

Dolores Library District

Strategic Plan

July 2025 – June 2028

This three-year Strategic Plan for the Dolores Library District was developed during the spring of 2025, with input from the Dolores community, library staff, Dolores community leaders, and the Library Board of Trustees. Part 1, the introduction to the plan, describes the process used to develop the plan and a summary of the community survey results. Part 2 provides an overview of the library district and presents the mission statement. It also provides drafts of the vision and value statements. Part 3 is the plan, consisting of six major goals, covering the main aspects of library function and services, together with measurable objectives for each goal. Implementation of the plan will be reviewed regularly by the Board of Trustees and the Director in order to monitor progress. Copies of the Strategic Plan are available at the Dolores Public Library for the general public to review.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Planning Process: A Strategic Planning Committee was formed in January 2025 consisting of three trustees and the library director. The committee met regularly during the winter and spring, collecting and reviewing information and feedback from the community, discussing best practices for strategic planning, and developing a draft plan. The draft plan was presented to the full library board and was adopted at the regularly scheduled board meeting on July 8, 2025.

According to the Colorado Public Library Standards, The board of trustees oversees the strategic plan development while the library director and staff implement the plan, track progress, and provide regular reporting to the board. The strategic plan also enables the library to prioritize the budget, staff activities and performance, library services, and resources.

In separate meetings, the board and staff compiled responses to the following questions:

- What do we do?
- Where do we want to go?

- What do we value?
- What are the library's internal strengths and weaknesses?
- What are the library's external opportunities and external threats?

The director met with leaders of the community, including the Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, local business leaders, Friends of the Dolores Library, and town and school district officials. He sought their input on the role of the library in the greater Dolores community and their vision for where the library should be headed over the next 3 to 5 years.

Community Survey: A survey seeking community input about the library was made available online and in print form during the month of March. A total of 131 responses were received and tabulated. Highlights of the survey responses are presented below:

Does the library's collection and programming meet the needs of you and your family?

- Yes 85%
- Somewhat 14%
- No 1%

Is support for the library a wise use of tax dollars?

- Yes 95%
- Somewhat 5%
- No 0%

Do you feel welcome when you visit the library?

- Yes 86%
- Somewhat 12%
- No 2%

Is the library a source of pride for the Dolores community?

- Yes 94%
- Somewhat 4%
- No 2%

Survey respondents were asked to check which library services they and their families have used over the past year. From a list of eleven services, 43% of respondents said they use between one and three services; 47% of respondents said they use between four and seven services; and 10% of respondents said they use between eight and eleven services. Only one person said they do not use the library. In order from most used to least used, the services and the number of survey respondents who indicated that they use that service are listed below.

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| ○ Books in print available at the library | 118 | 90% |
| ○ Books in print available through inter-library loan | 82 | 63% |
| ○ Copying services | 61 | 47% |
| ○ Free Wi-Fi and computers | 61 | 47% |
| ○ Adult programming | 57 | 44% |
| ○ DVDs | 50 | 38% |
| ○ E-books through Cloud library | 41 | 32% |
| ○ Technology assistance | 27 | 21% |
| ○ Audio books on CD | 23 | 18% |
| ○ Children’s programming | 20 | 15% |
| ○ Teen programming | 8 | 6% |

Several open-ended questions were asked, seeking input on new programming, desired improvements or changes, what respondents value most about the library, and other suggestions. A total of 325 comments were submitted, all of which were reviewed by the committee and taken into consideration when developing goals for the Strategic Plan.

PART 2: OVERVIEW AND MISSION STATEMENT

Overview of the Dolores Public Library: Dolores is a small town located in the Dolores River Valley in Montezuma County, a county in the very southwestern corner of Colorado. The library district includes the town of Dolores and outlying rural areas. It is one of three libraries that serve the residents of Montezuma County. The library has a collection of 21,730 physical items including books, audio visual resources, and other loanable items.

The 2024 Public Library Annual Report included a number of useful statistics and interesting findings:

- 32,635 total circulation (29,016 physical/3,619 digital)

- Participation of 6,026 people in 429 unique programs
- 20,617 in-person visits, 3,356 phone calls
- 561,492 pageviews on our website
- 4,219 computer sessions on our public computers

Accomplishments during 2024 included:

- Maintained stable circulation, but saw a shift from hardcopy (decrease by 8%) to digital formats (increase by 22%)
- Updated the library website to comply with new accessibility requirements
- Raised \$25,000 for the Dolores Public Library Foundation Fund
- Obtained \$18,400 in grants
- Increased participation in teen programs by 236% and children's programs by 91%
- Saw an increase of 91% in patrons visiting the library website
- The library director was selected for the Association for Rural and Small Libraries Leadership Institute, a two-year professional development program

Mission, Vision, and Value Statements

The Dolores Library District's services to the community are guided by basic policies set out in the Library Bill of Rights and Code of Ethics.

MISSION: Your community source for knowledge, personal growth and opportunities for lifelong learning.

In the words of staff, board, and community members, the Dolores Public Library provides free books, services, programming, and a sense of community for Dolores residents. The library provides opportunities for learning and offers access to important resources to everyone, regardless of their background, income or ability. The library enriches lives and supports intellectual freedom and learning by providing a robust and diverse collection of books and resources in print, on CD and DVD, and digitally.

VISION:

Using input from staff, board, and community members, the following vision statement has been drafted. One of the goals of this Strategic Plan is to finalize the vision statement by the end of 2025.

The vision of the Dolores Public Library is to be a community hub of unbiased knowledge, interesting and diverse programming for people of all ages, and a safe place where all residents feel welcome and respected. The library encourages and fosters literacy, stimulates the imagination and creates the next generation of book lovers.

VALUE STATEMENTS:

As with the Vision Statement, it is a goal of the Strategic Plan to finalize these value statements by the end of 2025.

1. We believe that the freedom to read is essential to our democracy.
2. We value access to uncensored information that considers a variety of perspectives and points of view.
3. We believe that all people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use.
4. We value the people who use our services and their interests and needs.
5. We value the beautiful library building located on the Dolores River that is managed by welcoming, competent, professional staff.
6. We value our ability to offer a variety of free materials and services not available elsewhere in the community.
7. We value our relationship with the Dolores community and our ability to offer a place for all residents to work, relax, learn, and have fun.

PART 3: PLANNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal #1: Collection and Circulation

Utilize circulation data, patron input, and staff research of online resources, reviews, and recommendations to identify relevant and engaging materials that align with the demographic, cultural, and educational needs of the

greater Dolores community. Provide access to materials in a variety of formats while optimizing budget and space.

The library's collection of books, reference materials, membership in the Colorado Interlibrary Loan system, digital materials (including DVDs, audiobooks, databases, and e-books) and other loanable items (such as sewing machines, backpacks, games, and activity bags) form the heart of the Dolores Public Library. A small library cannot offer a full range of materials, but it can specialize in areas of local interest, respond to patron requests, and implement creative ways to use available space.

Objectives:

- Develop and implement a system for the ongoing collection and tabulation of patron input concerning preferences for fiction and non-fiction genres, print vs digital formats, age-specific needs, and loanable items. Consider patron input when adding to the collection, with an emphasis on balancing the physical and digital collections.
- Using input from Dolores school teachers, local historical societies such as the Galloping Goose Historical Society and the Montezuma Heritage Museum, and special interest groups, expand and diversify the library's collection of materials with local interest.
- At least twice a year, evaluate Interlibrary Loan usage trends to identify high-demand genres. Consider purchasing high demand books/genres.
- Promote new materials through the library website, social media, email newsletters, library displays, and a "staff picks" shelf.
- Offer trainings to patrons on how to access electronic materials.

Goal #2: Programming

Continue to expand programming for children, teens, adults, seniors and families as a way to meet community needs and bring new patrons into the library.

Programming options include specialized assistance offered to individual patrons, library sponsored programs, and programs sponsored by outside organizations or individuals. Community, board, and staff input collected as part of the March 2025

community survey indicated an avid interest in expanding programming for all age groups. In response to the question, "What new programs would you like see offered at the library?" a total of 59 suggestions were made. Space, budget, and staff time all limit the number of programs that can be offered.

- Offer a variety of programs that appeal to a range of patron groups.
- Using data from the 2025 community survey, schedule diverse programs throughout the year. Consider offering programs based on one or several themes each year.
- Provide the most requested programs, to the extent allowed by space and personnel.
- Market programs in diverse ways to reach as many households in the greater Dolores community as possible.

Goal #3: Personnel Development and Retention

Cultivate a team of personnel who value the library as a community resource, including (1) competent, customer-friendly library professionals who are rewarded for their service with competitive salaries and benefits; and (2) volunteers who assist paid staff with routine tasks.

The library has a professional staff and a team of volunteers who are committed to the growth and continued improvement of the library. The Library Director is responsible for cultivating the professional growth of each paid staff member through training, positive feedback, constructive performance evaluations, delegation of responsibility and other techniques that encourage individual growth and job satisfaction. It is the responsibility of the trustees to ensure that competitive salaries and benefits are offered and that staff are able to work within a safe environment. The Library Director is responsible for the oversight, but not necessarily direct supervision, of volunteers to ensure that all personnel associated with the library share in the same vision and values.

Objectives

- Evaluate on an annual basis the hardware and software needs of each staff person to ensure that they have the technology necessary to perform their jobs efficiently.

- Ensure that all staff, including the director, have the necessary customer service skills to create an inclusive space where all patrons feel welcome.
- Conduct a salary review at least once during the three-year planning period to ensure that, to the extent possible, salaries and benefits are competitive with similar sized library districts in Colorado and with other employers in Montezuma County.
- Engage the community in the work and mission of the library through the creation and management of volunteer positions.

Goal #4: Facility

Develop and implement plans for ongoing building maintenance and enhanced usage of all interior and exterior spaces.

Built in 2004, the Dolores Public Library is one of the most beautiful buildings in town, with an expansive wall of windows overlooking the Dolores River. The basic structure of the facility and fixtures requires regular maintenance, particularly as the building ages. Optimal use should be made of both the interior and exterior spaces. The library's exterior spaces offer the potential for expanded programming during the warmer months of the year. Patrons enjoy sitting on the patio facing the river. Patrons are often seen parked in the parking lot during hours when the library is closed, utilizing the library's free Wi-Fi connection.

Objectives

- Address the use of space in the library, with a focus on quiet zones, use of the supply/work room, additional storage space, the computer lab area, and display areas for loanable items and recent acquisitions.
- By the end of 2025, develop a schedule for the upgrade and replacement of public computers, shelving, and library furniture.
- Based upon input received on the community survey, evaluate the library's hours of operation, the meeting room reservation system, and the possible creation of a maker's space.
- Address the need for additional parking in consultation with neighboring property owners and with improved signage.

- Make exterior improvements, including enhanced visual appeal of exterior spaces, improved outdoor seating areas, and possibly an outdoor education area.
- In cooperation with local, state, and federal partners, evaluate improvements needed to stabilize the riverbank.

Goal #5: Board Development

Cultivate the existing board, ensure that each trustee receives the training and responsibilities that keep them engaged with board activities, and identify potential new trustees when a vacancy is anticipated.

The 7-member Board of Trustees has excellent attendance at monthly meetings. Most trustees sit on a committee (ad hoc or standing) or assist with other tasks outside of monthly meetings. There is an ongoing need for orientation of new trustees, professional development of all trustees, cultivation of new leaders willing to assume officer positions, and identification of patrons who might be interested in serving on the board when vacancies become available.

Objectives:

- Maintain an up-to-date board orientation packet, with essential files stored in digital format, to give to each new trustee who joins the board, as part of their orientation.
- Ensure that each trustee has access to information about professional development opportunities and online educational programs for library trustees.
- Schedule an “educational learning moment” at monthly board meetings.
- Maintain a matrix of trustee skill sets and demographics in order to identify areas where the board could be diversified when openings occur.
- When more than one opening on the board is anticipated, consider the feasibility of sending a letter of invitation to all registered voters in the Dolores Library District, announcing the need for new trustees.

Goal #6: Financing

Develop a financial plan for the library which addresses the need for ongoing fundraising, grant writing, and a mill levy increase.

Recent cuts in Colorado property assessment rates have resulted in reduced revenue to the Dolores Public Library from property taxes. As a result, the library has needed to reduce expenditures and develop alternative revenue streams, including grants, donations from individuals, and funds raised for the Dolores Library Foundation Fund and by the Friends of the Dolores Library. Reduced spending and alternative funding sources have not fully replaced reduced property tax revenue. As a result, the library district will need to request voter approval for an increase in the annual mill levy if the current level of service is to continue.

Objectives:

- By the end of 2026, develop a 10-year facility plan for the aging library infrastructure.
- Develop a fiscal plan that sets targets for the initiation of a mill levy increase campaign, raises the reserves necessary to implement the 10-year facility plan, and provides sufficient funds to offer competitive salaries and benefits to library staff.
- Consider the establishment of a capital fund as part of the fiscal plan.
- Evaluate in-house grant writing capacity and develop alternative ways to prepare grants if in-house capacity is not adequate.
- Coordinate with the officers of the Friends of the Dolores Library on a routine basis to ensure that FoDL goals are in alignment with library goals.