



Strategic Plan

FY2025 - FY2029

October 2024 - September 2028

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OUR VISION

The Norfolk Public Library will be the focal point of the town and serve as the community hub of information, programs, and activities. We will excel in collecting materials, providing equal access to all patrons, while also offering innovative services and creating a welcoming environment.

OUR MISSION

The Mission of the Norfolk Public Library is to provide residents of all ages a welcoming environment where the library resources of space, collection, technology, and programs promote and encourage lifelong learning, recreational interests, cultural exchanges, and a sense of community.

THE OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this planning process was to help the library identify and analyze community and library needs, determine library service priorities as well as develop goals and objectives that address both short and long-term library opportunities.

The Norfolk Public Library has undertaken the planning process with the following objectives in mind:

- Assess the library's role in the community
- Evaluate various strengths and opportunities
- Set relevant priorities and goals for the next five years
- Demonstrate library needs, through objective data, to the Select Board, Advisory Board, and to the town
- Position the library as a vital and essential resource for the community

This plan was developed by the Library's Strategic Planning Committee which consisted of fifteen people:

- Jay Talerman, Moderator
- Sarah Ward, Library Director
- Courtney Allen, Associate Director
- All three members of the Library Board of Trustees: Ken Nelson, Jen Oliver, Patti McCarty, and Brian Beachkofski (newly elected Board member)
- Three representatives from the Friends of the Norfolk Public Library: Stephanie Hamel, Susan McCarthy, and Callan Bignoli
- Five community members: Janet Yavarow, Gerard Grivois, Alex Daigle, Michael Simone, Adelaida Gibson

Meetings for this committee followed the format recommended by MLS's three meeting model[1]:

- **Meeting One:** Orientation and SOAR Exercise
Facilitated by: Town Moderator Jay Talerman
- **Meeting Two:** Community Visioning and Draft Goals
Facilitated by: Town Moderator Jay Talerman
- **Meeting Three:** Survey Results and Wrap Up
Facilitated by: Town Moderator Jay Talerman

[1] <http://guides.masslibsystem.org/strategicplanning>.



Valuable input from Library staff was also collected by conducting a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) exercise at a staff meeting.

A survey was created for patrons and non-patrons to complete during a seven week period. This survey was posted on our library website, our social media pages (Facebook and Instagram), shared on the Norfolk Community Facebook page, the Norfolk Open Forum Facebook page, as well as QR codes posted in different businesses, locations, and at events around town.

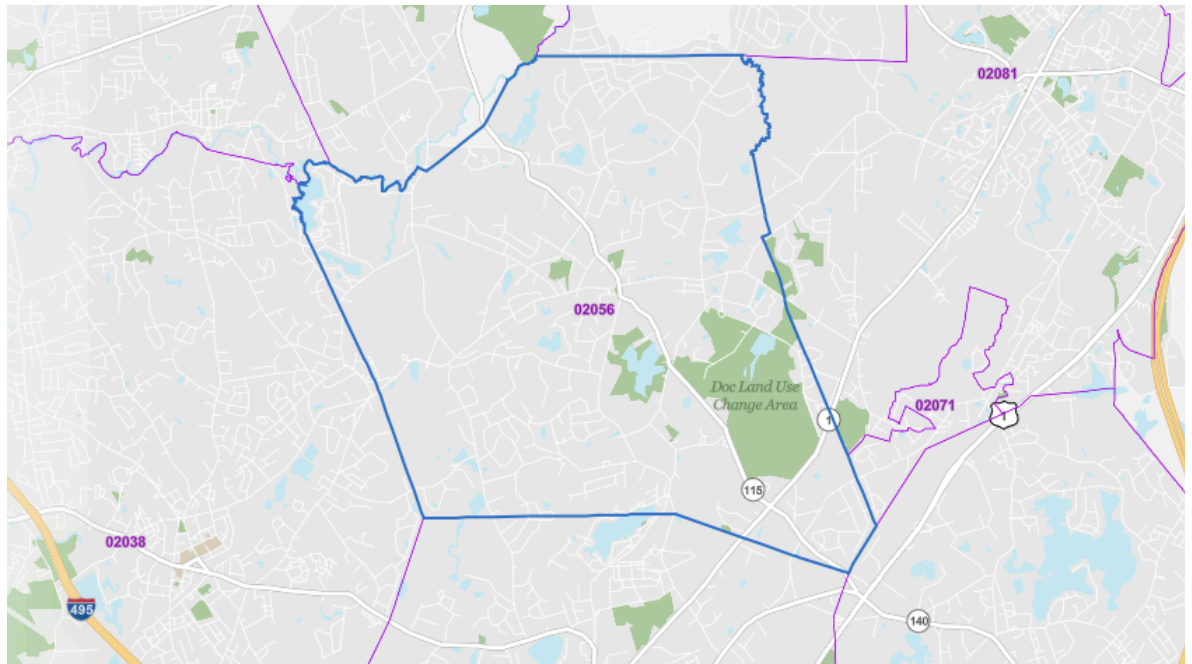
The plan produced by this process will serve as a blueprint to guide library service development for the next five years. The plan is a living document and is important for a multitude of reasons:

- It identifies priorities in services at the library
- It reveals user needs and wants from the library
- It provides opportunity for evaluation and assessment
- It is necessary for funding opportunities and budget decisions

This plan will be reviewed and revised each year to keep pace with the need for new objectives as old ones are met, new needs develop, and conditions change.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Norfolk was settled in 1678 and incorporated in 1870. Originally, Norfolk, Wrentham, Franklin, Medway, and Walpole was comprised of one town which was called North Wrentham. In 1870, the residents petitioned the state legislature to become a separate town, and the petition was approved on February 23, 1870. The new town of Norfolk was composed of 1,124 inhabitants and 9,000 acres of land.



The town encompasses 15 square miles and is located 20 miles southwest of Boston and 22 miles north of Providence, RI and is bounded by Foxboro, Franklin, Medfield, Medway, Millis, Walpole, and Wrentham.

According to the 2020 American Community Survey, Norfolk's official population is 11,662. Norfolk's population also includes the town's prison, Pondville Correctional Center, which averages 106 inmates [2].

Norfolk is predominantly an English speaking, affluent community with the following racial distribution: 84.1% white; 5.6% African American; 0.3% American Indian; 7.6% Latino; 1.3% Asian and 1.1% two or more Races.

[2] [Quarterly Report on the Status of Prison Capacity, 4th Quarter, 2022](#)

Norfolk is a civic-minded town that is made up of multiple volunteer and community organizations. Service organizations include Garden Club of Norfolk, Norfolk Community League, Norfolk Grange, Norfolk Lion's Club, Friends of the Norfolk Public Library, Norfolk Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC), Norfolk PTO, KP Cares, KP DECA, KP Leos, Norfolk Council on Aging, Friends of the Council on Aging, and Norfolk Cultural Council.



Photo credit: Jake Jacobson

Norfolk is served by MBTA Commuter Rail Service to and from Boston and has access to routes 1, 1A, 109, 128, 95 and 495. GATRA, the Greater Attleboro Transportation Authority, also provides dial-a-ride service to residents who cannot drive.

The Norfolk Public School System consists of the H. Olive Day School, housing grades pre-K through two, and the Freeman-Kennedy School, housing grades three through six. Norfolk, along with Wrentham and Plainville, participates in a regional district for students in grades 7 - 12 attending King Philip Regional Middle School and High School. Students may also elect to attend Tri-County Regional Vocational-Technical High School, which is located in nearby Franklin, or Norfolk Agricultural High School, located in Walpole. There are also other private institutions available.

Although Norfolk has no major shopping centers, there are large grocery stores and several malls within a short driving distance. Within town there are banks, variety stores and a handful of small businesses.

LIBRARY HISTORY

The Norfolk Public Library was founded in 1880. A gift of 100 volumes was given by a private citizen's group known as the Norfolk Library Association and by the loan of additional books from the Norfolk Farmer's Club. For 12 years the library was housed on the first floor of the old Town Hall. It was only open from 7:00 to 9:00 on Saturday nights to coincide with the Norfolk Brass Band rehearsal, which was held in the same room.

There arose the question of where to house the growing book collection. In 1898, the library was moved to the tower room on the second floor of the Center School where it stayed until 1919 when the town appropriated \$350.00 to rent and furnish a room in the old Baptist Church. There it remained until the Grange bought the building and requested that the library be moved. In 1951, the oldest portion of the present building was prepared for occupancy.

Records show that the present local history room was built in 1845 to serve as the North School on the south corner of Cleveland and Fruit Streets. From that time until 1870, Norfolk was a part of Wrentham and the North School was one of 18 schools in the larger town. Shortly after 1900, a hook and ladder company was organized in Norfolk and housing was needed for their equipment. It was decided to use the North School building, which was taken down, piece by piece, and re-erected in its present location. It was used until 1926 when a new fire house was built farther down Main Street.

For a number of years the building was used for band rehearsals and social gatherings, and in 1951 it again became an educational institution as the Norfolk Public Library. In 1962, an additional 600 square feet was added to the original structure. In 1985, another addition was completed, bringing total available space to 8,000 square feet. In 2004, the library relocated to temporary quarters while a major addition/renovation was undertaken. In November, 2005 the library opened the new 23,000 square foot facility.



LIBRARY GOVERNANCE

The Library is a department of town government and is governed by an elected three-member Board of Trustees. The Board's authority is derived from Chapter 78, Sections 10 and 11 of the Massachusetts General Laws. Section 10 states in part that: "The board shall have the custody and management of the library ... and of all property owned by the town relating thereto. All money raised or appropriated by the town for its support and maintenance shall be expended by the board, and all money or property which the town may receive by gift or bequest ... shall be administered by the board ..."

Responsibility for library management, collection development, and provision of library services to the public is delegated by the Board of Library Trustees to the Library Director. The Director is appointed by and is directly responsible to the Board, and is an employee of the Town of Norfolk.

The Norfolk Public Library Board of Trustees has a strong record of effective leadership in the community. The three-member board operates under a written set of bylaws. The Board meets on a monthly basis and all members are expected to attend meetings regularly. The Trustees are well informed of both town issues and library issues and are staunch advocates for the library. They continually strive to provide quality library service and are well respected in the community for their leadership and advocacy for the library.

LIBRARY SERVICES

BUILDING FACILITIES

In 2005, the Norfolk Public Library was renovated and expanded. It is a spacious, bright, and welcoming building. The new wing of the building was dedicated to youth services and encompasses a suite of rooms for infants and preschool children through high school. Adult areas consist of a new book display area, large print book area, fiction, and non-fiction stacks, three study rooms, and a magazine reading room.

The teen space has been redesigned with vibrant colors, a couch, café seating, and charging stations. The lobby, lounge, and community room were also recently renovated in 2022 as the result of water damage sustained in the winter.

The Library has three meeting rooms. Two of the meeting rooms (Community Room: 100 person capacity and Lounge: 15 person capacity) and kitchenette are located off the lobby area and may be accessed by community groups during and outside of normal library hours. The Schoolhouse is available only during open library hours.

According to our recent Community Survey many patrons were concerned about the facility given our recent history with water and HVAC issues. Other concerns were about handicap accessibility when accessing the building as well as lighting. The water issues have been mitigated and are being monitored on a regular basis. The HVAC issues have been a long term issue since the last renovation and there are discussions surrounding the HVAC system planned. Additional lighting was added this summer.

STAFF

The Norfolk Public Library is fortunate to have a proficient, stable, and dedicated staff. Staffing consists of the following professional full-time positions: Library Director, Associate Director, Information Systems Administrator, and Senior Youth Services Librarian. Part-time support staff includes a Programming Coordinator, one Technical Services Librarian, a Circulation Supervisor and seven Library Associates who serve patrons at the circulation desk. Included in the FY25 budget was reinstating the Children's Librarian position with the new staff member scheduled to start in January of 2025.

The staff is friendly, knowledgeable, skillful, and responsive to user needs. Staff members are encouraged to seek professional development opportunities by attending state and regional conferences, tuition reimbursement towards degree granting programs, as well as workshops offered through the Massachusetts Library System (MLS) and the SAILS Library Network. Staff members also share their expertise with each other at regularly scheduled staff meetings.

PATRON ACCESS

The library is open six days a week with the following hours:

Monday - Thursday	10:00 - 7:30
Friday	10:00 - 4:00
Saturday	10:00 - 2:00

Through this evaluation process, it became apparent that for some our hours are limited and not convenient. However, we are the only library in the regional area open six days a week all year round. Patrons can also access the library 24/7 by using online databases and e-resources such as Libby for checking out e-books, audiobooks, lectures, movies, and more.

We also provide services and access to library materials to Pondville Correctional Facility and MCI Norfolk's Library. The Library provides delivery for home-bound residents (both temporary and permanent) through a home delivery program.

MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGY

The Norfolk Public Library maintains an attractive, up-to-date collection that reflects community needs. Library materials are actively used by patrons as evidenced by the increase of annual circulation statistics. The collection is kept current by the regular acquisition of professionally selected books and materials. Worn, dated, and seldom-used materials are weeded on an ongoing basis. The collection is systematically arranged and classified so that items can be easily identified and located through the online catalog.

Along with our print materials, a major focus has been on maintaining patrons' access to digital materials, and alleviating wait times, while still staying within the books and materials budget voted on by residents. By offering this content through Libby, we are addressing a need by providing library services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Other 24/7 access to materials is provided through Libby extensions like Qello Concerts, Craftsy, Kanopy, Kanopy Kids, The Great Courses, state databases, and more. Patrons also have in-library and at-home access to specialized databases that are provided by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), Massachusetts Library System (MLS), SAILS, and the Norfolk Public Library.

With people used to accessing information immediately and expecting instantaneous results or assistance, an adequate budget is a necessity. Without the proper staffing and sufficient budget, the Library would not be able to meet the growing and evolving needs of the community.



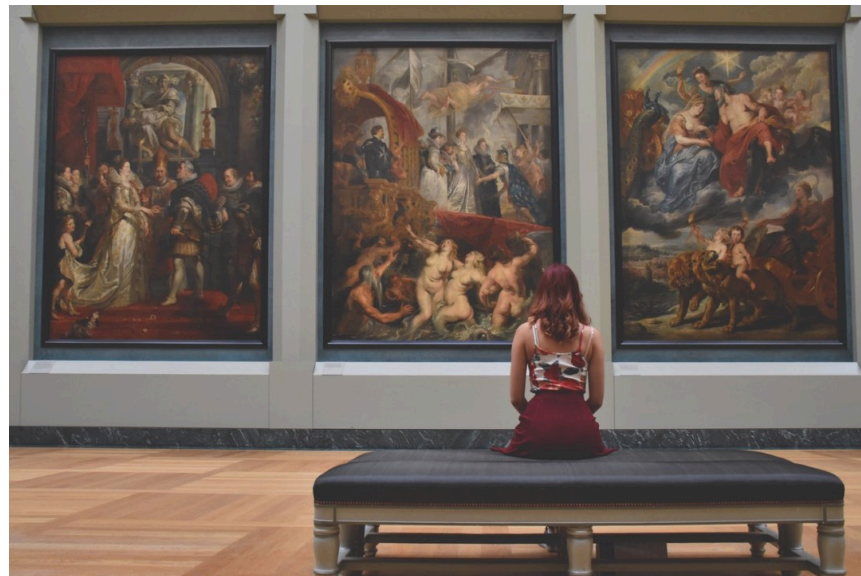
We have a Stuffbrary collection which offers patrons access to a variety of unique items to check out to use for a special event or try before buying. Some of these items include: an Instant Pot, air fryer, yard games, metal detector, outdoor yard games, ice cream maker, projector with projection screen, hotspots, Kindles/Nooks, and a telescope.



Stuffbrary

@ Norfolk Public Library

Museum passes are available for check out as well and provide discounted admission to several museums, parks, and zoos. Museum passes are funded by the Friends of the Library as well as different community groups.



SURVEY RESPONSES

To gather community feedback, we created a survey that consisted of seven questions. We sought to have this survey reach patrons and non-patrons alike, so we posted on our library website and social media pages such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as shared it on the Norfolk Community Facebook page and posted a QR code at businesses and events. During the seven weeks that the survey was available, we received 108 responses.



SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) exercises were also conducted with library staff and the Strategic Planning Committee. This exercise provided additional insights into what the library does well, what needs to improve, goals, and how we can accomplish those goals.

In analyzing the data collected from the Strategic Planning Committee, library staff, and the Community Survey, several themes began to emerge:

Collection: It was asked that the library focus on the physical collection. One patron noted that a lot of their requests had to be ordered from another library. It is unclear if this is due to it being a popular title or if there is an area, subject, or author that we need to make sure we are ordering. However, overall satisfaction with the collection was high.

Staffing: Patrons who responded to the survey rated the staff highly as helpful, kind, and able to answer questions. Some responses noted that the circulation desk was not always staffed fully.

Hours: While a majority of the responses did not have any issues with the hours offered, there were some strongly worded suggestions for additional hours. Previously the library was able to be open 7 days a week for part of the year. Due to budget and staffing constraints the hours were changed during 2020, with an increase closer to previous hours in 2021 and 2022.

Library Awareness: It is obvious that more needs to be done in terms of promoting the Library's programs and services. A lot of the survey responses were requesting services, opportunities, or programs that we already provide.

Programming: Responses were appreciative of the variety of programs that were available, but did ask for more craft programs, evening and weekend programming,, and programming for grades K-3. Some of the concerns have begun to already be addressed since the survey began in April 2024. The addition of a part time Children's Librarian in January 2025 will assist in being able to meet some of these needs as well.

**THE LIBRARY
IS OPEN,
COME SAY
HELLO!**



Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to check out the library's hours.

www.norfolkpl.org/about/library-hours



ASSESSMENT OF USER NEEDS

As a result of the Community Survey, the following have been identified as priorities to users and will be part of the goals outlined in the following section.

Collections

The items that were the most requested for the library to work on were both our physical and digital materials. There was not a space on the survey in this section to elaborate so there are plans to reach out to patrons to see if there is a desire for more variety, if it was an issue of wait times for popular items, or if we need to display and advertise what is available in a different way. Changes in ordering were recently made and additional digital resources were added that may have answered what some of the patron concerns were. The additional survey will assist in planning for our FY2026 budget and beyond.

Programming

There were general requests for more programming, especially in the evening and during weekend hours. Adult programming was the main request with grades 3-6, K-2, preschool, and 7-12 following in that order of frequency. There was more weekend programming offered this summer, and planned for this fall, but the hiring of a Children's Librarian this winter will definitely help the Library to offer more options for working families.

Promotion and Awareness of Library Services

The Library continues to evolve to best serve the needs of the public. With this evolution has come new and exciting services. These new services have created a wider range of opportunities. With that breadth comes the challenge of promoting everything in a way that highlights the services being offered. Many requests in the survey were for things that the library already offers, highlighting the need to approach promoting things more often and in different ways.

Trained and Knowledgeable Staff to Assist Patrons

In a constantly changing information environment, patrons rely on the Library staff for technological assistance. It is imperative that staff have continuing education opportunities in order to provide quality services that meet patron needs.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Strategic Planning Committee met this spring to discuss the Library's strengths, weaknesses, to review the community survey results, and to draft the goals this plan will focus on. Below are some of the strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results that were identified by the committee.

Strengths

(What the library does well)

- Welcoming, inclusive environment
- Variety of programs
- Knowledgeable/friendly staff
- Peaceful/welcoming
- "new" & holds shelf
- museum passes
- Customer service
- Hours/location
- Online databases
- Additions to collections
- Stuffbrary
- Meeting rooms
- Programming
- Access of materials
- Tech-diversity
- Staff
- Ongoing booksale
- 3D printer
- History
- Passports
- Seed library
- Welcoming kids/teens area
- Emails/newsletter
- commonwealth catalogue

Opportunities

(What the library could be doing differently/additionally to serve the community now)

- Community Day, Farmer's Market (Small booksale at a few)
- Storywalks
- TikToks, etc.
- Vary marketing/info. About programs/services (maybe focus more on services)
- More email communications
- Advertise at train station
- Sunday hours
- Adult literacy/tutoring
- Partnerships with others in Town
- Comm. Engagement (ex: Norwood Library)
 - Activity (patron recommends, highlight staff's capability to research)
- Informing patrons of how they can get materials not available through SAILS/COMCAT
- Learning opportunities between library staff and patrons (engine building)
- Patron recommended titles

Aspirations

(What the library could plan for the future to better serve the community)

- Hours for working families (programs)
- Demographics in town
 - What age group is growing fastest?
- Get residents who don't have a card to come in and learn about the library
- Technology specific survey/plan
- Guest speakers, game nights, programming occurring at the same time for kids and adults
- Outreach
 - Farmer's market, you tube, other social media
- Themed social gatherings/clubs (Fiber, watercolor, etc.)
 - Human library
- Coordinate with town org. outside of programs
- D&D clubs run by kids
- More interactive children's room
- Outdoor program space for all ages
- Clubs for kids, by kids
- For the town to have more parking available for events
- Get into school libraries more
- Focus on new patrons or current
 - Who are we missing?

Results

(What will look different when you apply the opportunities and aspirations)

- Increase % of residents who have a library card
- # of room uses or people counter
- Outreach to shelter, etc.
- Teen volunteer opportunities for outside programs have teens be part of the social media advertising or being a part of reaching out to the schools to help bridge the gap for after school programs that may be cut (check in with the schools to maybe offer space)
- Minecraft library that people can visit
- Peer tutoring teens tutoring younger kids (National Honor Society?)
- Museum passes Feature a museum and then have a date to talk about experiences, etc. (museum book club?)
- Activity flyers (for in house and schools) feature museum pass info, summer reading, etc.
- Increase library usage
 - program attendance, residents who have a library card
- Deepen engagement with new users
 - participate in Town Meeting committee updates
- Outcome for Facility
 - capital plan asks for each fiscal year

FOCUS AREAS & GOALS

The heart of this plan is its goals and objectives. They provide the framework on which the plan is built and will guide the Library for the next five years. The goals will be outlined with action items listed underneath that staff will implement to reach these goals. The goals and action items will be reviewed each year and adjusted as needed to ensure the Library is best serving the community's needs.

Focus Area: Facility

Goal 1: Evaluate current patron spaces for needs such as updated furniture, re-organization to make it more patron friendly, look for opportunities to create more study spaces, and make sure we are utilizing the space to meet the evolving needs of the community.

Goal 2: Work with the town to come up with a long term repair or replacement plan for the HVAC system.

Goal 3: Curate collections, both physical and digital, that meet promote literacy and reflect the community. Identify grant or other funding to assist in the cost of expanding the Library's digital collection and platforms.

Goal 4: Find and hold trainings for library staff to ensure they are staying knowledgeable about the latest developments in library services and that they are comfortable with the technology within the library and available to patrons.

Focus Area: Funding

Goal 1: Prepare an annual budget that appropriately reflects the needs and expectations of service at the library, while equally providing funding to increase programming and services to all patrons.

Goal 2: Ensure that the Library has submitted at least one capital project request each budget year apart from the requests made by the Facilities Department.

Goal 3: Establish supplemental funding sources to augment municipal funding.

Focus Area: Library Awareness

Goal 1: Communicate more often with patrons and residents about what services the library offer through email and social media posts highlighting different collections or services.

Goal 2: Compare different services that include text message notifications to vary the types of communications to patrons.

Goal 3: Identify new programs for patrons to participate in (i.e., program loyalty card, rewards, posting on unconventional social media pages-like FB Freecycle pages, program registration adding to your calendar)

Goal 4: Reach out to the community with surveys about targeted subjects (collection, technology, programming).

Goal 5: Participate in Town Meetings with committee updates and to talk briefly about available services and programs.

Focus Area: Programming

Goal 1: Hire Children's Librarian to add additional youth programs.

Goal 2: Complete an audit of programming for the last two years. Use the information to identify any program types or opportunities that have been missed or need to be offered more often or at different times.

Goal 3: Create a space where patrons, residents, and visitors can meet others with similar interests through hobbies, events, and more.

Goal 4: Offer specific programming to tie in with the Maker Lab.

Focus Area: Community

Goal 1: Identify new opportunities within the community to perform outreach and create connections.

Goal 2: Sponsor a biennial town-wide read to bring the community together. Expand to the tri-town area one year.

Goal 3: Work collaboratively with Norfolk town departments, nearby libraries, and businesses.

Focus Area: Technology

Goal 1: Keep current equipment and software up to date while evaluating existing technology that impacts patron services.

Goal 2: Find grant opportunities that would provide the Library with additional funding outside of the annual budget to update or add new technology for patrons and staff.

Goal 3: Evaluate and improve website functionality and navigation for patrons.

Goal 4: Create regular opportunities for technology assistance and training for all ages.