

# **TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON**

## **Meeting of the Trustees Executive Committee**

**Friday, September 13, 2024, at 8:30 a.m.**

**Via Zoom**

### **MINUTES**

The meeting of the Boston Public Library (“BPL”) Trustees Executive Committee (“Committee”) was held on Friday, September 13, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Committee members present included Dr. Ray Liu, Chair, Evelyn Arana-Ortiz, Vice Chair and Trustees: Joe Berman, Cheryl Cronin, and Christian Westra. Members John Hailer and Jeff Hawkins were absent.

Also present were David Leonard, President, Pamela Carver, Clerk of the Board, Staff, and members of the public.

#### **Call to Order:**

- Dr. Ray Liu presided and convened the meeting at 8:32am. He acknowledged the Trustees’ reaffirmation statement.
- The Clerk took roll call and confirmed there was a quorum. She reminded all that the meeting was being recorded and the process for signing up for public comment.
- Dr. Liu expressed gratitude for the committee's engagement and highlighted the community’s trust in the BPL’s assets.
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#### **Strategic Planning Update:**

- Christian Westra and David Leonard emphasized we are at pivotal point of the process and need to begin process of input from trustees and key stakeholders.
- The Board of Trustees will also receive a version of this at the September 24<sup>th</sup> board meeting.
- Mr. Leonard emphasized the importance of involving stakeholders in the planning process to ensure transparency and inclusivity.
- The aim is to achieve trustee buy-in by the end of November.

#### **Mission, Vision, and Goals:**

- Sarah Zaphiris indicated that revisions are in progress, particularly on the core value "Free to All," which resonates with staff, community, and Trustees alike. It reflects the BPL’s identity.
- Discussion on incorporating literacy and knowledge into the strategic plan and mission statement was held.

#### **Proposed Library Roles:**

- The four roles were outlined. They determined who the library is to the community.
  1. Welcoming Destination
  2. Life-Long Learning & Research Partner
  3. Trusted Resource
  4. Community Engager
- The committee was tasked with reviewing these roles for further discussion later.

#### **Committee Structure and Next Steps:**

- There were raised concerns about the Steering Committee's function and the need for more clarity regarding its role in decision making.
- A suggestion was made to hold additional Executive Committee meetings in October/November for deeper discussions but open it up to all board members to participate in the discussion.

**Executive Session:**

- Ray Liu called for an Executive Session to discuss negotiations with a nonunion staff member under exemption 2 of MA Open Meeting Law.
- A roll call vote was taken, and the motion to enter Executive Session was passed.
- The Committee will not be reconvening after the closed session.

With no new business or public comments, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Pamela R. Carver, Clerk of the Board*

**Boston Public Library**

# Strategic Plan

2024 – 2030

Mid-October 2024 Draft

**DRAFT - Not for Distribution**

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# Introduction



# Letter From The President



David Leonard  
BPL President

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Introduction  
**Context**

Since its founding in 1848, the Boston Public Library (BPL) has led the conversation on the role of the Library.

*BPL's History and Reach:*

As **the first large free municipal library in the United States**, BPL pioneered many innovations that have shaped modern library systems, including being the first to lend books, establish a branch library, and create a dedicated children's room.

Today, **BPL stands as a premier library and research institution, with 26 locations including its central library and over 23 million items in its Special Collections.** As both a community anchor and a cultural epicenter, BPL is a vital resource locally, across the Commonwealth, and internationally.

*World-Class Research and Collections:*

**With over 23 million items in its collection—one of the largest in the country**, including materials dating back to the 10th century—BPL stands out as a unique institution in research and preservation of our history.

As stewards of our nation's past and future, BPL preserves invaluable cultural artifacts while driving forward-thinking initiatives that ensure memory, identity, culture, and belonging are assets that belong to every generation.

**2,264,592**

In-person visits systemwide

**50,196**

New library cards issued

**CIRCULATION**

Print:  
**~2.2M**

E-content:  
**~4.7M**

**2,531**

Rare or unique items available in-person

*"Events at my local library **bring community members together**, strengthening the fabric of the neighborhood."*

*- Community Survey*

**8,258**

In-person visits to Special Collections

# Introduction Context

*Building on our strengths, we are repositioning our role to serve future generations of Bostonians, the Commonwealth, and beyond.*

### Our Strengths:

The Boston Public Library (BPL) serves as a **vital anchor institution for the community**, providing a cultural and educational destination for residents and visitors alike. BPL is **recognized as a trusted resource and critical community infrastructure**, thanks to our dedicated staff, immense collections and resources, and welcoming physical spaces.

Notably, **73% of Boston residents live within a 15-minute walk of a library branch**, positioning BPL as a natural partner for a variety of city initiatives and a vital resource for community well-being, with our branches playing an integral role in cultivating vibrant neighborhood life.

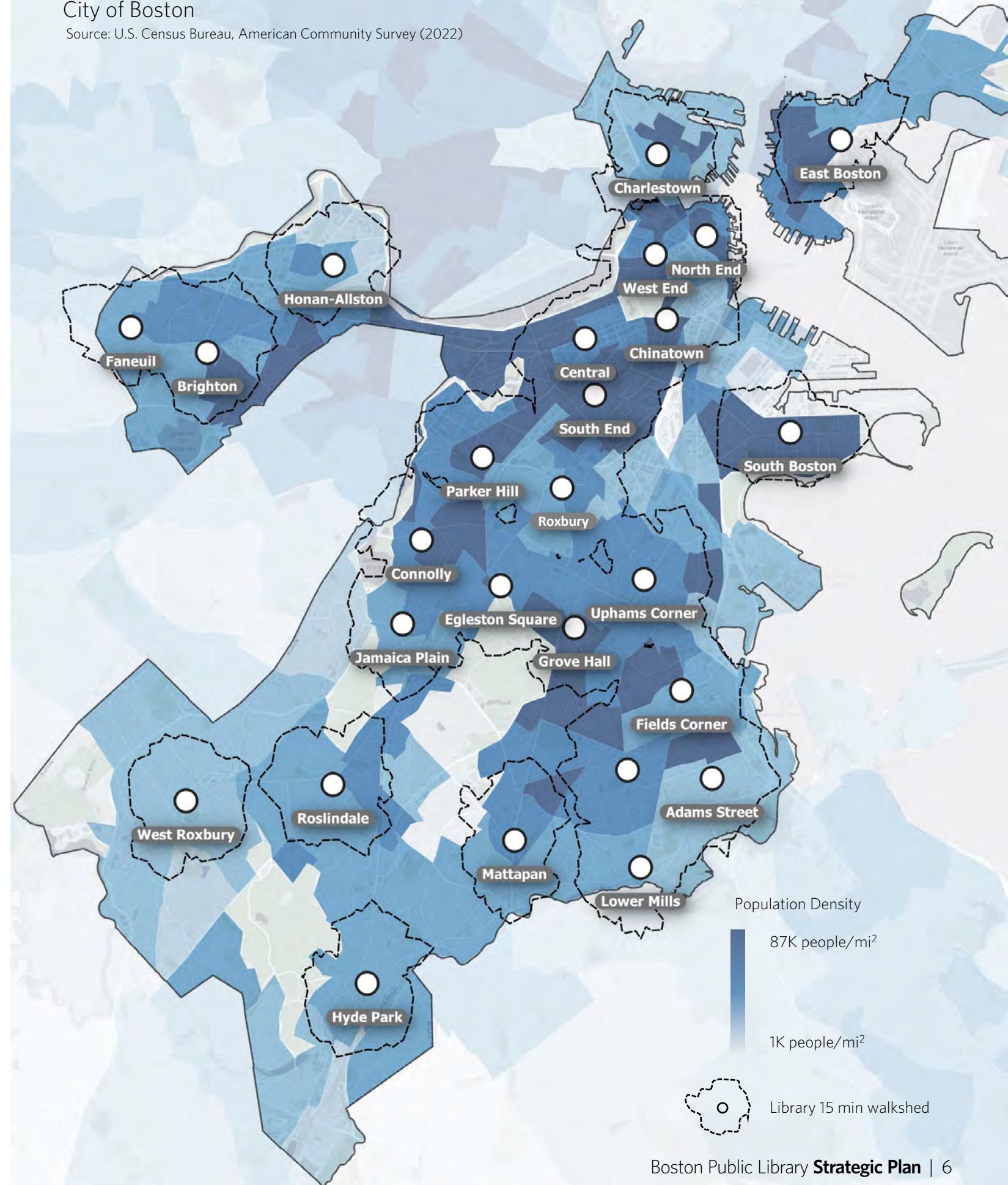
### Current Challenges:

The BPL continues to make a significant impact through its services while grappling with **funding constraints, a large portfolio of physical infrastructure to manage, staffing challenges** compared to benchmark institutions, and the complexity of the **special collections function**.

### Our Changing Role:

Over the past 150 years, the BPL has evolved to meet the diverse needs of our communities. In the post-pandemic landscape, along with the **library's integration with the Human Services Department of the City of Boston**, we have a unique opportunity to refine our role through an equity lens, paving the way for new initiatives to suit a wider range of holistic human needs.

Population Density by Census Tract  
City of Boston  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2022)





Introduction

# Who Participated

Through a series of in-person, hybrid, and virtual workshops and inputs, the Strategic Plan was co-created through the input of key stakeholder groups.

## PARTNERS

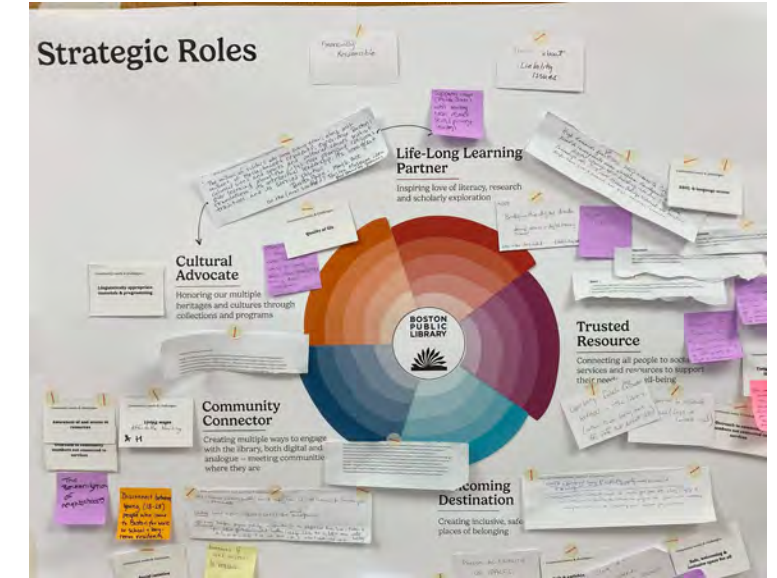
**21** CBOs and Partner Organizations Consulted

**1** Input Session with City of Boston Leadership

## COMMUNITY

**451** Community Survey Responses

**5** Branch Tours



## STAFF

**4** Strategic Planning Workshops with **23** Staff Representatives

Sessions included staff from across all parts of the organization and were central to the co-creation of key elements of the plan.

**185** Completed Staff Surveys

# Value Vision Mission

## Values

*The principles and beliefs that guide how we work and interact with each other to serve our communities.*

## Vision

*How we envision the future outcomes for our communities.*

## Mission

*Our purpose, why we exist, and what we do to make our Vision a reality.*



We believe in

# Free to All

Our values are anchored in the promise of **Free to All**, proudly inscribed above the entrance of the Central Library in Copley Square.

This commitment to welcoming everyone equally—regardless of gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, faith, or economic status—reflects our enduring dedication to inclusion, equity, and access. At BPL, we envision a world where everyone has the freedom to flourish.

**Free to All** is a cherished part of our history and a guiding principle for our future.

## Free to...

Free to **Discover**  
Free to **Learn**  
Free to **Create**

Free to **Imagine**  
Free to **Connect**  
Free to **Explore**

Free to **Play**  
Free to **Choose**  
Free to **Think**

Free to **Be**  
**Boston Public Library**

## Free to All

## Core Value

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Our belief in **Free to All** is at the heart of everything we do.

## Vision

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An inclusive community propelled by curiosity, connection, and growth.

## Mission

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Open a world of discovery, to enrich lives and elevate every community.

# Strategic Roles & Initiatives

## **Strategic Roles**

*The key roles we play in our communities and the directions for our future that will make the most impact.*

## **Strategic Goals**

*The ambitious objectives that guides the development and prioritization of strategic initiatives to achieve our mission and vision.*

## **Strategic Initiatives**

*The focused actions to advance our strategic plan, prioritizing the resources and efforts to meet the needs of our communities.*



# Strategic Roles

The key roles we play in our communities and the directions for our future that will make the most impact.

## Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

*Inspiring a love of literacy, discovery, and scholarly exploration for all.*

## Community Engager

*Expanding the reach of the library beyond its physical walls, meeting communities where they are.*

## Welcoming Destinations

*Creating active, inclusive third places where every person can chart their own path.*

## Trusted Resource

*Connecting all people to reliable information and services that fulfill their needs and enrich their lives.*



*Strategic Role*

# Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

*Inspiring a love of literacy, discovery, and scholarly exploration for all.*

Our role as a **lifelong learning and research partner** reflects our dedication to fostering a love of learning and celebrating our shared history. We create inclusive and engaging opportunities that connect with our communities at every stage of life. By leveraging our strengths as a premier research institution that is open to everyone, we collect, preserve, steward, and amplify access to, Boston's treasures in a way that brings the diverse contributions of our city and community to life.



Strategic Role

# Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

Inspiring a love of literacy, discovery, and scholarly exploration for all.

## Role Impact

- **Steward Boston’s history for future generations** by providing access to research, collections, and cultural treasures for all.
- Library as a vital partner that **supports all generations** from early childhood through older adulthood.
- Inspire all to cultivate a love of reading and **lifelong learning**.
- Support Boston as a city of **educated and empowered** citizens.



*“Our department helps cultural heritage institutions digitize materials and put them online. We answer individual questions, direct users to partner institutions, and help them use the repository to find what they need.”*

*- BPL Staff Survey*

## Community Needs

Our library provides access to collections and resources that are driven by the needs of the community.

- Addressing learning loss and achievement gaps
- Opportunities for self-discovery, life skills, and personal development
- Engaging youth
- Enhancing civics education and engagement
- Workforce development and economic opportunity
- Supporting social and emotional well-being for all ages
- Opportunities to explore personal interests and hobbies

## How We Live This Role

BPL’s wide range of engaging programs and resources support all ages and interests.

- Art on Public Display
- Branch Book Groups and Programming
- Chef-in-Residence
- Digital Commonwealth
- Entrepreneur-in-Residence
- ESL Classes
- Genealogy and Research Services
- Leventhal Map & Education Center
- Online GED, High School Diploma
- Oral History Backpacks
- Reader Services
- Special Collections & Open Houses
- Storytime Across All Locations



# Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Goal:  
Make the BPL a destination for families seeking enriching, educational, and fun activities for young children.

Strategic Goal:  
Equip young adults with tools to unlock opportunities and achieve advancement as they navigate the transition to adulthood.

Strategic Goal:  
Become a life-long learning partner for adults looking to develop new skills, achieve personal success, and connect with each other.



### Marquee:

- Ensure that all youth and families feel welcomed at the BPL by **designing inclusive, educational, culturally responsive, and fun programs** that celebrate the diversity of the community.

- Continue to play a **vital role in supporting early literacy** through resources and programs designed to prepare children and parents for kindergarten, such as interactive story times, reading challenges and parent-child workshops.
- Leverage the **youth spaces in the library as a hub for the community** where families can access education resources, engage in creative activities, and participate in community-building programs to become life-long learners.

### Marquee:

- Create **programs that blend education and fun**, such as, interactive workshops, STEAM-based activities, encouraging reading.

- **Support local schools** and students by **providing dedicated academic and literature resources**, such as test prep, and preparing students for life after high school.
- Develop programs on **emotional intelligence, stress management, and healthy relationships**.

### Marquee:

- Support and **empower people at all stages of their journeys to personal success** by expanding programming and resources that bring digital literacy, ESOL services, and career support together.

- Build on the success of the **Entrepreneur in Residence model** to provide support for local entrepreneurs, business owners, and other forms of residencies.
- Cultivate a **love of reading for all ages** through active programming and events, building a community of readers, and providing accessible physical and online reading materials.
- Expand programming for older adults, such as Age Strong Boston, to ensure the library remains a vital resource for the aging community



*Strategic Role*

# Welcoming Destinations

*Creating active, inclusive third places where every person can chart their own path.*

Our role as **welcoming destinations** is to offer inclusive spaces across Boston that are uplifting, safe, and thoughtfully designed, fostering an environment where curiosity naturally flourishes. We strive to meet the needs and interests of our community by offering transformative experiences where everyone can explore, connect, and contribute to the vibrancy of neighborhood life.

Strategic Role

# Welcoming Destinations

Creating active, inclusive third places where every person can chart their own path.

## Role Impact

- Everyone views our spaces as **uplifting, safe, and welcoming**, with a focus on connecting underserved communities and those we have yet to reach.
- All spaces are **well-maintained, fully accessible** and recognized as essential spaces for people of all backgrounds and abilities.
- Bostonians and tourists of all ages **experience joy, inspiration, and discovery at every visit**.
- Our spaces are thoughtfully designed and programmed to be **locally relevant and meaningful to our diverse communities**.



*“Our branch is one of the listed ‘Safe Place’ on the ‘Bridge Over Troubled Waters’-services to runaway, homeless and high-risk youth.*

*- BPL Staff Survey*

## Community Needs

Our library creates safe and inclusive places that are driven by the needs of the community.

- Safe, welcoming spaces, especially for those historically excluded or marginalized
- Support for reducing social isolation
- Access to mental health and well-being resources
- Opportunities for community engagement and connection
- Fostering a sense of belonging
- Culturally relevant programming
- Inclusive and accessible services for all community members

## How We Live This Role

BPL has made great efforts to create spaces that foster inclusivity, warmth, and accessibility.

- 26 Library Locations
- Adaptive Computer Stations
- Assistive Listening Devices
- Braille Collection
- Community Rooms and Conference Room Rentals
- Concerts in the Courtyard
- Innovation Lab, Reading Gardens, Nutrition Lab, Learning Lab
- Language Interpretation Services
- Newsfeed Café, Map Room Lounge, Courtyard Tea Room
- Reading Gardens
- Safe Place Program
- Sensory Walls

# Welcoming Destinations

Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Goal:  
Create places for all to enjoy by celebrating BPL's neighborhood anchors, reducing barriers to access, and designing inclusive spaces.

Strategic Goal:  
Activate the treasures of the BPL in ways that energize and inspire every community.



### Marquee:

- Launch the **McKim renovation capital project**. Develop a detailed evaluation outlining the space enhancements, service improvements, and staffing needed.

- Develop a **detailed plan for regular space maintenance, renovations, and service updates** to enhance the safety, security, and universal accessibility of all the branches
- Improve the **accessibility of BPL's facilities** by addressing barriers related to physical, visual, and auditory impairments, integrating universal design principles
- Create **community-centric, safe, and inclusive environments** that cater to multiple generations and cultures and is responsive to visitor experience.
- Increase awareness and enhance **sustainability practices across the BPL system** to align with the City of Boston's climate action goals of reducing building emissions, waste, and creating places resilient to climate change.

### Marquee:

- **Create new opportunities to interact and explore the special and research collections**, democratizing access and inspiring curiosity for all ages and backgrounds.
- Develop a **comprehensive plan for the discovery, stewardship, preservation, and access of collections** through enhanced description, maintenance, cataloging, and digitization.
- Create a **centralized hub for information that centers the researcher** and creates clear paths and connections among and between collections and service areas.



*Strategic Roles & Initiatives*

# Trusted Resource

*Connecting all people to trusted information and services that fulfill their needs and enrich their lives.*

Our role as a **trusted resource** is to offer intentional services, meeting people at their time of need, and leveraging our unique position as a trusted space to connect communities with city-wide resources. We aim to link individuals to support services and provide education that empowers them to access accurate, reliable information.

Strategic Role

# Trusted Resource

Connecting all people to trusted information and services that fulfill their needs and enrich their lives.

## Role Impact

- Everyone knows how to find **reliable information and the resources they need.**
- Historically **underserved communities** are connected to library resources and services.
- **Barriers to basic services are eliminated** to improve everyone's quality of life.



*"A patron once insisted I answer their tax questions because 'You're a librarian. I trust you.' Our trustworthiness is an extraordinarily valuable asset. We provide reliable information, no matter what."*

*- BPL Staff Survey*

## Community Needs

Our library is a reliable source to address the community's needs.

- Access and connection to essential resources (e.g. affordable housing, food security, childcare and mental health support)
- Support for social services
- Assistance for immigrant and new citizens
- Accurate information and combating misinformation
- Media and digital literacy, and critical thinking skills

## How We Live This Role

BPL has established partnerships with organizations to connect people to the resources they need.

- Digital and Media Literacy Offerings
- Digital Tools Such As Hoopla, New York Times, LinkedIn Learning, and Headspace
- Immigrant Information Corners
- Department of Youth Services
- Pine Street Inn
- Tax Prep Classes
- Welcome to Boston

# Trusted Resource

Strategic Initiatives



Strategic Goal:  
 Reaffirm the library's founding mission to provide unimpeded access to information and democratize learning and research for all.

Strategic Goal:  
 Provide a gateway to supportive human services as one of the City of Boston's most trusted places.

**Marquee:**

- Provide the **freedom to read for all groups** and backgrounds by removing as many barriers to entry as possible, such as expanded card access, the Browse, Borrow, Board, and Books Unbanned programs.
- Continue to build our brand as a **dependable source of unbiased information**, supporting intellectual freedom and ensuring patrons' right to access a diverse range of reading and educational resources.
- Equip patrons with the **skills to identify, evaluate, and use information effectively** through workshops and training sessions on media literacy and critical thinking.
- Establish civics literacy program that engage communities and help individuals become better citizens.

**Marquee:**

- **Evaluate the needs and develop a plan for the social work program** to provide support to our communities through specialized staff.
- Implement a structured **process for identifying and selecting partners**, aligning with strategic roles and measurable impact.
- Evaluate **partnerships to provide supports to high-needs communities** including people who are unhoused or struggling with mental health and/or substance abuse challenges.

- **Cultivate and maintain relationships and partnerships** with local organizations to meet the unique needs of the communities each branch serves.
- Broaden access to BPL's collections and services by strengthening our activities as Library for the Commonwealth, deepening our partnership with the Metro Boston Library Network, and **building trusted connections with additional institutions and organizations across Massachusetts.**

*Strategic Roles & Initiatives*

# Community Engager

*Expanding the reach of the library beyond its physical walls, meeting communities where they are.*

Our role as a **community engager** is to activate library assets across the city and beyond, boldly expanding the BPL experience through creative outreach strategies. We aim to extend our presence far beyond our walls, significantly grow our digital footprint, and build widespread awareness with dynamic, multi-channel campaigns that drive deep engagement, both system-wide and within each unique neighborhood.





Strategic Role

# Community Engager

Expanding the reach of the library beyond its physical walls, meeting communities where they are.

## Role Impact

- Library offerings and services are **activated throughout Boston and the commonwealth** to boost community interaction and involvement.
- All people, especially newcomers and immigrants, **feel supported and encouraged.**
- All people can participate in the library offerings, **whether in person or digitally.**



*“Every location has a community room where events and gatherings can take place. We engage in extensive outreach to schools and community organizations, bringing library services to external locations when patrons can't come to us.”*

*- BPL Staff Survey*

## Community Needs

Our library strives to reach our patrons and increase access to the offerings tailored to the needs of the community.

- Increased awareness of available resources and offerings
- Outreach to under-served community members
- Reduce barriers to access library services
- Provide inclusive participation opportunities that offer diverse formats and accessibility options

## How We Live This Role

BPL has engaged the communities in multiple channels - digitally and physically.

- Affinity Months
- Ask@BPL.org
- BPL by Bike
- Book Lists
- Books Unbanned
- Browse Borrow Board
- Chat Reference
- Digital Commonwealth
- Library e-card
- Museum Passes
- Newsletters
- Online Research Guides
- Shelf Service

# Community Engager

Strategic Initiatives



Strategic Goal:

Center our communities in all that we do and decide to do, through a research-backed approach.

Strategic Goal:

Amplify the stories and history of Boston's many communities, elevating underheard voices.

**Marquee:**

- Develop a multi-channel **outreach strategy to enhance library experiences across the city with creative approaches** that build awareness of the strategic roles, including mobile outreach, pop-up locations, and a staffing model to expand engagement.
- Conduct a **diversity audit to deepen the understanding of diverse cultures and backgrounds within the communities we serve** and incorporate human-centered design to identify the ways to better meet them where they are.
- **Conduct user research to understand the online information-seeking experience** of students, researchers, and community members to enhance online services.

- Establish **practices for active engagement with diverse communities** to identify the needs and gaps to better inform the communication, services, and programs at each branch.
- Enhance **our outreach efforts** through data-informed marketing and tailored communication strategies, with a focus on reaching underserved communities who do not come to the library.

**Marquee:**

- Curate a **strong portfolio of community history-based offerings** and opportunities.
- Highlight **the underrepresented communities** in circulating materials, special collections, and research.
- Create **digital opportunities to elevate underrepresented voices** with training and user-friendly methods to record their histories and increase online accessibility to their stories.
- Nourish civic literacy and education through **meaningful programs and engagements that draws on Boston's history** and diversity.

# Community Engager

Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Goal:  
Create a true 'Library without Walls' by enhancing the digital experience and widening online collections.

Strategic Goal:  
Promote digital literacy as an essential life skillset supported by connections to resources.

Strategic Goal:  
Expand multi-language offerings, supporting our diverse immigrant communities.



Marquee:

- Create a **more user-centric digital experience** through enhanced website navigation and a mobile application that caters to individual preferences and needs.

- Expand the **BPL digitization program that prioritizes high-value projects** that reflect and respond to community and research needs.

- **Democratize access to research through both in-person and digital channels**, such as online portals, fellowships, and more.

Marquee:

- **Increase access to online resources through digital literacy training** and offering technology lending programs (laptops and hotspots) to increase access for everyone.

- **Expand digital literacy programs to ensure patrons of all skill levels** can use technology to find the resources they need.

- **Improve multi-modal access** to collections for **under-represented and underserved communities**.

- **Explore, evaluate, and implement machine learning and AI-enabled tools** into library workflows and online resources for discovery, enhanced accessibility, and language translation.

Marquee:

- Increase **multilingual communications and accessibility** to provide equitable access to all of BPL's services **and expand our reach to non-English speaking communities**.

- **Increase multilingual capabilities for all communications** (text, print materials, wayfinding, services) to create an inclusive and welcoming experience for everyone.

- **Expand services for immigrant communities** by providing increased citizenship support and relevant programs at all stages of their journey.

# Organizational Shifts

## Organizational Shifts

*Key internal changes that will build capacity and enable BPL to fulfill our strategic roles and desired experiences for our patrons.*

## Strategic Initiatives

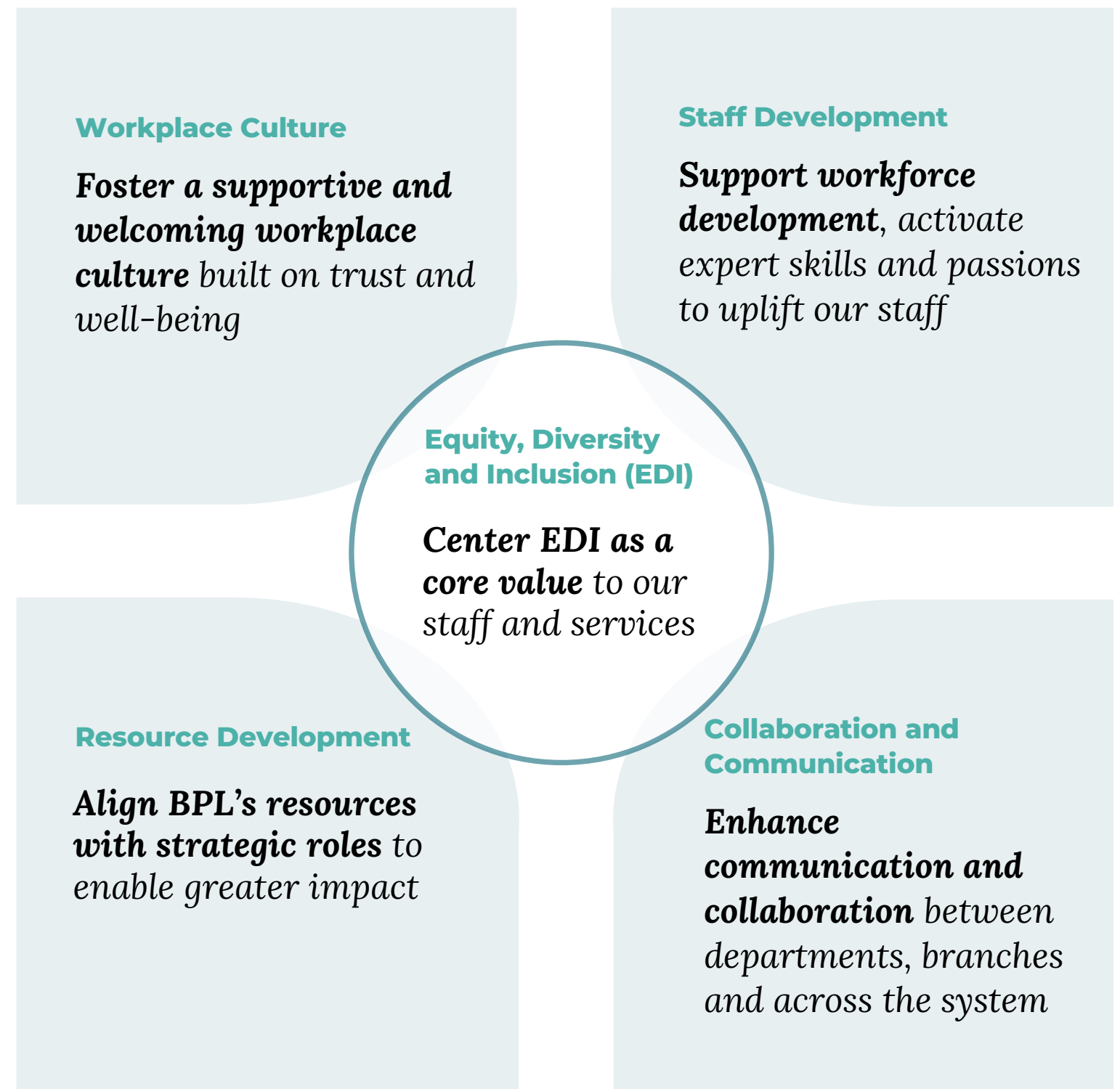
*The focused actions to advance our strategic plan, prioritizing the resources and efforts to meet the needs of our communities.*



# Organizational Shifts

**Key internal changes that will build capacity and enable BPL to fulfill our strategic roles and desired experiences for our patrons.**

These shifts set directions for internal initiatives that will drive systematic change in the processes and organizational structure to amplify the strengths of our people, places, and resources. By scaling our organizational capacity, BPL will be positioned to achieve more ambitious initiatives and explore new opportunities. The internal priorities should be addressed alongside the implementation of external initiatives.



### Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

*Center EDI as a core value to our staff and services*

#### Strategic Initiatives:

- **Create and implement a comprehensive EDI Plan 2.0 plan** with measurable goals, resources, and training to ensure an inclusive and equitable workplace and enable staff to engage with community
- **Develop a language access plan** to ensure that all patrons, regardless of language proficiency, can engage with BPL's services, programs, and resources through multilingual, multimodal access

### Workplace Culture

*Foster a supportive and joyful workplace culture built on trust, well-being, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)*

#### Strategic Initiatives:

- **Establish standardized and streamlined internal processes** across the system to reduce bureaucracy, empower BPL staff, and foster creativity.
- Invest in efforts to support the **safety, resilience and wellbeing of BPL staff**, including cultivating a trauma-informed workplace.
- Adopt a **customer service approach** and develop guiding principles to enable a consistent experience to all patrons.
- Foster an environment where people are empowered to **ask for and receive help**, and cultivate **a culture of accountability and responsibility** to enhance service delivery
- Adopt a **project management mindset**.



**Staff Development**

*Support workforce development, activate expert skills and passions to uplift our staff*

**Collaboration and Communication**

*Enhance communication and collaboration between departments, branches and across the system*

*Strategic Initiatives:*

- **Leverage the deep expertise and lived experiences** of our skilled staff and **create opportunities for community engagement** aligned with their passions.
- **Invest in professional development** to equip BPL staff with the skills and experiences to serve the patrons of all ages and backgrounds, including multilingual and digital skills.
- **Increase awareness and opportunities for career advancement**, professional development, skill building and **reduce barriers** to entry for librarianship via fellowship and mentorship.

*Strategic Initiatives:*

- **Clearly communicate and embody BPL's goals, roles, and priorities, setting a unified direction** that connects all staff so everyone can make meaningful contribution to the library's mission.
- **Enable knowledge sharing** by providing tools that identify **experiences, skillsets, and resources** available across the system.
- **Establish transparent and collaborative processes and guidelines** to align goals and break down siloes between the departments and branches.



**Resource Development**

*Align BPL's resources with strategic roles to enable greater impact*

*Strategic Initiatives:*

- Expand BPL's funding through **philanthropy and private fundraising channels** to build greater financial capacity.
- Develop a funding strategy across all vehicles - **municipal, state, federal, philanthropic, and in-kind funding** - to catalyze strategic roles and goals.
- Enhance the **collaboration and coordination within BPL** to align funding goals and resource allocation, maximizing support for effective initiatives.

*Strategic Initiatives (Continued):*

- Allow all staff members to make greater impact by **aligning BPL's hiring strategy with strategic roles and initiatives**.
- Adopt a **research-backed, data-driven approach** to identify internal and community needs, set priorities, and guide informed decision making.
- Identify **core staffing and operational gaps** to support future growth in communication, services, and programs, ensuring the successful implementation of strategic initiatives





# How We Will Live the Strategic Plan



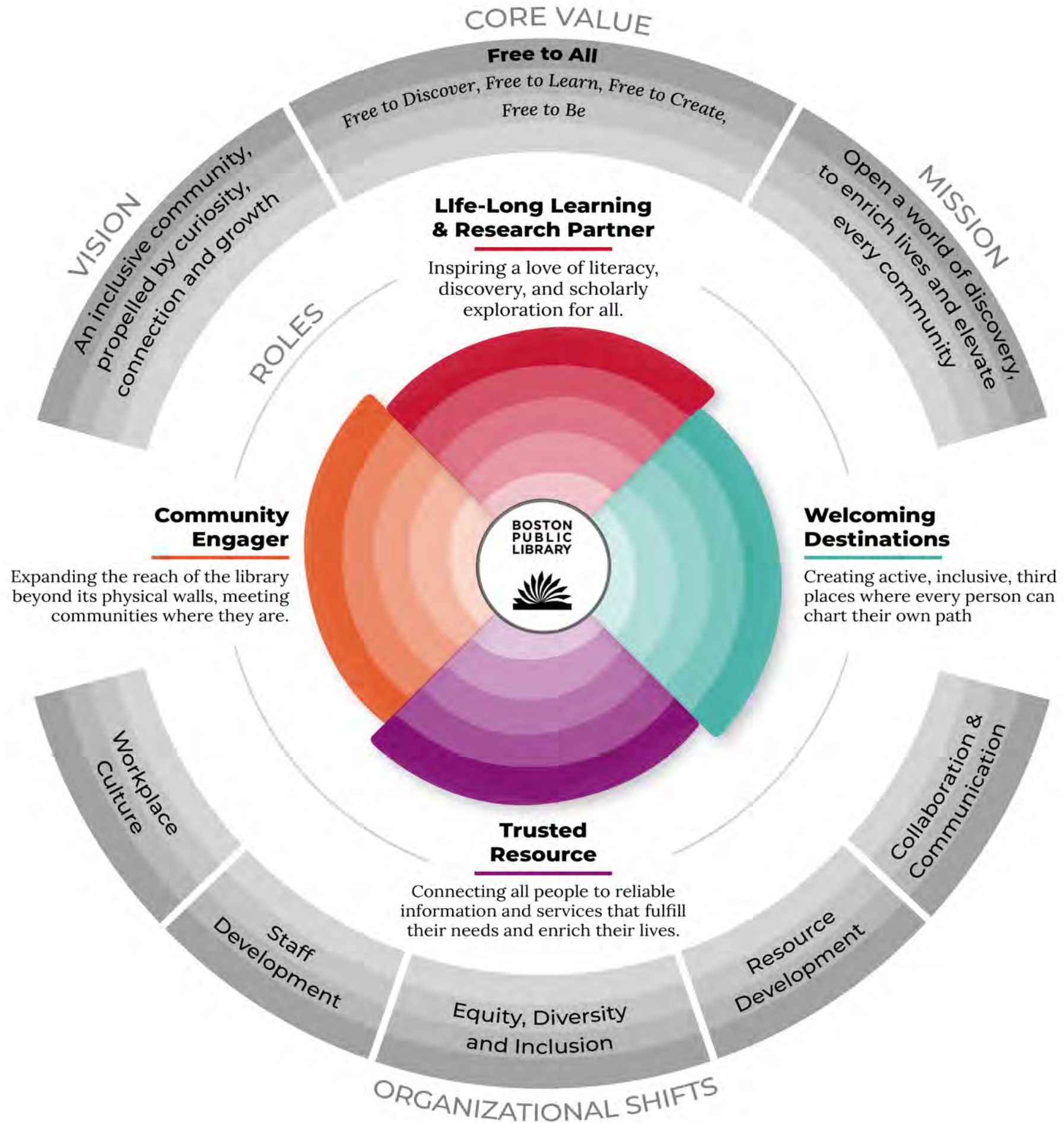
How We Will Live the Strategic Plan

# Bring the Plan To Life

**The success of our strategic plan is built on a shared commitment to bring our vision to life.**

This strategic plan will serve as a guiding framework to coordinate our efforts and amplify our impact. We recognize that achieving our goals requires the collective commitment of every staff member and our partners, as well as a focus on aligning our actions with our mission, vision, and values.

The following pages give examples of how the BPL might embody its strategic roles across the entirety of a given initiative, establishing common threads through customers experience and the library's priorities and commitments.

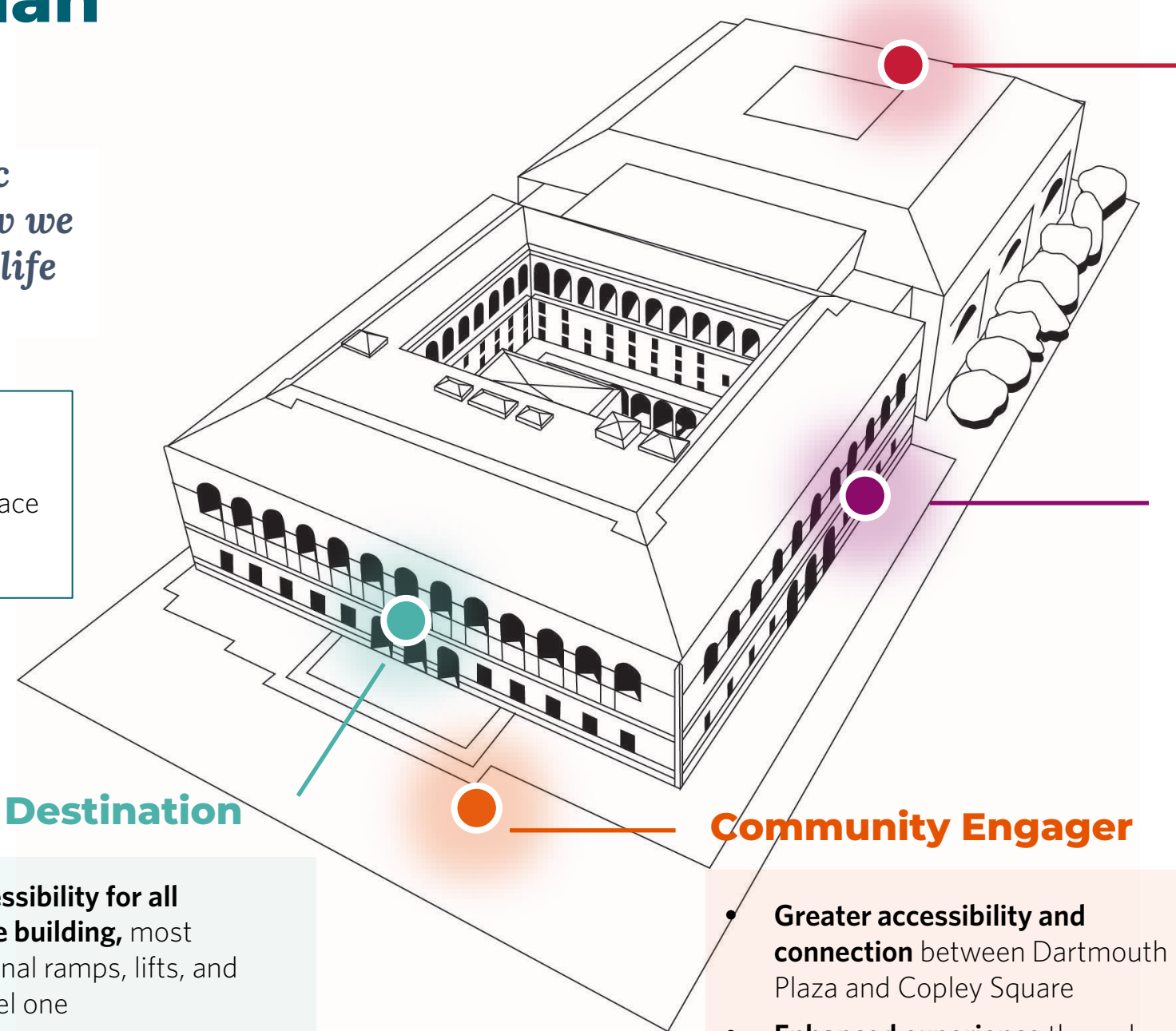


# How We Will Live the Strategic Plan Implementation: McKim Masterplan

The McKim masterplan strategic initiative is a key example of how we will bring our Strategic Roles to life with the building as our canvas.

**Initiative:**

Launch the McKim renovation capital project. Develop a detailed evaluation outlining the space enhancements, service improvements, and staffing needed.



## Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

- **Incorporation of more dedicated spaces for learning and collaboration** including classrooms, demonstration spaces, and enhanced multipurpose rooms

## Trusted Resource

- **Additional space for display and use of BPL's extensive Special Collections** across the building
- **Improved ground floor service connection** for the public to engage with research

## Welcoming Destination

- **Improved accessibility for all throughout the building**, most notably additional ramps, lifts, and elevator on level one
- **An enclosed courtyard** could increase activity by providing a welcoming third space for year-round programming and use

## Community Engager

- **Greater accessibility and connection** between Dartmouth Plaza and Copley Square
- **Enhanced experience** through entertainment, services, and agile public space

Sources: McKim Master Plan Update – Community Meeting: Planning Themes” (June 2, 2020)

Boston Public Library McKim Building Improvements Project: Master Plan Report – Volume 1 Executive Summary” (October 22, 2021)

# How We Will Live the Strategic Plan Implementation: Multilingual Access

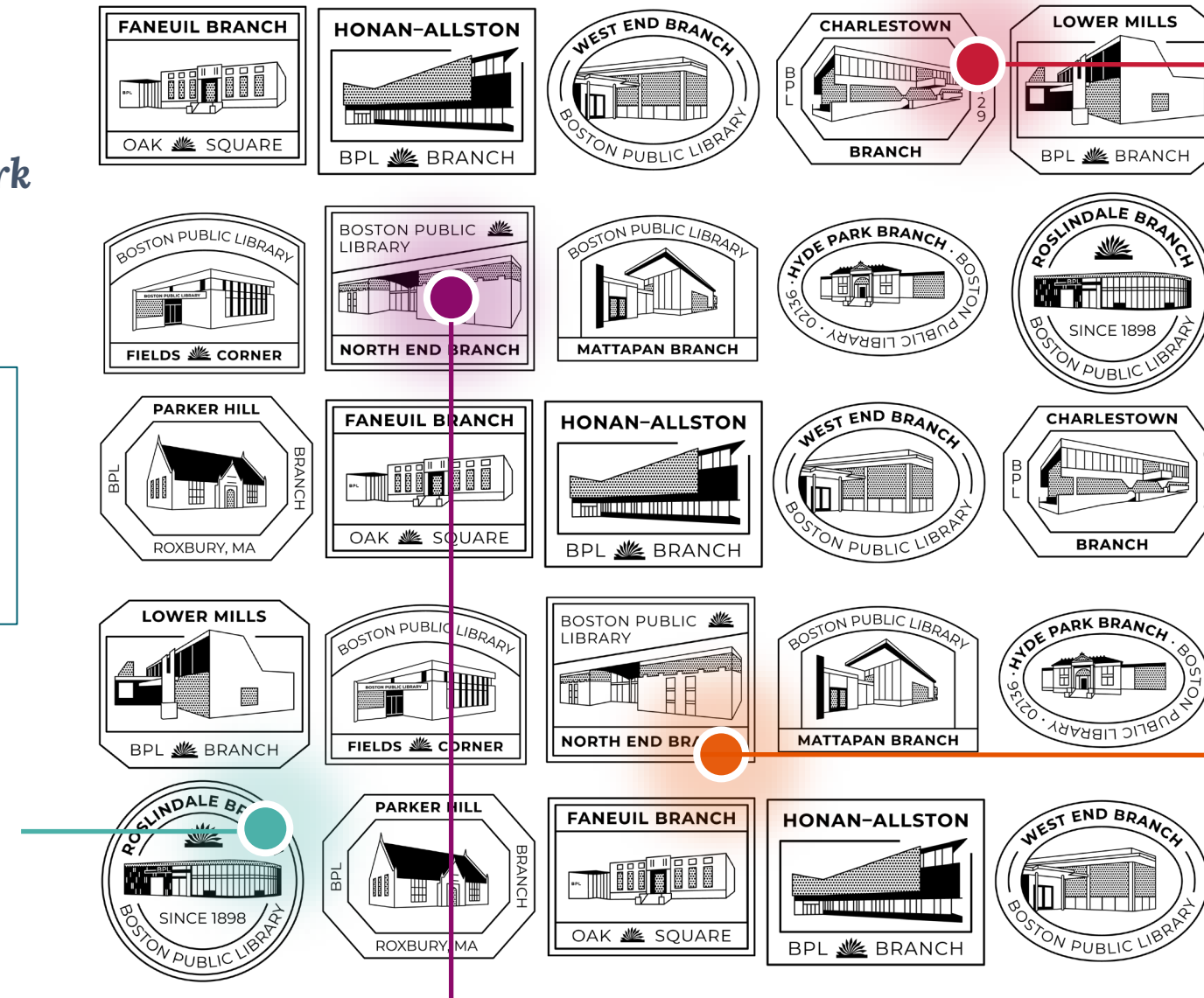
Multilingual access is another ambitious example of how we will work across our Strategic Roles to meet the diverse needs of our community.

**Initiative:**

Increase multilingual communications and accessibility to provide equitable access to all of BPL's services and expand our reach to non-English speaking communities.

## Welcoming Destination

- QR codes, desktop translators, and other app-based tools to make **translation easier and more pervasive**
- Public art and local artists who reflect the tapestry of **non-English speaking residents**
- Invitations to community members to share how **they use the library as a non-English speaker with ideas to further reduce barriers**



## Trusted Resource

- **Partner relationships** at both the local and system levels with groups who specialize in service to non-English-speaking communities
- Continued exploration of **food-based programming to celebrate culture and language**

## Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

- Intergenerational program models **offered in multiple languages**
- **Inclusive signature reading programs**
- Library resources for English speakers who want **to learn the languages spoken in their communities** including American Sign Language

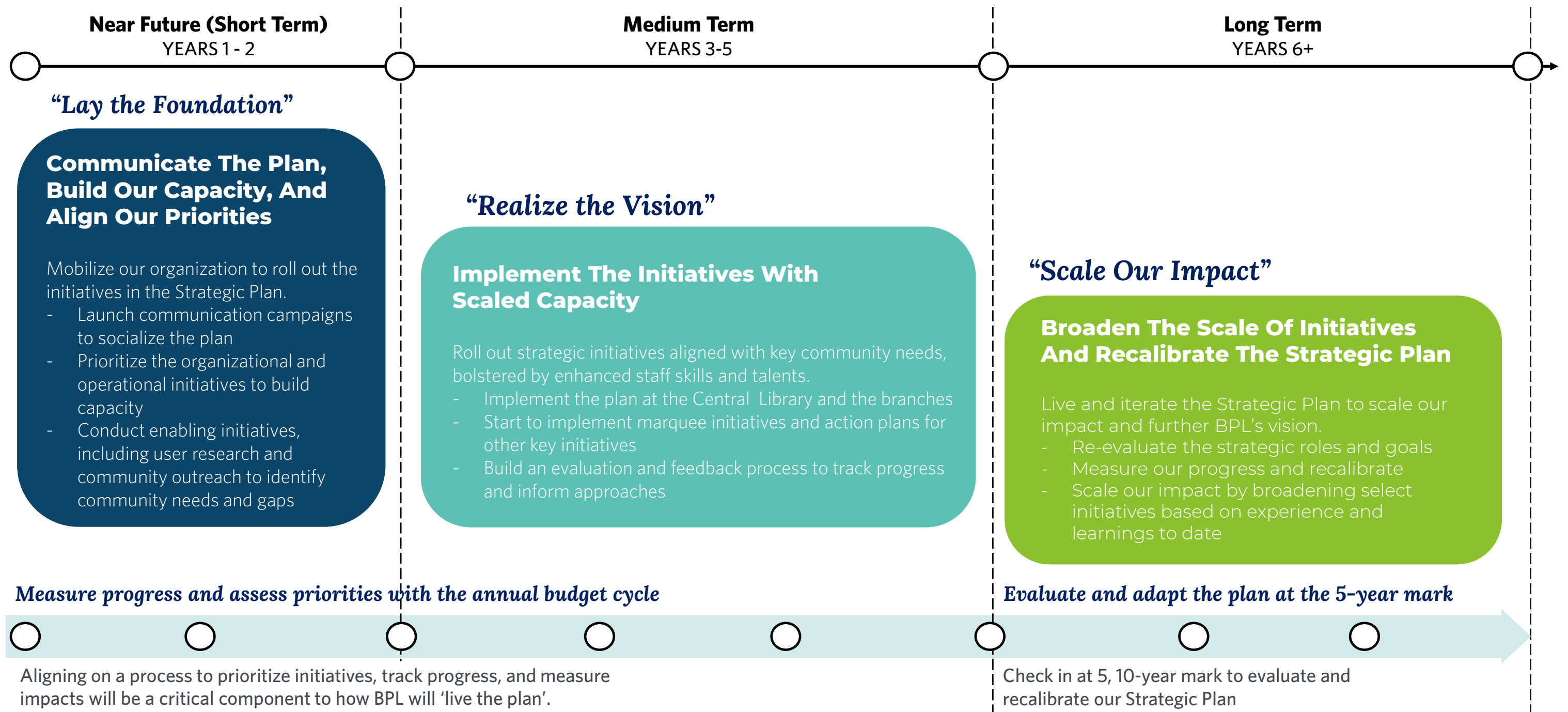
## Community Engager

- **Public history and storytelling projects** in languages other than English
- Pop-up exhibitions (i.e. airport, train station) in **local languages including "Free to All" campaigns**
- BPL promotional and **outreach materials with messaging and branding in more languages**

How We Will Live the Strategic Plan

# Implementation Roadmap

The Strategic Plan will guide the BPL over the next 10 years and beyond. It is a living framework for setting annual work plans and charting the path to our north star. The roadmap below shows how we envision the plan unfolding over the near and long term future.



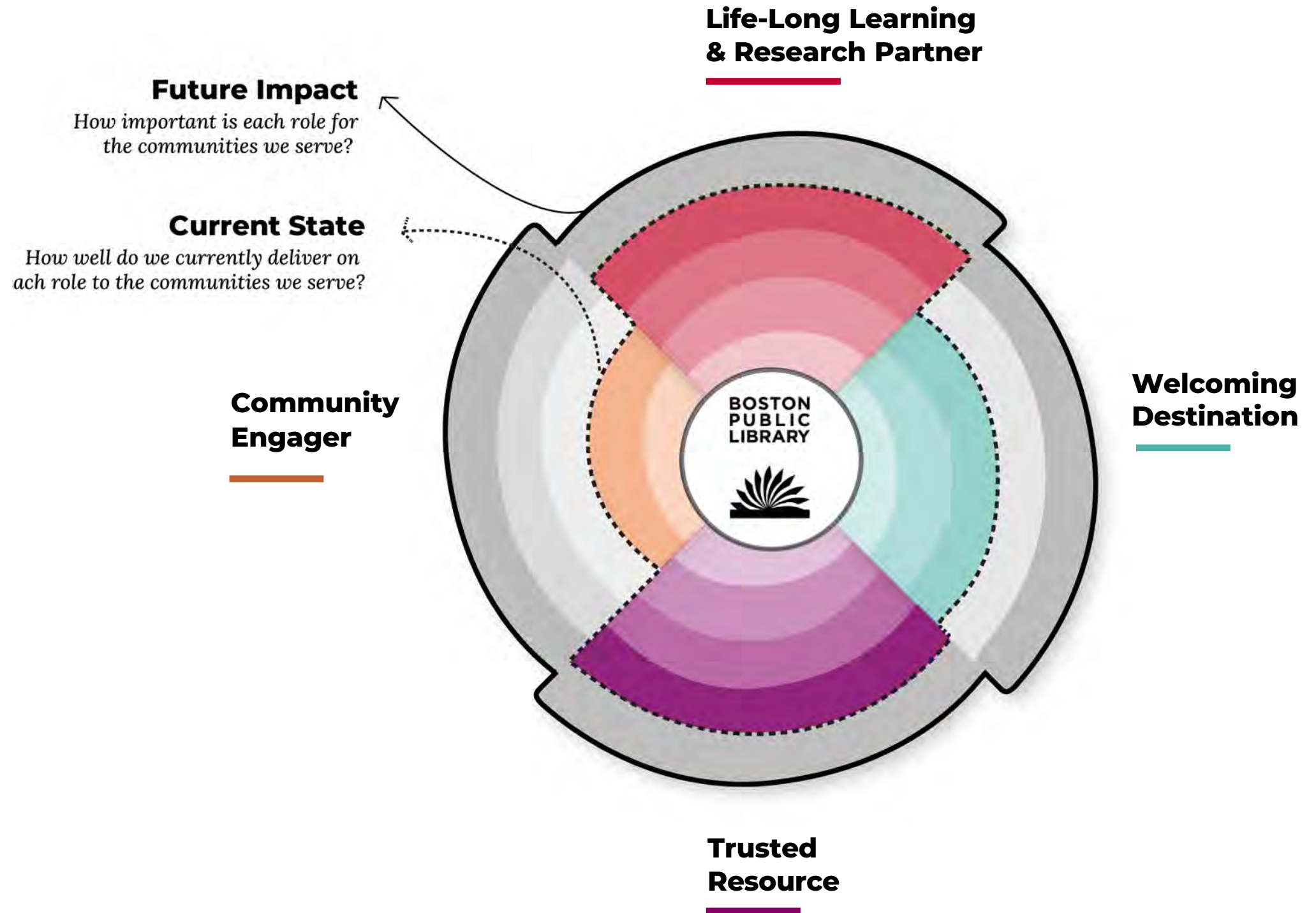
How We Will Live the Strategic Plan

# Living The Plan To Meet Our Community

The strategic plan is a dynamic tool that will drive our future impact, guiding us to continually adapt and innovate as we serve our diverse communities.

The Strategic Role framework can be utilized to calibrate future initiatives at system-wide, branch, and department levels to meet the needs of each unique community. It's a living tool that will help us measure, refine, and enhance our impact across a large and complex organization.

This plan drives us toward a future where we can serve the community more effectively and boldly than ever before. Together, we will forge a future where every individual can thrive, fully embodying the spirit of Free to All.



*How We Will Live the Strategic Plan*

# Acknowledgments

*The Boston Public Library would like to thank everyone who contributed to and supported the development of this plan.*

**BPL Staff**, for helping the Strategic Planning Team understand the communities they serve, for contextualizing BPL’s strengths and opportunities, and for providing essential feedback and guidance that shaped this co-created plan.

- |                              |                        |                       |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Amy Loustau                  | Euronna Taylor         | Robin Malamud         |
| Catherine Brobston           | Jessica Elias          | Sarah Jackson         |
| Celeste Bocchicchio-Chaudhri | Jessica Snow           | Shakera Laguerre      |
| Cheryl Delaney               | Kathleen Monahan       | Shuzhen Situ          |
| Christina Jones              | Laurel D. Cannon       | Tracy Wiggins         |
| Danny Pucci                  | Maija Meadows Hasegawa | Tresa Owens-Powell    |
| Dennis McCormack             | Nereida Villanueva     | Veronica Koven-Matasy |
| Emily Donnelly               | Pete Coco              |                       |

**BPL Leadership**, for their dedication and contributions to this process.

- |                  |                  |                 |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Alison Ford      | Gianna Gifford   | Michael Colford |
| Angela Veizaga   | Jane Sproul      | Pamela Carver   |
| Anna Fahey-Flynn | Jessica Chapel   | Paula Sakey     |
| Beth Prindle     | Joshua Rosenthal | Priscilla Foley |
| Brett Curry      | Keith Gillette   | Sarah Zaphiris  |
| David Leonard    | Lisa Pollack     | Sean Monahan    |
| Emily Tokarczyk  | Melissa Andrews  |                 |

**Strategic Planning Committee**, for their integral role in defining the future of BPL.

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Cheryl Cronin    | Lisa Pollack    |
| Christian Westra | Michael Colford |
| David Leonard    | Pamela Carver   |
| Heidi Brooks     | Paula Sakey     |
| Joe Berman       | Rahn Dorsey     |
| Jonathan Soroff  | Ray Liu         |
| Jose Masso III   | Sarah Zaphiris  |

**Steering Group**, for their consistent guidance, insight and direction throughout the planning process.

- Christian Westra
- David Leonard
- Jose Masso III
- Lisa Pollack
- Michael Colford
- Pamela Carver
- Paula Sakey
- Ray Liu
- Raymond Liu
- Sarah Zaphiris

**Our internal BPL partners:**

- Associates
- Board of Trustees
- Boston Public Library Fund
- Leventhal Map & Education Center

The following **community partners** for their thought leadership on the communities they serve:

- Animal Rescue League of Boston
- Asian Community Development Corporation
- Back Bay Association
- Boston Children’s Museum
- Boston Centers for Youth & Families
- Boston Schools Fund
- Boston University
- Bunker Hill Community College
- City of Boston
- Fisher College
- Grub Street
- Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
- Massachusetts Library System
- Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics
- Northeastern University
- Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement
- Pine Street Inn
- The Basics Boston
- The Boston Foundation
- United Way of Massachusetts Bay
- YMCA

**The external Strategic Planning Team:**

- Gensler
- Margaret Sullivan Studio
- Advancing with Purpose

# Appendix



# Appendix Toolkit: Evaluation Matrix For Strategic Initiatives

Leverage a structured framework that evaluates the impact and organizational capacity for a strategic initiative to provide the foundation for planning and implementing the initiative.

## Section 1: Impact & Strategic Fit

Evaluate how the proposed initiative align with the framework, while considering key elements such as demonstrated need, external support and measures of success.

Impact and Strategic Fit (Up to 50 points)	Criteria	Score	Scoring Comments
	<p>Is it in <b>alignment with our Vision, Mission and Core Value?</b></p> <p><b>Core Value:</b> Free to All</p> <p><b>Vision:</b> An inclusive community propelled by curiosity, connection, and growth.</p> <p><b>Mission:</b> Open a world of discovery, to enrich lives and elevate every community.</p>	Score out of 5 1=low alignment, 5=high	
	<p>Does the initiative <b>align with our Strategic Roles?</b></p> <p>Welcoming Destination ____ points, Welcoming Destination</p> <p>Life-long Learning &amp; Research Partner ____ points, Life-long Learning &amp; Research Partner</p> <p>Trusted Resource ____ points, Trusted Resource</p> <p>Community Engager ____ points, Community Engager</p>	Score up to 30 points set by calibration	
	<p>How well does this initiative <b>address a demonstrated gap or need within our community?</b> (Research-backed, Metrics, etc.)</p>	Score out of 5, 5=high demonstrated need	
	<p>How <b>strong is the external support</b> for this initiative (e.g., partner, funder, Mayor's initiative)?</p>	Up to 5 points, 5 = strong external support	
	<p>Are there <b>measurements that can be used to track short or long term impacts</b> of this initiative? How will we measure these impacts and track success over time?</p>	Score out of 5, 5=impacts highly measurable	

## Section 2: Organizational Capacity

Reflecting upon the capacity of the organization to support this effort, including internal capacity, monetary, communication, change needed, and risks.

Organizational Capacity (Up to 50 points)	<p><b>Do we have the people resources</b> (staff capacity or training, volunteers, partners) to do this work?</p>	Score out of 10, 10=high current capacity	
	<p>Do we have the <b>monetary or physical</b> resources (materials, spaces, funding, etc.) to do this work?</p>	Score out of 10, 10=high current capacity	
	<p>How well <b>are we able to communicate this initiative to the public or target audience?</b> Will we be able to leverage current channels or will new methods need to be developed?</p>	Score out of 10, 10=high current capacity	
	<p>Are the <b>risks associated with the initiative manageable?</b> (example risks: stakeholder buy-in, complexity, other factors)?</p>	Score out of 10, 10=risks manageable, 1=high risks	
	<p>Does this initiative involve a <b>manageable amount of organizational change?</b></p>	Score out of 5, 5=manageable change, 1=large degree of change	
	<p>Does this <b>build upon existing initiatives</b>, pushing our current capacity forward?</p>	Score out of 5, 5=high current estimate	

# Strategic Goals At A Glance

## Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

Goals

- Make the BPL the City of Boston’s first destination for families seeking enriching activities for young children.
- Equip young adults with tools to unlock opportunity and achieve advancement as they navigate the transition to adulthood.
- Become a life-long learning partner for adults looking to develop new skills, achieve personal success, and connect with each other.

## Welcoming Destinations

Goals

- Create places for all to enjoy by celebrating BPL’s neighborhood anchors, reducing barriers to access, and designing inclusive spaces.
- Activate the treasures of the BPL in ways that energize and inspire every community.

## Trusted Resource

Goals

- Reaffirm the library’s founding mission to provide unimpeded access to information and democratize learning and research for all.
- Provide a gateway to supportive human services as one of the City of Boston’s most trusted places.

## Community Engager

Goals

- Center our communities in all that we do and decide to do, through a research-backed approach.
- Amplify the stories and history of Boston’s many communities, elevating underheard voices.
- Create a true ‘Library without Walls’ by enhancing the digital experience and widening online collections.
- Promote digital literacy as an essential life skillset supported by connections to resources.
- Expand our multi-language offerings, supporting our diverse immigrant communities.

# Financial Benchmarking

Appendix

# Organizational Benchmarks

*We analyzed 10 urban library systems and found 6 to be comparable to the Boston Public Library.*

Among these, the DC Public Library, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Seattle Public Library, and San Francisco Public Library are similar in **size, geographic reach, and the population they serve.**

The Denver Public Library and Columbus Metropolitan Library cover a larger geographic area but are **comparable in size and population served, making them excellent benchmarks.**

Chicago Public Library, Brooklyn Public Library, Free Library of Philadelphia, and New York Public Library—are **larger systems** and not directly comparable to BPL in size, reach, or population.



DC Public Library



Enoch Pratt Free Library



Seattle Public Library



San Francisco Public Library



Denver Public Library



Columbus Metropolitan Library

Appendix

# Organizational Benchmarks

In comparison, BPL has **24-78%** less staff than urban libraries of similar size and scale.

LIBRARY	ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET	POPULATION
<b>BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY</b>	<b>\$61,599,091 (FY25)</b>	<b>692,600*</b>
DC PUBLIC LIBRARY	\$75,000,000	670,050
ENOCH PRATT FREE LIBRARY	\$61,482,800	602,495
SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY	\$92,000,000	749,256
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY	\$166,000,000	873, 965
DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY	\$90,000,000	717,632
COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN LIBRARY	\$83,000,000	971,930

GEOGRAPHIC REACH (sq.mi)	LOCATIONS	TOTAL FTE	% FTE COMPARED TO OTHER LIBRARIES
<b>48</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>506/550**</b>	
68	27	625	24% MORE FTE
92	22	492	2% LESS FTE
84	27	711	41% MORE FTE
46.7	31	900	78% MORE FTE
153	27	766	51% MORE FTE
223	23	850	68% MORE FTE

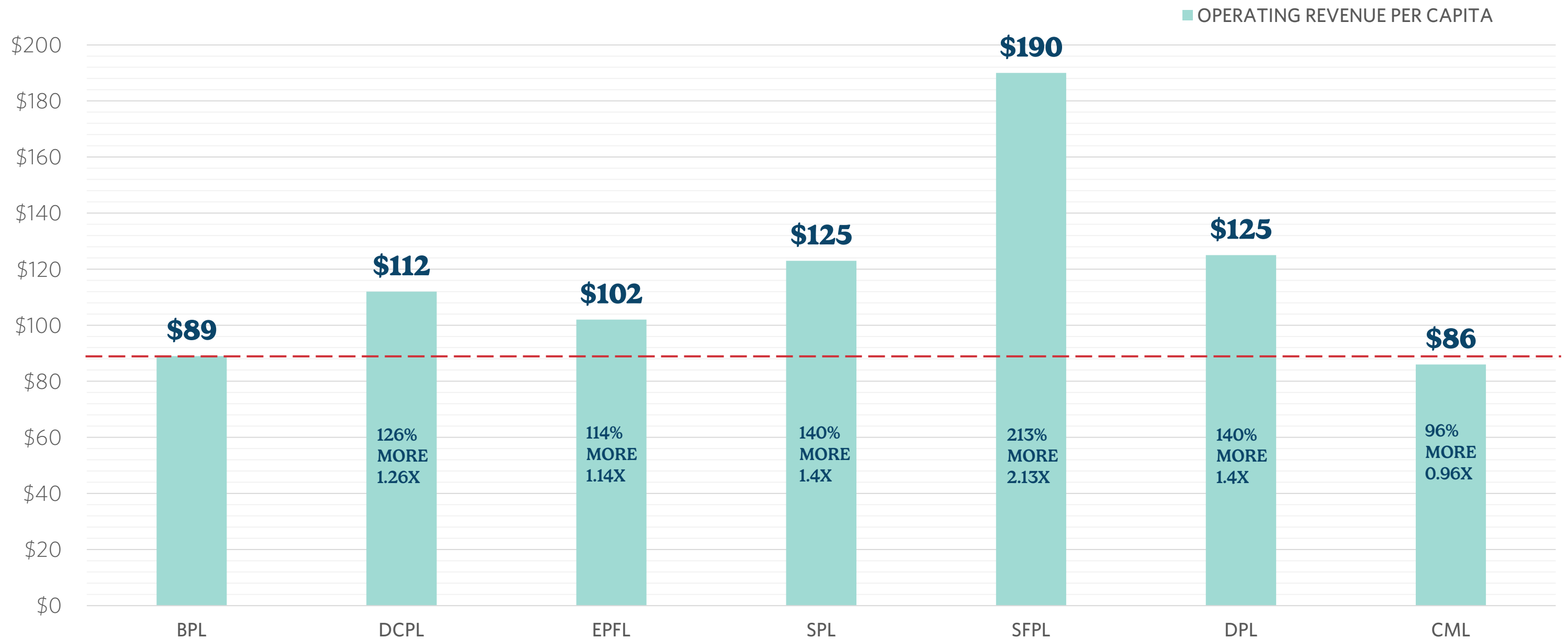
\*The Boston Public Library serves an immediate population of 700,000 and is also responsible for serving approximately 7 million people across the Commonwealth.

\*\*BPL operates one Central Library and 25 branches, with 550 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. Of these, 44 FTEs are assigned to Research and Special Collections. All comparisons are based on the 506 FTEs excluding research and special collections staff, FTE count provided October 2024

Appendix

# Organizational Benchmarks

On average, comparable peer urban libraries receive per capita funding that is twice that of BPL, with a range from almost **1.1x** to **2.1x**.



\*Note: This comparison only considers Boston's population of 700,000.

Appendix

# Organizational Benchmarks

*BPL oversees the largest Central Library in the country and 25 branches, managing significantly more square footage system-wide.*

**Boston Public Library**  
Central – 1,000,000 sf  
Total Branches - 300,000 sf  
**1.3 million SF**

**DC Public Library**  
Central – 400,000 sf  
Total Branches - 500,000 sf  
**900,000 SF**

**Enoch Pratt Free Library**  
Main – 349,713 sf  
Total Branches - 250,000 sf  
**572,278 SF**

**Seattle Public Library**  
Central – 360,000 sf  
Total Branches - 250,000 sf  
**610,000 SF**

**San Francisco Public Library**  
Main – 376,000 sf  
Total Branches - 227,000 sf  
**602,636 SF**

**Denver Public Library**  
Central – 540,000 sf  
Total Branches - 200,000 sf  
**740,000 SF**

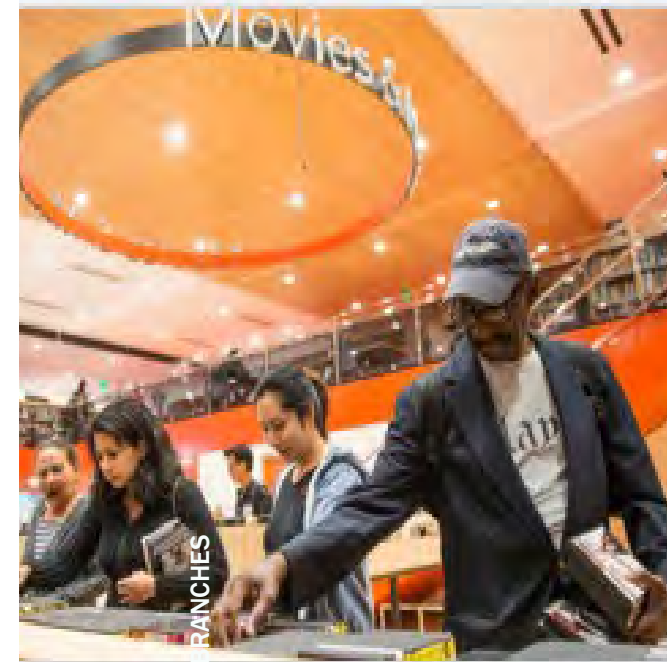
**Columbus Metropolitan Library**  
Main – 230,000 sf  
Total Branches - 370,000 sf  
**600,000 SF**

Appendix

# Organizational Benchmarks

The Boston Public Library, with over 23 million items, boasts one of the largest collections in the country, including materials dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

**No other public library matches the scale and complexity of BPL's holdings relative to its budget.**



Movies and Music DVDs, CDs and Audiobook Collection Newspapers, Novels, Books and More



Research and Archives



Rare Books Collection

The New York Public Library is the **only analogous research library**, but its governance and funding are structured inversely to BPL.



Written Manuscripts and Paper Documents



Leventhal Map Collection



Appendix

# Performance Metrics

Library	Materials Circulated	Physical Collection	Library Visits	Registered Cardholders	Children & Adult Program Attendance	Website Visits
Boston Public Library	5.7 Million	8.2 Million	2.3 Million	498 K + 50 K*	246 K	6.6 Million
DC Public Library	5 Million	1.1 Million	901 K	330 K	45 K	3.5 Million
Enoch Pratt Free Library	1.7 Million	2.2 Million	804 K	288 K	50 K	1.6 Million
Seattle Public Library	9.2 Million	1.7 Million	78 K	344 K	1006	5.2 Million
San Francisco Public Library	11.4 Million	4.2 Million	2.4 Million	438 K	101 K	6.2 Million
Denver Public Library	6 Million	1.5 Million	1.2 Million	395 K	23 K	5.3 Million
Columbus Met. Library	11.2 Million	1.5 Million	2.2 Million	604 K	133 K	7 Million
Richland County Public Library	2.3 Million	822 K	149 K	197 K	35 K	1.7 Million
Los Angeles Public Library	15.2 Million	6.3 Million	4.6 Million	2.8 Million	41 K	10.2 Million
Brooklyn Public Library	7.6 Million	29 Million	1.8 Million	534 K	13 K	4.5 Million

Data extracted from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) FY22 Public Libraries Survey and/or annual reports from each library.

\* 50,196 New library cards issued in 2023