

Multi-Year Strategy for a Safe and Welcoming Library

The mission of the Los Angeles Public Library is to provide free and easy access to information, ideas, books and technology that enrich, educate and empower every individual in our city's diverse communities. The library is a safe haven for learning and engagement, a place where everyone is welcome to follow their own pursuits and goals. Libraries are a unique institution in the community; in non-pandemic times, anyone can walk through the doors without restriction and be treated with dignity and respect.

What it means to feel safe and welcome in a space can differ from person to person, and from neighborhood to neighborhood. To be responsive to the needs of our patrons, staff, and community, the Library seeks to approach safety and security from a broader, more holistic perspective. Continuing work to create a welcoming and safe environment for staff and patrons will consist of four pillars: evaluation of safety ecosystem on a community level with community input, consolidation of tools of security and safety under the Library Experience Office, training for staff, and facilities improvements and alterations related to safety.

The Library Experience Office is a new approach for the Los Angeles Public Library that intends to create a bridge between social service, customer service, and the responses required in instances beyond the library's control, such as emergency situations. The Library Experience Office will provide a system-wide, strategic approach to safety and security that works across the library's divisions and in collaboration with Library partners and the public. The Office will coordinate the implementation of the Safety & Security Project recommendations, manage the work of new and existing staff teams, facilitate community engagement, and evaluate the effectiveness of evolving safety policies and practices and security investments using both traditional and alternative approaches.

FY 2020-21

In the current fiscal year, the proposed budget for LAPD Security Services and contract security was reduced by \$2 million and repurposed for exploring alternatives to traditional policing. The Reimagining Safety Initiative is: pursuing partnerships with nonprofit organizations to provide mental health care services to connect patrons to resources and services; providing training for staff; identifying facilities and programming changes to foster a welcoming environment for all; and forming the Library Experience Office.

In the first half of the 2020-21 fiscal year, the library has been closed to in-person services, protecting the health and safety of staff and the community by providing contactless services via Library To Go and digital services. During this time, the Safety & Security Project has been working on implementing recommendations from the project, including evaluating the security

aspects of the Library budget, developing mechanisms for staff input and information-sharing on health and safety topics, researching best practices from other systems, and providing input to the formation of the Library Experience Office.

The work of building the groundwork for a broad approach to safety and security does not reside with one individual, office, or group; it is the responsibility of every corner of the organization. Staff in branches and Central Library work to engage their community, provide experience to shape practices, and participate in the planning and execution of projects. IT staff upgrade systems and apply their expertise to maintain safe spaces. The Engagement & Learning division works with frontline staff to engage the public in meaningful programs to enrich the lives of Angelenos. Every department of the Library supports the efforts of safety and security and provides a welcoming environment for enrich, empower, and educate.

Additional action items planned in FY 2020-21:

- Develop a safety evaluation toolkit for each library to assess what being a safe and welcoming space means in their community.
- Work with a community engagement consultant to establish a methodology for inviting community input from a wide range of stakeholders and begin listening to and learning from the public.
- Continue compiling best practices from other libraries and institutions.
- Hire Principal Librarian II to manage Library Experience Office.
- Work with City Personnel to define and establish civil service lists for Social Worker II and III.
- Work with City Personnel to identify appropriate classification for Library Experience Specialists.
- Evaluate training programs for staff; begin training on personal safety, de-escalation, and community engagement in coordination with partners.
- Develop an aggregated evaluation assessment that includes information on library-specific evaluations, local assets and partnerships, community safety resources, number and categories of incidents, and community and staff feedback.
- Conduct conversations with staff as part of the Library's ongoing process of evaluating assumptions and dismantling racial bias, particularly in relation to safe and welcoming spaces for all.
- Establish contractual agreements with partners to begin work with social workers, mental health workers, and peer navigators.

FY 2021-22

FY 2021-22 will be a pivotal year to build the infrastructure and capacity of LAPL to manage safety and security from a broader perspective, using a variety of tools to position our staff and communities to work together to define and create safe and welcoming environments for all. The proposed budget establishes the formation of the Library Experience Office and provides

funds for additional personnel as well as funds for contractual services and technology upgrades.

Action Items:

- Continue community engagement, using a variety of methods to ensure equitable access and participation.
- Continue ongoing evaluation of the community/branch safety ecosystem, using an iterative process developed by the Safety & Security Project.
- Transition resources and processes to the Library Experience Office, including coordination with LAPD Security Services and contract security personnel.
- Hire Social Worker III and establish duties and responsibilities for Social Worker IIs.
- Begin hiring Library Experience Specialists.
- Continue to work with and expand opportunities for partnerships with local groups and individuals to meet the needs of the diverse communities the Library serves.
- Develop on-going opportunities for staff to share best practices within the system.
- Continue to evaluate and revise incident reporting procedures and practices.
- Following safety guidelines for reopening post-pandemic, expand pilot projects with partners providing mental health and social services, and services to unhoused patrons, and assess the impact of these partnerships.
- Continue staff training; establish a baseline of training for all new hires and substitute employees.
- Sustain staff conversations on implicit bias and racism.
- Begin work on Facilities Master Plan, incorporating evaluation of physical space and safety to criteria.
- In preparing for the FY2022-23 budget, determine criteria for security presence, based on factors including success onboarding Library Experience Specialists; adoption of social workers, peer navigators and other partner projects in health and safety; and progress in the City of Los Angeles efforts to incorporate alternatives to police response to non-violent emergency situations, such as the Therapeutic Van Pilot Program.

FY 2022-23

This year will focus on continuing the evaluation and training practices established during the previous year, and continuation of the Facilities Master Plan and facilities and technology upgrades.

Additional action Items:

- Expand Library Experience Specialist program, based on library evaluation reporting.
- Continue to explore opportunities to partner with local organizations to promote investment in the community and fulfill the role of the library as a community resource, including resources for people experiencing homelessness, workforce development, referrals to mental health resources, and support of education and learning for all ages.
- Expand peer navigator and social worker programs, based on local need and previous successes.

Challenges

- Measures to address the City fiscal crisis, including a hiring freeze and restrictions on contracting, may slow implementation of parts of the formation of Library Experience Office and the ability to negotiate contractual agreements.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of Reimagining Safety Initiative pilot programs that cannot begin while libraries are operating contactless and limited in-person services.
- The Library shares the challenges and opportunities that the City of Los Angeles faces in the coming years and these external factors will impact the demand and availability of resources.

Reporting

The Library will report on the progress of creating a safe and welcoming environment for library users, patrons and staff as part of the budget approval process in November. An additional mid-fiscal year report will be scheduled for the Spring. The Library will work with the Board Ad Hoc Committee on Re-envisioning Security on reporting progress throughout the year.