



WASHINGTON COUNTY FREE LIBRARY

Where People & Possibilities Meet

Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Adopted November 13, 2024

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The Washington County Free Library (WCFL) is proud to present the Strategic Plan for 2025-2030, a comprehensive roadmap that builds on our past successes while addressing the evolving needs of our community. Guided by our mission to build a strong, interconnected, and diverse community by bringing people, information, and ideas together, and our vision of Washington County as vibrant, collaborative, education and diverse community, we have designed this plan to strengthen WCFL's role in shaping the county's future.

Over the next five years, we aim to enhance our role as an educational cornerstone in Washington County through several Strategic Focus Areas:

1. **Educational Infrastructure and Self-Directed Learning:** WCFL will reinforce its commitment to supporting lifelong learning and literacy for all ages, with a particular emphasis on early literacy, K-12 success, and promoting reading and self-directed learning for everyone.
2. **Workforce Development and Economic Well-being:** The library will play a key role in the economic development of Washington County by providing resources, training, and partnerships that support workforce literacy and job readiness.
3. **Civic Resources and Community Engagement:** As a hub for community engagement, WCFL will offer spaces, services, and programs that foster civic participation, cultural understanding, and a sense of community among all residents.
4. **Stewardship of Resources and Facilities:** Ensuring the effective and sustainable use of our resources, from buildings and materials to staff and infrastructure, is crucial for the continued success and impact of the library.

This Strategic Plan is a testament to WCFL's resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to our mission. As we look to the future with optimism, we are excited to continue serving as a pivotal resource for education, economic development, and community engagement in Washington County. We invite you to join us on this journey as we work towards a brighter, more connected, and empowered community.



Stephen Schutte
President Board of Trustees



Jenny Bakos
Library Executive Director

Our thanks to the following members of the strategic planning committee:
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Strategic Focus 1: Washington County Free Library is an integral component of the educational infrastructure of our community and a leading provider of self-directed learning.

The Washington County Free Library is committed to supporting learning at all stages of life and all levels of literacy. The library encourages student success in school and enhances self-directed and incremental learning for children, teens and adults outside of formal education. Early learning is a primary focus in our community and our library.

Priority 1: The library will be an early literacy champion.

- **Programs and Activities:** Focus on early learning activities. In response to the low number of students entering kindergarten ready to learn, and an increase in English as a Second Language (ESL) students, the Youth Services staff will concentrate on increasing and augmenting age-appropriate programs, classes, and activities to enhance Birth to Five literacy levels and develop kindergarten readiness skills.
- **Programs and Activities:** Train public service staff in developing, delivering, and enhancing developmentally appropriate programs, classes, and activities for children, with an emphasis on individual community needs.
- **Access to Resources:** Focus resources on activities in the library, through outreach, and at home that foster parent engagement and support childcare providers in early childhood learning. Provide learning-forward environments for families to gather.
- **Reading and Lifelong Learning:** Continuously develop and implement services, including an emphasis on the targeted provision of interesting, in-demand, and educational books, which foster a love of books, reading and learning for early learners.
- **Data-Driven Approach:** Use outcome-based measurement to track and analyze progress in the above areas and adjust as needed.

Priority 2: The library will support K-12 learning and success.

- **Reading and Lifelong Learning:** Strengthen relationships with the Washington County Public Schools and utilize the CLASS Partnership agreement to foster and enhance student achievement.
- **Reading and Lifelong Learning:** Encourage reading, learning, and critical thinking through open access to books and other library resources by continuing to offer automatic library privileges to all students enrolled in the Washington County Public Schools.
- **Access to Resources:** The Fletcher Branch will continue to function as the school library of the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts.
- **Reading and Lifelong Learning:** Partner with schools on special programs, such as the Writers and Poets Contest and One Maryland One Book.
- **Programs and Activities:** Work with the schools and other organizations to support afterschool and out-of-school learning activities.
- **Programs and Activities:** Provide an enhanced and rigorous summer reading program with online and in-library resources, classes and school involvement to address the “summer slide”, support grade level reading, and promote reading for pleasure.

- Reading and Lifelong Learning: Continuously develop and implement programs, classes, activities, and services, including an emphasis on the targeted provision of interesting, in-demand, and educational books, that foster a love of books, reading, and learning for K-12 learners.
- Programs and Activities: Offer an augmented school-aged and teen STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) programs, classes, and activities.
- Data-Driven Approach: Use outcome-based measurement to track and analyze progress in the above areas and adjust as needed.
- Building Better Communities: Participate in community-wide educational support efforts, such as the Early Childhood Advisory Council.

Priority 3: The library will promote reading and self-directed learning for all.

- Access to Resources: Develop and maintain a dynamic, diverse, and accessible collection that meets the evolving needs of our community, while maximizing circulation and engagement through innovative services and programs.
- Reading and Lifelong Learning: Promote reading for pleasure and lifelong learning through book clubs, author visits, special displays and events and partnerships with other organizations.
- Reading and Lifelong Learning: Expand and augment opportunities for creative learning and experimentation using new and old technologies for all library users. Begin developing and incorporating alternative collections that explore a wide variety of skill sets.
- Access to Resources: Explore and provide self-directed instructional opportunities, including online resources, lectures, and partnerships, that create alternative pathways for lifelong learners.
- Access to Resources: Provide alternative delivery methods for books and other non-digital library materials.
- Data-Driven Approach: Use outcome-based measurement to track and analyze progress in the above areas and adjust as needed.

Strategic Focus 2: The Washington County Free Library will support workforce development and the economic well-being of all Washington County citizens.

The Washington County Free Library is committed to the economic development and growth of our community. The library is an integral part of the local workforce infrastructure, providing resources and participating in community-wide economic development activities.

Priority 1: The library will provide educational opportunities for workforce literacy and skills.

- Access to Resources: Provide print and digital resources to community members to promote workforce literacy.
- Programs and Activities: Provide and enhance one-on-one job search and resume coaching activities.
- Access to Resources: Ensure that staff are trained in job search skills and computer competencies to assist people looking for jobs.

- Building Better Communities: Continue to work with external organizations to provide free or low-cost space for adult education.

Priority 2: The library will collaborate with community organizations, both public and private, to promote jobs and economic development in Washington County.

- Programs and Activities: Partner with the Washington County One Stop Job Center and the Western Maryland Consortium to provide increased access to workforce training, job search and resume coaching and special events targeted at job seekers.
- Building Better Communities: Continue to partner with organizations such as Greater Hagerstown, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Homeless Coalition to grow the community's capacity for training, resource development, outreach, and programming to support the economic well-being of all our citizens.
- Building Better Communities: Explore new partnership opportunities with organizations that promote jobs and economic development in Washington County.

Strategic Focus 3: The Washington County Free Library is a vital and strategic civic resource for all our citizens.

The library is a collaborator in building a strong, interconnected, and diverse community. It is a place for the community to gather, engage, and explore public and civic issues. Serving all residents from infants to seniors, and providing technology, education, information, research, and cultural enrichment, the library is uniquely situated as a place for our citizens to learn about each other and their world, and work together to forge a robust, thriving society.

Priority 1: The library will provide spaces, services, classes, and resources for all with emphasis on the needs of each library community.

- Access to Resources: Provide library services for diverse populations throughout Washington County.
- Programs and Activities: Continue to develop, enhance, and augment multi-generational and family programming, classes, and activities that embrace the diverse needs of all Washington County communities.
- Programs and Activities: Augment and enhance the provision of ongoing programs, classes, and activities that encourage creativity, critical thinking, the ability to reason, cultural understanding and acceptance, and encourage community participation in response to the loneliness epidemic.
- Access to Resources: Maintain the high quality of research assistance through continual staff training and education.
- Data-Driven Approach: Use outcome-based measurement to track and analyze progress in the above areas and adjust as needed.

Priority 2: The library will anticipate and be responsive to community aspirations and needs, both current and future.

- **Building Better Communities:** Conduct community conversations to discover the aspirations and needs of our communities. The library's responses to these needs will be varied and focused outward on the needs of the community. Communicate the findings from these conversations to the community and its leaders.
- **Data-Driven Approach:** Ask for customer and staff feedback to measure customer satisfaction and experience and make adjustments accordingly.
- **Building Better Communities:** Continue efforts to underserved communities and individuals through both in-library services and outreach efforts.
- **Access to Resources:** Develop enhanced communication methods, both for the purpose of disseminating information out from the library and also for the purpose of facilitating connections within the community.

Priority 3: The library will form and/or strengthen partnerships and alliances with other organizations and institutions.

- **Access to Resources:** Collaborate with other public libraries in the state to increase the quality of resources, programs, classes, activities, and services.
- **Data-Driven Approach:** Use outcome-based measurement to track and analyze progress and adjust as needed.
- **Building Better Communities:** Continue to partner with organizations who support the library's mission and goals such as the Washington County Health Department, the Bester Community of Hope, the Maryland Humanities Council, the Washington County Arts Council, Maryland Public Libraries, and the Maryland State Library Agency.

Strategic Focus 4: The Washington County Free Library will be dedicated to the stewardship of resources and facilities for the staff and community members.

The Washington County Public Library is a safe and welcoming space for both the community and library employees, and is dedicated to sustaining and maintaining the resources, facilities, and staff that make it such a valuable and impactful community resource.

Priority 1: The library will provide a safe and productive environment for all.

- **Safety and Security:** Continue the development of a strong security team to monitor and maintain a safe working environment.
- **Safety and Security:** Continue to assess the need for facility and/or staffing improvements to improve safety at all branches.
- **Data-Driven Approach:** Use outcome-based measurement to track and analyze progress and adjust as needed.
- **Access to Resources:** Provide staff training, tools, and strategies for interacting with patrons who exhibit mental and/or behavioral health issues to maximize staff resources when dealing with potentially difficult situations and provide better customer service to all.

- Access to Resources: Provide wellness resources for staff, to include an Employee Assistance Program, to encourage and promote good health.
- Safety and Security: Serve the diverse communities who use the library by demonstrating sensitivity to the underserved, traditionally marginalized, and special populations, in balance with the more traditional uses of the library by the wider community.

Priority 2: The library will maintain highly competent and professional personnel.

- Planning and Compliance: Ensure compliance with state-mandated continuing education credits and requirements for staff.
- Planning and Compliance: Require and enforce adherence to a code of ethics for all library staff and trustees that focuses on equal service to all.
- Planning and Compliance: Begin creating departmental development and succession plans.
- Access to Resources: Provide regular and required management training, and focus attention on each department's needs and concerns.
- Access to Resources: Work towards developing a rigorous onboarding program for all new employees that gives library staff the tools to thrive in a public library environment and provide excellent customer service to both the community and fellow staff.
- Programs and Activities: Encourage all new permanent library staff members to participate in the annual state library conference (MLA).

Priority 3: Plan, design, and build a new Williamsport branch to expand services and resources in that community, and to provide a safe and welcoming facility for all.

- Planning and Compliance: Conduct an environmental site assessment of the donated land and work through any potential complications.
- Planning and Compliance: Apply for state grant funding for each year of the project and work with Washington County on the required matching funds.
- Planning and Compliance: Work with a professional architecture firm to adjust the proposed design according to the parameters of the donated land, while ensuring that library and community needs are met.
- Planning and Compliance: Transparently work with Washington County on remainder of the pre-construction planning process, ensuring that all aspects of the project are realistic and feasible, comply with all state and/or federally mandated building codes and regulations, and continue to meet library needs.
- Planning and Compliance: Transparently work with Washington County on execution of the construction process from breaking ground to final punch out, and address any issues and concerns as they arise.
- Safety and Security: Work with the library's security alarm vendor to install the appropriate alarms and other security measures to ensure the safety of the staff and patrons.
- Access to Resources: Open the new branch and welcome the Williamsport and Washington County communities to a new library offering improved access to services, programming space, and other resources.