



Illinois Heartland Library System

STRATEGIC

PLAN

2025 - 2027

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Introduction

Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) is a vibrant resource for its members with dedicated staff and vital services. To align its resources with the emerging priorities of member libraries, IHLS has undertaken a comprehensive strategic planning process incorporating feedback from members and stakeholders.

Implementing a new strategic plan will allow IHLS to focus on:

- connecting with current members, building relationships, and enhancing communications;
- advocating for library policies at local, state, and national levels;
- developing continuing education opportunities and evolving shared resources;
- and ensuring transparency and optimizing organizational structure.

IHLS initiated a strategic planning process starting in mid-2024. Alliance for Library Impact was engaged in June 2024 to facilitate the planning process in three phases: **Learn, Dream, Do**. The Learn phase entailed forming a Planning Team to guide the process, conducting a member survey, and leading focus groups. In the Dream phase, leadership team members discussed priorities and possible future pathways for the organization at retreat sessions. This strategic plan will guide IHLS through the Do phase, as it carries out its vision for the future.

Process Timeline

June 2024 - February 2025

The Planning Team spent several months learning about member needs and developing strategies to advance the organization’s mission over the next three years.

June	Planning Team Kick-Off
July - September	Member Survey; Focus Groups and Interviews
September	Learning Report; Planning Team Meeting, Board and Staff Retreats
October - November	Plan Development
December- February	Plan Review and Presentation to Board; Transition to Implementation



Vision

Imagining tomorrow, delivering today

Mission

IHLS empowers all types of libraries through advocacy, shared resources, innovative technologies, and robust learning opportunities that engage and enhance our member communities.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1:

ENGAGE MEMBERS

IHLS reaches out to build relationships with members while providing opportunities for members to connect and communicate with one another. Creating a two-way dialogue with local, state, and national policy makers, we will ensure that libraries are at the forefront of helping communities thrive.

Goals:

1.1 Build strong relationships between and among IHLS and member libraries

1.2 Enhance internal and external communications to facilitate awareness and ensure member engagement

1.3 Advocate on behalf of members with a variety of stakeholders to show how libraries create empowered communities

Potential Outcomes:

- Members indicate that IHLS is a go-to resource
- Members are better informed about all IHLS services
- State, regional, and local governing bodies better understand library needs and benefits
- Community members/library patrons better understand what IHLS is and what it offers them

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2:

SUPPORT LIBRARY SERVICES

IHLS is a go-to resource for members seeking training and continuing education. We provide valuable resources and shared technologies that allow members to serve their communities in integral and creative ways.

Goals:

2.1 Provide high quality continuing education content both in-person and online

2.2 Respond to evolving needs by providing robust services, shared resources, and innovative technologies

Potential Outcomes:

- Increased participation in continuing education/trainings
- Partnerships with outside organizations grow
- Members know what services IHLS offers and take advantage of more offerings
- Small and rural libraries can offer new technologies and services through shared resources

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3:

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IHLS prioritizes transparent operations and educates members on current and future organizational strategies. Staff will be confident in their roles and use their strengths to directly impact members.

Goals:

3.1 Ensure transparency for member trust and staff knowledge

3.2 Aim for a flexible organizational structure to optimize leadership and respond to emerging needs

Potential Outcomes:

- There is a clear return on investment for time and resources
- Members understand how IHLS works and what the organizational strategies are going forward
- Members feel their needs are met by IHLS staff
- IHLS staff feel their roles utilize their strengths

Next Steps

Implementation and Evaluation

Now that this plan has been adopted by the Illinois Heartland Library System Board of Directors, staff will develop an activity plan to guide implementation. Implementation is a continual process. The timing of certain activities will be determined by priority and influenced by various factors, such as funding and other resource allocation. Review and adjustment of the activity plan will happen on a regular basis.

Evaluation of the plan will be ongoing once the plan implementation is underway. The status of the plan and its implementation will be reported regularly to Directors and stakeholders.

Planning Committee

Leslie Bednar (IHLS Executive Director)
Stacey Carter (Director, Lincoln Correctional Center)
Leanne Furby (IHLS Project Coordinator)
Sarah Hill (IHLS Board Treasurer, and Director of Library Services, Lake Land College)
Rhonda Johnisee (IHLS Finance Director)
Ellen Popit (IHLS Associate Director)

Board of Directors

Loretta Broomfield
Karen Bounds
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Prepared by

