

# *The Strategic Road Map of the Northeast Kansas Library System*

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## **Our Vision . . . .**

*We are leaders and innovators in providing exemplary library services.*

## **Our Mission . . . .**

*The Northeast Kansas Library System inspires and empowers member libraries to engage, educate and add value to their communities.*

## **Our Values . . . .**

### **Community**

*Communication* – We foster communication and collaboration among member libraries.

*Community Engagement* – We embrace our role as a community anchor and support our member libraries in doing the same.

*Participation* – We value active participation in the larger library community.

*Respect for member libraries* – We respect member library differences (type, size, location) in an atmosphere of mutual trust and teamwork.

*Respect for people* – We value the professionalism and experience of library and system staff, boards, and volunteers. We seek recognition and rewards for library staff. We respect library users and expect members to provide excellent customer service. We expect and promote inclusivity.

### **Ethics**

*Confidentiality* – We support the ALA Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read statement.

*Integrity* – We follow the highest ethical standards of honesty and openness.

*Stewardship & Sustainability* – We use resources in an accountable manner and challenge ourselves to model sustainable practices.

### **Growth**

*Continuous improvement* – We expect and assist member libraries to continuously improve and strengthen services to benefit their communities.

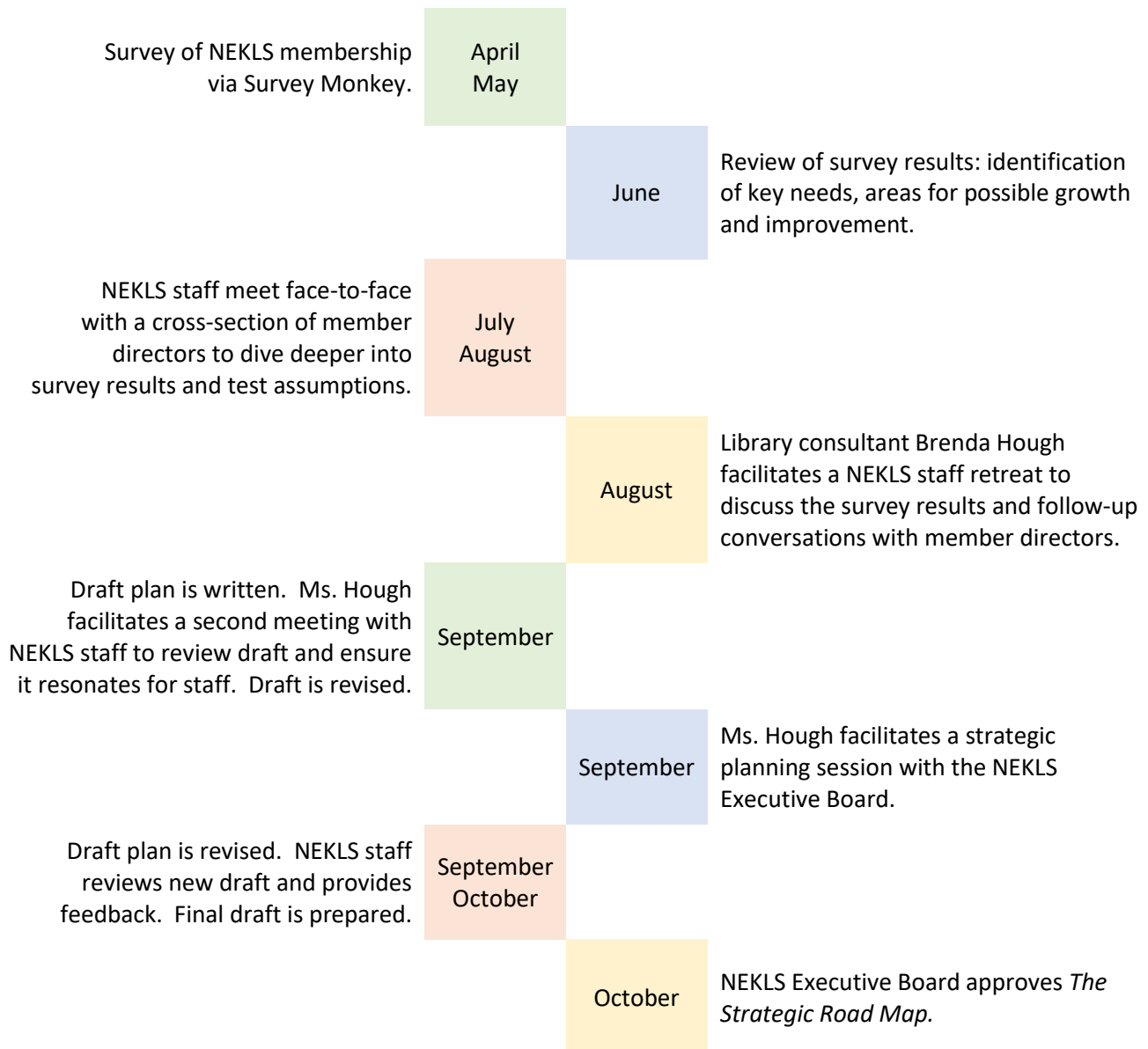
*Equal access & Resource sharing* – We believe people should have equal access to information, technology and services. We value the power of resource sharing to improve all libraries.

*Innovation* – As a nimble organization, we value innovation by NEKLS and member library personnel. We bring a sense of curiosity and enthusiasm to projects we pursue and support.

## Developing a Road Map in 2019 . . . .

Strategic planning. These two words can elicit feelings of excitement . . . and anxiety. Strategic planning does not *have* to be a daunting effort. NEKLS set out to develop a plan that moves beyond traditional goals, objectives and milestone dates to a document that inspires ongoing action and reflection on a forward-looking path – a descriptive road map.

The road map detailed in the following pages reflects our renewed commitment to our values and to our member libraries. We encourage and welcome continuous feedback from our constituencies.



## Strategic Areas of Focus . . . .

Our vision, mission and values inform how we approach our work with member libraries and the communities they serve. *The Strategic Road Map*, comprised of six Strategic Areas of Focus, reflects what NEKLS staff is seeing and hearing from our members. The road map guides our efforts and keeps us on a forward-looking path.

<p><b><i>Exploration</i></b> Encouraging NEKLS staff and member libraries to explore innovative and new ways of doing.</p>	<p><b><i>Community Engagement</i></b> Preparing library staff and other leaders to survey the landscape and engage their “communities” wherever they may be found.</p>
<p><b><i>Sustainability</i></b> Providing NEKLS staff and the libraries we serve the resources necessary to excel.</p>	<p><b><i>Core Competencies</i></b> Supporting library staff and other leaders in gaining access to the core knowledge, skills and tools required to advance a vibrant library.</p>
<p><b><i>People</i></b> Focusing on the enrichment and growth of an organization’s greatest asset – its people.</p>	<p><b><i>Literacies</i></b> Collaborating with member libraries to help individuals develop the literacies necessary for a fulfilling life.</p>

# Exploration

Encouraging NEKLS staff and member libraries to explore innovative and new ways of doing.

Organizations that fail to explore, innovate, and grow will gradually lose relevancy. The challenge for NEKLS and our member libraries is to identify ways to experiment with new ideas and innovations and find new ways of doing.

NEKLS is uniquely positioned to nurture a culture of exploration with our members. Through our continuing education programs, we will introduce our members to the latest trends, thought leaders and emerging best practices. We will bring grant funds to bear that allow for targeted experimentation to determine what really works and what can be replicated on a greater scale. We will facilitate collaborations between member libraries on new initiatives and, where practical, join in.

NEKLS is a nimble organization: our team culture encourages the proactive pursuit of new ideas and emerging trends and the reactive development of solutions to challenges and opportunities presented by member libraries. Our staff will seek to stay attuned to the shifting needs in our communities. When promising ideas or endeavors present themselves, NEKLS staff will find ways to pursue them. While not all ideas or endeavors will be successful, it's important to try things that aren't 100% guaranteed. When implementing new experiments and initiatives, NEKLS will solicit feedback and input from target audiences with the expectation that future iterations will result in a better resource or service.

## Key Needs

- Adequate resources, including technology, to support exploration
- Processes for identifying potential opportunities, creating prototypes and getting feedback from end users, which will be used to improve the resource or service through an iterative cycle
- Willingness to end projects and processes that no longer serve our communities

## Key Outcomes

- Libraries become more confident in trying new ideas
- NEKLS staff identify and understand problems, seeking and incorporating feedback to refine solutions
- NEKLS and our member libraries have demonstrated leadership in innovation and exploration

# Sustainability

Providing NEKLS staff and the libraries we serve the resources necessary to excel.

Libraries have a public relations challenge. Constituents often lack a clear understanding or appreciation for all that a library does – and the resources required – to support the community.

NEKLS will work with public library directors and boards to help them understand the budget process, statutory responsibilities, and successful advocacy for their library. We will provide training and continuing education opportunities addressing grant writing, fundraising, and making a case for support that tells the community’s story through the library’s lens.

The Northeast Kansas Library Foundation will expand its efforts to partner with member libraries to support their fundraising efforts.

Resource sharing is a core value for NEKLS and we support libraries in sharing collections, ideas, knowledge, stories, and best practices.

Through continuing education and the modeling of best practices, NEKLS will promote environmentally sound and socially equitable practices and policies that improve libraries and the communities they serve.

## Key Needs

- Training related to economic sustainability
- Awareness-raising and training related to environmental sustainability
- Awareness-raising and training related to workplaces that support employee well-being
- Willing partners in the community who can provide sustainability training

## Key Outcomes

- Libraries secure adequate funding
- Libraries maximize resource sharing
- NEKL Foundation increases the number of member libraries establishing funds
- Libraries pursue responsible and sustainable practices

# People

Focusing on the enrichment and growth of an organization’s greatest asset – its people.

Employees come to libraries with a variety of education and prior work experiences. One of the challenges for managers and supervisors is to ensure staff have the support they need to grow within the organization.

People exist in relationship to one another and fostering communication and collaboration is a key role for NEKLS to play. NEKLS will communicate effectively with members and identify ways to enhance collaboration and learning. Further, we believe everyone possesses leadership qualities and we recognize that leadership growth is a unique journey for each individual.

NEKLS will support these efforts through professional development and mentoring opportunities intended to grow leaders throughout an organization. We will advocate for good salaries and benefits and will assist libraries in exploring options for both. We will encourage libraries to consider additional benefits and services that support employee wellness and happiness.

We will apply this same lens to how we support our own employees.

## Key Needs

- Refinement of NEKLS information resources for library staff, boards and other leaders
- Active communities of practice
- Willing and seasoned mentors

## Key Outcomes

- Number of confident leaders within a library increases
- Member library staff feel connected to NEKLS and to one another
- NEKLS staff grows its leadership skills and mentoring capacities

# Community Engagement

Preparing library staff and other leaders to survey the landscape and engage their communities wherever they may be found.

“Communities” exist all around us. Some are rooted in geography and place, while others grow from our social interactions and shared interests. Communities stem from our relationships with various people, including family, friends, colleagues, classmates, teachers, and neighbors. Communities matter. They inspire us. They sustain us. They effect change in our lives. Perhaps more than ever, libraries attract and support a cross-section of communities.

NEKLS will work with libraries to facilitate meaningful conversations to discover the goals, aspirations, values and shifting needs of their communities. We will empower libraries to develop targeted programming and seek productive collaborations with other community partners. Further, NEKLS will help libraries employ outcomes measurement tools to better understand the impact of services and programs.

NEKLS’ chief community is our membership. We will pursue meaningful conversations with our members to regularly evaluate and refine our services. We will look and listen for opportunities to maximize the value of their membership through new services and initiatives.

We embrace our role as a community anchor and strive to model impactful community engagement by seeking leadership and service opportunities for NEKLS staff at the local, regional, state and national levels.

## Key Needs

- Training and tools for turning outward to identify community assets and aspirations
- Training on the use of social media tools
- Frameworks for community surveys and discussions
- Identifying and engaging willing partners

## Key Outcomes

- Library leaders, staff and stakeholders possess the skills and confidence to make community connections
- Libraries can identify and articulate the difference they are making in their communities
- NEKLS forges deeper connections in Lawrence and statewide

# Core Competencies

Supporting library staff and other leaders in gaining access to the core knowledge, skills and tools required to advance a vibrant library.

Strong libraries do core tasks well, such as: circulation, interlibrary loan, cataloging, records management, readers' advisory, reference, technology assistance, collection development and management, and budget development and management. Staff require a firm understanding of policies and procedures, practice teamwork and recognize where to pitch in to maintain high levels of service. Managers must navigate personnel issues, address patron concerns, and handle challenges as they arise. Public library boards of trustees shape policies and secure and steward financial resources. These leaders must develop their advocacy skills.

Competencies link the performance of individual library staff members to the overall goals of the library. NEKLS will place an emphasis on ensuring library staff and other leaders receive the training necessary to master core competencies. We will achieve this by consulting with library directors to help them identify training needs and appropriate solutions. We will annually offer a slate of continuing education and training opportunities that address timely topics.

## Key Needs

- Variety of format options for individuals to access training opportunities
- Systematic approach to assessing training needs and identifying learning opportunities
- Training modules that can be replicated by other members

## Key Outcomes

- Library staff demonstrates a clear understanding of library services and policies
- Library trustees are effective stewards and advocates
- Library staff are confident in their roles and demonstrate capacity to improve when needed



# Literacies

Collaborating with member libraries to help individuals develop the literacies necessary for a fulfilling life.

Individuals living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century require a set of literacy skills to avail themselves of all the opportunities life presents them. Definitions of “literacy” vary widely. For the purposes of NEKLS and the libraries we serve, we believe basic literacy encompasses skills in reading, writing, speaking and working with numbers and data. Beyond these foundational literacy skills, individuals today must further develop skills in other literacies.

Each community is different and NEKLS encourages member libraries to understand the literacies their community lacks. As members of a multi-type regional library system, NEKLS libraries are natural partners in developing meaningful pathways that enable youth to grow into confident, literate adults and lifelong learners. NEKLS will work with interested member libraries to advance literacy in all forms, including: information, communications and technology literacy; critical thinking, problem solving, and creative literacy; financial literacy; health literacy; civic literacy, and global awareness.

In speaking with member libraries, NEKLS has identified two literacies that require immediate attention:

Information literacy – “the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.”  
*ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*

Financial Literacy – “Possessing the skills and knowledge on financial matters to confidently take effective action that best fulfills an individual’s personal, family and global community goals.” *National Financial Educators Council*

## Key Needs

- Libraries identify the literacies for their community
- Understanding of the professional standards informing how academic, public and school libraries define and address literacies
- Content for programming, courses and trainings
- Commitment and support from library and community leadership

## Key Outcomes

- Libraries address the literacies for their community
- Member libraries of different types collaborate on addressing literacy learning and skill development needs

## Have Map, Will Travel . . . .

Developing the strategic road map was just the beginning. NEKLS staff is poised to consult and reflect upon it regularly, and use it to guide our path forward. Like any road map, we will need to refine and adapt it to help us meet new challenges and opportunities on the road ahead.

In order to keep our road map relevant, we will:

- ✓ Consult the Compass Card for NEKLS staff, which serves as a companion to the Road Map. This double-sided card lists our vision, mission and six strategic areas of focus on one side. The flip side contains a series of questions intended to spark reflection and ensure our actions support the strategic areas of focus.
- ✓ Conduct a brief annual survey of membership to measure outcomes from each strategic area of focus. This will be used to benchmark and evaluate progress going forward.
- ✓ Form a “navigation team” from within NEKLS staff to visit each member library annually for the sole purpose of discussing the road map and how we can serve them better – and to simply listen.
- ✓ Measure outcomes from targeted programs by employing a brief survey modeled after *Project Outcome*.
- ✓ Consult the road map at staff meetings as we discuss programs, projects and other happenings.
- ✓ Meet biannually to review the road map as a staff, paying particular attention to key needs and key outcomes. We will share results with the Executive Board.
- ✓ Use feedback to ensure resources are deployed in the most effective manner. This will be essential to the annual budget planning process.
- ✓ Produce an Annual Report that highlights successes from the road map.
- ✓ Harness the collective leadership capacity of NEKLS staff to advance the organization. NEKLS staff will continuously grow through professional development opportunities and other trainings.

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Questions, comments, suggestions regarding this strategic road map?

Call the NEKLS office at 785-838-4090 or send an email to [feedback@nekls.org](mailto:feedback@nekls.org)

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