

Outagamie County Library Service Plan: 2020-2024

Recommended for Adoption to the
Outagamie County Board of Supervisors
By Outagamie County Library Planning Committee
August 13, 2019

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Introduction

Wisconsin counties that participate in public library systems are responsible for providing library services to county residents who reside outside of communities that maintain their own libraries. Because Outagamie County is a member of the Outagamie Waupaca Library System (OWLS), it is required to engage in regular planning to ensure that county residents have access to adequate library services.

While county library service plans can address any appropriate issues, *Wisconsin Statutes* Section 43.11 requires that the Outagamie County plan address at least the following:

- How public library service will be provided to residents of those municipalities in Outagamie County not maintaining a public library.
- The method and level of funding to be provided by the County in order to implement services described in the plan, including the reimbursement of municipal libraries for providing countywide library service.
- A method for allocating membership on the OWLS Board between Outagamie and Waupaca Counties.

Eight members of the Outagamie Waupaca Library System Board residing in Outagamie County were designated to serve as the planning committee, and it developed this plan. A public hearing will be held, and the plan will be presented to the County Board of Supervisors for approval. It is intended for this plan to supersede the *Outagamie County Library Service Plan: 2015-2019*.

Review of the 2015-2019 County Library Service Plan

The Library Planning Committee's review of library service in Outagamie County indicates that the 2015-2019 Plan has been generally effective. Public libraries in the county have continued to do a good job of making high quality library services available to all residents of the county. They offer great value to the community, are open and welcoming to all, and provide a neutral, safe place for meetings. Participation in OWLS has been good for public libraries and library service in the county, and OWLS has done a good job of coordinating countywide library service. The principles articulated in the 2015-2019 Plan (Appendix B) continue to be valid and have guided the development of this plan.

During the period covered by the Plan, public library circulation decreased an average of 5% annually. Program offerings and program attendance remained steady. Use of electronic materials has increased each year. Total use of downloadable items in 2014 was equal to approximately 5% of physical material circulation. Between 2014 and 2018 e-circulation increased by over 100% to make up approximately 12% of physical circulation. Because eligible expenditures increased an average of 1% annually, and physical circulation decreased, Outagamie County libraries' cost per circulation increased an average of 4% each year.

Circulation to county residents living outside of communities with libraries decreased more slowly than total circulation. County resident use of municipal libraries decreased by an annual average of 4%. During the period covered by the Plan, the County's payments to municipal libraries increased at an average of 1% per year.

The 2015-2019 Plan focused on maintaining library funding at 100% of the formula for providing countywide library service, a threshold first achieved in 2014 and successfully maintained through 2019.

Another issue the plan addressed was to encourage the appointment of non-residents, especially those from the towns making the greatest use of the library, to local boards. Local libraries were also encouraged to consider including youth members on their boards.

Finally, the committee considered another issue facing some Outagamie County public libraries. Libraries in municipalities located near the county line sometimes provide significant levels of service to residents of other counties, and OWLS regularly works to see that these libraries are compensated for their efforts.

History of Funding

Because of the switch in funding methodologies that occurred in 2000, libraries were being funded at different percentage levels of the new formula. The 2000-2004 Plan attempted to hold libraries harmless by freezing payments to libraries with higher funding levels and increasing payments to libraries with lower funding levels. While this approach helped, there was still a large variation in funding levels among libraries.

Because it was not equitable for some libraries to be receiving reimbursements at a higher level than other libraries, the 2005-2009 Plan included a funding methodology that was more aggressive in moving libraries to the same funding percentage. Beginning in 2007, all libraries, except the Oneida Community Library, were funded at the same percentage level (78%) of the county funding formula. (The funding methodology for the Oneida Community Library was negotiated by Outagamie County and the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin.)

This action required significant cuts in funding to some libraries. In 2005, two libraries received cuts, and one library did not receive a funding increase. In 2006, three libraries received funding cuts, and four libraries did not receive increases. In 2007, four libraries received funding cuts.

Because the amount and cost of library service provided to the county by municipal libraries had increased more rapidly than the county's reimbursements, the funding level dropped from 88.5% in 2000 to 75.8% in 2004. While the downward trend was reversed between 2005 and 2009, little progress was made as the funding level only increased from 79.0% in 2005 to 80.4% in 2009.

The biggest challenge for Outagamie County in the 2010 to 2014 Plan was to make better progress toward the goal of reimbursing municipal libraries at 100% of the funding formula for providing countywide public library service. Under the previous funding methodology, which called for increasing the funding level 1% a year, it would have taken 20 years to achieve 100% funding of the reimbursement formula.

Failure to fully compensate libraries for the county service they provide contributes to disparity in the levels of support for library service between municipalities with libraries and the remainder of the county. A result of receiving less than 100% funding is that municipal residents provide higher levels of support to subsidize the use of their libraries by non-residents.

Beginning in 2010, the budget request contained an amount sufficient to increase the overall funding level by 4% each year in order to fund all libraries at the 100% level by 2014.

Year:	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014-2019
Funding Level:	84%	88%	92%	96%	100%

The 2015-2019 Plan maintained the same formula, and all libraries were funded at 100% for those five years.

Rationale for the 2020-2024 Plan

The Planning Committee has concluded that the current system of paying for library services (i.e., residents of communities with libraries support them through their local property taxes, and all other county residents pay for library service as part of their county taxes) has been fair and equitable for all parties. However, the Committee believes that the formula for determining a library's cost of service provided to the county should be updated to reflect changes in library service and use due to the increasing availability and high demand for digital resources which allow patrons to make use of library collections without visiting the library building.

Equitable funding for library service is a priority for the OWLS Board, for the libraries providing the service, and for their municipalities. Consequently, the Committee recommends that the county funding level be maintained at 100% funding of physical circulation for the duration of this plan. Furthermore, the Committee recommends phasing in reimbursement for electronic circulation over the next five years. Because library reimbursements are exempt from the county's levy limits, Outagamie County is in a position to provide full funding to municipal libraries without any impact on other county programs.

However, the Committee fully understands the economic difficulties facing all levels of government and that the recommended funding methodology is only possible because of the levy exemption. It is understood by all parties that should library payments no longer be exempt from county levy limits the recommended funding methodology would need to be revisited.

As in the past, it is also recommended that OWLS continue to be the agent to coordinate the annual budget process.

Municipalities have the authority to appoint up to two non-residents to serve on their library boards. Section 43.60 of the Wisconsin Statutes also allows counties to appoint up to 5 additional members to municipal library board, depending on how much of a library's total funding is provided by the county. The Committee agreed that the Plan should strongly encourage, but not mandate, the appointment of non-residents, especially those from the towns making the greatest use of the library, to local library boards. Local libraries should also be encouraged to include youth members on their boards.

The committee also discussed another issue facing some Outagamie County public libraries. Libraries in municipalities located near the county line sometimes provide significant levels of service to residents of other counties without adequate compensation.

The committee recommends the following funding methodology, which is based on a modification of the statutory funding formula and which assumes that the amount the county taxes for library payments continues to be exempt from the county’s levy limits.

Recommended Funding Methodology

1. Determine Each Library’s Cost of Service

- a. A library’s total operating expenditure in a given year, less capital expenditures, rent, or net lease costs, and expenditures from federal sources, fines, fees, gifts, grants, or donations, is divided by the total number of items loaned (i.e., circulation) during the same year to determine the library’s cost per loan.

Beginning with the 2020-2024 plan, electronic circulation will be included as part of the total circulation provided by a library if that library includes an amount in its annual operating budget to purchase or lease items in electronic format.

An electronic circulation is defined as an individual electronic file made available for a limited, defined time period on an electronic device. As such “uses” or “hits” of electronic databases or similar files will not be considered “circulation.” In order for an electronic circulation to count for reimbursement, OWLS must be able to obtain data from the content vendor that identifies the user’s municipality.

- b. A library’s cost per loan is multiplied by its number of loans to county residents living in jurisdictions that do not maintain libraries to determine the library’s cost of service provided to the county.

2. This plan recommends continuing funding at 100% of the formula for circulation of physical items and phasing in any change in funding related to electronic circulation at a rate of 20% per year.

Year:	2014-2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Funding level for physical circ:	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Funding level for electronic circ:	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%

3. Determine Each Library’s Payment

- a. Each library’s payment will be determined by multiplying its cost of county service by the funding level for the particular budget year.
- b. Each library’s payment under the county formula will be compared to the statutory minimum funding level for that library. If a library’s funding under the county’s formula is less than the required state minimum, its appropriation will be increased to the required minimum amount.

4. Annually, OWLS will coordinate the budget request process and will submit a budget request equaling the total of the payment amounts for all county libraries.

5. The OWLS Board will monitor the effectiveness of this funding methodology and recommend any changes to Outagamie County. In 2024, this methodology will be evaluated by a new County Library Planning Committee.
6. The Oneida Community Library's payment will continue to be based on the methodology negotiated between Outagamie County and the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin.

Goals and Objectives

Goal A: To continue membership in OWLS in order to ensure that all residents of Outagamie County have access to all library services provided by all public libraries in the county and library system.

Objectives:

1. Outagamie County shall regularly meet all statutory requirements in order to continue its membership in OWLS. (2020-2024)
2. Outagamie County shall regularly appoint ten members to the OWLS Board in accordance with this plan and with Section 43.19, *Wisconsin Statutes*. (2020-2024)
3. Outagamie County shall designate the OWLS Board to coordinate the implementation of countywide library services. (2020-2024)
4. Outagamie County shall encourage all municipal libraries in the county to continue their memberships in OWLS. (2020-2024)
5. OWLS shall continue working with neighboring systems and counties to resolve intersystem service inequities so that Outagamie County libraries are compensated adequately for providing services to residents of other systems. (2020-2024)

Goal B: To compensate public libraries at 100% of the funding methodology included in this plan for providing service to county residents residing in jurisdictions without local libraries.

Objectives:

1. OWLS shall annually collect circulation and expenditure data from municipal public libraries in the county and prepare a library budget request based on the County's funding methodology. (2020-2024)
2. OWLS shall annually submit the library budget request to Outagamie County in accordance with county and statutory deadlines. (2020-2024)
3. Outagamie County shall annually appropriate funding to compensate municipal libraries for providing services to residents of jurisdictions without local libraries. (2020-2024)

4. Outagamie County shall pay its annual library appropriation to OWLS for distribution to the appropriate municipal libraries. (2020-2024)

Goal C: To engage in continuous planning and education regarding the provision of public library services to Outagamie County residents.

Objectives:

1. The OWLS Board shall annually review this plan and shall forward to the County Board any recommended revisions. (2020-2024)
2. The County Board shall appoint a library planning committee to revise this plan or develop a new county library service plan whenever warranted. (2020-2024)
3. The County Board shall appoint a library planning committee to revise this plan or develop a new county library service plan. (2024)
4. OWLS shall annually contact library directors and county officials to inform them of options for appointing non-residents and youth to local library boards and shall encourage them to make such appointments. (2020-2024)
5. OWLS shall regularly provide detailed statistical information to all municipal libraries about services provided to residents of all jurisdictions within the county. (2020-2024)
6. Outagamie County shall encourage all municipal libraries in the county to regularly share information with town and county officials about library use by their constituents. (2020-2024)

Appendix A

Outagamie County Planning Committee Members Appointed May 2019

Committee Members

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Appendix B Guiding Principles

In order to develop a plan, it is necessary to articulate the underlying principles and assumptions that inform and shape the plan. This plan has been developed in the context of the principles and assumptions listed below. These principles are based on statutory requirements, history, or current practices.

1. All Outagamie County residents should have convenient access to high quality library services and should be free to use any public library in the county or library system.
2. Outagamie County should continue to rely on its existing municipal libraries to provide countywide library service. There is no need for the county to implement a new structure to provide additional library services.
3. The county has a responsibility to fairly compensate municipal libraries for providing countywide service.
4. The county should continue to contract with OWLS, and OWLS should continue to contract with the individual municipal libraries to ensure that countywide service is provided.
5. Public libraries within Outagamie County currently provide sufficient access to a high level of services. Any future county library service plans should attempt to preserve this level of access and services.
6. Because municipal libraries are making satisfactory efforts to provide appropriate services, this plan need not recommend any minimum service standards. However, all municipal libraries are encouraged to develop services in accordance with the *Wisconsin Public Library Standards*.
7. Local library boards have autonomous authority for determining local library service programs. This authority includes a responsibility to plan and deliver local library services in the most cost-effective manner possible.
8. Local libraries have a responsibility to collect and report the circulation and financial data used to determine county budget requests as accurately as possible.
9. Outagamie County encourages municipalities to appoint non-residents to their public library boards so that all county residents are represented in decision-making regarding library policies and operations.