



2023-2026 Strategic Plan

To obtain copies of this document, please visit buckslib.org/mission.

Locations

Bensalem

3700 Hulmeville Road
Bensalem, PA 19020

Doylestown

150 South Pine Street
Doylestown, PA 18901

Langhorne

301 South Pine Street
Langhorne, PA 19047

Levittown

7311 New Falls Road
Levittown, PA 19055

Perkasie

491 Arthur Avenue
Perkasie, PA 18944

Quakertown

401 West Mill Street
Quakertown, PA 18951

Yardley-Makefield

1080 Edgewood Road
Yardley, PA 19067

Leadership

County Commissioners

Robert J. Harvie Jr.
Diane M. Ellis-Marseglia, LCSW
Gene DiGirolamo

Library Board

Constance Moore, President
Anthony Bush, Vice President
Richard Rogers, Treasurer
Georgette Helbling, Board Trustee
Amy Masgay, Board Trustee
Kathleen Moeller-Peiffer, Board Trustee
Brian Reimers, Board Trustee

Chief Executive Officer

Martina Kominiarek

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

Expanding minds with opportunities for learning and discovery in welcoming spaces.

Vision

Community connections and a connected community from generation to generation.

Values

- We support intellectual freedom and free access to information.
- We serve a diverse community where every person belongs and we treat everyone with respect.
- We use our human, physical, and financial resources efficiently and effectively.
- We offer friendly, prompt, and reliable customer service.
- We welcome all library users to accessible physical and virtual environments.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

The Bucks County Free Library (BCFL) affirms our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We unequivocally celebrate Bucks County's diversity. We will actively work to make sure that everyone feels welcome to visit our libraries and make use of our collections and services without feeling marginalized. We will strive to uphold DEI as a core value and guiding light in our work.

At the institutional level we will continuously evaluate our policies and operational practices so we can remove unfairness and barriers to access. At the individual level we will continuously offer training, information, and resources to our staff and the public so we are taking the lead in promoting mutual understanding and respectful treatment of all who enter our physical and virtual spaces.

BCFL is for everyone.

2023-2026 Strategic Plan

Collection

Library users will have access to a collection of print, non-print, and electronic resources that support the diverse needs and interests of the whole community.

Action Steps

- Prioritize investing in our collection to meet user needs across formats.
- Improve the user experience of the library's catalog.
- Broaden collection access by partnering with District member libraries to reduce barriers.

Experiences

Visitors will enjoy welcoming, safe, and appealing library spaces and help from friendly staff.

Action Steps

- Continue to support equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging in everyday practices and institutional policies.
- Increase the use of technology help services through better promotional materials and easier access.
- Invest in building infrastructure and routine maintenance as outlined in BCFL's Facilities Plan. Actively seek grants and community funding for cosmetic improvements.

Connections

People of all ages and stages of life will engage with others and become involved with the library community.

Action Steps

- Partner with volunteers to strengthen our operations and public programming.
- Offer events so groups can gather together to learn and have fun.
- Collaborate with local agencies and non-profits to offer engaging public events and valuable information.

2023-2026 Strategic Planning Report

Overview

The Bucks County Free Library (BCFL) conducted a strategic planning process in the last half of 2022 to help focus and prioritize services and activities for 2023-2026. Library leadership, staff, and community members contributed to the process by participating in meetings, interactive sessions, and surveys. The library's goal throughout was to hear from participants their thoughts about how the library currently meets community needs and how the library could position itself to better meet community needs in the future.

BCFL worked with library planning consultant Catherine Alloway. Catherine has more than 30 years of public library management experience as a library director, with extensive experience in strategic planning. She is a past president of the Pennsylvania Library Association and has worked with the Office of Commonwealth Libraries on statewide projects.

Catherine delivered training in how to plan and helped library leaders and staff analyze and interpret community information; facilitate discussions; review and revise the library's mission, vision, and values statements; and draft the final plan and plan documents.

Planning Leaders and Contributors

Library Board members

Martina Kominiarek, CEO

Jessica Gruber, Public Services Director

Hannah Miller, District Consultant

Holly Ambrose, Collection Development Director, and Collection Management staff

Joe Thompson, Chief Operating Officer, and Information Technology and Facilities staff

John Doran, Chief Financial Officer

Patty Dawson, Access Services Administrator

Mark Conner, Library Manager

Adam Ali, Finance Assistant

Branch managers and staff

Inputs and Process

1. General email survey of library users (p. 5-8)
2. In-branch facilities survey of library users (p. 8-12)
3. Environmental scan discussions with library staff (p. 12-13)
4. Demographics/service area discussions with library managers (p. 13-14)
5. Library Board review of mission, vision, and values (p. 14)
6. Development and approval of final strategic plan (p. 14)

General E-Mail Survey of Library Users

In order to get a broad range of community feedback, the Bucks County Free Library conducted a deliberately open-ended community survey. Rather than offer a pre-selected list of things for people to choose from, the library offered open-ended questions. The goal of the survey was for library users to self-identify their own concerns, suggestions, and themes.

Information from the survey was used by the Library Board and management team for inspiration in developing mission and vision statements as well as identifying top-strategic priorities. Survey information also was and will be used in the future as a starting point for staff brainstorming and planning for specific activities and projects to support and accomplish strategic goals.

Survey Questions

Please give us your feedback:

1. If you could change one thing about the library what would it be? 2,480 responses
2. How do you imagine the library will play a part in your future? 2,455 responses
3. Is there anything you would like the library to know? 1,770 responses

Question 1: If you could change one thing about the library what would it be? 2,480 responses

Responses were reviewed and tagged by topic or category of operation. A list giving the number and percentage of comments in each topic was generated.

QUESTION 1 COMMENTS BY AREA OF OPERATION

Collection	887	36%
Everything is Good/Great/No Changes:	529	21%
Miscellaneous Operations and Services	461	19%
Facilities	267	11%
Catalog System/ILS	226	9%

The largest percentage of comments focused on the library's collection. The phrase "more of everything" effectively sums up what library users would like to have. The library's struggle to financially support collections of both print and e-materials was reflected in several comments, with print lovers expressing fears about paper books going away and frustration that library dollars also are supporting e-collections. A few people expressed hope that the library will keep and continue to support collections in formats that are waning as technology changes, particularly DVDs, audio books on CD, and magazines.

The next largest percent of respondents said they feel the library is doing a good job. The top item on the community wish list for changes in miscellaneous services was more open hours, particularly Friday and Saturday evenings and Sundays during the day.

A significant number of respondents (5%) complained that the library no longer subscribes to Overdrive as an e-book platform. Small percentages of respondents across multiple different areas of services and operations made recommendations for what they see as missing or would like to see more of, such as adult and children's programs.

A number of people complained about the library's newly implemented catalog and account software (ILS) and asked for specific improvements or more help using the system.

In the general survey, common themes that apply to all locations included divided sentiment for and against interactive children's areas and outdoor spaces where people can gather. The largest percentage of respondents commenting about facilities (3%) indicated they would like libraries to be quieter spaces or for the library to better support quiet areas. In addition to the general survey, the library conducted in-building surveys at each branch to gauge library user satisfaction and identify concerns specific to those locations.

Question 2: How do you imagine the library will play a part in your future? 2,455 responses

96% of respondents indicated the library will play a part in their future. Many commented about why they value the library and which library service or services they value the most.

Many respondents reflected back to the library that they view the library as a habit, a tradition, or a "constant"; and that the library plays an important and integral role in their lives. Several people identified life events that will motivate them to use the library more in the future, such as retirement or the birth of children or grandchildren. A number of future retirees noted that they hope to volunteer at the library post-retirement.

Several respondents indicated appreciation for the library's e-collection because they are unable to drive or have other physical impairments that make reading paper materials difficult. Several respondents commented that they don't currently borrow library e-books but plan to in the future.

Many people expressed appreciation for free access library materials because it empowers them to save money, help the environment, and read a lot more than would be possible compared to if they had to pay.

The 4% of respondents who said they did not plan to use the library in the future gave various reasons, such as dissatisfaction with collections, services, or facilities; physical impairments; and disapproval of the library's support for intellectual freedom.

Question 3: Is there anything you would like the library to know? 1,770 responses

73% of respondents to this question gave thanks, expressed appreciation for the library in general, complimented library staff, or named specific collections or services they value the most. The remainder elaborated on topics already covered in questions 1 and 2.

Question 1 Detail: If you could change one thing about the library what would it be?

2480 Respondents: Many of the respondents named more than one thing they would change.

21%+ (529 comments)

Everything is Good/Great/No Changes/Love the Library

6-10% (162-216 comments)

More E/Audio Books/Hoopla Borrows
More Hours

4-5% (98-135 comments)

Bring Back Overdrive/Libby/Kindle
Buy More (Suggested) Title/Topic/Genre
General Complaints (ILS)
More New (Format not Specified)
More/Keep Print Books

3% (68-73 comments)

More Adult Programs/Community Events
Quieter
More Children's Programs

2% (41-61 comments)

Extend Loan Periods
More Staff Engagement/Visibility
More Audio (Format not Specified)
Intellectual Freedom/Politics (Both Sides)

1% (25-36 comments)

Easier App/Help With Download/Streaming
More Comfortable Seating/Areas
More Books (Format not Specified)
Upgrade Children's Area
Eliminate or Reduce Fines

<1% (1-24 comments)

New Download/Streaming Services
More/Better Computers/Equipment
Computer Classes/Help Desk
Private Rooms (1-2 Person)
Login Problems/Password/PIN
Coffee/Food
Improved Wayfinding/Signs
Loan Museum Passes
More Book Clubs/Discussions
Improved/Different Shelving/Display
More/Keep Old/Out of Print Books
Landscaping Improvements
More Book Donations/Sales
Improve ILL/Purchase Suggestions
More Meeting/Group Study Rooms
More Large Print
More PR about Library Services
Music CDs
More Library of Things
Extended/Automatic Renewals
List of Previously Checked Out
Holds Pause
Holds Queue
More/Keep Magazines/Newspapers
More Author Events
Maker Equipment
More Games/Toys
More Outreach to Seniors
Suggestion Based on Previous Checkouts
Identify Paper/Hardcover
More DVDs

More Tables
More Graphic Novels
More Video Games
More Children's Books

More Teen Books
More Teen Programs
Catalog Board Books
Wish List Function (ILS)

Survey Distribution and Review Process

Surveys were e-mailed to people with adult card types (age 14 or older) whose accounts were registered to a BCFL branch and who had used their library card at least once beginning 1 January 2019. The library sent out 65,491 e-mails. 308 recipients unsubscribed; 9,977 recipients clicked on the survey link; and 2,791 (4.3%) responded.

Wufoo (a SurveyMonkey product) was used to gather answers. Responses were exported from Wufoo to Excel then to a Word document. Responses were reviewed and tagged by topic or category of operation. A list giving the number and percentage of comments in each topic was generated.

Not all respondents answered every question. Many respondents addressed more than one topic in their responses. Responses characterized by the following were not counted or considered, and were removed from survey results:

- Responses with no content, i.e. no, nope, n/a, already said it, etc.
- Incomplete/abandoned/test entries
- Responses clearly referring to a District member library and not a BCFL branch
- Responses stating there is no relationship with the library, i.e. take me off the list, moved out of state, don't use the library, etc.
- Spam, i.e. vendor solicitations for business
- Responses that included foul language, flaming language, or personal attacks

In-Branch Facilities Survey of Library Users

In 2021, BCFL completed a comprehensive, detailed Facilities Master Plan, which serves as the library's primary resource for guiding efforts to maintain and improve its buildings. As noted in the master plan, library finances allow for and are focused on a few critical areas. These include investment in basic infrastructure, such as roofing, HVAC, electrical, and lighting systems; required and routine preventative maintenance; daily and deep cleaning, such as carpets and windows; and basic grounds maintenance.





Because of financial constraints, the library generally is able to fund upgrades and improvements only with grants, donations, and capital funds designated for facilities. Funding for optional or cosmetic upgrades generally are stretched across the operating budget over multiple years, with focus on different branches from year to year. The facilities survey will help the library gauge general library user satisfaction with facilities, identify location-specific

concerns, and determine which locations may need priority attention compared to others in certain areas when allocating funds, developing timelines, and planning for local fundraising.





Surveys were made available to library users in each branch library for a period of several weeks in September and October 2022. Finance Assistant Adam Ali tabulated the results.

Library users were asked to respond to the following question and invited to optionally submit their own comments: **Please rate your library experience on a scale from bad to great in the following areas:**

Bensalem





<u>Category</u>	 		 	
	<u>Great or Good</u>		<u>OK or Bad</u>	
Parking Lot and Walkways	133	96%	4	3%
Landscaping	133	96%	5	4%
Overall Layout	134	96%	4	3%
Overall Appeal	134	96%	5	4%
Cleanliness	136	98%	3	2%
Safety	134	96%	4	3%
Lighting	132	95%	6	5%
Signs	125	90%	12	9%
Staff Help	136	98%	2	1%
Self Help	131	94%	5	4%
Seating Areas	126	91%	10	7%
Library Equipment	132	95%	5	4%
Personal Device Access	128	92%	8	6%
Restrooms	128	92%	8	6%

Doylestown





<u>Category</u>	 		 	
	<u>Great or Good</u>		<u>OK or Bad</u>	
Parking Lot and Walkways	227	91%	7	3%
Landscaping	243	97%	3	1%
Overall Layout	233	93%	9	4%
Overall Appeal	240	96%	5	2%
Cleanliness	241	96%	3	1%
Safety	242	97%	2	1%
Lighting	241	96%	3	1%
Signs	219	88%	14	6%

Staff Help	241	96%	6	2%
Self Help	229	92%	13	5%
Seating Areas	230	92%	16	6%
Library Equipment	236	94%	6	2%
Personal Device Access	215	86%	14	6%
Restrooms	211	84%	29	12%

Langhorne





<u>Category</u>	 		 	
	<u>Great or Good</u>		<u>OK or Bad</u>	
Parking Lot and Walkways	43	100%	0	0%
Landscaping	42	98%	1	2%
Overall Layout	42	98%	1	2%
Overall Appeal	41	95%	2	5%
Cleanliness	43	100%	0	0%
Safety	41	95%	2	5%
Lighting	42	98%	1	2%
Signs	42	98%	0	0%
Staff Help	43	100%	0	0%
Self Help	41	95%	2	5%
Seating Areas	40	93%	4	7%
Library Equipment	42	98%	1	2%
Personal Device Access	38	88%	0	0%
Restrooms	41	95%	0	0%

Levittown





<u>Category</u>	 		 	
	<u>Great or Good</u>		<u>OK or Bad</u>	
Parking Lot and Walkways	123	96%	1	1%
Landscaping	122	95%	5	4%
Overall Layout	123	96%	3	2%
Overall Appeal	125	98%	3	2%
Cleanliness	125	98%	3	2%
Safety	124	97%	4	3%
Lighting	126	98%	2	2%
Signs	121	95%	1	1%

Staff Help	126	98%	2	2%
Self Help	124	97%	2	2%
Seating Areas	122	95%	5	4%
Library Equipment	127	99%	1	1%
Personal Device Access	120	94%	2	2%
Restrooms	116	91%	9	7%

Perkasie





<u>Category</u>	 	<u>Great or Good</u>	 	<u>OK or Bad</u>
Parking Lot and Walkways	169	92%	11	6%
Landscaping	177	97%	5	3%
Overall Layout	178	97%	4	2%
Overall Appeal	178	97%	4	2%
Cleanliness	179	98%	2	1%
Safety	177	97%	6	3%
Lighting	179	98%	3	2%
Signs	163	89%	13	7%
Staff Help	178	97%	3	2%
Self Help	171	93%	7	4%
Seating Areas	168	92%	10	5%
Library Equipment	177	97%	4	2%
Personal Device Access	168	92%	4	2%
Restrooms	162	89%	16	9%

Quakertown

<u>Category</u>	 	<u>Great or Good</u>	 	<u>OK or Bad</u>
Parking Lot and Walkways	99	96%	3	3%
Landscaping	100	97%	2	2%
Overall Layout	100	97%	2	2%
Overall Appeal	100	97%	2	2%
Cleanliness	100	97%	2	2%
Safety	101	98%	1	1%
Lighting	100	97%	2	2%
Signs	96	93%	5	5%
Staff Help	96	93%	6	6%

Self Help	95	92%	6	6%
Seating Areas	97	94%	5	5%
Library Equipment	99	96%	3	3%
Personal Device Access	90	87%	3	3%
Restrooms	99	96%	3	3%

Yardley/Lower Makefield

<u>Category</u>	 		 	
	<u>Great or Good</u>		<u>OK or Bad</u>	
Parking Lot and Walkways	238	99%	0	0%
Landscaping	229	95%	8	3%
Overall Layout	227	95%	12	5%
Overall Appeal	229	95%	11	5%
Cleanliness	236	98%	3	1%
Safety	239	99%	1	1%
Lighting	235	98%	5	2%
Signs	216	90%	16	7%
Staff Help	233	97%	7	3%
Self Help	231	96%	7	3%
Seating Areas	209	87%	29	12%
Library Equipment	229	95%	10	4%
Personal Device Access	219	91%	15	6%
Restrooms	218	91%	11	5%

Environmental Scan Discussions with Staff

Five virtual staff meetings were conducted to get staff input. Library Manager, Mark Conner, and Public Services Director, Jessica Gruber, facilitated the meetings. The meetings included moderated discussions with directed questions. Keywords and phrases from each meeting were recorded, compiled, and then processed by project consultant Catherine Alloway using notes and NVivo processing software to determine word and concept frequency.

This information was used by the Library Board and management team for inspiration in identifying strategic priorities. Session information also was and will be used by staff in the future as a starting point for brainstorming and planning for specific activities and projects to support and accomplish strategic goals. Discussion questions and highlights:

1. What community need is the library currently meeting? What is the library doing that's unique? What service does the library offer that no other agencies in the community offer?

- Access to books, newspapers, media, public computers, and technology help
 - Free services with no charge and support to intellectual freedom
 - Places with safe and welcoming spaces to work and meet
 - Activities such as programs, entertainment, learning, reading, Passport applications, and other services
2. **Identify one local non-profit agency or for profit business that's providing a similar or identical service as the library. Where is there crossover? How are they the same? How are they different?**

Participants noted that the library is facing competition from other libraries; bookstores; schools and colleges; stores; Amazon; and entertainment venues such as theaters.

3. **Imagine a world 10 years from now where libraries are thriving. Why are they thriving? Imagine a world 10 years from now where libraries are dying. Why are they dying?**

Participants said that the library would thrive by offering free services, programs for all ages, resources and books for all, safe and welcoming spaces, and opportunities for community engagement. Participants noted the importance of library support to intellectual freedom and emphasized the need for marketing library services.

Participants shared ideas for ways they felt the library could stay strong in the future. These included providing customer service and technology help, supporting early literacy, offering programs for all ages, and conducting outreach. They said that the library should eliminate fines, offer separate Spanish language sections for adults, and be “locally responsive.”

Demographics/Service Area Discussions with Library Managers

Library managers participated in a session led by project consultant Catherine Alloway to review and consider current census and demographic data and what trends might drive library usage and services. The group reviewed information from the Bucks County Planning Commission *Bucks 2040* survey, conducted in 2022. The purpose of the survey is to identify community issues and priorities that will need to be reflected in the County's new comprehensive plan.

Information from this survey suggests that residents use and value libraries. Respondents from 78% of households said they've visited a library, with 21% rating public libraries as one of the top three important county services. In terms of satisfaction with public library services, 75% of respondents indicated that they are very satisfied or satisfied, with 21% giving a neutral rating and 4% indicating dissatisfaction.

Library Board Review and Revision of Mission, Vision, and Values

Library Board members participated in an interactive session led by project consultant Catherine Alloway to develop final mission, vision, and values statements. Before the meeting, Board members reviewed the library's current statements; language and words used by the community in the general survey to describe why the library is important to them; examples of statements from other libraries, non-profits, and businesses; and information about how mission, vision, and values statements are crafted.

At the session, Catherine Alloway reviewed information about what makes good mission and vision statements. To develop a new mission statement Board members asked themselves: "What is BCFL known for? What do we do best?" and "Who do we serve?" To develop a new vision statement Board members asked themselves "What words describe the ideal Bucks County, especially one where the public library is thriving?" They also did an exercise where they crafted imaginary headlines of the future that summed up the ideal Bucks County. To produce both statements, Board members individually considered these questions, shared out ideas, and tried out different words and phrases.

The BCFL values statement was created by staff many years ago to be deliberately evergreen. Management team members made minor changes to update the language in the values statements and gave the Board the recommendation to keep the values statement essentially the same with some minor tweaks.

BCFL's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) statement was developed and approved by the Board in early 2022 and was not considered for revision at this time. BCFL will demonstrate its commitment to DEI by planning for supporting activities in its final strategic plan.

Development and Approval of Final Strategic Plan

A draft of the final strategic plan language was developed by members of the management team based on priorities expressed in the community surveys and staff meetings. The draft plan was shared with key internal stakeholders and the Library Board for review and input.

The Library Board approved the final language in January 2023.

For questions or further information about the strategic plan or library services, please visit buckslib.org/contact-us.