



Stronger Together: A Community-Driven Future

Madera County Library

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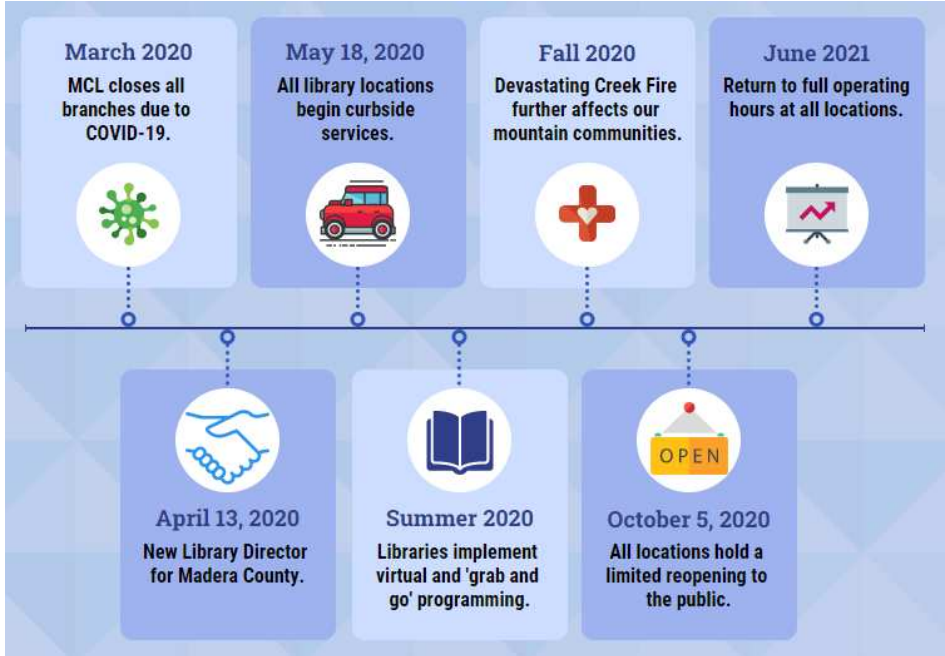
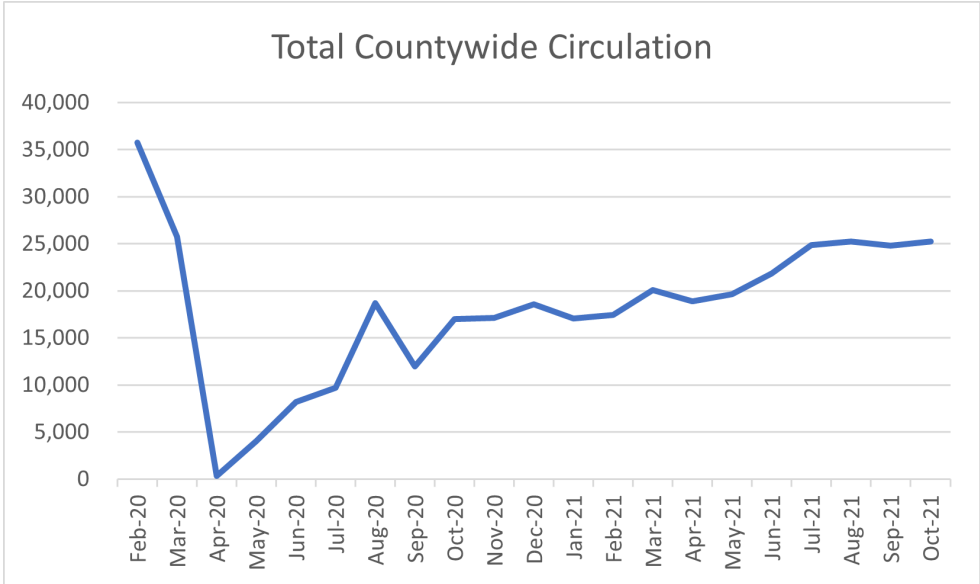
REBOUNDING FROM THE PANDEMIC

Krista Riggs, Library Director

Madera County Library (MCL) staff have done a remarkable job adapting to many unexpected challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic at all five locations. All locations closed to the public in March 2020 which stopped circulation of materials countywide. When I joined Madera County as the Library Director in April 2020, my priority was to bring staff back to work and resume library services in the safest way possible. After gaining input from our staff, administration, and Department of Public Health, all locations started contactless curbside service in May 2020. Our online resources also always remained available. Staff showed further courage and adaptability by moving the annual Summer Reading Program and other activities to virtual and 'grab and go' formats. Unfortunately, September 2020 brought the devastating Creek Fire to our mountain areas, further affecting library services as we prioritized the safety of our staff and communities. A month later, in October 2020, MCL reopened all locations with limited hours and reduced capacity. We returned to our regular operating hours in June 2021 at all five locations.

While our libraries have only been back to full open hours for about five months, our circulation numbers have shown a steady climb through curbside, limited, and full services. Throughout the pandemic our libraries have proven to be vital resources in the communities

we serve. After hitting 'rock bottom' in circulation numbers when buildings closed in Spring 2020, plus another dip from the Creek Fire in September 2020, total countywide circulation (check-in and check-out of materials at all locations) has rebounded to pre-closure levels and is steadily climbing back to pre-pandemic numbers.



This level of rebound would not have been possible without the courage, hard work, and diligence to safety of our staff, and the loyal patronage of our communities. We look forward to seeing this upward trend continue throughout the next few years as we grow as an organization and as a community. Our new strategic plan will strengthen Madera County Library through a renewed sense of purpose, vision, and values for the future. The plan is community-driven with the mission statement and focus areas arising as recurring themes from community input. Voices were captured from facilitated conversations with staff, Friends of the Library groups, and via public surveys in English and Spanish. What follows is a community-driven plan for a strong future.

MCL's Nicole Martinez assists a patron with curbside service:



NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Community conversations and surveys provided valuable input on what MCL's staff, Friends of the Library groups, and residents see as organizational strengths, areas for growth, and community aspirations. Many unique and diverse communities comprise Madera County, with equally unique and diverse needs. Conversations uncovered local needs, but also recurring themes that spanned the vast geography we serve.

During each conversation and on the surveys, we asked questions based on practices of the Harwood Institute of Public Knowledge to assess community need:

- What are your hopes for the community?
- What obstacles prevent us from reaching these hopes?
- What needs to change to reach these hopes?
- How can the Library help?

Assessments for each of the five communities with library locations can be found in the appendix. Recurring aspirations heard throughout the County include hopes for:

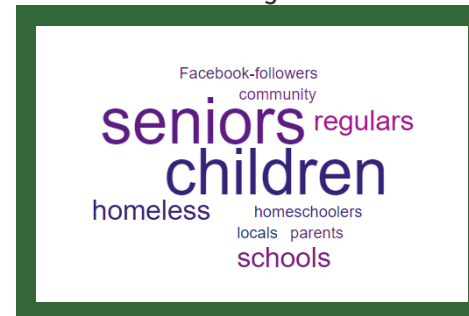
- Safe places/ activities for teens.
- Access to transportation.
- Awareness/ access to social services.
- Community meeting place.
- Community calendar.
- Local jobs and small businesses.
- Welcoming and inclusive communities.
- Engaged and involved communities.

In addition, each conversation or survey asked four questions to assess what the community perceives as our organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis):

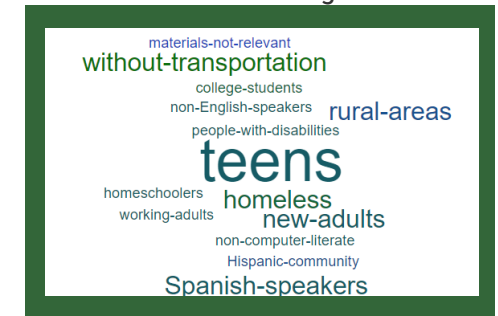
- Who are we reaching well?
- Who are we not reaching well?
- What do we do well?
- What can we do better?

Recurring answers to these questions Countywide form the following word clouds, with the size of the word representing the frequency of recurrence across conversations/ surveys:

Who are we reaching well?



Who are we not reaching well?



What do we do well?



What can we do better?



A final question asked in each conversation or survey with staff and the community is "What is the purpose of the Library in the community?" Recurring key words highlight what our communities and staff value as priorities for our public spaces, public service, and the organization as a whole:

What is the purpose of the Library?



FINDING OUR "WHY"

From recurring words and phrases answered to the question "What is the purpose of the Library in the community," MCL formulated the two parts of a mission statement: what we do and how we do it. These two parts equal our "why," or shared sense of purpose. Why each of our staff comes to work every day and finds fulfillment in serving the public.



Madera County Library strengthens communities by providing a place for everyone to connect, learn, and grow. = Mission Statement/ Shared Purpose

A SHARED VISION

To accompany this new sense of collective purpose in our mission statement, MCL also needed a new vision statement, or sense of what success will look like in a few years after implementing the strategic plan. Staff suggested vision statements via an anonymous online survey, and keywords were extracted in a word cloud based on frequency of recurrence:

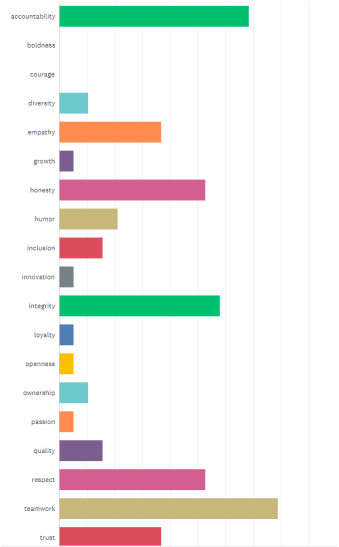


From these recurring keywords from staff-generated suggestions, we devised five possible vision statements. Staff voted on their favorite picture of success in the future:

The Library at the center of a thriving and connected community.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

Organizational values are the guideposts that keep us 'in our lanes' as we pursue a shared sense of purpose and vision. Collective values influence how team members interact with each other and the public, and the overall culture and work environment in our libraries. Emphasizing organizational values and asking related questions in interviews can also help us bring new staff on board that will be a good fit for the team based on shared priorities and expectations.

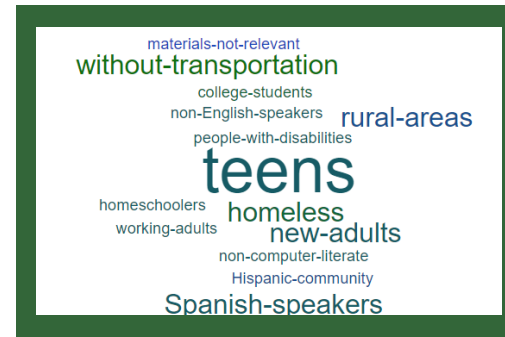


Library staff voted anonymously on what they value most from a list of possible choices, and the top five to rise to the top were: honesty, integrity, accountability, respect, and teamwork. A slight tweak of 'integrity' into 'ethics' results in a nice, memorable acronym. Madera County Library has HEART.



From the SWOT analysis mentioned on page 4, community input informs us that MCL isn't reaching teens and young/ new adults as well as other age groups. Other populations that recurred often throughout conversations and surveys as not being reached as well include people in our rural/ unincorporated areas, people lacking the transportation to get to a library, Spanish-speaking communities, and people experiencing homelessness (the larger the font size, the more often the word recurred in conversations or on surveys). Outreach, accessibility, publicity, partnering with other community organizations, and the website all recurred as areas for improvement:

Who are we not reaching well?



What can we do better?



When added to the aspirations heard across all communities from page 4, additional areas to consider include a focus on welcoming spaces for community gathering, support for the local workforce and businesses, and increased awareness and access to social services and resources available in the community, and opportunities for community engagement. From these recurring themes in multiple conversations and survey responses, four key areas of priority for the next three years are increasing programs and services for **Teens and Young Adults**, increasing programs and services in **Rural and Spanish-Speaking Communities**, improving the library's **Website and Online Presence**, and creating space, support, and collaborations for library locations to be **Community Resource Hubs**. Objectives for each focus area and means to evaluate and assess progress are outlined on the following strategic plan.

FOCUS AREAS

Focus areas define what MCL will prioritize through strategic planning to optimize our organizational capacity, budget, and staffing while best meeting the needs of the communities we serve. Using community input via conversations and surveys, four key areas emerge to strategically focus on over the next few years.





STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

FOCUS AREAS



Teens and Young Adults



Rural and Spanish-Speaking Communities



Website/ Online Presence



Community Resource Hub

Objectives

1. Gather public knowledge from local teens and young adults via community conversations and surveys on what they would like to see in our libraries.
2. Increase staff training opportunities on teen programs and services to build internal confidence and understanding.
3. Increase the number of co-designed programs for teens and young adults at each location, working in partnership with community organizations.
4. Develop an assessment tool to gain feedback from teens and young adults on resources, programs, and services to guide future planning and decisions.

1. Continue gathering public knowledge on what rural and Spanish-speaking communities would like to see on the upcoming Bookmobile.
2. Build awareness of the new Bookmobile through marketing, promotion, and partnerships.
3. Implement and evaluate service on two new monthly Bookmobile routes.
4. Plan, implement, and evaluate at least two new programs quarterly in rural areas utilizing the new Programming Trailer.
5. Implement StoryWalks in at least three community spaces.
6. Develop an assessment tool to gain feedback on resources, programs, and services to guide future planning and decisions.

1. Gather public knowledge on why the community uses the website and what people want to see.
2. Gather usage statistics about what links and internal pages are most used.
3. Seek funding to collaborate with a website designer to create a framework for a virtual 'third space' that staff can maintain.
4. Develop an assessment tool to gain feedback from the community about usability and effectiveness of the new website.
5. Increase engagement and refine strategy on social media platforms.
6. Follow CIPA guidelines and outline online safety protocols.

1. Through the Community Connections grant, conduct a needs assessment of the cities and unincorporated areas within Madera County.
2. With grant funds, set up community resource hubs in each branch and hire community resource liaisons.
3. Through collaboration in the Building Healthy Families initiative, continue training all staff to raise awareness of the resources available from partner organizations in each community.
4. Develop an assessment tool to capture statistics and gain feedback on the Community Connections project to guide future planning and decisions.

MISSION

Madera County Library strengthens communities by providing a place for everyone to connect, learn, and grow.





VISION

The Library at the center of a thriving and connected community.

VALUES

Honesty
Ethics
Accountability
Respect
Teamwork

FOCUS AREAS, OBJECTIVES, AND SUCCESS INDICATORS

Strategic Focus Areas	Objectives	Success Indicators
 <p>Teens and Young Adults Increase programs and services for teens through community input, co-designing, and partnerships.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather public knowledge from local teens and young adults via community conversations, focus groups, and surveys on what they would like to see in our libraries. 2. Increase staff training opportunities on teen programs and services to build internal confidence and understanding. 3. Increase the number of co-designed programs for teens and young adults at each location, working in partnership with community organizations. 4. Develop an assessment tool to gain feedback from teens and young adults on resources, programs, and services to guide future planning and decisions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MCL will conduct at least one survey and at least five conversations or focus groups with teens to gather input during 2022. 2. MCL will seek grant funding and community support to plan and implement at least two new programs yearly between 2023 - 2025 that are co-created with and respond to local input from teens. 3. MCL will form new partnerships with at least two teen-serving community organizations during 2023. 4. MCL will use program evaluations or other means of assessment to gain feedback from teens, reflect, and modify new programs to maintain relevancy and keep the interest of local teens.
 <p>Rural and Spanish-Speaking Communities Increase resources, programs, and services in English and Spanish for rural, unincorporated communities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue gathering public knowledge on what rural and Spanish-speaking communities would like to see on the upcoming Bookmobile. 2. Build awareness of the new Bookmobile through marketing, promotion, and partnerships with other community organizations. 3. Implement and evaluate service on two new monthly Bookmobile routes. 4. Plan, implement, and evaluate at least two new programs annually in rural areas utilizing the new Programming Trailer. 5. Implement StoryWalks in at least three community spaces. 6. Develop an assessment tool to gain feedback from Bookmobile patrons on resources, programs, and services to guide future planning and decisions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MCL will conduct at least one survey a year in English and Spanish plus a spreadsheet to collect input on relevant materials, programs, and services to have on the Bookmobile. 2. MCL will create a route schedule, webpage, flyers, and social media campaign in 2022 to promote this new service in new communities. 3. MCL will create two new programs a year working with community partners between 2022-2025 to utilize the grant-funded Programming Trailer in new communities in rural areas. 4. MCL will create paper and online evaluation surveys for the community to give feedback on these new programs and services. 5. MCL will implement StoryWalks in at least three community spaces.
 <p>Website/ Online Presence Increase presence and atmosphere of a virtual 'third space' for website, databases, and social media.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather public knowledge on why the community uses the website and what people want to see on the Library website. 2. Gather usage statistics about what links and internal pages are most used. 3. Explore funding options and logistics within IT regulations to collaborate with a website designer to create a virtual 'third space.' 4. Develop an assessment tool to gain feedback from the community about usability and effectiveness of the new website. 5. Increase engagement and refine strategy on social media platforms to reach new audiences. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MCL will conduct at least one survey and three conversations or focus groups with diverse communities to gather input during 2022. 2. MCL will compile a report of usage statistics during 2022. 3. MCL will work with County IT on webpage regulations in 2022. 4. MCL will collaborate with a web designer to create an online 'third space' with improved usability and navigation by 2024. 5. MCL will issue evaluation surveys to gain community feedback on design. 6. MCL will create a social media strategy by 2023 to increase engagement. 7. MCL will follow Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) guidelines and outline additional safety protocols for online spaces and engagement.
 <p>Community Resource Hub Increase space, support, and collaborations for library locations to serve as community resource hubs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through the Community Connections grant, conduct a needs assessment of service areas within Madera County. 2. With grant funds, set up community resource hubs in each branch and hire community resource liaisons. 3. Through collaboration in the Building Healthy Families initiative, continue training all staff to raise awareness of the resources available from partner organizations in each community. 4. Develop an assessment tool to capture statistics and gain feedback on the Community Connections project to guide future planning and decisions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MCL will conduct a needs assessment and asset map by 2022. 2. MCL will create resource hub spaces in library branches by 2023 and use the Building Healthy Families resource list for patron information/ self-referrals, staffed by grant funding in 2022 and then volunteers or staff. 3. MCL will coordinate staff training with partner organizations such as Behavioral Health, Social Services, CAPMC, and Workforce Development to increase staff awareness of local resources and services by 2024. 4. MCL will create paper and online evaluation surveys for the community to give feedback on the resource hubs, community resource liaisons, and use the data collected to guide future decisions and collaborations.

Appendix A - Public Knowledge Summaries

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Community Input from Chowchilla



ASPIRATIONS

When Chowchilla residents talk about their community, they hope for **welcoming and inclusive spaces** that are more **accepting of diversity**. They hope for **cleaner and safer spaces** with more **activities for seniors and youth**.

They hope for **improved test scores** in local schools, as well as more **intervention and trauma-informed programs and services** and **social-emotional support for families**.

Better **transportation** includes more **bike routes**. Residents hope for more access to **water**, more **economic development**, and more **support for new local businesses**. They would like for Chowchilla to be seen as a **destination location**.



CONCERNS

Residents are concerned by a lack of substantial **local news/** means to **advertise**. They are concerned that the area isn't **unified** as desired as communities tend to keep to themselves.

Residents also mention **transportation, joblessness, and safety** concerns as obstacles preventing aspirations. They mention the **digital divide** and lack of **Internet access**, along with concerns of a lack of awareness of available **social services** and **resources** in the area.

Residents are concerned that **industries** select other areas and **local events** have been discontinued. They worry if **parents and teachers** are receiving the **support** needed to help **struggling students**.



ACTIONS

Residents would like to see a **community center for tweens and teens**, more **public transportation** that is easier to use, and more **communication and trust**. They hope to seek **grant funding** and **collaborative funding partnerships**.

Residents would like more **advertising** to increase **awareness of local resources**, and **community watches** to increase **safety**.

They would like to see more **programs for tweens and teens**, more for **older adults**, and **volunteers** to help with **adult literacy** and **afterschool tutoring**.

Residents would like to see an increase in **partnerships, job-readiness and resume classes, computer classes, help for college applications, and financial/ life skills programs**.

Community input from Madera



Aspirations



The people of Madera want a **safe, welcoming community** with more **connectivity** among neighborhoods, increased **access to social services**, and more **activities for youth**. Residents seek more **economic growth** through **support for local businesses**. They hope for easier ways to get around town, including more **walking and biking paths** and easier **parking options** with more **angled parking spaces downtown**. They would like to see more **artistic and creative growth** with an **art hub downtown**, and would like to see **events** stay here in Madera. Residents also hope for more **community engagement and involvement**.

Concerns



When people talk about these issues, there is concern about **hesitancy to take risks**, attitudes surrounding **technology and change**, and **unconscious biases and comfort levels**. Residents see a **lack of funding** as an obstacle, along with a **lack of awareness of how to get involved and be active in the community**. They cite **conflicting feelings locally about community growth and change** as potential obstacles in reaching aspirations.

Actions



Ideas for overcoming barriers include planting seeds to **build an audience** and **generate support**, encouraging **involvement**, **cultivating local entrepreneurs, small business owners, and creative types** to combine efforts and **advocacy**, and creating **leadership opportunities for young people**. Residents point to **incentives for people to move and stay here** as a solution, along with an ability to **sustain businesses, affordable rents, and opportunities to take supported risks**. They seek more **programs** aimed at **small business owners, space for networking and finding common ground, and a hub for local resources**.



Community input from

Madera Ranchos



ASPIRATIONS

When the community talks about hopes, they mention more **community activities**, especially for **teens and adults**. They seek a **community center** with more **opportunities to interact and socialize**, and **opportunities** for **community organizations to collaborate**. They hope for **safe communities** with **good roads** and proper **traffic enforcement**. They would like more **accessible restaurants** yet hope to maintain a **small town feel** to the community.



ACTIONS

Residents look to the Library to be a **hub of information** about local **services, resources**, and **community events**. They would like better **marketing** formats to **increase awareness** of area **programs and services**. Residents look for a **concerted community effort to work together** with more **genuine partnerships** to increase **safety** and a **sense of neighborhood and community** that **looks out for each other**.



CONCERNS

Residents mention concerns around **communication** and **fragmentation** in the community. They seek a **community calendar, newsletter**, or other means of **sharing information** about **events and resources**. People cite a lack of **involvement**, lack of **technology**, lack of **opportunities for engagement**, and a lack of **initiative to complete projects** as barriers to reaching their hopes.





North Fork

Community Input



The North Fork community wishes for planned growth within **infrastructure**, more **job opportunities**, a place for teens to **gather**, and **stronger community connections** with opportunity for **engagement**.

Aspirations



When people talk about these hopes, they mention a more **accessible library** with **building improvements** and **space for community to gather**, more **funding opportunities**, and more **awareness of how to get involved locally**.

Concerns



In order to reach these aspirations, people point to **faster timelines** for projects, awareness of engagement opportunities, and **accountability** to accelerate change.

Change



Actions include **advocating** for building improvements, seeking **funding opportunities**, **working together** on gardening and other projects, and improved community **communication**.

Actions

Community Input from



Oakhurst

ASPIRATIONS



Oakhurst residents hope for more **economic growth** and **community involvement** with **increased access to technology** and the **Internet** for everyone. They hope for a **welcoming and inclusive community** that **values diversity**. They would like to see an increase in **safe activities for young people**, especially **teens**, and more easily **accessible local resources** and **social services**.

CONCERNS

The community is concerned with **isolation**, a lack of **transportation**, and a lack of awareness of local **services and resources** as preventing these hopes. They express concern about a lack of **job opportunities** and ways for **teens** to become **involved as future leaders** in the community. **Communication** is also a concern, with many looking to the Mariposa Gazette for **local news**. **Funding, time, and energy** are also obstacles in reaching hopes.



ACTIONS



The community believes the Library can serve as a **central hub for information** about **local services and resources**. A **community calendar** would help increase awareness of **community events and information**. Resources such as local **newsletters** can be combined for expanded information. **FOBL** can continue their **advocacy** efforts, **MALCO** is important for **area literacy**, and the **bookmobile** will help expand **services** in **rural areas**.

MCL Staff

Madera County Library staff from all levels and locations were invited to participate in one or more of three conversations to share expert knowledge of their communities.

Aspirations

MCL staff want to live in **unified** communities that are **safe, friendly, and active**. They hope for **better stores and local attractions, better roads and cleaner streets, more sidewalks, parks, and walking trails, activities for kids and teens, more affordable housing, more job opportunities, more shelters, and more awareness/ access to social services and mental health resources**. Staff also mentioned increased **access to computers** and the **Internet, health care, and recreation** as hopes for the community.



Concerns

People mention a lack of **transportation, isolation, language barriers, resistance to change, and difficulty for newcomers** to get **involved** as concerns to reaching these hopes. Other concerns include a lack of **meeting space, cost of activities, lack of partnerships, and lack of funding, as well as a distrust of others or the unknown. The digital divide and economic disparities** create additional barriers in the communities we serve.



Actions

Staff would like to see **smart planning and collaboration, trauma-informed practices and training, more communication among service organizations and the community, more funding opportunities, more places to connect to the Internet and each other, advocacy, reasonably-priced activities, affordable health care, increased awareness of social services and issues**. They would also like to see **tutoring, partnerships with social services, and resume/ computer classes**.






Trust

MCL staff trust **local leaders, the Board of Supervisors, police and sheriff departments, Friends of the Library, health care providers, community non-profit organizations, church leaders, ourselves, educators, and the food bank** to help take action.



Appendix B - Current Strategic Grants and Initiatives

Madera County Library is already implementing multiple competitive grants and participating in statewide initiatives that support the strategic focus areas of this plan. Below is a summary of current projects and how they relate to the selected areas of priority for the next three years.

Strategic Focus Areas	Grant or Initiative
 <p>Teens and Young Adults</p>	<p>STEAM Equity Grant - Chowchilla Branch Library The Chowchilla Library is one of just twelve libraries in the country to be selected for the American Library Association's STEAM Equity Grant Project. The four-year project includes traveling exhibits, kits and activities, and free special programs for tweens and teens on topics of science, technology, engineering, art, and math. Open to everyone, the project especially focuses on empowering Latina/ Hispanic tweens and teens who may be interested in pursuing STEAM education and future careers.</p> <p>Teen Advisory Board - Chowchilla Branch Library Local teens are invited to join this leadership team to share input and ideas for future library programming, materials, and services. The group will also help plan and implement fun programs for children. Participation counts as volunteer time at the library.</p> <p>Teen Space - Oakhurst Branch Library Through generous donations from the Friends of the Oakhurst Branch Library, the area 4-H club, and local donors, the Oakhurst Library is renovating a corner space into a teen area. Teens and young adults will have a space just for them to relax, connect, and socialize in a welcoming environment inside the library.</p>
 <p>Rural and Spanish-Speaking Communities</p>	<p>Mobile Library/ Bookmobile Grant MCL received a grant from the California State Library to create a mobile library/ bookmobile to visit rural areas not currently served by physical buildings. Proposed routes include areas around LaVina, Fairmead, Coarsegold, and local senior residences and schools, with materials available in English and Spanish.</p> <p>Backpack Literacy Project MCL received a continuation on a grant from First 5 Madera County for a second year of offering workshops that empower parents to be their child's first teacher. The 2021-2022 iteration focuses on rural and Spanish-speaking communities. Additional funding from Madera County Superintendent of Schools allows for further expansion of the program.</p> <p>StoryWalks/ Programming Trailer Grant MCL received a grant from the California State Library to install StoryWalks in community parks, where families read a book page by page/ sign by sign as they walk along a path or trail. The project encourages shared literacy and healthy outdoor activities for families. StoryWalks will feature books in both English and Spanish.</p> <p>Building Equity-Based Summers MCL is in the second year of participation in this initiative through the California State Library and California Library Association. The project encourages libraries to build equitable practices into benchmark programs such as the Summer Reading Program by asking questions such as 'Who are we unintentionally leaving out?' and 'What barriers to participation might we be unintentionally creating?'</p> <p>Zip Books Grant Also a grant from the State Library, Zip Books allows any MCL cardholder to request that a book or audiobook be added to the collection. If the request is accepted, the item is ordered from Amazon and delivered directly to the requestor's address. The material is then returned to a library branch or Bookmobile to be added to the collection, helping create community-driven collections reflecting local interest and need.</p>
 <p>Community Resource Hub</p>	<p>Community Connections Grant MCL is one of ten libraries from the state to be selected as a participant in the California State Library's Community Connections funding opportunity. The grant will allow MCL to train and support two Community Resource Liaisons in our libraries to help raise awareness of and connect people to local information, resources, and services. The project will also support creating community resource hubs in each branch to further increase awareness of resources and services available in our communities.</p> <p>Growing Healthy Families Madera County MCL recently joined this important community initiative that also includes the Department of Social Services, Community Action Partnership Madera County, Public Health, Behavioral Health, First 5 Madera County, Workforce Development, and other important community organizations. Through involvement, MCL will help strengthen communities while expanding its reach and scope of resources through collaboration with community partners.</p> <p>Veterans Resource Center Also a California State Library initiative, the Veterans Resource Center at the Madera Main Library provides free books, resources, and information to local veterans.</p>



MADERA COUNTY LIBRARY