



# **Oconto County Library Service Plan: 2020-2024**

Oconto County Library Planning Committee  
September 4, 2019

Adopted by Oconto County Board of Supervisors  
September 19, 2019

## **Executive Summary**

Oconto County is required to develop a library service plan that addresses how public library service will be provided to residents of those municipalities in the county not maintaining a public library and the method and level of funding to be provided by the county for this service.

On August 20, 2009, the County Board adopted the 2010-2014 County Library Service Plan. This was the County's first plan since 1976. The 2010-2014 Plan was updated with the 2015-2019 Plan. Now, a need exist to create a 2020-2024 plan. The County Board designated the Oconto County Library Services Board (OCLSB) (see appendix A for membership list) as the Library Planning Committee. This Committee developed and recommended this new library services plan to the Board of Supervisors.

The goals established by the Planning Committee are as follows:

### **GOAL 1:**

**Provide all county residents with access to all library services provided by all system member libraries**

### **GOAL 2:**

**Ensure that the public and government officials recognize libraries as a vital and necessary service to everyone.**

### **GOAL 3:**

**Fund libraries sufficiently in order to provide the public with current materials and technology, knowledgeable staff and educational programming, as needed.**

### **GOAL 4:**

**To engage in continuous planning and education regarding the provision of public library services to Oconto County residents.**

The above goals are the same as the previous plans. . The focus of the 2020-2024 Plan is to further advance each goal.

This Library Services Plan is intended to serve as a game plan to promote and provide the necessary resources for the six county libraries to carry out its mission statement and accomplish the goals listed above.

## **Introduction**

On (September 4, 2019), the Oconto County Library Services Board, acting as the Oconto County Library Planning Committee, recommended approval of this plan that sets the course for library operations through 2024. The current mission statement (listed below) was not changed from the previous plans. A set of guiding principles was proposed with goals and action items articulated to guide the achievement of those goals. This report will describe in detail the Planning Committee analysis of the Oconto County library system, its goals and actions, and set out recommendations for future efforts.

Under Wisconsin law, 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 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* Section 43.11 requires that the Oconto County plan address at least the following:

1. How public library service will be provided to residents of those municipalities in Oconto County not maintaining a public library. The services provided must include full access to all member libraries. Under State Law 43.12, neighboring counties and cities, such as Brown County and Antigo, have been charging Oconto County for library services to Oconto County residents. In 2018, the charge was \$110,828. In 2019, the charge was \$107,786.
2. The method and level of funding to be provided by the County in order to implement services described in the plan, including the reimbursement to municipal libraries for providing service to residents of those jurisdictions in the county that don't operate a public library.

The committee developed this plan, held two public hearings and presented it to the Oconto County Board of Supervisors for approval.

## **Mission Statement**

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

## **Library Services in Oconto County**

Library service in Oconto County is provided by six legally established public libraries:

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

Gillett Public Library  
Lena Public Library  
Suring Area Public Library

These libraries were created under the authority of Section 43.52, *Wisconsin Statutes* by their respective cities and villages, and are governed by municipally appointed library boards. All public library boards must include the local school district superintendent, or their designee, as a member. In addition, one member of the municipal governing body may be appointed to the library board, and up to two members may be nonresidents of the municipality. Library board members serve three-year terms.

Section 43.15(4)(b)(3), *Wisconsin Statutes*, 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.” The current agreements between Oconto County and the six libraries were signed in 2017.

Libraries in the county provide a wide variety of materials, programs, and services to their patrons. Below are some selected statistics relating to library usage.

<u>Library</u>	<u>2017 Service Population</u>	<u>2018 Cardholders</u>	<u>2018 Circulation</u>	<u>2018 Circ. To Non-Residents</u>	<u>2018 Program Attendance</u>
Gillett	3719	2005	25,979	14,666	5697
Lakes Country	6757	2620	47,526	36,126	1168
Lena	2169	975	19,267	14,217	3435
Farnsworth	9814	3670	43,608	20,077	6234
Oconto Falls	12054	3219	63,647	44,126	5051
Suring Area	<u>3695</u>	<u>1130</u>	<u>18,737</u>	<u>14,460</u>	<u>2015</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,208</b>	<b>13,619</b>	<b>218,764</b>	<b>143,672</b>	<b>23,600</b>

### **Funding for Library Services in Oconto County**

Public libraries receive funding from a variety of sources including the county, cities, villages, and towns contributions as well as fines and fees for services. Property taxes provide the majority of that funding.

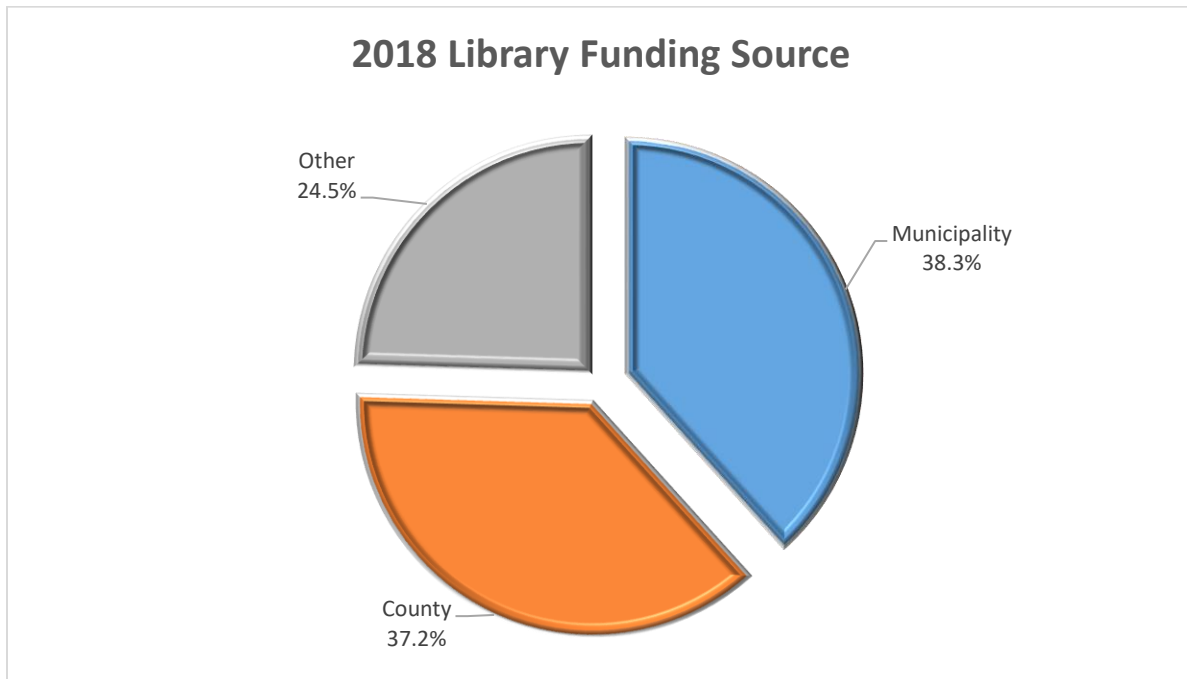
Oconto County levies a portion of the general tax on all county property, except for any municipality that provides an exemption resolution, which is allocated to the individual libraries. Below is a list of those communities eligible to be exempt from the County Library Tax.

City of Oconto	City of Oconto Falls	City of Gillett	Village of Lena
Village of Suring	Town of Maple Valley	Town of Breed	Town of How
Town of Bagley	Town of Lakewood	Town of Lena	

As required by law, the county library tax is used to compensate municipal libraries for serving county residents without local libraries as required by law as well as residents in municipalities with a local library.

In 2018, the county's six public libraries received a total operating income of \$908,005.

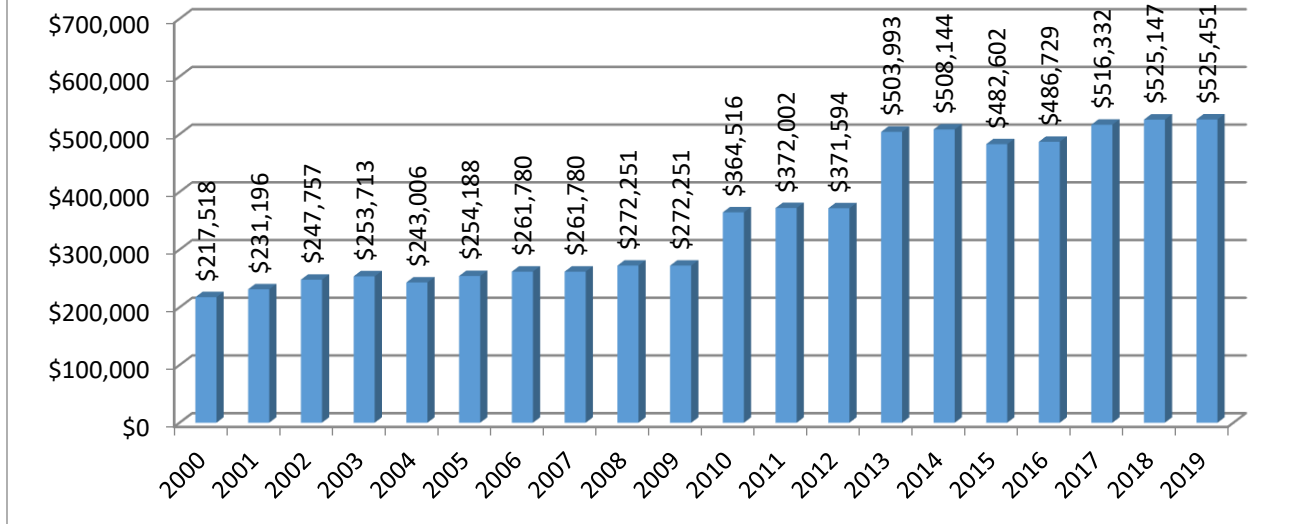
36.5% of this income came from the municipalities operating the libraries. \$373,593 or 43.6% of library revenue came from Oconto County, and \$170,769 or 19.9% came from other sources. (See pie chart below)



In addition to funding to the six county libraries, in 2019 Oconto County also provided \$107,786 to two other library systems, \$106,807 to the Brown County Library system and \$979 to the Antigo Library per State Statutes 43.12. The County also allocated \$4,000 for the operations of the OCLSB. Regarding payments to other county libraries, Oconto County in 2013 worked with local legislators to make changes to the law. Unfortunately, no action was taken legislatively to make the changes requested by the County Board.

Oconto County's support for library services has grown 142% since 2000 (see chart below). In 2000, Oconto County appropriated \$217,518 to support municipal libraries. In 2019, the County appropriation was \$525,451. Approximately half of this increase is due to payments to libraries outside Oconto County.

## County Library Funding 2000-2019



Funding to the six libraries within Oconto County is based on a formula established in the original 2009-2014 plan. The formula was created to address an inequity in funding that was tied to historical funding levels and did not relate to actual circulation or usage. This funding formula took into consideration many factors that measured library activities in the community they serve. In addition, the allocation from the County was set at 2.1% of the previous year's county tax levy. This formula created a built in increase if the County tax levy increased. It also created a more stable source of funding for the six local libraries. Prior to 2010, County provided approximately 1.6% of the previous year's tax levy to the County Library system.

During the discussions on the 2014-2019 plan, some of the libraries expressed concern that the formula did not adequately or fairly allocate the funding to each library. Therefore, the formula for allocating the funds was revisited to determine if changes needed to be made. Discussion also took place regarding the 2.1% allocation formula as set for the amount distributed to the six libraries, especially in light of the additional charges Oconto County has incurred from neighboring county libraries.

In 2013, the recommendation from the Oconto Library Services Board was to leave the funding formula as is. However, during the discussion on the 2020-2024 plan, it was determined that changes to the formula were needed to address the changing use of the libraries. More emphasis was placed on uses of electronic items and services and programs provided by the libraries. As a result the formula, located in the funding allocation section later of this plan.

## **Plan Foundation**

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

### **Guiding Principles**

- ❖ To maintain the independence of community and joint libraries.
- ❖ To have no library experience a decrease in its annual appropriation solely because of the funding change.
- ❖ To meet the needs of residents with concern for all ages, backgrounds, interest, abilities and levels of education.
- ❖ To uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and serve people of all ages and at all levels of need.
- ❖ To protect each person's right to privacy and freedom from censorship in choosing library materials.
- ❖ To guide all people toward a love of reading and an awareness of books and other library services and materials.
- ❖ To be a place to turn to for discovery of ideas and the power of information that helps people reach life goals.
- ❖ To maintain and improve the quality of life for all citizens of the community by providing resources that enhance and contribute to individual knowledge, enlightenment and enjoyment in the most efficient manner possible.
- ❖ To ensure libraries are integral parts of public education and an easily accessible, convenient focal point of community life, connecting the people of the region.

## **Goals and Actions**

The above guiding principles were then used to develop four specific goals with action items for each. These goals, along with the action items, will be used to carry out the mission statement of the Oconto County Library System.

## **GOAL 1:**

### **Provide all county residents with access to all library services provided by all system member libraries**

#### Actions:

1. Oconto County Libraries will continue membership in the Nicolet Federated Library System (NFLS); Oconto County shall meet all requirements under Chapter 43, Wisconsin Statutes in order to continue its membership in NFLS.
2. Libraries will continue to provide on-line services to county residents through its memberships in its *Outagamie–Waupaca Library System (OWLSnet) Consortium*.
3. Oconto County shall seek NFLS assistance and any other resources to work with neighboring systems and counties to resolve any intersystem service inequities arising under Wisconsin Act 420, so that Oconto County libraries or libraries in other systems of NFLS member counties are compensated adequately for providing services to nonresidents.
4. Oconto County will continue to maintain an Oconto County Library Services Board in accordance with this plan and with Section 43.19, Wisconsin Statutes.
5. Oconto County shall designate the Oconto County Library Services Board to coordinate the implementation of countywide library services.
6. Libraries will continue and expand in-house delivery of e-services in collaboration with OWLSnet.
7. Libraries will continue to provide programming, as they are able that brings in groups or reaches out to communities.
8. Libraries should look to the business community to see what services could be provided to meet their needs.
9. Libraries will respond to requests to provide services to the disabled and to individuals with special needs.
10. Libraries shall survey their collections each year to remain relevant and current.



## **GOAL 2:**

**Ensure that the public and government officials recognize libraries as a vital and necessary service to everyone.**

Actions:

1. OCLSB in conjunction with each local library will develop a public relations campaign to increase the public's awareness of the value and impact of Oconto County's libraries.
2. Local libraries will inform their service areas of events and activities through on-going media communications.
3. Local libraries will provide a short presentation each year at the County Board meetings to inform the County Board of the services provided at that library.
4. Libraries will continue to serve as a vibrant center for community life, offering opportunities to learn, know, gather and grow.
5. Libraries will promote collaboration with school districts and community organizations to best utilize the resources available. Libraries will also seek opportunities to collaborate with other organizations to present programs of current interest.
6. Libraries will provide staff with training opportunities that promote skills development, improve vital customer service 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 under Section 43 of the Wisconsin Statutes (Act 150 and Act 420) in order to provide the public with current materials and technology, knowledgeable staff, and educational programming.**

Actions:

1. Oconto County shall annually appropriate 2.1% of the previous year's county tax levy amount to compensate the public libraries in Oconto County for providing services to County residents. Oconto County shall appropriate additional funding if the 2.1% of the tax levy does not meet the minimum of funding levels under Wisconsin Statutes Section 43 (Act 150). (2015-2019). In addition to the 2.1% funding, Oconto County shall allocate additional funding to satisfy payment under Wisconsin Statutes Section 43 (Act 420) for payment to neighboring County libraries.

2. Oconto County shall pay its annual library appropriation to the public libraries in Oconto County by March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.
3. Oconto County shall provide a budget of \$2,000 to the OCLSB to enable them to promote the libraries of the county (i.e., newsletters, flyers, presentations, media, etc.).
4. The OCLSB will present an annual summary of activities of the county libraries to the County Supervisors and other elected officials by June 1 of each year.
5. Libraries and the OCLSB will investigate and develop alternative revenue streams and fund sources while seeking additional grant funding as appropriate.

**GOAL 4:**

**To engage in continuous planning and education regarding the provision of public library services to Oconto County residents.**

Actions:

1. The OCLSB shall review this plan as necessary and shall forward to the Oconto County Board any recommended revisions.
2. The Oconto County Board may appoint a Library Planning Committee (LPC) to revise this plan or develop a new county library service plan whenever circumstances warrant during the term of this plan.
3. The local libraries in Oconto County shall, at least annually, provide detailed statistical information to their governing municipalities and Oconto County about services provided to residents of all jurisdictions within the county.
4. The OCLSB shall work with all public libraries in the county to regularly share information with municipal and county officials about library use, programs, and activities provided to county residents.
5. The local libraries will work with NFLS toward ongoing training for staff.

**Funding Allocation**

The Planning Committee also determined a need to more fairly allocate the funding provided to county libraries. The allocation formula that was created is as follows:

<b><u>Statistic</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage Allocation</u></b>
Circulation & Electronic Materials	30
Circulation to Non-Residents	15
Program Attendance	20
Users of Public Internet	20
Total Service Population	<u>15</u>
Total	100

The statistics to calculate this formula are taken directly from the reports each library must annually submit to the Nicolet Federal Library System. Each year, the figures will be inputted into the formula and applied to the county funding amount. As a result, the funding amount for each library will be known approximately 6-8 months before the actual budget year. This will allow each library ample time to draft a budget to carry out the goals as established by this plan.

The Committee also recommends that if the above formula results in a reduction in funding, that library will be held harmless. That is, the library would receive at least the same amount as they received the previous year. Any increase due to the hold harmless funding will be taken from the other libraries allocation based on the overall percentage of the total funding.

**Conclusion**

This Library Services Plan is intended to serve as a game plan to promote and provide the necessary resources for the six county libraries to carry out its mission statement.

The Oconto County Board will need to approve this plan. A draft of the resolution to adopt this plan is included in Appendix B.

## **Appendix A- Oconto County Planning Committee Members**

Oconto County Library Services Board (OCLSB) Members:

Vicki Gooding – At Large Representative, President of OCLSB  
Linda Hougas, Gillett Library Representative  
Sue Mogged – Oconto Falls Library Representative  
LoAnn Elbe – Suring Library Representative  
Paul Schumacher, Lakes Country Library Representative  
Al Sleeter – County Board Representative  
Emily Miller, School Superintendent – Oconto School District

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

Amy Peterson, Librarian - Lena Public Library  
Joan Denis, Librarian - Oconto Falls Public Library  
Jill Trochta, Librarian - Suring Area Public Library  
Kay Rankel, Librarian – Gillett Area Library  
Kristin Laufenberg, Librarian - Farnsworth Public Library  
Nicole Lowery, Librarian - Lakes County Public Library  
Ken Harter – Nicolet Federated Library System Representative  
Kevin Hamann, Administrative Coordinator – Oconto County

**RESOLUTION # \_\_\_\_\_ - 19**

**TO:** The Honorable Chairperson and Members of the Oconto County Board of Supervisors

**RE: ADOPTION OF OCONTO COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICES PLAN 2020-2024**

WHEREAS, the Oconto County Library Services Board was appointed as the County Library Planning Committee entrusted to develop the 2020-2024 Oconto County Library Services Plan; and

WHEREAS, this Committee has been meeting for more than a year to create a new plan (attached); and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on September 4, 2019 on the proposed 2020-2024 plan; and

WHEREAS, this new plan conforms to the requirement imposed by the State of Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, the County Library Services Board on September 4, 2019 recommended approval of the new plan; and

WHEREAS, there is no additional fiscal impact of this plan versus the current plan as the funding allocation provided by the County remains the same level, 2.1% of the previous county tax levy.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Oconto County Board of Supervisors hereby adopt the attached Oconto County Library Services Plan 2020-2024.

Submitted this 19th day of September, 2019

By: FINANCE & INSURANCE COMMITTEE

Paul Bednarik. Chairperson

Al Sleeter

Greg Sekela

Doug McMahan

Gary Frank