

WCCLS Library Funding and Governance Evaluation

Date: September 2025

Subject: WCCLS Library Funding and Governance Evaluation – Near-Term Funding Allocation and Service Boundaries

Project Background

Public library service in Washington County is provided by a partnership between Washington County, nine cities, and three nonprofit organizations (together known as the Cooperative). In February 2024, the County engaged with Merina+Co, a local consulting firm, to conduct an evaluation of the existing Cooperative funding and governance model. For more information on the project background, the Cooperative's shared vision for success, and the results of the current state assessment, refer to wccls.org/writing-our-future.

Defining Base Service Levels

Informed by the results of the [summer 2024 Community Survey](#), Partners participated in a process of compiling a list of Base Service Levels that should be supported consistently across the Cooperative by County funds. The Base Service Levels expanded on the Oregon State Library minimum conditions for public libraries such as requiring a minimum of 45 open hours and 4 full-time equivalents or "FTEs", and included service levels for Collections & Materials, Community Engagement & Outreach, Personnel, Programs & Services, Public Spaces, and Operations across the Cooperative. More information regarding the Base Service Levels can be found in the Near-Term Funding and Base Service Levels Summary Report (January 2025) at wccls.org/writing-our-future.

Determining Near-Term Funding Needs

Once the Base Service Levels were determined, Partners were engaged to estimate the cost of providing the Base Service Levels consistently across the Cooperative. Partners also collaborated to identify opportunities to leverage the use of resources across the Cooperative to provide services at-scale and realize cost savings without reducing the level of services provided to the community. The costs of providing Base Service Levels and the estimated savings from increased efficiencies served as inputs for determining the funding needed to support the Base Service Levels consistently across the County through the FY2027-2031 levy cycle.

In December 2024, the WCCLS Executive Board reached two-thirds agreement (2/3 cities and 2/3 non-profits) in support of a *minimum* \$0.32 per \$1,000 assessed value levy rate (\$0.10 increase) for FY2027-2031 and pursue a centralized service delivery model for collections and inter-library loan management to consistently and sustainably fund the Base Service Levels. In June 2025 the Board of County Commissioners adopted a resolution in support of referring a \$0.37 per \$1,000 assessed value levy rate (\$0.15 increased) to voters in November 2025. More information regarding the Base Service Levels and near-term funding results can be found in the Near-Term Funding and Base Service Levels Summary Report (January 2025) at wccls.org/writing-our-future.

Creating a Methodology for Determining Service Boundaries and Allocating Partner Funds

The current phase of the Funding and Governance Evaluation Project has focused on establishing transparent and objective methodologies for defining service boundaries and allocating County funds in support of providing the defined base service levels across the Cooperative. These were two core goals identified by Partners for this process.

Service Boundary Methodology

While Cooperative services are available to residents countywide, service boundaries are used to define the specific geographic area for which each Partner is responsible for providing base services, as well as provide a means for calculating each Partner's service population. The proposed methodology for establishing Partner service boundaries divides the County into discrete geographic units using voter precincts and assigns each geographic area to one or more Partners according to the methodology outlined in Figure 1. The resulting service boundaries are included in Appendix A and can be viewed [here](#) for visualization purposes only.



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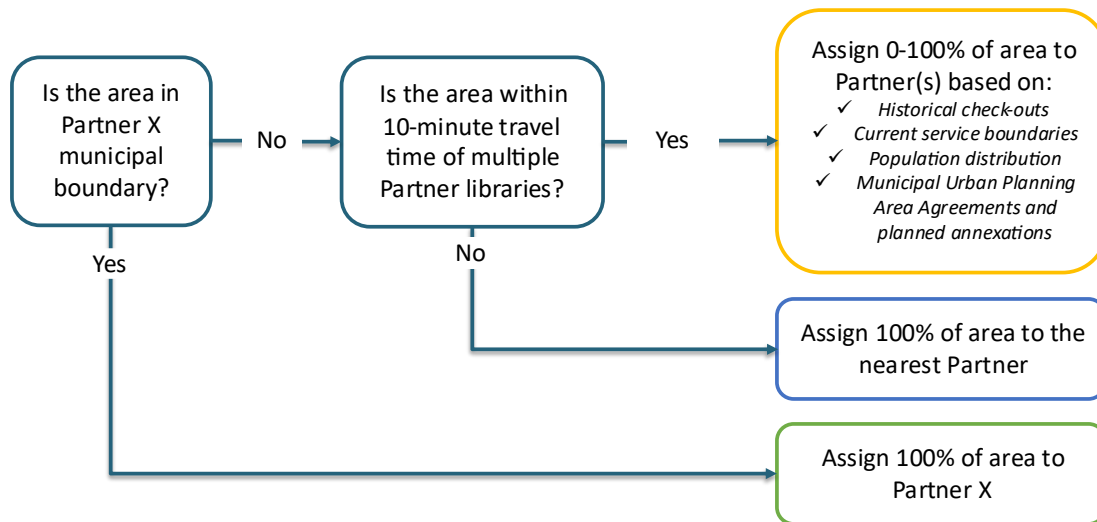


Figure 1: Methodology for Determining Partner Service Boundaries

Funding Allocation Methodology

The Current State Assessment revealed that the Cooperative’s past funding allocation practices have resulted in funding inequities among Partners over time. Addressing those inequities begins first by supporting a more consistent level of service across the Cooperative with County funds. The methodology developed for allocating County funds to each Partner is intended to support the defined base service levels in a way that acknowledges operational differences resulting from past funding levels while moving towards a more consistent level of investment in each Partner library. To accomplish this, the methodology allocates funding to each Partner relative to their population according to a graduated table of units determined by Cooperative estimates for staffing levels in FTEs necessary to provide base service levels across Partner libraries. The methodology, outlined in Figure 2, follows the following steps:

1. The population within a Partner’s service boundary is estimated¹ and rounded down to the nearest multiple of 2,500².
2. The rounded service population is used to determine the number of funding units³ allocated to each Partner as described in Table 1.
3. The allocated funding units are multiplied by a dollar per unit⁴ to arrive at the base allocation for each Partner.
4. Non-profit Partners serving unincorporated areas of the County are allocated an additional dollar amount per facility square-foot to support the cost of maintaining library facilities.

¹ [2022 American Community Census population data](#)

² Population intervals of 2,500 are used to reduce the funding allocation formula’s sensitivity to population estimates and stabilize funding allocations.

³ The funding units correlate to a number of full-time equivalent (FTE) units to be allocated in addition to a base allocation of 4 FTE units, the minimum requirement outlined in the base service levels.

⁴ The dollar per unit was initially proposed to reflect Cooperative-wide averages based on forecasted estimates for the average total direct library cost per estimated FTE (\$119,000) and has since been increased according to the County’s proposal to reflect higher average costs for city Partners (\$128,000).

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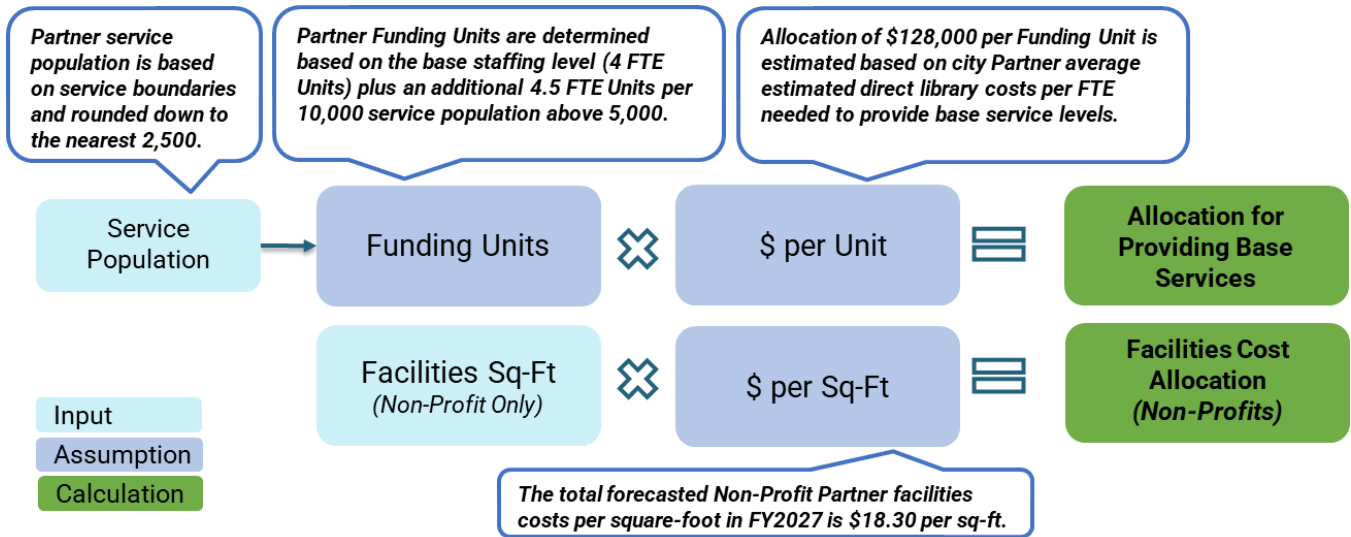


Figure 2: Methodology for calculating WCCLS Partner library funding allocation for providing base service levels

Table 1: Example calculation for determining WCCLS Partner Funding Units and Base Services Allocation using Service Population

| SERVICE POPULATION | BASE FTE UNITS | + | ADD. FTE UNITS | = | TOTAL FUNDING UNITS | → | TOTAL FUNDING UNITS | x | \$ / UNIT | = | BASE SERVICES ALLOCATION |
|--------------------|----------------|---|----------------|---|---------------------|---|---------------------|---|-----------|---|--------------------------|
| 5,000 | 4 | + | 0 | = | 4 | → | 4 | x | \$128,000 | = | \$512,000 |
| 7,500 | 4 | + | 1.125 | = | 5.125 | → | 5.125 | x | \$128,000 | = | \$656,000 |
| 10,000 | 4 | + | 2.25 | = | 6.25 | → | 6.25 | x | \$128,000 | = | \$800,000 |
| ... | ... | | ... | | ... | | ... | | ... | | ... |
| 120,000 | 4 | + | 51.75 | = | 55.75 | → | 55.75 | x | \$128,000 | = | \$7,136,000 |

Appendix II includes the example results of the funding formula for each Partner using the methodology as described and service populations shown in Appendix I.

Adapting Funding Allocations to Align with Partner Needs

The funding allocation methodology aims to disrupt the trend of underinvesting in vulnerable communities by using an objective and data-driven approach that avoids using output metrics as inputs in the funding formula and supports a consistent level of services among all communities. As a result, the methodology results in potential funding allocations that differ from what Partners currently receive by reducing the variance in funding levels across Partners (see Appendix II). For some Partners, this means the calculated allocations are significantly more than previous allocations whereas for other Partners calculated allocations are less than current allocations.

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While the methodology was developed with the intention of reducing this discrepancy, the reality is that Partner operations have been established based on historical funding practices and are dependent on the County's current level of investment to sustain current service levels. Additionally, Partners are facing varying degrees of financial pressures due to rising costs and outside circumstances unrelated to the Cooperative and County investments in library services. To address these realities and mitigate impacts to library services over time, an additional "Implementation Plan" layer to the funding formula was proposed to adjust allocations to mitigate potential funding reductions and provide time for Partners to scale up services to meet increased investments. The final adjustments to funding allocations within this Implementation Plan layer are documented within the County's formal proposal for FY2026-2027 through FY203-2031 Funding Allocations.

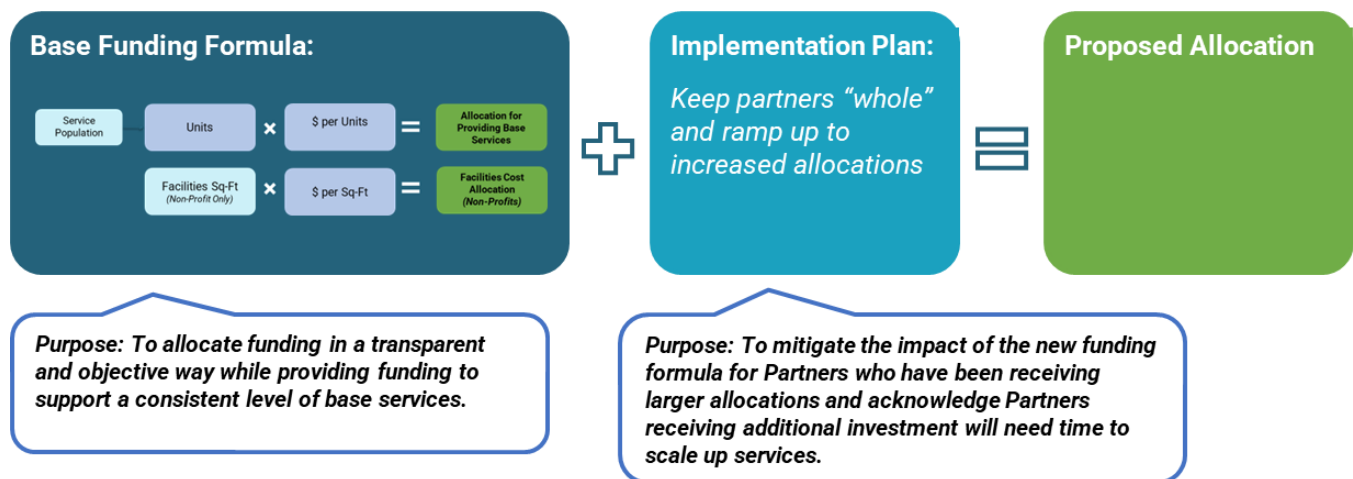


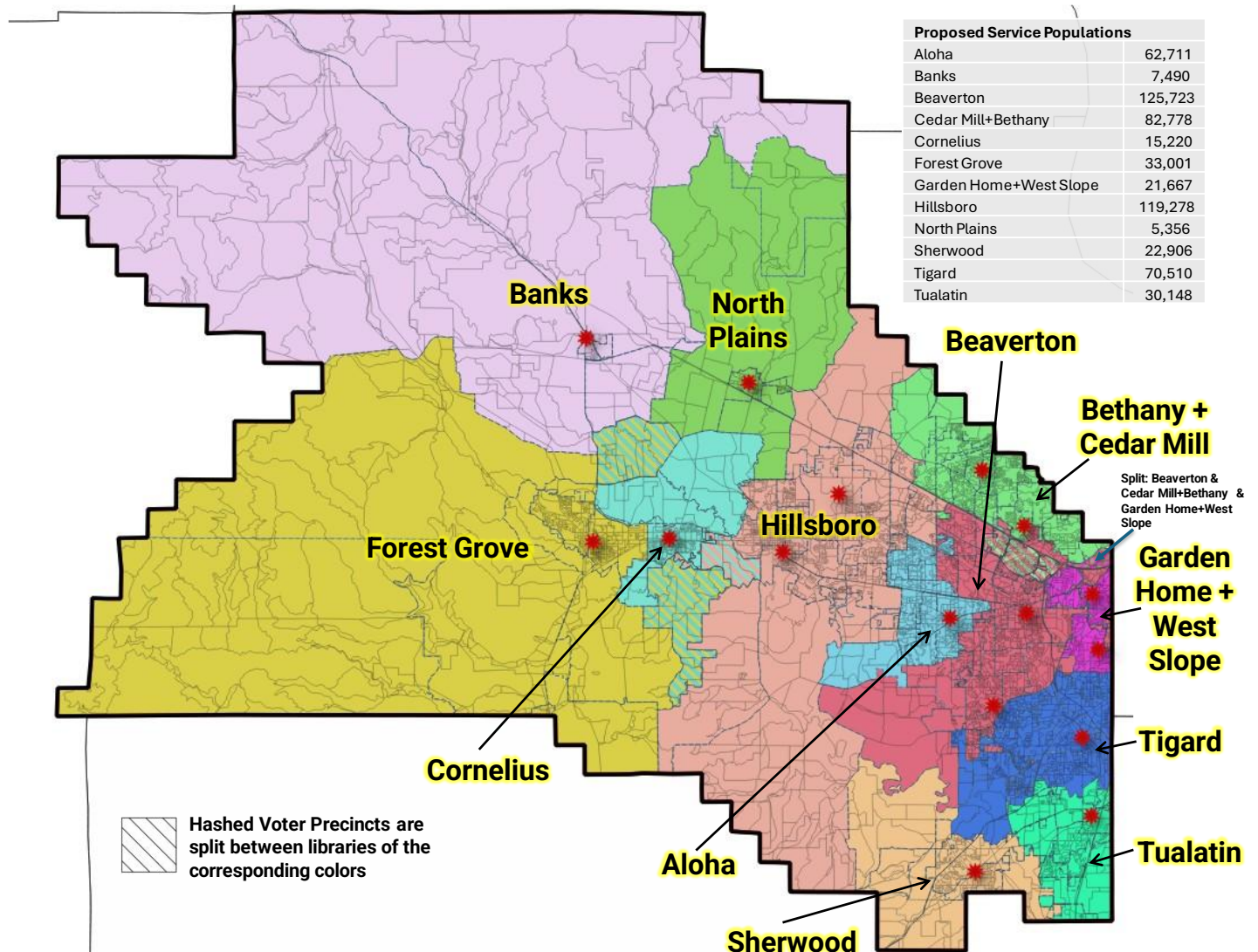
Figure 3: Base Funding Formula plus Implementation Plan Layer

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Appendix I – Proposed Service Boundaries (FY2026-27 to FY2030-31)⁵



⁵ Last Updated on 8/26/25

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Appendix II – Results of Funding Formula Using Described Methodology for FY26-27 (for example purposes only)

| | FY26-27 Funding Formula Results (Example Only) | FY25-26 Actual Allocation |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Aloha | \$ 3,995,105 | \$ 585,549 |
| Banks | \$ 512,000 | \$ 255,983 |
| Beaverton | \$ 7,424,000 | \$ 6,822,021 |
| Cedar Mill+Bethany | \$ 5,534,315 | \$ 5,045,585 |
| Cornelius | \$ 1,088,000 | \$ 611,293 |
| Forest Grove | \$ 2,096,000 | \$ 996,517 |
| Garden Home+West Slope | \$ 1,689,296 | \$ 1,374,624 |
| Hillsboro | \$ 6,992,000 | \$ 6,217,317 |
| North Plains | \$ 512,000 | \$ 209,616 |
| Sherwood | \$ 1,520,000 | \$ 1,052,254 |
| Tigard | \$ 4,256,000 | \$ 4,310,668 |
| Tualatin | \$ 1,952,000 | \$ 1,914,143 |

