



Strathcona County Library

Plan of Service 2021-2024

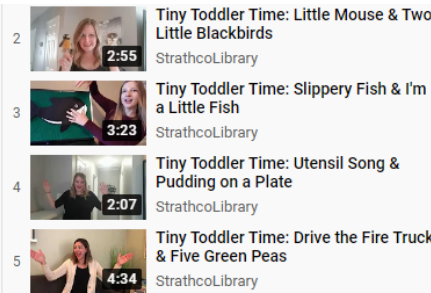
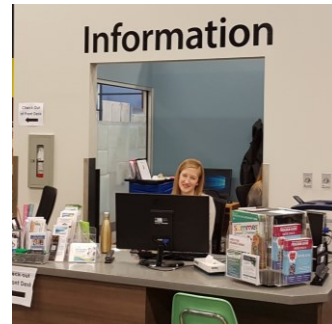
Process

Community Needs
Assessment

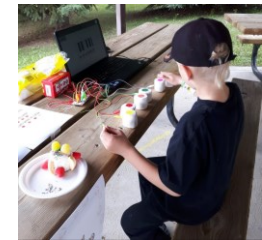
Staff Input

Board Input

A library can be many things to many people.



Why develop a strategic plan?

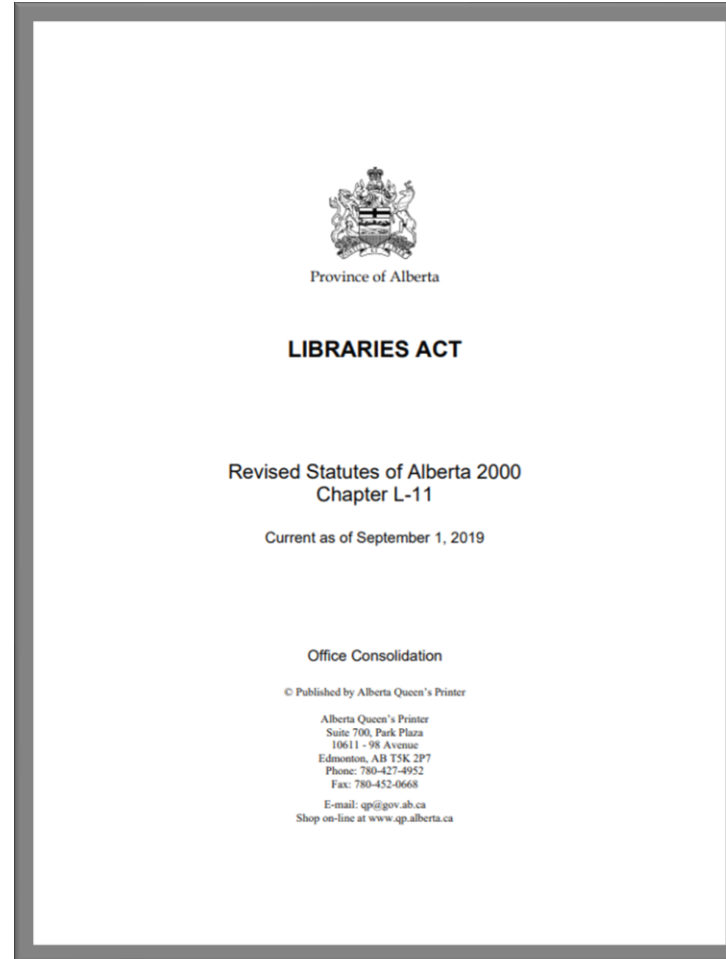


A strategic plan helps everyone to understand what the library intends to focus on for a specified period of time.

Library Legislation



Why a “Plan of Service”?



Every 3-5 years, Alberta public library boards must conduct a **Community Needs Assessment** to ensure their libraries are meeting current needs.

Libraries must develop a **Plan of Service** that outlines what public services will be provided to the community in response.

Plans must be submitted to Alberta Municipal Affairs in order for libraries to be eligible for provincial grants.

Our Library Organization



Imagine our library as a plant.



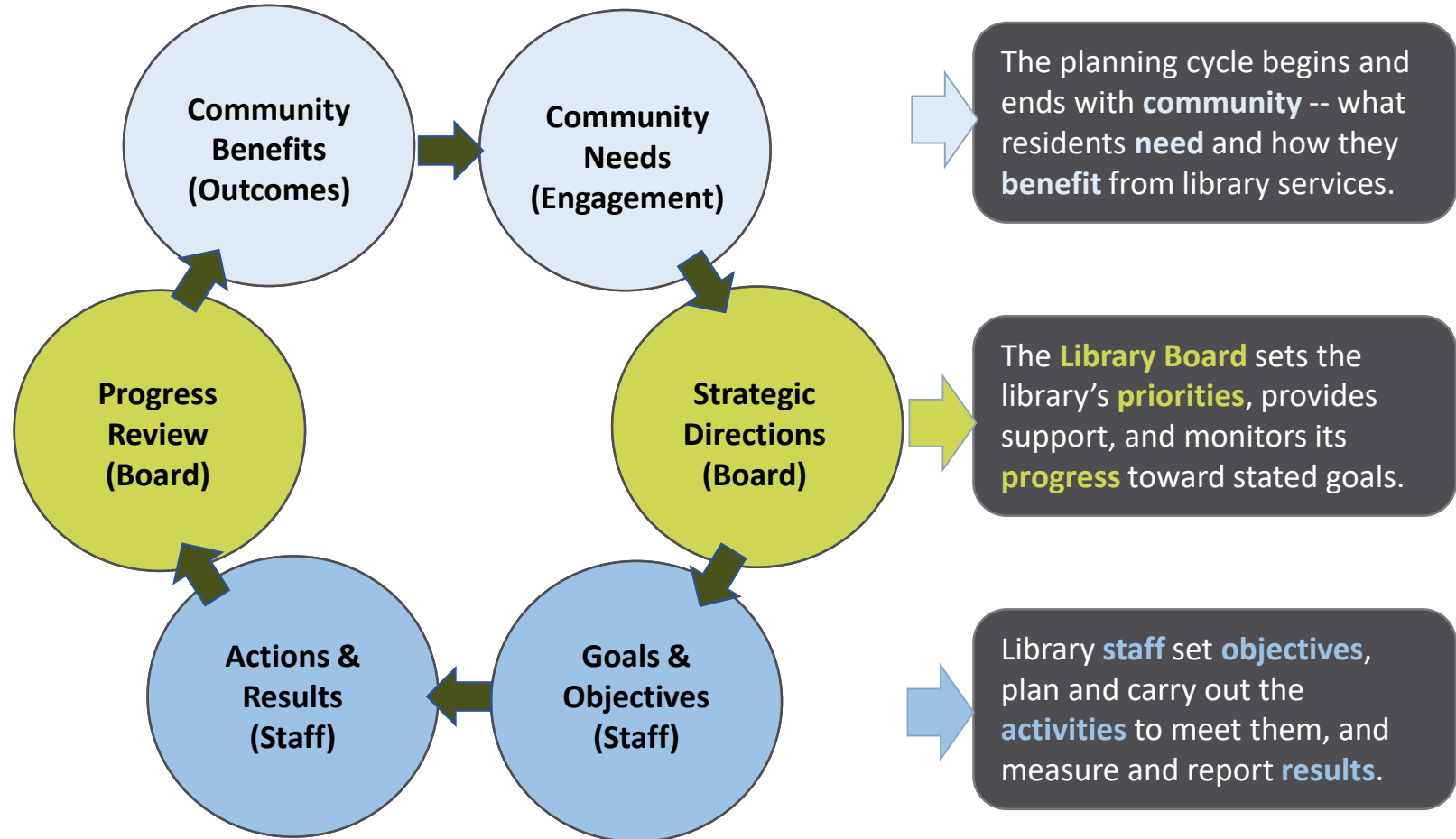
The flower is our public face. Each petal represents a **Focus Area** within our Plan of Service.

The Library Board ensures that the plant has strong roots, choosing **what** the library will focus on, guided by policies and legislation.

Staff work in the stem to support our plant, choosing **how** activities will happen, guided by plans and procedures.

Our plant is one of many in the community garden that collaborate to provide services. Having a **Plan of Service** helps us to see where our goals align.

Planning Roles



The strategic planning cycle.





Ten things to know...

Environmental Scan in 2020



Our library has strengths to build on

1. Plans of Service get results: in 2005, our needs assessment helped us to build our current library!
2. We are working closely with other County organizations toward community safety and wellbeing.
3. Our library has strong support from our community, municipality, and County Council.
4. We partner well with other key community agencies to pool resources and deliver better services.



There are opportunities awaiting us

5. With better tools on the market, we can provide even better digital service for our patrons.
6. Wherever the next County communities are built – bricks or digital – the library can be a part of them.
7. We know that there are many more community members who could benefit from library services.



We have challenges to address

8. Economic recovery will have deep impacts on our community and our services.
9. We have implemented several new online conveniences, and patrons will want them to continue.
10. COVID-19 and our increased reliance on digital platforms present us with different risks to manage.

In 2020, we expect that the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to have significant impact on our community for the next few years. We believe that a strategic plan that focuses on response to immediate and emerging community needs is the best choice for our library at this time.



Building a New Plan of Service Community Engagement

Staff

✓ Check in
with
community

Community Engagement: Projects 1 + 2

Project 1
Oct 2020 - Jan 2021

Research

Compiled needs from related public engagement projects from 2016 - 2020.

Assessed results to see where needs are already being addressed; where opportunities exist for the library.

Project 2
Oct 2020 - Jan 2021

Stakeholder Interviews

Cross-checked initial list of 83 stakeholders against Research Project organizations.

Interviewed 17 key library partners about their needs and needs of their clients and partners.

Results: Key Categories Identified

| NEED CATEGORY | SPECIFIC NEED EXAMPLE |
|--|---|
| 1. Mental Health Challenges | Better support for mental health, increased access and awareness of existing services. |
| 2. Financial Challenges | Affordable housing; support for struggling seniors, families, job-seekers. |
| 3. Educational Challenges | Students are struggling with reading, social development skills, online learning skills, access to study spaces, affordable educational resources. |
| 4. Technology Access and Digital Literacy | Access to reliable/affordable high-speed internet access, devices, and help to build digital literacy skills. |
| 5. Diversity and Inclusion | Support for and celebration of diversity based on: age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, race, religion, socio-economic status. |
| 6. Public Spaces | When restrictions ease, more residents will likely be looking for spaces to work, attend school remotely, connect with mental health or financial service providers, or just to connect with others outside of their homes. |
| 7. Recreation | Activities that spark joy, creativity, and fun – many people are missing these. |



Community Needs Assessment Process

Community Engagement: Project 3

Project 3 Dec 2020 - Feb 2021

Surveys

Worked with County Communications on surveys for the Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel (SCOOP):

- Profile: to capture data about respondents (library use, frequency, location, etc.)
- Needs ranking question as part of February Mixed Topic Survey.
- Ran additional versions of the needs ranking survey for the public, from the library's website, and for staff.

SURVEY QUESTION

Strathcona County Library is reviewing community needs that it can address over the next two years.

The list below represents some broad areas of need and an example of some actions the library could take within each category.

Please rank the list in the order of priority that you believe the library should address them, with 1 being the highest priority and 7 being the lowest priority.

532 SCOOP panelists answered the library's survey question.

About SCOOP Survey Participants

AGE OF RESPONDENTS

| | |
|-----|-------|
| 33% | 65+ |
| 21% | 55-64 |
| 19% | 45-54 |
| 18% | 35-44 |
| 08% | 25-34 |
| 01% | 15-24 |

- 68% urban, 31% rural
- 57% female, 43% male
- 1% work, but do not live in the County

900+ SCOOP panelists filled in a library profile.

32 residents responded to the survey from the library's website.

33 responded to the staff version of the survey.



Community Needs Assessment Data



Building a New Plan of Service Strategic Directions

Board

✓ Set
strategic
directions

Community Engagement: Survey Results

| Staff Survey | SCOOP Survey | Website Survey |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Technology Access & Digital Literacy | 1. Educational Challenges | 1. Educational Challenges |
| 2. Financial Challenges | 2. Mental Health | 2. Mental Health |
| 3. Educational Challenges | 3. Financial Challenges | 3. Technology Access & Digital Literacy |
| 4. Mental Health | 4. Technology Access & Digital Literacy | 4. Financial Challenges |
| 5. Diversity and Inclusion | 5. Public Spaces | 5. Public Spaces |
| 6. Public Spaces | 6. Recreation | 6. Recreation |
| 7. Recreation | 7. Diversity and Inclusion | 7. Diversity and Inclusion |

Staff and Public Comments

- 70% of staff and 87% of public respondents felt no key need categories were missed.
- Suggested categories fit well within the library's core values of equitable access and collaboration.

At the Board Retreat, members discussed survey results and stakeholder feedback, then filled out the needs ranking survey themselves.

| Board Survey |
|---|
| 1. Educational Challenges |
| 2. Mental Health |
| 3. Technology Access & Digital Literacy |
| 4. Financial Challenges |
| 5. Diversity and Inclusion |
| 6. Public Spaces |
| 7. Recreation |

Library Board Comments

- SCL must continue to collaborate with partners to address the impact of the pandemic.
- Cost-effectiveness of library services are important, especially for those experiencing financial hardship.
- Important to reach all sectors of the County's population, including newcomers, as part of work on diversity and inclusion.

Community Needs Assessment Results



SCL's New Strategic Directions

Based on the results of the three Community Needs Assessment projects, the Library Board has chosen the following three focus areas for the library's new Plan of Service.

1. Support for Education and Lifelong Learning

2. Support for Technology Access and Digital Literacy

3. Support for Community Connection and Engagement



These priorities are what will direct our activities and resources for the duration of the plan.



**Plan of
Service
2021-2024**



Plan of Service 2021-2024

Exploring Direction 1

1. Support for Education and Lifelong Learning

Why chosen as a focus area?

- Addresses needs from across many segments of the County's population.
- Builds on library strengths (successful programs, services and partnerships).

Key activities and audiences

- Early literacy: preschoolers and caregivers
- K-12 learning: students, homeschoolers
- Self-directed learning (retraining, skill-building): job seekers, retirees.

NOTE: Board does not consider post-secondary students to be of high priority for this plan because they have post-secondary libraries and other options to help meet their specific needs.

Possible
Goal
Areas

Support early learning and literacy (preschoolers and caregivers)

Support K-12 learning (including homeschoolers)

Support self-directed and/or informal learning for adults (especially job seekers, retirees)



Plan of Service 2021-2024

Exploring Direction 2

2. Support for Technology Access and Digital Literacy

Why chosen as a focus area?

- Addresses needs from across many segments of the County's population.
- Builds on library strengths (free access to internet, computers, strong digital collections, successful digital literacy programs and training).
- Library is uniquely positioned to offer these services and to do so without charging fees.

Key activities and audiences

- Access to internet and devices: seniors, adults, K-12 students, rural residents, preschoolers.
- Access to digital resources: all.
- Support for digital literacy: all.

Possible
Goal
Areas

Support access to **technology** (internet and digital devices)

Support access to **digital resources** (free and paid content)

Support **digital literacy** (digital and information fluency skill development)



Plan of Service 2021-2024

Exploring Direction 3

3. Support for Community Connection and Engagement

Why chosen as a focus area?

- Addresses a variety of pandemic-related community needs, from financial support to wellbeing.
- Builds on library strength as a connector for residents to community and other resources, services and people.

Key activities and audiences

- Create opportunities for connection to community and needed resources.
- Ensure diverse populations can see themselves in library materials and programs: seniors, youth, newcomers.
- Support residents in all of their diversity.

Possible
Goal
Areas

Connect residents to community services and resources (to address health, finance, employment, recreational needs)

Provide opportunities for connection and engagement (via programs, services)

Support diversity and inclusion (equitable access for all, reach out to different audiences).



Building the Plan of Service: Goals & Objectives

Staff

- ✓ Develop goals and objectives



Strategic Directions

Staff Input

Staff were surveyed for feedback on the new strategic directions and for input for the Management Team to use when developing goals and objectives.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Do you feel that the three focus areas chosen are reasonable?
- Do you feel that the key activities and audiences for support within each area are reasonable?

WITHIN EACH FOCUS AREA

- What are we doing well (that we should continue)?
- What new ideas or activities can we explore (that we could start)?
- What are we not doing well, or don't need to be doing (that we could stop)?
- Do you have a bold idea or other comments to share?

CAPACITY

Staff were asked to self-assess their capacity, by indicating whether or not they felt they could complete all of their assigned tasks within a typical work week. They were also asked about what factors were impacting capacity.

Staff Input Results



Strategic Directions

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

37 responded to the survey

Of respondents to questions about strategic directions...

- 100% agreed with the three strategic focus areas.
- 100% agreed with the key activities and audiences for support.

WITHIN EACH FOCUS AREA

- Noted challenges (e.g. tight timelines, need to collaborate and not duplicate efforts).
- Proposed different service planning and delivery models.
- Identified new partners, audiences and techniques for collaborating and reaching out.
- Suggested areas for training and development.

CAPACITY

- Most were split between ability to complete weekly tasks and ability to take on more.
- 14% struggling to complete weekly tasks
- Some were too busy to respond to the survey.

TOP AFFECTING FACTORS

- Need to balance work with health, financial, COVID-related, other life issues.
- Impact of repeated library openings and closures.



Goals & Objectives

Definitions

Managers worked with these definitions to develop goals and objectives.

GOALS

Broad statements of intent that outline how you will fulfill your purpose and reach your vision.

Describe the core areas for action that you will undertake to close the gap between where you are now and your vision.



OBJECTIVES

Directions (not methods) for actions you will pursue to achieve your goals.

Clear, accountable, responsive to opportunities and challenges.

Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART).



ACTIONS

Activities and methods you will use to achieve your stated objectives and desired outcomes.

Key Principles, Challenges and Definitions

Managers identified key principles and challenges for the library while developing goals and objectives, and some key phrases for definition.

PRINCIPLES

Equitable access is a key value for SCL that, along with diversity and inclusion, are priorities within all goal areas and whenever developing library services.

SCL is committed to using co-creation, or collaborative planning and delivery along with the community for whom services are intended, whenever possible.

SCL must be mindful of its capacity to address the considerable needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and will use its new Plan of Service to guide decision-making.

INITIATIVES

Temporary projects with a defined scope, timeframe and end product. Details (programs, services, collections, audiences) to be specified when actions are developed.

CHALLENGES

Stakeholders are busy and their needs are fluid so we will have to keep checking in with them.

We know there are more community members who could use our help— reaching out to new audiences means trying new methods for service planning and delivery.

To help patrons with their digital skills we need to ensure that we keep up with our own digital skill development and training.

To measure the impact of library services we need methods that are simple and convenient for our stakeholders.

EXPLORE

Assessment of interests, preferences, availability of partners or resources, capacity, impact, etc. Tools to be developed or refined to help staff make and explain their decisions.



Goals & Objectives



Plan of Service Goals

Goals

Based on staff input, the Management Team developed one goal within each of the focus areas chosen by the Library Board for the Plan of Service 2021-2023.

1. Support for Education and Lifelong Learning

Residents will have opportunities for learning and support to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.

2. Support for Technology Access and Digital Literacy

Residents will have access to technology and opportunities to develop their information fluency and digital literacy skills so they can participate with confidence in digital environments.

3. Support for Community Connection and Engagement

Residents will have opportunities to connect with each other and local resources to increase their awareness and/or use of community resources and feel engaged in the community.



Staff

- ✓ Develop goals and objectives

Plan of Service Goals & Objectives Progress Report

Plan of Service Update: 2021-2024

At the March 4, 2023, SCL Board/Management Team Strategic Planning Retreat, it was recognized that:

- When this plan was developed in 2020, much of the library's capacity was taken up by pandemic measures.
- Objectives were written with cautious targets, using minimum requirements.
- Progress has been made within each goal area, but the library has more work ahead within some areas to address pockets of unmet or emergent community needs.

SCL's Library Board

- Reviewed and documented progress on Plan of Service objectives.
- Discussed whether or not objectives were completed, and whether or not they remained a priority for the community.
- Considered adding new or amending existing objectives.
- Identified areas where the library should focus attention, within existing objectives, to meet community needs in 2024.
- Concluded:
Given that recent Strathcona County community engagements confirm that the needs identified by the library during its 2020 community needs assessment are still important in the community, and that there are areas where important work still needs to be done within the library's current Plan of Service framework, the current Plan of Service should be updated to cover the period of 2021 to 2024.



Plan of Service Update



Progress on Plan of Service Objectives

Goal 1 Objectives

Support for Education and Lifelong Learning

Residents of all ages will have opportunities for learning and support to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Obj 1.1 By the end of 2024: SCL will explore a minimum of three new approaches to early and emergent literacy to reach and support children to enjoy the benefits of reading and learning throughout their lives.

Obj 1.2 By the end of 2024: SCL will consult with K-12 stakeholders and develop a minimum of three initiatives, in keeping with SCL's vision and mission, to support K-12 learning.

Obj 1.3 By the end of 2024: SCL will provide a minimum of three initiatives that support opportunities for lifelong learners.

Obj 1.4 By the end of 2024: SCL will undertake a minimum of three initiatives designed to broaden its collection of resources and materials to support curiosity, diversity and learning.

Obj 1.5 For the duration of this plan: 80% of library stakeholders (patrons, parents, partners) surveyed or interviewed will indicate that the library's programs or services in this goal area met their needs and had a positive impact in their lives.



Progress on Plan of Service Objectives

Goal 2 Objectives

Support for Technology Access and Digital Literacy

Residents will have access to technology and opportunities to develop their information fluency and digital literacy skills so they can participate with confidence in digital environments.

Obj 2.1 By the end of 2024: SCL will have a minimum of three initiatives in place to respond to the digital literacy skills, needs and priorities of patrons.

Obj 2.2 By the end of 2021: SCL will assess current outreach activities with respect to technological devices and identify concrete steps on how to move forward.

Obj 2.3 By the end of 2022: SCL will implement a staff development strategy to enhance the technological skills of library staff so they can support digital literacy skill development and services for patrons.

Obj 2.4 By the end of 2022: SCL will be an active stakeholder, in keeping with its mission and vision, in the County's Community Broadband Project and other efforts toward equitable access to high speed internet, wireless services and bandwidth for residents.

Obj 2.5 For the duration of this plan: 80% of library stakeholders (patrons, parents, partners) surveyed or interviewed will indicate that the library's programs or services in this goal area met their needs and had a positive impact in their lives.



Progress on Plan of Service Objectives

Goal 3 Objectives

Support for Community Connection and Engagement

Residents will have opportunities to connect with each other and local resources to increase their awareness and/or use of community resources and feel engaged in the community.

Obj 3.1 By the end of 2022: SCL will assess its current activity to provide job seekers with resources, connect them to community employment services and identify concrete steps on how to move forward.

Obj 3.2 By the end of 2024: SCL will undertake a minimum of three initiatives to build its knowledge of and relationships with other community groups to ensure it can act as a hub for community information and resources.

Obj 3.3 By the end of 2024: SCL will identify specific target audience priorities and pilot test at least three approaches for community outreach to connect these target audiences to the library and its services.

Obj 3.4 By the end of 2024: SCL will create at least five opportunities for residents to participate in community dialogue and connection.

Obj 3.5 For the duration of this plan: 80% of library stakeholders (patrons, parents, partners) surveyed or interviewed will indicate that the library's programs or services in this goal area met their needs and had a positive impact in their lives.



Mission and Vision 2021-2024

SCL's Mission and Vision

SCL's Library Board reviewed the library's mission and vision through a mix of surveys and discussions, and approved the following for its current Plan of Service.

Mission

Reaching out across urban and rural Strathcona County, the library enriches lives, promotes community engagement, sparks imagination, and empowers residents to build skills and knowledge.

Vision

The heart of a connected, informed, and inspired community.

Note: In March 2023, SCL's Board approved this updated Plan of Service 2021-2024.

A top-down view of a desk with a spiral notebook, a pen, and a small potted plant. The notebook is open, and the word "Questions?" is written on the left page. A dark green box is overlaid on the right page, containing contact information for Sharon Siga, CEO of Strathcona County Library. The background is a light-colored wooden surface.

Questions?

Sharon Siga, CEO
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*Thanks to [@biancoblue](#) for
freepik desktop image

