



Cumberland Public Libraries Strategic Plan 2026-2029

Message from the Library Director:

The library's mission was last updated more than 20 years ago, and no longer reflected what the library, as a vibrant community resource, offered to the public. In hiring a consultant to aid the library, we were able to gain an outside voice that enabled the staff, community partners, and the public to have real conversations about our values and create concrete steps to meet the library's changing needs.

Our goal in creating a new strategic plan was to make the library more responsive to community members, and to allow us to more easily share our values with the public and with our funders. I am excited to share this new plan with our patrons, staff, and government partners.

Sincerely,
Denise Corey,
Library Director, Cumberland Public Libraries

Message from the Chair:

I am so proud to have been part of the work on the Cumberland Public Libraries (CPL) strategic plan. As a long time library user, but a newer member of the library board, I feel that I have been able to contribute a unique perspective.

CPL's strategic plan will help the library thrive by providing a roadmap for the future. Once the strategic plan is in place we will need to continuously work with it to ensure we remain a viable and useful resource to our communities.

Public libraries provide so many resources and physical spaces in which the public gathers. We are excited to implement this plan to continue to meet the diverse needs of the public.

Sincerely,
Kim Ford
Board Chair, Cumberland Regional Library Board

Vision:

As a place for everyone, accessibility, inclusion, opportunity and intellectual freedom are prioritized. By valuing and supporting staff and patrons, growth and strengthening community partnerships, we are a vibrant hub for learning, collaboration, and social connection. We are an integral part of a thriving, connected community.

Mission:

We provide free access to information while celebrating our role as a welcoming place for everyone to learn, connect, and grow.

Core Values:

Accessibility and Inclusivity

- Providing services to everyone, regardless of background, ability, or socioeconomic status.
- Build on our efforts to make libraries barrier-free spaces that are welcoming to all by following regulatory recommendations and making accommodations whenever and wherever opportunities for improvement lie.
- Accessibility includes physical spaces, resources, and digital access.

Welcoming and Safe Environment

- As hosts, we strive to create a welcoming and friendly space where people feel they belong without judgement. As CPL grows with our communities, we welcome and encourage feedback that helps us to create spaces where everyone feels respected, safe and included.

Equity and Fair Treatment

- Ensuring fair treatment and opportunities for all patrons.
- Equitable access and opportunity for people to connect with library services and resources.

Quality and Service Excellence

- Providing high-quality services and resources.
- Ensuring intellectual freedom and encouraging curiosity, critical thinking, creativity and life-long learning.
- Maintaining high standards of staff professionalism, expertise and pride in library work.

Trustworthiness and Integrity

- We are a trusted information source, providing a wide range of print, audio/visual, digital, and online resources to support communities.
- Providing skilled library staff to assist library users on how to identify and access reliable information.

Strategic Pillars and Goals

Key Priorities

Timeframe: Priorities for January 2026 – September 2026

Goal 1.1	Ensure all library facilities, collections, and resources are culturally responsive, physically accessible, and welcoming by continuously identifying and addressing barriers.
Goal 1.6	Provide a wide-range of programs and services so all community members have opportunities to grow and succeed.
Goal 1.7	Conduct accessibility audits of our facilities in collaboration with our Municipal partners, to help determine where facility upgrades are required.
Goal 2.1	Deepen and expand strategic partnerships with community organizations, schools, and funders to enhance engagement and meet mutual goals.
Goal 2.2	Position the library as an essential community hub by increasing awareness of its full range of programs, services, and resources through targeted outreach efforts.
Goal 2.6	Strengthen the library's role as a vital civic hub and advocate for democratic engagement.
Goal 3.1	Uphold and defend intellectual freedom through strong policies and staff training.
Goal 3.3	Diversify lifelong learning opportunities to provide rich, engaging, and relevant literacy options for people of all ages.
Goal 4.2	Engage stakeholders to identify the best methods for communication.
Goal 4.3	Ensure sustainable library operations by advocating for adequate government funding and pursuing appropriate grant opportunities to support core services and strategic initiatives.
Goal 5.2	Provide consistent, high-quality service delivery by ensuring operational policies and procedures are consistently applied across all library locations.
Goal 5.3	Enhance board engagement through expanded representation and development opportunities.

Strategic Pillars and Goals

Strategic Pillar 1: Access and Inclusion

Goal 1.1: Ensure all library facilities, collections, and resources are culturally responsive, physically accessible, and welcoming by continuously identifying and addressing barriers.

- Strategic Action 1.1a: Work with partners regarding accessible standards.
- Strategic Action 1.1b: Make adjustments to internal facilities (signage, shelving).
- Strategic Action 1.1c: Work with community members, partners and organizations working with persons with disabilities to gain feedback on how to make the library more accessible.
- Strategic Action 1.1d: Continue to provide information sessions and one-on-one help on how to access library materials, including digital collections.
- Strategic Action 1.1e: Provide disability awareness training to library staff. Staff who participate in this training will receive information on how to better serve persons with disabilities.
- Strategic Action 1.1f: Every three years, undertake a collection audit to evaluate the inclusivity, representation, and quality of the collections.

Goal 1.2: Broaden access to library resources.

- Strategic Action 1.2a: Broaden access to library resources through digital platforms.
- Strategic Action 1.2b: Broaden access to library resources through community outreach.
- Strategic Action 1.2c: Broaden access to library resources through diverse collections.
- Strategic Action 1.2d: Provide ways for people to request accommodations so that they may more fully participate in a program or benefit from a service.

Goal 1.3: Strengthen staff and board capacity to serve a diverse community through targeted and ongoing training ensuring self-directed learning and professional development opportunities.

- Strategic Action 1.3a: Ask staff what types of training would be useful for their roles.
- Strategic Action 1.3b: Create a system for staff to bring potential professional development opportunities to management for approval.
- Strategic Action 1.3c: Build a database of relevant professional development opportunities for staff to access and complete.

Goal 1.4: Explore methods to take the library where people are: physical locations: i.e. farmer's markets, community spaces or expanding strategies such as Borrow by Mail and digital services.

- Strategic Action 1.4a: A mobile, pop-up event will be held at a community event or space in each of the library branch communities not restricted to summer months.
- Strategic Action 1.4b: Provide new online content to highlight services such as Borrow by Mail, Interlibrary Loan, and digital services.

Goal 1.5: Build our collections to include a greater variety of books and other materials in accessible formats and for different reading abilities.

- Strategic Action 1.5a: Conduct an assessment of our accessible library materials, determining what needs to be augmented to make our collection more accessible (ex: more large print, audiobooks, etc.).
- Strategic Action 1.5b: Engage with community partners (e.g. accessibility committees and school learning centers) to identify what accessible formats and materials are desired within the collection.
- Strategic Action 1.5c: Undertake a comprehensive program to highlight what accessible formats and resources are presently available to library users.

Goal 1.6: Provide a wide-range of programs and services so all community members have opportunities to grow and succeed.

- Strategic Action 1.6a: Initiate a review of the opening hours and services provided at each branch to identify the best approach for community access.

Goal 1.7: Conduct accessibility audits of our facilities in collaboration with our Municipal partners, to help determine where facility upgrades are required.

- Strategic Action 1.7a: Reach out to municipal accessibility committees to clarify next steps.

Goal 1.8: Advocate and act on behalf of our library users, employees and communities to make sure that our partners remain committed to providing the necessary upgrades to remove and prevent barriers to library services.

- Strategic Action 1.8a: Talk with partners to see how they can make their services platforms more accessible for our patrons.
- Strategic Action 1.8b: Develop a new internal process, with robust safeguards in place, to collect sensitive data from library staff and library users regarding accessibility, awareness, and exclusionary barriers to library services.
- Strategic Action 1.8c: Develop a process to share the data collected as above with the Library Board in its capacity as the decision-making body for the organization.

Strategic Pillar 2: Community Connection, Collaboration and Engagement

Goal 2.1: Deepen and expand strategic partnerships with community organizations, schools, and funders to enhance engagement and meet mutual goals.

- Strategic Action 2.1a: Identify potential key partners (such as seniors' homes, emerging community groups, etc.) and network with them to promote the library (and what it can do for them).
- Strategic Action 2.1b: Re-Engage with current community partners; promoting the library as a key community resource and partner.
- Strategic Action 2.1c: Attend and participate in the planning of community events; showcasing the library is integrated into the community.
- Strategic Action 2.1d: Work with the school system to increase the library's engagement with advancing student education.

- Strategic Action 2.1e: Continue to expand community outreach to our more rural locations; ensuring equitable representation of the library throughout Cumberland County.
- Strategic Action 2.1f: Deepen relationships with funders by demonstrating their impact on library services and programs.

Goal 2.2: Position the library as an essential community hub by increasing awareness of its full range of programs, services, and resources through targeted outreach efforts.

- Strategic Action 2.2a: Consult with community stakeholders to solidify how we could deepen our purpose as a community hub.
- Strategic Action 2.2b: Explore and commit to targeted outreach efforts using social media to promote our services.
- Strategic Action 2.2c: Develop recommendations for online infrastructure, specifically on new and diverse ways for library users to access cultural heritage, local history, and other materials.

Goal 2.3: Ensure library programming, collections, and spaces are relevant and responsive to community needs by actively soliciting and analyzing public feedback.

- Strategic Action 2.3a: Engage community voices through the use of use surveys, focus groups, and informal conversations to gather diverse input on learning needs.
- Strategic Action 2.3b: Create a program feedback form for patrons and staff to ensure programs are meeting community needs.

Goal 2.4: Take part in events in communities throughout Cumberland County.

- Strategic Action 2.4a: Engage with municipal and community partners to identify key events and collaborate on meaningful library participation, such as supporting initiatives like Welcome Week and other community-focused gatherings.

Goal 2.5: Expand outreach efforts through innovative mobile and pop-up library initiatives.

- Strategic Action 2.5a: Focus on outreach services, such as Borrow by Mail and online digital services, for those who cannot visit their local library (including those who are homebound or in nursing homes).
- Strategic Action 2.5b: Expand services and resources for teenagers and young adults, and increase their use of, and engagement with, the library through partnership with the education sector (i.e. schools) and youth organizations.

Goal 2.6: Strengthen the library's role as a vital civic hub and advocate for democratic engagement.

- Strategic Action 2.6a: Endorse the Declaration of Democracy from the Urban Libraries Council. (Resource: www.urbanlibraries.org/files/Libraries_as_Cornerstones_of_Democracy_6.28.pdf)
- Strategic Action 2.6b: Provide access to a wide-range of trusted information sources, including print, digital, and online formats.

- Strategic Action 2.6c: Launch a new forum (eg. Ideas Book Club) to discuss topics pertaining to the library sector, including literacy, book bans, freedom to read initiatives, and legal issues affecting library operations.

Strategic Pillar 3: Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Goal 3.1: Uphold and defend intellectual freedom through strong policies and staff training.

- Strategic Action 3.1a: Provide intellectual freedom training to all staff.
- Strategic Action 3.1b: Develop new and diverse survey and input methods, as well as making improvements to existing metrics, to analyze library usage, to inform decisions made about library operations, and to share with the public.
- Strategic Action 3.1c: Ensure staff have the information they need to help people find and access materials that are available.
- Strategic Action 3.1d: Develop a formal program policy—aligned with the collections policy—that outlines how community input and librarian expertise guide program development.

Goal 3.2: Support literacy and learning by integrating new technologies and providing education on their use to staff and the public.

- Strategic Action 3.2a: Train staff on emerging technologies by provide ongoing staff education on the ethical, environmental, and social implications of technologies like AI to support informed service delivery.
- Strategic Action 3.2b: Offer digital literacy programming, while reinforcing librarians' role in curating trusted content on emerging technologies, such as AI, focusing on their risks, misinformation, and environmental impacts, while also fostering critical thinking and scam awareness.

Goal 3.3: Diversify lifelong learning opportunities to provide rich, engaging, and relevant literacy options for people of all ages.

- Strategic Action 3.3a: Provide programs for lifelong learning opportunities. Examples: early literacy, climate change, emergencies, indigenous learnings.

Goal 3.4: Position librarians and staff as expert navigators in the complex digital information landscape.

- Strategic Action 3.4a: Implement a comprehensive professional development program for all staff to be able to help library users navigate the digital information landscape.

Strategic Pillar 4: Communication & Advocacy

Goal 4.1: Improve communication strategies by enhancing social and web presence.

- Strategic Action 4.1a: Complete a new social media strategy.
- Strategic Action 4.1b: Create an updated, easy-to-navigate website to effectively showcase the library's services and demonstrate its overall value.

Goals 4.2: Engage stakeholders to identify the best methods for communication.

- Strategic Action 4.2a: Host stakeholder meetings to discuss the most effective and relevant communication methods.

Goal 4.3: Ensure sustainable library operations by advocating for adequate government funding and pursuing appropriate grant opportunities to support core services and strategic initiatives.

- Strategic Action 4.3a: Develop a clear and compelling value proposition that demonstrates the library's relevance and impact to funders, partners, and the community.
- Strategic Action 4.3b: The library board will advocate for new, consistent, and ongoing funding to meet the long-term financial sustainability of Cumberland Public Libraries.
- Strategic Action 4.3c: Clarify how libraries are expected to create better alignment with the provincial strategic directions.

Goal 4.4: Develop a new library service analysis and impact evaluation framework.

- Strategic Action 4.4a: Create new means and mechanisms to collect, record, and analyze library service-related data.

Strategic Pillar 5: Organizational Excellence and Sustainability

Goal 5.1: Align staff roles, professional development, and internal communication to support a modern library vision to support staff as *professionally trained people*.

- Strategic Action 5.1a: Re-write and update all job descriptions.
- Strategic Action 5.1b: Create concrete directed and ongoing professional development opportunities for staff.
- Strategic Action 5.1c: Create the conditions for self-directed professional development opportunities for staff and create a link in their annual performance evaluation
- Strategic Action 5.1d: Where possible, library staff will receive annual training on communications and online content creation.

Goal 5.2: Provide consistent, high-quality service delivery by ensuring operational policies and procedures are consistently applied across all library locations.

- Strategic Action 5.2a: Ensure copies of the Cumberland Public Libraries Operational Policies and the SamePage operation manual are more easily available on-line or within branches.
- Strategic Action 5.2b: Policies will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, with the commitment that the board and senior staff will create a calendar for this review process and adhere to it during the life of this strategic plan.

Goal 5.3: Enhance board engagement through expanded representation and development opportunities.

- Strategic Action 5.3a: Collaborate with municipal partners to add more representatives to the board in alignment with the Library Act to help enhance board governance.

- Strategic Action 5.3b: Ensure stronger board representation (chair + other board members) in attending the annual provincial library conference.
- Strategic Action 5.3c: Provide annual training to board members on the diverse aspects of running a library so they are better positioned to be a driving force behind the library.
- Strategic Action 5.3d: Consistently post board agenda and minutes.
- Strategic Action 5.3e: Equip the Board to serve as effective community champions by providing clear roles, defined expectations, and targeted development resources.

*Facilitated by Peak Experiences – The Learning Company
Made possible by a grant from the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage*