

2024-2026

# STRATEGIC PLAN



*Cultivating a community of readers and creative thinkers.*

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“*My kids love to read. The library offers books that encourage imagination and learning and programs that are fun and engaging. And it's free!*

**-Bogota Resident**

# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

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Like many communities, the borough of Bogota has been through many changes over the last few years. But some things remain the same: despite Bogota's increase in population, it remains a close-knit community where everyone is welcome. The Bogota Public Library is committed to capturing that spirit and aims to be, as one patron called us, "the center of everything." Both the staff and the Board of Trustees of the Bogota Library have always kept up with the growing and changing needs of its patrons: we've added to our Spanish language collection and have otherwise worked to create a collection that represents the diversity in our borough. We've also created a more browsable collection so patrons can more easily find genres and subjects. To continue these efforts, we formed a Strategic Plan Committee in 2023 and linked up with Library Crossroads Consulting to assist us with forming our next Strategic Plan, which will be used for the next three years.

The feedback we received from the community was very helpful and instrumental in forming this plan. Through a community-wide survey and four focus groups, we heard from the community about what we do well and what we can improve on. All feedback was welcomed and appreciated, and helped to create a more complete and comprehensive plan.

The Bogota Library plans to continue to build on what it does well—our staff remains committed to bringing diligent and friendly service to each interaction we have. We plan to remain a center for our community to borrow items, use our technology, and attend educational and interactive programming. We will continue to offer a collection and services as diverse as our community because that's what makes us mighty.

This plan also addresses the needs of our changing community, and offers goals and objectives based on these needs. We will work with the schools in town to make sure information on our services reaches our Bogota students and we will identify community leaders who can help us ensure all corners of our community knows what we have to offer.

On behalf of the staff and Trustees of the Bogota Public Library, I introduce our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan. As we move into the future, we will meet the needs of our community while continuing to provide efficient and friendly service with that small-town feel we all love.

*-Rebecca Youla, Board President*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# OUR PROCESS

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Developing a useful strategic plan is a dynamic and comprehensive process, involving in-depth analysis and broad collaboration. The ultimate result is an overarching plan that is meaningful to the community. We begin with an information-gathering phase, then work together to develop specifics that can guide the library's decision-making in the future. You will see the results of each step of our process in this plan.

## COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

To create this plan, we thoroughly analyzed the Bogota community. Using sources such as the U.S. Census and the NJ School Performance Report, we determined trends and unique features of the local area. This data also highlighted potential opportunities and strengths that emerged in later conversations with community members.

## SURVEYS

A community-wide survey was designed to capture concerns, attitudes, opinions, challenges, experiences, and the needs of residents of Bogota. It was distributed in English and Spanish, electronically and in print. The survey contained closed- and open-ended questions to elicit a wide range of responses.

## FOCUS GROUPS

As a final part of the information-gathering phase, we held a series of four focus groups. The groups consisted of members of key demographics, including: Spanish speakers, senior citizens, teens, and interested community members. Conversations were designed to explore themes that emerged in the previously collected data, and obtain more detailed, personalized feedback.

## VISION, MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Having gathered a comprehensive amount of information about the Bogota community, we began to refine an overarching vision for the library. Consultants met with the library's Strategic Planning Committee to develop an informed set of values and goals. Over the course of many in-depth discussions, and shaped by the wealth of data previously collected, the Strategic Planning Committee created and refined the vision, mission, goals, and objectives that you will find in this plan.

This strategic plan is a result of a joint effort between the entire Bogota library community, and Library Crossroads Consulting, LLC.

# COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

## INTRODUCTION

This analysis includes data from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the NJ School Performance Report, as well as insight gained from surveys and focus groups. Measurable statistics provide us with an improved understanding of the Bogota community, and help clarify emerging trends that were reflected in feedback from library staff and town residents.

## AT A GLANCE

Population and Demographics - U.S. Census statistics show a 7% increase in the population of Bogota between the 2010 and 2020 census, with similar increases in several demographics, making Bogota a small, but growing, multicultural community. Most residents identify as White, Hispanic, and/or Black or African American. Nearly half of the residents speak a language other than English at home.



***Bogota's population changes reported by the U.S. Census 1990-2020, including 2022 estimate.***

Computer and Internet Use - Nearly everyone has home access to a computer and broadband internet. This presents an opportunity for the library to act as a primary resource for education regarding information literacy and advances in technology.

Education and Income - Bogota is home to an educationally competitive school district, with graduation rates that are similar to those of the rest of the state. Nearly 75% of students go on to enroll in 2- or 4-year colleges. While the average income for residents of Bogota is above the state average, housing costs are around average, and poverty is very low.

Location and Transportation - Occupying less than one square mile in northern New Jersey, Bogota is adjacent to Hackensack, Teaneck, and Ridgefield Park. A central location gives Bogota residents easy access to major roads and additional public transit options in nearby municipalities.

Economy and Business - Bogota has few businesses due to its limited size, however according to information from Data Axle Reference Solutions, 14% of all businesses in Bogota are home businesses, a number that may increase in the new economy.



## COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

### Population and Demographics

Bogota had an estimated population of 8,778 residents, according to 2020 U.S. Census statistics. This represents an increase of approximately 7% since 2010. The overall population of the state of New Jersey increased about 5% in the same time period. Estimates from the U.S. Census projected that the population of Bogota continued to grow to 9,284 residents in 2022, representing an estimated 5.7% increase since the 2020 census.



The 2022 U.S. Census statistics for Bogota represent an increasingly diverse community with a sizable increase in many demographics. Nearly 60% of the population is White. Fifty percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino, which is an increase of about 10% from 2010. Thirteen percent of the population is Black or African American, which is more than double that demographic from 2010. Seven percent of the population identifies as Two or More Races, which represents an increase of about 6% from 2010. About 8% of the population is Asian alone, while less than 1% identify as American Indian and Alaskan alone.

Nearly 50% of residents of Bogota speak a language other than English at home, compared to about 32% overall in the rest of the state. Thirty seven percent of Bogota residents speak primarily Spanish. Nearly 4% speak Tagalog (including Filipino), 3% speak other Indo-European languages, nearly 1% speak Korean, and another 3% speak “Other and Unspecified” languages. An estimated 32% of residents of Bogota were born outside the United States, compared to about 23% for the state overall.

The median age of residents in Bogota is about 42.3 years, which is slightly higher than the average age of New Jersey residents, 40.3 years.

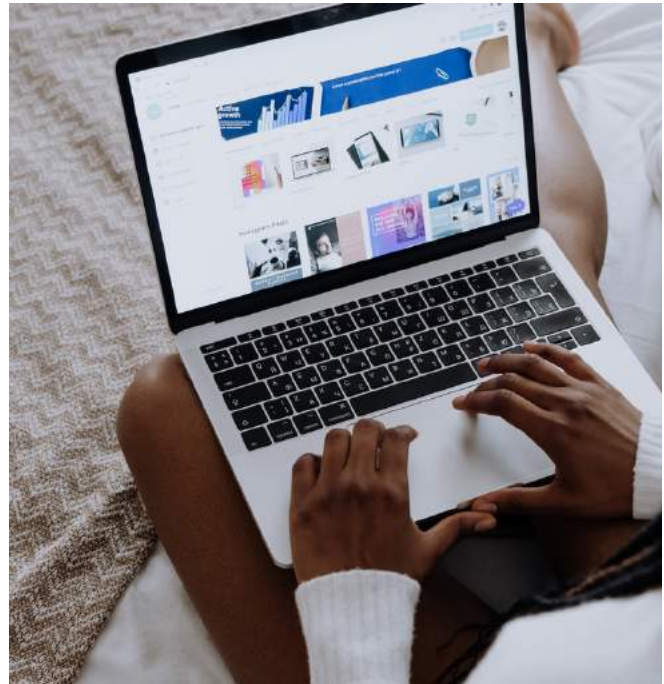
### **Voices from the Community**

Over 65% of survey respondents want Bogota to be a close knit and welcoming community. Survey respondents also frequently described the community they wanted to live in as diverse, inclusive, and accepting. Over 50% of surveyed residents selected “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” as one of the most important issues in Bogota. The Spanish speaking focus group greatly appreciated the library’s Spanish language collection for both adults and children.

Participants in all focus groups believe the Bogota Library brings the community together and plays an important role in connecting all people as the “center of everything.”

### **Computer and Internet Use**

Bogota residents have a high level of access to home computers (96.3%) and broadband internet (91.3%), which is slightly above average access for the state of New Jersey. Information literacy is difficult to gauge in communities, but it is an important element to consider when looking at computer and internet use. Libraries often find themselves to be the primary community resource for computer and internet assistance and training.



### **Voices from the Community**

Residents valued access to public computers, printers and WiFi, as well as the technology assistance they receive at the Bogota Library. Senior focus group participants specifically talked about their need for learning technology, and survey respondents also selected “Learning Technology” as a challenge they or their family have faced in recent years. Nearly 30% of survey participants chose “Invest in the technology required to create and assist digitally literate citizens,” as a statement that reflected their values.

### **Education and Income**

Performance measures for Bogota public schools show an educationally competitive school system with average to above average graduation rates. The Bogota school district has a total enrollment of 1,271 students who attend grades pre-K through 12, in four different schools:

- E. Roy Bixby Elementary School PK-5
- Lillian M. Steen Elementary School PK-5
- Bogota Middle School 6-7
- Bogota Jr./Sr. High School 8-12





The graduation rate from Bogota High School for Cohort 2022 was 96.3%, exceeding the state average of 90.9%. The Cohort 2021 graduation rate was 90.5%, almost identical to the state average for 2021. From the Class of 2021, just over 22% of students went on to 2-year colleges, while about 52.3% enrolled in 4-year institutions. An estimated 37.7% of Bogota residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, which is slightly under the 41.5% average for the state.

Bogota's students are served by two media specialists.

Bogota is a community with higher-than-average incomes, about average housing costs, and a very low poverty rate. The median income of Bogota (\$104,949) exceeds the New Jersey median of \$89,703 by about 17%. The employment rate in Bogota is around 69.6%, which is above the New Jersey average of 65.6%.

About 49% of householders in Bogota moved into their units since 2010. The median value of owner-occupied units in Bogota, from 2017 to 2021, was \$349,600, which was slightly lower than the median for New Jersey (\$355,700). Median gross rent in Bogota was \$1,506; compared to the New Jersey average of \$1,436. The poverty rate is 3.9%, compared to the New Jersey average of 10.2%.

### **Voices from the Community**

*Education was selected by survey respondents as the top issue for Bogota (64%). The library is a valued resource for Bogota students, and some residents would prefer a larger facility that is able to provide additional studying and tutoring space. Teens specifically discussed a need for quiet study space and a lack of seating at times.*

*"Cost of Living" was the challenge or concern most frequently selected by survey respondents, and "Affordability" was chosen by 48% of respondents as an issue in Bogota. Residents value the library's free access to books, ebooks, computers, WiFi, and programming.*

### **Location and Transportation**

Bogota occupies 0.8 square miles in northern New Jersey. It is located in Bergen County, on the eastern side of the Hackensack River. The borough borders Hackensack, Ridgefield Park, and Teaneck.

River Road and Queen Anne Road run north to south on each side of the borough, while East and West Main Street provide east to west access. Route 80 runs through the lower part of the borough and has entrances in adjacent towns. A major highway in northern New Jersey, Route 80 (and other nearby roads, including Routes 4 and 46), makes Bogota an excellent place to live for those working in other towns, or commuting to New York City.

The township is bisected by the CSX River Subdivision freight rail line, but currently has no NJ Transit commuter line. However, access to the Pascack Valley Line train is available in adjacent Hackensack. Multiple NJ Transit bus routes run through Bogota, connecting residents with Manhattan, Newark, and other Bergen County towns.



#### **Voices from the Community**

*Traffic, parking, and public transportation were all commonly selected issues by survey respondents. Residents often discussed the small size of the town as both positive and negative.*

#### **Economy and Business**

Outwater Industries (Plastics) is the largest business in Bogota by sales volume. Banks, convenience stores, contractors, healthcare providers, and realtors round out the majority of businesses in Bogota, with a sales volume exceeding one million dollars. Data Axle Reference Solutions\*\*\* estimates that about 36 of the 255 businesses listed in the database are home businesses. Home business examples include: contractors, musical instructors, consultants, travel agents, and daycare providers.

Many local businesses are members of the Hackensack Regional Chamber of Commerce, which serves businesses in Hackensack, South Hackensack, Bogota, Saddle Brook, Garfield, and Maywood. Their goal is to promote economic vitality and business success in the area through networking events, community events, referral services, and training opportunities.

#### **Voices from the Community**

*Focus group members discussed how Bogota does not have many businesses to support programs, which puts more pressure on parents and families to help find the money to support programs.*



## U.S. CENSUS STATISTICS FOR BOGOTA, NJ\*

### Total population:

2022 Estimate: 9,284

2020 Census: 8,778

2010 Census: 8,187

### Median household income, 2017-2021:

Bogota: \$104,949

New Jersey: \$89,703

### Employment rate:

Bogota: 69.6%

New Jersey: 65.6%

### Median age:

Bogota: 42.3

New Jersey: 40.3

### Persons in Poverty:

Bogota: 3.9%

New Jersey: 10.2%

### Racial and Ethnic Groups (2010):

White alone: 64.5%

Black or African American alone: 6.2%

Asian alone: 13.4%

Two or More Races: 1.3%

Hispanic or Latino: 30.9%

### Racial and Ethnic Groups (2020):

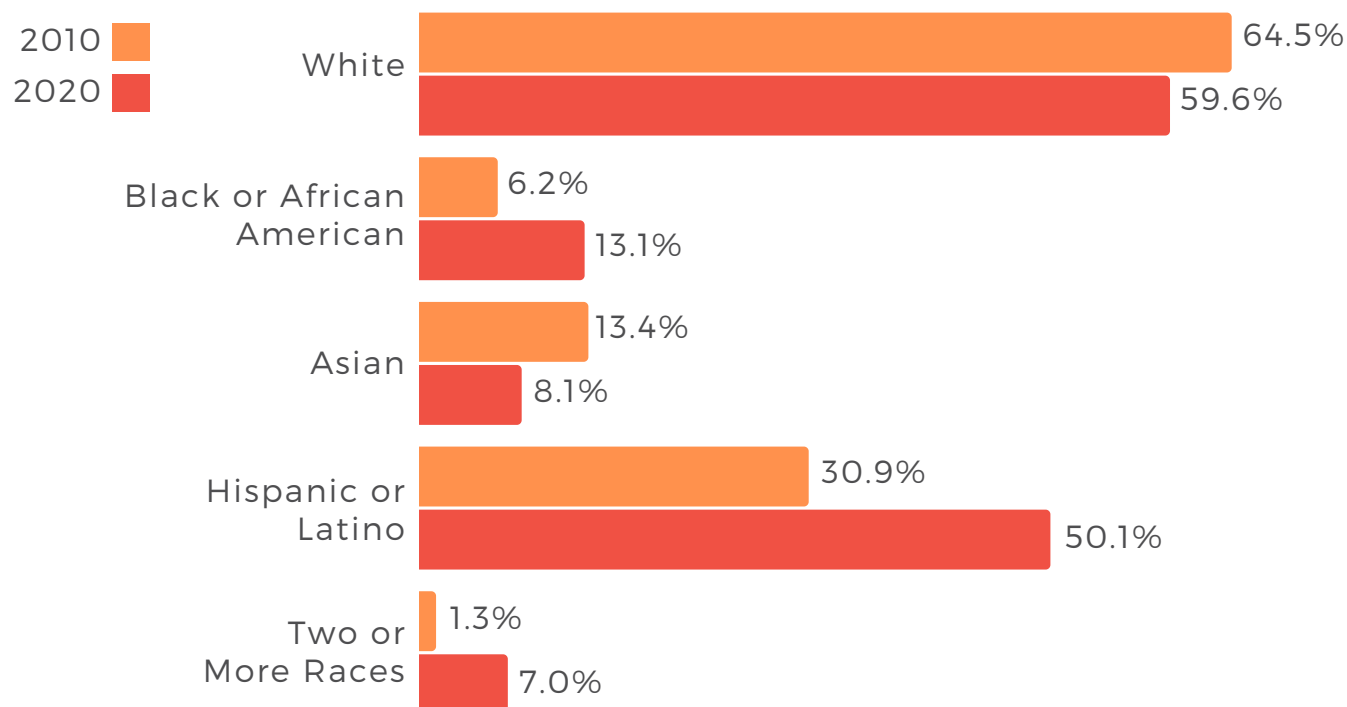
White alone: 59.6%

Black or African American alone: 13.1%

Asian alone: 8.1%

Two or More Races: 7.0%

Hispanic or Latino: 50.1%



### Computer and Internet Use

Households with a computer, percent, 2017-2021

Bogota: 96.3%

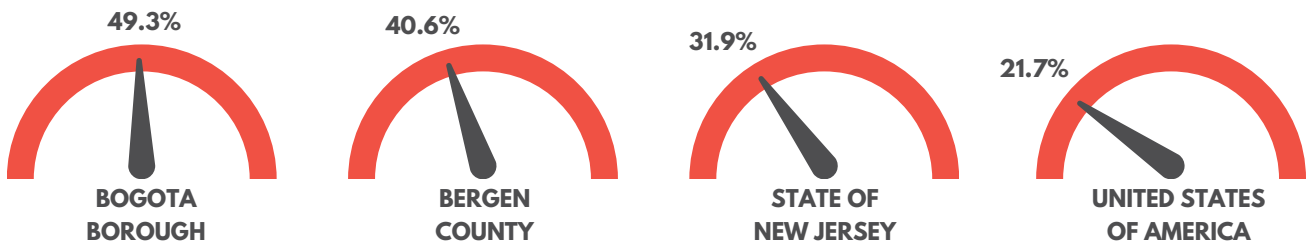
New Jersey: 93.9%

Households with a broadband Internet subscription, percent, 2017-2021

Bogota: 91.3%

New Jersey: 89.4%

## Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+



## Languages Spoken at Home (Top 4 and Other)

- Spanish: 37.1%
- Tagalog (Incl. Filipino): 3.5%
- Other Indo-European: 3.1%
- Korean: .9%
- Other and Unspecified Languages: 3.1%

## Foreign born persons, percent, 2017-2021

Bogota: 31.7%

New Jersey 22.9%

## Educational Attainment

High School Graduate or Higher

Bogota: 92%

New Jersey: 90.5%

Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Bogota: 37.7%

New Jersey: 41.5%



## Housing Characteristics

Housing Units With a Mortgage: 1,352

Occupied Units Paying Rent: 952

Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2017-2021:

Bogota: \$349,600

New Jersey: \$355,700

Median Gross Rent:

Bogota: \$1,506

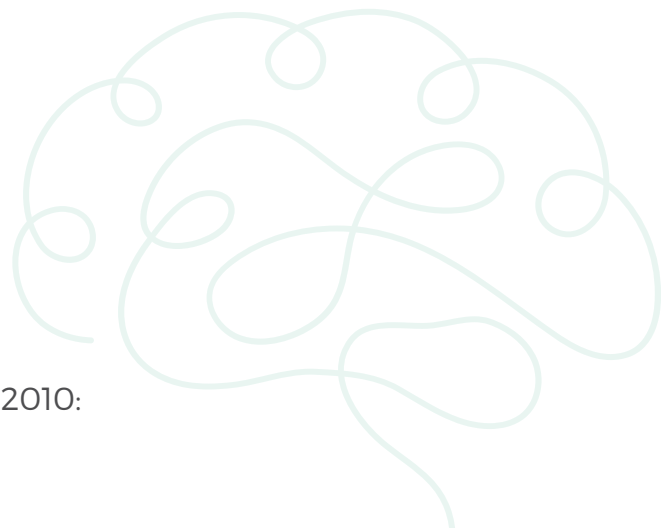
New Jersey: \$1,436

Occupied Housing Units:

3,102

Householders who moved into their unit since 2010:

1,508 (48.6%)



### Mean Travel Time to Work:

Bogota: 30.7 minutes

New Jersey: 31.5 minutes

## **NJ SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REPORTS (2021-2022) FOR BOGOTA\*\***

### Bogota School District Statistics

Enrollment: 1,271

Student Groups (PK-12)

- Economically Disadvantaged Students 36.7%
- Students with Disabilities 18.4%
- English Learners 8.7%

Racial and Ethnic Groups (PK-12)

White 13.2%

Hispanic 70.2%

Black or African American 7.7%

Asian 6.9%

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 0.2%

American Indian or Alaska Native 0.1%

Two Or More Races 1.7%

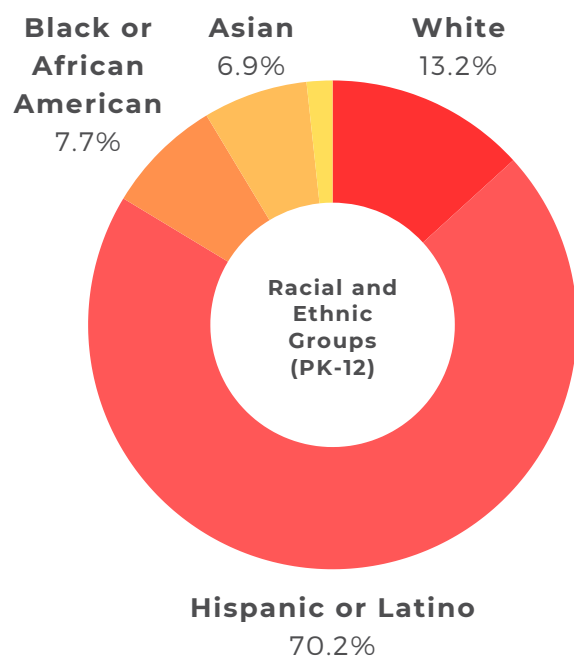
Enrollment by Home Language (PK-12)

English 69.6%

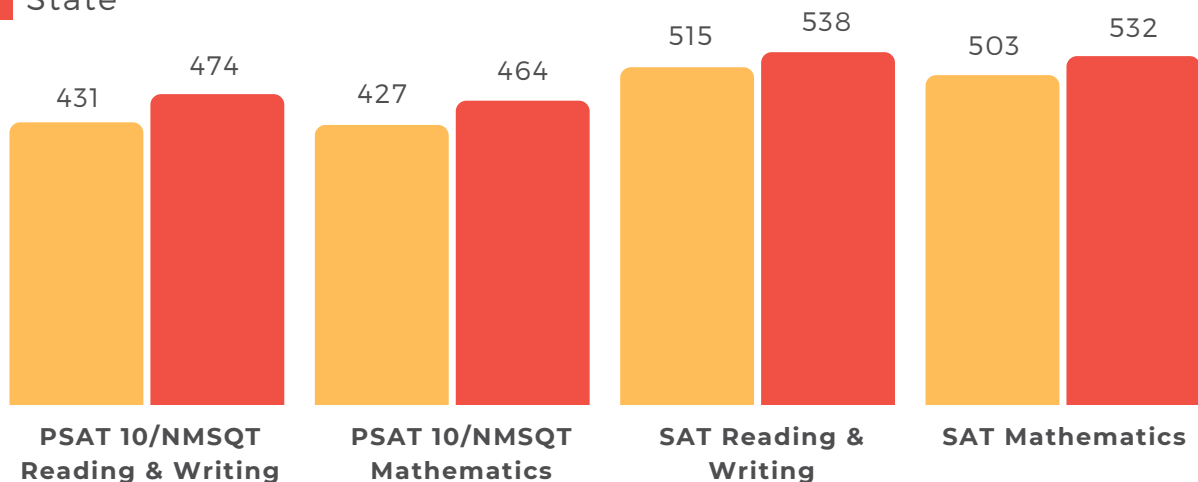
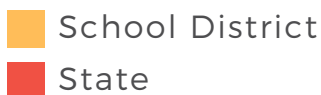
Spanish 25.5%

Urdu 1.1%

Other 3.9%



### Standardized Testing Scores





Graduation Rates (4 Year Cohort 2022).

School District Graduation Rate 96.3%

Statewide Graduation Rate 90.9%

Graduation Rates (4 Year Cohort 2021).

School District Graduation Rate 90.5%

Statewide Graduation Rate 90.6%



Post Secondary Enrollment

School District 74.4%

Statewide 73.7%



% of Enrolled in 2-Year Institution

School District 22.1%

Statewide 29.5%

% of Enrolled in 4-Year Institution

School District 52.3%

Statewide 70.5%



School Librarian/Media Specialists: 2

**SOURCES**

\*[U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts](#) and [U.S. Census Data Files](#)

\*\*[NJ School Performance Reports \(2021-2022\).](#)

\*\*\*[Data Axle Reference Solutions](#)

“*This library is second, only to my family, in its importance to my daily life and wellness.*

**-Bogota Resident**

# SURVEY RESPONSES

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## SUMMARY

We asked the Bogota community to share some of their concerns, attitudes, opinions, challenges, experiences, and needs with us in order to get a clearer picture of why people use (or don't use) the library, what their expectations are, and how the library can support the community.

The survey was distributed online and in print format, in both English and Spanish. About 135 people answered some, or most of the questions, which ranged from simple closed questions (such as, "What is your age?"), to more detailed, open-ended questions (such as, "How does the library improve the quality of your life?"). The majority of participants were adults over the age of 35.

The survey results show that a large number of participants absolutely love their library. More than three-quarters of respondents reported having positive feelings about the library facility. Favorite things about the library were often the friendly and helpful staff, and welcoming atmosphere. People love using the library to borrow new books, and participate in programs. The overall rating for the library was 4.5 (out of 5).

The survey participants also had a range of ideas about ways the library can improve. The most popular suggestions were to add more books (print and digital) and programs for all ages. Participants also expressed that their small library could use more space, especially quiet areas.

Overall, Bogota community members want to live in a place that is welcoming and friendly, with neighbors who are accepting, helpful, and kind. In the Bogota Public Library, people found much of what they value in a community.

Thank you to the Bogota community for taking the time to complete this survey. The information that has been provided will be enlightening and invaluable to future planning efforts.



## RESPONSES

### 1. Do you have a Bogota library card?

Answered: 135

- Yes: 83%
- No: 17%

### 2. Are you a resident of Bogota?

Answered: 135

- Yes: 85%
- No: 15%

### 3. If you are NOT a resident of Bogota, what town do you live in?

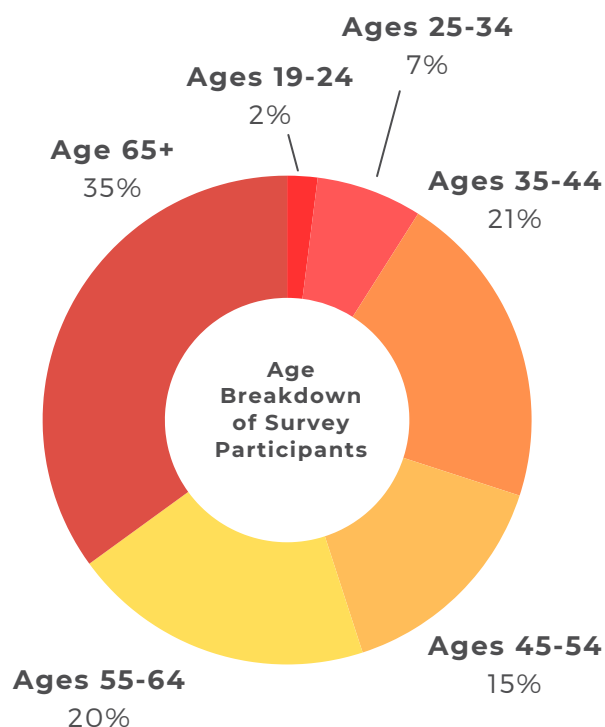
Answered: 19

Teaneck (9); Ridgefield Park (4); Paramus (2); Bloomfield, Clifton, Garfield (1 each)

### 4. What is your age group?

Answered: 131

- 19-24 years: 2%
- 25-34 years: 7%
- 35-44 years: 21%
- 45-54 years: 15%
- 55-64 years: 20%
- 65+ years: 35%



### 5. Please describe your normal use of the library:

Answered: 131

#### Ranked Responses

- 55% I primarily use the library to check out print materials, attend in-person programs, and/or use the facility
- 24% I regularly visit the library, AND use the library virtually
- 15% I primarily use the library virtually by downloading books, using online resources, or attending online programs
- 5% I don't use the library

### 6. Which of the following factors limit your use of the library?

Answered: 127

#### Ranked Responses

- 28% Too busy / No time
- 20% I use my own computer at home or other location
- 10% Parking
- 9% Not enough quiet space
- 8% I buy my own books and other materials

- 6% The hours are not convenient
- 5% I use another library
- 3% Not enough access to electricity for devices
- 2% Unpleasant past experience
- 1% I don't drive
- 1% The location is not convenient
- 37% None of the above
- 14% Other\*

\* Other responses indicated that some participants felt there were not enough book options, or they already subscribe to an audiobook service.

7. During your visits to the library which of the following are the most important to you and other members of your household? <sup>1</sup> (Most Important) through 10 (Least Important)

Answered: 122

### Ranked Responses

- Borrowing Books
- Programs and Events
- Studying/Quiet Space
- Computer/Printer/Scanner/Fax
- Passport Services
- Information/Technology Help
- WiFi (Wireless Internet)
- Children's Room



8. If you have visited the Bogota Public Library in the past three years, please describe how you felt about the facility.

Answered: 122

### Open-Ended Responses

The answers to this question were overwhelmingly positive (84%). Many respondents absolutely “love” the library, and frequently mentioned the friendly and helpful staff. The library was often described as being clean and well-organized, with a welcoming atmosphere.

Seven percent of the responses were neutral, with respondents saying they felt “ok” about the library, or simply describing an interaction that went as expected.

About 8% of the responses included negative feelings about the library (one-third of the time, negative comments were in addition to a positive comment). The negative comments mainly centered around noise levels (of children in particular, or just hearing “people talking or laughing” from everywhere in the library); or the space being “too small and cramped.”



### 9. What do you like most about the library?

Answered: 112

#### **Open-Ended Responses**

Survey participants liked a variety of things about the library, with one participant writing, “I like everything about it!”

Thirty-five percent of all responses mentioned the staff, often using words like “friendly,” and “helpful.” Others described the staff as having positive energy and being “engaging.” A further 9% of respondents most liked the friendly and welcoming atmosphere at the library.

Responses also included references to the collection and programs, with equal frequency. People value being part of BCCLS, and the breadth of the collection available to them. They liked hard copies of books (including items in Spanish) and magazines, and being able to browse the collection. Participants also appreciate the variety of adult and children’s programming. They enjoy the library’s many activities and events, including the ability to participate online.

Respondents also praised:

- The access and availability of the library’s wide range of resources and services
- The convenience of the library’s location and hours
- The children’s area and programs
- How the library is small and comfortable, and promotes a sense of community

### 10. Please pick three statements that best represent your values. (What is most important to you?) The Library will...

Answered 112

#### **Ranked Responses**

1. Offer a great library experience by hiring friendly, knowledgeable, and helpful staff. (77)
2. Build community by engaging with and connecting Bogota’s population. (63)
3. Promote the literacy, learning, and civic engagement necessary for a healthy democracy. (61)
4. Invest in the facility to provide a safe, comfortable and welcoming environment. (53)
5. Invest in the technology required to create and assist digitally literate citizens. (31)
6. Be careful stewards of public resources and value integrity as a cornerstone of all that we do. (28)
7. Seek to be more effective by collaborating with other community organizations. (23)



## 11. Please pick your top three priorities for the library.

Answered: 112

### **Ranked Responses**

1. Well-trained, engaged staff providing excellent customer service (67)
2. Diverse assortment of programs and events (66)
3. Safe and clean building (52)
4. Convenient operating hours (47)
5. Expansive physical and digital resources (including Libby/Overdrive, Hoopla, etc.) (37)
6. Ample, attractive interior physical space (meeting/study rooms, display spaces, etc.) (25)
7. Access to technology (computers, printers, etc.) (23)
8. Strong partnerships with community organizations (18)

## 12. How does the library help improve the quality of your life?

Answered: 112

### **Open-Ended Responses**

Survey participants love to read and the number one response, noted by almost half of the respondents, was that the library gave them books. Respondents frequently felt that the library improved the quality of their life by providing free access to print and digital books that they otherwise may not get to read. They valued discovering new authors, the ease of using Libby or requesting items from partnering libraries, keeping their family supplied with reading materials, and simply relaxing with a good book.

The second most popular response was that the library offered quality programs and events that made participants feel like part of the community. People appreciated that the library's programs were engaging and expanded their thinking. Many specifically felt grateful for programs for seniors. Respondents felt that participation in the library's programs helped connect people: parents enjoyed meeting other parents, and new residents felt welcomed. Participants valued being a part of Bogota's multicultural community.

Other frequent responses included:

- Participants valued having a safe, welcoming space where they could spend time. More than one person felt the library acted as a "respite from the world."
- The library provides access to information, promoting learning and an informed community.
- The library provides access to media and other diverse resources, including technology and video games.
- Participants valued the library as a trusted, safe place that helped keep their kids busy, through programs and reading.

### 13. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with the Bogota Public Library?

Answered 112

Average Rating 4.5 

### 14. What should the library improve overall?

Answered: 112

#### **Open-Ended Responses**

Survey respondents had many strong and thoughtful ideas about what the library can do to improve (if anything, 17% of participants felt the library was “perfect the way it is”). The responses were varied and detailed, from adding satellite locations or more close parking, to hiring more full-time staff.

Over 30% percent of the responses suggested the library could add more books and programs. Participants would like: more books for teens, more audiobooks, more offerings on Libby, and an even greater selection of books and materials in general. They also suggested offering more programs for older kids and teens, more movies in the park, and just more programs overall.

Nearly 20% of the responses suggested adding space, or remodeling existing space. Many participants would like designated quiet areas, either meeting rooms, nooks, or comfortable chairs to read in. They suggested increasing the size of areas for children, adults, and seniors; or they desired a larger facility.

The following ideas also appeared in several responses:

- Increase hours, particularly on Sundays, or when programs are held
- Reduce the noise level in the library, particularly from children
- Continue and increase community outreach
- Increase publicity and communication about events
- Continue to stay current, including adding more technology
- Add museum passes

### 15. Please describe what type of community you want Bogota to be.

Answered: 112

#### **Open-Ended Responses**

The top answer to this question, mentioned in nearly 60% of the responses, was that participants most want to live in a “close knit” community that is friendly and welcoming. People used words like, “kind,” “civilized,” “caring,” and “respectful.” They want Bogota to be a community of neighbors who support each other, are helpful, and make everyone feel welcome.

Many responses also included the following descriptions:

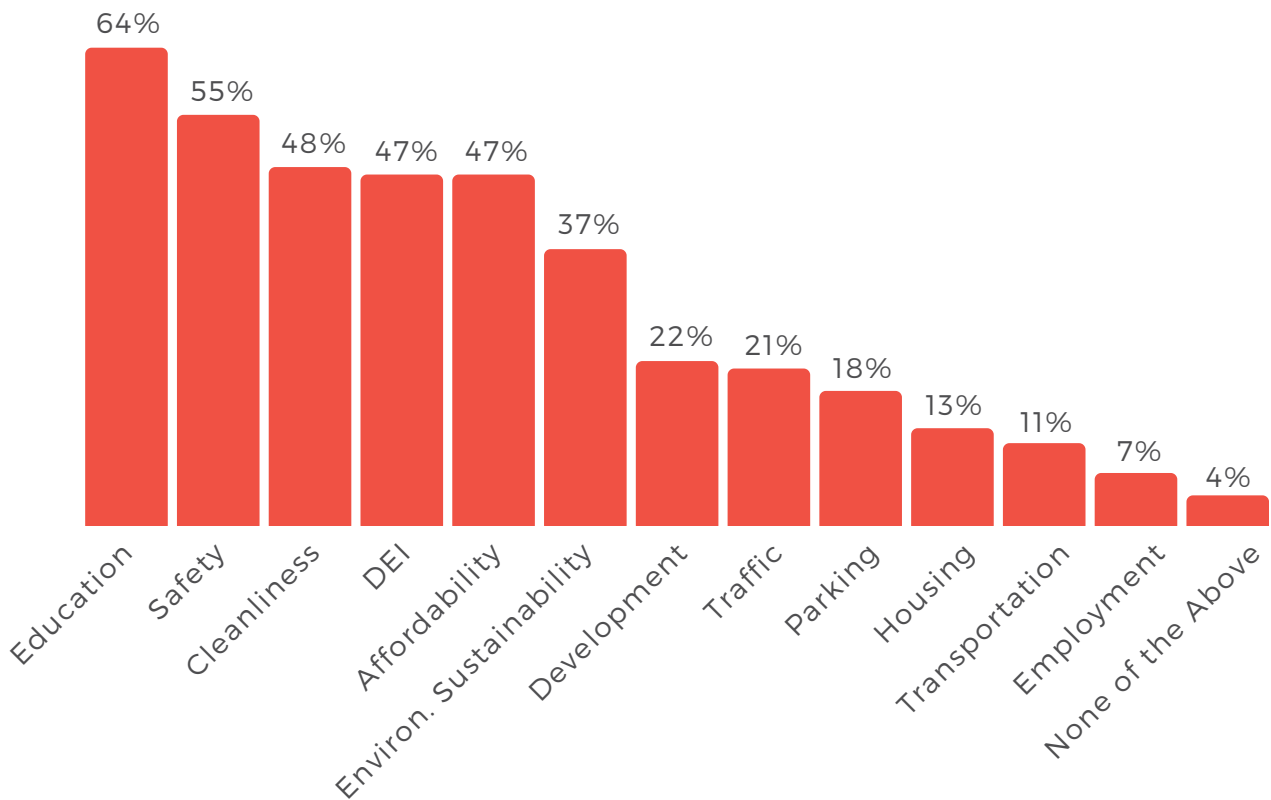
- Inclusive and accepting
- Diverse

- Safe
- Literate, educated, and informed
- Clean

## 16. What are the most important issues when it comes to the Bogota community?

Answered: 112

### Ranked Responses



## 17. What challenges or concerns have you or your family personally dealt with in the last few years?

Answered: 112

### Ranked Responses

- 44% Cost of living
- 29% Continuing lifetime learning and personal growth
- 26% Aging (self)
- 22% Grief
- 20% Financial planning
- 19% Learning new technologies
- 18% Aging parents
- 17% Ensuring opportunities for children
- 17% Social isolation

- 16% Economic hardship
- 15% Finding reliable health information
- 13% Childcare
- 13% Obtaining affordable healthcare
- 12% Unemployment or underemployment
- 10% Running a small business
- 9% Physical mobility
- 6% Food insecurity
- 6% Online security/identity theft
- 6% Racism or other prejudice
- 4% Housing insecurity or homelessness
- 2% Divorce
- 13% None of the above
- 8% Other\*

*\* Other responses included: caregiving (for disabled adults, or someone with a mental illness), loneliness, and health issues.*

“*I am also grateful to help tutor ESL students. It is very rewarding and it is my hope I am making a positive contribution to our community.*

**-Bogota Resident**



# FOCUS GROUPS

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Over 30 people participated in four different focus groups. The groups consisted of members of key demographics, including: Spanish-speaking patrons, seniors, teens, and interested community members. Each group met for about one hour at the library or virtually.

Conversations were designed to explore themes that emerged in the previously collected data, and obtain more detailed, personalized feedback. A Spanish-speaking staff member led one focus group, the others were run by consultants from Library Crossroads, LLC. The questions started broadly, then narrowed to focus on specific library services.

## RESPONSES

### 1. What type of community do you want to live in?

There was consensus among all groups that the ideal community would be one that is friendly, diverse, and welcoming. Participants valued a “small town atmosphere” where neighbors were “loving,” and there were opportunities to connect with, and help each other. They spoke about the importance of respect and a positive environment in a small, diverse town.

Groups also spoke about a community that:

- Values community involvement
- Is safe and secure
- Has access to resources (for example: technology and education)
- Is quiet and clean

### 2. What challenges do you see in Bogota?

Participants saw a variety of different challenges in their town. Some felt that most people were experiencing financial hardships after COVID. They felt that, given the small size of their town, parents and families were shouldering a bulk of the financial support for programs that might otherwise be funded by businesses. Some pointed out that the increase in population is putting a strain on the school system. They also felt that tension on social media was a challenge in the community.

### 3. Why do you think its important for a community to have a public library?

The most popular response to this question was that the library brings people together through social activities, programs, and access to resources. Groups described the library as “essential,” and “the center of everything.” One group felt the library was important to the health of the town. They valued that the library



helped the community stay connected (to each other and community information), pointing out that social connectedness promotes general wellbeing. Groups valued the library as a place where they and their children can meet others (from Bogota and nearby towns), and work together.

Groups also frequently discussed the library as a center for educational activities. Teens, in particular, viewed the library as the place to read, learn, study, do research, and access educational resources. Participants in other groups valued the library's support of continuing education and tutoring, and saw the library as an important place to find information.

Groups also felt the library provides:

- Free access to books and resources
- A safe place for adults and children (teens said the library helps “people be themselves”)
- Free access to technology (computers and internet)
- Literacy support
- Browsing

#### 4. What can the library do to better meet your specific needs?

Some similar themes emerged among all of the answers to this question.

**Programming:** All groups mentioned that the library can improve programming, from the times that programs are offered, to the types of programs, to increasing the staff that is available to help with programs. Working parents and adults felt the timing of daytime programs was difficult for them. Other participants would like to see conversation classes for ESL groups or people learning Spanish.

**Access:** Most groups valued the library's access to materials (books, movies, magazines) and technology (computers, internet, printing). They would like more technology classes, and beginner computer classes for adults. Some groups also suggested more areas for charging devices, or more outlets. The teens enjoyed “browsing” at the library.

**Partnerships:** Several groups mentioned strengthening the library's partnerships with other organizations or departments in town. Participants valued the library's membership in BCCLS, and the “attachment” to other libraries. The Spanish-speaking participants valued the library's outreach to schools, saying that they learned about the library through their child's school. They suggested more involvement and coordination between the schools and the library.

**Space:** Some groups discussed the size and layout of the library, suggesting that more meeting rooms or quiet areas are needed.

Some needs were discussed by specific groups:

- Teens - This group talked about needing help with projects, using resources, tutoring, and passports.
- Virtual Attendees - This group of community members suggested more communication (including on social media): about events; to new residents; and about the work of the Friends of the Library.



#### 5. Please share positive or negative opinions about:

##### **Building**

*Strengths:* Teens like the children's section. Seniors like the architecture.

*Opportunities:* Groups agree that the building is small. They suggest more seating, more books, and a place for private study. Some also suggest parking options could be expanded.

##### **Website**

*Strengths:* Groups seemed to have a neutral feeling about the website, or it was not mentioned at all.

*Opportunities:* Teens had the most to say about the website. They would like the availability of an app, and were unaware of BCCLS. They felt a possible barrier to using the website could be that you must have your library card with you to check your account and place holds.

##### **Resources**

*Strengths:* Participants reported positive experiences when using the library.

They love the programs (specifically crochet, dance, and art appreciation). They appreciate Libby and the library's passport services. Spanish-speaking participants were appreciative of the way materials were arranged, saying that it was "easy and helpful" to find a book by themselves.

Opportunities: Some participants suggested the addition of more materials (like DVDs, or items for people who are disabled or hard of hearing). Others recommended increasing the content in the library's newsletter.

#### 6. Is there anything else about the library you think we should know?

Participants were quick to point out that the employees of the library are knowledgeable, and "always willing to help."

Groups reiterated that they would like more communication from the library. Teens want a way to more easily learn about new books, or make purchase suggestions. Seniors would like more promotion about the library to new residents, or non-patrons; and more information on community issues. They also suggested that the library could have more local history resources and information, and celebrate local talent.

Groups also added more to the idea of library partnerships with community organizations. Seniors wondered if the library could act as a "go between" for seniors and local services. Teens suggested the library coordinate technology with the schools, so that students can access software when not in school.

Other topics that groups spoke about were:

- Remodeling or refreshing spaces, particularly to address noise issues
- Having an online library card, or app
- Offering 3D printing

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*Reading books and being in that atmosphere helps myself and my kids to nurture a growth mindset.*

**-Bogota Resident**

# VISION

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The Bogota Public Library cultivates a community of readers and creative thinkers.

# MISSION

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We provide our community the tools for success through literacy services, technology access, and creative, engaging, programming. We value an environment that is open, inclusive, and supportive. Our staff is welcoming and provides patrons individualized services with care.





# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

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## **GOAL 1**

**Actively guide our community to the materials and tools that enhance a love of reading and foster creativity.**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Provide and promote training on digital literacy tools
- Work with the teen community to identify ways to enhance services for that age group
- Continue to offer collections and services to address literacy needs of all age groups and learning styles
- Communicate with the Bogota Board of Education to improve access to programming and tools for student needs



## **GOAL 2**

**Ensure our library has appropriate space to serve the residents of our community.**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Maximize the use of existing available space
- Assess library service needs and work with stakeholders to develop a long range space plan
- Identify a second programming space
- Enhance the aesthetics of the library (paint, art, etc.)
- Continue collection development audits to ensure our materials reflect our community



## **GOAL 3**

**Build community by engaging with, and connecting, our diverse population.**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Develop cross-cultural and intergenerational programming
- Identify the best days and times for library programming to increase attendance
- Collaborate with the Bogota Board of Education to identify and incorporate student interests



## **GOAL 4**

**Enhance community awareness of, and access to, our programs and services.**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Identify the best strategies to actively promote library collections and services
- Cultivate library ambassadors from various borough organizations to facilitate community outreach
- Keep abreast of ever-changing digital marketing trends to ensure use of the most relevant and effective marketing strategies



# HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

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This strategic plan is the result of input from the community and library staff. It has been shaped by data about where the library has been, and feedback about how the library can best serve the community and your stakeholders. As a result, it contains information and recommendations that can be used to strengthen and guide library management in a number of ways. These include:

## Sharing

This plan should be shared with anyone who would benefit from understanding where the library has been, and where you would like it to go. Communication about this plan can be shared with:

- Staff
- Township Officials
- The Township
- Friends of the Library
- Community Partners
- Potential Funders
- Surrounding Libraries
- Job Applicants



## Planning

Does an existing service or program help the library meet your stated goals, or would those resources be better applied to a new service? How do you meet the seemingly unlimited needs of the community with a limited amount of resources, time, funding, and staff effort? The library's Vision and Mission statement and Goals and Objectives can help guide the library's annual planning, and inform difficult decisions around the expenditure of limited assets.

## Evaluating

This plan serves as a rubric for measuring your success. Oftentimes, the assessments made by members of library administration differ from considerations of those outside of library management. For this reason, we encourage libraries to provide opportunities for feedback – for your entire community, and all areas of library staff – to evaluate your library's success in meeting the stated goals and objectives.

## Budgeting

When developing your next budget, ensure that your library's goals and objectives are reflected in your budget. This strategic plan should also be a regular part of any budget presentation or request for funds.

## **Reviewing Policies**

Are your current policies reflective of the Vision and Mission statement and the Goals and Objectives in this plan? For example: if you want a “welcoming and comfortable space,” is the policy under consideration welcoming to everyone? Who does it include? And who is being left out?

## **Recruiting**

Are you recruiting the staff you need to meet your Goals and Objectives? We encourage you to use this strategic plan as a rubric for developing employment postings and hiring practices. Through job listings and an easy-to-find location on your website, all applicants should be able to review the strategic plan to see what your library values.

## **Working with Partners**

Sharing the strategic plan with potential partners, including other libraries, may create new opportunities to work together for collective impact.

## **Holding Staff Meetings**

We recommend actively engaging with this plan - share and discuss the strategic plan with all staff and volunteers. Simply making the plan available does not ensure the plan has been read and understood. Reviewing and discussing will help library staff and volunteers become involved with the stated goals, and see how their own feedback is reflected in the plan.

