



THE ASSOCIATION FOR
RURAL & SMALL
LIBRARIES

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2027





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At-a-Glance Strategic Plan

This one-page overview focuses on the questions of What, How, and Why within ARSL's strategic plan.

WHAT goals are being set by ARSL?		
 <p>Increase Operational & Environmental Sustainability</p>	 <p>Increase Membership Growth & Retention</p>	 <p>Expand Advocacy Efforts</p>
HOW will these goals be accomplished?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversifying revenue streams to ensure operational sustainability. • Incorporate environmental sustainability as a core component of organizational activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase professional development opportunities for ARSL members. • Create inclusive and meaningful engagement opportunities to foster community and connection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower our community to advocate on behalf of libraries. • Establish organizational advocacy priorities that reflect community needs.
WHY is this being done?		
<p>MISSION: ARSL builds strong communities through advocacy, professional development, and elevating the impact of rural and small libraries.</p> <p>VISION: As the premier organization representing rural and small libraries, ARSL recognizes the uniqueness of small and rural libraries and is committed to providing an environment that encourages excellence within this community of practice, supporting their goals of service and speaking on behalf of this important constituency.</p> <p>VALUES: Accessibility, Responsive Service, Intellectual Freedom, Professionalism, Collaboration, Accountability</p>		



Mission, Vision & Values

The foundation of any strategic plan begins with a well thought out organizational mission and a broad vision for the future. It is also important to establish key organizational values. Mission, vision, and values explain WHY strategic initiatives are implemented by an organization.

Mission Statement

ARSL builds strong communities through advocacy, professional development, and elevating the impact of rural and small libraries.

Vision Statement

As the premier organization representing rural and small libraries, ARSL recognizes the uniqueness of small and rural libraries and is committed to providing an environment that encourages excellence within this community of practice, supporting their goals of service and speaking on behalf of this important constituency.

Organizational Values

Accessibility: Providing equitable services, events, and information that are inclusive of all and reflect the diversity of our community.

Responsive Service: Acting with initiative, creativity, and flexibility, and utilizing technology to provide high quality service that is timely and relevant to member needs.

Intellectual Freedom: Dedicated to defending free and unhindered access to information and supporting library users' right to privacy.

Professionalism: Supporting the development of skilled practitioners at every level of librarianship and promoting professional respect in an environment where all feel welcome.

Collaboration: Partnering with other agencies and organizations to advance shared goals.

Accountability: Effective and efficient stewardship of member resources, promoting transparent communication and ethical conduct on the part of organizational leadership.

Goal One

Increase Operational & Environmental Sustainability



Objective One

Diversify revenue streams to ensure operational sustainability.

Actions

- Add dedicated staff support for fundraising and grant management.
- Secure additional year-round organizational sponsors through the ARSL Supporters Alliance.
- Implement incremental increases to vendor fees and secure additional event sponsorships for the Annual Conference.
- Grow membership through targeted outreach campaigns aligned with the regional rotation of the Annual Conference.



Objective Two

Incorporate environmental sustainability as a core component of organizational activities.

Actions

- Prioritize conference facilities that demonstrate a commitment to sustainable operations.
- Facilitate the adoption of digital conference solutions to minimize paper use and waste.
- Partner on sustainability initiatives within the broader professional landscape.
- Facilitate adoption of environmentally sustainable practices in libraries through resource-sharing and education.

Goal Two

Increase Membership Growth & Retention



Objective One

Enhance the value of ARSL membership.

Actions

- Expand online continuing education resources.
- Engage organizational partners to deliver relevant programming at the Annual Conference.
- Develop a peer mentorship program for rural and small library workers.



Objective Two

Foster community through meaningful and inclusive networking opportunities.

Actions

- Expand existing online networking groups and in-person conference events that bring together diverse groups within the library community.
- Prioritize recruitment of diverse volunteers and organizational leaders.
- Develop an ARSL Ambassadors program to raise awareness of membership benefits among nonmembers.
- Strengthen engagement with library supporters.

Goal Three

Expand Advocacy Efforts



Objective One

Empower our community to advocate on behalf of libraries.

Actions

- Offer continuing education focused on core advocacy areas (e.g., intellectual freedom, civic discourse).
- Expand existing Advocacy Center resources.
- Facilitate connections for direct peer support.



Objective Two

Establish organizational advocacy priorities that reflect community needs.

Actions

- Add dedicated staff support for community relations.
- Engage with partner organizations in coordinated advocacy efforts.
- Provide formal advocacy training for organizational leaders.
- Develop messaging and programming around identified needs in rural communities (e.g., literacy, digital equity, libraries as anchor institutions).



Into the Future

An effective strategic plan is a living document. Leadership at all levels should revisit it regularly to help guide decision making in matters large and small. Strategies for keeping this an active document include:

- In committee and Board meetings, make time to discuss how everyone is applying the strategic plan. What has been done since the last meeting to help accomplish the strategic initiatives, and what was learned? What activities are planned between this meeting and the next to make progress?
- Encourage individual reflection on the strategy. Ask volunteer leaders to consider how the strategic plan applies to their own personal work. Give people opportunities to talk about what the plan means to them. Tie specific goals and workplans to the strategic plan.
- Refer back to the strategic plan when planning or evaluating any initiative. How well does it align with the organization's stated goals? How could it align better? Use the strategic plan to decide what projects to pursue and what to set aside.
- Allow the plan to change if circumstances do. Has a particular initiative stopped being relevant? Is a target number or deadline no longer realistic? Has a new, extremely important consideration arisen? Revisit the plan at least annually to see if it needs to be revised based on new information or circumstances.
- Enjoy it! While this plan gives ARSL a lot to accomplish, it should also be an inspiring reminder of the important impact you have on the community.