

Phase 1 – Assess (Mission, Values, Community Needs)

In the first phase, **Assess**, you develop your mission and values, and determine your community needs. You need to really know your community and library environment before you plan.



VALUES: WHAT WE BELIEVE

Values define the set of beliefs and principles that guide the library and staff behavior. They are the basis of the ethical standards that govern how a library serves the community, works with partners and vendors, appreciates staff members, and is represented to the world. They define what is respected, and may have emotional connotations. Leaders and staff should be proud of the library's values because these values define the library's culture and identity. They should drive the priorities of staff and leadership and how they perform and make decisions. Your community should experience the values through each service and program. Values can be single words (such as integrity, trust, teamwork) or short phrases.

Values express the library's attitude and beliefs about three things:

- People: the way people inside and outside the library are treated
- Process: how the library is managed, decisions are made, and services and programs are provided
- Performance: expectations concerning the library's responsibilities and intended impact on its community

VALUES ACTIVITY

Values can be identified by using an in-person group exercise with all library staff. You could also have all staff participate in the brainstorming step and have leadership organize and make the final selection. Or you could have leadership make the initial list and have staff narrow down and make final selection as a group.

1. Brainstorm. Take 10 minutes to silently answer the question, **“What is important at our library and what is unique about our role in the community?”** Write down every value that comes to mind (a word or phrase), putting each on its own separate index card or Post-it note. Each person should write at least 10. Display the notes or cards randomly on a wall or table so that all are visible.
2. Sort the ideas into categories that seem to fit together. Try to condense into 5-7 groups that feature similar ideas. Move values that don’t have a place to a “parking lot” to the side of your sorting area. Come back later to see if these ideas now have a place. As a group, create headings for each category grouping.
3. Now you are ready to choose your library’s core values from the organized list. Look at each of the 5-7 groups you created. Choose a key word or concept that summarizes the entire group of cards. This is where a large list of core values can be helpful to help you capture the right words to summarize each of your groups. **The key word or concept you chose from each group is one of your core values.** The core values should be weighted by significance (# of cards) and consist of everything identified as most important or unique about your library. For each category, write a values statement, reviewing the values with everyone to assure understanding and agreement.

Your group’s list of 5-7 core values or values statement:

How will you carry out the process of determining your library values?
