

# Arrowhead Library System

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## Purpose Statement

Arrowhead Library System enhances the value of all types of libraries to their communities by cultivating collaboration, technological innovation, and professional development; and enriches the quality of life by providing direct services for those without a public library and access to electronic resources for all people in northeastern Minnesota.

The region's public libraries are strong and vital hubs in their communities, and a source of great civic pride. People of all ages, locations, and socio-economic backgrounds actively make use of public library services. Public libraries are in tune with changing needs in their communities and respond with services and programming that consistently satisfy and delight the people who use them. The Library System's strategic plan identifies four areas of attention for the next three years: Embrace Empowerment; Optimize the Customer Service Experience; Increase Awareness; and, Support Lifelong Learning

Regional Public Library Systems energize the public library community by using their combined talents to provide leadership in identifying where public libraries will be in the future.

## 2023 Initiatives

- Library Services

Itasca County is a member of the Arrowhead Library System (ALS), a seven-county regional public library system organized through a joint powers agreement. Membership in ALS extends access to library services for all Itasca County residents. ALS provides direct services to Itasca County residents through the Bookmobile and Mail-A-Book program. Itasca County residents can use their Arrowhead library card at any public library in the County, any of ALS's 27 member public libraries, on the ALS Bookmobile, or at nearly every public library in the State of Minnesota. When library buildings are closed, the ALS library card is a lifeline to still available digital library services and resources. Through ALS membership, Itasca County residents are also able to access an array of State-funded electronic resources. ALS provides and/or underwrites various services to the six public libraries in Itasca County. During the 2020 shutdown, ALS diverted significant financial resources into the Overdrive service with e-books and downloadable audiobooks, and not surprisingly, this service saw yet another significant increase in usage. In 2020, ALS began subscribing to an online service called TumbleBooks that is available to all residents of the region with a library card. TumbleBooks are animated, talking picture books that have been created from existing

picture books from well-known publishers and authors. In 2021, ALS was provided with additional funds through the State of Minnesota's Regional Library Telecommunications Aid (RLTA) program which enable additional investments in content for the Overdrive service, as well as the addition of a subscription to the Creativebug online resource for library patrons. This resource offers more than 1,000 award-winning arts and crafts video classes taught by recognized design experts and artists. In 2022, ALS brought back the online ChiltonLibrary.com service providing 24/7 access to information on vehicle maintenance and repair, as well as technical service bulletins. In 2022, ALS also licensed Open Access, which includes free access to over 40 million vetted, quality, open access journals, eBooks, and eTextbooks.

As has been the case for many years, ALS provides broadband Internet connections for the six public libraries in Itasca County (Bovey, Calumet, Coleraine, Grand Rapids, Keewatin, and Marble). Internet service is provided at no charge to each library thanks to ALS's efforts to combine funds from the State of Minnesota (the RLTA program) that are leveraged with discounts through the federal Universal Service (e-Rate) program for schools and libraries. Starting in 2019, ALS was given the option of offering member libraries the opportunity to utilize their existing broadband connection to offer Wi-Fi service to the public using the library. The only cost to the local public library would be for any necessary re-wiring of their buildings. In 2021, ALS received \$110,000 in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, with the bulk of those funds made available as sub-grants to interested public libraries. Libraries will be wrapping up their sub-grant projects this summer.

Starting in June 2022 and extending into 2023, ALS has engaged the services of the Northspan Group (Duluth, MN) to conduct a comprehensive strategic planning process with widespread stakeholder participation.

Although no County funds are being used, each year ALS invests in a separate e-book collection that is available only to students in K-12 schools across the seven-county ALS service area. The content of the collection is geared specifically toward K-12 students. To date, the collection is being used by students from the following schools: Robert J. Elkington Middle School; Deer River High School; and, St. Joseph's School in Grand Rapids.

ALS is cognizant of the major financial challenges facing all public agencies in 2022 and beyond. Our 2023 Budget request is **\$402,526** which is a 2.5% increase over the 2022 allocation. The request for an increase results in part from a dramatic increase in fuel costs for the ALS Bookmobile service as well as fuel surcharges imposed by the courier service providing delivery service to all ALS libraries, including Bovey, Calumet, Coleraine, Grand Rapids, Keewatin, and Marble.