



Ellsworth Public Library Strategic Plan 2019-2021: Educating and Inspiring the Community



Mission

The Ellsworth Public Library is a vibrant and essential community resource, educating and inspiring the people we serve.

The Ellsworth Public Library is the largest library in Hancock County and serves the city of Ellsworth Maine and 18 surrounding towns, for a total service population of a little under 25,000. Ellsworth is one of the fastest growing cities in Maine and functions as a service center for a broad geographic area. Ellsworth is located about 40 minutes from Acadia National Park, and tourism swells in the summer. Visitors to the park travel through Ellsworth to get to Mount Desert Island.

The library, a historic house that was remodeled to become a library, was established in 1897 at its current site and a significant addition was built in 1991. The current library is 12,500 square feet and contains over 40,000 volumes. During fiscal year 2018 (July 2017 – June 2018), more than 84,000 people visited the library. The library hosted over 700 educational and recreational programs, attended by more than 12,000 people.

The library's patron base is economically diverse, with a significant low-income population in Ellsworth and surrounding towns. As a coastal community, Ellsworth has a significant seasonal population resulting in a spike in usage during summer months into early fall.

As we plan for the future, we anticipate continued population growth and library services that are tailored to the community's evolving needs. Library visits increased by 4% during fiscal year 2018 and print circulation increased by 2%. This is an excellent opportunity to build upon that momentum over the next three years and beyond.

Goals:

Goal 1: All residents of the greater Ellsworth community will experience the library as a community center of learning and social connection.

Goal 2: Library visitors will use comfortable library spaces for work, study, connection, discovery, and play.

Goal 3: Community members of all ages will partner with the library to develop, lead, and attend enriching and transformational programs through the year.

Goal 4: Adults and students will have access to informational and interesting print and electronic materials that support academic success and life-long learning.

Goal 5: Library visitors will be assisted by knowledgeable and caring staff.

Goal 6: The Ellsworth community and surrounding towns will value and support the library.

Goal 1: All residents of the greater Ellsworth community will experience the library as a community center of learning and social connection.

Outcomes by 2021:

1. The library is seen as gateway for connecting with the community.
2. The number of people using the library continues to increase.
3. The number of community partners increases each year.
4. The library's role as a community connector and referral resource continues to expand.

Actions 2019:

1. Continually explore new avenues to increase awareness of services, resources and events to ensure that people hear about them from multiple sources
2. Survey community members with specific options on library hours to increase access by better meeting community needs
3. Implement priority library open hours.
4. Identify prospective strategic collaborations to reach more of the community
5. Research what other libraries are doing around satellite models
6. Determine geographic focus for satellite.
7. Identify financial resources to fund satellite model
8. Create a community resource area in the library
9. Develop a marketing plan with staff and trustee input

Actions 2020:

1. Assess whether expanded hours increases traffic and make changes if needed
2. Pilot a satellite library model to bring more library services into the community
3. Evaluate response to satellite

Actions 2021:

1. Consider expansion of satellite model beyond pilot

Goal 2: Library visitors will use comfortable library spaces for work, study, connection, discovery, and play.

Outcomes by 2021:

1. Offer small meeting space in the library.
2. Increase lounge-style seating.
3. Increase usage of children’s areas for play and reading.

Actions 2019:

1. Create an open area for story times in the children’s area and purchase additional seating
2. Assess feasibility of flooring over an open area in the library for added space
3. Preserve and improve quiet spaces
4. Building upon input from library space planner, prioritize reconfiguration based on community needs
5. Improve safety, energy efficiency and handicap accessibility throughout the building
6. Swap adult fiction and non-fiction collections for better use of space

Actions 2020:

1. Launch a fundraising campaign for improved space. Determine whether this will be the annual appeal or a separate fundraiser
2. Research and apply for grants to improve space
3. Create more lounge-style seating areas and space for socializing
4. Explore ways to make the space more inviting for people in the community who are looking for co-working spaces (remote workers), including expanded food/beverage options
5. Increase space to house special collections

Actions 2021:

1. Based on funding available, implement priority space improvement projects
2. Provide range of meeting spaces for the community to gather
3. Collect data on space usage and assess

Goal 3: Community members of all ages will partner with the library to develop, lead, and attend enriching and transformational programs through the year.

Outcomes by 2021:

1. Continue to increase program attendance each year.
2. Implement regular successful programming for each target demographic.
3. Increase ongoing partnerships with community organizations, including local schools.

Actions 2019:

1. Design programs for:
Young adults
Tweens (10 – 15) after school
Reluctant readers
Young professionals/millennials
2. Expand Saturday programming for children
3. Convene regular meetings with school librarians
4. Diversify program offerings for adults (e.g., history, current events, financial planning, science)
5. Identify community partners to work with on collaborative programming
6. Convene community conversations to explore aspirations and concerns
7. Improve and diversify marketing of library programs and services

Actions 2020:

1. Assess effectiveness of new programs and set priorities
2. Develop collaborative programming with community partners
3. Increase the visibility of the library as a community meeting space
4. Assess marketing efforts and make adjustments as needed

Actions 2021:

1. Assess community partnerships and prioritize
2. Review and assess all program offerings and make changes as needed

Goal 4: Adults and students will have access to informational and interesting print and electronic materials that support academic success and life-long learning.

Outcomes by 2021:

1. Increase print circulation by 5%.
2. Increase usage of electronic collections by 10%.

Actions 2019:

1. Ensure collection decisions are guided by community needs
2. Upgrade/redesign web site
3. Make it easy to use ILL: Explore a switch to a library consortium that allows seamless patron-initiated ILLs (Minerva)
4. Increase patron education about how to use the Download Library and other electronic collections
5. Publicize purchase request options
6. Consider shifting location of collections based on demand and space needs
7. Increase book display areas and new books area
8. Better publicize new additions to the collection

Actions 2020:

1. Implement migration to Minerva consortium
2. Develop a new books newsletter
3. Deepen readers' advisory services: book talks, online book recommendations, promote Novelist
4. Assess whether collection changes have increased circulation

Actions 2021:

1. Assess usage and satisfaction with Minerva

Goal 5: Library visitors will be assisted by knowledgeable and caring staff.

Outcomes by 2021:

1. Increase patron satisfaction.
2. Increase circulation and program attendance without increasing staff hours.

Actions 2019:

1. Review and refine job descriptions
2. Improve staffing efficiencies and move some staff off circulation desk
3. Consider staggered work shifts to slightly increase hours without increasing the budget
4. Invite a consultant to observe staff work flows and make recommendations
5. Begin implementation of work flow efficiency recommendations
6. Implement customer service and team-building training for staff
7. Begin succession planning for staff nearing retirement
8. Ensure adequate staff time for continuing education to meet training needs
9. Train and involve all staff in marketing efforts
10. Implement a short patron satisfaction survey
11. Assess board development needs

Actions 2020:

1. Continue to implement recommendations from staff work flow study
2. Implement staggered work shifts
3. Assess changes
4. Continue succession planning
5. Determine need for any additional customer service or team-building training
6. Implement board training based on assessment of needs

Actions 2021:

1. Assess staff efficiency and make changes as needed
2. Implement a comprehensive patron satisfaction survey
3. Analyze survey results and make service changes as needed
4. Continue board training and development

Goal 6: The Ellsworth community and surrounding towns will value and support the library.

Outcomes by 2021:

1. Reduce the City of Ellsworth appropriation.
2. Increase annual appeal giving by 15%.

Actions 2019:

1. Build donor base through the annual appeal
2. Develop a planned giving brochure
3. Increase outreach/education to surrounding towns to demonstrate the value of library service to their communities and garner increased financial support
3. Plan one signature fundraising event
4. Create an annual report to highlight donors, library services, and our funding model
5. Explore other revenue options to diversify the library's funding and reduce the tax appropriation from the city of Ellsworth
6. Develop a plan to codify financial support from surrounding towns
7. Ensure transparency about our funding model and build public support for the library budget

Actions 2020:

1. Plan the second recurring signature fundraising event – increase revenue and/or sponsorships
2. Publicize and distribute marketing materials related to giving (planned giving brochure, annual report)
3. Rework and enliven annual funding requests to the city and towns
4. Develop and cultivate library advocates in Ellsworth and surrounding towns
5. Meet with town select boards and/or budget committees to discuss need for funding diversity
6. Collect information about the potential impact of non-resident fees
7. Decide whether and how to implement non-resident fees for library cards
8. Develop a library funding model infographic

Actions 2021:

1. Third recurring signature fundraising event – increase revenue and assess
2. Implement non-resident fees or alternate funding solution

Library trustees began the strategic planning process in late summer 2017 and formed a strategic planning committee comprising trustees, staff, and community representatives. Working with consultant Deb Burwell, committee members conducted nine focus groups over the fall and winter, and nine one on one interviews with community leaders. We also conducted a community-wide survey and received 188 responses.

Strategic Planning Committee:

Trustees: Anne Lusby and Jane McLetchie

Staff: Amy Wisehart, Keli Gancos, Abby Morrow

Community Members: Barbara Beyer and Michael Povich

City Council Representative: Marc Blanchette (through December 2017)

Consultant: Deb Burwell

Final plan approved by library trustees 10.22.18