

TOWNSEND PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN DECEMBER 2023



Townsend Public Library Strategic Plan

Governing Body Approval

This plan was approved unanimously by the Townsend Public Library Board of Trustees in December 2023.

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Townsend Public Library to provide the public with access to quality collections, technology, and programs for information, lifelong learning, literature, and entertainment.

Planning Methodology & User Needs Assessment

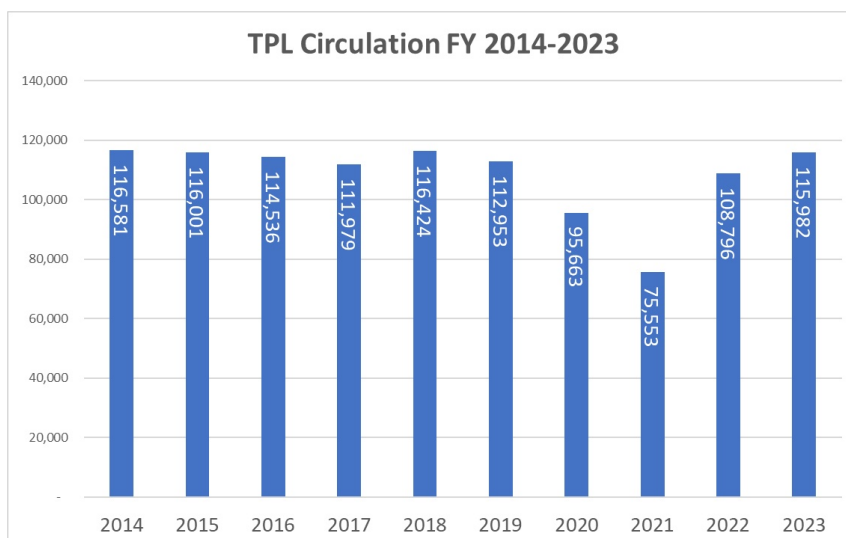
Various members of the Townsend Public Library Board of Trustees, the Library Director, and the Assistant Library Director met throughout the 2023/24 Fiscal Years to determine the best manners to elicit community feedback, implement those techniques, analyze the results, and develop strategic goals and objectives.

The methods used to gather community input and assess needs included online surveys sent to all library patrons and in-person ranked dot voting at various annual public events. The community feedback obtained helped the trustees and staff to narrow down four areas of focus for strategic development over the next five years.

AREAS OF FOCUS

1. Expanding Access Across Populations
2. The Library as a Community Hub
3. Facilities and Sustainability
4. Innovation

Utilizing these areas of focus from our community surveying, we were able to come up with a series of goals and objectives that will help us move forward to better meet the needs of our patron community in the future. The Townsend Public Library has maintained a high level of circulation for the past 10 years, and these new goals allow us to maintain this as our highest priority going forward.



Areas of Focus: Expanded Access Across Populations

GOAL

The past few years brought a variety of changes to how the TPL was used, with ever-changing schedules and patron services to meet the needs of residents through a pandemic and the years following. It is clear through our community feedback that a variety of steps are desired to increase the availability of library services to populations that currently report being underserved by the library.

OBJECTIVE 1: Increased Hours of Operation

To increase staffing hours to allow the library to be open later during the week and more frequently on the weekends. Adding later hours during the weeknights and increased weekend hours would help to reach residents who report that the current schedule does not meet their needs. This objective could be met in a variety of ways:

- Altering one of the current part-time library technicians to a full-time benefited position. In addition to helping increase access to library services through expanded hours of operation, this would have the added benefit of increasing retention in library staffing.
- Adding additional hours to existing part-time library staffing.
- Adding a Library Page position to allow more routine tasks to be completed by a lower wage employee, freeing other library staff for more patron and material-centered tasks.

OBJECTIVE 2: Diversity in Programming

To continue to provide a highly successive series of regular and special programs while increasing the diversity of programming to include programming for more working adults and older children and adolescents.

OBJECTIVE 3: Increased Public Communication & Outreach

To increase awareness of library programming and services to a broader audience of residents. This should include periodically reviewing and revising streams of physical and online publicity as more options become available.

OBJECTIVE 4: Increased Reliability and Access to Public Technology Services

To increase the availability and reliability of public internet, computers, printers, and other technical services.



Areas of Focus: Library as A Community Hub

GOAL

The Townsend Public Library, through the efforts of staff and patrons, is a center of community, culture, education, and recreation. The following years will allow us to further focus on these areas for our town and community.

OBJECTIVE 1: Increased Collaboration and Events of the Greater Community

To increase collaboration between groups outside of the library to better support the community and expand awareness and access to library services. This can be accomplished through joint efforts with The Senior Center, The Recreation Department, the Outreach Coordinator, the Historical Society, the North Middlesex Regional School District, and others to be determined. The recent staffing changes to allow for the position of Assistant Director can be utilized to help increase collaboration efforts.

OBJECTIVE 2: Increased Variety of Library Materials

To increase the variety of materials available to the broader community. This includes increasing options for The Library of Things that allow people to access items that they may not be able to access otherwise. These could include non-traditional library items such as infrequently used gardening tools, a power washer, or metal detectors.



Areas of Focus: Facilities & Sustainability

GOAL

The Townsend Public Library enjoys an ample environment dedicated to its mission. More than a decade into the use of this newer facility, we will continue to work to maintain the space while exploring the ways that it can be optimized to accommodate the changing needs of the community.

OBJECTIVE 1: Increased Flexibility in Programming Spaces, Quiet Spaces, and Community Meeting Rooms

To increase the flexibility in indoor and outdoor spaces to accommodate a variety of programs. This includes the addition of new outdoor programming and recreational space with the support of the Townsend Public Library Endowment.

To evaluate the need and usage of quiet spaces throughout the library. As a busy and very open public space, these areas are somewhat limited and should be considered for future use to meet various patron needs.

OBJECTIVE 2: Evaluation of Public Furniture Condition and Maintenance

To keep on top of the maintenance of high-use public furnishings to ensure cost-effective fixes and replacements are done promptly.

OBJECTIVE 3: Increased Physical Signage for Publicity or Programs and Announcements

To pursue better ways to advertise current and upcoming programs to residents driving by the library entrance.

OBJECTIVE 4: Evaluating Access to Facilities Support

To work with other departments in town to find solutions to daily, weekly, and annual facility support issues that are currently taking resources from other library duties. This includes exploring innovative ideas for sharing and separating facilities management as productively as possible. Some long-term items that would benefit from more cost-effective regular maintenance include carpet cleaning, window cleaning, and necessary cosmetic repairs such as wall damage and touch-up painting.



Areas of Focus: Innovation

The Townsend Public Library led the way in innovative solutions to complex problems throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Seeing the overwhelming community support for the services we were able to offer, we should continue to lead with the use of new technology to pursue areas of expanding library services and better meet ever-changing community needs.

OBJECTIVE 1: Increased Access to Emerging Library Technologies

To utilize the current partnership with the technology services offered by CWMARS, library staff will continue to evaluate the inclusion of new technologies as they become available.

OBJECTIVE 2: Investigate Grants and Alternative Funding Sources

To investigate applicable grants that can be used by the library in pursuing its strategic plan, utilizing the help of town grant writing personnel and other independent resources.

OBJECTIVE 3: Changing Community Needs

To continue to periodically solicit feedback from the community to evaluate changing needs and innovative solutions as they become apparent.



COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS (USER NEEDS)

Online Survey:

In January 2023, the library asked the public to complete an online survey about the library services they utilize, as well as ways that the library could be improved. Three hundred and eighteen responses were collected. Overall, the feedback was positive and supportive of the library services currently provided, encouraging continued efforts in those areas. Responses included many glowing accolades such as:

- “It’s perfect as it is for me!”
- “It is an amazing resource here in town! We are so lucky to have it!”
- “I feel very lucky to live in a town with such a vital, beautiful library, which is a reflection of the people who work there. Thank you!”

Improvements patrons requested included, but were not limited to:

- Increased variety of hours, especially on weekends
- More activities for adults and school-aged children
- More quiet areas to work and study as well as “cozy” and “comfy” reading areas
- Better management of middle-schoolers coming to the library after school.
- Options for snacks and refreshments
- More audiobooks, eBooks, and nontraditional items for the Library of Things:
- Increased advertising of events

Specific examples of what the library could improve:

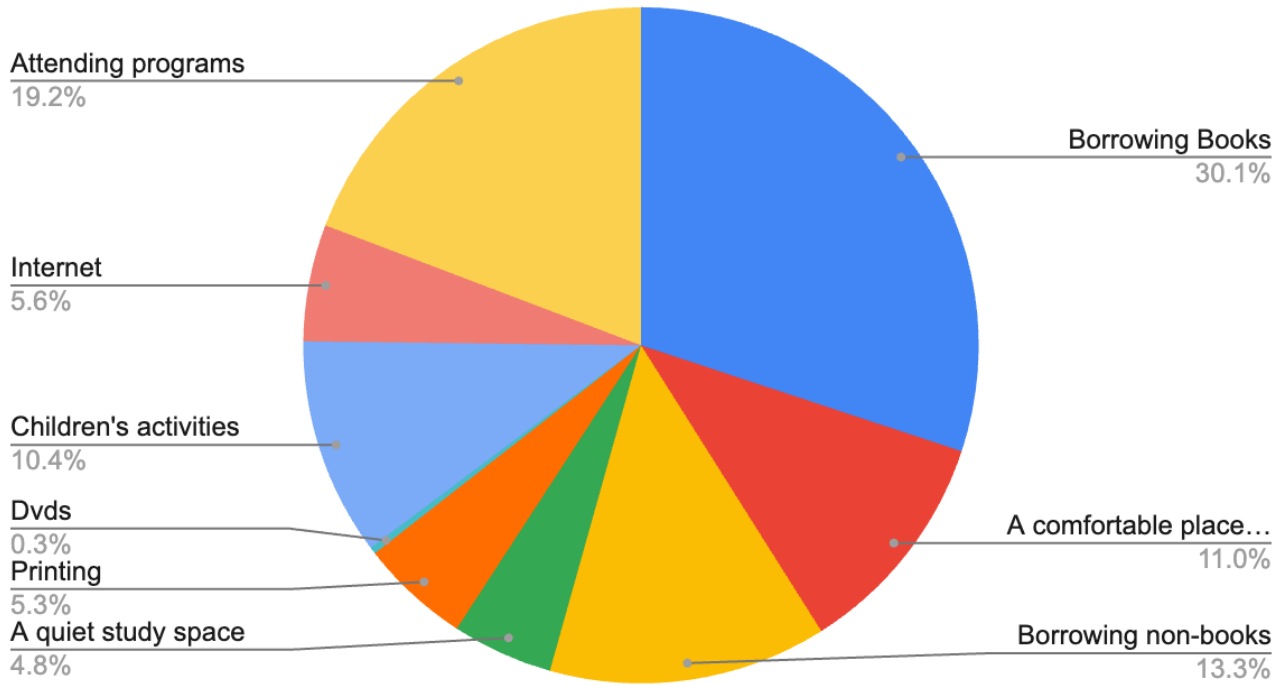
- “The hours. I use the library to study and it would be great if it had more hours available. Especially longer hours on the weekend and Monday nights”
- “Children activities during nights/weekends would be great”
- “I’d like a quiet room”
- “Weekend hours for sure. And more little kid programs during weekends instead of weekdays when parents are working/kids are at daycare”
- “A quiet area...sometimes it gets too noisy in the main room”
- “More hours on weekends...would be great for working parents”

In-Person Ranked Survey:

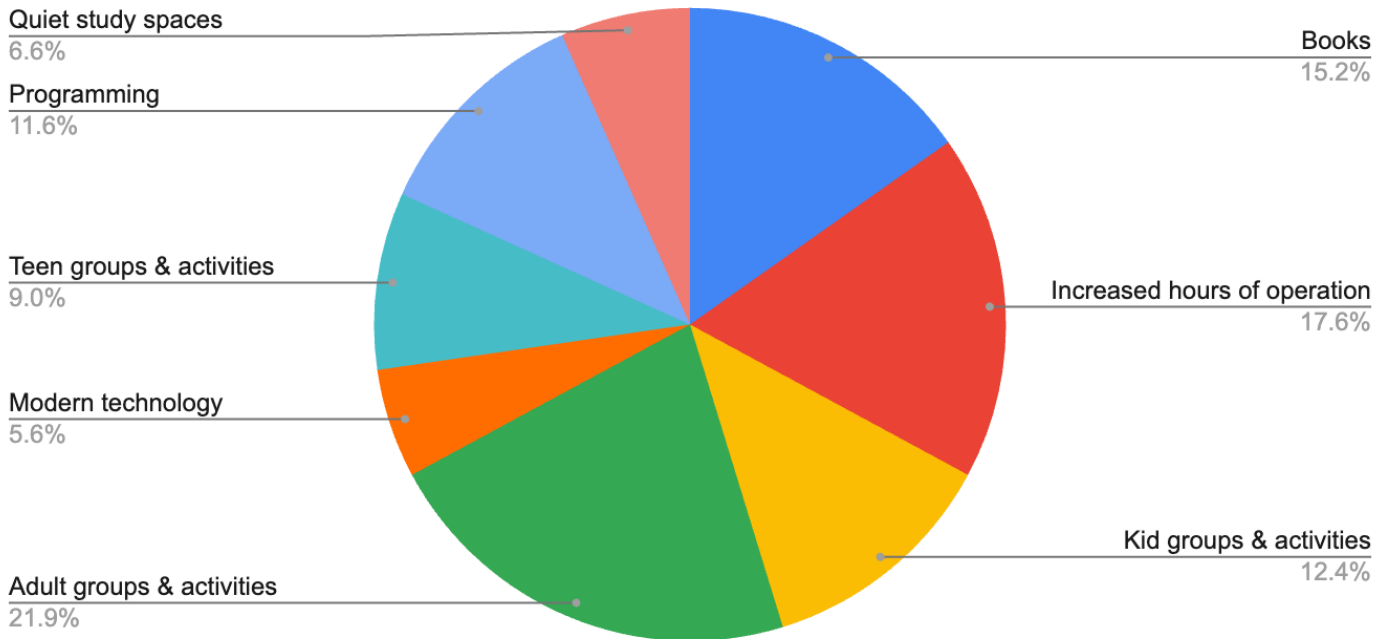
In addition to an online survey, members of the Board of Library Trustees spent 6 months at a variety of high-attendance events soliciting feedback from attending patrons on areas they would rank in importance for future library improvements. The results were like those of the online survey, giving the following priorities:

- Increased variety of hours
- Increased activities for a variety of populations
- Continued investment in the physical space of the library
- Increasing variety in materials

Which of the following do you currently use the library for?



What would you like to see more of at the library?



As the library seeks to increase our hours of operation over the coming years, which of the following would you find most helpful?

