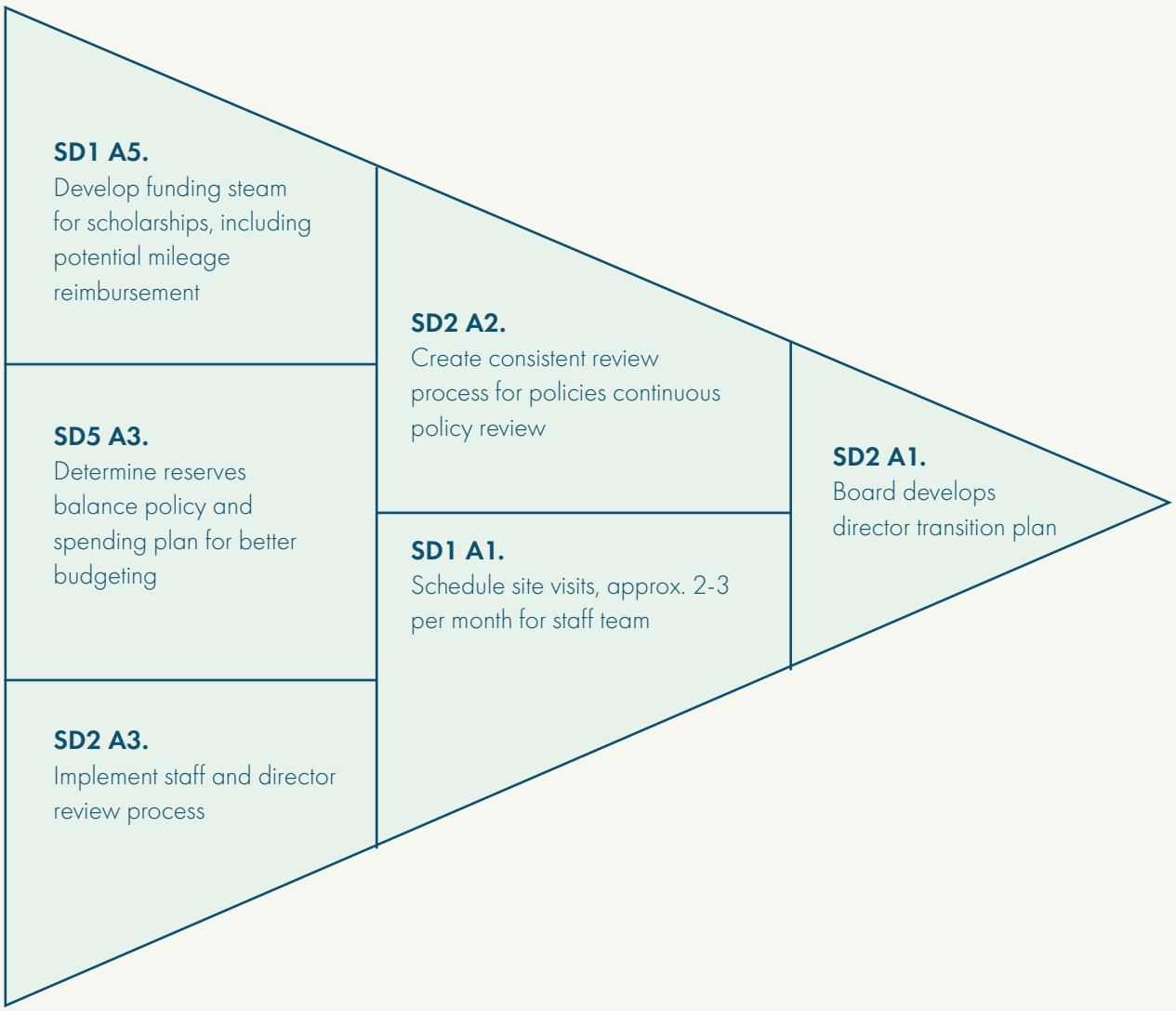
7. Provide grant-writing training

OUTCOMES:

- Increased state funding
- Increased Maintenance of Effort (cities and counties)
- Increased participation by library board members and library partners
- Better connections and relationships with movers and shakers, community resources

TIMELINE AND PRIORITIES

Participants placed strategic plan actions on a timeline, which is available in the appendix titled ALS Strategic Plan Timeline 01.17.23. Of the first quarter actions identified in the timeline exercise, strategy committee participants identified the following as the most catalytic for the strategic plan:



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3. ALS Wall of Wonder Historical Scan 11.15.22

4. ALS Board Staff Strategy Committee Survey Summary 11.30.22

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13. ALS Priority Wedge 01.17.23

APPENDIX 1

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

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STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Arrowhead Library System has prepared this 3-year strategic plan to guide its activities and achieve accomplishments consistent with the group's vision and mission. The strategic process steps, session dates, and agendas are included as an attachment, as are the results of the sessions that followed.

PROCESS STEPS

Collection of Background Information & Internal and External Analysis
Wall of Wonder Historical Scan
Strategy Committee, Board, & Staff Survey
Library Patron Survey
ALS Partner Library Staff Survey
Member Library Focus Groups
Board and Staff Succession Interviews
11.30.22 Strategic Planning Retreat A
12.12.22 Vision Mission Core Values Mini Survey
01.17.23 Strategic Planning Retreat B
01.26.23 Draft Strategic Plan Review & Feedback
02.23.23 Strategic Plan Board Presentation
Complete a 90-day check-in
Subsequent quarterly and annual planning

COLLECTION OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION & INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

The strategic planning process began with a series of meetings and communications with ALS staff that provided contact information, materials detailing the organization's work and impact, and clarification over the plans for the engagement. This phase also included the collection of background demographic data from the US Census American Community survey to provide an overview of the current situation and recent trends in the ALS service area. Combined with background materials and extensive survey work, this information was included in a context-grounding presentation in the first strategic planning session.

WALL OF WONDER HISTORICAL SCAN

The facilitated sessions in the strategic planning process began with a workshop that created a Wall of Wonder, which is a visual representation of ALS's history. It invited strategy committee members and several former board members with strong historical knowledge to identify significant events in the United States, the ALS region, and within the organization itself since 1980. This exercise helped participants understand the trajectory of the organization within a broader social context, grounding them in ALS's work as they moved into the formal planning process.

APPENDIX 1, CONT.

STRATEGY COMMITTEE, BOARD, AND STAFF SURVEY

In order to directly inform the strategic planning process, ALS solicited input from staff, board, and strategy committee members in a survey completed in August and September 2022. The survey received responses from 26 of the 33 people to whom it was sent. Participants were asked to rate the organization's execution on its previous strategic plan; assess its existing mission, vision, and values; brainstorm ideas for the practical vision, underlying contradictions, and strategic directions workshops within the strategic planning process; and identify the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The full results of the survey are available in the appendix titled ALS Board Staff Strategy Committee Survey 11.30.22.

LIBRARY PATRON SURVEY

Northspan administered a survey of ALS library patrons, including bookmobile and Mail-a-Book patrons, from August to October 2022. The survey generated 184 responses, including 91 electronic surveys and 93 paper surveys. Respondents provided information on frequency of library use, most used and valuable services, and provided input on additional programs and services they would like to see in regional libraries. They also provided ideas for a practical vision to guide ALS's strategic planning process. A survey summary is available in the appendix titled ALS Patron Survey 11.30.22.

ALS PARTNER LIBRARY STAFF SURVEY

A third and final survey was sent to ALS's member libraries to provide them with an opportunity for input into the strategic planning process. Much like the patron survey, it asked about the usage and value of certain services, what staff found valuable, and how staff interacted with ALS. It also provided practical vision ideas. The survey garnered 26 responses, and a summary is available in the appendix titled ALS Library Staff Survey Summary 11.30.22.

MEMBER LIBRARY FOCUS GROUPS

Northspan facilitated two 2-hour focus groups for ALS member community libraries in October 2022. Representatives for 18 of the 27 libraries attended one of the two sessions and shared their impressions of ALS, its services, and their aspirations for the organization as it went through the strategic planning process. They also reviewed partial results of the patron and library staff surveys and provided practical vision input. A thematic summary of the focus groups is available in the document titled Library Focus Group Themes 10.18.22 and 10.20.22.

BOARD AND STAFF SUCCESSION INTERVIEWS

Prior to the start of the strategic planning process, Northspan conducted interviews with 22 of 23 ALS staff members and 10 of 12 board members. These 32 interviews drew out insights on stakeholders' roles in the strategic planning process, identified things that were going well, and identified potential issues for the organization. It explored participants' perceptions on the process, their thoughts on leadership practices, and fostered thought on internal training opportunities. Several questions also focused on succession planning for staff, most notably Director Jim Weikum, who plans to retire in January 2024. A complete interview summary, including recommendations for the succession process, will be shared with the board and outgoing director along with the final report.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

Northspan reviewed ALS's previous strategic plan and conducted background research on demographic trends in the ALS 7-county service area. This research was presented at the first Strategic Planning Session, and some information was added in response to questions at these sessions. Details from this section are included in the main text of this report.

STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT A

AGENDA | NOVEMBER 30, 2022 | 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

9:00 Welcome, Agenda, & Introductions

9:20 Context Presentation

10:20 Practical Vision Workshop

12:00 Break & Back to Working Lunch

12:20 Underlying Contradictions Workshop

2:20 Strategic Directions Workshop

4:20 Next Steps

4:30 Adjourn

On November 30, the strategy committee met for the first time and received a presentation on the results of the surveys, demographic research, and the two library focus groups.

PRACTICAL VISION

In the first workshop of the strategic planning process, the strategy committee developed a practical vision for the process. The thoughts that fed into this practical vision are included in the appendix document titled ALS PV UC SDs 11.30.22. Elements of the practical vision included:

- Inclusive, Consistent Support
- Collaborative Professional Development
- Intentional Community Engagement
- Strong Organizational Leadership
- Responsive, Sustainable Resources
- Equitable, Available Technology

UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS AKA BLOCKS

The next workshop focused on blocks that prevent the ALS from reaching the practical vision outlined in the first workshop. Participants identified six contradictions or blocks that they believed inhibited ALS's efforts. These blocks are available in the appendix in the document titled ALS PV UC SDs 11.30.22.

UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS

- Service Area and Structure Challenge Collaboration
- Competitive Funding Restricts Innovation
- Staff Roles & Expectations Limit Flexibility & Responsiveness
- Limited Resources Restrict Technology Utilization
- Unfocused Marketing Hinders Understanding
- Broadband Infrastructure Limits Access to Services

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

With the contradictions in mind, the participants then moved to identify five strategic directions that they believe will allow ALS to overcome these blocks. These strategic directions are available in the appendix in the document titled ALS PV UC SDs 11.30.22.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. Empowering Libraries' Staff Through Collaboration and Professional Development
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POST-STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS MINI-SURVEY

After the first retreat day, a mini survey asked ALS strategy committee members several questions to help them envision the future. It also identified the organization's strengths and weaknesses for implementation of the plan, along with the benefits and dangers of its success. The results of this survey are available in the appendix titled ALS Vision Mission Core Values Mini Survey Summary 01.17.23.

STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT B

AGENDA | January 17, 2022 | 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

9:00 Welcome, Agenda, & Introductions
9:20 The Future Summary
9:30 Mission, Vision, Core Values Workshop
11:30 Lunch Break
12:00 Our Current Reality Summary
12:10 Focused Implementation
- **Current Reality, Success Indicators, Actions**
- **Timeline**
- **Priority**
- **Next Steps**

3:40 90-Day Plan Teams
4:20 Next Steps
4:30 Adjourn

On January 17, 2023, Northspan facilitated a second full-day retreat with the strategy committee.

MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES

In this session, the strategy committee revisited ALS's mission, vision, and core values. Participants updated language to be more concise and workshopped the most relevant language for ALS's current situation.

FOCUSED IMPLEMENTATION

ALS defined its current reality, identified success indicators, and developed outcomes and accomplishments that will allow the organization to move from current reality to success on each of its strategic directions. These accomplishments and the ideas that led to their creation are available in the appendix in the document titled ALS Current Reality, Success Indicators & Actions 1.17.23. The strategy committee then further defined the strategic plan timeline, which is available in the appendix titled ALS Strategic Plan Timeline 1.17.23 and identified the most important priorities for the first quarter of the strategic plan, which is available in the appendix titled ALS Priority Wedge 1.17.23.

APPENDIX 2

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

APPENDIX 2

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background preparation for the strategic planning process included an analysis of existing documents completed by ALS, along with a demographic assessment of the region. This information was presented at the first Strategic Planning Session.

The organization has had just three directors in its nearly sixty years of existence, and Jim Weikum has served as its director since 1992. Unique services include a bookmobile, mail-a-book service, provision of access to databases and a regional catalog, subscriptions to audiobook and e-book services, and programming support for member libraries.

ALS has conducted regular strategic planning exercises, at times using both an outside facilitator and completing the process internally. Northspan reviewed three previous strategic plans to inform its efforts and undertook the extensive survey work documented in Appendix 1 to fully understand the backdrop framing the strategic plan.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

To provide context informing ALS's planning, Northspan conducted background research on its service area, which includes Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Lake of the Woods, and St. Louis Counties in northeast Minnesota. This data provides valuable context on changes in the composition of the population in the service area, which in turn has implications for the people using ALS region libraries and some of the services they may desire.

POPULATION

The ALS region saw little population change between 2010 and 2020, with a loss of just over 500 residents, or less than one quarter of one percent. However, a variety of underlying forces led to this stable headline number. Population decline was substantial in Koochiching and Lake of the Woods Counties, while Cook County and Carlton County showed growth. St. Louis County's large size obscures some internal dynamics, as the northern portions of the county saw a 1.4% decline in population, Duluth remained effectively flat, and the communities surrounding Duluth grew at a rate of nearly 4%. Nevertheless, all counties in the region lag Minnesota's growth rate over this same time period.

TABLE 1: POPULATION CHANGE BY COUNTY IN THE ALS SERVICE AREA, 2010-2020

COUNTY	2010	2020	NET CHANGE	% CHANGE
CARLTON	34,958	35,709	751	2.1%
COOK	5,211	5,402	191	3.7%
ITASCA	44,835	45,180	345	0.8%
KOOCHICHING	13,461	12.355	(1,106)	-8.2%
LAKE	10,900	10,571	(329)	-3.0%
LAKE OF THE WOODS	4,147	3,747	(400)	-9.6%
ST. LOUIS	199,472	199,499	27	0.0%
ALS AREA	**312,984**	**312,463**	**(521)**	**-0.2%**
MINNESOTA	5,214,914	5,600.,166	385,252	7.4%

APPENDIX 2, CONT.

AGE

The composition of the population in the ALS service area shifted notably over the decade of the 2010s. The population under age 18 shrank in every county over this timespan, as did the population in the 35-64 prime working age category. The population over 65, meanwhile, increased everywhere, sometimes dramatically. While these trends are partially reflective of a large cohort of aging Baby Boomers, they also show the movement of a retirement-age population to the region, a trend particularly notable in Cook County. Three counties (Carlton, Cook, and St. Louis) did muster growth in the 18-35 age group, which suggests some room for future population increases when these age cohorts have children.

Table 2: ALS Service Area Change in Population by Age Bracket, 2010-2020

COUNTY	UNDER 18	18-35	35-64	65+
CARLTON	-3.9%	3.5%	-1.1%	19.4%
COOK	-6.9%	17.5%	-15.9%	52.3%
ITASCA	-4.6%	-3.0%	-6.9%	28.4%
KOOCHICHING	-22.9%	-4.8%	-13.6%	16.5%
LAKE	-8.7%	-2.4%	-9.4%	14.0%
LAKE OF THE WOODS	-15.7%	-11.4%	-14.8%	9.8%
ST. LOUIS	-4.6%	1.4%	-7.5%	23.1%
ALS AREA	**-5.6%**	**0.9%**	**-7.3%**	**23.1%**
MINNESOTA	1.3%	4.7%	2.6%	34.9%

RACE AND ETHNICITY

While the ALS region is overwhelmingly white, its racial and ethnic composition has begun to shift over time. Black, Hispanic, and multiracial populations all grew by substantial percentages over the decade from 2010 to 2020. While the Native American population shows a notable decline, more granular Northspan research in other communities has shown that many areas with large Native American populations saw simultaneous large growth in the 2+ races category, suggesting that this regional growth may instead reflect changes in reporting rather than an actual decline in this population; while certainly comprising people of many mixes of races, the increase in the multiracial group is substantially larger than the decline among Native Americans. As a result, populations of color in northeast Minnesota have grown noticeably since 2010, allowing the region to cover for a substantial amount of its population loss among the white population.

Table 3: Racial and Ethnic Composition of ALS Service Area Population, 2010-2020

RACE OR ETHNICITY	2010	2020	NET CHANGE	% CHANGE
WHITE	93.2%	91.2%	(6,740)	-2.3%
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	1.1%	1.4%	826	23.6%
NATIVE AMERICAN	2.8%	2.3%	(1,530)	-17.3%
ASIAN	0.8%	-0.8%	(10)	-0.4%%
2+ RACES	1.7%	3.6%	5,898	111.3%
HISPANIC (any race)	-15.7%	-11.4%	1,642	44.0%

APPENDIX 2, CONT.

EDUCATION

The ALS region has an education profile characteristic of many rural, majority white regions of the United States, though it shows some changes. Its high school graduation rate substantially outstrips the national rate, and the percentage of the population with at least some college is likewise high. While attainment of college degrees lags the national rate, it has shown robust growth over the past decade, particularly among holders of advanced degrees.

Table 4: ALS Service Area Population by Education Level, 2010-2020

EDUCATION LEVEL	2010	2020	% CHANGE
LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL	8.2%	5.6%	-30.4%
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE	91.8%	94.4%	4.8%
SOME COLLEGE	59.7%	66.4%	13.4%
BACHELOR'S OR HIGHER	23.9%	28.0%	19.4%
ADVANCED DEGREE	7.5%	9.6%	30.5%

POVERTY

The ALS region has elevated rates of poverty by Minnesota standards, though it is closer in line with national averages. Poverty declined most substantially in areas that lost population and grew in some areas that added people, suggesting some potential migration from areas with limited job opportunities to those that had shown some growth. Rates remain highest in central and western portions of Duluth, in the urban cores of smaller towns, and in areas with large Native American populations.

Table 5: ALS Service Area Poverty Rates by County, 2010-2020

COUNTY	2010	2020	NET CHANGE	% CHANGE
CARLTON	10.5%	10.8%	157	4.5%
COOK	8.9%	5,402	191	3.7%
ITASCA	11.8%	45,180	345	0.8%
KOOCHICHING	12.4%	12.355	(1,106)	-8.2%
LAKE	11.6%	10,571	(329)	-3.0%
LAKE OF THE WOODS	13.7%	3,747	(400)	-9.6%
ST. LOUIS	15.1%	199,499	27	0.0%
ALS AREA	13.8%	312,463	(521)	-0.2%
MINNESOTA	11.6%	5,600.,166	385,252	7.4%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Incomes in the ALS region have risen steadily over time, with declines in the lowest-income brackets and increases in higher brackets. The increase in household income over the decade of the 2010s does outpace inflation, though these data do not incorporate some of the inflationary volatility that has occurred since 2020. Median family income includes housing units where members are related by marriage, birth, or adoption, while median household income includes all families, unrelated groups living together, and individuals living alone.

Table 6: ALS Service Area Household Income Statistics, 2010-2020

INCOME CATEGORIES	2010	2020	% CHANGE
Less than $25,000	27.8%	20.4%	-27.1%
$25,000-$49,000	26.3%	22.9%	-12.8%
$50,000-$74,999	20.7%	19.2%	-10.1%
$75,000-$99,999	12.2%	12.9%	240%
$100,000-$150,000	9.4%	16%	226%
$150,000-$200,000	2.1%	5.0%	138%
$200,000+	1.7%	3.7%	118%
Median Household Income	$45,71	$57,724	26.3%
Median Family Income	$59,414	$76,392	28.6%

TAKEAWAYS

The data show that the ALS region has a relatively flat, aging population, though these trends are uneven across the seven counties and have implications for where library services may be necessary in future years. The region is slowly but steadily becoming more diverse, reflecting a need to reflect changing demographics, and the advancing age of many northeast Minnesotans also has implications for the ways in which residents will engage with libraries. Poverty, while shrinking, remains persistent in the region, and libraries' growing role in providing resources to community members who may not otherwise have access to certain services remains a critical function. By staying abreast of these trends, ALS can tailor its services to reflect the realities of patron demographics and consider emerging opportunities to better serve regional residents.

APPENDIX 3

ALS WALL OF WONDER HISTORICAL SCAN 11.15.22

Arrowhead Library System (ALS) Wall of Wonder
November 15, 2022
Virginia, Minnesota

Nimbly Helping Communities Evolve

	Era of Beginning					Era of Transition						Era of Adaptation			Era of Growth & Anticipation		
	1980s			1990s		2000s			2010s			2020s			Future		
NATION	Reagan administration	Economic turmoil/Reagan Era		Desert Storm	World Wide Web	Afghanistan War	Y2K, 9/11, Bush Iraq War	Housing crash/ Tax base	Obama election era, Forest Fires	Hurricane Disasters	E-books (Kindle)	COVID pandemic, Political division	COVID pandemic	Pandemic	Vikings Super Bowl	Info: consolidation, open access/ Political Uncertainty	
	Greater focus on education	Economic stress, inflation, interest rates, Reaganism		Censorship	Internet	Terrorism, War, Loss of Trust	Recession		Social Media	Techology/Privacy		Racial Tension and Equity	Pandemic		Artiical Intelligence, Robotics	Environment and Health/ Pandemic	
REGION	Loss of mining jobs	Carnegie library changes		Decrease in Mining, Timber, Paper Mills	91 Halloween Blizzard	Wellstone crash	New housing and general development	Housing crash and recession	Duluth reimagined: Tourism, Cultural Center	Social media and gender issues in the schools	Environment: tailings, acid rain, invasive species, CWD, sulfates	Tech Migration, Political Shift (allegiances and clout)	Cost of living and inflation (increase)		Need to revision Range Economy	Becoming more politically conservative	Rare metals mining
	Mining layoffs	Rudy Perpich	Boom and Bust mining economy/ Population decline	Plane crash	Environmental protection and challenges	Decrease in enrollment k-12, college	School consolidations		Newspaper changes: no daily, online, consolidation	Consolidation of schools, colleges	Tourism as economic driver	Iron Range political influence decrease	Changing political climate		Mines closing?	Improving access to Broadband	
	Paul Wellstone	Male dominated Industries															
ALS	County minimum level of support change	Bookmobile and MAB Strong		ADA compliance/ building	Technology support LIS/ OPAC admin	Computerize/ Internet	Horizon!		ALS/NCLC Merger	Legacy grants, Microtype		Overdrive	Pandemic affected library services		New ALS Director (Bye Jim)	Become more of community hub	Advocacy to support increased funding
	Continuation: BookMobile and Mal a Book	Population Decline		Jim Weikum	Jim Weikum	Migrate to non-library degree staff at library?	New building		Legacy began	Legacy Amendment		Pandemic Responses: Zoom boom, library card application, take and makes	Equity in collections and programs		New ways to serve/ Pandemic/tech	Leadership change (Jim)	Broadband
									Legacy Funding	Consolidation					Digital preservation	Collaborate with community leaders	

APPENDIX 4

ALS BOARD STAFF STRATEGY COMMITTEE SURVEY SUMMARY 11.30.22

BACKGROUND

As part of the strategic planning process, Arrowhead Library System (ALS) staff, board, and strategic planning committee members were invited to take a survey to assess the group's progress on the current strategic plan and reflect on ALS' vision, mission, and values. In addition, participants were asked to complete an analysis of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and identify a vision for the future. The survey was distributed via e-mail and was open from August 30, 2022 – September 23, 2022; of 33 invitees, there were 26 responses.

PROGRESS ON CURRENT STATEGIC PLAN

Participants were asked to evaluate progress on ALS' existing strategic plan by ranking each action item *Completed/Accomplished, Needs More Work, or No Longer a Priority.* Actions that were ranked highly as completed included actions surrounding resource sharing with member libraries. Actions still seeking more work toward completion include those that focus on standardizing processes across libraries and empowering librarians to feel more confident with advocacy.

Goal #1: Embrace Empowerment	Completed/ Accomplished	Needs More Work	No Longer a Priority
Conduct member library site visits to educate and to listen	19%	76%	5%
Share resources and information with member libraries via newsletter and e-communications	83%	17%	0%
Encourage communication between member libraries	45%	55%	0%
Facilitate a wide variety of relevant library-specific training to member library staff, including in-person, online, and hosted around the ALS region	57%	43%	0%
Provide ALS Mini Grants for member libraries to support program development at the local level, and share grant ideas and outcomes	75%	25%	0%

Goal #2: Optimize the Customer Service Experience	Completed/ Accomplished	Needs More Work	No Longer a Priority
Review ALS collection development policies based on trending needs and requests of patrons	43%	57%	0%
Encourage the creation of standardized circulation policies across libraries	30%	70%	0%
Continuously review ALS website and electronic resources to ensure accurate and helpful information is easily accessible, relevant, and secure	39%	61%	0%
Maintain responsive interlibrary loan and delivery systems	91%	9%	0%
Adopt technology that enhances access to ALS resources and information	55%	41%	5%

Goal #3: Increase Awareness	Completed/ Accomplished	Needs More Work	No Longer a Priority
Build and enhance strategic partnerships to better meet the unique needs of each organization	43%	57%	0%
Advocate for all types of libraries at the national, state, and local level using multiple platforms	60%	40%	0%
Teach member library staff how to advocate, using statistics and other ALS data	22%	78%	0%
Facilitate trustee training for ALS Board Members and local library board members	32%	64%	5%
Work with community organizations, including townships, to promote ALS services	24%	76%	0%

Goal #4: Support Lifelong Learning	Completed/ Accomplished	Needs More Work	No Longer a Priority
Provide materials, training, and programs for library staff and patrons focusing on early literacy	64%	36%	0%
Offer meaningful, educational and accessible reading programs that support literacy development for patrons of all ages	61%	39%	0%
Identify and remove barriers to services and resource accessibility by developing mindful solutions	48%	48%	5%
Add member school libraries to the ALS Horizon system to foster connectivity with ALS and each other	48%	48%	5%

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

Next, respondents were asked about ALS' current mission, vision and values. The majority of participants recognized the current statements and were asked to provide further feedback on the relevance.

VISION: The Future of our Library Community School and academic libraries are valued by their students, faculty, and administrators. Staff in these libraries have the professional skills to help students perform well academically, develop critical thinking skills, and grow into lifelong learners. Through membership in the regional system, special libraries help extend the reach of their sponsoring organizations. They share information and expertise about specialized topics with the wider community. The region's public libraries are strong and vital hubs in their communities, and a source of great civic pride. People of all ages, locations, and socio-economic backgrounds actively make use of public library services. Public libraries are in tune with changing needs in their communities and respond with services and programming that consistently satisfy and delight the people who use them. The region is abuzz about libraries.

-Approved by the ALS Board on February 14, 2013.

- 70% recognize this as the vision statement
- 80% feel the statement is relevant

MISSION: Arrowhead Library System enhances the value of all types of libraries to their communities by cultivating collaboration, technological innovation, and professional development; and enriches the quality of life by providing direct services for those without a public library and access to electronic resources for all people in northeastern Minnesota.

- 87% recognize this as the mission statement
- 84% feel the statement is relevant

CORE VALUES: We believe in...the worth and appreciation of diverse points of view, each individual's right to free and equal access to information and ideas , the value of individuals, community, and culture, the importance of innovation in meeting evolving customer needs and expectations, accountability for the public's resources - Approved by the ALS Board on June 13, 2019.

- 83% recognize these as the value statements
- 96% recognize them as relevant

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Staff - experienced, creative, passionate, skilled, engaged, friendly, supportive, educated
- Collaboration
- Services: Bookmobile, Interlibrary loans
- Consistent efforts to keep Board informed
- Communities value their libraries very highly
- Technology in place
- We have an inhouse print shop where libraries can order materials to promote services

Weaknesses

- Retirements & staff turnover
- Communication with and between staff team members
- Inter library concern for ALS services threatening them (i.e. they think Mail-A-Book or Bookmobile takes away their patrons)
- Making the public aware of the services offered. More than just an occasional newspaper article and Facebook
- Not a good mix of training for all staff.

Opportunities

- Reaching the comunity with new techonolgy.
- Collaborate with external groups on Programming
- HR partnership with local health/wellness organizations for ALS staff safety and well-being training
- Social services in member libraries
- Love of library services in our communities
- area has some good artists
- bringing Duluth Pub. Lib. into our electronic system

Threats

- Censorship
- Funding determined by legislation
- Political climate
- Public perception; lack of awareness of library resources
- Increased cost of service delivery ie-gas/building repairs, high cost of technology and changes in tech
- Retirement/loss of institutional knowledge
- Uninterested elected officials, local, county, state

PRACTICAL VISION

The next section of the survey asked participants to consider the question: *"What do you want to see in place in 5 years as a result of our strategic planning actions?"* Responses clustered into the following themes:

- Continued and Increased Programming and Services
- Enhanced Staff Development
- Flexible, Strategic Operations
- Strengthened Promotion and Advocacy
- Growing, Fairly Allocated Funding
- Updated and Utilized Infrastructure

UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS

After identifying their practical vision, survey participants were next asked to identify **underlying contradictions,** addressing the prompt *"What may be blocking or holding us back from moving toward your practical vision?"* Responses include:

- Current Staffing Model Limits Growth
- Fixed Methods Inhibit Efficiency
- Cultural and Political Trends Constrain Finances
- Unclear Communication Practices Cloud Messaging
- Challenging Demographics and Region Create Unmet Needs

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Finally, respondents were asked to reflect on their answers to the previous two questions and asked to consider *"What innovative things (actions, programs, or efforts) can our community and staff do, create or take one to move your Practical Vision ideas into accomplishments?"* Four aggregated strategic direction ideas emerged:

- Train and Support Staff to Strengthen Capacity
- Develop Internal Procedures to Streamline Operations
- Strengthen Internal and External Communications to Improve Messaging
- Connect with Communities to Increase Access

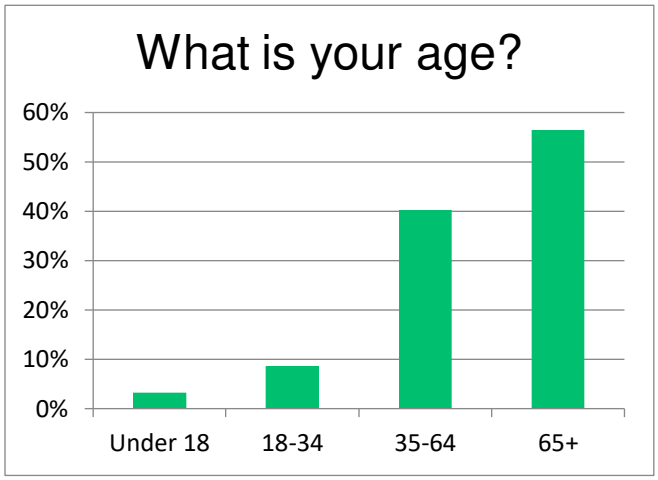
APPENDIX 5

ALS PATRON SURVEY SUMMARY 11.30.22

BACKGROUND

As part of the Arrowhead Library System's strategic planning process, Northspan administered a survey of ALS library patrons. The survey generated 184 responses, including 91 electronic surveys and 93 paper surveys distributed at member libraries, and through ALS's bookmobile and Mail-a-Book services. While not a fully random sample, the responses offer insights into how patrons use libraries and what they most value from their libraries and, by extension, ALS.

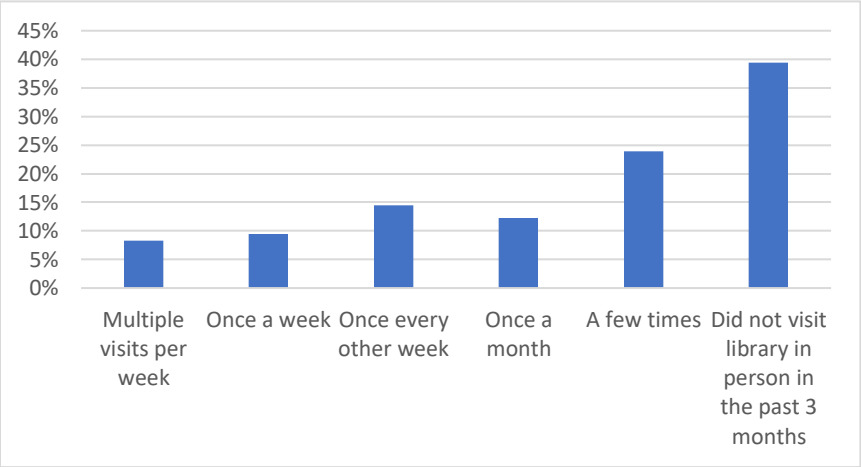
The survey had a broad reach among library users. 23 ALS member libraries were represented as patrons' "home" libraries, plus several non-regional responses and many who wrote in "bookmobile" on paper survey. The survey asked similar questions to the library staff survey, with some edits to reflect patrons' perspectives; this allowed the responses to be compared directly in partner library focus groups. The survey made no effort to educate respondents on the specifics of ALS's work, and instead sought to understand how patrons interact with libraries and how ALS can fit into the equation.



Respondent Age

Responses were not reflective of the age distribution in the ALS region and skewed heavily toward the 65-plus age category. These trends were particularly pronounced among paper survey respondents, though this sample also included all under 18 respondents, whereas the 35-64 age group was strongly represented in the electronic version. Given the inherent difficulties in surveying the under 18 population, the overall results were probably somewhat representative of libraries' adult user base, which focus group participants noted skewed toward the very old and very young.

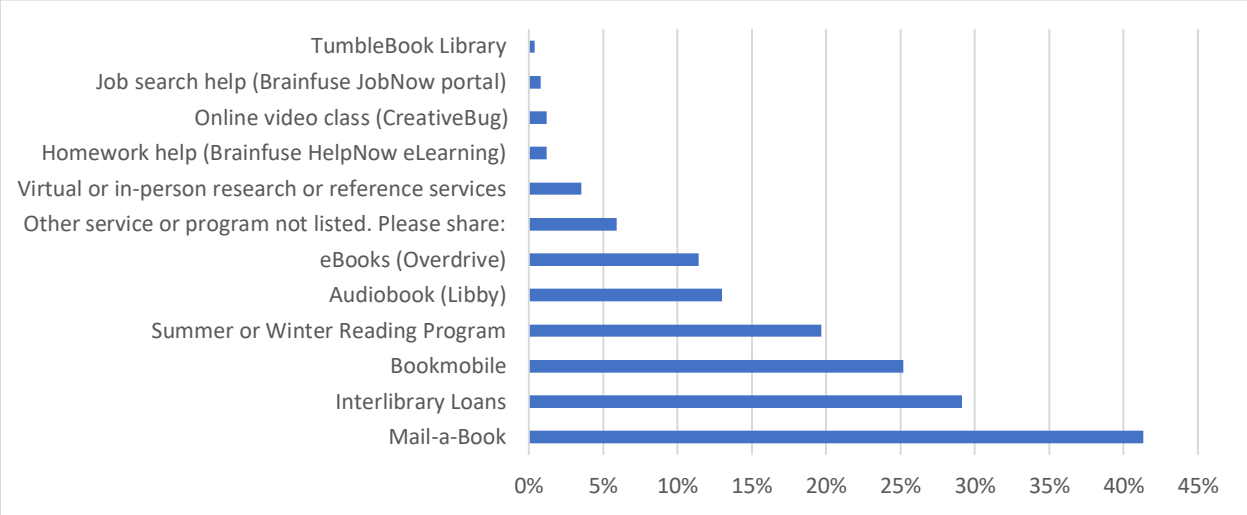
96 percent of respondents identified as white, a percentage higher than the overall population but not far out of line from the US Census data that puts the ALS region's white population at 91 percent. People with disabilities and veterans were also relatively well-represented in the sample. Respondents were also able to self-identify with a variety of categories or affinity groups, and responses yielded over 20 percent as professionals in education, along with numerous stay-at-home or homeschooling parents.



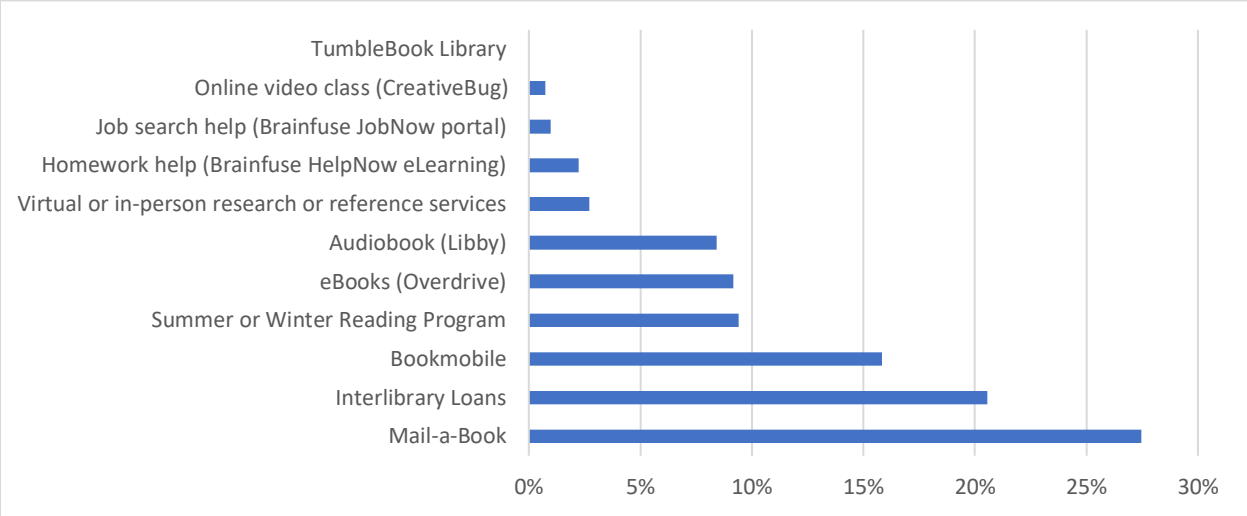
Library Visitation

The survey generated a broad sample of different levels of library visitation, ranging from those who visit facilities once a week to those who do not set foot in libraries for several months, but still use their services.

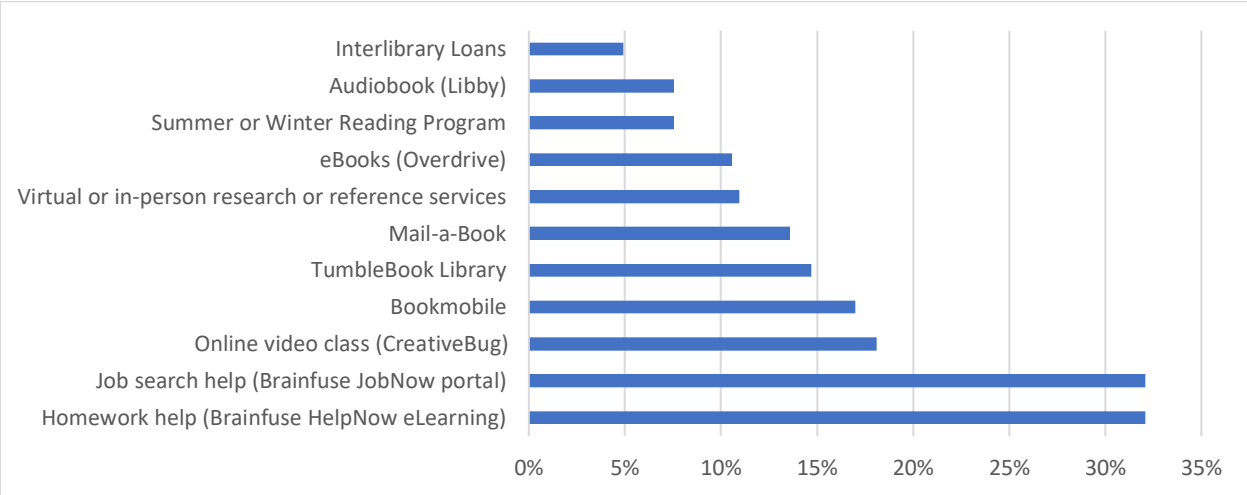
MOST USED LIBRARY SERVICES



MOST VALUABLE LIBRARY SERVICES



LEAST USED LIBRARY SERVICES



Library Service Use Analysis
An analysis of the most used, most valuable, and least used library services reveals many commonalities. The most used and most valuable charts match almost perfectly, while the least used chart is a near inverse of the other two. Interlibrary loans are especially popular among patrons, while audiobooks and e-books are emerging trends, Mail-a-Book and the bookmobile maintain a dedicated user base, and the summer and winter reading programs have substantial support as well. Services provided by ALS that are more general online resources, such as online video classes through CreativeBug, job search help through Brainfuse, and homework help through Brainfuse, were among the least used and valued.

Additional Programs and Services
Respondents listed a number of additional programs and services they would like to see out of their libraries. While not all are directly relevant to ALS, several emerged as clear trends. There was considerable support for non-traditional items for circulation, including take-and-make kits, e-readers, and other community resources that have been supported by ALS legacy programming in the past. The enhancement or expansion of contests for reading and writing also generated support, along with more general requests for expanded programming. Other respondents used this space to reaffirm their support for existing ALS operations such as the bookmobile and Mail-a-Book, or to advocate for specific resources such as genealogy research tools.

PRACTICAL VISION
The next section of the survey asked participants to consider the question: *"What do you want to see in place in 5 years as a result of our strategic planning actions?*" Responses clustered into the following areas:

- Expanded Adult and Children's Programming
- Increased Access & Hours
- Greater Community Engagement
- Expanded Catalogue
- Support Existing Operations
- Creative Checkout Options
- Improved Tech Functionality
- Upgraded Library Facilities
- Provide Materials Recommendations
- Negotiating Sensitive Topics

See the ALS Summary of All PV UC SD Survey Ideas 11.28.22 document for all responses in each element of the practical vision.

APPENDIX 6

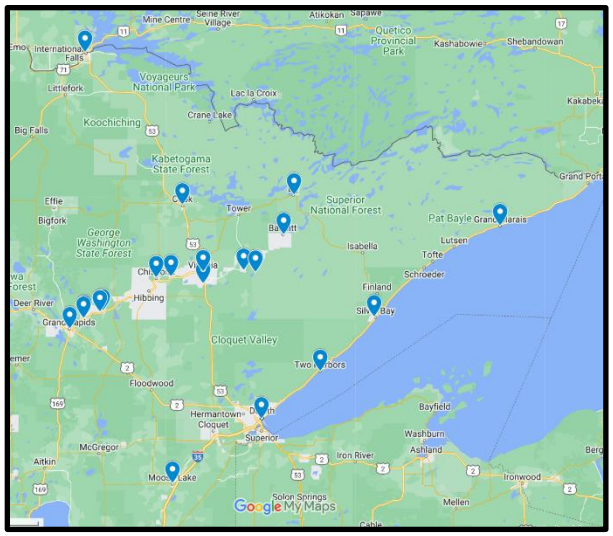
ALS LIBRARY STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY 11.30.22

ARROWHEAD LIBRARY | PARTNER STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

The Arrowhead Library System (ALS) contracted with Northspan to conduct a survey for partner library staff members as part of the strategic planning process. The survey was developed in survey monkey and a link was distributed via e-mail. The survey was open from Tuesday, August 30, 2022, through Wednesday, September 21, 2022.

BACKGROUND

There were 26 total responses to the survey. Those who participated comprised of staff from 20 different libraries across the Arrowhead Library region.



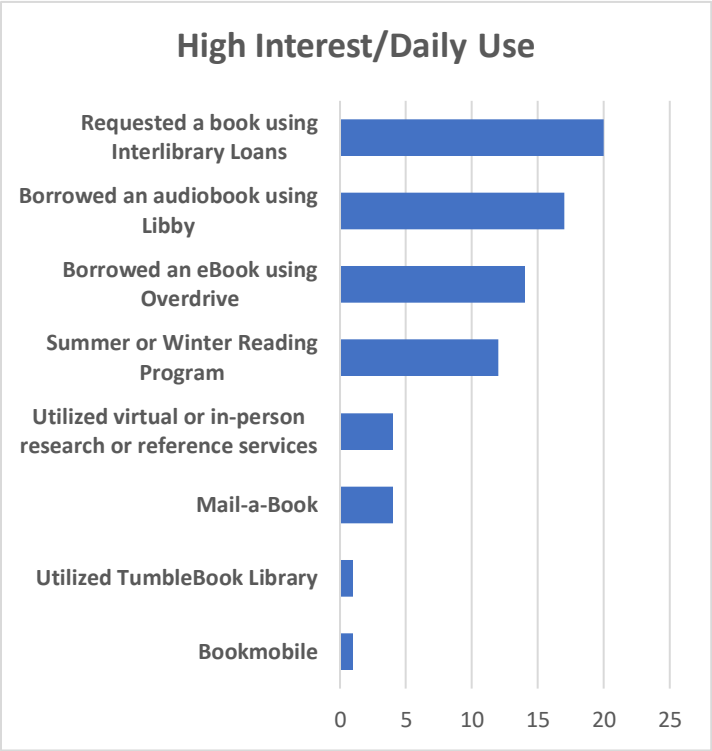
PATRON OBSERVATIONS

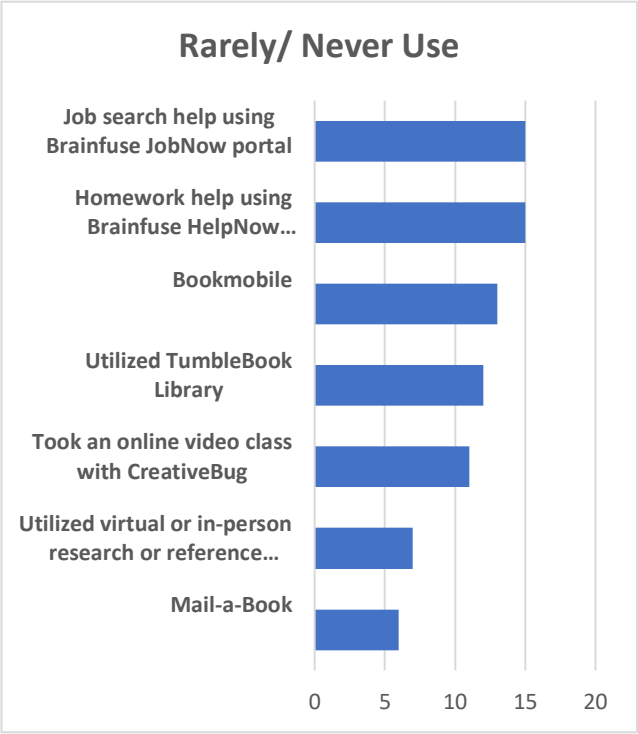
To better understand usage an appreciation of ALS services, staff were asked how often on an average week would they say patrons are engaging with the listed library services or programs.

- Bookmobile
- Mail-a-Book
- Summer or Winter Reading Program
- Homework help using Brainfuse HelpNow eLearning
- Job search help using Brainfuse JobNow portal
- Borrowed an eBook using Overdrive
- Borrowed an audiobook using Libby
- Utilized TumbleBook Library
- Requested a book using Interlibrary Loans
- Took an online video class with CreativeBug
- Utilized virtual or in-person research or reference services

Staff rated these services on a scale of Rarely/Never, Some interest, Moderate interest, High interest/daily use.

In the **High Interest/Daily Use** category, requesting a book via interlibrary loan took the lead, followed by borrowing an audiobook on Libby, then borrowing an ebook on Overdrive.

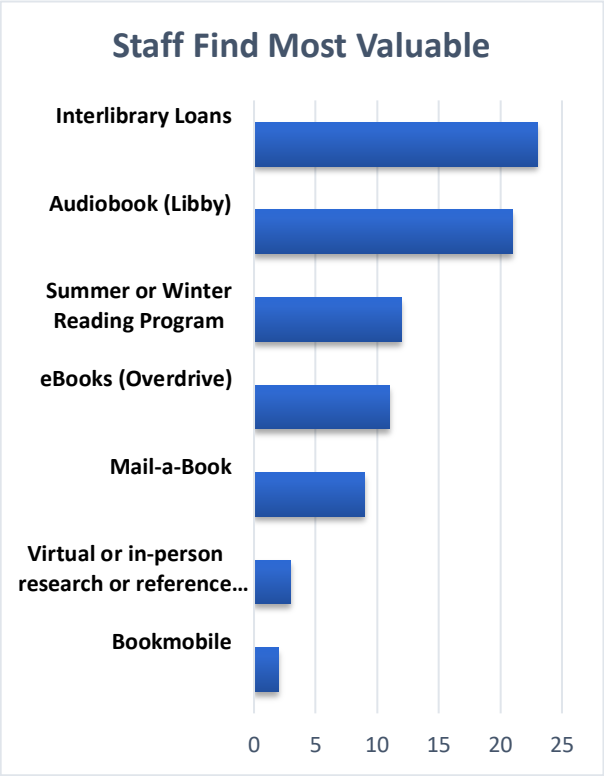




In the **Rarely/Never Used** assessment, Brainfuse Job Now and Homework help using Brainfuse made the top of the list, followed by the Bookmobile.

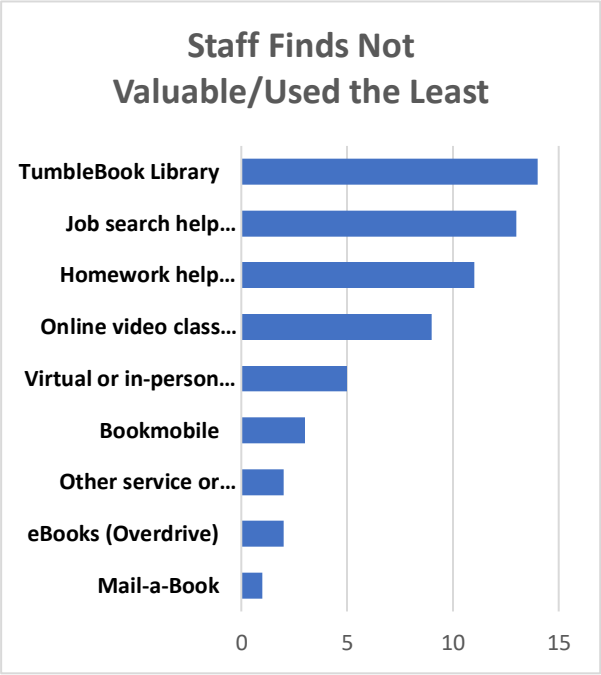
Arguably, staff may not be aware of bookmobile use as the bookmobile services areas with challenged library access.

Staff were then asked which of the following services **they found most valuable**: Interlibrary Loans, Audiobook (Libby), Summer or Winter Reading Program, eBooks (Overdrive), Mail-a-Book, Virtual or in-person research or reference services, Bookmobile, Homework help (Brainfuse HelpNow eLearning), Job search help (Brainfuse JobNow portal), TumbleBook Library, and Online video class (CreativeBug).



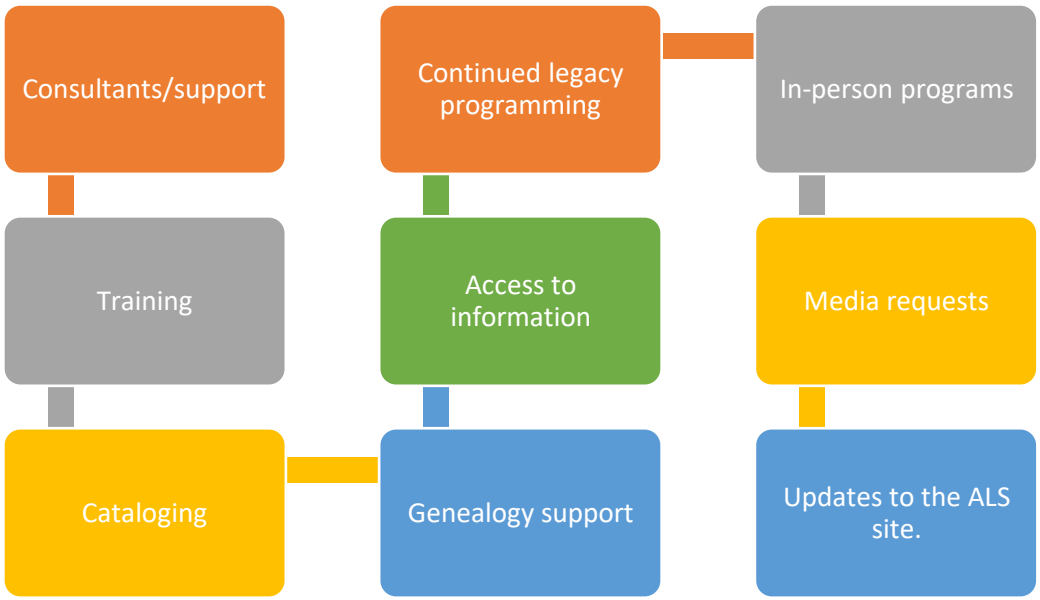
Overwhelming, staff found interlibrary loans to be the **most valuable**, with 23/26 participants rating it first. Audiobook (Libby) was a close second, and the summer/winter reading programs a third (followed closely by eBooks).

Conversely, when asked **what patrons use the least,** staff noted that TumbleBook Library is the least valuable, followed by Job search help (Brainfuse JobNow portal) and Homework help (Brainfuse HelpNow). The online video class (Creative Bug) was also rated relatively low, with over 1/3 (35%) putting it towards the top of the "Used the Least" list.



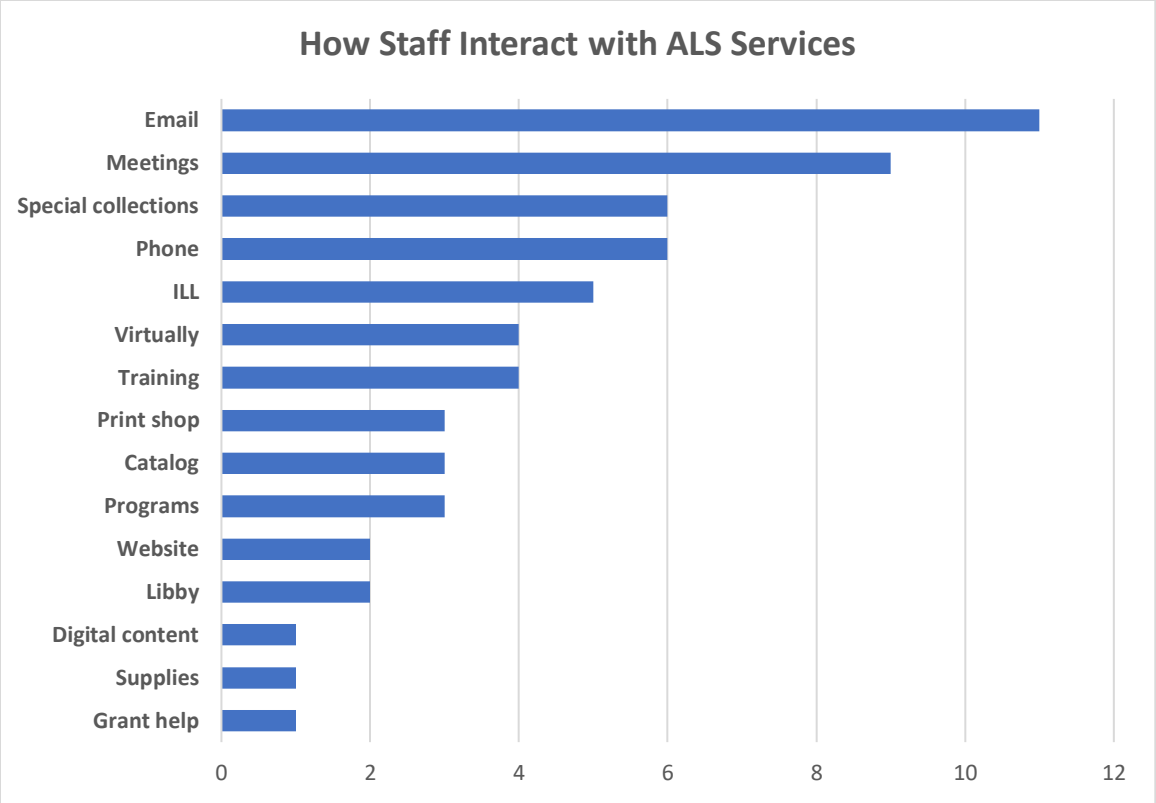
QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

In an effort to glean input on additions to the ALS provided lineup, staff were asked if there were any programs or services they would like to see at the library not currently offered. Staff offered 25 different suggestions. The themes of these responses are featured below



"I am looking forward to meeting in person at ALS Headquarters again! It is so helpful to gather with other library staff and exchange ideas and support each other."

Staff were asked how they interact with the ALS. The question was open-ended inviting a text-response from participants. The answers varied widely, but by far staff shared their use of email to interact with the ALS. Second were meetings. And third were collections: large print, materials, professional collections.



Importantly, staff were asked if they felt supported by the Arrowhead Library system. Out of the 23 responses to this question, only one answered in the negative, simply stating they did not "feel very well supported."

All others responded resoundingly that the ALS was helpful: with questions, responding to email, and hosting meetings. One shared, "They are always there to help me or point me to the right direction." Said another, "I love the trainings and meetings and how they really try to tailor their support to what the member libraries need. They have been there for us to help smooth over technical needs and issues, supported us with grants, helped us brainstorm solutions and program ideas, connected us with other libraries as we contemplate building upgrades. They do so much and with such great attitudes all the time! They are absolutely invaluable to us!"

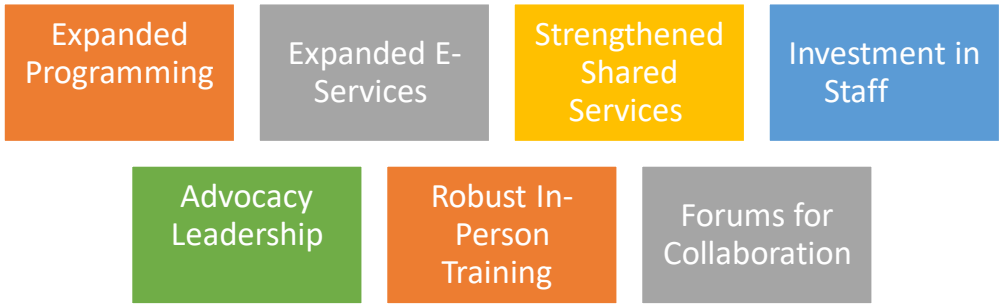
Indeed, being a part of a larger system was important to many of the participants. "Being part of a system is key for VPL and ALS supports the library with resources. (staff, advocacy, state and local information)." Said another, "Being part of something bigger than our small library is super helpful to meeting our community's needs. Sharing knowledge and ideas among libraries." "They answer our questions, they anticipate our needs, they foster community, they strive to respond, they practice compassion and do not patronize when our staff need help understanding basic concepts. They are committed to attitudes of service. "

Folks mentioned sharing grant opportunities, assistance with writing grants and annual reports. One mentioned the financial assistance of mini-grants.

Many listed the programs and services ALS offers, like, “legacy programming, the delivery system, youth programming support, ILL's, horizon, special collections & the print shop. " Digital content was noted. The ALS was deemed as being very supportive. As one person said, they couldn’t survive without their help.

Staff were asked how ALS could better support or advocate for their library:

Finally, partner library staff members were invited to answer the practical vision question:“What do you want to see in place in 5 years?



The specific ideas generated are offered on the next page.

Practical Vision Ideas: Library Survey

Expanded Programming	Expanded E-Services	Strengthened Shared Services	Investment in Staff	Advocacy Leadership	Robust In-Person Training	Forums for Collaboration
Expanded programming	more e services	book recommendations	Preserve the current staff's culture!	advocacy training for library workers and stakeholders	In person training and programming. We miss it!	Create forums for library staff to collaborate and share experiences
More focus on teen programming.	More robust downloadable collections	"Duluth catalog being integrated into Arrowhead" (or at least let them send Duluth holds to ALS)	Staff retention & succession planning	Better ways to advocate	Trainings for all staff (especially technology changes)	ALS staff visits to member libraries
Programs that bring arts and culture to communities	Streaming services available for public use	Continued improvement of the ILS	Mentoring program for library staff new to ALS	Strong advocacy for all ALS libraries	In-person Training again	Continued support of regional activities/events
Increased Library usage in the region	Increased ebook/e-Audiobook collection	Regionwide cataloging	Strong, approachable leadership	Continued funding support - grants/advocacy/resources	Additional training options for library staff	facilitate standardized borrowing policies across libraries
Ideas to bring families into the library	Genealogical database access.	Support with cataloging at ALS	invest in ALS staff - bennies, raises, kudos, etc	Advocacy for better funding for all libraries	Training on what to archive - materials & information	more cohesiveness among libraries
continued support via grants	Increase access to digital content	"more Horizon features for ease of use"	Continued provision of continuing education for staff	more community awareness of value of libraries	More specialized trainings for member library staff	Continued support of regional collaboration
More adult programs	Knowledgable & nimble tech staff	a designated person for marc record creation	Stabilized work force	More advocacy resources for member library staff	Space design help for connecting with community	Partnership with Discovery Center focused on Genealogy
Creation of a One Book program for entire ALS region with promotion, author visit, programs, etc.	Travelling basic computer class for patrons	Printer generated transit / hold slips	succession planning framework (ALS AND member libraries)	elected officials value libraries more	maximizing available space/collection development within small libraries	provide virtual networking for library workers
More author meet and greets.	Reorganization of ALS website resources for libraries	"Improve the ALS catalog." I loved the ipac arrowhead catalog.				
More assistance	Training for member libraries on online databases	Centralized cataloging for Horizon libraries				
continued and expanded programming	"Improve the ALS app." Or run another staff feedback session to gather possible improvements.	Contined support of shared services				
Keep up with the great progamming	Promotion and access of Open Access resources	training hub - videos, system wide new staff				
Ideas to get teens to read	Significantly reduced wait lists for ebooks/eaudios					
Continued Legacy programs	more eBooks / audiobooks					
Better outreach to lower income families.						
Different programs besides summer/ winter reading						
Continued 'Take and makes'						
"Help promote patrons with poor vision" (e.g. spread literature on National services)						
access to "thing" collections - library and patron levels						

APPENDIX 7

LIBRARY FOCUS GROUP THEMES 10.18.22 AND 10.20.22

ALS Member Library Listening Sessions

On October 18 and 20, 2022, representatives from 18 of ALS's 27 regional member libraries participated in one of two 1.5-hour virtual listening sessions with Northspan. Participants described their impression of the ALS as helpful and knowledgeable, welcoming, and in a time of change. The shared catalog, connecting libraries, programming and organizational support were declared most valuable assets of the ALS.

Broader trends participants have observed about libraries are libraries now being used as community hubs, content going digital, and in-person use still not up to pre-COVID numbers. The group felt the ALS could respond to these changes by acting as a centralized hub for coordination of programming and funding and providing more digital content.

The group defined library users as aging, more diverse, increased poverty and increased mental health challenges. The lack of social resources was discussed. Members shared the importance of referrals to existing resources and personal boundaries.

October 18 and 20, 2022 Themes

Rational Aim: Gather input from ALS member libraries on the trends they see and how they affect ALS.
Experiential Aim: Give ALS libraries a chance to have a stake in ALS's strategic planning process.

Grounding Ourselves (go around the room)

Please share a one-sentence impression of ALS.

HELPFUL and KNOWLEDGABLE

- Very helpful and if they don't know the answer they will find it.
- Helpful and fragile.
- Helpful. Knowledgeable. A lot of institutional knowledge particularly with Jim and Molly.
- ALS is knowledgeable. Simple.
- ALS are amazing. They will find the answer.
- Customer service oriented. ALS is amazing at connecting in a human way, trying to understand what we need and trying to provide it.
- Responsiveness. Anytime I have a question I get a response. If they don't know the answer, they will find it. Problem solving.
- Support. A knowledgeable resource.
- They do it pretty well.
- Patient and kind. If I have a stupid question, I get a good answer.

CHANGE:

- Change. Libraries are in a big series of changes right now. ALS is also in a big change right now.
- In flux, changing. In a period of transition in these last few years.

WELCOMING

- ALS staff are very friendly and welcoming. So lucky to be a part of the ALS. They do a great job. They are just wonderful.

- ALS is welcoming.
- ALS is a warm comfy blanket of support. They just make you feel good, but do what they need to do at the same time.

(Other)
Very supportive of a very diverse group of libraries. They work with public libraries, special school, academic… keep us all together.
Focused and resilient.
Very forward thinking and very stable for us as libraries.
The opportunity they afford a small library like ours.

What is one aspect of ALS you find particularly valuable?
SHARED CATALOG

- Shared library catalog.
- All of the above, but probably the catalog would be my top of the list.
- I would have to say horizon and support with online catalog as well.
- I agree with everyone especially horizon.
- I'd agree; cataloging too.
- Horizon
- ALS surprises with horizon and all of the support for it.
- For us it is the Overdrive collection. It is a really important collection for us.

CONNECTING LIBRARIES

- Facilitating all of the library getting together and exchanging information.
- I agree with everyone also and the continuing education for library knowledge. Even the refresher courses.
- Connecting all of the different libraries. It is hard sometime to know what is going on in everyone elses' places. They offer a forum for us to connect and let us know what other libraries are doing. Fresh knowledge and ideas.
- Connection. Pretty vital.
- Constant communication. Knowing that you are not in a boat by yourself. Connection and things like that. We are a small library. It's nice to know there are people like you struggling like you are. A lot of connection.

PROGRAMMING

- Legacy programming.
- Essential for us as well. Programming that is region wide.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

- Training between webinars and different trainings beneficial to myself and my staff.
- Organizational support: getting ready for annual statistics.

What broader trends in libraries have you observed?
How are libraries changing over time?

COMMUNITY HUB

- We've always been a community hub; we are becoming the only social outlet for a lot of people. The full range. People of all walks of life, stages of development, levels of need. Only place that's left that that happens.
- We do a lot of tech support here at the library. We also are helping bridge the broadband gap. Definitely a community hub more than a reading room.
- Community getting together less of a quiet reading space.
- Tell patrons: don't come after school, it's going to be loud.
- I've always said we're not a "shush" library
- As an urban library how can we serve as part of the social safety net and keep all people safe.
    - Karl asked if others in rural settings are seeing this too? Some participants nodded their heads.
- Vigilance as well. Policies are locked tight against challenges. Making sure libraries stay a community hub/community resource with budget cuts. Avoiding overtaxing staff.

GOING DIGITAL

- Less physical magazines
- Less physical magazines and newspapers.
- A lot of patrons digital and streaming has become huge. 30-35% circulation is digital. People looking for a space to meet with other people more than the materials. People are looking for someplace to be social.
- How to use libby, use their phone. Free internet. Updated it: internet access and power outside our library because we can't be open 24/7.

(Other)
Going fine free. Taking away those barriers for our patrons.

Short term strategic plans. Everyone wants a direction. We are pretty sure we can't get too far ahead of ourselves.

Early literacy: how many kiddos are coming out of the pandemic without social/emotional skills unlike in 2019.

(Only asked in one session) How has the library use changed since the pandemic? Have the numbers come back?

No.

- Shaking heads.
- Increasing over time, but a slow increase.
- Foot traffic 2/3 prior to 2020.
- Uptick in childrens/digital use.
- Programming: if there are too many people for their comfort, they will turn around and leave. If a room looks full, some people will not go in if they are not comfortable with that.
- Pandemic we closed and closed for a long time. Then when they opened, the library flooded. Had wondered if that was why they were still missing 1/3 of the population.

Seasonal traffic

- Question posed to others: I am tied to tourist-based economy. What did you see this summer? People who only came for the weekends they had them in drove.

- The leaf peepers have picked up for us. Not people who have a cabin, but people who are willing to travel but not willing fly—so come north for the weekend.
- We are seeing fewer of our regular summer people. I would like to know where they all went. They are here, but they are not in the library as they are in the past.
- People are waiting for their hotel room, so they sit in the library and read periodicals. This is a change

Computer use

- Something we have seen prior to March of 2020: less use of our public computers in our computer center. The digital divide still exists. Are people going elsewhere? Or are they just not accessing computers to the same level they are.
- Our computers aren't as busy, but our hotspots and laptops we check out are out all the time.

How does ALS need to adapt to trends to meet evolving library needs?
How can ALS respond to some of these changes.

CENTRALIZED COORDINATION of PROGRAMMING AND FUNDING

- Get us together to brainstorm issues. That facilitation of idea exchange.
- I was able to get grant money to update power external; coordinating grant opportunities has been huge.
- Overall, all of the coordination that ALS does
- I'm thankful for all the programs we are able to offer only with the help and funding of ALS.
- I think they do a great job with the programming. I see even more need for that. More and more requests: when are you going to have a live performance?
- Increasing ways people could respond to those requests: Centralized purchasing would be really helpful.

DIGITAL CONTENT

- The need for increased access to digital content. A lot of our patrons are really relying on that.
- I was going to say the same exact thing. Overdrive is important to our community. More digital collections would be terrific.

Who Uses Libraries (present demographic data)
Do the data reflect what you're seeing in your library?

YES DATA REFLECTS LIBRARIES

- Head nodding.
- They are accurate to 2020. Since the pandemic started, we have seen a large number of families moving in which we haven't before. People who want to homeschool their children. One wage earner remains in the twin cities. They are living in their cabin, or trying to purchase a home
- Speaking from SLC, Lake and Cook County. With the influx of short term rentals or remote workers, competing with resources; people having to turn down job offers because they can't find housing. Not surprised by data.

AGING / POVERTY

- Definitely see the aging. And maybe the poverty we are just seeing more of them come into the library.

- Definitely an aging population. Also the poverty level with what we know with our patrons this does not seem to reflect what we see in the library either.
- That is our population. The very young and the very old. We tend to have a lot more large print books and I have a lot of picture books.
- We are seeing that same trend. Most of our repeat patrons are in the 65+ category. We have seen families from California, Mississippi and Missouri. We are seeing people move in because of heat, or wat As we are looking at how many people are trying to age in place as well; folks are aging in their home, or because they want to or because they cannot find senior living. We appreciate things like mail a book that keep people independent as long as possible.
- Our main usership is in the over 60 category. In the library.
- People are looking for something to do once they retire. Once they retire they are here all the time.
- In Duluth we are not necessarily seeing a bigger flux of old people.
- A very large unsheltered population; people come in for the day because they need a place to be. Last she heard there are 1,000 people without homes and only 150 beds.

INCREASED DIVERSITY
We are gaining a more diverse population, which is great! I would say our poverty level is growing as well.

(Are they taking into consideration the homeless population? Are you doing any adjustment for that? Karl said he is not; he said the census bureau is trying to.
That may be part of what we are seeing; not housed or un-homed.)

Have your patrons changed over the years, and if so, how?

MENTAL HEALTH
- Well everybody is getting older. But we are seeing more mental health challenges. More folks less able to cope with what is going on around them. Even just in life in general, but also, what's happening in the building on the day they show up.
- I think the biggest thing is just mental health within our patrons and dealing with those kind of issues on a pretty regular basis.
- I agree, I think that is a national concern.
- mental health ……they just want someone to listen to them.

How do people see libraries responding to that, being part of the solution, or just adapting to that situation?

REFERRALS
- I think that's the million dollar question. A lot of my response has been referrals. We can't take on those roles. I don't feel its healthy for us, for the library.

BOUNDARIES
- That's something myself and staff have to hold those boundaries. People want to talk. It's nice to support our patrons, but it's draining… lack of resources. We have the cops. Sometimes they're helpful.
- Boundaries are important

LACK OF RESOURCES CHALLENGING

- No other resources.
- Others experience this?
- Head nodding.
- So where do you stop. There are resources available. This assumes computer literacy. That is very frustrating. Because of the State of MN had to a PDF… getting into the tax stuff will all the extra levels… how much time do you spend on that?
- We also have a large part of our patrons that need help with benefits and basic technology needs to function in daily life. Partnering with the county to help facilitate social workers and one on one help is on our wish list.
- Keeping the libraries welcoming spaces to all, and continuing to have welcoming and positive staff. Referrals are great.
- So busy as well.
- Tuesday was a new moon 😕
- This is our new norm now; what do we do going forward?
- We have a lot of numbers and people we could refer people to… but we have a guy who's stationed himself near city grounds living in a tent. He's spending every day here. He's a registered sex offender. Refuses to register for services, but wants services.
- YES!!! there is truth to that, I've seen it in retail, homecare and food service.

TEENS

- We have a very large amount of bored teens in the afternoons. We don't have enough staff to provide consistent programming to help keep them busy. Bored teens are destructive and it's hard to keep them from climbing everything from our book drop to the railings!
- Have any of you had them take your soap dispensers off the wall? The destruction is quite fascinating.
- Steal soap dispensers, light bulbs, toilet paper…They are just bored. Not bad kids. We have the only free wi-fi in town.
- Now I am appreciating our teens who are just slightly louder than I prefer :-)
- luckily we haven't had that and I'm hoping with our new maker space that that won't end up being a problem

How do these trends affect the services ALS offers?

TAKE AND MAKE KITS

- The take and make kits helpful.
- Take and make kits are super popular! We love them.
- Our patrons LOVE the take and makes!

Having someone to bounce ideas off of. Having programming that fits some of our older teens.

DIGITAL

- I think back to the digital. That's where our middle-aged folks are at. Increasing the options for that group. I think that's our demographic for our digital.

We are benefiting from our rotating collections: large prints, story walks. We don't have the space for that.

Survey Results – Library Staff

Karl presented the data from the library staff survey.

How do you react to these survey results?
YES

- Feels like a pretty accurate representation at least on my end of things.
- I agree.
- Others agree?
- Couple "agree" in the chat.

Anything that surprised you?

BOOKMOBILE/MAIL A BOOK

- The lower usage of the bookmobile.
- I don't really have a handle on who uses bookmobile.. If those who come in, I don't know
- We have more interaction with mail a book than bookmobile.
- Carlton has a large amount that goes out to Mail a book

(Other)
The comment that ALS wasn't helpful

Would you like to expand on any opinions expressed in the survey?
Offer more detail?

CATALOGING

- I would love to see from the ALS, I don't know how often it is, a chance to go hands on and do cataloguing and as questions come up have someone right there. Training on cataloguing with slides is not helpful. An open lab where we could go catalogue and have support.
- I agree with that. Hands on training is very valuable.
- I agree it would be valuable, but we would never make it. It is a two hour drive.
- For me it's a :15 drive.
- If the staff that are cataloguing system, ALS is huge, training that hits the northern part and southern part and trains. Moved around. I know that the in person training hasn't happened because of COVID
- Ditto with [name redacted]. I'm an hour further.
- I know we've done somethings with cataloguing and having a one on one zoom and it has worked. There are options that we have utilized.
- It would be great, I'm wondering if it could be combined with something I saw in the PDF results that were sent, that there be an ALS staff that does JUST cataloging
- I probably wouldn't go every month, or four times a year. In grand rapids, or two harbors for the north shore libraries. They've done this in the past.
- I think they have done some in person. I worked with [name redacted] in the past; 30 minutes the most helpful training ever.

- I like doing it as I'm actually doing it. I like it where you bring your cataloguing, and you just ask as you go. When you run into problems, you just ask.
- I don't feel that I get enough into the library that I have to do the "from scratch" cataloging to go to an in person workshop.
- …A trend I see is a public and increased expectations, but at the same time, funding for public libraries is flat. Stress on the individual library or arrowhead library system itself. Regional cataloging, for instance. That is a way we could increase our ability to stretch our resources at the local level and strengthen our relationship with ALS. Perhaps we could consolidate that and try to maintain services or enhance services that are extremely popular.
-

Other thoughts on how ALS could be supportive? New areas of focus? Reallocating resources to more emphasis on them?

ADVOCACY

- Continued advocacy for funding at the State level. That is a State wide problem. MN Library System is also working on it. Jim and Molly are working on it. It can be very very discouraging.
- Making sure that that's something that continues to be done. It is something Jim is very passionate about.
- Yes, more funding at state level! Currently, [library redacted] gets a little over $3500 in addition to what the City is required to provide, and that all goes to wages. We have to fundraise for everything else.

FUNDING

- We are well funded. We are a bit over than what the city provides. I know grand rapids has issues.
- In the 9 years I have been here the City Council has been pretty supportive of my budget.
- I would say Virginia is pretty well funded. It is really nice to work with the grants within ALS, like our most recent mini-grant we got chairs for our teen area. Some of those special projects are nice to have.
- We would love to be open more hours. Also if we didn't get the money from ALS for new books, we wouldn't get new books as often
- We are pretty lucky with funding, though the City of [redacted] is cutting heavily next year.
- Funding hasn't changed since 2009. Money doesn't go as far.

(Other)
Models I have seen in other libraries—the current system is at capacity. Want to make sure that staff is supported as we think about transitions.
The sentiment around brainfuse, databases are not surprising and difficult. We have had some of the same conversations here. If we could just let people know what it is in our databases they would use them! They are wonderful resources for people, we are spending a lot of money for them. But they are not being used. May need to make a difficult decision in the future if we are looking to repurpose funds.

What can ALS do to best support regional libraries?

TRAINING

- I feel like the training they offer is very valuable. In this part of the state we don't have that easy connection they have in the twin cities. Training and nurturing connections between all of us. Prior to the pandemic there was a full day of training all of the library directors and maybe ALS staff were invited. Helpful for networking and training. It was free to us. It was tremendously helpful.
- Was it called the future summit?
- It was some kind of summit. Facing the future!

ATTEND NATIONAL CONFERENCES/TRAINING

- In addition to in house training we could think about ways we could expand offering library workers to both state and national; what if there were a scholarship ALS sponsored. They reported back to the group. State library association more accessible to the ALS region? More brainstorming/networking opportunities.
- Helping libraries attend conferences. It is expensive. The last time I went it was in Vermont. Things like that would be very helpful.

Survey Results – Patrons

How do the patron survey results compare to staff results?
SIMILAR

- Remarkably similar.
- Head nods.

Did anything surprise you?

- I was glad to see people are using the homework help and the job now.

In your experience, have patrons' usage of various library resources change over time?

- E content: ebooks and audiobooks. Hard to know how much was COVID. How many will come back to in person library. We are seeing an increase.

Are you seeing different trends in different demographics?

INCREASED NUMBERS

- We are definitely seeing people wanting to get back. Community Ed was full and with big wait lists.
- Our summer reading program had higher numbers than in nine years.
- I feel like in person visits to the library are higher than pre covid.

DECREASED NUMBERS
People verbally saying they are ready to be out, but it's not manifesting in programs at specific times. Numbers are better but nowhere close to what we were.

- We're not back to pre-covid since our hours are reduced due to short staffing.
- It's like a ghost town on Thursday nights. We have no teens coming. The whole COVID for us has changed when people come to town/when they're in town.

SAME NUMBERS

- We are back to pre-covid.
- We are pretty much there.
- Traffic is back into the library
- Because we were a smaller library we were able to open quicker; we're smaller we know our patrons pretty well so it's easier to get back to that comfort level.

REQUESTS

- Circ traffic.
- We have people requesting programs all the time. We are so short staffed that we can't supply that kind of volume at the moment.
- I'm seeing our traffic flow has completely changed.
- Referencing the combination of demographics and people not wanting to go out at night. That retired age group. People want the day program.

ALS AWARENESS and UNDERSTANDING

- I wonder if there is an awareness of what ALS is? The reports might be about their home library.
- What would come to mind if asked what ALS was.
- A couple patrons asked what ALS is.

The library staff has a good pulse on usage and value of patrons.

E BOOKS

- We see of the ebooks and audios slowly rise over the years. Otherwise I see it to be stable.

- What I hear are our patrons: what is going to happen when we don't have to have as many books in our library. Little ones and elderly like a physical book. That's a trend I am looking at. Do we need to cut down on large prints. Middle aged kids are totally digital. Our numbers went very high when Libby came out. We had overdrive before that. But Libby was really pushed. We get about 100 bookings every month. And we were sitting at about 27. And it stays there. That's where a lot of it is going to go. Magazines are available too, so we have let our magazine subscriptions go. What are we going to do with the space we have. They don't want the library to close because libraries have always been the central hub of the city. They want to see it used a little bit more.

Practical Vision

Where do you see areas of similarity between library staff and patron priorities?

PROGRAMMING

- A desire for more programming of one kind or another.
- The call for programming from both library staff and patrons is intense.

ACCESS and STANDARDIZATION

- Access and standardization of library materials. Automatic renewals. Fine forgiveness. Having DVDs going out for a certain amount of time.
- Access to digital and streaming materials.

EVENING PROGRAMMING

- I thought it was interesting about the evening program. We have a lot of working adults in the area. People don't want to go out. The are not the best attended. That is interesting that this is something they would like to see.
- evening events are up and down.....mostly down in the winter
- When we have talked to people, yeah, it's hard to get out. They say they want the programming, but when push comes to shove, they don't leave the house after they get home.
- We have had the same experience with evening programming.
- We have had the same experience with evening programming.

SATURDAY HOURS

- Similar thing with Saturday hours. It's the same people not new people on Saturday hours.
- Before my time they tried Saturday hours at the request of a council person. No one showed up. Same with evening hours. Young people after school show stay til 5 or 6.
- We have also had the same experience with Saturday hours. We tried them this past spring. Attendance was abysmal and it was the same faces.
- Saturday we do get regulars and then we get new people the last hour before we close.
- Saturday hours during the school year. Close during the summer no one shows up on a Saturday during the summer.
- A lot from the patrons asking for more hours. Later hours. Saturday hours. I don't know that we would actually get people coming in. Most of the late people weren't coming in late hours. Kids playing games. Saturday hours people come in.
- Weekend/Saturday hours question: do people come in? YES head nods.
- Saturday is very popular for us.
- We are open earlier in the morning, later in the evening. But not including Saturday component. We saw tourism people coming in on Saturday hours. Late morning, early afternoon time period. Year round residents used earlier in the morning or after work hours. The reason they were coming in on Saturday was because they could not come in on weekday hours
-

ADVOCACY and MARKETING

- I feel like the advocacy thing is on both fairly heavy because the ask from public for more programing/new things, is the ask from libraries for more funding and visibility
- A lot of the stuff on the patrons' list we do. Need marketing. I can't go to people's homes personally and invite them. Advocacy and visibility.
- We put it in the newspaper, online, electric board, and Facebook and Instagram. Where should we put, we ask? We have an amazing amount of people who watch city council meetings, so I started doing that. I cannot directly inform you (patrons).
- We have the same problems with awareness and marketing of programs. We can't afford to send mailers and no one seems to want to sign up for e-mail notifications.
- If they come into the library they'll know what's happening there. Don't put the blame all on you
- Despite people wanting activities at the library, they don't actually read to find out when things are happening. You have to read. So you know when to show up.

- … We want more advocacy and training. And the aptly named “sensitive topics” column. Reflects the need for advocacy.

(Other)
There is an interesting one… specific… a satellite library by [location redacted] (which is the combination of the three libraries). The school doesn’t have a library. Whether they have a library type staff is unknown. We are chatting about how to get services to them.

WIFI
I have a question: free wifi? Does anyone actually charge for wifi?

- No.
- I kind of wondered about that too.
- Maybe a library doesn't have wi-fi?
- We tried circulating hotspots and 17 out of 20 never came back within the first 6 months.

ALS AWARENESS AND MARKETING

- That also harkens back to awareness of what ALS is and can provide.
- I agree. I don’t know whether that is a problem? Should ALS and the member libraries try to educate or not. Maybe its too nuanced to expect people to understand.

.
If you had to identify one element from these lists as the foremost priority for the strategic planning process, what would it be?

FINE FREE

- Mine would be—that we go straight across the board with all libraries in it for the fine free, define it, how many days, is it complete, do they get checkouts… a little hand out that could go in every book. If you keep it over this time, you may not be able to check out a book. All on the same board. Patrons will comment on libraries being fine free. We are not. We need more conversation about this and see what everyone wants to do.
- Since we all have different budgets, different boards. We all have the same talking points to give patrons clear expectations.

CONNECTION
Community connection for library workers. Programming opportunities are themes.

AUTONOMY and SUPPORT BALANCE

- ALS is my favorite system I have worked in. Allows you to tailor yourself to your own community. You don’t have to deal with horizon yourself. I was in [region redacted]; centralized book purchasing (dislike).
- Like that we are independent libraries. There are times it would be nice to have more uniformity.
- Historically we are one of the oldest systems in the state. We have been working together for a very long time.
- There feels a good balance of independent and working together as a team. The communities are very very different

- Nimbleness; we can be responsive. We can be more nimble with community responses in comparison if we had to pull things up the chain a little bit more.
- Also what they expect of their communities! The fact that they are just combining schools now? They very much want to be in their own space and claim their own space. Having that support, not having to maintain horizon. I'm so thankful I don't have to do that.
- I really do feel like my library, and the ALS system are like an extension of family.

COMMUNITY REFLECTION

- Duluth population 85,000… very small populations. I'm right in the middle. Lots of variety.
- I'm right in the middle. I'm not going to remember 4500 people; people have to bring their library card.
- We have not even started a discussion of consolidating our school districts. We are independent, stand-alone. I don't know I would get any support if Arrowhead said we need to become a single system. We would not be part of it. I would not get city approval.
- I'm from a small community in northern [non-ALS area county redacted]; book mobile broke down and [library system redacted] never replaced it. My mom is trying to coordinate a community library in a community of 300.
- I don't require patrons to bring their card, but I tell them if they don't they'll have to spell their name(s) for me.

TRAINING

- In person training in program with donuts.
- Carlton likes donuts too.
- Agree on in-person training.
- Training. A close second is the programming.
- In person training where ALS spends a ½ day. They haven't done that in a long time and it was very beneficial.
- training at ALS as it changes so much

SHARED SERVICES

- Strengthen shared services: catalogue, all of that stuff.
- I agree with that.

ADVOCACY

- I don't disagree with any of that; for [library redacted] it would be great for more of the advocacy to get more of our patrons to come in, know that we are there, that we have all these things if you come in and take advantage of that. Author tours… we don't have a lot of patrons who attend those. So I have stopped saying, yes come here. But I try to advocate for ones in the area.

AGE RESPONSIVE

- Aging with gusto; knowing that population that is aging, how do we make sure we are reaching them? And that teen area? We do well with the young kids. Take and makes to those specific age groups to help meet them where they are at. As you look at the statistics and the census that would be good to have.

INVEST IN STAFF

- Hard to choose just one. Investment in staff from transition planning to make sure staff has capacity.
- Staff.
- Say the same. Programming really rose to the top for library staff and public. But ALS can't do anything without a solid investment in their staff. That feels foundational.
- Programming, advocacy, training. But need a solid staff to assist us all.
- Staff. It has to be. We all recognize that the ALS staff is at capacity.
- Staff. When Chris Magnusson left, she tried to get info when she left. Without of transitional person I lost a couple of weeks of back and forth. Staff. Make sure there is someone that can answer the question. If they are planning on leaving, at least have someone as a back up.
- Concur. Staff is something the board needs to recognize the value of. All the regional library people recognize the value of these people; the board gets excited about a project and forgets what it does to the staff to implement something new.

Reflection

What insights did you take away from this session today?

IMPORTANCE OF GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER IN ALS SYSTEM

- On thing I wanted to add: what is so great about training is getting to know people. I am shocked by all of the people I do not know on this screen right now.
- That was one of the things I was going to say; I have hardly met any staff. I'm not sure I've seen them in person.
- yes to more adult interaction that understand my work!

RECOGNIZE CHALLENGE

- Building on that comment, ALS strategic plan needs to recognize that the last two years have been hard on library staff as well to get us back working and with our communities.
- I have to very much agree with that.
- Anyone else feel like you had to adjust to being around people again.
- There was some traumatic change we had to go through and process. Coming back was a shock to the system.
- Building up your social endurance.
- I've also had people so excited they are allowed to come into a library. We are tiny in [city redacted], but we are more cozy that way.

LIBRARIES SUPPORT ALS

- We need more programming, training, digital collections… now after this meeting, I see the focus at Arrowhead. But they need more support from us, whatever we can do to support them. We can't have more without a stronger staff at Arrowhead. They are maxed out. This meeting has clarified that for me. Where we need to help them.
- We rely and depend so much on ALS we have a hierarchical relationship. They help us connect. I feel overwhelmed and outrageously nuts. I can't take on one more thing. I can't help but look at this and ask what library directors could do. Could it make us stronger of we thought about things that way. Not sure how feasible that is.

The autonomy that each library has; ALS does not tell us what we need to be/do. We have large libraries and small, tiny spots. Towns of 2,000 people. It is nice we get to choose what we need for our patrons. There is also a need for overall consistency in some things.
One of my areas, mark records. We do get 15 mark records on Horizon. It's strange that we all have the same book but 15 entries.

Did you learn anything that will directly affect your work?
SATURDAY HOURS

- I'm not going to feel bad about these Saturday hours.
- I was happy to hear that too.

EMPATHY

- That we are having the same struggles and trying the same things.
- It's good to know that other libraries are experiencing the same things!
- We all do have limited staff and capabilities. Limited bandwidth. I have been requesting a staff day. I better get it passed through city hall.

SOLIDARITY

- I like our group. I love ALS, man. Not just everyone at headquarters, but this energy in this room. Helpful for me to hear the different perspectives, and each of us have about 2/3 of our visitation numbers. There's a solidarity here I want to go away with.
- All of us trying to contribute and help each other. These last two years when we haven't been together physically… a mentorship program for new directors, or finding out what's happening. Compass meetings are so focused we don't get a chance to share.
- Directors meetings/Compass meetings used to be held at different locations. It was really cool to go to other libraries and see different things library had done. Not proposing we all drive all the time. But nice to do some group visits to the different libraries.
- I love that. I think this group could have an online connection so this guerilla group could have a conversation about what that connection could look like.

Is there anything you think the ALS strategy committee should know as it heads into this process?

DONUTS

- Obviously donuts.
- Good to know, thank you.

REPRESENTATION

- Knowing Crystal is our representative. If they are lacking in info, let us know.

ASSISTANCE

- You think you've got enough data, but you have a hole. Ask us!

ALS APPRECIATION

- I want to emphasize the ALS contribution is recognized by everyone in this room. We get it there is a lot going on and a struggle. They have done an amazing job.
- I was just going to express gratitude for the intentionality of this process. It says a lot about how much they care about what they are doing.

APPENDIX 8

ALS SUMMARY OF ALL PRACTICAL VISION, UNDERLYING CONTRADICTION, AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION SURVEY IDEAS 11.28.22

Practical Vision Ideas: Library Survey

Expanded Programming	Expanded E-Services	Strengthened Shared Services	Investment in Staff	Advocacy Leadership	Robust In-Person Training	Forums for Collaboration
Expanded programming	more e services	book recommendations	Preserve the current staff's culture!	advocacy training for library workers and stakeholders	In person training and programming. We miss it!	Create forums for library staff to collaborate and share experiences
More focus on teen programming.	More robust downloadable collections	"Duluth catalog being integrated into Arrowhead" (or at least let them send Duluth holds to ALS)	Staff retention & succession planning	Better ways to advocate	Trainings for all staff (especially technology changes)	ALS staff visits to member libraries
Programs that bring arts and culture to communities	Streaming services available for public use	Continued improvement of the ILS	Mentoring program for library staff new to ALS	Strong advocacy for all ALS libraries	In-person Training again	Continued support of regional activities/events
Increased Library usage in the region	Increased ebook/e-Audiobook collection	Regionwide cataloging	Strong, approachable leadership	Continued funding support - grants/advocacy/resources	Additional training options for library staff	facilitate standardized borrowing policies across libraries
Ideas to bring families into the library	Genealogical database access.	Support with cataloging at ALS	invest in ALS staff - bennies, raises, kudos, etc	Advocacy for better funding for all libraries	Training on what to archive - materials & information	more cohesiveness among libraries
continued support via grants	Increase access to digital content	"more Horizon features for ease of use"	Continued provision of continuing education for staff	more community awareness of value of libraries	More specialized trainings for member library staff	Continued support of regional collaboration
More adult programs	Knowledgable & nimble tech staff	a designated person for marc record creation	Stabilized work force	More advocacy resources for member library staff	Space design help for connecting with community	Partnership with Discovery Center focused on Genealogy
Creation of a One Book program for entire ALS region with promotion, author visit, programs, etc.	Travelling basic computer class for patrons	Printer generated transit / hold slips	succession planning framework (ALS AND member libraries)	elected officials value libraries more	maximizing available space/collection development within small libraries	provide virtual networking for library workers
More author meet and greets.	Reorganization of ALS website resources for libraries	"Improve the ALS catalog." I loved the ipac arrowhead catalog.				
More assistance	Training for member libraries on online databases	Centralized cataloging for Horizon libraries				
continued and expanded programming	"Improve the ALS app." Or run another staff feedback session to gather possible improvements.	Contined support of shared services				
Keep up with the great progamming	Promotion and access of Open Access resources	training hub - videos, system wide new staff				
Ideas to get teens to read	Significantly reduced wait lists for ebooks/eaudios					
Continued Legacy programs	more eBooks / audiobooks					
Better outreach to lower income families.						
Different programs besides summer/ winter reading						
Continued 'Take and makes'						
"Help promote patrons with poor vision" (e.g. spread literature on National services)						
access to "thing" collections - library and patron levels						

Practical Vision Ideas: Patron Survey

Expanded Adult Programming	Expanded Programming for Children	Increased Access & Hours	Greater Community Engagement	Expanded Catalogue	Support Existing Operations	Creative Checkout Options	Improved Tech Functionality	Upgraded Library Facilities	Provide Materials Recommendations
More online video classes	More educational videos for children	No fines when borrowing via mail-a-book	Community presence	Increase copies of popular ebooks on Overdrive.	Continue the bookmobile	E-reader checkout capability	Online catalog easier to search items	Upgraded Carlton library facilities	List of recommendations - books
Entrepreneur/small business owner resources for MN residents	Partnerships with elementary schools	Book drop off in cities without library	Access to free community events and services	More classic children's stories at Bookmobile	Continue the Libby app	Toys/crafts and activities back - especially weekends in winter - nothing to do on the shore	Easier to follow directions for mail-a-book	Creative spaces with 3-D Printers, and other tools	List of recommendations - movies
professional development material/videos/resources/ series	Instill love of reading for all ages	Saturday library hours	Interactive events with community and libraries	Books by Nancy Carlson for Children	Keep small local libraries open.	Music	Online catalog easier to use	Studios for audio and video production	Section for prize winning books(or just a listing)
learning a new sub-skill i.e. grant-writing, coding, podcasting	more engaged program for young children	open more hours! by far the most important	Theatre for various presentations	Books by Henry Winkler for Children	staff receiving a living wage	More newspapers.	Computers not being blocked from ordinary sites.	Handicap accessible bookmobile	Section for NYT best sellers(or just a listing)
DIY in-person class or series	Continued programming for youth and STEAM activities	actively welcoming patrons (less plexiglass, friendly faces)	More outreach programs led by a human.	Large print books	Staff retention. There is so much turnover. Let's ensure the staff receive better compensation. We need them for any strat plan to be successful.	Make and take kits	More computers that actually work.	That Nashwauk develope/sustain a city library	
Book Clubs	Support for programs for all ages	Fine forgiveness with 5 days of due dt	Outreach programs on how to do projects.	New Books	Keep small town libraries open!	a variety of magazines	free wifi	makerspace	
Continued outreach to seniors	Encouragement for teens to use library	fine free - no check outs without returns	Have some topics with coffee time.	Expanded Mail-A-Book offerings	Small town librarians are imperative to their community.	More digital video offerings	easier to use card catalog system	Book store to purchase items	
author/ writing workshops	Continue support for children's programs/activities	evening hours/programs for working adults	Nashwauk library have backing from city/ALS	Hard copy book availability	Small town libraries BUILD/SUPPORT their communities.	All DVD offerings get 1 week loan period	more access from home	Satellite library in Midway by new school	
Book clubs that are hybrid offerings for people unable to be in person	Smaller libraries ENCOURAGE/SUPPORT uncomfortable readers.	Full access spaces for wheelchairs	Community visitors	Expand online book options.	Keep small town libraries open!	Tool library/kitchen items library	Automatic renewal if items aren't on hold		
Evening book clubs for adults who work	Offer shorter reading programs more times during the year to keep kids engaged	Collections of representation of all facets of disability culture	Library/ALS presence at community events where no local library is available (example 4th of July Parade, Embarrass Fair)	Additional copies of hot new releases	I am happy with current conditions!	Expanded Services - non-reading material	online access to local history collection		
Author visits	Children's read alouds	Working with transit to get people of all walks and wheels the port unity to get to the public libraries.	ALS providing expert staff to support local libraries	maintenance of a strong non digital collection	Continue hiring professional librarians focused on ALS regional issues				
Continue offering book clubs	Storytime	In person items that allow working parents to take their kids -not just during the workday	Outreach services other than bookmobile and mail a book - connecting people with resources	More e-options, the Netflix of audiobooks #1					
computer classes	Kids activities	Saturday hours for working families	Better marketing, including push marketing, to those who desire more information about services ex. Text service every month to share new titles and how to check out	Expand ebook selections					
More in library activities	efforts made to involve teens	I'd like to see more evening activities so people working 9-5 can attend.	ALS as a community partner	Educational books					
Programs for adults.	Infant friendly area/time	There is great teen outreach, but I'd love to have young adult outreach.	ALS providing books/items at community wvents	Christian studies					
Meet the author events.	Get youth more involved	Fine forgiveness for overdue items, when renewable.	Intergenerational groups	Easy to read chapter books					
Guest speakers	More craft programs	Longer loans on items, or automatic renewals.	More employees of color-BIPOC Staff representation	Updated local book collections					
Programming	More music programs	Hours that actually work for working people.	More collaboration between libraries	More ebooks selection					
author visits	Kids activities	Bookmobile at places on Fridays before the weekend for patrons to pick up materials	Connect with community books	More ebook selections					
writing program	Volunteers to assist people in developing reading skills	Open more hours	Community Education	More "Libby" book selections					
More live programs	More things for young children to do in the childrens section.	Weekend hours	Outreach Services						
Programs with exercise	More children programs- story time is great! Itd be nice to have more than one a week.	Weekend and evening hours	collaboration with community organizations						
Things for seniors.	A homeschool program or meet up for older (elementary aged) children during the school week/daytime, possibly a book club, art club, lego club, board game club?	Eliminate fines							
more arts & culture programs	A homeschool program/club for middle & high schoolers during the school week/daytime. Example: book club, trivia club, debate team								
book clubs	Ultimately, I'd like to see more programs/opportunities for homeschoolers within our surrounding libraries as I feel homeschooling families enjoy utilizing and supporting our local libraries.								
More bingo	Increased homework/tutoring for kids								
Computer classes	Youth/Young adults on Commission/board								

Practical Vision Ideas: Strategy Committee Survey

CONTINUED AND INCREASED PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES	FLEXIBLE, STRATEGIC OPERATIONS	ENHANCED STAFF DEVELOPMENT	STRONG STAFF, BOARD, AND DIRECTOR HIRED AND RETAINED	STRENGTHENED PROMOTION AND ADVOCACY	GROWING, FAIRLY ALLOCATED FUNDING	UPDATED AND UTILIZED INFRASTRUCTRE
Continue and expand need based service delivery	Inperson vs virtual	ALS employee training on google drive	ALS fully staffed with committed employees	More marketing	Consider increase in cost to counties and Duluth	Better utilization of space in ALS building
current/relevant material collections	intellectual freedom and respect	ALS training sessions for patrons at libraries	Diverse Work Force	Promote the library as a community center	Funding adequate to sustain library relevancy	Plans for effectively utilizing available spaces in the ALS building
Dedicated outreach programming with nursing homes	Stability vs flexibility	Full but manageable workloads for all ALS staff	Hire new director	Stronger marketing plan for ALS	Funding increase from the State of Minnesota	ILS replacement
ESL and cultural diversity programming	Streamlined meetings, consent agenda, virtual when allowable	Implement staff reviews for regular program/service evaluation	Hire new director with regional service experience	Updated social media/website presence with concise messaging	Funding increases from (at least) the largest counties	Website revamp
Increase circulation in MAB	Strengthen customer service to patrons and libraries	Improve staff engagement and willingness to support organizational goals	Maintain quality library personnel	Advocacy vs censure	Increase in funding	Up to date Electronics
Increase in circulation	Work from home opportunities	Improved relationships between departments and staff	Stable dedicated staff	All member libraries visited in the next year	Procure funds for libraries	
Maintain and improve services	share information, coordinate activities among ALS departments	innovative and reliable approaches to customer service	Staff with diverse backgrounds & experiences	help libraries with their online presence, websites		
Maintain Bookmobile operation and promote services	Shared resources vs community initiatives	Offer more in house training for member libraries		Increased advocacy from member libraries		
MAB, Book Mobile, ILL, Delivery, Training, ematerials	Strategic Plan	Regularly-reviewed policies/procedures that guide ALS		Increased public support		
More inclusive programming	Still relevant in 2027			Increased state support		
more resources for online & e-services	Succession plans					
relevant services with logical processes	Tradition vs innovation					
Re-evaluation of Bookmobile Schedule	Dedicated and experienced board membership					
Social services in the library	Strong board leadership					
life long literacy						
financially neutral for patrons						
help schools that don't have libraries						
Inclusive Environment for Libraries						
More community involvement						
Member libraries and communities more closely connected						
Reach out to underserved segments of the community						

Underlying Contradiction Ideas: Strategy Committee Survey

CURRENT STAFFING MODEL LIMITS GROWTH	FIXED METHODS INHIBIT EFFICIENCY	CULTURAL AND POLITICAL TRENDS CONSTRAIN FINANCES	UNCLEAR COMMUNICATION PRACTICES CLOUD MESSAGING	CHALLENGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND REGION CREATE UNMET NEEDS
Lack of consistent evaluation	Conflicting views on ALS organizational goals and outcomes	dependence on outside funding	Continue to improve clarity in communications	mostly middle or low income households
Lack of diversity in the external workforce	Continue to eliminate redundancies wherever possible	Fixed funding	Lack of communication with departments	large rural area
Limited staff time	Lack of standardized methods to maintain records	Funding resources	Limited communication	the Arrowhead's large area
Maintaining quality human resources	Library Board is underutilized/unaware	Continue to develop budgets that reflect actual resources	Unbalanced communication	winter weather
Staff education & training (internal AND external)	Reactive instead of proactive	Reliance on funding from the state level	limited direction towards reaching goals	Unrealized needs in communities
Staff too comfortable with routine/tradition	self-centered focus or tunnel vision	restricted funding	Unclear direction	Encourage expansion of community partnerships
Staff turnover (Great Resignation/Reshuffle)	Outdated systems	Restricted funding	underdeveloped and unclear expectations / outcomes	
Task oriented culture can neglect 'growing' the business	Unchanged historical practices	Outdated perception of libraries by funders	Staff and ALS documents develop common message	
Too much silo or turf perspective	Missed opportunities to circulate new catalogs	Increase advocacy actions to increase revenue sources		
Long-time employees	Creating and utilizing a Strategic Plan	outdated fiscal understanding		
Undermining staff who don't promote services	Use the SWOT system regularly to problem solve	less interest in reading books by public		
Underutilized staff	Maintain current relevant library policies	political atmosphere against libraries		
Underutilized imagination		unbalanced and conflicting cultural pressures		
		Increase ongoing interaction with local and state legislators		

Strategic Direction Ideas: Strategy Committee Survey

TRAIN AND SUPPORT STAFF TO STRENGTHEN CAPACITY	DEVELOP INTERNAL PROCEDURES TO STREAMLINE OPERATIONS	STRENGTHEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS TO IMPROVE MESSAGING	CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES TO INCREASE ACCESS
Become a technology training resource	Strategic Plan	communication of expected outcomes	Create connections in our communities to build understanding
Bring back member training sessions	Develop schedule to regularly review ALS policies	Build via tech & documents regular info to legislators	Outreach to underserved populations
Board member "shadow" days	Advocate for best practices	Develop common message and review yearly	Collaborate w/ Community Education for lifelong learning
Continue Board and Staff training	Advocate for established goals.	Educate public on our available services	Partner in the Global World
Council staff on expectations in departments	Annual policy/procedure review	Include staff in discussion	Add a new staff position-community liaison
ESL courses for staff	Create strategic plan sub-committee for evaluation and transparency	focus on efforts to increase efforts on interlibrary communication and cooperation among libraries	have e-portal for school libraries
encourage positive interactions between staff and stakeholders	Maintain relevant library policies	Use electronic media to promote services to Lobby funding sources	increase investment in outreach programs
Mandate customer service/skills training for ALS staff	support innovative solutions to processes and policies	Funding outreach to relevant partners	Set up a bookmobile for retirement/nursing homes
Plan to maintain personnel's library education	Set dates for tasks to be accomplished	Lobby for funding at State Capitol potential patrons	support programming for all ages
Offer yearly ALS team-building opportunity	Update meeting format	Hire a marketing director	
Motivate staff on working at ALS			create google site template libraries can personalize
Team-building experiences			
Q/A discussion of Union Contract with all parties			balancing local culture with progressive ideological trends
Teach staff and Boards to use SWOT to problem solve			
Annual employee evaluations			
Implement director and staff reviews in 2023			
Incentives for staff who take on extra			
Hire a ILS replacement consultant			
Hire a website developer			
Provide appropriate equipment for staff success			

APPENDIX 9

ALS PRACTICAL VISION, UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS, AND STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 11.30.22

Arrowhead Library Systems (ALS)

Practical Vision, Underlying Contradictions & Strategic Directions Workshop 11.30.22

PRACTICAL VISION | *What we want to see in place in five years as a result of our actions?*

- Inclusive, Consistent Support
- Collaborative Professional Development
- Intentional Community Engagement
- Strong Organizational Leadership
- Responsive, Sustainable Resources
- Equitable, Available Technology

UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS | *What may be blocking us or holding us back from moving toward your Practical Vision?*

- Service Area and Structure Challenge Collaboration
- Competitive Funding Restricts Innovation
- Staff Roles & Expectations Limit Flexibility & Responsiveness
- Limited Resources Restrict Technology Utilization
- Unfocused Marketing Hinders Understanding
- Broadband Infrastructure Limits Access to Services

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS | *What innovative, substantial actions, programs or efforts can our board or staff do, create, or take on that will address our blocks and move us toward our Practical Vision?*

1. Empowering Staff through Collaboration and Professional Development
2. Determining Staffing, Structure, and Workflow Needs
3. Expanding Community Outreach Services
4. Coordinating Marketing Efforts for Library Programs
5. Enhancing Library Support through Focused Advocacy

Inclusive, Consistent Support	Collaborative Professional Development	Intentional Community Engagement	Strong Organizational Leadership	Responsive, Sustainable Resources	Equitable, Available Technology
• Staff visits at sites • In person • Library participation • Cheerlead for local libraries • Common messaging • Involve staff with advocacy • Promote more accessible hours	• Cross training and team building • Mentorship model system • Prepared curriculum and on-demand training (ILS and beyond) • Active, intentional facilitated collaboration (Donuts for all) • Regular in person training	• Community partnerships • Expand/ reinvent outreach services --go where people are • Legacy • Marketing	• Well-oiled machine--flywheel for libraries • Leader who understands regional delivery • Organizational development and alignment • ALS (in) visibility	• Funding • Promote sustainable budget/operations and increased revenues • More staff • Evaluate services	• Ubiquitous broadband (advocacy) • Tech support to communities through libraries • Tech training

Service Area and Structure Challenge Collaboration	Competitive Funding Restricts Innovation	Staff Roles & Expectations Limit Flexibility & Responsiveness	Limited Resources Restrict Technology Utilization	Unfocused Marketing Hinders Understanding	Broadband Infrastructure Limits Access to Services
• Vast geographic area - libraries feel isolated and focus inward • Underdeveloped community collaboration in outreach services - tech training, homeless, senior centers, elderly • Federated structure - autonomous libraries, city not county, perception of competing outreach services, competing for county money • Limited community interaction • Limited outreach ability • Local advocacy groups (library boards) • Non-participation in trainings/meetings • Uncoordinated, inconsistent supportive services between ALS & community libraries • Diversity of municipalities and institutions	• Restricted revenue growth • Scarcity mindset • Unclear/limited community and financial resources to hire and maintain staff • Staffing workload and time restrict new projects and training • Little increase in funding and/or funding resources	• Unrealistic staff expectations lead to burnout • Restrictive job descriptions prevent collaboration • Underdeveloped systems for staff turnover • Traditional libraries memorialized & preserved • Outdated vision (post-Covid, growth of technology)	• Outdated tech (Horizon) • Underdeveloped and disjointed tech resources available • Tech accessibility • Growth of tech/ Zoom Boom	• Unrealistic expectations (limited public understanding of the profession) • Unclear services that are offered • Disjointed marketing efforts	• Underdeveloped broadband access • Fragmented/limited and inconsistent (outdated) broadband

Empowering Staff Through Collaborationtand Professional Development	Determining Staffing, Structure, and Workflow Needs	Expanding Community Outreach Services	Coordinating Marketing Efforts for Library Programs	Enhancing Library Support through Focused Advocacy
• Initiating in-service training at rotating locations • Relaunching Facing the Future summit (yearly inservice) • Initiating one-on-one meetings at member libraries • Developing a professional cohort to identify local training needs • Purchasing new tech for loaning/training • Reviving new director training	• Updating pulbic library membership requirements • Hiring: Cataloger, Outreach Librarians, Social Workers • Creating a process for annual budget requests • Reviewing all ALS job descriptions • Analyzing organizational structure and jobs	• Teaching technology classs (external) • Expanding outreach services • Connecting partners to resources • Collaborating with communities to provide shared services (senior centers, daycare, etc.) • Pursuing more community outreach opportunities • Identifying community partners	• Posting library news in newspaper and Facebook • Revamping summer reading program support • Developing a "use your library" campaign • Hiring outreach/ marketing and advertising coordinator • Launching a public library card campaign	• Pursuing grant funding • Creating work group(s) for topics (funding, marketing, PR) • Advocating for more inclusive library hours to include an evening • Initiating an ALS advocacy group • Proposing statewide summit on library maintenance of effort (MOE)

APPENDIX 10

ALS VISION MISSION CORE VALUES MINISURVEY HANDOUT 01.17.23

January 17, 2023

ARROWHEAD LIBRARY SYSTEMS (ALS)

Strengths (What are the strengths this group has toward creating the Practical Vision? What are our strengths as a team?):

Believe in the importance of libraries
Commitment to access
Commitment to service
Dedication
Dedication
desire to help both patrons and member libraries
Enthusiasm for the future
long time involvement led to good input and direction
creative/out of the box thinking
Creativity
open-minded and honest about pros and cons of operations
Openness
Recognize the cultural changes of the last 5 years
Systematic and sustainable approaches are valued
cohorts came to agreed direction
creative people
Degreed and experienced librarians in key roles
Diverse backgrounds
group has people and staff that are passionate
group has wide range of experience
institutional memory/knowledge of things
knowledgeable staff and supportive board members
Professional ALS managers
Board members representing seven counties and four types of libraries
Knowledge of regional stakeholders
Regional advocates for funding and support
willing to spend time to reach goals
willing to work together
well versed in ALS services
Data
Direction

Weakness (What are the weaknesses this group has toward accomplishing the Strategic Directions? What are our weaknesses as a team?):

ALS staff retirements
Lack of qualified applicants for open positions
Staffing
Balancing the majority of the stakeholders (small public libraries) with that of the diversity of sizes and types
Bringing it all together
Diversity
Geographic area
The sheer geographic size of the region for which ALS is responsible
budget/budget reductions/unstable funding (RLBSS)
Dismal financial outlook
Funding levels
Limited new funding
Reduced or inconsistent funding
Several years of deficit budgets
Cannot set policy, advocate for change
Champion for advocacy
Digital delivery and broadband access limitations
Inherent tension about visibility for a regional library system
Amount of time to share ideas
perhaps to aware of own situation
Shyness
Time
“The way things have always been”

January 17, 2023

ARROWHEAD LIBRARY SYSTEMS (ALS)

Benefits (What benefits will our success bring?):

A fully functioning library system
Better library service
Stronger libraries
Technology center status
good services to library patrons
good services to member libraries
Better public understanding of library offerings
Community staple
Continued relevance in communities
Family participation
Happier community
More Library usage
enhanced understanding of value of libraries
Knowledge is power
More literate population
Stronger communities
A strong history - tradition of success in expanding support across NE MN
Attention to our region
Strong advocacy for libraries and people in the ALS region
expanded partnerships and community visibility
A participatory, supportive, representative board
Dedicated and satisfied employees
Nimbleness honed during the pandemic
Stakeholders' (especially library staff) appreciation
Strong communication
MN Government is no longer divided amongst political parties

Dangers (What obstacles or dangers do we anticipate confronting when we are highly successful?):

A well-informed citizenry is a threat to the manipulative abilities of politicians and media outlets - that's a danger to the status quo!
Censorship
Conflict over intellectual freedom
ALS staff resistance to change
Complacency
Continued involvement of staff and members
Inability to change
Internal strife due to change/different
Fear of change
Libraries fearing loss of autonomy
Member library participation
Scarcity mindsets viewing ALS services/success as "competition"
Weighted down by past practices, traditions
Jealousy
lack of help with cooperative efforts
Haters
Legislative support / funding
Shifting political landscapes
Loss of public respect
being taken for granted
lack of belief in need for more funding
Changing demographics and aging population
reality of keeping up with tech needs/wants
Good leadership

January 17, 2023

ARROWHEAD LIBRARY SYSTEMS (ALS)

What are your aspirations or dreams for the Arrowhead Library System (ALS)?

- To be a leader in the state, an example to follow in terms of library programs, services and innovation. To be the region everyone wants to work in.
- To become stronger and more connected with all types of libraries -- to be the go-to hub for all libraries in the region, to have all ALS staff members on board with mission, goals and outcomes no matter the job structure, to create and maintain successful partnerships in communities
- To be able to market libraries to the general public.
- Evolve to meet the ever changing needs of the people served
- A system that reflects its community and serves every member in a number of ways.
- I want to see Arrowhead become a trendsetter in the greater Minnesota library community. I'd like to see a cultural shift in the library's perception among the regular populace.
- That they are viewed by a majority of citizens and elected officials as a key factor in preserving this region's history, enriching its present, and fostering a brighter future.
- That it continue to be respected and a real benefit to clients and member libraries, with staff having a real appreciation for what they are providing.

How would things be different if your aspirations & dreams came true?

- Better library services for the region's population, better support for library staff. Competitive market for library jobs.
- staff will feel more connected to the mission, goals and outcomes of the organization, strengthen our place in the community, more use of outreach services
- More people would be Library users. People would be better informed.
- Maybe more excitement around libraries.
- Not much would change apart from everyone being on the same page for this vision.
- The public would view the library as an essential institution to the function of society and democracy. The majority would be able to accurately articulate the value that libraries and freedom of information bring to communities, and any challenges to ALS libraries or librarianship would be quite limited.
- ALS would be more highly visible beyond library staff members
- If everyone, ALS and local libraries, really realized much how their efforts were benefiting library patrons and therefore our Region, I think we would be even more successful.

Think about the culture & core values ALS is building through this strategic planning process…
Now, please write three words that you feel, or hope, embody the Arrowhead Library System (ALS).

- Community Oriented
- Connected
- Consistent
- Empowered
- Evolving
- Helpful
- Innovative
- Interactive
- Knowledgeable
- Leadership
- Local
- Professionalism
- Forward Thinking
- Dedicated Dedicated
- Partnership
- Passionate
- Peaceful
- Relevant
- Resilient
- Visionary

APPENDIX 11

ALS CURRENT REALITY, SUCCESS INDICATORS & ACTIONS 01.17.23

January 17, 2023

ARROWHEAD LIBRARY SYSTEMS (ALS)

Current Realities, Success Indicators & Actions/Accomplishments

Current Reality: *Description of the current situation as it relates to the Strategic Direction.*
Success Indicators: *Explains what will be different in 5 years if the organization mobilizes around and gets behind the Strategic Direction.*
Actions/Accomplishments: *Considers and answers "What do we need to accomplish at a level of program, project, or event to begin moving from Current Reality to Success as described?"*

SD1. Empowering Staff through Collaboration and Professional Development

Current Realities

- Have been reliant on Zoom but libraries express preference for in-person
- High turnover, need to touch base with new people
- Regular meetings with automated library/youth services staff
- Zoom training: ALS-purchased databases, Horizon topics (e.g., back to school)
- Purchasing for ALS professional collections
- ALS participates in statewide and national professional development conferences

Success Indicators

- Increased number of attendees for training
- Increased number of site visits
- Continuing education feedback showing benefit
- Continuing education increased attendance and certificates
- Increased usage of professional collection
- Higher participation in regional and State library organizations and advocacy

Actions/Accomplishments

1. Schedule site visits, approx. 2-3 per month for staff team
2. Include superintendents, city administrators, and provosts in training and advocacy opportunity communications
3. Create new public library director, staff, and board member mentor or orientation program
4. Evaluate preferred participation methods (face-to-face, Zoom, or other) and revise as needed
5. Develop funding stream for scholarships, including potential mileage reimbursement

SD2. Determining Staffing, Structure, and Workflow Needs

Current Realities

- Fully staffed with positions that are available
- Org chart not updated
- Jim's retirement impending – January 2024
- No staff review process
- Have both union employees and salaried staff; dynamic affects workflow
- Have a 2-year union contract
- Tightest labor market in memory. Filling positions is hard and retention is important

- Inconsistent supervision practices
- Libraries notice tension when there are openings
- Staff meetings have started (bi-monthly)

Success Indicators

- Org chart updated
- Standardized updated personnel processes, policies, and documentation
- Smooth transition to new director
- High levels of staff engagement and satisfaction
- Services consistent during staff absences

Actions/Accomplishments

1. Board develops director transition plan
2. Create consistent review process for policies and continuous policy review
3. Implement staff and director review process
4. Implement monthly staff meetings
5. Conduct employee engagement and satisfaction study
6. Consult with other regions on their internal practices
7. Conduct staffing study and organizational review

SD3. Expanding Community Outreach Services

Current Realities

- Limited staffing
- Jim conducts community outreach for ALS
- Many connections are at a local level; ALS supports this
- Partners have varying capacity
- General info goes out for libraries to use (and then to patrons and non-patrons)
- Field shifting from providing services in buildings to events in community—broadened outreach, wider understanding of what libraries do
- Have bookmobile, mail-a-book, and ILL

Success Indicators

- Increased number of library cards and patrons
- Increased number of outreach events and programs attended by ALS outreach services
- Increased number of partners
- Outreach kits available and circulating

Actions/Accomplishments

1. Identify non-library community partners who can use and promote ALS services
2. Designate ALS staff and board members to participate in outreach events
3. Purchase a hotspot for outreach events
4. Promote examples of successful partnerships
5. Develop and promote outreach kits to assist libraries with borrower signup
6. Provide training to libraries on how to recruit volunteers
7. Create method to communicate value provided by outreach

January 17, 2023

ARROWHEAD LIBRARY SYSTEMS (ALS)

SD4. Coordinating Marketing Efforts for Library Programs

Current Realities

- Stable budgets for existing programming
- No outreach/marketing coordinator (Mollie does it)
- Legacy funding comes with marketing money (very popular)
- Website and Facebook page; not a lot of engagement
- Weekly Weeder exists
- Have a print shop (unique) and investing in it; not all libraries aware of what's available

Success Indicators

- Higher volume of traffic on digital platforms
- Higher circulation and usage of programs and services
    - Track ALS-specific campaigns
    - Library card holders
    - Library users
- Print shop tickets increase
- Outreach/marketing coordinator position created
- Increased coverage in regional media

Actions/Accomplishments

1. Produce content/resources that explain programs/services to member libraries
2. Hold annual open house events with vendors on services
3. Create budget, job description(s), and staffing process for marketing efforts
4. Develop plan for communication to member libraries
5. In coordination with member libraries, develop plan for communication to general public
6. Reevaluate existing pieces for relevance and accessibility

SD5. Enhancing Library Support through Focused Advocacy

Current Realities

- Legislative day attendance (providing packets, making appointments)
- Attend library conferences—supporting MLA
- Attend ALA (Jim)
- Chair of MLA legislative committee is ALS staff member
- Talk to county board(s)
- State MLA hires lobbyist
- MLA hires national lobbyist
- Grant writing happening (e.g., Legacy grant)

Success Indicators

- Increased state funding
- Increased Maintenance of Effort (cities and counties)
- Increased participation by library board members and library partners
- Better connections and relationships with movers and shakers, community resources

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ARROWHEAD LIBRARY SYSTEMS (ALS)

Actions/Accomplishments

1. Attend legislative day, encouraging board member representation
2. Clarify funding sources (counties) and evaluate effectiveness
3. Determine reserves balance policy and spending plan for better budgeting
4. Share grant opportunities with member libraries
5. Request more money from counties and state
6. Host advocacy and awareness training for libraries trustees and library staff
7. Provide grant-writing training

APPENDIX 12

ALS STRATEGIC PLAN TIMELINE 01.17.23

	2023				2024				2025				2026
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
SD1. Empowering Staff through Collaboration and Professional Development													
A1 Schedule site visits, approx. 2-3 per month for staff team	Start												End
A2 Include superintendents, city administrators, and provosts in training and advocacy opportunity communications		Start										End	
A3 CCreate new public library director, staff, and board member mentor or orientation program			Start										End
A4 Evaluate preferred participation methods (face-to-face, Zoom, or other) and revise as needed			Start										End
A5 Develop funding stream for scholarships, including potential mileage reimbursement				Start								End	
SD2. Determining Staffing, Structure, and Workflow Needs													
A1 Board develops director transition plan	Start		End										
A2 Create consistent review process for policies and continuous policy review	Start											End	
A3 Implement staff and director review process		Start										End	
A4 Implement monthly staff meetings			Start									End	
A5 Conduct employee engagement and satisfaction study						Start		End					
A6 Consult with other regions on their internal practices						Start				End			
A7 Conduct staffing study and organizational review									Start				End
SD3. Expanding Community Outreach Services													
A1 Identify non-library community partners who can use and promote ALS services		Start											End
A2 Designate ALS staff and board members to participate in outreach events		Start							End				
A3 Purchase a hotspot for outreach events				Start/ End									
A4 Develop and promote outreach kits to assist libraries with borrower signup							Start				End		
A5 Provide training to libraries on how to recruit volunteers									Start				End
A7 Create method to communicate value provided by outreach									Start				End
SD4. Coordinating Marketing Efforts for Library Programs													
A1 Produce content/resources that explain programs/services to member libraries		Start	End										
A2 Hold annual open house events with vendors on services					Start/ End		Start/ End				Start/ End		Start/End
A3 Create budget, job description(s), and staffing process for marketing efforts						Start	End						
A4 Develop plan for communication to member libraries								Start	End				
A5 In coordination with member libraries, develop plan for communication to general public								Start	End				
A6 Reevaluate existing pieces for relevance and accessibility										Start	End		
SD5. Enhancing Library Support through Focused Advocacy													
A1 Attend legislative day, encouraging board member representation	Start/ End					Start/ End			Start/ End				Start/End
A2 Clarify funding sources (counties) and evaluate effectiveness	Start			End									
A3 Determine reserves balance policy and spending plan for better budgeting	Start			End									
A4 Share grant opportunities with member libraries		Start/ End				Start/ End				Start/ End			Start/End
A5 Request more money from counties and state			Start/ End				Start/ End						Start/End
A6 Host advocacy and awareness training for libraries trustees and library staff					Start			End					
A7 Provide grant-writing training					Start			End					

APPENDIX 13

ALS PRIORITY WEDGE 01.17.23

SD1 A5. Develop funding stream for scholarships, including potential mileage reimbursement

SD5 A3. Determine reserves balance policy and spending plan for better budgeting

SD2 A3. Implement staff and director review process

SD2 A2. Create consistent review process for policies and continuous policy review

SD1 A1. Schedule site visits, approx. 2-3 per month for staff team

SD2 A1. Board develops director transition plan