



Oconto County Library Service Plan: 2025-2029

*The mission of the Library Service Plan,
like the Mission of Oconto County,
is to responsibly serve and support the libraries in Oconto County.*

Recommended by Oconto County Library Planning Committee
July 29, 2024

Referred by Oconto County Administration Committee
September 12, 2024

Adopted by Oconto County Board of Supervisors
September 19, 2024

Executive Summary

Oconto County is required to draft a five-year plan that addresses how public library services will be provided to residents, including those who live in municipalities not maintaining a public library. This plan, which covers 2025-2029, outlines the method of delivery and level of funding to be provided to its six county libraries.

The County Board authorized formation of a Library Planning Committee through resolution R2023-04-04. (Committee members are listed in Appendix A). This committee prepared and recommended this new plan which will guide the County as it provides the necessary support and resources for the six county libraries to accomplish the following goals:

- *Provide all residents with access to all services provided by system member libraries
- *Ensure that officials and the public recognize libraries as a vital and necessary service
- *Fund libraries sufficiently to provide materials, technology, staff, and programming
- *Engage in continuous planning and education regarding provision of library services

Introduction

On July 29, 2024, the Oconto County Library Planning Committee recommended approval of this plan that sets the course for library operations through 2029. The Committee prepared this plan, held three public hearings, and presented it to the Oconto County Board of Supervisors for approval. It contains guiding principles with goals and action items articulated to ensure achievement. It also details the Committee's analysis of the County library system and sets recommendations for future efforts.

Under Wisconsin law, counties that participate in public library systems are responsible for providing library services to those who reside outside of communities that maintain libraries (unlibrarianed). Because Oconto County is a member of the Nicolet Federated Library System, 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* §43.11 requires that the Oconto County plan address at least the following:

1. How library service will be provided to residents of those municipalities not maintaining a public library. These services must include full access to all member libraries. Under *Wisconsin Statutes* §43.12, neighboring counties and cities may request reimbursement from Oconto County for services provided to "unlibrarianed" Oconto County residents.
2. The method and level of funding to be provided through the County in order to implement such services must be described in the plan, including the reimbursement to neighboring counties for services to residents of those municipalities not maintaining a library.

Guiding Principles of Oconto County Libraries

Oconto County Libraries believe in the freedom to read, learn, and discover. Their mission is to serve; to welcome and support all people in their enjoyment of reading and pursuit of lifelong learning; to provide equal access to information, ideas, and knowledge through books, programs and technology.

Libraries Serving Oconto County

Farnsworth Public Library (Oconto)
Oconto Falls Community Library
Lakes Country Public Library (Lakewood)*

Gillett Public Library
Lena Public Library*
Suring Area Public Library*

**Indicates a Joint Library Agreement is in place*

These libraries were created under *Wisconsin Statutes* §43.52 & §43.53 and are governed by municipally- appointed library boards. All public library boards must include the local school district superintendent or an appointed designee. Only one member of the municipal governing body may be appointed, and no more than two members may be nonresidents of the municipality. Board members serve 3-year terms.

Wisconsin Statute §43.15(4)(b)(3) specifies that a county must enter into a written agreement with its public library system “to participate in the system and its activities and to furnish library services to residents of those municipalities in the county not maintaining a public library.”

Funding for Library Services in Oconto County

Public libraries receive most of their funding from property taxes. Oconto County levies a library tax on all municipalities, except for those municipalities that annually provide documentation for exemption per *Wisconsin Statute* §43.64:

Town of Abrams	Town of Bagley*	Town of Brazeau**	Town of Breed*
Town of Chase	Town of Doty**	Town of Gillett	Town of How*
Town of Lakewood*	Town of Lena*	Town of Little River	Town of Little Suamico
Town of Maple Valley*	Town of Morgan	Town of Mountain**	Town of Oconto
Town of Oconto Falls	Town of Pensaukee	Town of Riverview**	Town of Spruce**
Town of Stiles	Town of Townsend**	Town of Underhill	Village of Lena*
Village of Suring*	City of Gillett*	City of Oconto*	City of Oconto Falls*

*Municipalities qualifying for exemption per *Wisconsin Statute* §43.64 (librared).

**Municipalities that became exempt after the 2020-2024 Plan was created.

Background

Prior to 2010, the County provided library funding at approximately 1.6% of the previous year's total tax levy. That amount increased to 2.1% in 2010. Funding was based on a formula established in the 2009-2014 plan to address inequity tied to historical funding levels. This formula created a built-in increase if the County tax levy increased to provide a stable source of library funding. During discussions on the 2025-2029 plan, concerns arose about the formula and distribution of funding. Sources of concern were the 2.1% and additional charges the County incurs from neighboring county libraries. Thus, it was determined funding changes were needed.

Plan Foundation and Guiding Principles

The Oconto County Library Planning Committee created guiding principles that lay the foundation of the plan. Below are the guiding principles that were approved.

- ❖ To maintain the independence of municipal and joint libraries.
- ❖ To uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and meet the needs of ALL residents.
- ❖ To protect each person's right to privacy and freedom from censorship.
- ❖ To guide all patrons toward a love of reading and awareness of books and other library services and materials.
- ❖ To maintain and improve patrons' quality of life by providing resources that enhance and contribute to individual knowledge, enjoyment, and ability to reach life goals.
- ❖ To ensure libraries are integral parts of public education, and an easily accessible, convenient focal point of community life.

Goals and Actions

GOAL 1: Provide all residents access to all library services provided by all member libraries.

1. Continue membership in the Nicolet Federated Library System (NFLS). Meet all requirements under Chapter 43, Wisconsin Statutes in order to maintain membership in NFLS.
2. Continue to provide on-line services through memberships in the *Outagamie–Waupaca Library System (OWLSnet) Consortium*.
3. Ensure that Oconto County libraries and libraries in other systems of NFLS member counties are compensated adequately for providing services to nonresidents.
4. Maintain an Oconto County Library Services Board in accordance with *Wisconsin Statutes* §43.19 and this Plan.
5. Charge the Oconto County Library Services Board with the responsibility to coordinate the implementation of countywide library services.
6. Continue and expand in-house delivery of e-services in collaboration with OWLSnet.

7. Continue to provide programming to bring in groups or reach out to communities.
8. Consult the business community to see what services could be provided to meet their needs.
9. Respond to requests to provide services to individuals with special needs.
10. Survey collections annually to remain relevant and current.

GOAL 2: Ensure that officials and the public recognize libraries as a vital, necessary service.

1. In conjunction with each local library, OCLSB will develop a publicity campaign to increase public awareness of the value and impact of libraries.
2. Libraries will inform service areas of events/activities via on-going media communications.
3. Each Library will provide a short presentation annually at a County Board meeting to inform the Board of services provided at their library.
4. Libraries will continue to serve as vibrant community life centers, offering opportunities to gather, learn and grow.
5. Libraries will promote collaboration with school districts and community organizations to best utilize resources available and present programs of interest.
6. Libraries will provide staff with training opportunities that promote skills to improve vital customer services and fulfill the Library's mission.
7. Libraries will annually review library service needs and set objectives based on statistics, surveys, and user feedback.

GOAL 3: Fund libraries sufficiently to provide materials, technology, staff, programming.

1. Oconto County shall annually apportion **2.1%** of the previous year's base tax levy amount from non-exempt municipalities to help fund its public libraries. The County shall appropriate additional funding if the specified levy does not meet the minimum funding level under *Wisconsin Statutes §43*.
2. The County shall also apportion from non-exempt municipalities additional funding to reimburse libraries in neighboring counties for services provided to residents in unlibrariated municipalities as outlined in Wisconsin Statutes.
3. Oconto County shall pay its annual appropriation to the libraries by March 1.

GOAL 4: Engage in continuous planning regarding provision of library services.

1. The OCLSB shall annually review the plan and forward recommended revisions to the Oconto County Board.
2. The Oconto County Board may appoint a Library Planning Committee (LPC) to revise this plan or develop a new county library service plan when circumstances warrant.
3. Local libraries shall annually provide detailed statistical information to their governing municipalities and the County to document services provided.

Funding Allocation

In year one of the Library Services Plan 2025-2029, to accommodate the required increase to Farnsworth Public Library to meet the statutory 70%, all other libraries will see an equal decrease in the percentage of the previous year's (2024) allocation. That allocation becomes the base for the next year and any increase/decrease, once the 70% minimum is achieved, would be distributed/reduced to the libraries based on an equal percentage of the total allocation (base levy of the applicable tax levy year).

Conclusion

This Library Services Plan is intended to ensure that Oconto County provides necessary resources for each of its six libraries to carry out their mission as outlined in this document. The Oconto County Board shall formally review and adopt this plan for it to take effect.

Appendix A - Oconto County Planning Committee Members

Oconto County Library Planning Committee Members:

Debra Schroeder	Farnsworth Public Library (Oconto)
Dawn Byars	Gillett Public Library
Kathleen Marsh	Lakes Country Public Library
Judy Patenaude	Lena Public Library
Susan Mogged	Oconto Falls Community Library
LoAnn Elbe	Suring Area Public Library
Joan Denis	Nicolet Federated Library System Board
Vicki Gooding	Library Services Board – At Large Member
Al Sleeter	Administration Committee
David Parmentier	County Board Supervisor – Served by a Library (librariied)
Tom Bitters	County Board Supervisor – Not Served by a Library (unlibrariied)

In addition, the following individuals provided input into the planning process:

Amy Peterson, Librarian	Farnsworth Public Library (Oconto)
Shannon Stoner, Librarian	Gillett Public Library
Katie Essermann, Librarian	Lakes County Public Library
April De La Ruelle, Librarian	Lena Public Library
Rachel Pascoe, Librarian	Oconto Falls Community Library
Jill Trochta, Librarian	Suring Area Public Library
Richard Heath, County Administrator	Oconto County
Kim Pytleski, County Clerk	Oconto County
Lisa Sherman, Finance Director	Oconto County
Tracy Vreeke, Director	Nicolet Federated Library System