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Estes Valley Library

Community Needs Assessment

Executive Summary

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Evaluation &
Analytics

Executive Summary

To gather feedback on how the Estes Valley Library can best serve the community, a community needs assessment was undertaken, with data collection occurring between August and October of 2022. In total, 599 survey responses were collected, 23 participants took part in a focus group, and five Spanish-speaking community members took part in a phone interview.

Overall, feedback gathered through the community needs assessment would indicate that respondents are fairly satisfied with the services offered by the library and feel it does well to provide the space for a variety of activities. The primary barriers that community members said prevent them from using the library were the seasonal crowds and available parking in and around the library itself. This document provides a summary of findings

Methodology

The community needs assessment effort used three primary methods to gather feedback: an online survey, focus groups and interviews conducted via phone.

Online Survey

An online survey was used to gather feedback from as many full-time and part-time residents of and visitors to the Estes Valley as possible. The survey was designed in and delivered via Alchemer. The survey was offered in both English and Spanish.

Outreach for the survey included direct outreach from the library and outreach from organizations within the Estes Valley. As an incentive for their feedback, survey participants were offered a chance to enter a drawing for one of five $100 gift cards of their choice from local businesses.

In total, 528 respondents completed the survey, and an additional 71 respondents completed all but the final portions of the survey (respondent demographic questions, incentive sign-up and focus group sign-up). The latter are included where applicable.

Focus Groups

To facilitate a more in-depth discussion with community members about the library's strengths, what they would like to see offered, and what they would like to see changed about the Estes Valley Library, three focus groups were held. Two focus groups were held in person at the Estes Valley Library, and one focus group was held virtually using Zoom meeting software. Each focus group was 90 minutes in length.

Recruitment for the focus groups was completed through interest shown and contact information collected through the online survey. A total of 107 participants indicated they were interested in participating in a focus group and invited to participate. Through the

three focus groups, a total of 23 individuals participated (18 via in-person focus groups and five via the virtual focus group).

Participants were given a $75 Visa gift card for their time and feedback. For the in-person focus groups, food and refreshments were also provided.

Interviews

To incorporate the voices of Spanish speakers, 30-minute phone interviews were conducted, in Spanish, with five Spanish-speaking members of the Estes Valley community. Recruitment came from the online survey of Spanish speakers who indicated they would be willing to participate in a focus group and from a community partner who helped identify Spanish-speaking members of the community willing to speak about the library. A total of eight participants were identified, and five participated in an interview. Interviewees were provided a $75 Visa gift card for their time and feedback.

Analysis

In addition to descriptive statistics (i.e., means, frequencies, etc.), a series of analyses were conducted. The purpose of these tests is to identify between-group patterns. That is, the intent is to see if means or frequencies vary between different groups based on library usage and demographic information collected. These tests included:

- **Chi-square tests of independence** to examine frequency-based data (e.g., the check-all-that-apply survey item related to barriers to using the library). For these analyses, the frequency of selections for each subgroup is compared with the overall sample frequency to see if it is more or less than expected based on the overall sample.

- **Independent samples t-tests** to compare scaled items using binary categorical variables (e.g., whether or not respondents have children in their household) to determine if mean scores varied between the two groups enough for it to be considered a pattern.

- **One-way ANOVA tests** to compare categorical variables that have more than two groups (e.g., age, library usage, etc.) to determine if mean scores varied between the groups.

Qualitative data collected from open-ended survey questions, focus groups and interviews were examined using thematic analysis to pull out patterns and topics most discussed by participants.

Summary of Findings

Barriers to Accessing the Library

Overall, when survey patrons were asked about the barriers that prevent them from using the library more, the most frequently selected barrier was seasonal crowds, followed by a

lack of parking. This was a frequent point of discussion at each focus group, was brought up by numerous survey respondents through the open-ended questions, and was mentioned by multiple interviewees.

In an examination of response rates by various demographic groupings, a few notable trends were observed:

- Seasonal crowds was selected as a barrier by virtual and casual patrons more frequently than expected.

- Non-patrons selected not having a library card, difficulty navigating the website and library apps, and language barriers more frequently than expected.

- Respondents who identified as Hispanic, Latino, Latina or Latinx selected work or family commitments and language barriers more frequently than expected.

- Respondents ages 25 to 34 and 24 and younger selected difficulty navigating the website and library apps more frequently than expected.

- Respondents from the 55 to 64 and 65 and older age groups indicated that the hours of library operation were a barrier less frequently than expected.

- Respondents who indicated they had children selected hours of operation, when programming is offered, and work or family commitments more frequently than expected.

- Respondents who had an adult with a disability in their household indicated the lack of disabled parking as a barrier more frequently than expected.

Increase Use

Overall, when survey patrons were asked what would lead them to use the library more frequently, the items with the highest mean scores were more available parking and more weekend hours. Qualitative feedback from focus groups, interviews and open-ended questions contained myriad suggestions, with the most frequent themes being more books and media, tech assistance and tech-related classes, a "library of things" where patrons could check out equipment, a coffee bar or ability to have beverages in the library, and classes and events targeting adults that are offered at times they can attend.

In an examination of survey responses by various demographic groupings, a few trends were observed:

- Casual patrons were more interested in an easier-to-navigate website than were enthusiast and in-person patrons.

- Virtual patrons, casual patrons and consistent patrons were more interested in more virtual services than were enthusiast and in-person patrons.

- While not statistically significant, the highest mean score for casual patrons was for available parking near the library.

- Respondents who identified as Hispanic, Latino, Latina or Latinx rated all items higher than those who did not identify as such. Statistically significant differences were observed for this demographic when it came to space dedicated to teenagers and an easier-to-obtain library card.

- A fairly consistent trend was respondents with less education having higher mean scores for items than did respondents with more education.

- Respondents with children in their household had higher mean scores for all items than did those without children in their household, particularly for more space dedicated to children and to teenagers.

- Households with an individual considered to be at high risk for COVID-19 had higher mean scores for more virtual services, an easier-to-navigate website, an easier-to-obtain library card, and more space dedicated both to children and to teenagers.

How Well the Estes Valley Library Provides Services

Overall, survey responses would indicate that the library is doing an exceptional job in providing various services. With a mean rating of 4.1, services for teenagers was the lowest-rated item. Qualitative feedback from focus groups, interviews and open-ended survey questions was also very positive as it relates to the services on offer from the library.

In an examination of survey responses by various demographic groupings, a few trends were observed:

- Female survey respondents tended to rate the library higher than did male survey respondents, with statistically significant differences for young children's services, services for adults, and hands-on learning opportunities.

- Respondents who identified as Hispanic, Latino, Latina or Latinx rated the library lower for all eight items than did those who did not identify as such. A statistically significant difference was observed for services for teenagers.

- Respondents with more education tended to rate the library's ability to provide services higher than did those with less education.

- Respondents from older age groups tended to rate the library higher than did those from younger age groups.

How Well the Estes Valley Library Provides Space for Various Activities

Overall, survey respondents and qualitative feedback were very positive on how well the library provides space for various activities. Qualitative feedback did suggest that more comfortable seating or spaces that were designed for comfort or lounging and reading would be appreciated. Focus group participants also noted the need for space for teenagers, saying it was lacking in the community.

In an examination of survey responses by various demographics, a few trends were observed:

- Respondents who identified as Hispanic, Latino, Latina or Latinx rated the library lower for all items in this section than did those who did not identify as such. Statistically significant differences were observed for space that feels welcoming and safe; space for relaxing, reading or studying; space to meet with friends; space for local networking; space for learning new skills; and space for arts, crafts and design.

- Respondents from younger age groups tended to rate the library lower for items in this section than did respondents from older age groups.

- Respondents with children in their household tended to rate the library lower for many items than did respondents without children in their household. This was particularly true for the item related to space for children's activities.

Interest in Changes Made During the COVID-19 Pandemic Becoming Permanent

Overall, interest in keeping the changes the library implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was fairly lukewarm, with Grab & Go kits and digital library cards having the highest mean scores, while curbside service and laptop checkout had the lowest mean scores.

In an examination of survey responses by various demographics, a few trends were observed:

- In-person library patrons had lower mean scores than others for virtual programming and community Zoom meeting service.

- Casual and virtual patrons had higher mean scores for digital library cards.

- Survey respondents who identified as female had higher mean scores for Grab & Go kits than did male survey respondents.

- Respondents who identified as Hispanic, Latino, Latina or Latinx had a higher mean score for laptop checkout than did respondents who did not identify as such.

Respondents ages 25 to 34 and 24 and younger tended to have higher mean scores for laptop checkout, curbside service and Wi-Fi hot spot checkout.

Recommendations

The following recommendations emerge from the findings:

Explore options for overcoming the challenges related to access. This would appear to be the foremost implication from the findings of this effort. Given the location and the influx of visitors to the area due to the national park, many community members' greatest challenge is accessing the library and its various services. Exploring options to take library services to community members during peak tourist season and options to reduce the

burden of paid parking for respondents who visit the library would most likely be welcome.

Find ways to educate the community on all the library offers. During the focus groups, there were multiple moments when participants were first learning about specific services or expressed uncertainty about what the library offers. For example, the Twig service that allows patrons to receive books without having to get to the library was brought up at all three focus groups, and each time there were participants who had not heard of the service. Additionally, there were numerous survey responses that seemed to contradict other survey responses when it came to available services. Where some respondents were glowing about an available service, others said they wished this service was offered or indicated they were not sure if it was offered but said it would be something they would like to see.

Streamline website navigation and event registration. Perhaps related to the last point, a few focus group participants, interviewees and survey respondents expressed some frustration with navigating the website and finding what they were looking for. One example specifically called out was the ability to register for events through the library calendar but not through the original page where the patron had learned about the event. Additionally, casual patrons and those from the youngest age groups were more likely than their peers to rate an easier-to-use website highly when asked what would lead them to use library services more. Multiple Spanish-speaking interviewees were unaware the library website was available in Spanish.

Offer programming targeting adults. Throughout the data collection activities, respondents were fairly impressed with the scope of what was on offer from the library. A common theme, however, was that much of the programming seemed to target young people or to be offered during daytime working hours.

Offer programming at times more conducive to participation by target audiences. Feedback suggests that many community members feel programming is offered at times that are not ideal. Survey responses indicate that more programming offered in the evenings throughout the week, and during the day on weekends, would be welcome. Focus group participants felt that some children's programming was offered at times when their child would likely be taking a nap, and that programming for teenagers was offered at times when it would be difficult for parents to help with logistics. Perhaps building in a feedback mechanism at event registration and through outreach, where participants could indicate they are interested but unable to make the time, could help fine-tune when programming is offered.