Strategic Planning for Library Multitype Cooperatives:
Samples & Examples

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edited by

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A library cooperative must be clear about why it exists. The core underlying purposes of the organization are articulated in its mission statement. It needs to be understood and agreed upon by all of its stakeholders, the Board, the staff and the members. Without this common understanding of the fundamental mission of the organization, effective planning and program development is unlikely to take place. The careful formulation or reformulation of the organization’s mission statement obviously needs to be among the first major steps in the strategic planning process.

A well developed mission statement provides a number of benefits both to the planning process and to organizational success. These include:
- a focus for the “business” of the organization which allows a course-setting framework for all strategies and activities,
- a context for tying resource allocations to the critical strategies for meeting mission priorities,
- a clear statement of the organization’s purpose for potential partners and funding agencies,
- a decision tool for program and project strategies.

In the review of submitted planning documents, it was interesting to note that mission statements ranged from a short sentence to fairly long lists. They ranged from very broad statements of function to specific identifications of the targeted clientele with generic descriptions of the kinds of services and/or products to be provided by the organization. In several cases, the planning team included their definition of a mission statement in their presentation of the organization’s mission statement.

In terms of commonalities, almost all of the submitted statements attempt to describe, usually clearly and concisely, the core purpose and enterprise of the organization. Each provokes the logical next question -- How are we going to do this? -- which sets the stage for the strategic approach to planning. Some of the specific elements of the submitted mission statements include: enhancing access, facilitating cooperative programs and partnerships, meeting the community’s need to know, and providing advocacy for libraries. Strengthening member libraries or enabling libraries to improve services are also recurring themes in the following mission statements. Emphasis on these improvements to benefit the end user community is often stated or implied.
MISSION STATEMENT
The mission of Region V is to:

BRING LIBRARIES TOGETHER. REGION V PROMOTES COOPERATION AND FACILITATES THE EFFECTIVE SHARING OF RESOURCES, INFORMATION AND SERVICES.

The mission and vision of Region V flow from its purpose. Mission defines "what business the Region is in order to achieve its purpose." It incorporates the primary methods by which the Region will achieve its purpose and the underlying assumptions, beliefs, and philosophy which inform the Region's purpose and programs.

Library service in Region V has been and continues to be uneven. Funding levels vary and all are limited by a tight economy. Both small and large libraries feel constrained in terms of personnel and collection development. Advances in technology are so rapid and costly that even large libraries find it difficult to keep current.

At the same time, demand for library service is growing in quantity and quality. It is the Committee's assumption that no library -- school, public, special or academic -- can satisfy all of their patrons' needs all of the time.

The Region provides the opportunity for access to resources through a comprehensive array of programs and services, and it has a responsibility to assist member libraries in identifying which services are most useful to them.

PURPOSE STATEMENT
The purpose of Region V is to:

STRENGTHEN MEMBER LIBRARIES' ABILITY TO MEET PATRONS' NEEDS

Establishing a clear single sentence purpose statement is the foundation for the development of a successful strategic plan. The Committee asked, "Why does the Region exist and what do we want it to accomplish?"

Discussion focused on improving patron access to resources and information but also addressed the differences between member libraries in terms of mission, funding, size of collection, access to information, and ability to share resources.

The Committee realized that the purpose must focus on member libraries who in turn will provide service to patrons. The purpose statement establishes the ultimate result for which Region V exists and will focus the Region's planning and resources during the next five years.

#10 b. -- Central Jersey Regional Library Cooperative

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The Mission of SOLINET
The mission of the Southeastern Library Network, Inc. (SOLINET), a diversified, not-for-profit membership organization, is to offer services and products that enable members and their constituents to employ, primarily through resource sharing and development, the most effective and economical means available in rendering library and other information services for the educational, cultural, research, and economic advancement of the Southeast.

#52 -- SOLINET (Southeastern Library Network Inc.)

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MOLO's Mission Statement:
As a basic tenet, the MOLO Board of Trustees agreed that MOLO's focus should be toward developing and supporting roles which serve the library institutions, administrators, trustees, and staffs. The Board agreed that MOLO programs serving patrons directly confuses the role MOLO plays with regard to its membership and also sets up a "competitive" or redundant service with local libraries. Therefore MOLO's mission statement has been changed from: Cooperation to extend and enhance service to our member libraries' users to

Cooperating to enhance our member's library services to their users.

#31 -- MOLO Regional Library System

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The Southwest Regional Library Service System, hereinafter known as "SWRLSS" (pronounced "swirls") has adopted as its mission: to strengthen, support and equalize member library services by providing leadership and encouraging cooperation among libraries in order to improve public access to information.

#54 -- Southwest Regional Library Services System
MISSION STATEMENT:

The North Country Reference and Research Resources Council is a regional multitype library agency primarily dedicated to cooperatively providing support and services necessary for all of its members to meet their individual goals. The Council serves libraries in the seven counties of Northern New York for the ultimate benefit of the library user.

#38 -- North Country Reference & Research Resources Council

OUR MISSION

SEFLIN, a non-profit membership organization of Southeast Florida libraries, believes that libraries can make a difference in people's lives. Our mission is to work cooperatively with our members and the community to promote the collection and sharing of library resources, to facilitate training, to increase public awareness, to provide leadership, to encourage the joint use of technology and to support activities that enhance an individual library's ability to meet the informational, educational and cultural needs of its primary users and Southeast Florida residents.

#50 b. -- Southeast Florida Library Information Network, Inc. (Summary)

MISSION

The South Carolina State Library's mission is to improve library services throughout the state and to ensure all citizens access to libraries and information resources adequate to meet their needs. The State Library supports libraries in meeting the informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs of the people of South Carolina.

#47 -- South Carolina State Library
**Mission Statement**
The Southeast Library System works proactively with library personnel and with other agencies to help them meet the diverse informational needs of their patrons. Innovative, interdependent and seamless approaches will be used to provide services.

#51 -- Southeast Nebraska Library System

Lakeland Library Cooperative strengthens member libraries in eight west Michigan counties by providing the means to share resources, services and expertise for the benefit of individuals and communities.

#24 -- Lakeland Library Cooperative

**The Mission**
The South Dakota Library Network provides all residents of South Dakota with rapid, easy access to the information, materials, and services of its member libraries.

#49 -- South Dakota State Library

**Mission Statement:** Acknowledging the ever increasing interdependence of all types of libraries, the Meridian Library System will focus on those activities that best support, serve and promote the individual strengths of its constituents. It will be innovative, proactive and stress those activities and services necessary to accomplish system goals which include consulting, resource sharing and provision of continuing education activities.

#28 -- Meridian Library System
MISSION STATEMENT

The Bergen County Cooperative Library System is a federation of public libraries that promotes high quality library service to the general public through resource sharing. Reciprocal borrowing among its member libraries is the cornerstone program of the organization.

BCCLS derives its strength from its synergistic nature while maintaining respect for each library’s autonomy.

BCCLS initiates, nurtures and manages cooperative public library programs and services which provide their users the widest possible access to all types of library materials and information.

BCCLS facilitates the role of public libraries in a global technologically based community.

BCCLS encourages libraries as community centers in meeting the intellectual, cultural, and recreational needs of individuals, families, groups, and businesses.

BCCLS upholds the principle that professional reference and information services should be available to the members of BCCLS and all residents of Bergen County.

BCCLS supports coalition and consensus building as key steps to successfully address library needs at the local, county, state, and national levels for both adequate funding and appropriate legislation.

BCCLS believes that its libraries are enhanced by the open exchange of ideas and resources through formal and informal means as well as professional activities.

BCCLS affirms that libraries are forums for information and ideas and endorses the ALA Library Bill of Rights.

#2 -- Bergen County Cooperative Library System

MISSION STATEMENT

The N.H. Automated Information System will provide the residents of New Hampshire rapid access to library and informational resources through a coordinated statewide information network.

#35 -- New Hampshire State Library

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of PALINET is to assist staff of libraries and information centers to deliver high quality, cost-effective services to their users through the application of technologies that foster information access, resource sharing and interlibrary cooperation.

Mission describes the contribution of the organization to achievement of the vision in a precise, concise and inspiring declaration of the fundamental purpose for which the organization exists. This mission statement establishes the long-range view of the organization's role in the library and information marketplace and provides the framework within which goals and objectives are defined.

#43 -- PALINET

BCR'S MISSION STATEMENT

The Bibliographical Center for Research (BCR) is organized as a not-for-profit corporation to assist in the effective and economical delivery of high-quality library and information services. BCR operations serve the membership by helping the library community to share information resources, by providing access to information services, by developing and promoting new technologies for information organization and delivery and by carrying out training and technical assistance in the use of information services. BCR encourages and assists communication among the members and serves as their advocate on regional and national library and information issues.

#3 -- Bibliographical Center for Research, Rocky Mountain Region, Inc.

Our Mission

The mission of AMIGOS is to:
Provide innovative information services,
Promote regional cooperation and resource-sharing, and
Support libraries as leaders in education and information services.

#1 -- AMIGOS
Mission
The mission of the Connecticut State Library is to provide high quality library and information services to state government and the citizens of Connecticut; to work cooperatively with related agencies and constituent organizations in providing those services; to preserve and make available the records of Connecticut’s history and heritage; to promote the development and growth of high quality information services on an equitable basis statewide; to provide leadership and cooperative opportunities for the library, educational, and historical communities in order to enhance the value of their individual and collective service missions; and to develop and promote appropriate legislation and public policy in support of these efforts.

#14 -- Connecticut State Library

MISSION
The mission of the Nebraska Library Commission is statewide promotion, development, and coordination of library and information services. As the state library agency, the Commission is an advocate for the library and information service needs of all Nebraskans.

#32 -- Nebraska Library Commission

MISSION
The Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries is a partnership of research, public and educational institutions working in concert to serve the information needs of the constituencies of member institutions and the general public. The two fold mission of the Alliance is: 1) to share resources, and 2) to identify and solve problems of information creation, collection, access and distribution. The Alliance institutions seek to reduce member operating costs and provide additional services to its constituencies by sharing their resources, expertise and leveraged purchasing. In pursuit of its mission the Alliance will:

- Offer automated and conventional systems or cooperative arrangements to enhance access to information resources
- Forge alliances with other organizations that offer information products and services
- Share ideas and strategies for managing changing conditions in the library environment
- Sponsor research which seeks solutions to a wide range of information management problems
- Develop strategies for reducing costs.

#13 -- Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries
MISSION STATEMENT
DEFINITION: An organization’s mission should provide a general description of its fundamental and global reason for being. It should be brief, clear, and broad enough to allow flexibility in implementation. An effective mission is a means by which managers and others can make decisions; reflect the values, beliefs, philosophy, and culture of the organization; and serve as an energy source and rallying point for the organization.

The Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives serves Kentucky’s need to know by assuring equitable access to high quality library and information resources and services and by helping public agencies ensure that adequate documentation of government programs is created, efficiently maintained and made readily accessible.

The Network Mission:
A key starting point of the planning process was the crafting of a new mission statement that would refocus the network and its member institutions on their basic reason for existence: The improvement of services to library and information users. The New Network Mission Statement is:
The Network assures that all Indiana residents receive the best possible library and information services by providing a cooperative, statewide structure for information and resource sharing.

VISION AND MISSION
In 1991, the South Central Research Library Council adopted the following vision and mission. It continues to be an effective tool for focusing the work of the organization. The Strategic Plan flows from the mission statement.

The South Central Research Library Council affirms that equal opportunity to participate in our country’s economic, political and social life depends upon equal access to information; and the South Central Research Library Council affirms that libraries and library systems are the most appropriate means for ensuring this access.

In carrying out that vision, the mission of the South Central Research Library Council is:

1. To connect members with each other and thus stimulate cooperation; to provide gateways into information networks.
2. To challenge members to achieve excellence and to embrace innovation so that they can flourish within an ever-changing environment.
3. To champion libraries and information services; to act as an advocate for members.
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