

Bedford Public Library

Path to Excellence

2021-2026



Mission

We bring people, information, and ideas together to enrich lives and build community.

Vision

To provide knowledge, hope, and endless possibilities.

Values

At the Bedford Public Library, we:

Strengthen Community

Connect People with information and services

Provide a community space for individuals and groups

Build excitement for education and learning

Develop Partnerships

Share skills and programs

Encourage Collaboration

Listen and learn from others

Seek partnerships with other organizations and libraries

Encourage Innovation

Recruit and train dedicated and professional staff

Investigate new funding sources and budget practices

Focus on future possibilities

Embrace Change

Explore new technologies

Community

The Bedford Public Library serves 34,125 persons who reside in the seven northern townships in Lawrence County. We enjoy a positive working relationship with the Mitchell Community Public Library to serve all residents of Lawrence County. We have a reciprocal borrow agreement with MCPL and use a statewide resource sharing service that expands our offerings. Currently over 62% of our taxpayers have a regular or digital library card.

Our population has remained nearly the same for the past decade. Lawrence County leaders are working diligently to retain and recruit young people and families to make their home and living here. There is a strong desire and high level of energy focused on improving educational, cultural, and work opportunities needed to attract new residents to our county. The Bedford Public Library is dedicated to working as a community partner to improve life for all in Lawrence County.



Planning

Mapping the Library's Path to Excellence started with a core planning team that consisted of Susan Miller, Director; Nathan Watson, Director of Operations; Chloe Day, Children/Teen Services Coordinator; and April Blair, Adult Services Coordinator.

Our planning team used the Harwood Institute's aspiration model to engage our board of directors, BPL staff, and our community. Through a combination of in-person polls, social media questionnaires, and a virtual community conversation, we sought to understand what our community members wanted for their community and how the library can help make that happen. Overwhelmingly, community members said that they want to live in a community that is safe and kind, where customers can pursue health, wealth, and happiness.

In early 2020, IU's Center of Rural Engagement conducted a survey on community engagement with the Bedford Public Library. Using this study, along with data from the City of Bedford's 2019 Long-Range Plan, and community input we built a strategic plan that emphasized the following points: **Lifelong learning, Kindness and belonging, Health and wellness, Success readiness, Civic engagement, Stewardship and Advocacy.**



Professional Development

The Bedford Public Library values and supports continuing education and professional development. Our goal is to have 75% of our staff obtain Indiana Library Certification. Our commitment to excellence includes required staff trainings, tuition support for classes toward a master's degree in Library Science or certification, work time and registration costs for work-related continuing education, and access to leadership activities at the state and local level.

Technical and cultural change require that all staff adapt and learn as an essential part of their work at the Bedford Public Library. Professional development is essential to each of our strategic commitments in our Path to Excellence. We have included a professional development goal in each section of this plan to ensure that staff learn and use new strategies and technologies.



Evaluation

The aspirational nature of this plan requires a multifaceted approach to evaluation. We will gather anecdotal data from face-to-face conversations with our library customers, community members, and local leaders. Statistical data will be collected and analyzed on a regular basis throughout the life of this plan. Engagement through social media and community involvement will also be examined as indicators of success. We will improve our ability to listen and learn from our community.



The Library is committed to Lifelong Learning

Our community is a place where people are constantly pursuing new knowledge and experiences for themselves and their families. The Bedford Public Library is a valuable community partner for providing these experiences for individuals and groups throughout every stage of life.

Through these experiences, people are connected to each other and our community.

Needs:

- Learning experiences that are supplemental to school curriculum and follow federal and state standards
- Learning experiences and activities that build community and connections
- Intergenerational and family activities
- Cultural & arts programming
- Hands-on technological experiences
- Facilitation and collaboration with homeschool families

Actions:

- Providing educational opportunities through interests and unique hands-on demonstrations
- Become a central hub for multigenerational/family experiences
- Provide family/multigenerational learning experiences through take-home learning/activity kits
- Purchase multimedia hardware/software for creation of content for virtual learners
- Create and expand multifaceted learning experiences, including STEM, arts and culture, functional literacy, and more
- Be a place where together, the community shares in celebrating and documenting our educational journeys

Impact:

- Community members feel the Library is integral to their family growth
- Organizations see us as learning facilitators and valuable partners
- Library resources, virtual and onsite, will engage nontraditional learners and educators
- People will form connections through shared learning
- Community will benefit from increased functional literacy
- Community will experience state-of-the-art digital programming

Indicators:

- Stories and testimonies of people's experiences with our programs will be shared on social media
- Regular experience surveys will show how individuals are impacted by our programs
- Feedback from NLCS teachers will indicate program's relevancy to standards and curriculum
- Attendance at cultural programs will increase

The Library is committed to Kindness and Belonging

Our community is a place for all people. The Bedford Public Library provides an environment that represents our community, that welcomes and strives to provide services for all. People feel like they belong, are respected, and their unique voices are heard.

Needs:

- Community-wide sense of connection
- Activities for people with varying needs and abilities
- Internet connectivity in remote parts of the county
- A neutral, safe space for learning and expression

Actions:

- Connect our community by providing programming that brings people together and appeals to individual needs of our community members
- Increase resources and access to services, materials, and technology to remote areas of our community
- Adapt services and programming so that they are accessible to people with diverse abilities
- Partner with organizations to facilitate conversations, trainings, other educational resources for community members and staff
- Serve as a convener of support networks
- Curate a collection that represents all members of our community

Impact:

- Providing educational opportunities through interests and unique hands-on demonstrations
- Become a central hub for multigenerational/family experiences
- Provide family/multigenerational learning experiences through take-home learning/activity kits
- Purchase multimedia hardware/software for creation of content for virtual learners
- Learning experiences will be multifaceted, including STEM, arts and culture, functional literacy and more
- Be a place where our community learns and grows together

Indicators:

- People will be exposed to a variety of viewpoints
- Library access and service will be expanded to meet the needs of specialized demographics
- People in rural areas will have more physical access to Library services
- People will have expanded access to support networks

The Library is committed to Health and Wellness

Our community is made up of people who are happy and healthy. Bedford Public Library provides services, programs, and partnerships that encourage physical, mental, emotional, and social health.

People have the knowledge and tools to live long, happy lives.

Needs:

- Culture that values healthy lifestyle choices
- Resources and programming that encourage mental and emotional health
- Health coverage resources and guidance
- Socio-emotional and trauma-informed care training for community and Library staff
- Nutrition education and food literacy

Actions:

- Utilize partnerships to provide programming that supports physical, socio-emotional, and mental health
- Create active programs that promote physical activity and exposure to nature
- Seek social work interns to assess people's individual needs and recommend appropriate assistance
- Ensure that hardware and software used for benefit assistance is up-to-date and adequate
- Train staff in trauma-informed care and other socio-emotional approaches to service, as well as navigating assistance and benefit systems

Impact:

- Community will experience programs that promote health and bring joy
- People will have greater access to the Healthcare Marketplace
- Social work interns will offer guided assistance in locating resources (housing, food, mental health, financial/food assistance, etc.)
- Community members will have increased socio-emotional health through use of mindfulness techniques
- Employees will benefit from socio-emotional and trauma-informed care trainings
- The Library will benefit from partnerships with federal, state, and local organizations that provide health and socio-emotional services

Indicators:

- Community feedback along with wellness surveys will show people are using the Library to make positive health decisions and promote a happy lifestyle
- Statistics will reflect a community increase in people who are signed up for healthcare benefits, local resources, wellness programs, etc.
- Majority of people who participate in wellness programs will meet their personal goals
- Overall county health statistics will improve

The Library is committed to Success Readiness

Our community is economically prosperous, and people are skilled and ready for success. Bedford Public Library provides knowledge, resources, and skills training to people at all levels of their career so that they may pursue prosperity and happiness.

Needs:

- Resources and education for people who are looking for financial and professional advancement at any stage of life
- Functional literacy skills (check writing, bank accounts, job descriptions, etc.)
- Availability of soft skills for many emerging adults and others
- Resources for people who are new to the community

Actions:

- Offer programming that explores career development and tools for prosperity at all stages of a person's life
- Partner with organizations that can offer both technical and interpersonal skills trainings
- Create an environment that is helpful and welcoming to new community members
- Utilize partnerships to create a multigenerational financial literacy program
- Provide resources and materials that assist customers with professional development
- Train staff on workforce resources and how best to utilize them to assist our community members
- Provide access to career training and career exploration software for community members

Impact:

- Our community will have access to resources that promote prosperity
- Our staff will be ready to assist people at any career stage
- People will be better prepared to navigate an ever-changing professional landscape
- The Library will be a valuable economic partner to our community

Indicators:

- Community feedback will show that people are learning the skills they need for career advancement
- Enrollment in skills trainings will increase
- Community partners will report referrals
- Participation in financial literacy programs will increase
- Career exploration will be integrated into existing programs

The Library is committed to Civic Engagement

Our community is civic-minded, well informed, and ready to lead future generations. Bedford Public Library provides knowledge and experiences for children and adults to take an active part in our community by encouraging media literacy, respectful discourse, and public participation.

Needs:

- Increased participation in public/civic activities
- Increased civic knowledge and educational opportunities for children and adults
- Ability to spot misinformation/disinformation

Actions:

- Create a non-partisan civic education initiative that provides engaging ways for people of all ages to learn and participate in the democratic process
- Expand information literacy programming to include adults
- Host regular community conversations
- Provide opportunities for officials to engage with community members
- Increase technological capabilities to produce local civics podcast and videos
- Continually update staff training to accommodate the ever-changing landscape of misinformation/disinformation

Impact:

- Community will be more civically engaged
- People will be able to spot and will avoid misinformation/disinformation
- Community will see the Library as an important player in the democratic process
- Community members will have opportunities to engage their political leaders

Indicators:

- Community feedback will indicate community's satisfaction with civics initiative
- The community will see higher voter turnout
- Attendance at community conversations will increase
- Social media engagements, podcast listens, and video views will reflect a highly engaged audience

The Library is committed to Stewardship and Advocacy

Our community knows that the Library is valued and will benefit from its services for years to come. The Bedford Public Library manages resources to ensure community members have services that are innovative, sustainable, and speak to the unique needs of the community. The Library partners with other libraries

Needs:

- Advocacy to increase awareness and support of the Library
- Facility that is safe and well maintained
- Funding that supports the vision, mission, and values of the Library
- Fiscal responsibility that inspires trust from our community

Actions:

- Advocate for the Library's position in the community and effectively share its impact with community members, local government, and organizations
- Utilize community partners and resources to expand service funding
- Use digital infrastructure to collect data and analytics for making strategic and budgetary decisions
- Explore emerging technologies to ensure Library operations are innovative and efficient
- Train staff to effectively use emerging technologies

Impact:

- Library will be able to sustain and expand resources and programming
- Community will have a better understanding of the Library's role in the community
- Community will benefit from expanded partnerships
- Library will be technologically competitive
- Community members will value library services and share positive experiences with others

Indicators:

- Library will maintain a positive cash balance that ensures funding for the future
- Library technology will be current and adequate to meet the needs of the organization and the community
- Marketing decisions will be based on digital marketing insights and analytics
- Staff will be trained and efficient in digital project management tools