

Southeast Kansas Library System

Strategic Plan



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Approved by the Executive Board:
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System Overview:

The Southeast Kansas Library System (SEKLS) is one of the seven Regional Systems of Cooperative Libraries and includes 15 counties in our region. The System covers a total of 9,503 square miles with a population of over 200,000.

As defined in K.S.A. 75-2548, SEKLS exists “to provide adequate library services to all citizens of the state through regional systems of cooperating libraries herein provided, by the joint planning and financing of library services to improve existing service, to utilize such federal aid funds as may be available and to extend library service to persons not having the same at this time.”

SEKLS is headquartered in the Iola Public Library with office space rented from the library. There are two shared positions; the Director and Business Manager work 2/3 time for SEKLS and 1/3 time for the public library.

As provided by law, the SEKLS board contains representatives of all member libraries and appointees by the county commission of each taxing county, representing the area that levies the system tax. This makes a 117-member full board. A majority of responsibilities, other than approving the annual budget, are delegated to an Executive Board. The SEKLS Executive Board consists of nine members: three public library representatives from communities of varying sizes, two school library representatives, one academic or special library representative, one county appointee, plus one additional member and the president, both elected at large from any category of membership.

The current board is:

Scotty Zollars, Parsons (Academic)	President
Jennifer Gum-Fowler, Kincaid (Public)	Vice President
Jennifer Rosson, Caney (Public)	Secretary
Bev Clarkson, Pittsburg (Public)	Treasurer
Janice Jones, Yates Center (Public)	
Sarah Owen, Independence CC (Academic)	
Robie Martin, Parsons (School)	
Heather Kelly, Howard (School)	
Marilyn VanSoosten, Crawford County (Appointee)	

Development Process:

With support from an outside consultant, member library staff, System staff, and the Executive Board created this plan. The process began at member library Forums, informal discussions held monthly, with the development of new vision and mission statement options. In addition, the outside consultant led both a staff and an Executive Board retreat. Using the notes and ideas provided in these retreats, plus a work session with the System consulting staff, a draft plan was developed.

Once approved, a dashboard will be developed to provide live tracking from the System's website to support quarterly assessments and progress monitoring.

While the Strategic Plan will guide future growth, staff revised the System's Annual Report to highlight accomplishments of member libraries and staff. The Strategic Plan will be referenced in the annual System Plan and Budget that is developed for review and approval by the State Library Board of Kansas.

By aligning efforts around these core areas and action steps, the Southeast Kansas Library System can move towards a more connected, efficient, and impactful library system that serves the needs of the community while fostering growth, innovation, and collaboration among member libraries and departments.



Strategic Focus Areas:

1. Communication and Collaboration:

Ensure effective collaboration and communication within the System and between the System and member libraries.

Action Steps:

01. Develop innovative ways for SEKLS staff to collaborate with colleagues and member libraries. (Ongoing | Technology and Admin)
 - a. Continuously review and improve onboarding process and training provided to member libraries. (Ongoing | Consulting)
 - b. Implement Google Workspace training for staff to optimize knowledge, comfort, and use of these communication tools. (Year 1 | Technology)
 - c. Implement web and Google Workspace-based continuing education management and tracking strategy. (Year 2 | Consulting)
 - d. To strengthen team dynamics, address space concerns and other barriers identified as hindering collaboration. (Year 2 | Consulting and Admin)
02. Gather feedback from member libraries on System communications and enhance communication channels as needed. (Year 1 | Admin)
 - a. Assess all current communication channels between System and member libraries for accuracy, frequency, and appropriateness.
 - i. Implement shared contacts (Technology)
 - ii. Review Google Groups (Consulting)
 - b. Assess the effectiveness of established regular meetings to promote collaboration and information sharing. (Consulting)
 - c. Create a comprehensive communication plan to address information sharing, storage, and access using available technologies, such as Google Workspace and sekls.org. (Year 1 | Technology)
 - i. Redesign and launch a new web presence.

2. Culture and Relationships:

Cultivate a positive, supportive, and highly functional organizational culture.

Action Steps:

01. Promote psychological safety within the team. (Ongoing | Admin)
02. Encourage relationship-building opportunities among member libraries through retreats and organic bonding moments. (Ongoing | Consulting)
 - a. Host a Director's Retreat for public library directors. (Year 1)

- 03. With involvement of member libraries, the Board, and staff, fully explore and identify the System's organizational values. (Year 1 | Consulting and Admin)
 - a. Once identified, develop a plan to communicate the organizational values through marketing and reinforce them within the organization. (Year 2)
 - i. Develop a new Marketing budget line.
- 04. Review the System's overall employee benefits package, including the hybrid work policy and onboarding. (Year 1 | Admin)
 - a. Assess the effectiveness of that package in recruiting and retaining employees.
 - b. Research and consider the development of a longevity policy; adjustment of the start time in relation to using paid time off; and allowing for the limited roll over of vacation.

3. Strategic Alignment:

Assess the strategic alignment between SEKLS and Iola Public Library.

Action Steps:

- 01. Convene an ad hoc committee of the Executive Board and Iola Library Board to fully review the IPL-SEKLS Agreement. (Year 1 | Admin)
 - a. Assess duties, costs, resources, and all shared positions.
- 02. Convene an ad hoc committee of the Executive Board and staff to separate shared policies and procedures between SEKLS and Iola Library. (Year 1)
 - a. Research and draft missing or necessary policies and procedures for SEKLS.
 - b. Establish clear divisions and expectations irrespective of a joint or separate arrangement.
 - c. Amend the IPL-SEKLS Agreement accordingly.
- 03. Perform an audit of staff duties and update job descriptions accordingly. (Year 1)
- 04. Determine the feasibility of creating a new Advocacy Consultant position to support System and library staff and patrons. (Year 2)
 - a. Develop a job description.
 - b. Determine if this position can be shared with other organizations, such as schools and academic institutions.

4. Library Services, Support, and Funding:

Provide the support needed to ensure strong and relevant libraries in the System.

Action Steps:

- 01. Maintain strong relationships with member libraries. (Ongoing | Consulting)

- a. Consultants visit each member library at least once a year.
 - b. Schedule multiple in-person events annually to support relationship-building among member library staff and between member libraries and System staff.
02. Continuously assess and provide responsive services, training, and resources for libraries and staff. (Ongoing | Consulting and Administration)
- a. Identify and communicate the Kansas Library Standards that are covered in each workshop.
 - b. Educate and inform on issues of importance, such as legislative updates.
03. Gather feedback from member libraries on System services, resources, and programs. (Year 1 | Consulting)
- a. Review the effectiveness of the Interest Groups program.
 - i. If warranted, Staff will identify and provide expanded opportunities for networking and discussion.
04. Determine the future of the Family Engagement in Public Libraries grant-funded program. (Year 1 | Youth Services)
- a. Reassess the workload of the Youth Services Consultant and services provided to libraries in connection with this, including;
 - i. Services to school librarians.
 - b. Consider different models to continue the grant, including;
 - i. Outside agency administering the grant to offer program throughout the state.
 - ii. Partnership agreement with other systems, and/or the State Library to offer services in their region.
 - iii. Train-the trainer opportunity for systems interested in implementing the model themselves.
 - c. Determine what continuation within SEKLS would look like with no outside support, including;
 - i. Garnering local financial support from trusts, organizations, and other interested parties.
05. Support and strengthen services to children in libraries (Year 2 | Youth Services)
- a. Develop a Storytime training module that involves expert training, onsite observation at participating libraries, and reflection with a focus on scalability and adaptability.
06. Identify and expand funding for member libraries. (Year 2 | Admin)
- a. Explore, review, and implement diverse funding mechanisms, including grants, partnerships, allocation, and subsidies to expand services, programs, and technology.
 - b. Advocate for increases in State Aid.
07. Support libraries to be advocates for the relevance and advancement of library services within their communities. (Year 2 | Consulting)

- a. Provide hands-on training for use of LibraryAware and Canva to develop meaningful communication pieces.
 - b. Identify and participate in relevant activities, such as Library Legislative Day.
 - c. Provide one advocacy-focused continuing education opportunity each year.
08. Position member libraries as essential community partners and respected leaders. (Year 3 | Consulting and Admin)
- a. Cultivate engaged library leaders capable of assessing and meeting community needs.
 - i. Provide training on conducting a community needs analysis.
 - b. Identify additional opportunities to develop leadership, public speaking, and advocacy skills.
 - i. Explore potential partnerships such as Toastmasters.

5. Consortium Development and Resource Sharing:

Support resource sharing services that promote economies of scale and expanded library services throughout the region.

Action Steps:

- 01. Solidify a strategy for inclusion of additional public and non-public libraries into SEKnFind. (Year 1 | SEKnFind and Youth Services)
 - a. Identify public libraries not currently part of SEKnFind and determine the best path towards inclusion, including consideration of Coffey County libraries.
 - b. Investigate the feasibility of including school libraries in the consortium.
 - i. Research and determine the impact of pertinent laws and regulations.
 - ii. Survey member school libraries to gauge interest.
- 02. Participate fully in discussions and development of the potential expansion of borrowing and lending beyond SEKnFind utilizing Koha's ILL capabilities. (Year 2)
- 03. Prepare a plan for future growth of SEKnFind consortium and other resource sharing services. (Year 2 | SEKnFind)
 - a. Investigate and rank the importance of current and future value-added services, such as;
 - i. Aspen, LibraryAware, and NoveList
 - b. Determine the personnel needs of the SEKnFind consortium and plan for future growth. (Year 3)

6. Resource and Technology Assessment:

Provide responsive and forward-thinking technology services to member libraries.

Action Steps:

01. Optimize funding to support access to digital collections. (Year 1 | Admin)
 - a. Replace hoopla support with agnostic support for digital content.
02. Ensure the System and member libraries have up-to-date technology and training to optimize use of available resources. (Ongoing | Technology)
 - a. Determine how best to fund and distribute hardware to member libraries. (Year 1 | Admin and Technology)
 - i. Prepare for the Windows 10 end-of-life in October 2025.
 - ii. Inventory existing hardware and software at member libraries.
 - iii. Provide usage statistics and consulting to assist with replacement decisions. Assist with usage data collection, if needed.
 - b. Provide Technology Plan training and support. (Year 2)
 - c. Increase understanding of and use of Category Two E-rate funding among school and public libraries. (Year 2)
 - d. Analyze the impact of technological advancements. (Year 3 | Technology)
 - i. Provide training and support to develop AI usage policies.
 - ii. Assess use, budget, and possible expansion of the System's collection of demonstration technology.

Vision and Mission Statements:

Vision Options:

- To create a seamlessly connected and empowered Regional Library System fostering innovation, collaboration, and community engagement.
- Communities within the Southeast Kansas Regional Library System have innovative, connected, and responsive library services.
- The varied information needs of all patrons in the SEKLS region are met by friendly, knowledgeable, welcoming library staff.

Mission Statement Options:

- SEKLS, in service to public, academic, and special libraries in southeast Kansas, fosters progress, supports leadership, and enriches communities through funding, professional guidance, and resource sharing.
- SEKLS strengthens libraries. We provide robust resources, shared knowledge, and innovative solutions for our communities.
 - Libraries: public, academic, school, and special libraries
 - Resources: Financial and human resources
 - Shared knowledge: Consulting and best practices
 - Innovate solutions: Continuing education and grant-funded projects
 - Communities: Every community in the SEK regional library system
- SEKLS supports communities in our region by helping build and sustain excellent library service.

Core Values:

- **Collaboration:** Foster a culture of collaboration and shared learning among departments within SEKLS, with our member libraries, and between those libraries and their communities.
- **Transparency:** Operate with openness and trust in all internal and external communications and processes.
- **Excellence:** Commitment to delivering high-quality services, programs, and resources to member libraries.
- **Innovation:** Embrace technological advancements and creative solutions to meet evolving community needs.
- **Empowerment:** Support and empower [system and member] library staff through training, resources, and positive work environments.