Overview:
As part of the Jackson County Library Strategic Planning process input was solicited from key stakeholders throughout the county about the future of the Library. Members of the community were asked what they consider important about the role of libraries in our lives and the services the library should deliver.

Process:
Nine focus groups were held between October 2015 and January 2016 and involved 122 people. Participants represented a wide variety of sectors including arts, education, media, business, government, social services, community leaders, Friends of the Library groups, Library Foundation and more. Library District board members were actively involved in these sessions, which were facilitated by Margot Helphand, consultant to the strategic planning process as well as library staff.

Participants were asked:
- What your organization’s greatest priorities for the future?
- What are greatest challenges or barriers to achieve these priorities?
- What role do you think your library (the district and branches) can play in accomplishing the priorities and meeting the challenges?

Participants were asked to prioritize 21st Century library functions as developed by the American Public Library Association.

Key Themes:
1. What are your organization’s greatest priorities for the future?
   A. Major Themes
   - **Workforce Development;** Developing a skilled work force to support strategic business and economic priorities; develop work ethic; help veterans and people with disabilities find jobs; physical space to grow and accommodate work force
     - e.g. Programs with resume writing, interviewing, tutoring, basic math and reading skills classes
   - **Economic Development;** Launch, support, and attract new businesses—building on existing entrepreneurship; need living wage jobs; diversify employment opportunities; recruit and retain 1st rate talent (small town, isolated, integrating into community)
   - **Education and Literacy;**
     - **Literacy: Increase graduation rates** through literacy; improve outcomes for students—reach goals in 3 years; close the achievement/opportunity gap; improve reading/writing/math skills; supplement education to make literature accessible; extending learning...
past school day; college/career ready; engaging people of all ages to continue their journey toward literacy
- Digital literacy; access—internet, technology, and tools
- Instill love of reading in children—measures of progress 3rd grade
- Tutoring, reliable and accurate sources of information
- Readiness for school
- Digital Literacy; Digital fluency; residents comfortable using technology
- Alleviate poverty; elevate low income families
- Transportation – county-wide; providing transit convenient for everyone
  - Urban growth—stay within walking distance of transit routes
  - Improve image of using transportation
  - Long range plan for reliable transportation system
- Access; Expand footprint by extending world class internet services to Jackson County
- Improve safety and reduce crime

2. What are the greatest challenges or barriers to achieve these priorities?
   A. Major Themes
   - Socio-economic diversity; poverty; gap between have and have-nots;
     Vulnerable populations; poorer students start impaired in language; lack of economic base; poverty of spirit where people can’t imagine a better future; low wages; capacity to fund public services while area still recovering from recession; lack of family wage jobs
   - Lack of collaboration; multiple community priorities; each community has different priorities; lots of entities working on the same issue and not collaborating; lack of cohesion – small, rural, dispersed communities, need critical mass to work on critical issues need to add more voices
   - Achievement gap – students unprepared for digital age; governments unprepared to help in the digital age; low graduation rates; culture of “underachievement”
   - Workforce; Underperforming dramatically in terms of turning out a qualified labor pool; people can’t pass drug tests; shortages; hard to hire people to meet needs of employers; workforce cluster priorities based on real, logical trends, need to engage workforce partners; workforce trained to attract business or other way around
   - Funding; finding Board members to raise money
   - Transportation; tax to fund increased transportation impossible; getting to library is difficult; impedes getting folks to programs offered
   - Lack of time and volunteers– Lack of time to work on big issues or engage in the community; competition for people’s time
   - Language barriers; Bilingual-bicultural staff needed; library staffing needs to reflect community
3. What role do you think your library (the district and branches) can play in accomplishing the priorities and meeting the challenges?

A. Major Themes

- **Facilitate literacy**: tutor center at library; support reluctant readers; literary competitions; leverage filing of eBooks for students to use; workshops for literacy; parent empowerment; focus on information literacy
- **Link to public schools**: Connect to schools; keep kids interested in learning all year long; ASPIRE program with libraries; libraries involved with schools to make sure students graduate, ready for next steps and workforce; pathways for kids to provide opportunities for internships
- **Maintain collection**: Have the collection people need and want; keep up to date with evolving knowledge; maintain traditional role as book repository
- **Be the Community Hub: Community/Social Center**: Library is the community living room with focus on intellectual discourse; meeting rooms; seasonal experiences; a place where people come together to think, create and talk; a safe place; nucleus of the community; connecting people to each other and to organizations;
- **Outreach to the Community**: think beyond the library walls; take the library to the people; staff reach outlying areas; help people make connections; outreach to homebound; outreach to kids; partner with other organizations; programs in the community
- **Develop the Workforce**: target underemployed and emerging workforce; become the physical location for workforce development; teach people job skills such as resume writing; offer soft skills training (leadership, conflict, speaking, etc. – all branches); assist in career choices; someone from library at the RCC workforce sector table; workforce training hub;
- **Build love of reading and learning**: Inspire children; imagination is the heart of creativity; collection development must ensure that needed materials vigorously support children;
- **Provide Access to Technology**: keep up-to-date on technology; ensure internet connection for people who cannot afford high speed access; digital projects (Hannon Library partnership with SOU for digitization of library materials); library staff act as learning facilitators; eBook training
- **Facilitate Early Learning**: Support early literacy; pre-K literacy facilitate early learning through programming, provide a physical space for early childhood learning to carry on in the libraries

4. Library Functions Prioritized (see attached)