

Mission:

The Kaukauna Public Library connects individuals and the community through collections, services, and programs that educate, inspire, and empower.

Vision:

The Kaukauna Public Library will be a welcoming and inclusive destination where all people can connect, explore, create, and grow. As a trusted cornerstone of the community, the library empowers lifelong learning, literacy, and imagination while contributing to the mental, emotional, social, and physical well-being of those it serves.

Values:

Inclusion: our library is for everyone

Experience: free and equitable access to information and enrichment

Collaboration: building strong partnerships

Imagination: inspiring creativity

Stewardship: serving as a respected resource

Growth: fostering life-long learning opportunities

Intellectual Freedom: we support the freedom to read, learn, and explore

Innovation: seeking creative solutions to enhance library services

Goal One:

Build Collections

Objective: The library strives to build Kaukauna Strong collections to meet the needs of our users. The library will advocate for increased municipal funding to improve the gap in basic level (Tier 1) standards for library audio and video collections.

Activities:

- Increase collection expenditure annually.
- Reallocate funding to increase expenditure on audio and video collections for all ages.
- Write grants to expand audio collections.
- Increase Overdrive allocations annually to match state mandated allocations by year three.
- Increase messaging about the realities of electronic resources and licensing fees for public libraries.

Background:

At the conclusion of the previous strategic plan, the Kaukauna Public Library achieved Tier I compliance with materials expenditures, meeting a key benchmark established by the Wisconsin Public Library Standards. Full Tier I compliance requires libraries to meet standards in all nine service categories. Currently, the library meets Tier I compliance in three of the nine categories.

One of the areas with the largest gap to compliance is audio recordings per capita. To meet Tier I standards, the library must increase its holdings from 0.16 audio recordings per capita to 0.34. Video recordings also require growth, increasing from 0.41 to 0.52 recordings per capita. While achieving full compliance in audio recordings may not be feasible within the timeframe of this strategic plan due to the size of the gap, the library is committed to making measurable progress and reducing disparity over the next three years.

Patron surveys and community feedback have consistently identified long wait times for digital materials through Libby and usage limits within Hoopla as areas of concern. Although member libraries of the Outagamie Waupaca Library System have committed additional funding to Libby in the coming years, significant reductions in waiting times are unlikely. Libraries across the country continue to face challenges associated with publisher licensing models for digital materials, which often result in substantially higher costs and access restrictions compared to physical collections. These industry-wide challenges are largely invisible to the public but have a direct impact on a library's ability to provide timely access to electronic resources.

Goal Two:

Increase Engagement

Objective:

To meet the growing needs and wants of our community, the library needs to have a core staff that reflects the size of the community it is serving.

Activities:

- Stabilize core staffing by increasing the ratio of regular staff to substitute staff.
- Continue to convert part-time positions into full-time positions.
- Explore the opportunity to add library pages.
- Review compensation to remain competitive within the Fox Cities.

Background:

Library staff participated in both a staff survey and a strategic planning session to identify workforce strengths and challenges. Staff identified limited opportunities for advancement, professional growth, and compensation progression as factors influencing recruitment and retention.

The current workforce is composed of approximately half regularly scheduled core staff and half on-call substitute staff. Employee turnover has been concentrated on part-time and on-call positions, with approximately 13 part-time or on-call staff departures occurring for every full-time staff departure over the past five years. This pattern highlights ongoing challenges in maintaining a stable and experienced frontline workforce.

Feedback from staff also indicated that the balance between regular and on-call staffing levels can affect both customer service quality and employee confidence at public service points. On-call staff reported that the volume of information, procedures, and ongoing operational changes associated with service desk responsibilities can be difficult to maintain when work schedules are infrequent. As a result, inconsistent staffing patterns may impact on staff readiness, knowledge retention, and the ability to provide consistently accurate and confident customer service.

Goal Three:

Broaden Outreach

Objective:

Extend programs, services, resources, and collections outside the physical walls of the library to build relationships, increase facility usage, build trust, and serve those in underserved areas.

Activities:

- Establish a regular connection with local licensed public childcare facilities.
- Increase outreach to ESL and ELL families in the district.
- Ensure accessibility at all off-site events sponsored by the library.
- Build relationships with local assisted living and residential facilities.

Background:

Outreach is essential to advancing equitable access to library services. Through outreach efforts, the library extends materials, technology, programs, and resources to individuals who may face physical, geographic, or socioeconomic barriers to visiting a library location. These efforts not only expand access, but also increase awareness of the library's offerings, encouraging community members to engage more fully with library services and spaces. Outreach provides valuable opportunities for staff to connect directly with residents, gather feedback, and better understand evolving community needs. By fostering these relationships, the library can ensure its programs, services, and collections remain relevant, responsive, and reflective of the communities it serves.

Goal Four:

Build Connections

Objective:

Refresh library spaces to increase social connectedness for our community.

Activities:

- Redesign the preschool play area.
- Create an area for tween imaginative play.
- Redesign the teen/tween computer lab.

- Create an additional “living room” space for adults.

Background:

As Kaukauna Public Library enters its second decade in its current facility, the library continues to evaluate how its spaces support evolving community needs and usage patterns. In recent years, the importance of social connection and shared community spaces has become increasingly evident. Public libraries serve as important “third spaces,” providing welcoming environments where individuals can gather, engage with others, and build a sense of belonging regardless of social or economic status, with no expectation of funds changing hands.

Community feedback has highlighted opportunities to enhance library spaces to better serve users of all ages. In the most recent patron survey, residents identified the preschool play area as a priority for improvement, noting that furnishings and equipment are reaching the end of their useful life. At the same time, tweens have expressed interest in having a dedicated space that reflects their needs and encourages engagement, as existing youth spaces were designed primarily for younger children. Changes in technology and user behavior have also created opportunities to reimagine underutilized spaces. When the facility opened, access to computers was a primary need for many tweens and teens. Today, widespread access to personal devices has reduced demand for dedicated computer stations, creating an opportunity to transform portions of the tween/teen computer lab into a more flexible, welcoming environment. Such improvements would better support social interaction, collaborative activities, and address existing noise concerns.

The library has already witnessed the positive impact that intentionally designed gathering spaces can have on community connection. Following the addition of comfortable seating, a fireplace, and complimentary coffee service near the newspaper area, staff observed regular interactions among patrons that developed into lasting social relationships. Building on this success, the library seeks to create additional opportunities for informal gathering and conversation, further strengthening the library's role as a community hub and fostering social connection among adults.