

## Why donate to the Grand Rapids Area Library Fund?

The fund enables those who use the library, but who live outside of the city of Grand Rapids, to donate directly to its operations. The fund hopes to raise \$300,000 - about the same amount that the library will lose in revenue. If successful, the library will be able to return to five days of operation in 2027.

Donations made to the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF) will be forwarded to the City of Grand Rapids next year, which will direct the funds to its library budget, specifically to support staff.

The Grand Rapids Area Library (GRAL) is used by all residents of the county, yet more than two-thirds of the library's card holders live outside the city, and account for about half the check-outs from the system. And, it's not just books: the library provides space to learn, make copies, renew passports, explore objects from fishing poles to ukeleles and simply visit each other. There is also a revolving series of lectures and performances.

The Grand Rapids Area Library (GRAL) is owned and operated by the City of Grand Rapids. It is part of the Arrowhead Library System (ALS) which was created in 1965. ALS is a federated library system with each city's library run independently but sharing resources through ALS. There are five other libraries in Itasca County located at Bovey, Coleraine, Calumet, Marble and Keewatin. They each participate in the ALS.

The Minnesota Department of Education notifies cities and counties of their minimum library requirement, which is funded through a levy. Set by state law, the statute has not increased this minimum since 2011. The city's minimum was set then as \$391,618.

The city steadily increased its levy for the library to \$825,128 in 2025. For taxes payable in 2026, the city was forced to cut its levy for the library to \$514,927. The city has cut \$1 million from its operations - including police, IT, public works and administration - to achieve its 2026 levy. In response to the cuts, the library will be open only Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in 2026, from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Itasca County's minimum levy for the ALS is set by the state at \$342,709. The county's share goes in part to the GRAL but also to the other five libraries in the system. The county will increase its share to GRAL by \$50,000 in 2026, for approximately \$178,000. The city and county are working together to develop a funding proposal that more equitably funds all six libraries.