PROPOSAL: STRATEGIC PLANNING

Ossining Public Library

We have witnessed the enormous impact libraries have on the people they serve.

Our projects have ranged in size and scope, challenges, and opportunities, but one fact remains constant: we are passionate and effective advocates for libraries.

Contact

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February 21, 2020

Ms. Karen LaRocca-Fels
Ossining Public Library
53 Croton Avenue
Ossining, NY 10562

Dear Ms. LaRocca-Fels,

Thank you for the opportunity to present this proposal for strategic planning. Our firm brings to your project a long-standing commitment to libraries and significant experience in community needs research as well as organizational, technology, branding, communications, and facilities planning for public libraries across the United States. Our hallmarks are pragmatic, relevant, research-based plans that maximize available resources to build support for and use of public library services.

In all our projects with public libraries, we focus on understanding communities at the "sidewalk" level. What are the most compelling issues to residents of the service area? What are elected officials and community influentials saying? What segments of the population is the library reaching…or not reaching? How can the library more effectively contribute to community and economic development, job readiness, and entrepreneurialism? Are there additional opportunities to support early childhood literacy, ESL, and aging populations? How can a library better leverage technology and collections?

The methodology we recommend in this proposal is scaled to Ossining's size and population and provides a variety of options for the Library's consideration. Any combination is designed to yield data which will generate productive discussions and lead to consensus around strategic priorities. Regardless of the exact methodology, we have found that planning stimulates professional development and a can-do optimism about all that is possible.

We certainly hope to be able to work with you in this important endeavor.

With best regards, I remain

Yours truly,

Pam Fitzgerald
Managing Partner

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Process Overview

It is our understanding that the Ossining Public Library ("OPL" or "the Library") seeks to develop a strategic plan that will advance the Library's service to residents of its service area.

The process we lay out is inclusive and interactive, reflects best practices in library planning, and focuses on measurable outcomes. By engaging key stakeholders, staff, leadership, and the community, we propose to develop an actionable plan with research-backed strategic priorities and measurable outcomes.

DISCOVERY

Project Kickoff

We begin with preliminary conference calls with Ossining Public Library leadership to consult on the composition of the Planning Committee, if it has not already been determined. We'll review the process, objectives, deliverables, responsibilities, and scheduling to ensure a common project understanding.

Environmental Scan

We ask the Library to identify relevant documents and data for us to review, such as:

♦ local planning, economic development, and other key municipal documents and studies;

♦ relevant school district reports and educational statistics;

♦ previous Library plans, studies, and annual reports; and

♦ budgets, key statistics, output measures, etc.

We will also access and review:

♦ census and other local demographic reports;

♦ national reports, surveys, and studies regarding public library service.

Peer Benchmarking [Optional]

Benchmarking provides an opportunity for the Library to identify areas of excellence as well as areas of underperformance by comparing its output and other measures against similar entities and/or recognized standards—very useful in the preliminary stages of identifying priority areas of focus. The comparisons also provide concrete and persuasive data for redeployment of assets, advocacy, reports to elected officials, and fundraising.

We propose to measure the performance of the Library against that of four (4) peer libraries. Peer library selection will be based on the number of library locations, operating expenses, and service area size, as well as demographic indicators. Inputs (e.g. budgeting, staff, etc.), outputs (e.g. circulation, card registration, etc.), and ratios (e.g. cost per circulation) will be compared using the most recent published data available.

We will confer closely with the Library on the final selection of the peer set. The report that summarizes this study will provide concrete direction for subsequent research questions. *Learn more about benchmarking at ivy.gr.com/benchmarking.*

Trustee Interviews

Library "insiders" bring important perspectives and valuable knowledge and insights about the Library's role in the community as well as particular challenges and concerns. These confidential conversations provide opportunities for our consultants to better understand the PEST (political, environmental, social, and technological) context of a project, and for Trustees to express, without reservation, their views on the Library's organizational health and prospects.

Before our initial site visit, we propose to conduct one-on-one, in-depth phone interviews with the Library's Trustees by phone. Interview notes will be prepared to serve as a reference throughout the project and will remain confidential.

Tour+ | Site Visit #1

One member of the consulting team will meet with the Director and tour the Library with attention to relevant areas of operations, such as collections, staffing, technology assets and capabilities, organizational health, etc.

During this one-day visit, the consultant will conduct the following sessions with the Strategic Planning Committee:

- **Process Makes Perfect** – Reviewing the planning process sets the group's expectations and establishes a common understanding of how a research-based strategic plan supports library success.

- ◆ **Trends Talk** – We'll report on significant trends and facilitate discussions around how the Library might proactively respond to these social, economic, technological, demographic, and cultural shifts.
- ◆ **SWOT Workshop** – A SWOT analysis of the Library is a valuable exercise for identifying and prioritizing key considerations for strategic planning.
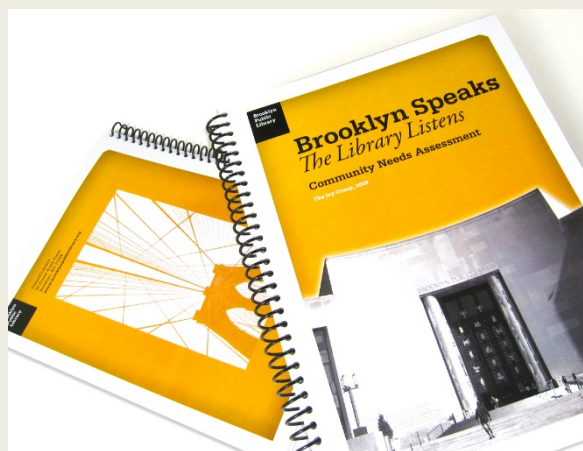
Brooklyn Public Library (NY)

Ivy Group planned and conducted a year-long community needs assessment on behalf of the BPL. Research methodologies included focus groups, telephone surveys, online surveys, benchmarking, and one-on-one interviews. The focus groups and telephone surveys were conducted in six languages.

View the report at ivy.gr.com/BPL-sample

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Leader Interviews [Optional]

Community Leader Interviews are an opportunity for the Library Director and Trustees to connect directly with key civic "influentials" that they might not otherwise hear from. These interviews provide an opportunity for substantive conversations with individuals who represent key stakeholder groups in the Library's service area and can "make things happen" when support is needed.

It is our experience that having Library leadership, rather than outside consultants, conduct the interviews makes it possible for the Library to connect personally with individuals to cultivate important relationships.

These interviews also enable the Library to:

♦ better understand its service area's overall needs, leadership priorities, as well as the social, political, economic, and demographic trends affecting it;

♦ assess the awareness of and support for Library services among critical constituencies;

♦ identify opportunities for the Library to align itself with local goals in such areas as educational achievement, economic development, inter-departmental cooperation, customer service, etc.; and

♦ evaluate the potential for new collaborations and partnerships.

We ask the Library Director and Trustees to be responsible for:

♦ contacting leaders and conducting approximately eight (8) interviews; and

♦ submitting interview summary reports on forms we will provide.

Ivy Group will be responsible for:

♦ coaching the Library on the interviewing process;

♦ consulting with the Library on developing a list of "influentials" who should be interviewed (educators, employers and business owners, civic, cultural, and religious leaders, elected officials, journalists, etc.);

♦ creating a discussion guide, with one (1) round of revisions, to guide the conversations; and

♦ reviewing submitted reports and analyzing participant feedback.

Market Segmentation & Community Profile [Optional]

A market segmentation study applies consumer data to the Library's patron list, as well as the general service area population. Claritas' MyBestSegments lifestyle systems define every household in the U.S. by distinct lifestyle types, called "segments", to provide a comprehensive picture of who lives where and what they are like.

By identifying key demographics, lifestyle characteristics, consumer behavior, and media preferences, the Library can determine not only whom to target but also what to say and how to reach them. These insights are especially useful in planning for services, collections, and programs and in crafting more effective communications strategies.

This methodology is particularly valuable in pinpointing the characteristics, needs, and preferences of library nonusers.

Provided with a list of cardholder addresses (no names appended), we will identify the Library's primary consumer segments within Ossining, NY. Using patron addresses and a Claritas community overview, we will compare and contrast the consumer segments of library users to the segments that make up the community.

We will also calculate library penetration by segment to identify opportunities for community outreach. This approach enables us to assess the Library's market penetration of the service area, know more about current users, and determine the interests and needs of nonusers.

Community Online Survey [Optional]

Conducting an online survey of the public is a cost-effective way to give voice to anyone who wishes to participate in the planning process and sends the message that the study is inclusive, unbiased, and transparent. Most importantly, it can become the occasion for raising overall public awareness and understanding of the wide array of library services.

Nevertheless, respondents will come largely from the Library's most frequent users and ardent supporters—the reason why we deem this research as optional. Those who rarely or never access Library programs and services will feel they have "nothing to add" and are unlikely even with attractive incentives to participate in significant numbers. Market segmentation data can "fill in the blanks" regarding nonusers and we offer a second option—a telephone survey—that ensures a representative number of non- or infrequent users are reached.

Ivy Group will be responsible for:

♦ developing the survey questionnaire (one round of revisions) with a series of quantitative questions and one qualitative "open end" question;

♦ recommending strategies to ensure maximum participation;

- programming, testing, and launching the survey, monitoring response rates;
- analyzing the data; and
- summarizing key findings.

We ask the Library to be responsible for:

- posting the survey link on its website and social media; and
- promoting survey participation.

While the exact scope of survey questions will be planned in close consultation with the Strategic Planning Committee, we anticipate determining:

- importance that residents attach to specific library programs and services;
- levels of customer satisfaction (users only) with specific attributes of library services (programming, collections, technology access, customer service, etc.);
- barriers that prevent non- or infrequent users from accessing library services; and
- interest in new programs, services, and technologies that the Library would consider offering in the future.

Community Conversations [Optional]

We will provide a discussion guide and consult with the Library on the best ways to recruit and conduct "town halls". As with community online surveys, the Library's most ardent supporters (and detractors) will be motivated to attend. For this reason, we encourage the Director and Trustees to host these events and to submit a summary memo to share with the consulting team important insights. These "good neighbor outreach" activities can supplement, but never replace, the more rigorous market segmentation information.

Cecil County Public Library (MD)

CCPL's five-year strategic plan challenged the Library to continuously raise the bar for its innovative culture, excellence in customer service, and one-of-a-kind experiences following recognition as a 2015 Winner of the National Medal. A community assessment revealed opportunities to strengthen communications and built the case for a facilities study, completed by Ivy Group in 2019.

STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Planning Summit | Site Visit 2

During this one-day visit, the consultant will conduct focused discussions with the Board, staff, Friends, and Planning Committee and cover the following agenda:

♦ **Research Says What?** – A review or the research and discussion of implications for collections, programs, services, and communications.

♦ **Go Forth and Strategize** – Identification of emerging themes and reach consensus on areas of focus and outline supporting strategies. To help the work groups prioritize tactics, we'll introduce the Action Priority Matrix for evaluating potential impact and feasibility. Work group templates will be distributed and explained.

♦ **Listening and Learning** – An opportunity for those most engaged with the Library to pose questions and voice their perspectives.

Work Groups

Staff engagement and excitement are especially key to the plan's success. The closer staff members are to the planning process, the more likely they are to actively support and promote plan priorities. Bringing staff, trustees, and members of the Planning Committee together is valuable because of the multiple perspectives they bring.

These work groups address the nitty-gritty of goal setting, implementation, and progress assessment. They also provide an opportunity for the Library's "rising stars" to apply their knowledge and practice collaborative problem-solving.

Each area of focus that emerges from the planning summit will be assigned by the Library Director to a work group whose purpose will be to build an actionable plan, including identifying resources required to fulfill the plans as well as determining appropriate measures of success.

We will provide templates, be readily available to advise the groups as they proceed, and review and edit the draft plans as they are submitted. Where appropriate, the final Strategic Plan document will include recommendations for building organizational capacity for implementation.

Strategic Plan

We will draft the new plan based on the areas of focus that emerge from the research, planning summit, and the draft plans submitted by the work groups.

Elements of the strategic plan:

- Executive summary
- Areas of focus, strategies
- Acknowledgments
- Appendices of research reports

Each strategy will include:

- objectives, tactics, i.e., actions to take;
- goals, i.e., recommendations for monitoring progress and measuring success;
- implications for required resources and capacity building, e.g., facilities, staff, budget; and
- communications and outreach recommendations.

We will submit a draft plan for feedback and suggested revisions. Following the incorporation of one (1) round of revisions to the document, we will submit the approved and formatted plan to the Library. We will also consult with the Library on the best ways to launch the plan with the public and key stakeholder groups.

One-page Plan Design [Optional]

On final approval of the full plan, an abridged "one-page strategic plan" will be designed as a quick reference for library stakeholders and promotional tool for community outreach. The design will conform to the Library's graphic standards and is eligible for one round of revisions. The Library will receive a print-ready PDF.

Ongoing Consultation

Throughout the planning process, we are readily available to answer questions, offer suggestions, and consult with the Director and Trustees.

Area of Focus
Supported by research rationale, i.e., data and input that indicate community needs and/or service gaps

Strategy
Establishes organizational and policy direction

Strategy

Tactic | Tactic | Tactic | Tactic

Resources, Outreach, and Metrics | Resources, Outreach, and Metrics

Timeline

On the Library's acceptance of the Proposal, we will determine a mutually agreeable timeline. We do request a minimum of five (5) business days from receipt of the signed Proposal to commence work.

Month 1	Project Kickoff
	Environmental Scan
	Trustee Interviews
Month 2	Peer Benchmarking [Optional]
	Community Leader Interviews [Optional]
	Tour+ | Site Visit 1
Months 3-4	Market Segmentation [Optional]
	Community Online Survey [Optional]
	Community Conversations [Optional]
Month 5	Planning Summit | Site Visit 2
	Staff Work Groups
Month 6	Plan Development
	Final Plan Submission

Cedar Rapids Public Library (IA)

An architecturally stunning library with a dynamic Director in a town fully recovered from a devastating flood, the Library put market segmentation to work to develop "areas of strategic focus" and ambitious plans to engage more City residents in the life of the Library.

Story at ivy.gr.com/crpl

Project Summary and Fees

Discovery

		Core
Kick-off & Environmental Scan Review community research and library materials	2,372.	X
Peer Benchmarking Determine peer libraries, analyze data for Library and 4 peers, prepare report	4,743.	
Trustee Interviews Draft discussion guide (1 round of revisions), schedule and conduct up to 7 interviews	1,976.	X
Tour+ | Site Visit #1 **1 consultant; 1 day, 2 nights** Tour library location, present on methodology and national trends, conduct SWOT	3,730.	X

Community Assessment

		Core
Community Leader Interviews Consult on interviewee selection, coach Library interviewers, draft discussion guide (1 round of revisions), review submitted interview notes	949.	
Market Segmentation Clean library patron data, conduct comparative analysis of unique library user households (13K) and nonusers in Ossining with service implications for top 5 community segments, prepare report	6,323.	
Community Online Survey Draft single-audience survey (1 round of revisions), program survey instrument, monitor progress, prepare report	4,743.	
Community Conversations Discussion guide development and consulting; review submitted summary memo	791.	

Plan Development

		Core
Planning Summit | Site Visit #2 **1 consultant; 1 days, 2 nights** Provide worksheets, facilitate one full day of sessions and workshops	4,362.	X
Strategic Plan Development Review and edit work group plans, draft plan (1 round of revisions), deliver final report (2 PDFs; high- and low-resolution)	4,743.	X
One-page Plan Design Design abridged plan (2 PDFs; high- and low-resolution)	1,581.	
Core Sub-Total, exclusive of optionals exclusive of travel expenses, to be billed as incurred, not to exceed $1,600 for each site visit	**17,182.**	

About The Ivy Group

The Ivy Group is a full-service strategic consulting, marketing, and communications firm.

Co-founded in 1989 by Pam Fitzgerald and Nancy Davis MLS, The Ivy Group is a privately-held small business with 100% female ownership, certified as a SWaM vendor (#662737) by the Commonwealth of Virginia. We are members of the American Library Association and Public Library Association.

Comprehensive Capabilities

We provide the following services to libraries, library systems and agencies, state departments, and library support organizations:

- community needs assessments and strategic planning;
- environmental scans and market segmentation;
- primary research, including focus groups, town halls, executive interviews, telephone surveys, online surveys, site intercepts;
- branding, visual identity, and graphic design;
- marketing and communications strategies;
- website design and development;
- board and staff training;
- executive coaching and mentoring;
- facilities assessments and community outreach for architects and space planners; and
- fundraising and advocacy consulting.

Experienced In-house Team

A close-knit working group, we combine our library experience, business and communications expertise, and enthusiasm for supporting communities to advance America's libraries.

Pam Fitzgerald has conducted trainings and orchestrated successful planning projects for libraries across the nation since co-founding the firm in 1989. Her ability to analyze and leverage an organization's strengths and to integrate them into compelling strategies has resulted in plans that have made the best possible use of available resources and collaborative opportunities.

Julia Prince has put her Haverford College economics degree to work for Ivy Group since 2014 as a researcher, strategist, and project manager. Equally comfortable in the trenches of a spreadsheet or on the front lines facilitating planning summits, Julia translates research into actionable strategies.

Ellen Roberson has managed the logistics of numerous library planning projects since 2006 and will oversee timelines and work deliverables for the Library. With an eye for detail and a talent for getting to the root of the matter, Ellen is extensively engaged in all community conversations, whether scripting a survey questionnaire or conducting an interview.

The core consulting team will be supported by the following in-house staff:

- ♦ Franziska Matiuk, Consultant
- ♦ Stephen Burden, Senior Designer
- ♦ Jan Garrison, Office Manager
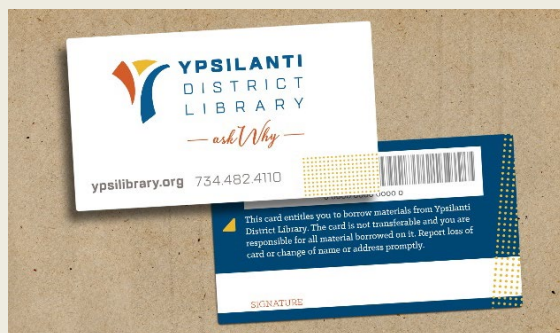
Ypsilanti District Library (MI)

Libraries have become the level playing field of ideas, entertainment, and inspiration. YDL's strategic plan addressed old stereotypes with a new vision and a series of focused initiatives. The research also provided the Board with public relations messaging it needed for funding advocacy.

Story at ivy.gr.com/YDL-work

Commitment to Community

Ivy Group is committed to guiding strategic vision and developing original creative to support organizations as they build thriving, healthy communities.

We believe libraries play a vital role in the life of American communities—as sources of education and pleasure, as contributors to quality of life, and as supporters of economic development and lifelong learning.

In the best of all worlds, we imagine libraries that:

- thrive, because resources and commitment abound;
- are customer-centric and community-focused;
- offer targeted services and rich experiences that cannot be duplicated elsewhere;
- serve as community gathering places;
- meet information needs virtually and within brick-and-mortar facilities;
- keep pace with new technologies, putting them to the best possible use in the interests of their customers;
- provide opportunities for learning at any age and stage;
- support the economic vitality of the community with job search support and business reference services;
- ensure a safe and secure environment in which children can explore, read, learn, and discover;
- support students with homework help and access to technology and resources;
- honor the professional commitment to open access, privacy and confidentiality;
- are well-managed and fiscally prudent;
- make best use of resources;
- communicate effectively with stakeholders;
- cultivate and steward donors; and
- plan for their futures.

Representative Library Experience

We have customized programs for over one hundred libraries of all sizes, including:

Berks County Public Libraries (PA)

Boston Public Library (MA)

Bucks County Free Library (PA)

Camden County Library System (NJ)

Carlstadt Public Library (NJ)

Chatham-Kent Public Libraries (Ontario, CA)

Chester County Library System (PA)

Commonwealth Libraries of Pennsylvania

Corvallis-Benton Public Library (OR)

Dauphin County Library System (PA)

DeKalb County Public Library (GA)

Delaware County Library System (PA)

Des Moines Public Library (IA)

Englewood Public Library (NJ)

Fairfax County Public Library (VA)

Free Library of Philadelphia

Frisco Public Library (TX)

Gwinnett County Public Library (GA)

Haverford Township Free Library (PA)

Hershey Public Library (PA)

Highland Park Library (TX)

Hoboken Public Library (NJ)

Idaho Commission for Libraries

Indiana County Public Libraries (PA)

James V. Brown Library (PA)

Jefferson-Madison Regional Library (VA)

Kentucky State Department of Libraries

Library System of Lancaster County (PA)

Licking County Library System (OH)

Loudoun County Library System   (VA)

Luzerne County Library System (PA)

Lycoming County Public Library System (PA)

Maryland Library Association

Milwaukee Public Library (WI)

Monmouth County Library (NJ)

Montgomery County Public Libraries (PA)

Nassau County Library System (NY)

New England Library Association

New Jersey Library Trustee Association

North Carolina Library Association

NOVEL NY

Palmyra Public Library (PA)

Parkland Community Library (PA)

Port Jefferson Free Library (NY)

Queens Library (NY)

San Antonio Public Library (TX)

Schlow Centre Regional Library (PA)

Solano County Library (CA)

Tulsa City-County Library (OK)

Virginia Library Association

West Des Moines Public Library (IA)

References

Strategic Planning 2019

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Auburn Public Library (AL)
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Strategic Planning 2019

Sharan Marshall, CEO
Southern Maryland Regional Library
Association; Calvert County Library; Charles
County Public Library; St. Mary's County Library
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Strategic Planning 2018
Facilities Planning 2019

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Licking County Library System (OH)

Located in a rural area, the Library is working to address early childhood education, educational attainment, and employment needs amidst declining economics and an opioid epidemic. Ivy Group worked with the LCLS to develop a dynamic, targeted marketing and outreach program that made the most of limited resources.

Story at ivy.gr.com/licking