

## XI. STRATEGIC ISSUES

### A. FY2019 – FY2022 Strategic Plan Trends – Discussion

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The FY2019 – FY2022 Strategic Plan (<http://libraries.idaho.gov/files/2019-2022-STATE-planSbai.pdf>) continues to address Idaho library needs described in terms of the Commission’s mission and identified state priorities:

- Building the capacity of libraries to better serve their communities,
- Increasing college and career readiness of Idahoans,
- Working toward equitable access to information and library services for all Idahoans, and
- Furthering economic and employment development.

The plan provides flexibility to manage and improve current programs and, at the same time, strategically positions the Commission to take advantage of opportunities that might appear. It reflects the Commission’s intent to support current and traditional services important to the people of Idaho while keeping an eye on future trends to enhance information access and services in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

As part of the staff’s ongoing efforts to practice foresight and plan for the future, the agency’s third library futures conference is scheduled for June 2019, with the theme “Libraries POP – Pursue the Possibilities!” We have also reassigned some responsibilities in order to reclass the newly vacant Librarian position to Library Consultant; we will recruit for experience with STEAM services, design thinking, and library services for Idaho’s aging population as well as ability to track emerging trends the agency should help Idaho libraries understand and prepare to address.

Pages 3 through 6 of the Plan (see below) describe key factors, including statistics and trends, under each of the first four goals (Goal 5 addresses responsible and effective government practices). With this discussion, I’m seeking Board members’ perspectives on trends that will impact Idaho libraries.

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**Goal 1: Build the institutional capacity of libraries to better serve their communities**, is further supported by data from the [FY2016 Idaho Public Library Statistics](#). Approximately 75% of Idaho libraries do not have ALA-MLS librarians on staff. While many public library directors and other staff without MLS degrees have received some training in library practices, many in smaller public libraries are new to the profession and particularly appreciate the variety of continuing education options and consulting services available through the Commission. Those needs have

also been identified and rank highly for Idaho's school library personnel. Surveys and work in the field show approximately 99 percent of elementary school library staff are noncertified paraprofessionals, often without access to a district school library coordinator to help with professional development and planning for the needs of students and teachers. Each year, the Commission's School Library Consultant creates an annual training plan that builds on previous training, while providing basic library skills for those new to school libraries. She has also worked to provide train-the-trainer models for district coordinators.

Idaho's access to broadband internet is not keeping up with demand, especially in rural communities. According to content delivery network Akamai's latest State of the Internet Report, "Across the country, 42 of the 51 states saw average connection speeds above 15 Mbps, up from 34 states in the previous quarter. The remaining states were not far from this threshold, with lowest-ranking Idaho posting a 12.0 Mbps average connection speed, up 0.4% quarter over quarter." The Commission was able to hire its first full-time Broadband Consultant in FY2017 and is seeing that pay off in terms of consulting services for E-rate and the Education Opportunity Resource Act (EOR), and technology planning assistance to smaller public libraries, in particular.

*(Sources for Goal 1: Public Library Statistics FY 2016, [Akamai's State of the Internet Report, 2017.](#))*

**Goal 2: Support the role of libraries in preparing Idahoans to be college and career ready,** addresses one of the state's most pressing needs. In 2010, the Idaho State Board of Education set a goal that 60 percent of Idaho citizens between the ages of 25 and 34 would have a postsecondary degree or certificate by the year 2020. The Idaho Commission for Libraries and the Idaho library community immediately joined countless businesses, agencies, and other organizations that are working toward this statewide goal. Reaching the 60 percent goal will require focused effort, investment, and improvement at all levels of our education system. Idaho libraries should be recognized for the role they play to ensure more children enter kindergarten with early literacy skills, for providing positive learning experiences for students during the summer and other out-of-school time, and supporting student learning through library resources and the guidance of trained librarians. The Commission is working closely with the State Department of Education and the State Board of Education to help promote the free Smarty Ants™ program and ensure that more children have access to resources and programs that will help them succeed when they enter school. Commission staff have also increased efforts to ensure more libraries offer STEM programs and resources beginning with Fun with Math and Science family workshops, popular Makelt programs, and new Summer STEM from your library resources. Our partnership with the STEM Action Center has strengthened these offerings and ensured that all those who are interested in creating Maker Spaces and more can offer those throughout the state.

While there are many positive indicators, there is still much work to be done. Idaho lags behind the rest of the country on several key educational markers:

- Idaho ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in the proportion of students who graduate from high school on time and go directly to college and 49<sup>th</sup> in per-student spending.
- More than 7 in 10 students (77%) attend schools receiving Title 1 funds.
- Since 1993, the Hispanic student population in Idaho has more than doubled, from 16,697 students to 48,855 in 2014. The recent increase in the Hispanic population is relevant because a large achievement gap exists between Hispanic students and non-Hispanic students and between low-income students and higher-income students.
- In reading and math, more than 6 in 10 of Idaho 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders have not reached the level of “proficient,” as defined by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- Idaho’s high school graduation rate now stands at 78.9 percent, ranking below the national average of 83.2 percent.
- Idaho is one of seven states that provide no state funding for preschool or any other early education programs.
- Idaho school districts are not required to offer kindergarten programs, nor are children required to attend kindergarten. The compulsory starting age for education in Idaho is seven years old.
- Only 35 percent of three- and four-year-old children in Idaho are enrolled in some form of preschool or enriched day care. The national average is 47 percent.
- In the fall of 2013, only 54 percent of Idaho kindergarteners were ready to read upon entering school, based on the Idaho Reading Indicator scores. Fewer than half (45%) of low-income kindergarteners and fewer than one-third (29%) of Hispanic kindergarteners were ready to read when entering kindergarten.

*(Sources for Goal 2: Idaho State Board of Education; Public Library Statistics FY 2015; Public Library Survey Data, 2014, Institute of Museum and Library Services, Idaho Education Field Guide, 2015; Idaho Statesman and Idaho Education News reports 2015-2016)*

**Goal 3: Ensure equitable access to information and library services for Idahoans with disabilities, those in rural communities, English-language learners, people living in poverty, and other underserved communities**, addresses the challenges of providing access to all Idahoans by removing barriers to information. Many of the statistics cited in the second goal are tied to the large number of Idahoans who are living in poverty. Nearly half (49%) of all K-12 students were eligible for free or reduced lunch in 2015. Idaho’s mountainous and vast area make communication, traveling, and increasing access to broadband connectivity a challenge. In 2016-2017, 10.5 percent of Idaho students were receiving special education services.

According to December 2017 Census Bureau reports, Idaho leads the U.S. as the fastest growing state. A forecasting model developed by the Idaho Department of Labor suggests Idaho’s population will grow at three times the national rate between now and 2025 – and nearly all

the new residents will be retirees moving to the state. The forecasting model predicts that Idaho's population will grow 15.3 percent from 2015 to 2025, reaching 1.9 million. The model also suggests an increasing urbanization trend in Idaho, with more than two-thirds of the population growth expected to occur in Ada, Canyon, and Kootenai Counties. By 2025, it shows the share of Idaho's population living in urban counties increasing from 70.6 percent to 74.3 percent.

According to the 2017 "[Hispanic Profile Data Book for Idaho](#)," published by the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs, Idaho Hispanics make up 12 percent of Idaho's population and 18 percent of K-12 public school students. Hispanics accounted for 30 percent of the state's population growth between 2010 and 2015 and 42 percent of K-12 public school enrollment growth between the 2010-11 and 2015-16 school years. In terms of education, Idaho Hispanic students are less proficient in basic subjects and less prepared for college and career than non-Hispanics, based on standardized test scores. Students in the English Learner program score the lowest on standardized tests. Compared to non-Hispanics, Hispanics in Idaho have higher unemployment and poverty rates. They also have lower average annual wages and household income.

If information becomes available only in certain areas or only to those who can afford it, our economy and the basic foundations of our democracy, as well as each individual's quality of life, are at risk. This plan helps address some of the barriers that are currently limiting access for all Idahoans.

*(Sources for Goal 3: Idaho State Department of Education, Idaho Department of Labor via [Spokesman Review article](#), and Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs)*

**Goal 4: Support the role of libraries in economic and employment development**, is a relatively new area of focus for the Commission and one that ties into our support of Idaho's education system and goal #2. While Idaho's unemployment rate is currently relatively low, many Idahoans struggle to find employment and often turn to their local library staff for help to apply for jobs online, prepare resumes, and locate job postings. In the long-term, if we don't have more students pursue post-secondary education options, Idaho will have an under-supply of educated workers. Studies show at least 60 percent of jobs nationwide will require a post-secondary credential in the years ahead. The lack of qualified workers in Idaho may cause businesses to stagnate or leave the state in search of a better educated workforce and keep downward pressure on wages. Additional data to support this goal includes:

- Through 2024, the Idaho Department of Labor forecasts total employment growth to be on track to exceed labor force growth by 49,000 people. Idaho's rural counties tend to be hit hardest.
- Total employment in Idaho's urban counties is growing more than twice as fast as the population of the state's rural counties. According to the Idaho Department of Labor,

the unemployment rate has dropped over the last seven years to 3.2 percent. Idaho's per capita income is 80 percent of the national average and ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in the U.S.

- In 2016, Idaho had 21,000 people making minimum wage or less, representing about 4.6 percent of all hourly wage earners in the state. The nationwide average is 3.3 percent and Idaho ranks the ninth highest in the nation. Of those Idahoans making the minimum wage or less in 2015, 61 percent were women.
- The 2018 United Way report shows 40 percent of Idahoans are living in poverty or are asset limited, income constrained, employed (ALICE).
- The top three emerging degree areas for Idaho employers are computer science/technology, business and economics, and engineering.

The work ICfL staff have done partnering with the Idaho Department of Labor in recent years has laid the groundwork for libraries to begin to formalize plans to support economic and employment development.

*(Sources for Goal 4: Idaho State Board of Education, 2014; Idaho Department of Labor Workforce Trends, May 2018; [ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Idaho, 2018 United Way Report](#); Idaho Education Field Guide, 2015)*

**Goal 5: Model responsible and effective government practices** addresses the way staff operate and work to continuously improve operations. Planning, budgeting, and implementing services is done by aligning resources and priorities to maximize the value of both public and private funding.