



**Illinois Heartland Library System**

**STRATEGIC**

**PLAN**

**2025 - 2027**

DRAFT

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DRAFT

# 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

Options to consider:

1. Imagining tomorrow, delivering possibilities for today (current tagline)
2. Library Resources, Delivered with Heart
3. Delivered with Heart

# Mission

We empower all types of libraries through advocacy, shared resources, innovative technologies, and robust learning opportunities that engage and enhance our members' work in their 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 stronger relationships between IHLS and member libraries, and among members

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 vibrant 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 Promote transparency for members, staff, and stakeholders

3.2 Aim for a flexible organizational structure to optimize staff strengths 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  
Ann Chandler  
Mark Decker  
Kim Dykstra  
Kristi Lear  
Linda McDonnell  
Matt Greider  
Sarah Hill  
Ryan Johnson  
Emily Pickell  
Joshua Short  
Michael Treece  
Kristy Walker

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Prepared by

