



**SECURING A SUCCESSFUL AND SECURE FUTURE FOR
THE CAMDEN COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM**

Prepared by
The Ivy Group, Ltd.
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**STRATEGIC PLAN
CAMDEN COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
2006-2009**

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VISION STATEMENT

The Camden County Library System Ten-Year Vision:

We are the Camden County Library System, your gateway to the world. With you, we create bridges that begin in Camden County and led to the destination of your choice. Building on our proud heritage, we use technology to extend beyond our walls.

We exist to bring people ideas, and opportunities together in many resourceful ways. We promote continuous improvement in Camden County by fostering community growth and cooperation. We measure our success by your success.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Camden County Library System Three- Year Mission:

We meet the learning, recreational and informational needs of our customers, providing an open environment for our community.



BACKGROUND AND SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Camden County Library System has an eighty-five year tradition of providing public library services in Camden County. Today, the library is supported by two-thirds of the communities in Camden County and, despite its name-- serves only 48% of all residents in the County. At the present time, the CCLS operates six branches in Bellmawr, Gloucester, Haddon Township, Merchantville, Voorhees, and Winslow.

The CCLS developed its last strategic plan in 1996. In 2004, the system contracted with Dubberly Garcia Associates, Inc. to develop a Facilities Master Plan for 2004-2014. In 2004, CCLS selected The Ivy Group to conduct a telephone survey of households within its service area. In 2004, Human Resources conducted a Quality of Work Life Survey among the System's 240 employees. The results of these studies have provided background and a framework for the development of the 2006-2209 Strategic Plan.

In 2005, a budget crisis confronted the Camden County, and the CCLS was asked to reduce its operating annual budget by more than a million dollars. A compromise was reached, and the System ultimately cut approximately \$750,000 from its budget. The reduced unanticipated reduction in funding resulted in several significant changes including:

- A hiring freeze which has reduced the staff by 7%
- A separation plan that follows the Camden County model and makes it possible for staff with substantial years of service to leave the library system permanently with the option of pursuing other professional interests
- Reduction in the operating budget of 5%
- Adoption of a flat budget for the purchase of materials

Because of ongoing concerns regarding future financial support, the Planning Team reached the decision that it could not develop a strategic plan that was contingent on restored funding or higher staffing levels. The team was in agreement that it would be very difficult to implement a plan that called for increasing circulation, launching new outreach programs, or adding new collections or formats.

Instead, the team chose to focus on a new strategic direction that responds to the findings of the 2004 Community Assessment and telephone survey and highlights the critical importance of increasing CCLS'S internal capacity to address issues and needs that will have far-reaching implications on the future strength and success of the Camden County Library System. The 2006-2009 Strategic Plan addresses the following critical needs identified during the planning process including:

- Staff Training and Development
- Diversified Funding
- Satisfying Customer Expectations for Reliable Technology
- Branding and Marketing the Camden County Library System
- Public and Private Sector Partnerships and Collaboration
- Development and Expansion of the Camden County Library System



GUIDELINES FOR DECISION MAKING

In order to objectively evaluate the relative importance and viability of possible new strategic initiatives, the Planning Team adopted the following guidelines that it used to establish priorities:

- Does the initiative support the mission, vision/goals/customer service philosophy of the library?
- Does the initiative fall within the charge of this team/roundtable/Committee?
- Does the initiative improve customer service? Do the benefits outweigh the drawbacks for the staff and customers?
- Do we have the resources to make this happen when considering staff, time, and budget?
- Can the CCLS sustain the initiative?
- Will the initiative help brand CCLS?
- Does the initiative support cultural diversity?



THE PLANNING PROCESS

In March 2005, The Camden County Library System contracted with The Ivy Group to plan and implement a strategic planning process. In April, fourteen employees were asked to participate in developing the new strategic plan. Members of the Planning Team include:

Nasreen Ahmed
Karen Avenick
Christina Bates
Kristyn Beatty
Bill Brahms
Linda Devlin
Jennifer Druce

Dave Eckert
Chris Entwisle
Diana Joniec
Janice Masud-Paul
Laura Porter
Claudia Sumler
Awilda Velez

The Planning Team wishes to also thank Helen Elliott for her assistance in coordinating the meetings of the Planning Team and preparing and distributing minutes of our meetings.

A variety of techniques were used to gather input for the plan. These include:

- Reviewing previous strategic planning documents;
- Analyzing the 2000 Census for Camden County;
- Reviewing the results of 2004 Telephone Survey;
- Planning Meeting-April 1
- Meeting with the Staff Empowerment Team-May 11
- Site visits and meetings with the staff at all branch locations-May 17 & 18
- Meeting with Administrative Team-May 16;
- Planning Team Retreat—July 14
- Independent ranking of initiatives by committee members—Week Nov. 7
- Planning Team Meeting—November 14
- Team Meeting—December 16
- Final Draft of Plan Submitted for Team Review



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ONE:

Supplement the funding provided by Camden County by exploring and cultivating new opportunities for diversified revenue generation:

Camden County Library System Responses:

Year One:

- Look at best practices of similar library systems that have successfully supplemented their annual operating budget with incremental revenues for special projects;
- Include the need for a development officer, who would be responsible for corporate underwriting, grants, major gifts, annual giving programs, and special fundraising events, in change management discussions. Review options for achieving this, including budgeting for a new position, outsourcing, or reallocating existing staff resources;
- Contract with a consultant who specializes in fundraising to conduct a feasibility study;
- Explore the possibility of applying for 501 C-3 status and developing a CCLS Foundation;
- Build on annual fund raising drive developed by Voorhees and replicate it at other branches.

Years Two and Three:

- If the feasibility study indicates that there are significant opportunities for generating incremental income, hire an experienced development officer who would be responsible for corporate underwriting, grants, major gifts, annual giving programs, and special fundraising events;
- Develop a plan for the Development Office which integrates the preliminary work of current staff members;
- Strengthen Friends Groups by creating an umbrella group for the system the goals of which will be to promote cooperation among individual Friends Groups, provide advocacy training; and support the work of the Development Office;
- Market promotional items such as t-shirts that will generate small-scale income but also promote the brand;
- Enhance the CCLS website so that library users can make contributions online at any time.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE TWO:

Increase the visibility of and use of services available from the CCLS by implementing a coordinated, consistent branding, marketing and public relations program:

Camden County Library System Responses:

Year One:

- Include the need for a marketing director in change management discussions. Review options for achieving this, including contracting the work out, finding someone on staff, or hiring new staff;
- In looking at how CCLS will be organized in the future, consider the possibility of refocusing the efforts of the Director of Public Relations and Public Information to projects and activities that benefit the entire system;
- Build a case for the need for enhanced marketing with the Library Commission, the staff, and the general public;
- Continue to explore the possibility of changing the name of CCLS in order to reduce customer confusion and frustration;
- Meet with the county deputy director responsible for branding and marketing Camden County to gather information about future campaigns and programs the county may conduct;
- Evaluate the branding and marketing plan for Camden County to determine how CCLS would benefit from supporting the County plan when considering style, positioning, etc;
- Create a strategic marketing communications and public relations plan for CCLS that reinforces the brand for the entire system while allowing for customization at branch locations;
- Evaluate the effectiveness and appeal of the current website and develop a plan for upgrading it. Aggressively promote the website to increase use;
- Create an online archive and style manual that ensures consistent use of all brand elements and enables individual branches to efficiently produce marketing and public relations materials to meet their day-to-day needs;
- Develop an ongoing program of advocacy and stewardship that targets elected officials and other county leaders.



Years Two and Three:

- Develop marketing communications materials to support the development office;
- Provide front line staff with marketing training;
- Intensify efforts to increase the use of all electronic resources in order to achieve a favorable return on investment and increase usage without generating additional work for staff;
- Make core-marketing communications available in other languages.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE THREE:

Expand the visibility and awareness of CCLS and maximize resources by forging partnerships and collaborations with community organizations and other government agencies:

Camden County Library System Responses

Year One:

- Include in the change management discussions the need for an outreach coordinator. Review options for achieving this, including budgeting for a new position, outsourcing, or reallocating existing staff resources;
- Cultivate collaboration and partnerships within CCLS to avoid duplicating efforts and to increase productivity—i.e. develop and pilot test adult or children’s programs at one location, fine tune them, and then replicate them at other branches;
- Establish guidelines and standardize procedures for entering into partnership agreements and evaluating their effectiveness: (marketing, sharing of costs and revenues, etc.);
- Research partnership opportunities with county departments and agencies, and high profile, highly respected organizations/initiate discussions with organizations that help support the mission, reach target audiences and expand diversity, promote sense of community, etc.);
- Pursue partnership opportunities identified during the interviews with county leaders.

Years Two and Three:

- Research best practices for school and public library collaboration and contact library systems that have been successful to identify critical components that led to mutually beneficial collaborations;
- Facilitate a meeting with school administrators and CCLS administration to explore the benefits of developing a plan for school and library partnerships that sets forth goals and objectives, responsibilities and project evaluation;
- Create a plan for developing partnerships with other county departments.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE FOUR:

Develop strategies that make it possible for CCLS to meet the expectations of county residents with regard to technology, provide staff with adequate technical support, and foster the use of technology to work smarter:

Camden County Library System Responses:

Year One:

- Hire a consultant to develop a technology plan for CCLS that will support both CCLS'S long range and master facilities plans;
- Integrate the recommendations of the technology plan into change management training and budget preparation;
- Increase the capacity of the system to troubleshoot problems that occur in branches by training designated staff to manage situations that do not require intervention of IT personnel;
- Provide training opportunities for staff to remain current in using new technology and databases;
- Proactively identify new technologies to evaluate their appropriateness for CCLS;
- Upgrade, brand and market the CCLS website/make it “your homepage” that visitors want to come back to often. Review options for website work, including outsourcing and reallocation of staff resources. Begin web work as budget and staffing permit;
- Maximize the effectiveness of the website through the use of e-commerce and continuous updating of content of interest that is “pushed out” to library users;
- Maximizing use of the website for functions such as placing reserves, registering for programs, reserving meeting rooms and cross- marketing other programs and services;
- Integrate all brand elements into the design of the website;
- Up-grade the phone system by automating the system at Voorhees; directing callers to the CCLS website address, and adding an answering capability that provides information about hours and directions to locations;
- Consider the introduction of new technologies for staff to meet and share work—i.e. conference calls, online training, Microsoft chat, etc.—without traveling to other branches.



Years Two and Three:

- Continue with website and technology enhancements and promotion as allocated in budget;
- Identify partnership opportunities to share technology with other organizations and agencies Options –meet with County Tech person in course of development of technology plan;
- Create links to main sites of interest to library users and corporate sites - e.g., link to Amazon, a person’s customized default log-in page (weather movie listings, etc.);
- Consider soliciting the support of a corporation to underwrite the costs of developing a DVD tour about CCLS;
- Explore ways to fund interactive kiosks which make it possible to provide timely, accurate information that is by a webmaster and customized for each location;
- Explore potential of introducing “social technology” such as instant messaging, blogging, Wikipedia, digital conversion etc..

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE FIVE:

Maximize staff resources and enhance the ability of CCLS to train, recruit, and retain high quality staff.

Camden County Library System Responses:

Year One:

- Assign responsibility for staff training at the administrative level;
- Consult with other county departments to learn about their training programs and needs and then determine if CCLS can take advantage of their training capabilities or develop training around common needs such as cultural diversity and customer service and “sell” CCLS training to them;
- Research existing training packages that CCLS could purchase (possibly in conjunction with other county departments) rather than developing the programs internally;
- Standardize and formalize training goals and protocols;
- Develop a training program and plan for new employee orientation, on-going training or current employees, and customized training designed to retain “rising stars”;
- Analyze data and use it to allocate adequate staffing where the work justifies it;
- Re-examine models in which some staff float and are not tied to one desk or department;
- Cross train all staff from the time they begin orientation;
- Identify technology (self check out, self registration etc.) that will free up staff to do value-added work such as programming and outreach. Include plans in following year’s budget request.



Year Two:

- Integrate training goals with performance appraisals;
- Conduct a succession planning audit to project future recruitment and leadership needs;
- Make continuing education, leadership training, mentoring, job shadowing and other professional development activities available to employees identified as having the greatest potential;
- Begin to implement technology changes (self check out, self registration, etc.) identified in budget and continue to explore ways to use it to streamline work flow;
- Conduct an inventory and make better use of unique strengths and skills of staff;
- Develop training that will support staff empowerment. Training will instill philosophy of empowerment in staff at all levels and will help managers learn to support the decisions that are made by their staff;
- Continue to work on an employee recognition program that will be supported by the staff;
- Include in the marketing plan a CCLS recruitment package that can be distributed to prospective employees.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE SIX:

Continuously leverage opportunities to strengthen the Camden County Library System and enhance the quality of public library services available to County residents:

- Integrate goals of 2006-2009 Change Management process;
- Selectively open dialogues with independent public libraries in Camden County which might benefit from being a member of the CCLS;
- Solicit opportunities to review and implement the recommendations of the Master Facilities Plan that call for the construction of new branch locations to extend library services into un-served areas.

