LEROY COLLINS
LEON COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Learn. Engage. Innovate.

ESSENTIAL LIBRARIES INITIATIVE

ADOPTED JUNE 2021

Leon County Board of County Commissioners: *(Left to Right) District 2 Commissioner Jimbo Jackson, At-Large Commissioner Carolyn D. Cummings, District 4 Commissioner Brian Welch, District 1 Commissioner Bill Proctor (Chairman), At- Large Commissioner Nick Maddox (Vice Chairman), District 5 Commissioner Kristin Dozier, District 3 Commissioner Rick Minor*

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LEON COUNTY GOVERNMENT
ESSENTIAL LIBRARIES

VINCENT S. LONG
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

On behalf of Leon County Government, I am excited to present Leon County's Essential Libraries Initiative (ELI). The ELI re-envisions County libraries to better serve our community's changing needs both now and in the future. According to the Aspen Institute, libraries are no longer book warehouses. Rather, they are critical social infrastructure and integral to the community's continued resilience and overall wellbeing.

Approved by the Board of County Commissioners in June 2021, the ELI guides the Library System's daily actions to serve and support citizens as they learn new skills, engage with the community, and pursue creative interests for the whole family.

Leon County has long recognized the significant role our libraries have in serving and supporting citizens of all ages. But in recent years, in Leon County and around the country, circulation of physical materials has declined while demands for digital content, gathering spaces, and interactive programming continues to grow. To address these evolving needs, the County gathered input from thousands of citizens and community partners and began the process of creating the ELI. We used this input to align our priorities with the needs of the community to ensure continued relevance of County libraries. The plan you are now holding serves as a road map to grow that relevance in many different ways.

From engaging programming to facility enhancements, citizens can already see the ELI being implemented throughout our Library System. And as we plan for the future, we will continue to engage our citizens in transforming County libraries into centers of learning, engagement, and innovation.

PAMELA MONROE
DIRECTOR,
LEROY COLLINS LEON COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

The Essential Libraries Initiative (ELI) is a fantastic journey into our future, developed with and for you! Based upon information gathered through internal reviews, research on best practices of award-winning libraries, interdepartmental collaboration, and a wide range of community input, this exciting strategic plan leads the way to a vibrant, community-focused Library System.

We appreciate the participation of so many in the planning process. The ELI focus areas and priorities are direct results of listening sessions with citizens, community partners and stakeholders, and close to 5,000 survey responses from Library users and non-users alike. The opportunity to engage and serve even more citizens with new, relevant programs, materials and services is exciting! As a result, we have already begun implementing some of the action items. Others will take shape as planned over the next few years. As you read through this document, we hope you will see how the ELI will transform the Library and in turn, positively impact our community. We are confident that the value of the Essential Libraries Initiative will be evident for many years to come.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Leon County Public Library System's Essential Libraries Initiative is a strategic plan that re-envisions the Library to address the changing needs of residents and trends in library use. Approved by the Leon County Board of County Commissioners in June 2021, the initiative contains refocused priorities and action items to implement enhancements to the Library's offerings. Over the last two years, the Library has undergone an extensive re-envisioning process that includes identifying the changing roles of public libraries, refocusing priorities on the needs of the community, and engaging citizens to help develop new strategies to maintain relevance. Consequently, a major component of the Essential Libraries Initiative is developing new programs that are representative of and appealing to Leon County's diverse population.
The action items proposed as part of the initiative will be implemented over the next three years. The four focus areas of the Library guide the development of all new programs and services that will be offered as part of the Essential Libraries Initiative:

- Literacy and Lifelong Learning
- Business and Workforce Development
- Civic and Community Engagement
- Arts and Humanities

Each focus area includes specific priorities which will be achieved by implementing their respective action items. Although the Library will be developing and ensuring the completion of the action items, support from work areas, such as the Office of Sustainability, the Office of Economic Vitality, and Parks and Recreation, and partnerships with local institutions and community organizations will be vital to the success of the initiative.

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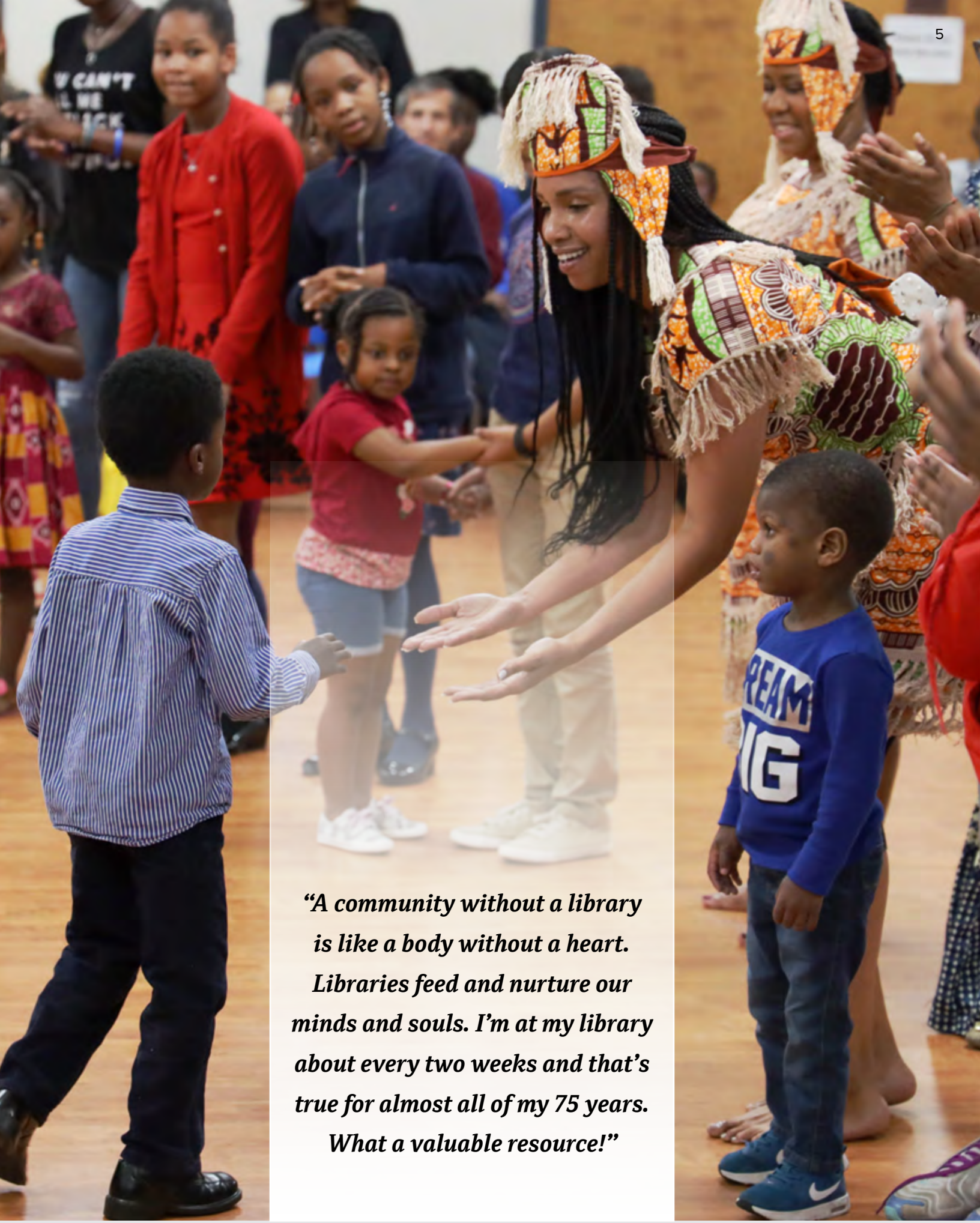
Mission Statement

To be an essential resource and place for learning, engagement and innovation that provides for our community's changing needs.



"A community without a library is like a body without a heart. Libraries feed and nurture our minds and souls. I'm at my library about every two weeks and that's true for almost all of my 75 years. What a valuable resource!"

FOCUS AREA

LITERACY AND LIFELONG LEARNING

To serve as a resource in developing the skills needed to be successful socially, intellectually, financially, and technologically at any age by promoting traditional and non-traditional forms of literacy. (L)

	Priority	*Initial Action Item*
L1	Champion adult and youth literacy as the foundation for learning and discovery.	Increase youth literacy resources by providing additional staff training, curating a collection of books, games, and other materials to help children practice reading at home, and offering summer reading skills camps.
L2	Provide technology training for all ages to ensure a digitally literate community.	Offer free basic and intermediate digital literacy training programs with opportunities for certification.
L3	Support lifelong education for seniors and retirees with programs that entertain, educate, and provide connections to community resources.	Partner with local organizations to develop workshops and events focused on mental health and financial topics that will serve both seniors and their caregivers.
L4	Develop early learning resources for parents and guardians to teach their children the skills they need to succeed in school.	Develop kindergarten readiness workshops and programs to help young children and their caregivers prepare for school.
L5	Support K-12 students in developing core academic and learning success skills: literacy, problem solving, creativity and innovation, teamwork and collaboration, and communication.	Continue to offer the Homework Hub program where K-8 students can participate in one-on-one tutoring, homework help clinics, and demonstrations of the Library's online studying tools.

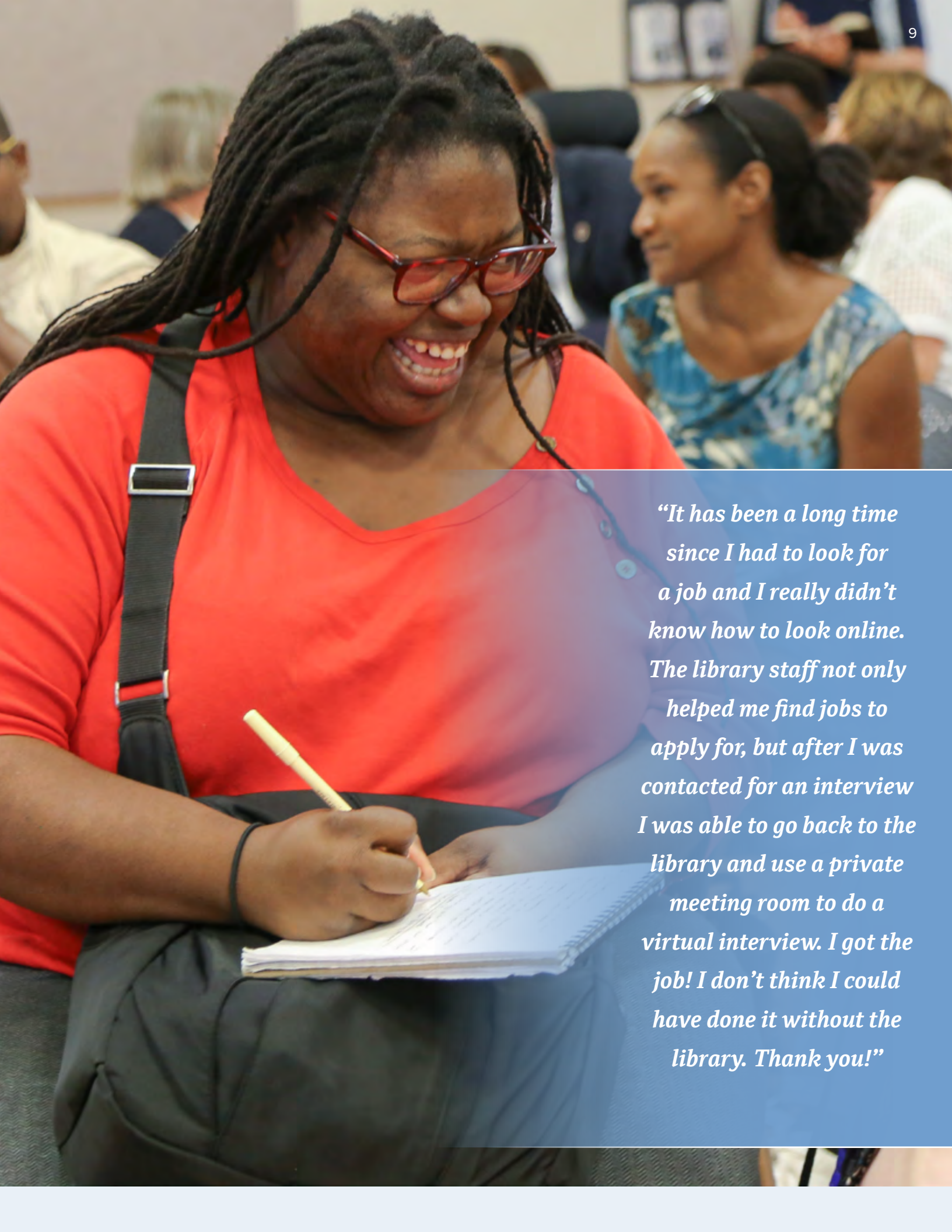
"I applied and got my job using library resources, vote at libraries, and read books at least once a month from different libraries across town. Thank you so much for providing this resource. I know I can always go there no matter how much is in my bank account."

FOCUS AREA

BUSINESS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

To support a strong local economy by acting as a resource for businesses and individuals seeking professional development. (B)

	Priority	*Initial Action Item*
B1	Collaborate with the Tallahassee-Leon County Office of Economic Vitality to provide resources and spaces that support local businesses and entrepreneurs.	Improve and expand coworking spaces and create new conference and meeting rooms for entrepreneurs, small business owners, and telecommuters.
B2	Provide programs that develop skillsets needed to build a thriving workforce.	Develop programs and activities with local partners to introduce youth to possible STEM career fields.
B3	Offer resources for job seekers and those transitioning to new careers.	Support parent jobseekers struggling to find or afford childcare by offering Storytime and other activities during job fairs.
B4	Provide opportunities for teens to develop leadership and life skills to ready them for the workforce.	Expand programming for teens to include life-skills training and other resources to prepare them for working and socializing in an adult world.

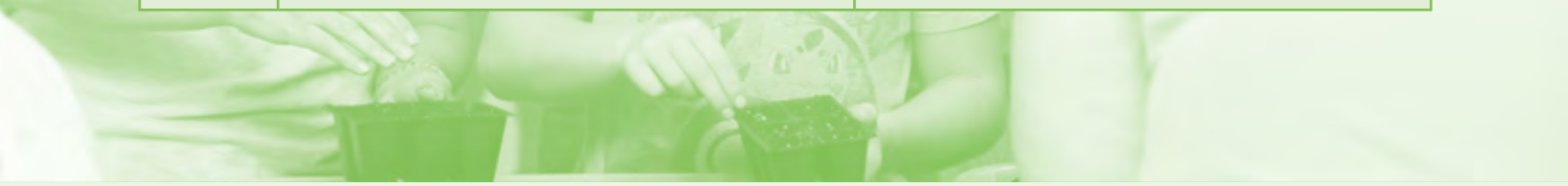


"It has been a long time since I had to look for a job and I really didn't know how to look online. The library staff not only helped me find jobs to apply for, but after I was contacted for an interview I was able to go back to the library and use a private meeting room to do a virtual interview. I got the job! I don't think I could have done it without the library. Thank you!"

FOCUS AREA
CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To serve as a vibrant, active hub of civic discourse and participative democracy, building relationships and bridging gaps in all segments of the community. (C)

	Priority	*Initial Action Item*
C1	Provide opportunities to engage in civil discourse around topics that impact Leon County and are of interest to the community.	Host facilitated discussions and resources on relevant topics and issues that impact Leon County residents, including programs about voter suppression and a resource guide for having discussions about race, equality, and inclusion.
C2	Serve as a gateway to connect people with community services and government programs.	Establish a Community Resources Specialist position to provide one-on-one assistance and referrals for community services, including affordable housing, career skills training, counseling, and government services and benefits.
C3	Collaborate with local colleges and universities to maximize outcomes in areas of mutual interest.	Expand the Library's internship program so participating students will work with staff to increase outreach to local community members and offer programs outside of Library facilities.
C4	Act as a resource and partner to local nonprofit service providers in addressing community issues.	• Launch a video visitation and family literacy program where children can connect with an incarcerated parent using a video kiosk at the Library. • Develop collaborative food programming with the Leon County Office of Sustainability and local partners to offer healthy cooking classes, no/low waste cooking, cooking on a budget, and cooking for those with limited access to food sources.



"I grew up using the library when I lived at zip code 32309 and I always loved it. I love having physical books to read and it's important to have a resource for those who are struggling. Keeping libraries alive is super important and I appreciate all they do to help."

FOCUS AREA
ARTS AND HUMANITIES

To support residents in their creative, intellectual, and recreational pursuits and foster cultural enrichment. (A)

	Priority	*Initial Action Item*
A1	Offer a diverse physical and digital collection that supports the needs and interests of the community.	Develop a Library of Things containing various items available for loan that supports the "sharing economy" and sustainability efforts and can provide low-income residents with access to much-needed resources that promote digital literacy or home improvement and maintenance.
A2	Collaborate with arts, humanities, and other creative organizations to provide programming for all ages.	Host tutorials, workshops, or clubs to teach crafting and maker skills that will help citizens develop critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills.
A3	Offer timely and relevant cultural events and classes that showcase the community's diversity.	Celebrate cultural heritage months and other annual observations with relevant programs and displays and social media outreach that promote related books and materials in the collection.
A4	Support creativity through the Library's collection, collaborative spaces, events, and classes.	• Simplify the exhibit request process and engage with local artists, archives, colleges of art and community organizations to curate exhibits at Library locations. • Create a welcoming and relaxing environment for patrons by playing soft music.

"I have lived all over and I've never been more satisfied with a Library System! The best, most responsive, forward thinking organization I've ever encountered. This "Library of Things" is a brilliant initiative and I'm glad to have had some input."

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YOUR COUNTY LIBRARIES

LeRoy Collins Leon County Main Library
200 West Park Ave.
(850) 606-2665

Dr. B. L. Perry, Jr. Branch Library
2817 South Adams St.
(850) 606-2950

Eastside Branch Library
1583 Pedrick Rd.
(850) 606-2750

Jane G. Sauls Fort Braden Branch Library
16327 Blountstown Hwy.
(850) 606-2900

Lake Jackson Branch Library
Lake Jackson Town Center, 3840-300 North Monroe St.
(850) 606-2850

Northeast Branch Library
5513 Thomasville Rd.
(850) 606-2800

Woodville Branch Library
8000 Old Woodville Rd.
(850) 606-2925

Visit **LeonCountyLibrary.org**
for online resources and to sign up for a Library card

Leon County Wants to Learn About Your Vision for Our Essential Libraries

For thoughts or to provide input on the County's Library System, please call **(850) 606-2665**.

To get more information on Library resources and events, visit **LeonCountyLibrary.org**.

To follow us on social media, visit **Facebook.com/LeonCountyLibrary**

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