



**Library
Association
of Alberta**

2025

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

A BOLD NEW CHAPTER

This document outlines the Library Association of Alberta's strategic action plan for 2025 and beyond. Though strategic in nature, LAA did not set out to produce a traditional strategic plan. Instead, the Strategic Action Plan aims to achieve two broad goals. First, to set out clear and achievable actions the LAA Board and members can implement in the upcoming years. Second, to signal that LAA specifically and library associations in general are at a critical juncture – associations need to quickly adapt and find new ways to thrive in an environment that has changed dramatically over the past half decade.





WHO WE ARE

The Library Association of Alberta Board is made up of eight volunteer directors – all library workers, all committed to building a strong library community. We serve libraries and library workers from all library sectors and communities large and small. We value active association membership and consider our role as Board members both an act of public service and an opportunity to understand and help shape the future of libraries.

We've spent the last year taking the pulse of the library sector in Alberta. We've met with other library associations provincially and nationally to understand their strengths and challenges. We've held honest conversations with Alberta library leaders and listened to what they had to say about our association and the broader sector. We've interviewed members of our association as well as librarians from all library sectors, learning about what they value most in a library career, what challenges they face, and what they need to be successful.

We've taken the opportunity to look inward at ourselves – as an association at a crossroads – and wondered what we can achieve given the many constraints we face. This process of engagement and introspection has been tough, daunting – but also thrilling. We've discovered there are a lot of people who want to see us succeed and want to participate in getting us there. And we've figured out a lot about how to help everyone build a stronger library community in Alberta.

Everything we've learned has energized us and reoriented our mission at LAA. We're proud to share with you the five strategic action areas that we've developed from our year of listening and learning – and how we plan to start building.

OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS ARE...



1

SUPPORT A SECTORAL CONVERSATION ABOUT THE STRUCTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE LAA

LET'S BUILD A NEW BIG TENT

Libraries in Alberta need a strong, unified voice – now more than ever. We need to stop operating in silos and start having real conversations about joining forces. Our communities of librarians and library workers are asking for bold leadership, clear vision, and practical guidance. But the constraints that LAA and associations like us face are stark and they are not getting easier to manage. Business as usual won't cut it; we're spreading ourselves thin. The LAA wants to figure out what we can build that truly lasts and gives everyone a share of the new voice we want to hear.

HOW WE CAN DO THIS

1. Host formal and informal conversations with our members as well as peers and leaders in other organizations – find out who wants to help, and how.
2. Tell the story of what we're doing with our members, our supporters, and our collaborators in real time, as we do it, as it evolves.
3. Refresh our LAA brand through engagement, listening, and communicating how we see a stronger sector coming together.

KEY ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE

1. Engage members, with a refreshed energy, about LAA's strategic direction, including conversations about merging with other associations and organizations.
2. Get real about finances: map out what sustainable, purposeful operations actually look like and what we need to do to get there.
3. Create a clear picture of who's doing what across associations to spot where we're doubling up or missing opportunities.
4. Lead "Future Focus" meetups with other associations and organizations where we build relationships and tackle the tough questions about mergers and working together; no topic off limits.



2

CREATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITH A FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP

LET'S FIND THE NEEDLES IN OUR (LIBRARY) STACKS

We're blessed with a wealth of leadership experience in the Alberta library sector. But our true value lies in the leaders of tomorrow. We know everyone wants to grow, to learn, to become more successful versions of themselves. Professional development comes in many forms, but none of it matters if those who are prepared to lead can't be found and nourished. We want to connect emerging leaders with those who've been in the trenches. Their insight and wisdom are fuel for the future. Let's start preparing for tomorrow's challenges by empowering the emerging leaders of today.

HOW WE CAN DO THIS

- Recruit members who have ideas and want to lead. Empower them to host gatherings between established and emerging leaders – or just to champion efforts to do so.
- Find low-resource opportunities for librarians and library workers to build or learn leadership skills and participate in the conversation.
- Seek out and build connections with leaders who are inspired by our new vision and want to help others grow and adapt to change. Mobilize a network of leaders who are on-board and willing to roll up their sleeves to develop leadership capacity in our community.

KEY ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE

- Develop a Symposium Series of learning events with a focus on leadership and exploring emerging issues in the library field.
- Create a “Leadership Exchange” connecting emerging leaders with veterans through virtual coffee chats and bite-sized virtual “Fireside Chats” where experienced leaders share their best insights in short sessions. Investigate mentorship networks and programs.
- Build a simple online hub for sharing leadership resources, templates, and success stories
- Further develop cross-association leadership gatherings as sessions where leaders can bring real challenges for group discussion



3

CREATE A COMMUNITY OF INFORMED AND SKILLED ADVOCATES

LET'S SPEAK UP TOGETHER

When it comes to advocating for Alberta libraries, we need to sing from the same song sheet. Advocacy needs harmony to be effective; the tune should be so clear that anyone can sing along. But right now there's a lot of noise and no conductor. Let's create a clear, powerful message that any library champion can use to tell our story. Simple templates, compelling talking points and real examples will provide a starting point for sustained advocacy. We'll find stronger and more cohesive pathways to advocate for Alberta libraries by building relationships with peers, stakeholders and the government that will have everyone singing.

HOW WE CAN DO THIS

- Survey the advocacy landscape in Alberta and find out who is advocating for what, how well needs and resources are aligned, and where impact is and isn't made
- Think beyond toolkits; focus on stories about real challenges and the impact libraries make on their communities
- Develop strong competencies in library advocacy by practicing what we learn and tracking the impact we make

KEY ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE

- Launch advocacy coordination calls to align efforts, share knowledge, and develop strategies
- Make advocacy the focus of key sector meet-ups: symposiums, conferences, leadership gatherings
- Build a rapid response network for urgent advocacy needs
- Create a simple system for tracking and communicating advocacy efforts across the province
- Create a core "Library Story" – key messages and data points everyone can use
- Develop plug-and-play advocacy templates for common situations, drawing on the success of existing toolkits and strategy documents



4

SUPPORT SELF-ORGANIZING COMMUNITIES AND NETWORKS

LET'S BE THE SPARK IN THE DARK

Our Alberta library communities are bursting with ideas and energy – they just need support to run with them. There's a lot of space to explore but nowhere to launch. We can help construct the platform and provide the fuel for others to navigate their own journey and share what they discover. Let's create simple guidelines and opportunities that empower people to start their own groups or initiatives. Let's make it radically easier for members to connect and collaborate. No red tape, no Robert's rules. Just green lights and the opportunity to organize and feel part of something bigger and meaningful.

HOW WE CAN DO THIS

- Promote LAA's divisions and create opportunities for them to leap into initiatives that strengthen the broader library sector
- Support the development of social and networking opportunities and empower members (i.e. future board members, not only current ones) to run them.
- Pilot one or more opportunities for members to lead cross-sectoral conversations around topics of shared interest or concern (e.g. homelessness)

KEY ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE

- Set up virtual platforms where groups can easily meet and organize
- Document a clear, simple path for groups to become official divisions
- Create "Quick Start Guides" that make it simple to launch new initiatives
- Develop straightforward processes for preparing and supporting board members to engage our communities
- Host a social event at a major sector gathering devoted to community collaboration on a specific topic
- Share success stories from groups who join as divisions or develop working groups to inspire and guide others



5

BUILD AN ENGAGEMENT-FOCUSED BOARD

LET'S GET OUT THERE AND CONNECT

Board and volunteer burnout is real and can be a momentum killer. Life is already filled with a thousand decisions and tasks. Let's create roles for ourselves that energize rather than exhaust, with clear expectations and shared responsibilities. We're far more likely to connect with the needs of our members and the Alberta library sector if we're able to engage them from a position of strength. We need sustainable engagement, not superhuman effort, if we are to reinvent and reinvigorate the concept of a library association.

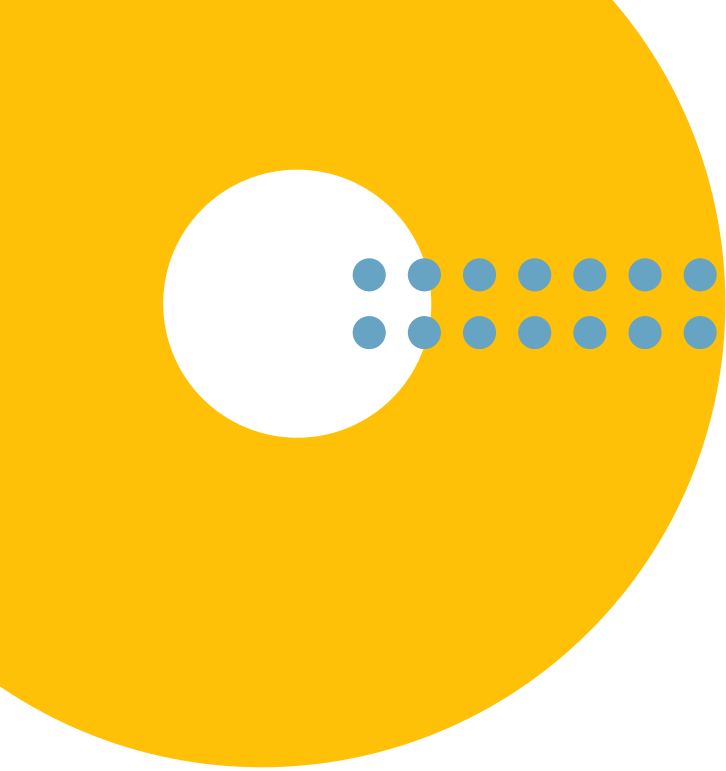
HOW WE CAN DO THIS

- Have tough but necessary conversations with ourselves as a Board about what restructuring might look like and require
- Build up board member competence and confidence in the soft skills necessary for great engagement and networking
- Gather members in conversations about generating ideas and momentum for participation in LAA initiatives

KEY ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE

- Create a board member onboarding support system with realistic role descriptions that set clear expectations about time and energy commitments
- Set up a buddy system to support new board members and prevent burnout
- Embed board member “check-ins” – with a creative and supportive framework – within existing meetings or meet-ups
- Develop messaging templates and talking points for board members within a broader communications strategy refresh that embodies our “punk rock” direction
- Launch bi-monthly “Open Door” sessions where members can easily connect with board members
- Create simple feedback channels that help us catch problems early





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