



To: Kaukauna Public Library Board of Trustee
From: Library Director Ashley Thiem-Menning
Date: 10/15/2026
Re: Strategic Plan Draft

Work on the next library strategic plan began in early 2026. During a staff training day, in small groups, staff members brainstormed on a few topics including services, programs, operations, and collections. While many of the ideas and recommendations are more immediate and not strategic, it was a great opportunity for staff to add ideas for how we can continue to improve Kaukauna Public Library.

In the summer, staff created questions for focus groups, as well as a general survey (print and electronic) for patrons. The library received 167 responses from the survey and hosted five focus groups. Later in the summer, the library recycled a prior City PULSE survey for staff. A PULSE survey is a short survey intended to track feedback on employment experience.

We also utilized 2025 DPI data to run our Wisconsin Public Library Standards tier compliance data. To have Tier I compliance, which is the basic level of service your library should offer to residents based on population, you must meet the benchmark in all nine categories. When we began the prior strategic plan, we only had compliance in one category.

We currently have compliance for hours and materials expenditures. Using 2026 data instead of 2025, we also have compliance for FTE. We are very close to compliance with public use computers. With the addition of one computer to the teen lab later this year, we will have reached compliance.

As the standards are currently based on statistics from 2016, we anticipate that DPI will be releasing new standards soon. The downside to this is that new standards will likely place us out of compliance again in most categories and will also likely make the gap in compliance greater in the areas we are struggling with.

However, we also expect the changes to reflect the digital age we live in now. If we look at our physical in-house periodical subscriptions, we are currently nowhere near compliance, however, if you count all the periodicals available on Libby, we would be compliant. We feel that this will be a category which undergoes significant change because many magazines are going out of business or are no longer physically being printed, making it extremely difficult to reach compliance.

The last three areas where we are not meeting the minimum expectations of service to residents are collection size, print volumes per capita, audio recordings, and video recordings. A portion of the strategic plan is written to address the largest gap in compliance, audio holdings.

Audio is a difficult collection because it is the most expensive to purchase and the least donated. The average audiobook is \$50 and public libraries receive little to no discounts on them from vendors. We are also seeing a much higher demand for audio equipment like Tonies, Yoto Cards and Wonderbooks, which can retail at \$100 per item. Over the course of the next three years, we do plan to allocate more to audio collections in each department, as well as increase our grant writing efforts for these materials. We believe this will get us closer to reaching compliance for the 2016 standards, but we are realistic in the notion that we will still not likely reach compliance during this strategic plan cycle.

The significant budget cuts in the material line for several years is the predominant factor for compliance. In 2010, our allocation for materials was \$110,725. When I took over in 2019, the budget set for materials in 2018 was \$60,000. If we had continued with the 2010 budgeted amount as a starting point, with just a modest 3% increase, our budget line for materials would have been projected out to \$177,681 today. 2027 is currently drafted with a budget of \$137,735.

With the support of the City, we have massively improved our position over the course of the last several budget cycles. It is to their credit that we are currently meeting compliance in the category of materials expenditure, which will help us continue our goals of reaching Tier I compliance in the future.

