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Report to / Rapport au:

**Ottawa Public Library Board
Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa**

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SUBJECT: Strategic Plan Update

OBJET: Mise à jour du plan stratégique

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Public Library Board:

- 1. Approve the refreshed Strategic Plan (“the Plan”), as described in Document 1; and,**
- 2. Approve extending the timeline of the Plan until 2028.**

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa:

- 1. Approuve le Plan stratégique actualisé (« le Plan »), tel que décrit dans le Document 1 ; et,**
- 2. Approuve la prolongation de l'échéancier du Plan jusqu'en 2028.**

BACKGROUND

In keeping with the Public Libraries Act, RSO 1990, c.P.44 (the Act), other relevant statutes, laws, and good governance practices, the Ottawa Public Library (“OPL” or “the Library”) Board (“the Board”) retains accountability for the full range of decisions affecting the organization. The Board has decided, however, to use a policy or strategic model of governance that focuses most of the attention of the trustees on setting strategic direction and objectives, making decisions on major projects, and monitoring performance.

As per Board Policy 002 –Delegation of Authority, the Board retains authority to “approve OPL Strategic Directions and Priorities.” Board Policy 001 –Roles and Responsibilities of the Board and Trustees further reiterates that trustees have a responsibility to both define the OPL’s purpose and direction and review and approve major strategies, plans, and decisions. Finally, Board Policy 009 –Roles and Responsibilities of the CEO includes the responsibility to interpret Board policy on the OPL’s purpose, direction, and strategies.

In June 2019, the Board approved the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan (“the 2020-2023 Plan”) including a set of Directions and Priorities for the –2020 - 2023 term of the Board (OPLB-2019-0601). The 2020-2023 Plan was approved after a two-year long process which included community engagement, as well as strategic planning sessions with the Board, OPL management, and employees. This process represented a departure from previous approaches: rather than a top-down approach, staff undertook a dynamic and engaging process involving the community, employees, and the Board. The 2020-2023 Plan incorporated consideration of trends and drivers, public input, and actions required so that OPL remains customer-focused and responsive to community needs.

The 2020-2023 Plan encompassed OPL’s Vision, Mission, Values, a Strategic Statement, Directions, and Priorities.

Of note, the development of a strategic statement was new for OPL. In alignment with the newly approved 2020-2023 Plan, in February 2020 the Board approved an updated Performance Measurement Framework (PMF), including key performance indicators (KPIs) (OPLB-2020-0202). The PMF monitors performance through the measurement of inputs (resources allocated) and outputs (services delivered) using data collected through a variety of sources.

Additionally, management conducted an exercise with the leadership team in November 2019 to introduce the 2020-2023 Plan and seek input into how the Plan could be implemented.

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, modeled on the previous Plan with minor adjustments, as described in this report.

DISCUSSION

Several factors have influenced OPL operations in the years since the 2020-2023 Plan was developed. The COVID-19 pandemic, notably the restrictions on in-person public library services, affected membership, use, and available resources including staffing. As a result, the pandemic affected staff's ability to deliver on the Corporate Work Plan. In addition, in light of a rapidly changing operating environment, significant strategic projects were initiated that are not reflected on the 2020-2023 Plan: notably the new OPL Service Delivery Framework (SDF) (OPLB-2022-0503). This Framework, particularly the definition of three service channels (virtual, facility, and mobile) and five service categories (collections, expertise, programs, spaces, and tools), has influenced the Board and Corporate Work Plan items for 2021, 2022, and 2023. Similarly, the Board direction to now develop the appropriate frameworks (for service channels) and strategies (for service categories) associated with the SDF has also influenced work at OPL.

Staff conducted an environmental scan of other Canadian public libraries who have recently, or are currently, planning new central library facilities. Among the findings were several resonant trends and lessons learned, including:

- Metrics, such as KPIs related to cardholder growth, are reported separately or tracked internally: they do not form part of the strategic plan;
- Strategic planning documents are increasingly focused on outcomes (the immediate results of the outputs) and impacts (the longer-term or broader effects of outputs) rather than outputs (services or products delivered); and,
- The development and launch of new plans should be carefully considered to occur well after the opening of a new central library facility, to both ensure public input reflects the impact of the new facility on the city, and to adequately manage internal staff capacity.

Lastly, trustees and senior management identified several other considerations in updating the 2020-2023 Plan, including:

- Introduction and advancement of several new strategic initiatives (SDF, community development) not represented;
- Incongruity of including an operational metric (the strategic statement, which measures an “output” rather than an “outcome”) in a strategic document; and,
- Concerns that emphasizing cardholdership in the strategic statement does not capture the value of other library activities that do not require residents to be active cardholders and may also lead to the development of initiatives solely to generate increased cardholders, rather than to generate value for residents.

Discussions with the Governance Ad hoc Committee in Q1-Q2 2023, and with all trustees at a Board workshop on strategic planning in July 2023, confirmed that OPL’s Vision, Mission, Values, and the current Strategic Directions and Priorities, remain meaningful, and continue to resonate in their current form.

The Vision (which describes what an organization wants to be), Mission (why it exists), and Values (what it believes in) are meaningful in their current form; no changes are recommended to these elements of the Strategic Plan. The strategic directions (which indicate where resources are focused) and priorities (which determine how operations are guided) are, in most cases, broad enough in their current definitions that specific operational activities can be aligned with them on an annual basis. Additionally, given the interruptions in service in the last three years, the goals articulated in these priorities remain valid, useful, and achievable. Furthermore, as noted, the social shifts that have resulted from the pandemic have also not yet finished, meaning that developing a completely new strategic plan at this time would not accurately capture a process that is still ongoing.

Proposed Changes to the Strategic Directions and Priorities

A few adjustments are recommended to the strategic directions and priorities:

- Revising the wording in one strategic direction;
- Revising the wording in 10 of 12 priorities;
- Removing one priority that is complete; and,
- Adding a new priority under the strategic direction to “Redesign the Library Experience.”

These changes will reflect strategic and operational changes, update nomenclature to reflect current practices, and better reflect the work currently underway. For a complete list of current Priorities and Directions, and proposed changes, see Document 1 OPL Strategic Plan: Current and Proposed.

The Strategic Statement

The 2020-2023 Plan included a strategic statement: “By 2023, we will increase the number of active cardholders by 25 percent by improving OPL’s community relevance.” This goal was established in 2019 and predicated on a regular level of service, which was not possible over the past two and a half years. More importantly, it does not capture the complete picture of the Library’s community relevance, including many valuable library activities such as attending a drop-in family storytime or other program that does not require registration with a card, such as consulting books, newspapers, or magazines. Similarly, the strategic statement goal could lead to initiatives that introduce barriers rather than remove them. For example, it could be seen to be beneficial to achieve the goal of requiring a Library card to register for programs, for instance, to encourage cardholdership, but this would also introduce friction in the experience of using the Library. Lastly, it does not consider cardholder penetration among specific demographics, for instance whether the cardholder rate is higher or lower than average (or the same) among vulnerable populations.¹

As a result, it is recommended that the strategic statement be removed from the Strategic Plan. Removing the strategic statement will allow OPL to continue to focus on efforts to improve its community relevance, while taking into consideration the full value of public library services. The information relevant to the strategic statement will nonetheless continue to be tracked and reported elsewhere (e.g., Key Performance Indicators, or KPIs).

Next steps

Staff efforts in 2023-2026 will focus on implementing elements of the Plan that relate to their respective areas, including the identification of specific actions for each of the four

¹ In October 2022, the OPL Board approved a working definition of vulnerable communities: The Library defines vulnerable communities according to the criteria from the Neighbourhood Equity Index, including the five domains of well-being and the associated indicators, as well as equity-deserving population groups including seniors, immigrants and racialized groups, youth, and families and children. Staff also recognize that, on a smaller scale, there may be “pockets” of other vulnerable groups or communities within individual neighbourhoods. These are identified by branch staff as required.

years, and identification of budgets to support the actions, where required. In many cases, Board ad hoc committees have been established to help guide staff on key initiatives related to the priorities. For instance, a Service Strategies Ad hoc Committee will advise staff regarding the development of strategies for the five service categories in the Service Delivery Framework (Collections, Expertise, Programs, Spaces, and Tools), including related public engagement. Service strategies will include outcome statements that will guide the implementation and assessment of services. Staff will bring the service strategies to the Board for approval.

The 2023-2028 Plan will carry OPL beyond the opening of Ādisōke in 2026. It will provide the CEO with direction to inform how services are structured and delivered, how resources are allocated, and how success will be measured. This, in turn, provides OPL with the information required to develop annual work plans to achieve the priorities in the Plan by the end of 2028.

In 2026, staff expect to begin planning for the larger process of developing the 2029-2032 Strategic Plan. This process is expected to include external support, as well as public, employee, and trustee engagement. It is anticipated that the 2027 budget may include funding requests for this planning process.

CONSULTATION

The development of this report required consultation with the OPL Board Governance Ad hoc Committee, and senior managers at OPL. OPL also conducted an environmental scan of other large urban public libraries (Calgary Public Library, Edmonton Public Library, Halifax Public Library, and Saskatoon Public Library) and consideration of strategic planning processes elsewhere within the city (i.e. Ottawa Community Housing, Ottawa Public Health).

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

Ottawa Public Library supports and considers the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (2005)* in its operations. There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

BOARD PRIORITIES

This report aligns with the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan.

BUSINESS ANALYSIS IMPLICATIONS

There are no business analysis considerations associated with approving the recommendations in this report. The continued ongoing business analysis implications pertain to the collection of data to report on the Board-approved key performance indicators (KPIs).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report. The refreshed Strategic Plan provides the CEO with direction to inform how services are structured and delivered, and how resources (financial and human) are allocated each year. All such allocations are made within the guidelines of Board Policy 002, Delegation of Authority. Any financial implications associated with specific actions will come to the Board as part of the respective annual budgeting process, as may be required.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to implementing the recommendations in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate risk management implications associated with approving the recommendations in this report. If OPL were to not make progress on the elements identified in the directions and priorities, there would be specific risks associated with each element, and general risks for the Library (e.g., potential reputational risks, loss of trust, diminished community relevance).

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no technology implications associated with this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 OPL Strategic Plan: Current and Proposed

DISPOSITION

Pending Board approval, staff will:

1. Ensure communication of the revised Strategic Plan to respective stakeholders including employees, the public, and City Council;

2. Align activities on the implementation of the revised Plan in their respective areas; and,
3. Incorporate funding to support the strategic planning process in subsequent annual budgets as required.

OPL Strategic Plan: Current and Proposed

Vision: To build community and transform lives

Mission: We inspire learning, spark curiosity, and connect people

Values:

- **Community:** We are an active part of our community, reaching beyond our spaces to build relationships that enrich Ottawa.
- **Inclusion:** We are welcoming and open to all, and are committed to providing access to spaces, collections, programs, resources, and expertise.
- **Integrity:** We embody the principles of public stewardship, transparency, and accountability in our operations and interactions.
- **Intellectual Freedom:** We defend the free and open exchange of lawful information and ideas in a democratic society, respecting individual's rights to privacy and choice.
- **Literacy:** We cultivate the joys of reading, learning, discovering, and creating.

Strategic Directions and Priorities

•Current:

•Redesign the Library Experience

- Develop programming strategy
- Define the ideal experience across physical and virtual channels
- Create the destination experience for the Ottawa Central Library
- Assess the impacts of barriers to service
- Develop the physical space experience

•Proposed:

• Redesign the Library Experience

- Define the ideal client experience across service channels (branches/facilities, virtual, and mobile)
- Develop the service strategies (programs, tools, expertise, collections, spaces)
- Create the destination experience for the Central branch at Ádisōke
- Renew and formalize a community development approach
- Identify and address barriers to service

•Current:
•Build Organizational Capacity

- Redesign the employee experience
- Renew leadership accountability
- Develop data-driven decision-making

•Proposed:
•Build Organizational Capacity

- Enhance the employee experience
- Foster leadership accountability
- Increase data-driven decision-making

•Current:
•Promote the Value of OPL

- Develop and implement a brand strategy
- Develop and implement a fundraising plan
- Strengthen stakeholder relationships and advocacy
- Strengthen the Intellectual Freedom program

•Proposed:
•Demonstrate the Value of OPL

- Develop and implement a brand strategy
- Advance fund development
- Strengthen community relationships and advocacy
- Integrate an ongoing commitment to intellectual freedom into all OPL activities