Appleton Public Library
Strategic Communications Plan

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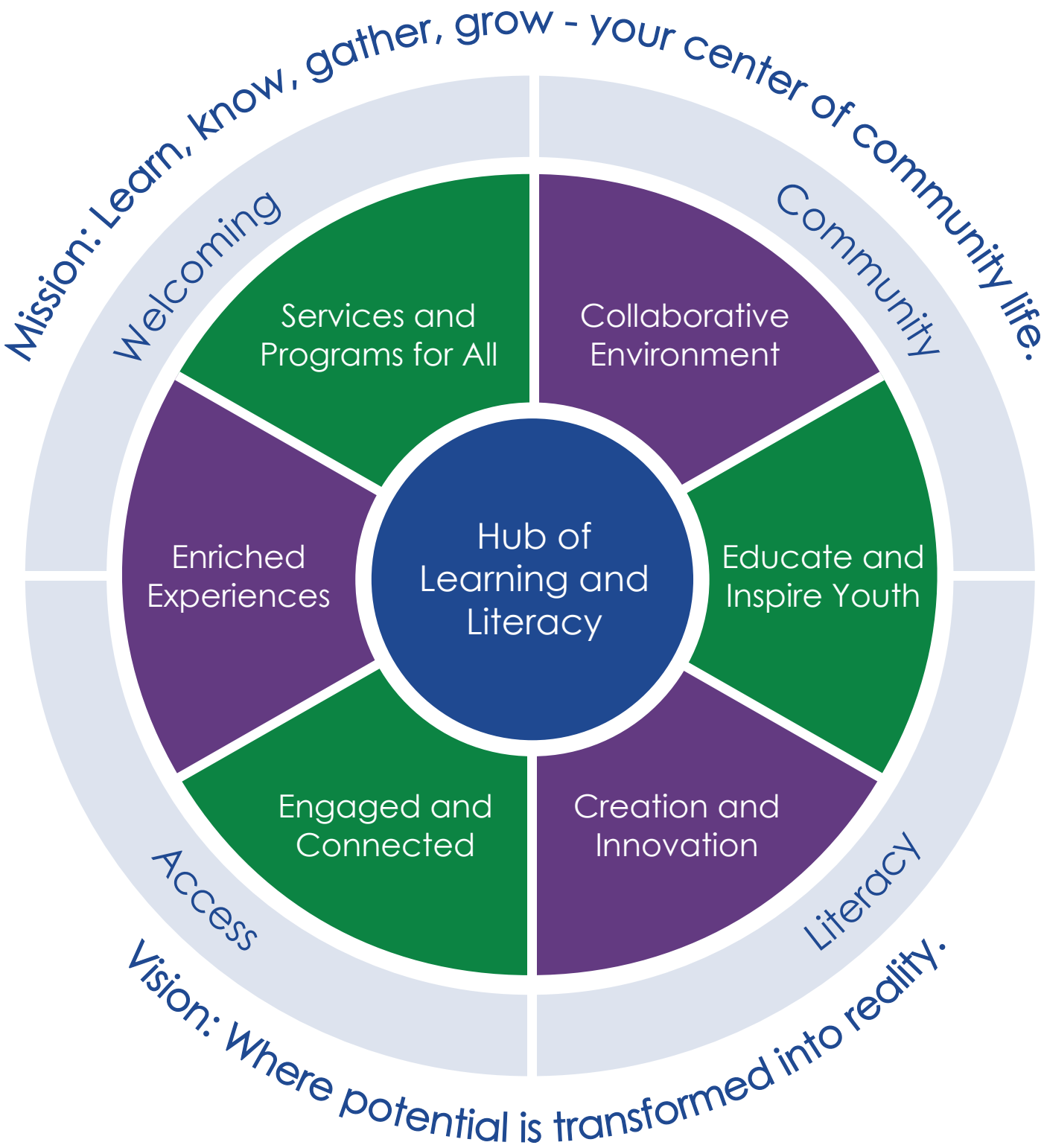
Mission, Vision, Organizational Values and Strategies



Organizational Values

Welcoming

Everyone belongs here.

Community

The library is essential to every person and organization achieving their goals.

Literacy

The City of Appleton is the city of literacy and learning.

Access

The library is accessible physically, culturally and intellectually.

Strategic Pillars

Hub of Learning and Literacy

We support and sustain education for all ages.

Collaborative Environment

We connect with partners to share knowledge and information.

Educate and Inspire Youth

We ensure that children and teens find a supportive place for their futures.

Creation and Innovation

We are a platform that sparks discovery, development and originality.

Engaged and Connected

We focus on how to make a difference in people's lives.

Enriched Experiences

We provide experiences that are timely, inclusive and aligned with community interests.

Services and Programs for All

We give our community opportunities for growth, self-instruction and inquiry.

Purpose

Our strategic communications plan is a multi-faceted approach that guides us through making decisions about communications and marketing. It provides clear and concise structure and direction based on customer and community research, data and best practices. The plan will support the library's mission, vision, organizational values and strategic pillars with forward-thinking, proactive communication strategies.

The success of the plan is strongly dependent on the support and involvement of library staff, library board of trustees and the Friends of Appleton Public Library. We all have a role in communications and community relations, and have an impact on how the library informs and is perceived by the public.

Situational Analysis

Over the last several years we have witnessed a rise in the use of digital communication platforms. Every year we collect data from our customers on their preferred communication methods. The top three answers continue to reflect the rise of digital platforms - email, our website, and our social media channels. Many of these communication platforms are relatively new to us. We must learn and understand how each are intended to function, so we continue to build equitable communication.

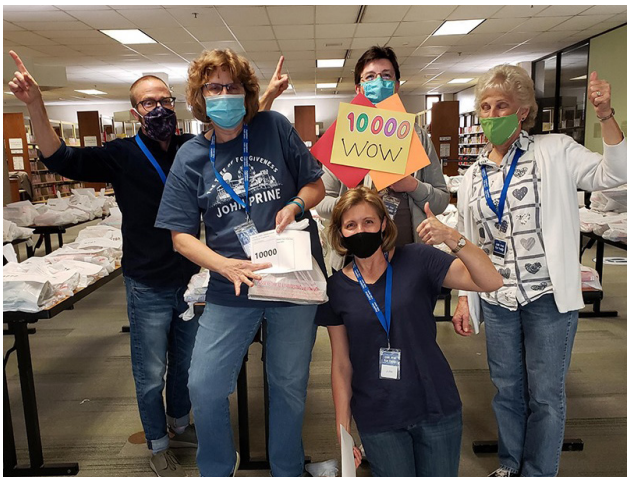
In addition to the shift in communication methods, we are seeing a shift in strategy across the marketing and communications field. As digital communication and density of information continues to rise, customers are becoming less responsive to traditional promotional messages. Reaching an audience in this landscape requires a focus on engagement – or a two-way conversation.

The goals in this plan provide a framework for how to begin to build equitable communication systems and refine our messaging strategy to achieve increased visibility and awareness of our brand and services.

SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths

- Creative staff with innovative ideas.
- APL widely respected institution.
- Mayoral and city department support.



Weaknesses

- Wide range of offerings; information overload.
- Inefficiencies in communication methods and efforts.
- Digital communication accessibility.

Opportunities

- Cross-promote messaging with targeted library and community partners.
- Build capacity for communication and marketing needs.

Threats

- Funding for communication and marketing projects and initiatives.
- Capacity to engage in communication activities.

Stakeholders

External Audiences

- Current APL Customers
- Library Supporters
- Community Partners
- Prospective APL Customers
- Prospective APL Supporters
- Media

Internal Audiences

- APL Staff
- Volunteers
- Library Board of Trustees
- Friends of APL Staff
- Friends of APL Board of Directors

Channels

Primary External

Website/App
- www.apl.org
- App

Outreach
- Service Desks
- Program Partnerships
- Board Memberships

Social Media
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube
- LinkedIn

Print
- Fliers/Posters/Bookmarks
- Brochures/Rack Cards

Email
- Constant Contact
- askus@apl.org

Phone
- Service Desk Phone Lines

Secondary External

Media Relations
Library TV Screens
Indoor/Outdoor Signage

Internal

Email
Intranet
Yammer
Teams/Share Point

Strategic Recommendations - Goals, Objectives & Action Steps

Cultivate the Brand | Focus Communications | Increase Engagement

Goal One: Cultivate the Brand

We will be champions for our developing brand in order to better establish an identity for the library that is woven into the fabric of our community.

Objective

Establish a clear identity and increase transparency with stakeholders through consistent branding and key messages.

Action Steps

- [ ] Participate in potential City of Appleton rebrand initiative to create alignment between the library and the city.
- [ ] Update and redistribute official brand guide and standards to library staff and OWLS.
- [ ] Train staff on how to use brand guide and standards.
- [ ] Work with OWLS to create branded promotional templates - including options for digital and print collateral.
- [ ] Create a cohesive identity and shared language throughout external channels.
- [ ] Create a robust annual report that serves as a tool for internal audiences to help demonstrate key messages to external audiences.
- [ ] Provide training opportunities for staff with a focus on equitable communications.

Objective

Build the foundation for an efficient, accessible, mobile-friendly website that reflects the Appleton Public Library brand.

Action Steps

- [ ] Simplify content on the website. Look for duplications, unnecessary or outdated information.
- [ ] Update the language and tone of the website to reflect the library brand.
- [ ] Research website layouts that provide improved efficiency and accessibility.
- [ ] Work with website committee to develop opportunities for community input to guide website redevelopment strategy.
- [ ] Maintain communication with OWLS for possible website needs.

Goal Two: Focus Communications

Through improved communications processes and procedures, our communications efforts will become more strategic, effective and efficient to better meet the needs of our community.

Objective

Prioritize the use of digital primary communication channels to engage, educate and gain insight from our community.

Action Steps

- [ ] Research and make a recommendation for a social media management platform that provides social media team user-friendly access to library social media sites, organizes content and provides an increase in access to customer analytics.
- [ ] Provide training to staff or volunteers on email communication platform.
- [ ] Create a campaign that highlights email communication service availability.
- [ ] Develop best practices guides for primary external channels to better meet the needs of intended audiences.
- [ ] Evaluate and provide feedback on new library app.
- [ ] Create a plan to organize data to evaluate the use of primary communication channels.

Objective

Continue to expand social media expertise by building an informed social media team.

Action Steps

- [ ] Research current social media demographics.
- [ ] Create a social media guide that details demographics and best practices for each site.
- [ ] Provide social media guide and training to social media team.
- [ ] Provide social media management platform training and resources to social media team.

Objective

Formulate building process communications strategy with a focus on proactive communication to internal and external audiences.

Action Steps

- [ ] Inventory and evaluate internal and external communication methods.
- [ ] Evaluate and, if needed, update written internal communication plan.
- [ ] Provide necessary tools and training to internal stakeholders.
- [ ] Provide timely, consistent and accurate updates to internal and external stakeholders.
- [ ] Meet with internal stakeholders as needed.

Goal Three: Increase Engagement

Through engagement and collaboration with internal and external audiences, we will increase the consistency of key messages. We'll seek meaningful engagement that fosters equitable communications and leads to improvements in the ways we communicate and deliver services.

Objective

Create a social media messaging strategy that humanizes the library and builds connection with the community.

Action Steps

- ☐ Work with staff to post fresh and timely content that promotes a dialog with customers.
- ☐ Communicate outcomes of large library programs and initiatives.
- ☐ Highlight library customers, staff and volunteers on social media outlets.
- ☐ Provide training opportunities to social media team that focus on increasing engagement.

Objective

Create a website messaging strategy that incorporates customer and staff insight.

Action Steps

- ☐ Track Google Analytics to see how the community is using the current website.
- ☐ Install heat mapping tool on website to gather data on website use and navigation.
- ☐ Survey the community to understand what they want/need in a library website.
- ☐ Work with staff to understand what they need in a website/intranet.
- ☐ Document community and organizational website/intranet goals to guide us through the transition to a new website.
- ☐ Work with staff to create content marketing opportunities based on customer interests.

Objective

Create a strong email messaging strategy that incorporates customer insights.

Action Steps

- ☐ Create email segmentation based on customer interest.
- ☐ Create a best practices guide for email marketing.
- ☐ Provide training opportunities to staff for email marketing.
- ☐ Work with staff to create content marketing opportunities based on customer interests.

Evaluation

At the end of each year we'll pause to evaluate our action steps and adjust our strategy as needed.

Questions?

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