

FY2027-FY2031

STRATEGIC PLAN XII

BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Introduction



The real story of the library is what happens when people have opportunities to explore, learn, create and connect: a child discovers a love of reading, a job seeker lands an interview or an older adult finds connection in a room full of neighbors.

For more than 75 years, Baltimore County Public Library has evolved alongside the county and communities we serve, adapting to a changing world while remaining grounded in what matters most: Making a meaningful difference in people's lives. From supporting literacy and lifelong learning to expanding access to technology, building skills and creating opportunities for connection, how we serve may evolve, but why we serve remains constant.

To understand how the library continues to make that meaningful difference, we first need to take a step back, assess where we have been and listen to the people who know our communities best to determine where to go next. Strategic Plan XII was shaped by hundreds of people who took the time to share what they value about their library, where we can do better and what Baltimore County needs to improve the lives of those who live here. We heard from community members, elected officials, nonprofit partners, educators, teens, older adults and library staff. Their experiences, ideas and perspectives helped us better understand our communities and where the library can have the greatest impact.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this process, including Baltimore County community members, the Board of Library Trustees for its guidance and Baltimore County Public Library staff for the work they do every day. Together, this input helped set a clear direction for the next five years.

Baltimore County Public Library is focused on four priority outcomes:

- Increase reading literacy
- Advance economic opportunity
- Increase digital literacy and technology access
- Strengthen social connections and reduce isolation

These outcomes define the difference we want to make in the lives of our customers and across every community in Baltimore County.

Four strategic themes guide how we achieve these outcomes:

- Enhance programming
- Build community connection
- Maximize impact of resources
- Align and empower the library workforce

These outcomes and themes provide a clear path for turning our priorities into action.

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Who We Serve

Baltimore County is home to more than 850,000 people living in urban neighborhoods, suburban communities and rural areas stretching from the Pennsylvania border to the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. Baltimore County Public Library serves these diverse communities through 19 branches and mobile library services that extend our reach beyond our buildings.

Understanding who lives in Baltimore County and how our communities continue to evolve is important to ensure library services remain relevant and accessible.

A Community of All Ages

The role of the library looks different at every age and stage of life. Children and families benefit from resources and activities that build early literacy and support learning. Working adults look for resources and programs that fit into busy schedules, build skills and open doors to new opportunities. As our older adult population continues to grow, so does the importance of opportunities for connection, accessible technology assistance and resources for caregivers.

Strategic Plan XII reflects the diversity of Baltimore County and our commitment to meet the needs of those who use the library today while reaching those who may not yet know everything the library has to offer.





How We Built the Plan

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From August 2025 through May 2026, Baltimore County Public Library worked with Greenway Strategy Group to listen, learn and turn what we heard into a plan to guide our work for the next five years. The process combined research and data with extensive input from the community, partners and staff to give us a fuller picture of where we are and where we need to go.

By the Numbers

- **7** Focus Groups
- **12** Interviews With Community Leaders
- **3** Regional Branch Sessions
- **3** Community Input Sessions
- **1,016** Community Survey Participants
- **64** Zip Codes Represented
- **21,798** Community Survey Ratings
- **429** Staff Survey Participants

What We Heard

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The Library Is Valued

People see Baltimore County Public Library as much more than a place to borrow books. They value the library as a community hub, a trusted gathering place, a source of technology and information, and a welcoming place to learn and connect.

Library staff were also consistently identified as one of our greatest strengths. Community members and partners described staff as professional, helpful, knowledgeable and committed to the people they serve.

More People Need to Know What the Library Offers

One of the clearest opportunities is increasing awareness. Many Baltimore County residents do not know the full range of resources, programs and services available through the library. Stronger and more targeted communication, outreach and partnerships can help us reach new audiences and connect more residents with what the library offers.

Partnerships Make Us Stronger

Community organizations, schools, government agencies and nonprofits value the library as a partner and see the potential for deeper, more coordinated collaboration. Stakeholders also see an important role for the library as a connector between residents and the organizations, services and resources available throughout Baltimore County.

Programming Brings People Together

Programs are among the library's most visible and valued offerings, especially those that create opportunities to learn, discover and connect. We also heard the need for greater consistency and accessibility and for programming that better reaches teens, older adults, new Americans, working adults and others who may face barriers to participation.

Access Takes Many Forms

Where people live, when branches are open, transportation, technology and the condition of library facilities can all affect access. Residents also need access to devices and broadband as well as library digital experiences that are easy to use.

Joy Matters

One of the simplest messages we heard may also be one of the most important: The library should not only be useful. It should be a place people enjoy.

Curiosity, discovery, creativity and connection are all part of the library experience and part of what makes libraries important to the communities they serve.

Supporting the People Who Serve Our Communities

Staff expressed a strong commitment to the library's mission while also identifying opportunities for greater support, including professional development, communication, leadership practices and meaningful opportunities to collaborate and connect.





OUR STRATEGIC PLAN



Everything we learned brings us to the work ahead.

Strategic Plan XII turns what we heard into a clear direction for the next five years. Our priority outcomes define the difference we want to make in people's lives, while four strategic themes guide where we focus our work. Within each theme, objectives and initiatives outline how we turn those priorities into action.

Our Priority Outcomes

Increase Reading Literacy

Reading is fundamental to learning at every age. The library supports literacy from a child's earliest experiences with books through lifelong reading and learning.

Advance Economic Opportunity

Libraries provide free access to job training, financial literacy, technology and other resources that can help residents build skills and pursue opportunities.

Increase Digital Literacy and Technology Access

Access to technology is essential to participating fully in today's world. The library helps bridge gaps in devices, broadband, technology skills and digital resources.

Strengthen Social Connections and Reduce Isolation

Libraries create opportunities for people to come together. Our branches are places to connect with neighbors, build relationships, discover shared interests and feel part of a community.

Four Strategic Themes

Enhance Programming

Our objectives:

- Ensure high-quality content and delivery aligned with our priority outcomes.
- Center joy and connection in programming.
- Develop programming for traditionally underserved populations.

What this means:

We are taking a more intentional approach to programming across all of our branches and through our outreach. A systemwide programming strategy creates shared priorities and standards while allowing branches to respond to the interests and needs of their individual communities.

Baltimore County Public Library is giving staff more ways to collaborate and developing measures to understand what is working, identify gaps and determine where programming can have the greatest benefit.

Build Community Connection

Our objectives:

- Deepen community awareness and use of library resources.
- Maximize strategic partnerships for the delivery of programs and services.

What this means:

We want more residents to know what their library offers and to see themselves reflected in our programs, services and communications.

Baltimore County Public Library is communicating in ways that reach different audiences, inviting meaningful feedback from the community and taking a more coordinated approach to outreach and partnerships.

Maximize Impact of Resources

Our objectives:

- Ensure efficient use of library resources aligned with priority outcomes and community needs.
- Curate relevant, accessible collections and services that respond to evolving customer needs.

What this means:
Being responsive means continually understanding what our communities need and making thoughtful decisions about where library resources can have the greatest impact.

Baltimore County Public Library is developing ways to better align collections, services, staffing and funding with community needs and the priorities of this plan. We are also evaluating what we offer to remain focused on work that matters most.

Align and Empower the Library Workforce

Our objectives:

- Structure employee roles and responsibilities to provide consistent and effective programs and services.
- Ensure relevant and ongoing development and support for all employees.

What this means:
Our staff are vital to the success of the library. Their knowledge, dedication and connection to the communities they serve are essential to providing the programs, services and experiences our customers rely on.

Baltimore County Public Library is strengthening employee engagement and internal communication, expanding professional development and creating greater clarity around roles and responsibilities. Our goal is to ensure staff have the skills, information, support and opportunities to collaborate and provide consistent, responsive service throughout Baltimore County.

Measuring Our Progress

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A strategic plan matters only if we know whether it is making a difference. That's why measurement and accountability are built into Strategic Plan XII.

Staff actively track progress toward our four priority outcomes, measure accomplishments within each strategic theme and monitor the implementation of individual initiatives.

A Strategic Plan Oversight Group provides ongoing guidance, reviews results and identifies where adjustments may be needed. Updates are also reported regularly to the Board of Library Trustees.



Turning the Plan Into Action



Strategic Plan XII is a five-year commitment, but the work begins now. Initiatives move forward in phases, each with clear activities, timelines and responsibilities. This approach allows us to focus our efforts, learn from what works and adjust as the needs of Baltimore County evolve.

A strategic plan is only as meaningful as what comes from it. Ultimately, this plan is about you, the people and communities we serve. That's why you have our commitment to be intentional. To be connected. To be responsive. To make a difference. To "Be All In."







Acknowledgments

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