

Boston Public Library

Strategic Plan

2025-2030





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Introduction

Introduction

Letter from the President



Dear Readers,

It is my distinct privilege and honor to introduce you to the Boston Public Library's new strategic plan. This plan builds on 176 years of tradition and innovation, setting the course ahead, while recognizing the challenges and opportunities of this moment. The first large, municipally funded public library remains essential to civic service and the public good, albeit with a broader mission and set of services to meet the needs of the people of Boston, the Commonwealth, and beyond.

We continue to live in a new age of information and technological innovation, set against a backdrop of social challenges – local, regional, national, and global – that impact our daily lives and our opportunities for the pursuit of health, wealth and happiness. We face an unprecedented set of climate challenges; and we recognize that the promises of an equitable society have yet to be fully realized.

And so, we position ourselves for today's needs, once again and always “free to all,” centering reading, new literacies, learning, intellectual freedom, and stewardship of our history – that which has been told and that which is yet to be told.

You will read of our reimagined roles as a Welcoming Destination, a Trusted Resource, a Community Engager, and a Lifelong Learning and Research Partner. We are also pleased to share with you the goals and initiatives that we will bring to life with you and for you in the years ahead, remaining as always, a critical institution at the intersection of education, arts & culture and human and civic services.

At the heart of all of this is our staff: those upon whose legacy we build; those who will activate this plan; and those to whom we will pass the torch, and whose extraordinary efforts will bring this plan and our sustaining mission to life every day, in every neighborhood and beyond.

I am grateful for the leadership of our Mayor, Michelle Wu, and our Chief of Human Services, José Massó, who have enthusiastically supported this effort since its inception, along with the leadership of our Board of Trustees, and a host of critical partners and friends.

We look forward to continuing to serve the people of Boston, Massachusetts, and beyond. And we look forward to welcoming you to **your** library.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Leonard".

David Leonard
President, Boston Public Library

Introduction

Letter from the Mayor



Dear Friends,

I am proud to introduce the Boston Public Library's new strategic plan—a bold vision that builds on the Library's long legacy as the cornerstone of our city's cultural and intellectual life, and cements its role as a hub for community and connection. For more than 175 years, the BPL has served as the people's palace—offering resources, programming, information, entertainment, and education to residents and visitors from all over the world.

By centering access and belonging, this plan ensures that the Library remains a home for everyone. It recognizes the BPL's role within the Human Services Cabinet and—in collaboration with Chief José Massó and his team—invests in the technology, job training, language classes, and health services that make the BPL a core pillar of support for all our residents.

There is a promise carved into the facade of the Central Library in Copley Square: Free to All. This strategic plan delivers on that promise by growing our services and making it easier for our residents to access all the treasures the Library has to offer.

I am grateful to the BPL Board of Trustees for stewarding one of our city's most cherished spaces. Special thanks to President David Leonard, whose leadership and vision continue to take the Library to new heights. And my deepest appreciation to all of the Library staff whose patience, presence, and passion make the BPL the magical, welcoming space that it is.

Together, we are ensuring that the Boston Public Library continues to inspire, connect, and empower our residents as the beating heart of our communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Wu".

Michelle Wu,
Mayor of Boston

Board of Trustees



Dear Friends of the Boston Public Library,

It is with immense pride and gratitude that we present the Boston Public Library's new strategic plan, a bold and visionary roadmap for the next chapter in our continued mission to serve the people of Boston and beyond. This plan embodies an inspiring balance of ambitious goals and achievable initiatives, positioning our library as a beacon of free access, groundbreaking innovation, and vibrant communities for years to come.

Our guiding principles form the foundation of this vision- to enhance the reach and impact of our services, to embrace inclusivity and creativity, and to adapt to the dynamic needs of the communities

we proudly serve. These principles are more than ideals—they represent a call to action, rooted in our unwavering commitment to the values of knowledge, equity, and public service.

As Chair of the Board of Trustees, I am profoundly aware of the important responsibility our Board plays in stewarding this transformative vision. Together with library leadership and staff, we will ensure that every initiative reflects the essence of our mission—our enduring promise to empower and inspire the individuals who deeply cherish this beloved institution.

I am grateful to my fellow Trustees, for their leadership and dedication in bringing this plan to life. Special thanks to the City of Boston, as well as the leadership and staff of the Boston Public Library, whose tireless efforts have helped chart a path forward that will engage and benefit our community for generations to come.

Thank you for believing in the Boston Public Library and for standing with us in building a future as bright and boundless as the imaginations of those we serve. We warmly invite you to join us on this exciting journey, as we shape a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

With heartfelt appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Liu".

Ray Liu, MD FSIR
Chair, Board of Trustees BPL

Introduction

Context

Since its founding, Boston has cultivated **revolutionary thought**, with the Boston Public Library serving as a gateway to **the knowledge that each successive generation has needed to face its challenges**.

Today, we stand in the midst of a new revolution in library services, with patrons coming to us requiring new offerings, help navigating a rapidly-shifting digital landscape, and support in recovering from an unprecedented pandemic. To meet these evolving needs, the Boston Public Library remains as committed today as ever to pioneering library services and programs.

As the first large free municipal library in the United States, BPL's innovations have been shaping the modern library world since 1848. BPL was the first to lend books, establish a branch library, and create a dedicated children's room.

Today, **BPL stands as a leading urban public library and research institution, with 27 locations, including its central library and archival center**. As both a community anchor and a cultural hub, BPL is a vital resource locally, across the Commonwealth, and internationally.

Our 20+ million item collection, which ranges from popular fiction to rare books, manuscripts, and artwork, positions us as one of the premier research institutions in the nation and the world.

As stewards of our city and nation's past and future, **BPL preserves invaluable cultural artifacts through its research and special collections** while delivering forward-thinking initiatives to ensure our collective memories, identities, and cultures will be assets that belong to every generation.

Why Update our Plan Now?

The role of the library has changed. Today, we stand at a crossroads, where digital platforms require new ways of thinking while offering new opportunities to make information ever more accessible. Challenged environments in other jurisdictions are bringing new communities to us, and a post-pandemic community is seeking connections to human services and to community.

We have a duty to refine the roles we embody to address these needs, and to continue that evolution to meet the future.

1,031,745

Current active
card holders

60 million

Items circulated in
the past decade
(FY15 – FY24)

4.1 million

Items viewed
online FY24

20+ million

Items in our
collection

26 million

In-person visits in
the past decade
(FY15-FY24)

\$100,000

Amount Joshua Bates
donated in 1852 to
establish the BPL and
build its first
collection.

Introduction

Context

Building on our strengths, we are adapting to serve the present and future of Boston, the Commonwealth and beyond.

For 176 years, the Boston Public Library has stood as a beacon of learning, democracy, innovation, and possibility. We were the first to declare that knowledge should be "Free to All," pioneering a movement that transformed American society. Today, we stand at the threshold of another transformation.

This is not just a strategic plan – it is a bold declaration of our commitment to lead the next revolution in public libraries, at the heart of modern society.

Our Strengths:

BPL not only serves as a **cultural and educational destination** for residents and visitors alike, but is also **recognized as a trusted resource and a critical piece of our community's infrastructure**. All of this is possible thanks to our dedicated staff, welcoming physical spaces, and world-class collections and resources, in addition to the municipal, state, and private sector support we receive.

Notably, **73% of Boston residents live within a 15-minute walk of one of BPL's 26 locations¹**, positioning BPL as a natural partner for a variety of city initiatives, and as a critical resource for cultivating vibrant neighborhood life and community well-being.

¹U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2022)

Current Challenges:

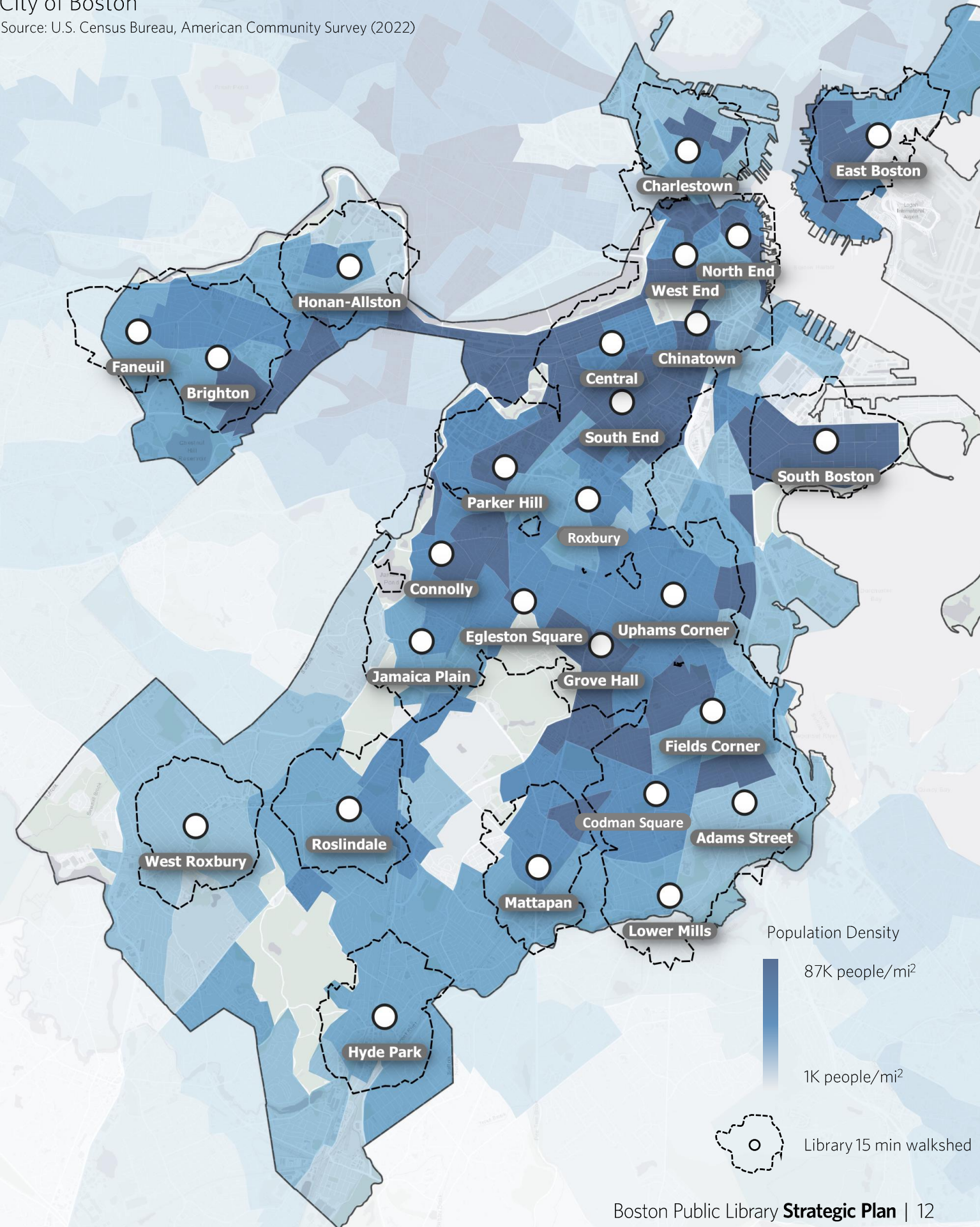
The BPL continues to **make a significant social impact through its services and offerings while grappling with long-standing, multifaceted funding and resource constraints**. These include a large portfolio of legacy physical infrastructure; a staffing model that is demonstrably under-sized not only in comparison to leading peer libraries but also to the scope of its work; growing staff and community aspirations and needs; and the size and complexity of the special and research collections it stewards.

Our Changing Role:

Over our history, BPL has continued to evolve to meet the diverse needs of our communities. Along with the **library's new position within the City of Boston's Human Services Cabinet**, we have a unique opportunity to further refine our role with an intentional focus on equity and the unique needs of individual communities.

Population Density by Census Tract City of Boston

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2022)



Values Vision Mission

Values

The principles and beliefs that guide how we work and how we interact with each other to serve our communities.

Vision

How we envision the future outcomes for our communities.

Mission

Our purpose: Why we exist, and what we do to make our Vision a reality.



We believe in

Free to All

Our values are anchored in the promise of **Free to All**, a phrase proudly inscribed above the entrance to the Central Library in Copley Square, and incorporated into each newly reimagined branch.

This commitment to welcoming everyone equally—regardless of gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, ability, faith, or economic status—reflects our enduring dedication to inclusion, equity, and access. At BPL, we envision a world where everyone has the freedom to flourish.

"Free to All" is a living promise that expands with each generation. In a world of increasing barriers and widening divisions, we declare that freedom of mind, spirit, and exploration is a fundamental human right.

This is what "Free to All" means today. It represents the freedom to grow, to question, to create, and to belong. It is a promise that has defined the Boston Public Library since 1848, and one that will guide us into the future.

Free to All. Now and Always.

Free to...

Free to **Discover**
Free to **Learn**
Free to **Explore**

Free to **Imagine**
Free to **Connect**
Free to **Create**

Free to **Read**
Free to **Think**
Free to **Choose**

Free to **Be**
Boston Public Library

Free to All

Core Value

The spirit of
Free to All
must be at
the heart of
everything
we do.

Vision

We believe in an inclusive community propelled by curiosity, connection, and the pursuit of knowledge.

Mission

We will open a world of discovery and learning to enrich lives and elevate every community.

A photograph of a woman with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a red V-neck shirt, sitting at a wooden desk in a library. She is looking up and to the right, engaged in conversation. Standing next to her is a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a brown suit jacket over a red shirt. He is looking down at her. In the background, there are bookshelves filled with books and a computer monitor displaying a blue screen. The scene is brightly lit with natural light from large windows.

Strategic Roles, Goals, & Initiatives

Strategic Roles

These are the key roles we play in our communities. They shape the strategic direction we will take to make the most impact.

Strategic Goals

These are the ambitious objectives that will guide our decision making, helping us to prioritize the best actions to take to achieve our mission and vision.

Strategic Initiatives

These are the focused actions we will take to advance our strategic plan, prioritizing our resources and efforts to best meet the needs of our communities.

Strategic Roles

A Bold Path Forward. Our vision demands transformation. We will revolutionize how we serve our communities by focusing on four powerful roles:

Community Engager

Expanding the reach of the library beyond its physical walls so we can meet and engage communities where they are.

Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

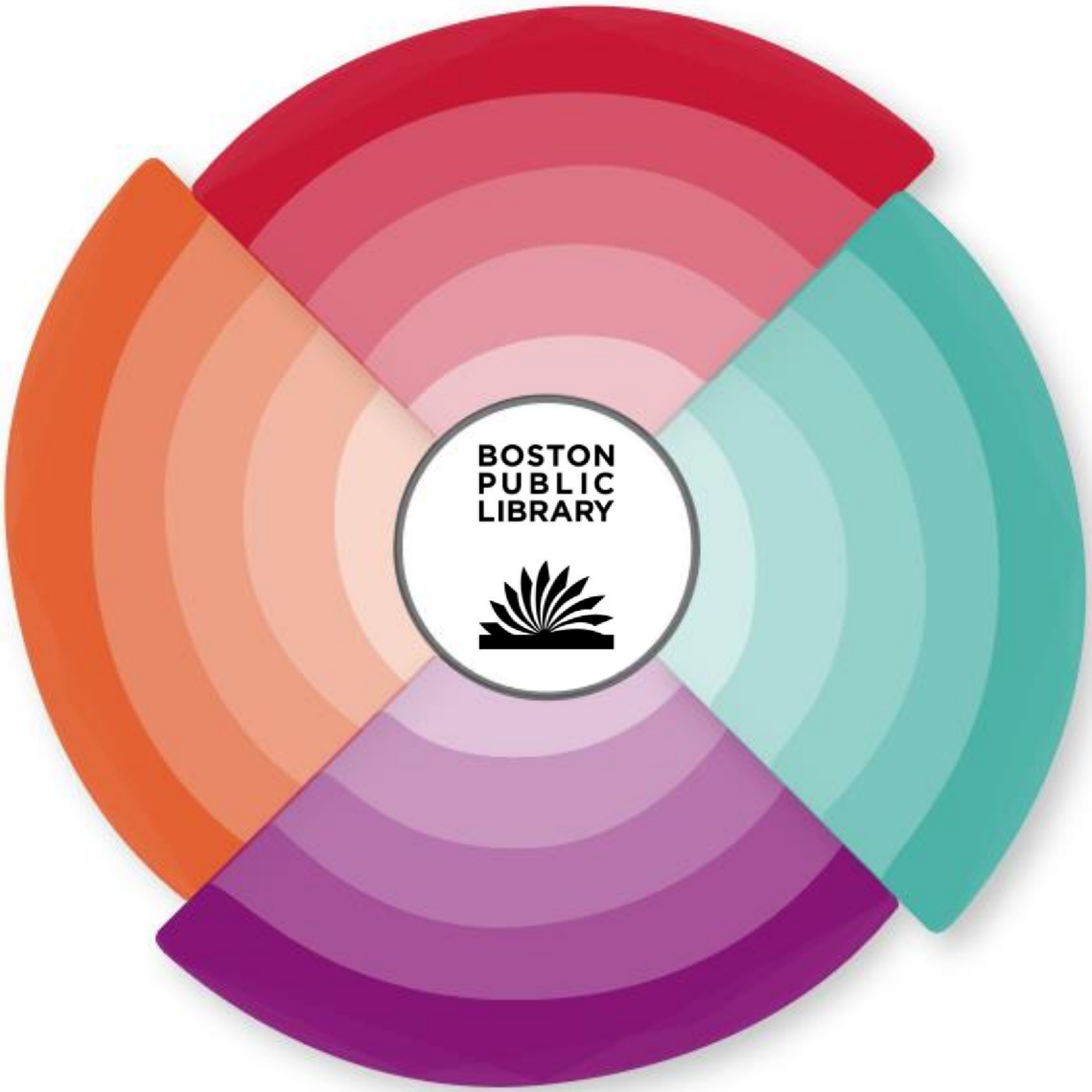
Empowering curiosity and a love of reading, discovery, and scholarly exploration for all.

Welcoming Destination

Creating active, inclusive third spaces where every person can chart their own path.

Trusted Resource

Connecting all people to reliable information and services that meet their needs and enrich their lives.





Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

Empowering curiosity and a love of reading, discovery, and scholarly exploration for all.

Our role as a **lifelong learning and research partner** reflects our dedication to fostering a love of reading, learning, and celebrating our shared history. We create inclusive and engaging opportunities that connect with our communities at every stage of life, by leveraging our vital role as a premier research institution that is open to everyone. We collect, preserve, steward, and provide access to historically and culturally significant collections in a way that brings the diverse contributions of our city and community to life.

Strategic Role

Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

Empowering curiosity and a love of reading, discovery, and scholarly exploration for all.

Strategic Goals:

Ignite Young Minds

Elevate BPL's role as an extraordinary hub of discovery, **igniting the curiosity of young children** and their families as they learn and grow together.

Advance Youth Opportunities

Launch the next generation toward excellence, **empowering teens and young adults** with innovative tools and opportunities to shape their own futures and thrive during their transition to adulthood.

Support Lifelong Growth

Champion adults' aspirations for personal success by becoming their life-long learning partner, fostering meaningful connections to their passions, their communities, and to each other.

Preserve and Share our Heritage & History

Pioneer innovative approaches to serve patrons from Boston, the Commonwealth, and beyond, by leveraging our collections, services, and programs to **closely connect communities to their past, document the present, and preserve these stories for the future.**



"Having a public library—and an excellent public library at that --has been important to me for the eight decades since I learned to read."

- Community Survey Respondent

Community Needs

Our communities want us to provide access to collections and resources that are driven by their specific needs, including:

- Addressing learning loss and closing achievement gaps
- Opportunities for personal development – from employment to hobbies
- Youth engagement from early childhood to young adulthood
- Supporting social and emotional well being
- Making sure older patrons feel engaged and connected
- Scholarly research
- Exploring local and family history
- Fun!

The Library Today

BPL's current range of engaging programs and resources supports all ages and interests, including:

- Book a Librarian
- Chef in Residence program
- Digital Commonwealth
- English classes for speakers of other languages
- Entrepreneur in Residence
- The Leventhal Map and Education Center
- Online GED and high school diploma programs
- Personal archiving workshops
- Reading challenges to support early literacy
- Research assistance for everyone
- Special Collections open houses

Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

Strategic Initiatives

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Support Lifelong Growth

Champion adults' aspirations for personal success by becoming their life-long learning partner, fostering meaningful connections to their passions, their communities, and to each other.



Key Initiatives:

- **Actively engage families and caregivers as a premier provider of enriching, educational, and fun programs and services** for young children, such as interactive story times, reading challenges, and parent-child workshops.
- Continue to play a **vital role in preparing children and parents for kindergarten** by providing resources and programs supporting early literacy, the joy of reading, and social-emotional learning.
- Develop a service model designed to establish in kids a **life-long connection to the library as a safe, welcoming place** where they can continue to grow and explore through **all ages and stages of their lives**.

- Create vibrant, interactive **programs that blend education and fun**, such as interactive workshops, volunteer opportunities and jobs for teens, STEAM-based activities, and book clubs.
- **Support local schools and students by providing dedicated academic and other resources**, such as test preparation and workforce counseling, to prepare students for life after high school.
- Position the BPL as a safe space to grow through programs focused on **emotional intelligence, stress management, and healthy relationships**, supporting the well-being of youth and teen patrons.

- **Support and empower people at all stages of their journeys to personal success** by expanding programming and resources for both personal and professional growth, such as digital literacy, ESOL services, starting new hobbies, career support, fun and inspiring activities, and more.
- Building on the success of the Kirstein Business Library and Innovation Center and its Entrepreneur-in-Residence programs, **partner with local universities and businesses to provide increased support for aspiring entrepreneurs**.
- Expand programming and connections for older adults, such as Age Strong Boston participants, to **ensure the library remains a vital resource for older adults**.

Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

Strategic Initiatives

Preserve and Share our Heritage & History

Pioneer innovative approaches to serve patrons from Boston, the Commonwealth, and beyond, by leveraging our collections, services, and programs to **closely connect communities to their past, document the present, and preserve these stories for the future.**



Key Initiatives:

- Inspire and empower all patrons to **see themselves as researchers** by designing spaces and service models that **fuel curiosity, encourage exploration of our collections, and democratize access.**
- Create a **cohesive hub for information that centers the researcher**, prioritizes clear paths and connections between collections and service areas, and broadens awareness throughout the library system and beyond.
- Build and promote **collections that represent the diversity of our communities of users**, with an emphasis on the historically underrepresented voices, histories, and lived experiences of our city and region.

- **Amplify BPL's role as the home of unique research and special collections** that are freely accessible to the users of today, and sustainably stewarded for future generations.
- **Foster a community for research through collaborative engagement with collections**, experiential learning, and creative programming.
- Develop an **ongoing digital preservation plan** that ensures the long-term stewardship of our digitized collections.





Welcoming Destination

Creating active, inclusive third spaces where every person can chart their own path.

Our role as a **welcoming destination** is to offer inclusive spaces across Boston that are uplifting, safe, and thoughtfully designed, fostering an environment where curiosity naturally flourishes. We strive to meet the needs and interests of our communities by offering modern, well-maintained, sustainable, and transformative experiences where everyone can explore, connect, and contribute to the vibrancy of neighborhood life.

Strategic Role

Welcoming Destination

Creating active, inclusive third spaces where every person can chart their own path.

Strategic Goals:

Create Inclusive Spaces

Ensure that **every location of the library is a place of belonging**, a third space, where all community members feel welcome, safe, included, and inspired to discover, create, connect, and celebrate their unique identities.

Embrace Diversity

Dramatically expand **our offerings for multiple languages, accessibility, and support for all**, to create vibrant crossroads where diverse communities find their voices amplified and their uniqueness celebrated.

Reimagine McKim

Renovate and transform the historic McKim Building into a vibrant, exciting library space that preserves and builds on its unique history while honoring its past, meeting the present, and celebrating the future.

Build Sustainable Communities

Create **future-ready spaces** that adapt with and support our evolving communities by continuing our visionary transformation of BPL's physical locations through thoughtful investment and innovative design.



"Our branch is one of the listed 'Safe Places' for Bridge Over Troubled Waters, which offers services to runaway, homeless, and high-risk youth"
- BPL Staff Survey

Community Needs

Our library creates safe and inclusive places that are driven by the needs of the community.

- Safe, welcoming spaces, especially for those historically excluded or marginalized
- Support for reducing social isolation
- Access to resources for mental health and well-being
- Opportunities for community engagement and connection
- Fostering a sense of belonging
- Culturally relevant programming
- Inclusive and accessible services for all community members
- Universal Design
- Serving neurodiverse communities

The Library Today

BPL has made great efforts to create spaces that foster inclusivity, warmth, and accessibility.

- Modernized and reimagined branches, made possible by capital investments from the City of Boston
- Adaptive computer stations
- Assistive listening devices
- Braille collections
- Community rooms
- Exploration spaces, like the InnoLab, Learning Lab, and Nutrition Lab
- On-demand video interpretation services
- Robust programming of author talks, musical performances, and more
- Sensory walls
- Unique spaces such as Newsfeed Café; Map Room Lounge; Courtyard Tea Room

Welcoming Destination

Strategic Initiatives



Create Inclusive Spaces

Ensure that **every location of the library is a place of belonging**, a third space, where all community members feel welcome, safe, included, and inspired to discover, create, connect, and celebrate their unique identities.

Embrace Diversity

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Reimagine McKim

Renovate and transform the historic McKim Building into a vibrant, exciting library space that preserves and builds on its unique history while honoring its past, meeting the present, and celebrating the future.

Key Initiatives:

- Ensure that community members, in all of their diversity, **feel a sense of belonging** in every BPL location and department by designing and planning for the maintenance of **inclusive, safe, and secure spaces**.
- **Remove physical and perceptual barriers to access** through responsive space design and multilingual outreach, communications, and wayfinding efforts.
- Make BPL locations the center of civic engagement and discourse; **public forums animated with ambitious, elevated, world-class programming** that engages and inspires.

- Evaluate and **enhance external outreach and communications to be more inclusive of speakers of other languages and those with different communications abilities**, including those who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, blind, visually impaired, and neuro-diverse.
- **Increase multilingual capabilities and multi-modal capabilities for all types of communications in our locations**, including text, printed materials, wayfinding, and point of service communications, to create an inclusive and welcoming experience for everyone.
- **Enhance services and relevant programs for immigrant communities** empowering them at all stages of their journeys.

- **Execute the McKim renovation and transformation project in a way that excites the public's imagination**, showcases BPL's vast collections, contributions, and programs, highlighting Boston's diversity.
- **Develop a services and staffing vision** for the proposed restored and renovated spaces.
- **Conduct a user-focused process** for the design of flexible spaces to connect with programs, collections, and staff (i.e. studios, maker spaces, practice rooms, hands-on exhibitions, etc.)
- **Establish a transparent and collaborative process**, involving all BPL stakeholders and partners, to align on goals for the project and fundraising priorities.

Welcoming Destination

Strategic Initiatives

Build Sustainable Communities

Create **future-ready spaces** that adapt with and support our evolving communities by continuing our visionary transformation of BPL's physical locations through thoughtful investment and innovative design.



Key Initiatives:

- Develop and enhance **sustainability and climate resilience practices across the BPL system in alignment with the City of Boston's climate action goals**, reducing building emissions, waste, and creating places resilient to climate change.
- Develop ambitious **new and inclusive methods of soliciting broader community input** into planning, programming studies and design activities.
- Utilize **universal design** in all projects to ensure sustainable accessibility, with particular attention to multilingual wayfinding and physical accessibility.
- Provide **programming opportunities around energy conservation, climate resilience and environmental awareness**.





Trusted Resource

Connecting all people to reliable information and services that meet their needs and enrich their lives.

Libraries remain among the most trusted institutions in the United States. This role leverages that unique positioning to allow us to help people access reliable citywide and regional resources and support when and where they need them. We can also guide people to the factual, accurate documents and records they need to understand our history and cultural life. By serving as a **trusted resource** for accurate vetted information, our patrons are able to access the true, unbiased information they need to enrich their lives and fully participate in our society.

Strategic Role

Trusted Resource

Connecting all people to reliable information and services that meet their needs and enrich their lives.

Strategic Goals:

Deliver Reliable Information

Champion **the pursuit of truth and knowledge** by setting the standard for information access, positioning the BPL as a beacon of accuracy and intellectual freedom in the digital age.

Connecting to Human Services

Pioneer an **effective partnership model of integrated community support**, connecting social and human services in the City of Boston with those who need them most.

Empower Digital Access

Advance **creative initiatives to shrink the digital divide**, ensuring all our patrons have the digital literacy skills, connectivity and tools they need to embrace new technologies and thrive in an increasingly connected world.



"A patron once insisted I answer their tax questions because 'You're a librarian. I trust you.' Our trustworthiness is an extraordinarily valuable asset. We provide reliable information, no matter what."

- BPL Staff Survey

Community Needs

The BPL must serve as a reliable source for resources that address community needs such as:

- Access and connection to essential resources, such as job training, affordable housing, food security, childcare, and mental health support
- Assistance for immigrants and newcomers
- Accurate information and critical thinking to combat misinformation
- Media and digital literacy

The Library Today

BPL has longstanding and established partnerships, programs, and services to connect people to the resources they need.

- Strong partnerships with City and State agencies and non-profit service providers
- Digital and Media Literacy Offerings
- Digital Tools such as Boston Globe, LinkedIn Learning, Libby, and Headspace
- Immigrant Information Corners
- Library Social Work Program
- Outreach through Department of Youth Services
- Partnership with Pine Street Inn
- Tax Prep Classes

Trusted Resource

Strategic Initiatives



Deliver Reliable Information

Champion **the pursuit of truth and knowledge** by setting the standard for information access, positioning the BPL as a beacon of accuracy and intellectual freedom in the digital age.

Key Initiatives:

- **Unlock the freedom to read and acquire information** by removing barriers to entry through **expanded card access and programs**, such as Browse | Borrow | Board and Books Unbanned.
- Enhance the public's awareness of **BPL as a dependable source of unbiased information**, a fierce **supporter of intellectual freedom**, and as an **advocate for patrons' rights** to information, resources, and privacy.
- Equip patrons with the **skills to identify, evaluate, and use information effectively** through workshops and training sessions on media literacy and critical thinking.

Connecting to Human Services

Pioneer an **effective partnership model of integrated community support**, connecting social and human services in the City of Boston with those who need them most.

- Evaluate and deepen BPL's **commitment to our social work program**, to support our communities with specialized staff skills and a supportive environment.
- **Work with the City of Boston's Human Services Cabinet to identify target populations of the highest need**, in order to deepen our strategic focus on programs, resources, and partnerships that serve these populations and align with the City's priorities.
- Implement a structured **process for identifying and selecting partners**, ensuring alignment with our strategic roles, community needs, and need for measurable impact.

Empower Digital Access

Advance **creative initiatives to shrink the digital divide**, ensuring all our patrons have the digital literacy skills, connectivity and tools they need to embrace new technologies and thrive in an increasingly connected world.

- **Increase use of BPL's online resources** through increased access to laptops, hotspots, and other technology lending programs.
- Expand **digital literacy programs to ensure patrons of all skill levels can use existing and emerging technology** to find the resources they need.
- **Improve digital and online access to collections** for underrepresented and underserved communities.
- **Explore and evaluate emerging technologies and tools** into library workflows and online resources for discovery, delivering enhanced accessibility, and language translation.
- **Educate the public about emerging and evolving technologies** for thoughtful integration and understanding in their own lives.



Community Engager

Expanding the reach of the library beyond its physical walls so we can meet and engage communities where they are.

Our role as a **community engager** is to activate library assets across the city and beyond, expanding the BPL experience through creative outreach strategies informed by our communities. We aim to extend our presence far beyond our walls, significantly grow our digital footprint, and build widespread awareness with dynamic, multi-channel campaigns that drive deep engagement.

Strategic Role

Community Engager

Expanding the reach of the library beyond its physical walls so we can meet and engage communities where they are.

Strategic Goals:

Center Community Needs and Input

Revolutionize how we serve, engage, and connect to our neighborhoods, prioritizing **community-centered, data-informed outreach, programs, and services** at our branches, enabling BPL to be in the community, working for the community, and informed by the community.

Amplify Community Voices

Investigate, uncover and amplify the untold stories and history of Boston and the Commonwealth through our collections, programs, and services, ensuring every community's narrative becomes an integral part of Boston's collective identity.

Foster Civic Participation

Launch **an innovative civic engagement program to bring people together** and transform community members into active architects of, and participants in, Boston's civic life and future.

Expand Digital Reach

Pioneer a true 'Library without Walls' by enhancing the digital experience and expanding awareness of BPL's expansive online collections - setting new standards for accessibility, engagement, and use.



"Every location has a community room where events and gatherings can take place. We engage in extensive outreach to schools and community organizations, bringing library services to external locations when patrons can't come to us."

- BPL Staff Survey

Community Needs

Our library strives to reach our patrons and increase access to the offerings tailored to the needs of the community.

- Increased awareness of available resources and offerings
- Outreach to under-served community members
- Reduce barriers to access library services
- Provide inclusive participation opportunities that offer diverse formats and accessibility options

The Library Today

BPL has engaged its communities in multiple channels – digitally and physically.

- Affinity Months
- Ask@BPL.org
- BPL by Bike
- Books Unbanned
- Browse | Borrow | Board
- Chat Reference
- Digital Commonwealth
- Library e-card
- Museum Passes
- Newsletters
- Online Research Guides
- Oral History Backpacks
- Shelf Service

Community Engager

Strategic Initiatives



Center Community Needs and Input

Revolutionize how we serve, engage, and connect to our neighborhoods, prioritizing **community-centered, data-informed outreach, programs, and services** at our branches, enabling BPL to be in the community, working for the community, and informed by the community.

Amplify Community Voices

Investigate, uncover and amplify the untold stories and history of Boston and the Commonwealth through our collections, programs, and services, ensuring every community's narrative becomes an integral part of Boston's collective identity.

Key Initiatives:

- Develop a **strategic approach for outreach, using creative, multi-channel methods** to meet people in unexpected, exciting, and engaging ways, such as pop-up locations and mobile outreach.
- **Deepen community members' library connections by meeting people wherever they are** -- whether inside the library or elsewhere.
- **Conduct user research to understand the information-seeking experience** of students, researchers, and community members to enhance and refine our service offerings.

- Establish practices for **active, ongoing engagement with diverse communities** to identify the needs and gaps to better inform the communication, services, and programs at each branch.
- **Gather and use data from both patrons and those who do not use the library** to prioritize outreach, marketing, and tailored communication strategies, with a focus on **reaching underserved communities** who do not yet come to the library.

- Curate a **strong portfolio of community history-based offerings** and opportunities.
- Highlight **underrepresented communities** in circulating materials, special collections, programs, exhibitions, and research.
- Create **digital opportunities to elevate underrepresented voices through** training and user-friendly tools for communities to express their personal histories and increase online accessibility to their stories.

Community Engager

Strategic Initiatives



Foster Civic Participation

Launch **an innovative civic engagement program to bring people together** and transform community members into active architects of, and participants in, Boston's civic life and future.

Expand Digital Reach

Pioneer a true 'Library without Walls' by enhancing the digital experience and expanding awareness of BPL's expansive online collections - setting new standards for accessibility, engagement, and use.

Key Initiatives:

- **Research best practices for civic engagement work** in public libraries.
- **Nourish civic literacy and education** through meaningful programs and engagements that help people become more engaged citizens.
- Expand relationships and participate in programs with library peers throughout the country that **nurture democracy through civic education and literacy**.

- Create a **more user-centric digital experience through enhanced website navigation and online applications** tailored to individual preferences and needs, simplifying and distilling program and service offerings to each user's interests.
- Democratize **access to BPL's research collection through digital channels** by expanding and focusing the BPL's digitization program to prioritize high value projects reflective and responsive to community and research needs.
- Increase awareness and usage of **BPL's electronic resources** to enhance and support both formal education and personal growth through instruction, education, and outreach.

- Use data to **develop and execute an inspiring, targeted campaign to increase awareness and accessibility of BPL's online programs, services, and resources** to communities throughout the city and beyond.



Organizational Readiness

Organizational Readiness

Key internal organizational changes that will build capacity and enable BPL to fulfill our strategic roles and desired experiences for our patrons.

Operational Initiatives

The focused actions of the organization itself to advance our strategic plan, prioritizing the resources and efforts to meet the needs of our communities.

Organizational Readiness

This transformation comes from within.

We are investing in our greatest asset – our people – through a workplace culture that champions creativity, growth, and well-being.

The nature of library work has shifted; staff are being challenged in new ways to help patrons solve issues that, until now, were outside the scope of library work. Our commitment is to become an inclusive organization, and our work to address systemic inequities is ongoing.

To that end, we are embedding equity and inclusion principles into every aspect of our work. We are building new capabilities in technology, community engagement, and cross-system collaboration. And we are examining how to shift our structures and strategies to use our resources most wisely.

By scaling our organizational capacity, BPL will be positioned to achieve more ambitious initiatives and explore new opportunities. These internal priorities must be addressed alongside the implementation of external-facing initiatives.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Center Equity, Diversity and Inclusion as a core value to our staff and services

Operational Initiatives:

- **Build internal capacity to support staff** in creating and offering services and programs based on the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- **Create and implement a comprehensive EDI 2.0 plan** with measurable goals, dedicated resources, and integrated training to ensure an inclusive, equitable workplace.
- Ensure that BPL employees who want to **improve their primary or secondary language skills** have access to ESOL or other resources.
- Adopt a **research-backed, data-informed approach** to identify organizational and staff needs, set priorities, and guide informed decision-making.

Workplace Culture

Foster a supportive and welcoming workplace culture built on trust, well-being, and belonging

Operational Initiatives:

- **Establish the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging as core to the culture** of the BPL, creating an organization where everyone can thrive.
- **Establish standardized and streamlined internal processes** across the system to reduce bureaucracy and systemic challenges, empower BPL staff, and foster creativity.
- **Invest in efforts to support the safety, resilience, and well-being of BPL staff**, including cultivating a trauma-informed workplace, acknowledging the complexity of key patron needs and their impact on staff effectiveness and support needs.
- **Prioritize our user-centered approach** for service design and delivery and develop guiding principles to ensure a **consistent experience for all patrons**.
- Foster an environment where **people are empowered to ask for and receive help**; cultivate **a culture of accountability and responsibility** to enhance service delivery while encouraging experimentation, innovation, and learning opportunities.
- Adopt a formal **project management methodology, along with an outcomes-focused and impact-centered** mindset.



Staff Development

Support workforce development, while activating staff's expertise, skills, and passions

Collaboration and Communication

Enhance communication and collaboration between all departments, locations, and branches, at all levels of the organization

Operational Initiatives:

- Commit to ongoing and empowering **professional development around the evolving Equity, Diversity & inclusion framework.**
- **Leverage the deep expertise and lived experiences** of our skilled staff and **create opportunities for community engagement** aligned with their passions.
- **Invest in professional development** to equip BPL staff with the skills and experiences to serve patrons of all ages and backgrounds, including multilingual and digital skills.
- **Increase awareness and opportunities for career advancement,** professional development, and skill building; reduce barriers to entry for librarianship and other types of advancement through fellowships, access to continuing education, and mentoring.
- **Develop a program of next generation library worker** support and mentoring, targeted at those about to enter the workforce.
- Allow all staff members to make greater impact by **aligning BPL's hiring strategy with strategic roles and initiatives.**

Operational Initiatives:

- **Create channels for all viewpoints and experiences** to be heard that remove barriers and uplift diversity.
- **Leverage BPL's goals, roles, and priorities to create a unified direction,** where everyone can see themselves as capable of making meaningful contributions to the library's mission and vision.
- **Enable knowledge sharing** by providing tools that identify **experiences, skillsets, and resources** available across the system.
- **Establish transparent and collaborative processes and guidelines** to align goals and break down siloes between the departments and branches.
- **Develop and commit to a specific platform and a set of best practices** for enhanced internal cross-organizational communication.



Resource Development and Capacity Building

Strengthen our impact by ensuring that BPL’s funding and partnerships, alongside efforts to secure additional resources, are aligned with our strategic roles

Operational Initiatives: Funding

- Expand BPL’s funding through **philanthropy and private fundraising channels, in partnership with the BPL Fund** as the Library’s primary philanthropic partner.
- Develop a **funding strategy across all sources - municipal, state, federal, philanthropic, and in-kind funding** - based on strategic goals and initiatives.
- Enhance the **collaboration and coordination within BPL** to align funding goals and resource allocation, maximizing support for effective initiatives.
- Strengthen communication and collaboration **between staff and affiliate partners** to improve effectiveness and alignment around **funding goals and resource allocation**.

Operational Initiatives: Partnerships & Staffing

- Renew our approach to **selecting and building strategic partnerships** focused on shared goals, mission alignment, and measurable impact.
- **Renew and evaluate relationships with our affiliate partners, friends groups, and partners-in-residence** to ensure alignment with the service delivery, stewardship, and resource development initiatives of our strategic plan.
- Recognize and integrate **staff time and capacity as critical resources in assessing the organizational capacity** for implementing the strategic initiatives.
- **Review programs, services, and positions for alignment with the strategic plan.**
- Incorporate thoughtful planning to **develop the essential support staff** who enable the successful delivery of all elements of the strategic plan.
- Identify **core staffing and operational gaps** to support future growth in communication, services, and programs, to ensure the successful implementation of strategic initiatives.



Activating the Strategic Plan



Bringing the Plan to Life

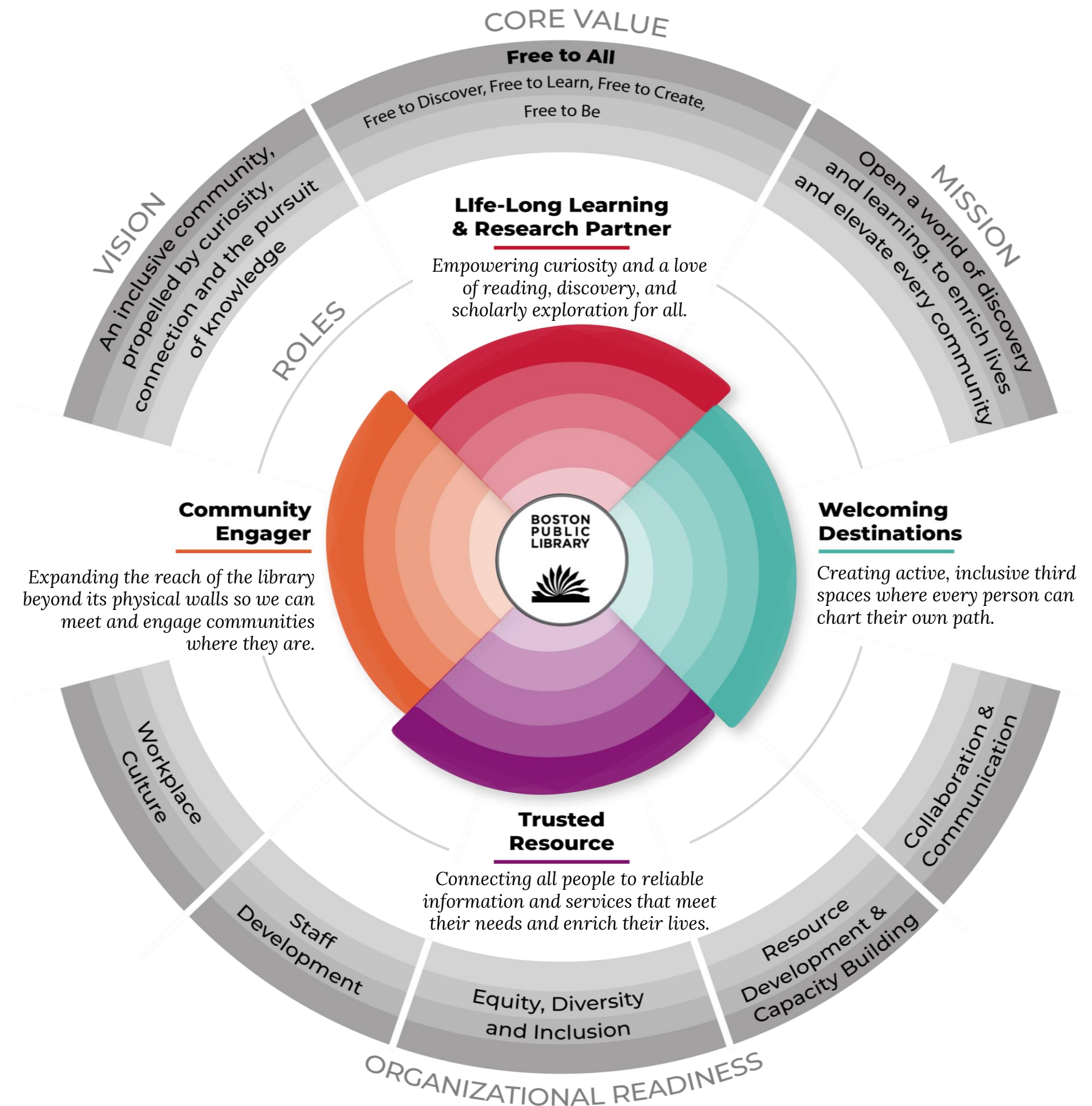
The success of our strategic plan is built on a shared commitment to bring our vision to life.

This strategic plan **will serve as a guiding framework to coordinate and focus our collective efforts in order to increase our impact.** Achieving our goals will require the collective commitment of every staff member and partner, as well as a focus on aligning our actions with our mission, vision, and values.

We invite staff, partners, community members, and supporters to join us in making this bold vision a reality. Together, we will ensure that the Boston Public Library continues to light the way forward, just as it has since 1848.

This is our moment to lead – not just for Boston, but for the future of public libraries everywhere.

The future will be Free to All.



Our Strategic Goals

Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

Ignite Young Minds

Elevate BPL's role as an extraordinary hub of discovery, **igniting the curiosity of young children** and their families as they learn and grow together.

Advance Youth Opportunities

Launch the next generation toward excellence, **empowering teens and young adults** with innovative tools and opportunities to shape their own futures and thrive during their transition to adulthood.

Support Lifelong Growth

Champion adults' aspirations for personal success by becoming their life-long learning partner, fostering meaningful connections to their passions, their communities, and to each other.

Preserve and Share our Heritage & History

Pioneer innovative approaches to serve patrons from Boston, the Commonwealth, and beyond, by leveraging our collections, services, and programs to **closely connect communities to their past, document the present, and preserve these stories for the future.**

Welcoming Destination

Create Inclusive Spaces

Ensure that **every location of the library is a place of belonging**, a third space, where all community members feel welcome, safe, included, and inspired to discover, create, connect, and celebrate their unique identities.

Embrace Diversity

Dramatically expand **our offerings for multiple languages, accessibility, and support for all**, to create vibrant crossroads where diverse communities find their voices amplified and celebrated.

Reimagine McKim

Renovate and transform the historic McKim Building into a vibrant, exciting library space that preserves and builds on its unique history while honoring its past, meeting the present, and celebrating the future.

Build Sustainable Communities

Create **future-ready spaces** that adapt with and support our evolving communities by continuing our visionary transformation of BPL's physical locations through thoughtful investment and innovative design.

Trusted Resource

Deliver Reliable Information

Champion **the pursuit of truth and knowledge** by setting the standard for information access, positioning the BPL as a beacon of accuracy and intellectual freedom in the digital age.

Connecting to Human Services

Pioneer an **effective partnership model of integrated community support**, connecting social and human services in the City of Boston with those who need them most.

Empower Digital Access

Advance **creative initiatives to shrink the digital divide**, ensuring all our patrons have the digital literacy skills, connectivity and tools they need to embrace new technologies and thrive in an increasingly connected world.

Community Engager

Center Community Needs and Input

Revolutionize how we serve, engage, and connect to our neighborhoods, prioritizing **community-centered, data-informed outreach, programs, and services** at our branches, enabling BPL to be in the community, working for the community, and informed by the community.

Amplify Community Voices

Investigate, uncover and amplify the untold stories and history of Boston and the Commonwealth through our collections, programs, and services, ensuring every community's narrative becomes an integral part of Boston's collective identity.

Foster Civic Participation

Launch **an innovative civic engagement program to bring people together** and transform community members into active architects of, and participants in, Boston's civic life and future.

Expand Digital Reach

Pioneer a true 'Library without Walls' by enhancing the digital experience and expanding awareness of BPL's expansive online collections - setting new standards for accessibility, engagement, and use.

Activating the Strategic Plan

Sample Implementation: McKim Renovation

Strategic Goal: Reimagine McKim

Renovate and transform the historic McKim Building into a vibrant, exciting library space that preserves and builds on its unique history while honoring its past, meeting the present, and celebrating the future.

As each goal is implemented, initiatives and tactics within these efforts will focus on elements that help the BPL live its Strategic Roles, bringing these roles to life.

Welcoming Destination

- **Improved accessibility for all throughout the building**, most notably additional ramps, lifts, and elevator on level one
- Provide a **welcoming third space for year-round programming** by activating underutilized space or exploring enclosing the courtyard

Community Engager

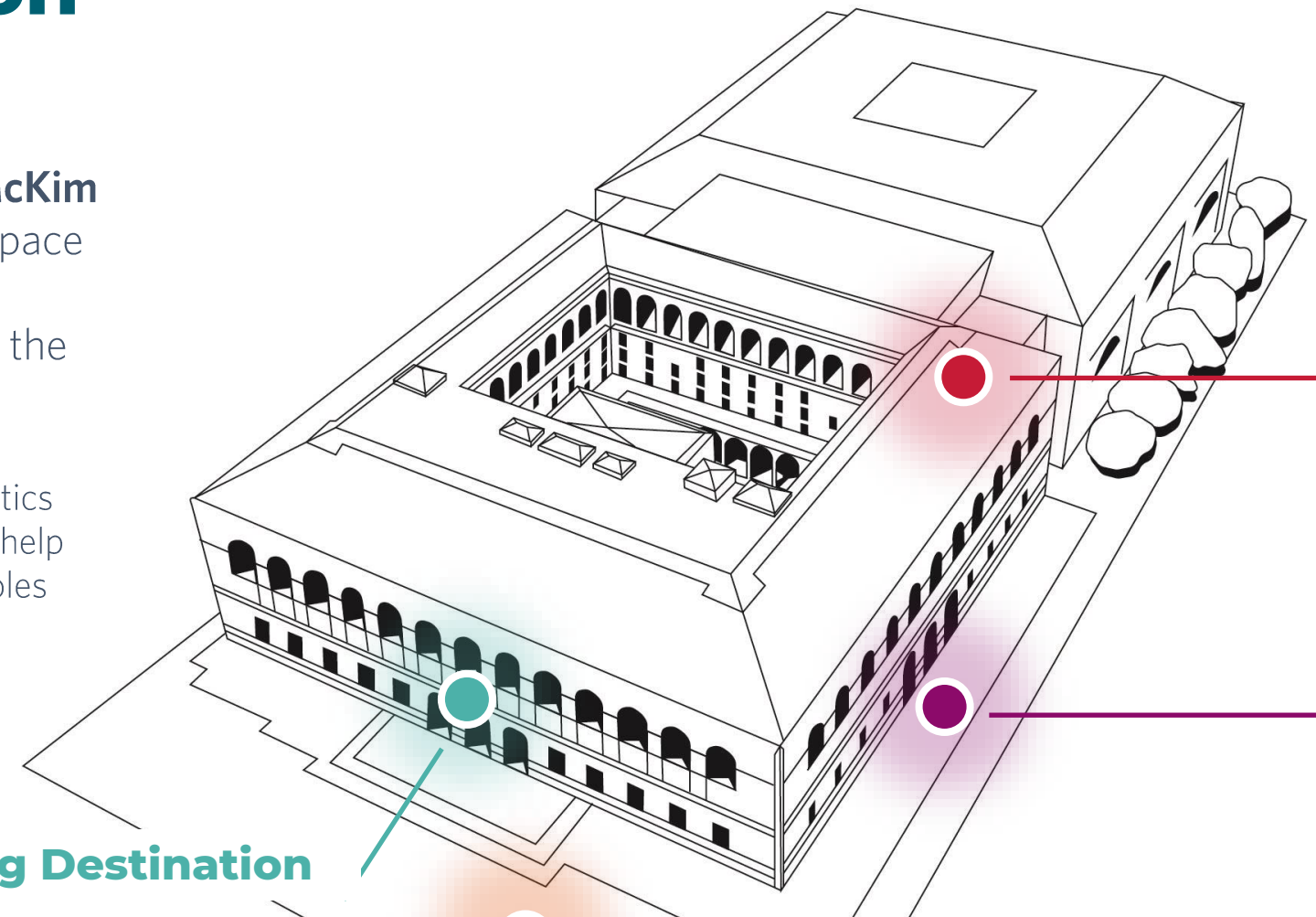
- **Greater accessibility and connection** between Dartmouth Plaza and Copley Square
- **Enhanced experience** through entertainment, services, and agile public space

Life-Long Learning & Research Partner

- **New dedicated spaces for learning and collaboration** including classrooms, demonstration spaces, and enhanced multipurpose rooms
- Creation of a **cohesive research hub that centers the user experience** and showcases connections across collections and service areas

Trusted Resource

- **Improved ground floor service connection** for the public to connect to services and partners
- **Additional space for display and use of BPL's extensive Special Collections** across the building



Implementation Framework

The Strategic Plan will guide the BPL as we look towards the City of Boston's 400th anniversary in 2030 and beyond. The framework below will guide our areas of focus for implementation planning, beginning in early 2025, and inform our approach towards that future.

Near Future

"Lay the Foundation"

Build Our Capacity, Communicate the Plan, and Align Our Priorities

Mobilize our organization to roll out the Strategic Plan and near-term initiatives:

- **Implementation Planning:**
Engage across the organization to prioritize initiatives, evaluate funding or resource needs, establish outcome measures for success, and develop a detailed roadmap to 2030
- Launch communication campaigns and roadshow to socialize the plan, both internally and externally
- Prioritize the organizational and operational initiatives to build capacity
- Execute enabling initiatives, including user research and community outreach to identify community needs and gaps, using this data to prioritize organizational and operational activities

Medium Term

"Realize the Vision"

Implement the Initiatives with Scaled Capacity

Roll out strategic initiatives aligned with key community needs, bolstered by enhanced staff skills and talents:

- Implement the plan throughout the system, at the Central Library and the Branches, engaging staff and communities to activate the roll out
- Start to implement prioritized initiatives while developing action plans for longer-term elements
- Build an evaluation and feedback process to track progress and inform approaches within the annual planning process

Long Term

"Scale Our Impact"

Broaden the Scale of Initiatives and Recalibrate the Strategic Plan

Live and iterate the Strategic Plan to scale our impact and further BPL's vision.

- Assess progress against the success measurements and goals, re-evaluate our readiness to pursue more ambitious and transformative goals beyond 2030
- Utilize findings from the feedback and evaluation process, continue to iterate upon the implementation approach, learning and evolving initiatives as they are implemented
- Scale our impact by broadening select initiatives based on experience and learnings to date

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Ray Liu, Chair
Evelyn Arana Ortiz, Vice Chair
Christian Westra Jonathan S. Lavine
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Boston Centers for Youth & Families
Boston Schools Fund
Boston University
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Bunker Hill Community College
City of Boston
Fisher College
Grub Street
Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
Massachusetts Library System
Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics
Northeastern University
Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement
Pine Street Inn
The Basics Boston
The Boston Foundation
United Way of Massachusetts Bay
YMCA

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Advancing with Purpose

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Financial Benchmarking

Organizational Benchmarks

The Boston Public library is a complex institution, ‘punching above its weight’ by providing world-class services with comparably less resources than its peers, as the benchmarks will demonstrate.

Closest direct benchmarks, comparable population, and size:

DC Public Library, Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore), Seattle Public Library, and San Francisco Public Library are similar in **size, geographic reach, and the population they serve.**

Benchmarks with similar populations, and larger geography:

The Denver Public Library and Columbus Metropolitan Library cover a larger geographic area but are **comparable in size and population served, making them excellent benchmarks.**

Benchmarks with larger systems in key cities:

While not directly comparable to BPL in size, reach, or population, **Chicago Public Library, Brooklyn Public Library, Los Angeles Public Library, and New York Public Library**—are **larger systems** that provide additional context.



DC Public Library



Enoch Pratt Free Library



Seattle Public Library



San Francisco Public Library



Denver Public Library



Columbus Metropolitan Library

Business & Operational Metrics

In comparison to comparable urban libraries with similar scale, BPL has **24-78%** less staff than peers, and far less, **93-187%**, than peer cities.

COMPARABLE SIZE & REACH

PEER CITIES

			COMPARABLE SIZE & REACH			
LIBRARY	ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET	POPULATION	GEOGRAPHIC REACH (sq.mi)	LOCATIONS	TOTAL FTE	% FTE COMPARED TO OTHER LIBRARIES
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY (BPL)	\$61,599,091 (FY25)	692,600*	48	26	506/550**	
DC PUBLIC LIBRARY (DCPL)	\$75,000,000	670,050	68	27	625	24% MORE FTE
ENOCH PRATT FREE LIBRARY (BALTIMORE) (EFPL)	\$61,482,800	602,495	92	22	492	2% LESS FTE
SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY (SPL)	\$92,000,000	749,256	84	27	711	41% MORE FTE
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY (BPL)	\$166,000,000	873, 965	46.7	31	900	78% MORE FTE
DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY (DPL)	\$90,000,000	717,632	153	27	853	69% MORE FTE
COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN LIBRARY (CPL)	\$81,656,000	971,930	223	23	850	68% MORE FTE
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY (NYPL)	\$380,325,000*	3,630,175	123	92	1450/2120	187% MORE FTE
BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY (BPL)	\$197,300,000	2,736,074	69.5	62	1168	131% MORE FTE
LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY (LAPL)	\$203,070,540	3,795,936	502	73	978	93% MORE FTE
CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY (CPL)	\$113,400,000	2,746,388	231.7	81	1152	128% MORE FTE

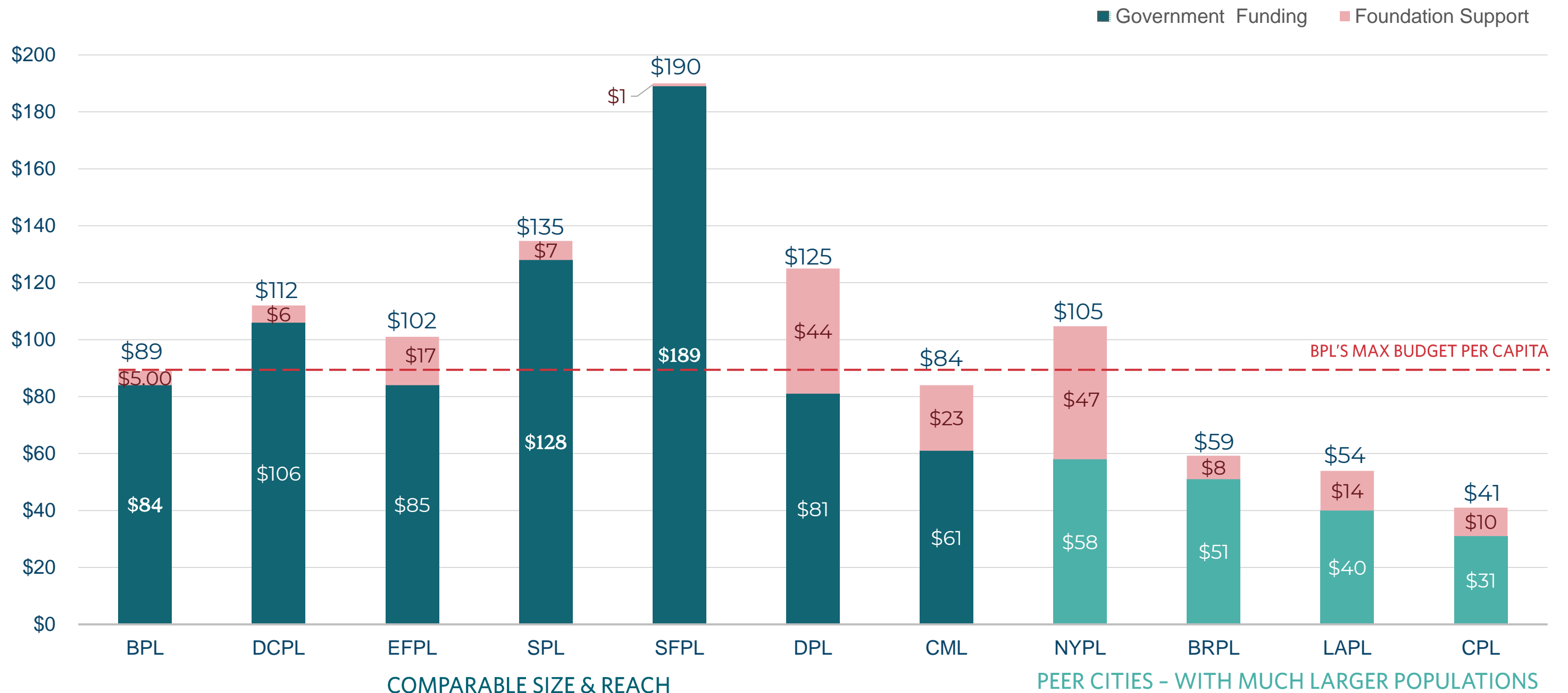
*The Boston Public Library serves 700,000 people within its immediate area and approximately 7 million people across the Commonwealth.

**BPL operates one Central Library and 25 branches, with 550 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. Of these, 44 FTEs are assigned to Research and Special Collections. All comparisons are based on the 506 FTEs excluding research and special collections staff, FTE count provided October 2024

Appendix

Spending Per Capita

Per capita, peer library systems **operate with a much larger budget than the Boston Public Library**. While the BPL has created an incredible impact within these constraints, the **success of the Strategic Plan will be dependent on elevating all funding streams**.

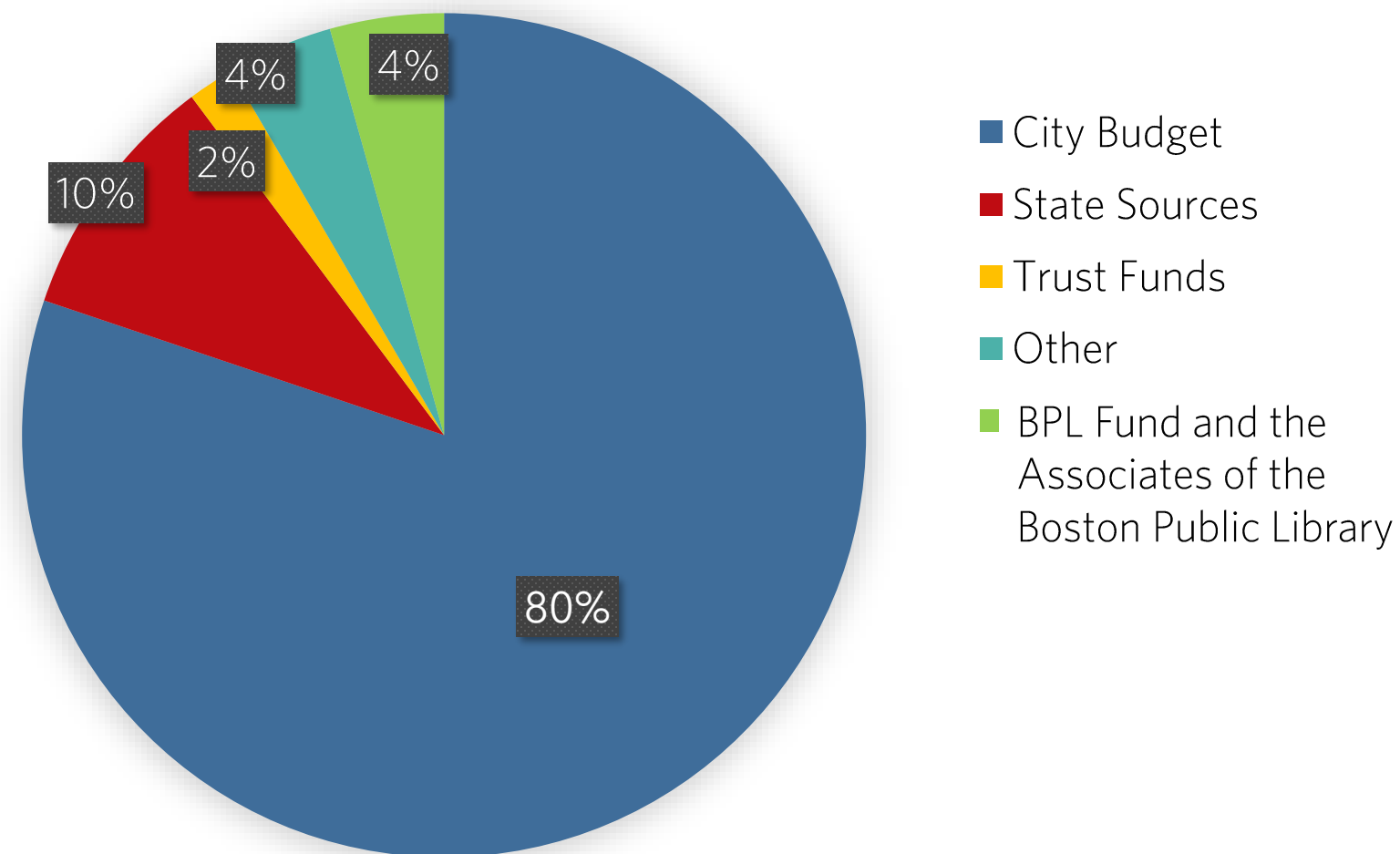


*Note: This comparison only considers Boston's population of 700,000.

Current Budget Funding Sources

Currently, the *majority of the operating budget for BPL is made up of allocations from the City and State, supplemented by additional sources beyond the budget amounts.*

BPL FY 25 Operating Budget: \$61M including Funding Sources



*The annual operating budget is supplemented yearly by the BPL Fund, raising **over \$12M in funding since 2019** and an **average of \$2.3M annually** in the past 5 years.*

Organizational Benchmarks

BPL oversees the largest Central Library, along with 25 neighborhood branches and an archival center- **managing significantly more square footage than comparable systems.**

Boston Public Library
Central – 1,000,000 sf
Total Branches - 300,000 sf
1.3 million SF

DC Public Library
Central – 400,000 sf
Total Branches - 500,000 sf
900,000 SF

Enoch Pratt Free Library
Main – 349,713 sf
Total Branches - 250,000 sf
572,278 SF

Seattle Public Library
Central – 360,000 sf
Total Branches - 250,000 sf
610,000 SF

San Francisco Public Library
Main – 376,000 sf
Total Branches - 227,000 sf
602,636 SF

Denver Public Library
Central – 540,000 sf
Total Branches - 200,000 sf
740,000 SF

Columbus Metropolitan Library
Main – 230,000 sf
Total Branches - 370,000 sf
600,000 SF

Appendix

Organizational Benchmarks

The Boston Public Library's 20+ million items - including those in its world-class research and special collections, make its collection one of the largest in the country.

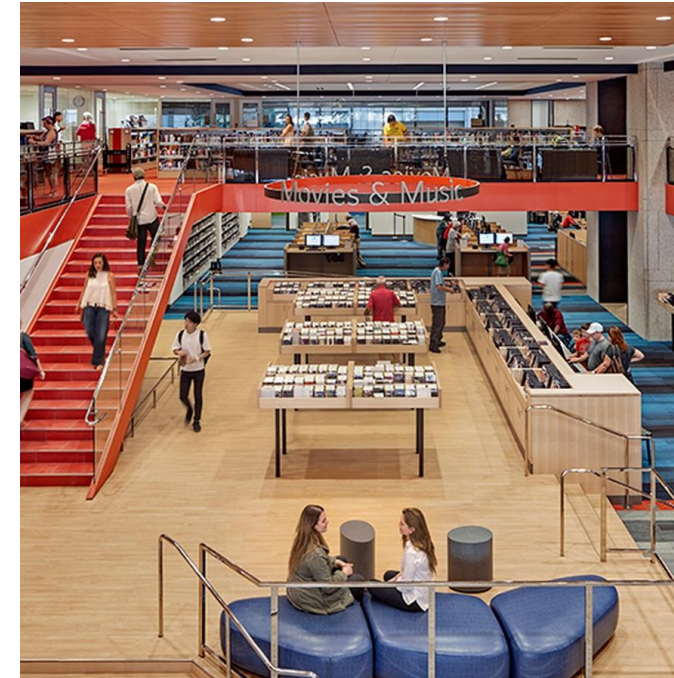
No other public library matches the scale and complexity of BPL's holdings relative to its budget.

The management required to maintain BPL's research and special collections is unique, demanding significantly greater resources due to its extensive stewardship needs, unlike other libraries.



Rare Books Collection

The New York Public Library is the **only comparable research library**, but its governance and **public-private funding structure** are fundamentally different from BPL's.



Multi-media collections, Audiobooks, Newspapers, Novels, Books and More



Research and Archives



Written Manuscripts and Paper Documents



Leventhal Map Collection

Performance Metrics

COMPARABLE SIZE & REACH	Library	Materials Circulated	Physical Collection	Library Visits	Registered Cardholders	Children & Adult Program Attendance	Website Visits
	Boston Public Library	5.7 Million	8.2 Million	2.3 Million	498 K + 50 K*	246 K	6.6 Million
	DC Public Library	5 Million	1.1 Million	901 K	330 K	45 K	3.5 Million
	Enoch Pratt Free Library	1.7 Million	2.2 Million	804 K	288 K	50 K	1.6 Million
	Seattle Public Library	9.2 Million	1.7 Million	78 K	344 K	1006	5.2 Million
	San Francisco Public Library	11.4 Million	4.2 Million	2.4 Million	438 K	101 K	6.2 Million
	Denver Public Library	6 Million	1.5 Million	1.2 Million	395 K	23 K	5.3 Million
	Columbus Met. Library	11.2 Million	1.5 Million	2.2 Million	604 K	133 K	7 Million
	Richland County Public Library	2.3 Million	822 K	149 K	197 K	35 K	1.7 Million
	Los Angeles Public Library	15.2 Million	6.3 Million	4.6 Million	2.8 Million	41 K	10.2 Million
PEER CITIES	Brooklyn Public Library	7.6 Million	29 Million	1.8 Million	534 K	13 K	4.5 Million

Data extracted from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) FY22 Public Libraries Survey and/or annual reports from each library.
* 50,196 New library cards issued in 2023

Communications Audit & Findings

Communications Audit & Findings

Executive Summary

Effective implementation of the strategic plan requires adjustments in support and resources for the communication and outreach teams.

Future Growth

The BPL communications team is **understaffed compared to peer libraries, resulting in increased workloads**, while **a limited marketing budget stifles creativity and restricts outreach efforts**. To address this, the team should expand by adding project management and creative support, build capacity for innovation, and increase the marketing budget when feasible to enable larger, more effective campaigns.

Internal Communications and Collaboration

Communications is **viewed as a service department rather than a strategic partner**, resulting in project overload, unclear priorities, and inconsistent messaging. To improve this, the team should increase its presence at branches, offer training on policies and messaging and enhance internal communication methods for staff cohesion.

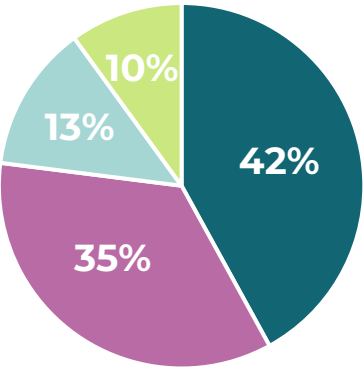
Public Awareness and Outreach

BPL's communication and outreach are **hindered by low public awareness**, insufficient multilingual and accessible materials, and a lack of understanding **that effective outreach relies on relationship-building** rather than just marketing. To address this, BPL should conduct market research to tailor strategies, develop inclusive materials, strengthen outreach teams and partnerships, and enhance its online presence with a more engaging, user-friendly website

The average marketing spend data for a public library in the USA was 2.3% in 2021 and some libraries spend as much as 5% of their annual operating budget on Marketing.

Percent of Total Operating Budget spent on Marketing

■ <1% ■ 1%-2% ■ 3%-5% ■ 5%



Source: Library Marketing Journal Survey

The BPL Communications team has an operating budget of **\$776,261.12**. Which is **1.26%** of the total operating budget and is **lower** than the national average.

The BPL Communications team is **57%-128% understaffed compared to its peers**, while other libraries have invested in additional creative, management and outreach positions, BPL's limited resources restrict its outreach and innovative campaigns.

LIBRARY	COMMS FTE	TOTAL FTE
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY	7	489
DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY	16	766
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY	140	1970
ENOCH PRATT FREE LIBRARY	9	492
RICHLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY	14	385
DC PUBLIC LIBRARY	12	625

Recommendations

This page reflects recommendations based on discussions and findings with the BPL communications team, as well as a review of peer libraries, to enhance Boston Public Library's communication strategies.

Future Growth and Staffing

Increase staffing for the BPL communications team and expand the marketing budget to foster creativity and enhance outreach efforts.

Recommendations:

- Expand the communications team by adding dedicated project management and creative support to enhance output and strategic initiatives.
- Build the capacity to develop and implement strategic marketing campaigns.
- When feasible, increase the marketing budget to enable more creative campaigns and better promote the library.

Internal Communication and Collaboration

Reposition the communications team as a strategic partner within the organization to ensure **clearer priorities, consistent messaging, and balanced project workloads.**

Recommendations:

- Develop an internal communications strategy to reinforce mission, vision, values, and goals to permeate internal and external communications
- Increase communications team presence at branches to improve understanding and collaboration.
- Improve internal communication through an active intranet to offer real-time updates to staff and for a more cohesive, informed staff.
- Provide staff with the skills and tools to align with the communication strategy, so they can independently manage communications, especially at a branch level.

Public Awareness and Reach

Increase public awareness, expand multilingual and accessible materials, and prioritize relationship-building as key elements of effective outreach.

Recommendations:

- Conduct market research to analyze neighborhood preferences and tailor marketing strategies accordingly
- Develop multilingual and accessible materials for broader engagement
- Leverage existing communications networks to build awareness and expand outreach.
- Ensure that the marketing team can support the goals, and initiatives of the strategic plan that incorporate partnerships, outreach, and partner

Communications Audit & Findings

Recommendations

Following our review of peer libraries and BPL's current organizational structure, we recommend considering the following expertise and skill sets to successfully implement effective strategies.

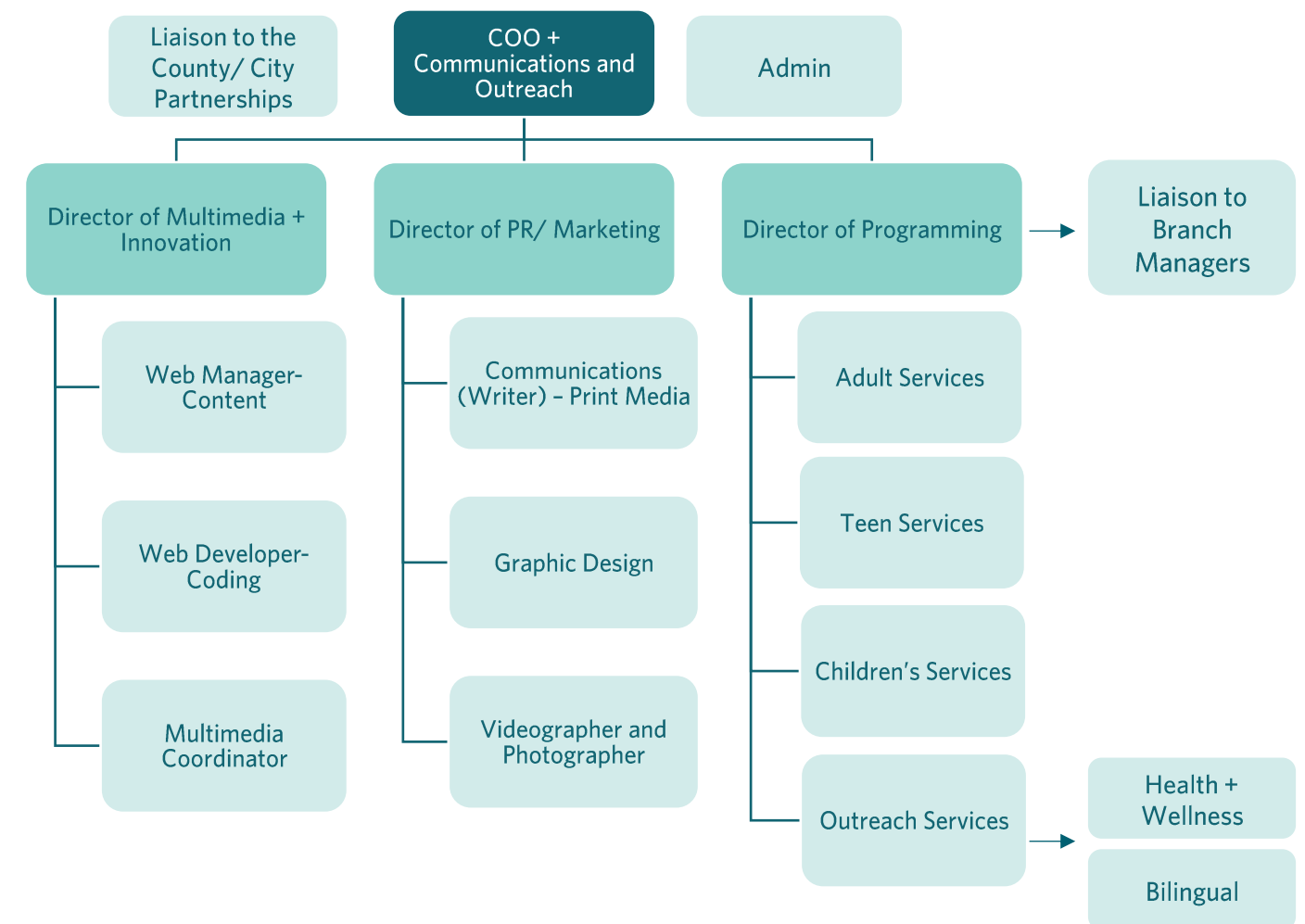
Additional creative, communications, and marketing support used by reviewed libraries includes:

- **Creative Roles:** Podcast Specialist, Digital Specialist, Video Specialist, Photography Specialist, Graphic Designer, Art and Design Studio Manager, Videographer, Copy Writer and Proofreader
- **Management Support:** Includes a general office manager and increased administrative assistance.
- **Outreach Focused Positions:** Language Access Coordinator, Outreach Coordinator, Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator, Event Services Coordinator
- **Internal Communications:** Richland Public Library manages all internal communications through HR and media relations, supporting their communications and creative teams.

CASE STUDY

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System merged communication and outreach functions by creating the position of Chief Operating Officer for Communication and Outreach.

This restructuring unified the teams, enhancing community engagement, and communication and fostering innovation. The reorganization resulted in tangible improvements, with staff trained in a communication strategy that decentralized responsibilities, allowing branches to manage daily tasks and communications more efficiently. The following is an illustrative example of how they restructured their team.



Communications Audit & Findings

What We Heard

Overview

“Newsletter tops the response in the community survey with 300,000 subscribers and 50% open rate!”

The Communications Team, though small, is highly productive. In addition to promoting BPL events, they handle copy editing, proofreading, and public relations. They are also responsible for managing both internal and external communications. Below is a summary of their key responsibilities.

Digital Channels

- **Website and targeted emails** have limited reach, engaging only patrons who actively sign up and primarily sharing information about milestone events, like branch openings.
- **Newsletters**, on the other hand, are highly successful, with open rates around 50%, especially "Books and Beyond" and the Reader Services' genre-based newsletter.
- **Social media engagement is active across major platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.** Individual branches maintain their own Facebook pages.

Print & Physical Channels

- **Marketing collateral** and physical keepsakes, such as materials distributed at events, printed flyers, bookmarks, and library SWAG (pins, magnets, stickers, bags), are effective for outreach.
- These are complemented by qualitative and experiential offerings like **BPL Book Lists, museum passes, and streaming services.**

Campaigns and Special Initiatives

- Special annual and monthly campaigns, such as **Year-End Wrapped and Affinity Months**, successfully engage many patrons.
- Managing and **promoting a large volume of weekly events**—such as 70 or more—requires a strategic, coordinated communication effort or distribution of responsibility beyond the central team.

Internal Communications

- **Staff Weekly Newsletters** efficiently communicate programs, events, and internal updates. Weekly press releases and digital slides, which rotate to showcase interesting programs at all locations, further enhance communication efforts.

What We Heard

Current Pain Points

“External communications are a closed loop; patrons must visit BPL or be signed up to hear from us. Without these steps, we remain invisible.”

Volume, staff capacity and budget constraints limit creativity

- **The volume of work, approvals, and last-minute requests** consumes significant staff time.
- **Limited budget for marketing** stifles creativity and limits outreach and patron acquisition.
- **Reviewing high volume of language and images consumes over 10 hours** of staff time each week.

Awareness of communications and procedures

- Staff especially at the branches **lack awareness of the communications team’s role** and value, as well as understanding of official policies (e.g., Asana process)
- **Difficulty in delivering concise information to staff**, as posting on Teams doesn't reach everyone, and the transition to SharePoint is complete.
- While the Communications team embraces newer technology (such as Canva, and other optimization programs), **lack of utilization or tech-savvy for these programs limits the ability of the team to optimize** or decentralize services.

Inconsistent messaging and quality control issues

- **Quality control issues** with marketing materials and a mix of authorized and unauthorized branch newsletters complicate oversight.
- **Promoting 70+ events weekly strains** staff resources and leads to inconsistent marketing materials across branches.
- **All branches manage separate social media** accounts, making them impossible to monitor.

Limited public awareness and accessibility

- **Lack of public awareness** due to limited communications and outreach.
- **We struggle to reach non-English speakers and those without technology access** due to inadequate multilingual and accessible communications
- **Limited internal understanding about the shared responsibility to build relationships that help effective outreach.**

What We Heard

Opportunities

Balance and Invest in Resources

- **Realign our workload and evaluate our resources** to align with the strategic plan.
- **Identify the key skills and expertise needed** to enhance our impact and efforts.
- **Invest in and build capacity for experimentation** and creative explorations to develop and execute larger campaigns and marketing goals.

System-Wide Communication and Collaboration

- **Improve internal communications to strengthen information sharing** and collaboration across the organization.
- Develop a stronger internal marketing strategy to **position the communications team as a valuable resource and strategic partner** for BPL staff.
- **Enhancing branch support** and presence, providing training on policies and messaging to ensure consistency and strengthen internal relationships.
- Have a branch liaison to communicate, coordinate, and collect branch stories to facilitate communications across the system.

Expanding Our Reach

- **Engage various demographics** and Boston's diverse community by building relationships with trade publications, colleges, and universities.
- **Expand online presence** and social media engagement.
- **Develop inclusive, accessible, and multilingual** collateral to reach a broader audience.
- **Develop a culture of shared responsibility in support of the communications and marketing work (or effort?).**

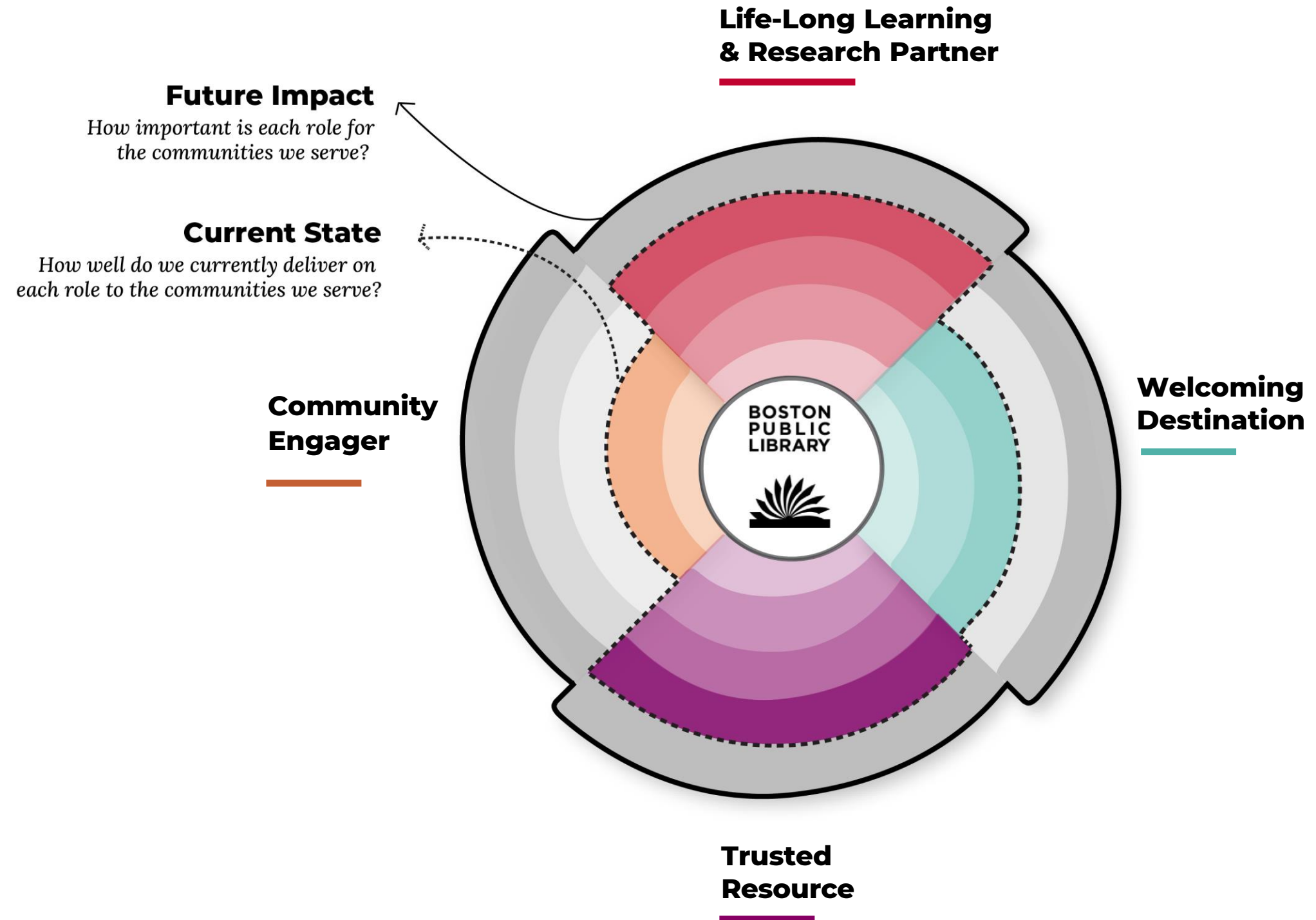
"Working at branches in person, getting to know staff, and providing more training will strengthen internal relations."

Evaluation Frameworks: Roles & Initiatives

Toolkit: **Calibrating the Plan**

The strategic plan is a dynamic tool that will drive our future impact, guiding us to continually adapt and innovate as we serve our diverse communities.

The Strategic Role framework is a living tool that will help us measure, refine, and enhance our impact across the organization. During the implementation planning phase, the tool will be further developed to continuously calibrate initiatives to meet the needs of each community.



Toolkit: Evaluation Matrix

The Initiative Evaluation Matrix, to be considered during implementation planning, is a structured framework that can evaluate the impact and organizational capacity for a Strategic Initiative, providing a foundation for planning and implementing the initiative.

Section 1: Impact & Strategic Fit

Evaluate how the proposed initiative align with the framework, while considering key elements such as demonstrated need, external support and measures of success.

Section 2: Organizational Capacity

Reflecting upon the capacity of the organization to support this effort, including internal capacity, monetary, communication, change needed, and risks.

Impact and Strategic Fit (Up to 50 points)	Criteria	Score	Scoring Comments
	Is it in alignment with our Vision, Mission and Core Value ? Core Value: Free to All Vision: An inclusive community propelled by curiosity, connection, and growth. Mission: Open a world of discovery, to enrich lives and elevate every community.	Score out of 5 1=low alignment, 5=high	
	Does the initiative align with our Strategic Roles ? Welcoming Destination Life-long Learning & Research Partner Trusted Resource Community Engager	Score up to 30 points set by calibration ___ points, Welcoming Destination ___ points, Life-long Learning & Research Partner ___ points, Trusted Resource ___ points, Community Engager	
	How well does this initiative address a demonstrated gap or need within our community ? (Research-backed, Metrics, etc.)	Score out of 5, 5=high demonstrated need	
	How strong is the external support for this initiative (e.g., partner, funder, Mayor's Initiative)?	Up to 5 points: 5 = strong external support	
	Are there measurements that can be used to track short or long term impacts of this initiative? How will we measure these impacts and track success over time?	Score out of 5, 5=impacts highly measurable	
Organizational Capacity (Up to 50 points)	Do we have the people resources (staff capacity or training, volunteers, partners) to do this work?	Score out of 10, 10=high current capacity	
	Do we have the monetary or physical resources (materials, spaces, funding, etc.) to do this work?	Score out of 10, 10=high current capacity	
	How well are we able to communicate this initiative to the public or target audience ? Will we be able to leverage current channels or will new methods need to be developed?	Score out of 10, 10=high current capacity	
	Are the risks associated with the initiative manageable ? (example risks: stakeholder buy-in, complexity, other factors)?	Score out of 10, 10=risks manageable, 1= high risks	
	Does this initiative involve a manageable amount of organizational change ?	Score out of 5 5=manageable change 1=large degree of change	
	Does this build upon existing initiatives , pushing our current capacity forward?	Score out of 5, 5=high current expertise	

Boston Community Landscape Review

A Look at Where We are Today

Boston has seen population growth that is commensurate with that of the United States, at nearly 8.5% average annually since 2010. It’s home to a rich collection of diverse families and a highly-educated population. This context represents a unique strength and opportunity for the library – to serve as a new community & cultural hub for socio-economic access, recreation, and information.

Baseline Demographic Comparison
Library 15-min walkshed, Boston, and USA

	15 min walkshed	Boston	USA
Total Population	507K	693K	337M
Total Households	213K	289K	129M
Median Income	\$86K	\$83K	\$73K
Unemployment Rate	4.6%	4.5%	4.3%
% HS Diploma or greater	71%	71%	59%
Diversity Index	80.3	80.1	72.1



693K+
Total Population

+8.5% avg annual growth rate since 2010



\$86K
Median Household Income

13% higher than the US Average



27%
of Residents are Foreign-Born

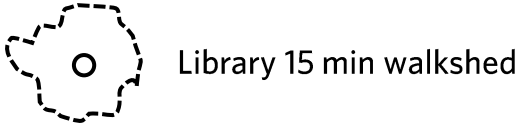
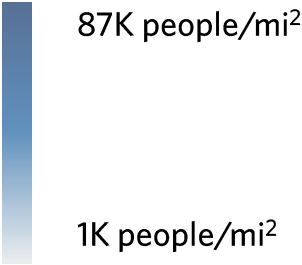
14% higher than the US Average

Meeting People where they are

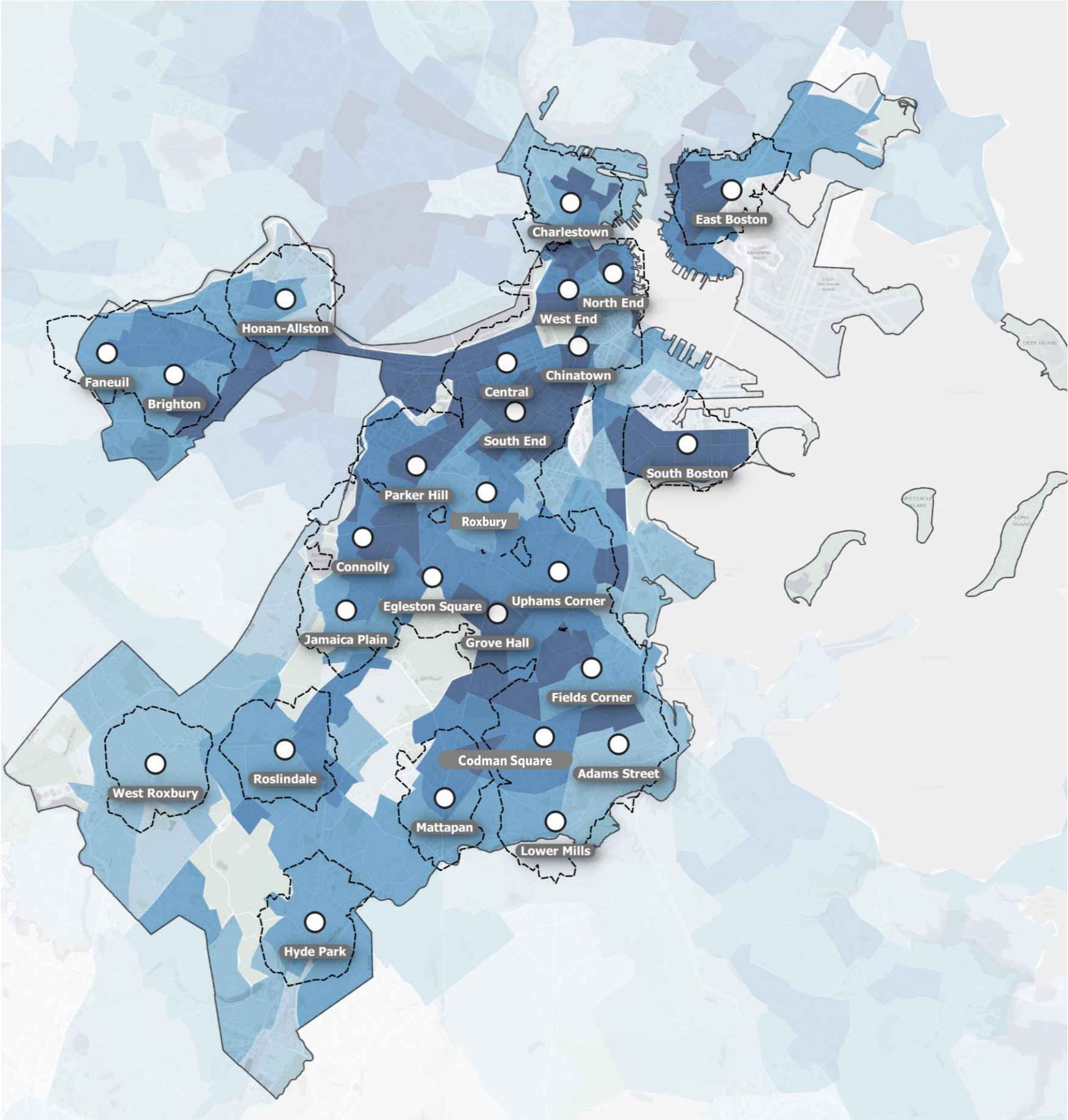
The framework of The 15-Minute City advocates for a convenient living experience for all, **creating a reality where nearly all of residents' needs are accessible within a 15-minute walk of their home.** This includes access to food, health & wellness services, education and libraries

On average **branches have 20,000 residents** within a 15-minutes walk. This means that **73% of Bostonians** reside within a 15 minutes of a library branch.

Population Density



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2022)

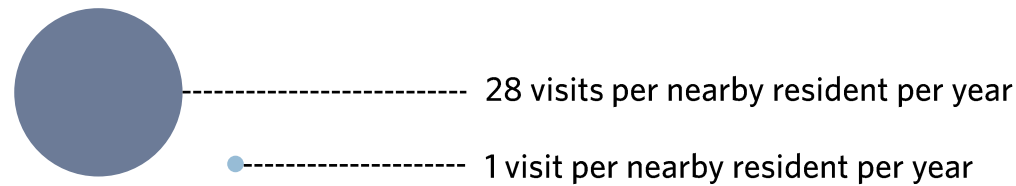


Creating Engagement Throughout the City

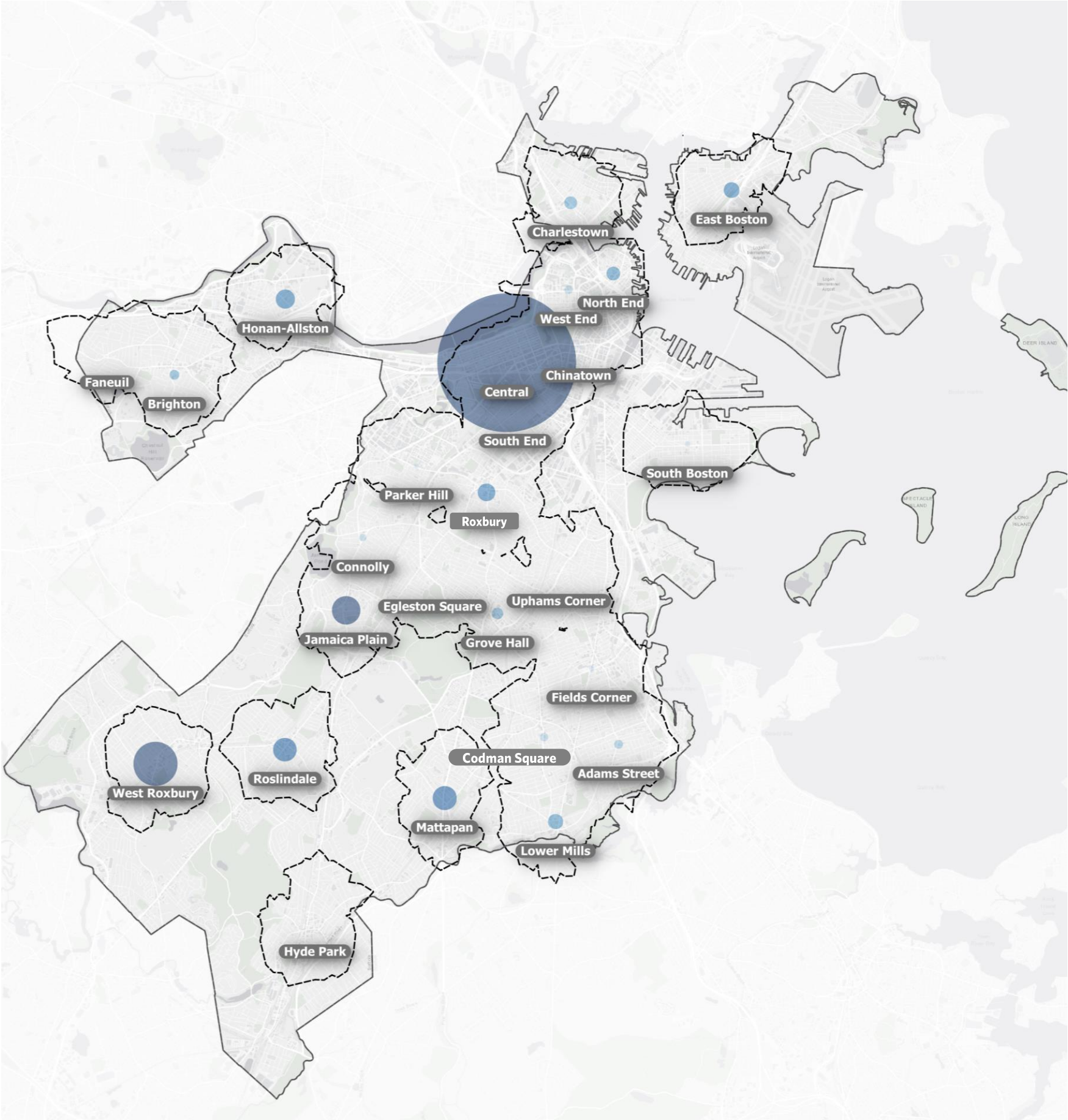
Library Branches around the city have varying amounts of programming and engagement. It is **critical to identify branches that have limited engagement with their neighborhood population**.

Creating more engagement with the library will involve aligning to each communities needs and interests.

Branch	Total Nearby Resident Population	FY23 Visits	FY23 Visits per Nearby Resident Population
Central	35.5K	1.02M	28.7
West Roxbury	9.9K	92.7K	9.4
Jamaica Plain	15.1K	94.1K	6.2
Mattapan	15.6K	83.3K	5.3
Roslindale	17.9K	92.4K	5.2



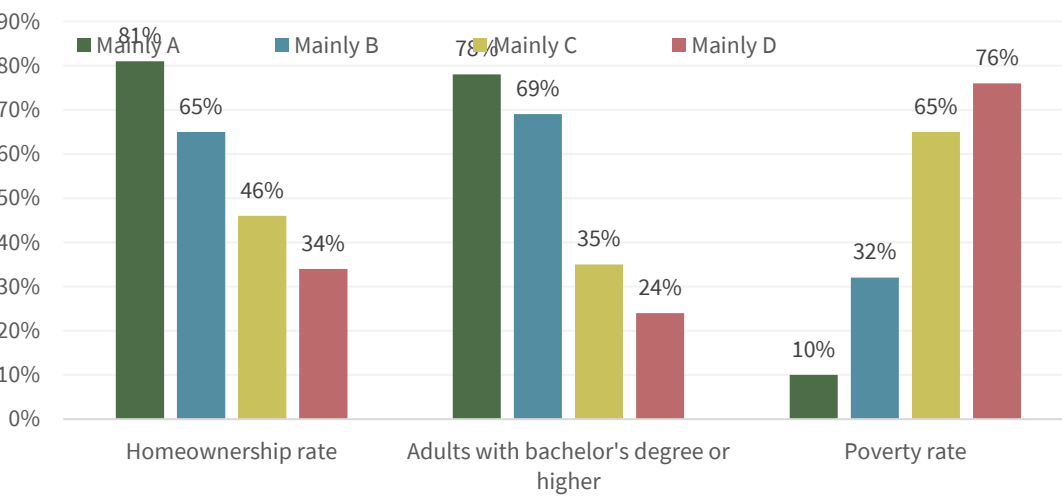
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2022), Boston Public Library FY23 Visitation



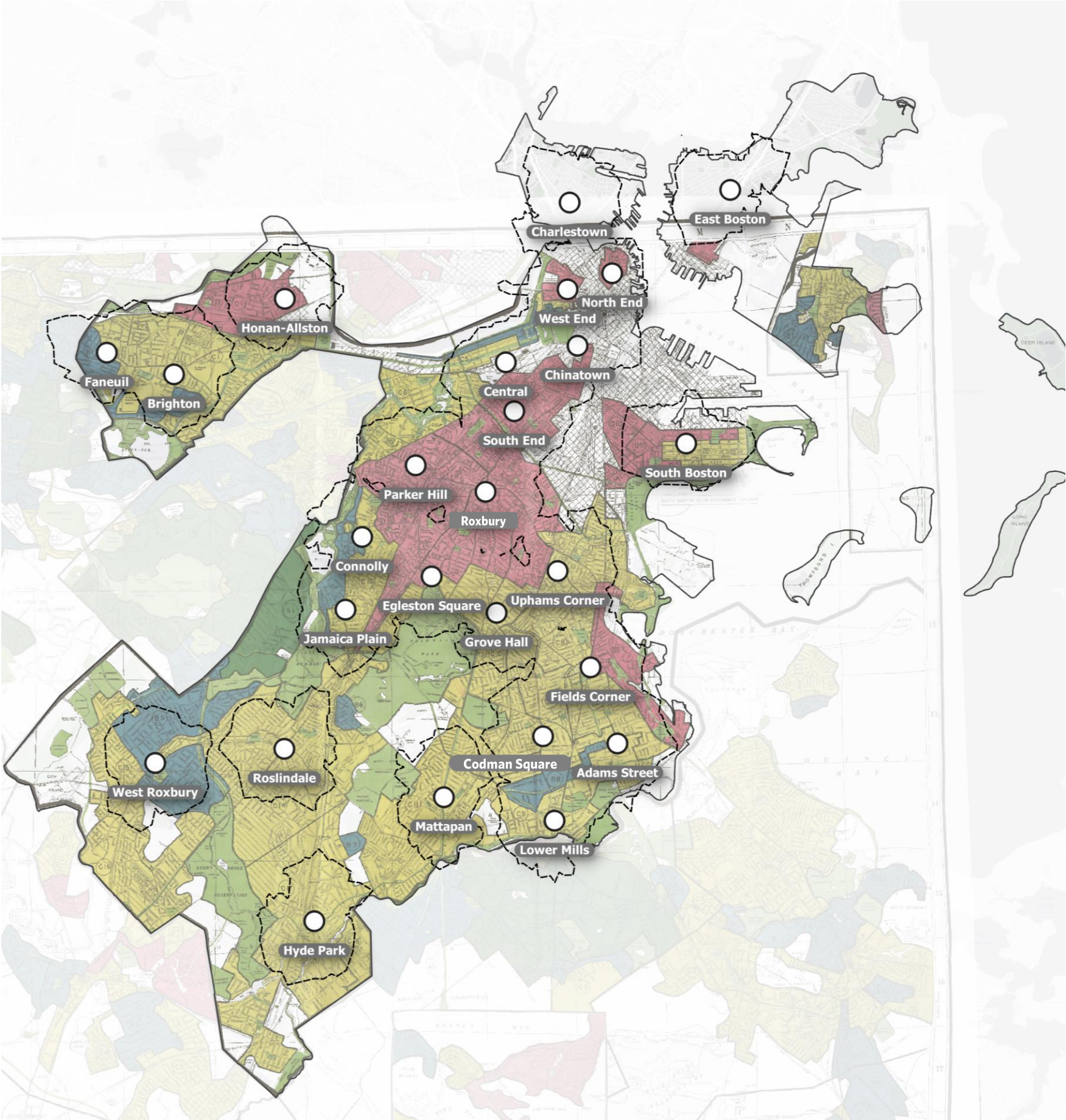
Contending with Historical Challenges

When the Homeowner’s Loan Corporation (HOLC) established discriminatory lending practices known as “redlining” from 1934 to the 1960’s, it created socioeconomic consequences that neighborhoods in Boston are still experiencing. Today, neighborhoods that were redlined (formerly Class D neighborhoods) **experience higher poverty rates, lower homeownership rates, and limited educational attainment.**

Socio-economic Outcomes for Redlined Communities are Still Challenging Today
Median of selected Boston area neighborhood characteristics by HOLC-based neighborhood (census tract) class



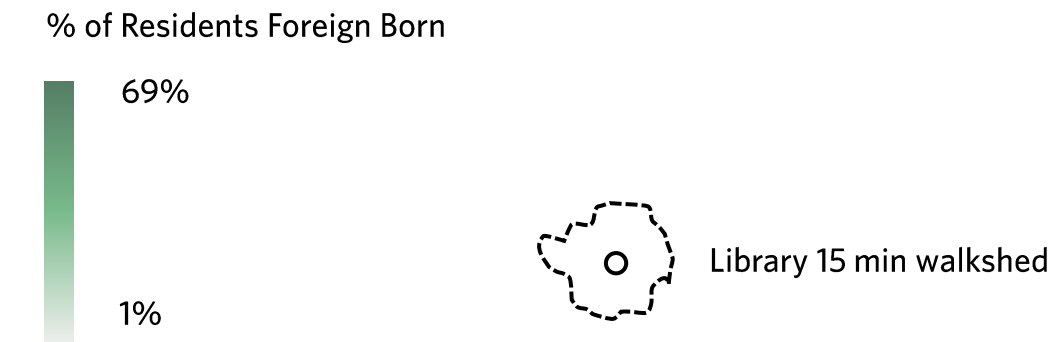
Source: Redlining and Present-Day Neighborhood Opportunity in the Boston Area (2023)



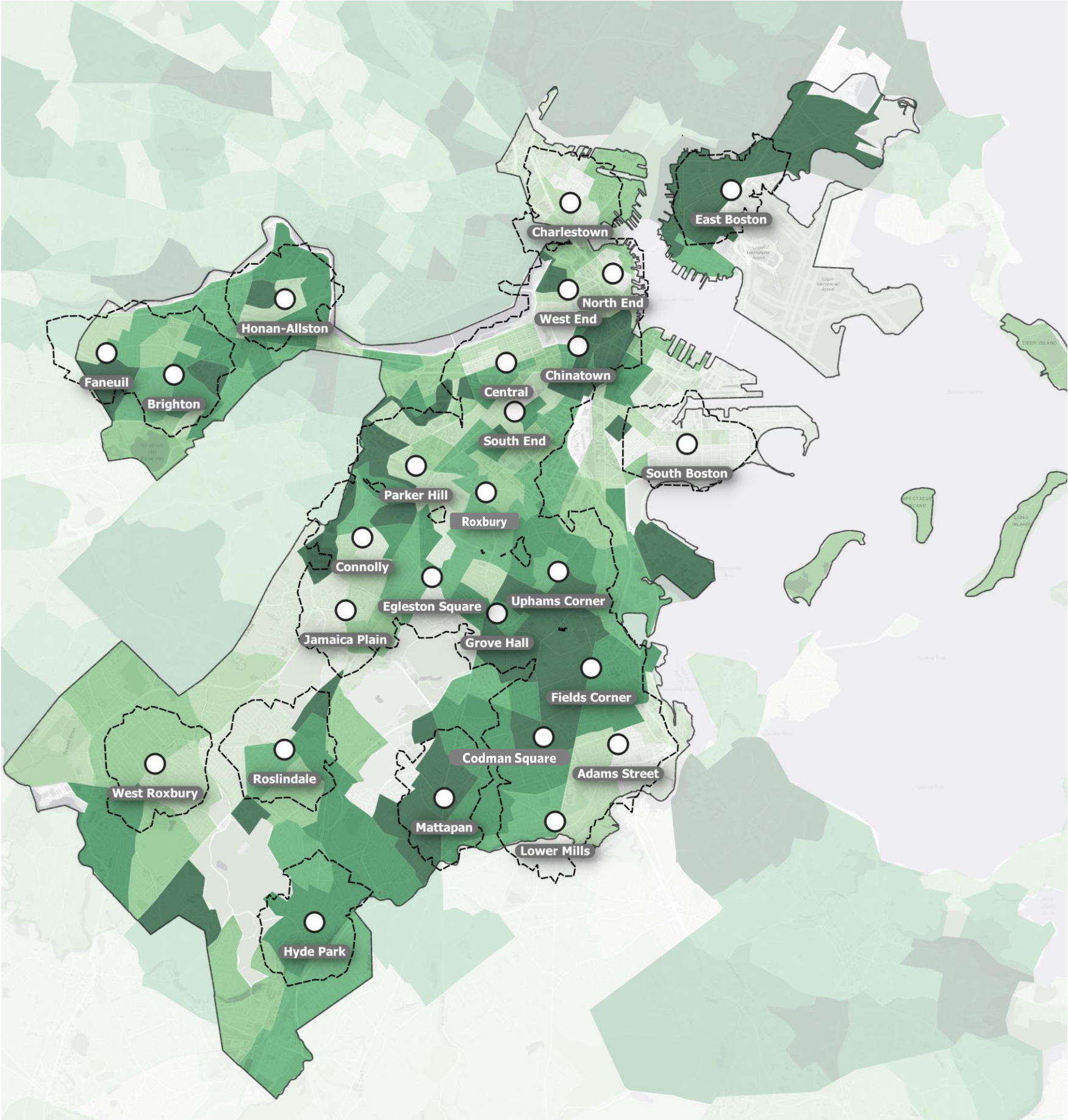
The Whole World in Boston

Boston continually has a strong presence of foreign-born residents. Today, the number of foreign-born residents is nearly 180K throughout the city, **amounting to 27% of the population**. This number is up 12K people since 2010.

This context affirms the necessity for Libraries to have culturally-relevant programming & services that cater to a diverse range of audiences.

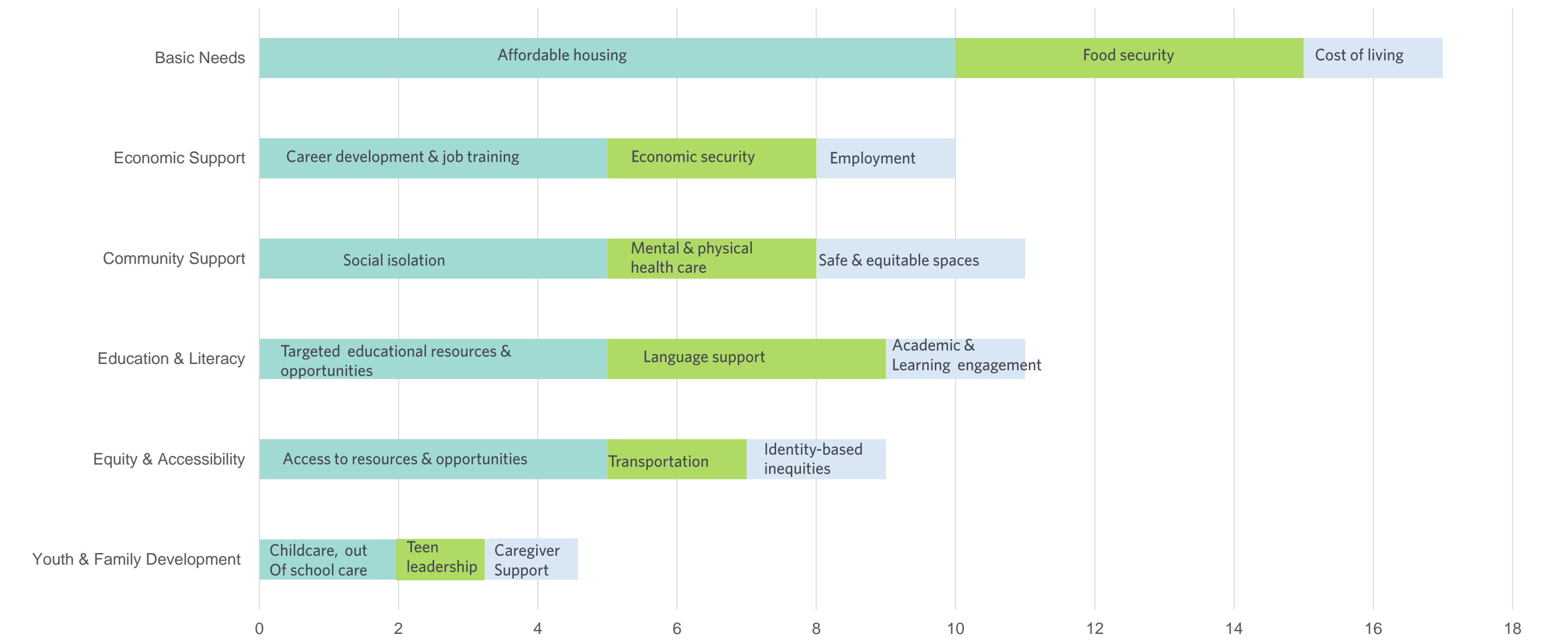


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2022)



Community Needs: Community Partner Survey

The needs and challenges were identified from the invite survey. This bar chart illustrates the frequency each response was mentioned by participants.



Partner Alignment:

Community Partner Survey

We (BPL and our Community Partners) collectively work towards fostering learning, breaking down barriers, supporting diverse communities, and enriching the cultural landscape through our commitments through:

EDUCATION & LEARNING	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT	YOUTH & FAMILY FOCUS	EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY	CULTURAL ENRICHMENT & ARTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support in the skills necessary for lifelong learning, as well as personal and professional development• Provide English and Citizenship classes as well as a network of support services• Advance educational equity through access to high-quality schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve, promote and protect business in the Back Bay• Enhance residents' quality of life by partnering to offer a wide range of comprehensive programs and activities• Immigrants can participate fully in society and create their own success stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide resources for youth and families to achieve greater economic success and social well-being• Improve the health of mind, body, and spirit of individuals and families• Empower students (K-12 and beyond) to share stories, amplify voices, and develop leadership skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide equitable access to high quality services, resources, and opportunities• Help people age in the homes and neighborhoods they love• Meet residents where they are to break down barriers to critical resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide resources designed to support intellectual curiosity and cultural appreciation• Document Boston's LGBTQ+ history• Empower teens to transform communities by collaborating on innovative art and design projects and sharing their voice on the public stage

Library Industry Landscape Review

Contemporary Library Themes

The following are key trends relevant to libraries and their communities, promoting innovations for librarians and professionals to shape the future. The subsequent slides showcase case stories and examples of how peer libraries are responding to these key trends.

- 01** Providing active learning experiences
- 02** Supporting career and workforce development
- 03** Understanding the whole person
- 04** Championing an inclusive democracy
- 05** Activating spaces and collections
- 06** Building community at the neighborhood level
- 07** Committing to DEI and anti-racism
- 08** Operating with a collective impact model
- 09** Developing pipelines for internal growth



Theme: Providing active learning experiences

Libraries are addressing critical literacy development in a proactive way and are partnering strategically with the school systems.

Foundational Critical Literacies



Ready For Kindergarten

Storyville at Baltimore County Public Library

At the Rosedale and Woodlawn branches of Baltimore County Public Library, [Storyville](#) offers a play-and-learn experience for children aged 0 to 5 and their caregivers. Storyville promotes early literacy and school readiness in enriching, engaging and creative environments such as the Baby Garden, Toddler Woods, and the Grocery Store.



Reading at a Third Grade Level

Columbus Metropolitan Library

[The Reading Buddies](#) program at Columbus Metropolitan Library is a transformative effort aimed at meeting the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. This program matches children with books suited to their third-grade reading levels and offers personalized reading sessions with trained staff or volunteers. By collaborating with the Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy at The Ohio State University (OSU) to assess its impact on reading scores, CML demonstrates a strong commitment to fulfilling its guarantee for third-grade reading proficiency.

Theme: Providing active learning experiences

Libraries are embracing a variety of learning experiences to make learning fun, playful, and intergenerational.

Joyful Learning



Learning Through Discovery *Calgary Public Library*

[Library School](#) is a program in partnership with the Calgary Public School system where students and teachers can delve deeper into local arts, books, and learning through play. Students interact with resident historians, artists, and musicians to discover how the library can be a place for lifelong learning that extends beyond books. Participants spend a week in the library focusing on a passion project.



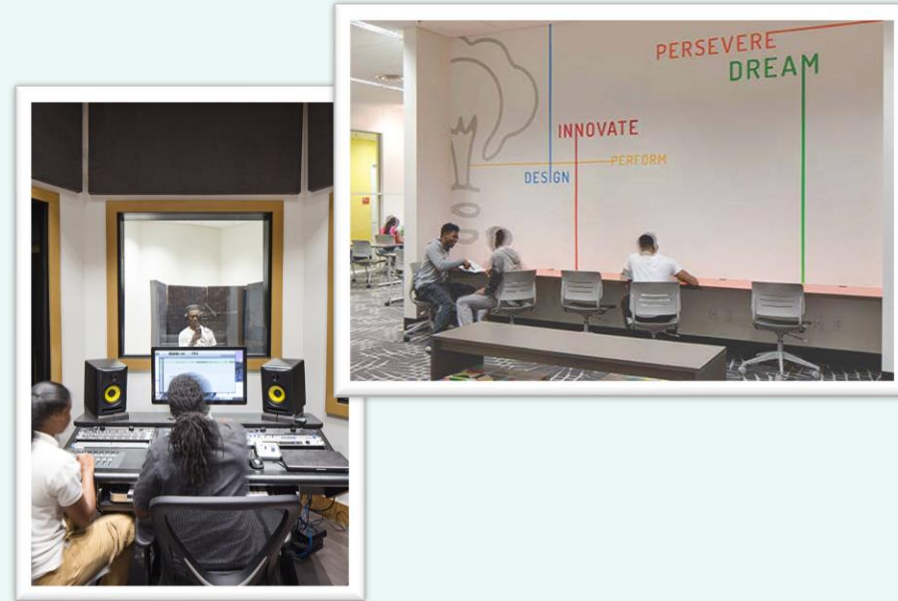
Family Centered Festivals *The Albus Storytelling Festival*

Albus is a biennial [international children's literature festival](#) organized in collaboration with the Aarhus municipality. With special focus on new literature formats, patrons can meet authors, experience theatre and attend readings while participating in creative workshops and competitions. Authors, illustrators, researchers, communicators, and publishers come together to celebrate the full diversity of children's literature.

Theme: Providing active learning experiences

Libraries are providing spaces, places, tools and resources while cultivating the staff talent to facilitate passion-based and project-based learning.

Connected Learning



Activating Connected Learning *Memphis Public Library*

Designed to foster connected learning and YOUmedia best practices, the 8,300 square foot teenage learning facility, [CLOUD901](#), activates a creative process to develop 21st century skills including innovation, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving. In addition to exposing teens to state-of-the-art technology, CLOUD901 translates that knowledge into career pathways, college opportunities, and workforce entry.



Intergenerational Content Creation *Nationwide Models To Storytelling & Sharing*

Libraries nationwide are embracing [innovative content creation strategies](#) to foster intergenerational storytelling models that spark community engagement, strengthen connections, and promote lifelong learning. Through dynamic workshops, digital platforms, and interactive programs, libraries are bridging generational divides, empowering individuals of all ages to share their unique narratives and perspectives. These initiatives not only preserve cultural heritage but also cultivate a sense of belonging, collaboration, and mutual understanding within diverse communities, enriching the fabric of lifelong learning and collective wisdom.

Theme: Supporting career and workforce development

Libraries are embracing their role in providing a holistic approach to career, workforce and entrepreneurial development.

Workforce Development



Supporting Personal Achievement

Ives Innovation Center at the New Haven Free Library

Libraries have emerged as frontline champions of economic recovery. From aiding job searches to offering skills training and shelter, they've become vital "second responders" to crisis, embodying resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity. Many libraries, like the New Haven Free Public Library in Connecticut, have long been at the forefront of inclusive innovation efforts. In 2016, the New Haven Free Public Library embarked on a mission to address economic disparities by creating an accessible [entrepreneurial hub](#), leveraging partnerships and community insights to drive positive change.



Empowering Interest-Based Career Development

The Commons at Prince George's County Memorial Library System

[The Commons](#) unites Prince George's County by offering cutting-edge technology, creative spaces, and digital literacy programs. From STEM-focused education for middle schoolers to support for immigrant entrepreneurs, it's a catalyst for growth. With five locations, PGCMLS expands access to tech education and workforce development, empowering residents to achieve their goals.

Theme:
Understanding the
whole person

Libraries are leveraging their role as safe havens to connect patrons to social services efficiently, effectively, and compassionately.

Social Work in the Library



Health and Safety Associates *HASA Program at San Francisco Public Library*

Since 2009, BPL library has assisted over 300 individuals in accessing temporary and permanent housing and connected nearly 1,000 people with essential services including safe accommodations, food, medical care, and mental health counseling. [The HASA program](#) employs six health and safety associates (HASAs), all formerly homeless patrons of the library, who compassionately reach out to identify and assist individuals in need of support.



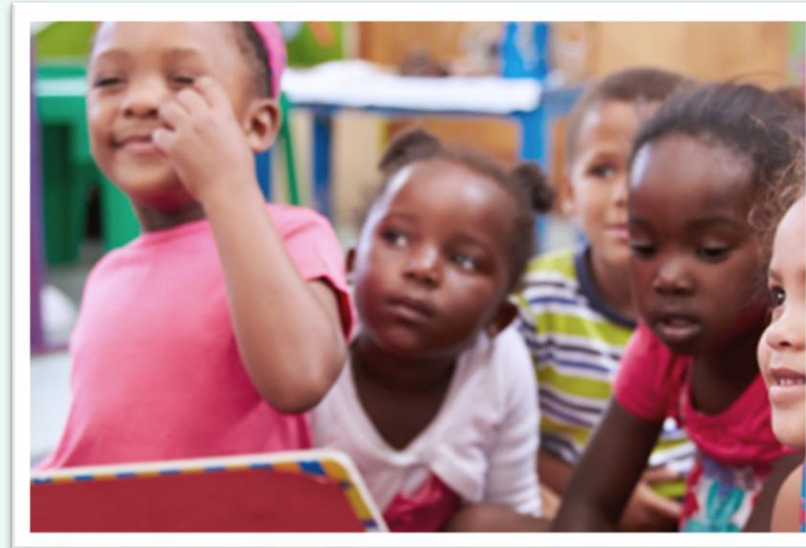
Creating Sustainable Social Work in the Library *Richland Library*

Richland Library's compassionate team of [social workers](#) serves as a lifeline for residents, providing invaluable support and guidance on crucial matters such as healthcare options, housing resources, access to food assistance, and other essential services. Through personalized consultations and a deep understanding of community needs, these dedicated professionals empower individuals and families to navigate complex systems and access the assistance they need for a better quality of life.

Theme: Operating with a collective impact model

Libraries are embracing collective impact initiatives to address their communities' most pressing challenges.

Collective Impact



City-Wide Childcare Resources [*Raising Las Vegas, ULC Innovation Award*](#)

Las Vegas-Clark County Library System works with over 100 community partners to connect children 0-5 with brain building resources at branch libraries, home, and a growing variety of outreach sites, including childcare centers and nursing home visits.



Workforce Development [*One-Stop Career Centers at Las Vegas-Clark County Library District*](#)

LVCCLD integrated "[One-Stop](#)" [workforce development centers](#) into libraries district-wide using federal funds to bridge socioeconomic gaps. This program supports families with after-school homework help, maker programs, immigrant services, English language acquisition, and career training. One-Stop has achieved significant success, increasing retention of co-located programs.

Theme: Championing an inclusive democracy

Libraries are taking the responsibility to encourage informed citizenship, civic involvement, and community participation.

Fostering An Inclusive Democracy



Encouraging Civic Engagement

The Stavros Niarchos X NYPL Dialogue

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library in New York recognized the public overwhelm and sense of hopelessness that comes from today's rapid sociopolitical change and escalating conflicts. Leveraging the library's role a safe space and knowledge hub, SNF started [a Dialogue Initiative](#) that aims to encourage inclusive discussions that bridge the gap between passive involvement and active, meaningful participation in civic life.



Creating A Hub For Civic Participation

Toledo Lucas County Public Library Civic Engagement

Toledo Lucas County Public Library (TLCPL) is a catalyst for informed citizenship and [active civic engagement](#). TLCPL hosts vibrant debates and forums using Ohio Debate Commission Playbooks. Access to additional resources aids community members in initiating their political journey and staying informed about key electoral dates. TLCPL reserves prestigious spaces like the Large Glass Community Room for nonpartisan events, ensuring diverse voices are heard. Empowering the community with vital civic insights and fostering connections with officials or candidates, TLCPL is a hub for civic participation.

Theme: Championing an inclusive democracy

Libraries are dedicating a variety of resources to foster holistic support in their path to citizenship and the American Dream.

Immigrant Services



All-encompassing Citizenship Service Approach *The American Place (TAP) at Hartford Public Library*

[TAP](#) (a division of HPL) is a leader in citizenship services, connecting newcomers with services and resources to facilitate resettlement, education, and career transitions. At HPL Downtown, TAP will be integrated into the Entrepreneurial Center, HPL Studios, and UConn partnership spaces to further strengthen a 'wraparound service' to foster financial freedom, passion-based learning, and educational opportunities.

***Sea Un Vendedor
Ambulante Exitoso***
***Be a Successful
Street Vendor***



Supporting Immigrant Entrepreneurs *Be a Successful Street Vendor Initiative*

Unlocking street vendors' success, the Los Angeles Public Library's groundbreaking initiative, '[Be a Successful Street Vendor](#),' powered by a strategic grant from the American Library Association and Google, joins forces with Community Power Collective, KLBRI, Immigrants Rising, Inclusive Action for the City, Public Counsel, and our vibrant local vendors. Together, they have curated invaluable resources to empower and uplift vendors toward thriving success.

Theme: Activating spaces and collections

Public libraries are bringing historically inaccessible materials to life through storytelling.

Creative Collection Activations



Activating Collections Through Community Building

James C. Hormel LGBTQIA+ Center at San Francisco Public Library

BPL's [James C. Hormel LGBTQIA+ Center](#) is a vibrant hub for preserving and celebrating LGBTQIA+ history and culture. With over 10,000 books and a stunning space funded by generous donors, the Center showcases the community's resilience and pride. Collaborating with departments and organizations, BPL hosts exhibitions, supports families and allies, and offers a welcoming reading room with diverse resources. Dedicated librarians ensure access to invaluable materials, making the Hormel Center a vital LGBTQIA+ resource.



Preserving Culture Through Celebrations Of Genealogy

The Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection at the Chicago Public Library

The [Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection](#) is the Midwest's premier African American history and literature repository, centered on Chicago's vibrant Black heritage. Delve into a wealth of materials covering a spectrum of topics from biography to civil rights, culture to sports, and beyond. Discover rare books, manuscripts, newspapers, and more documenting the African American and African experience.

Theme: Activating spaces and collections

Libraries are using creative engagement to address community challenges.

Creative Space Activations



Place-based Innovation
San Francisco Public Library
[Middle Ground](#) is an exploration of the complexities of human relationships. Step into the world of exhilarating outdoor exhibition delving into human connections and interactions. Uncover insights from social science on bias, humor, collaboration, and more, while engaging directly with this immersive experience.



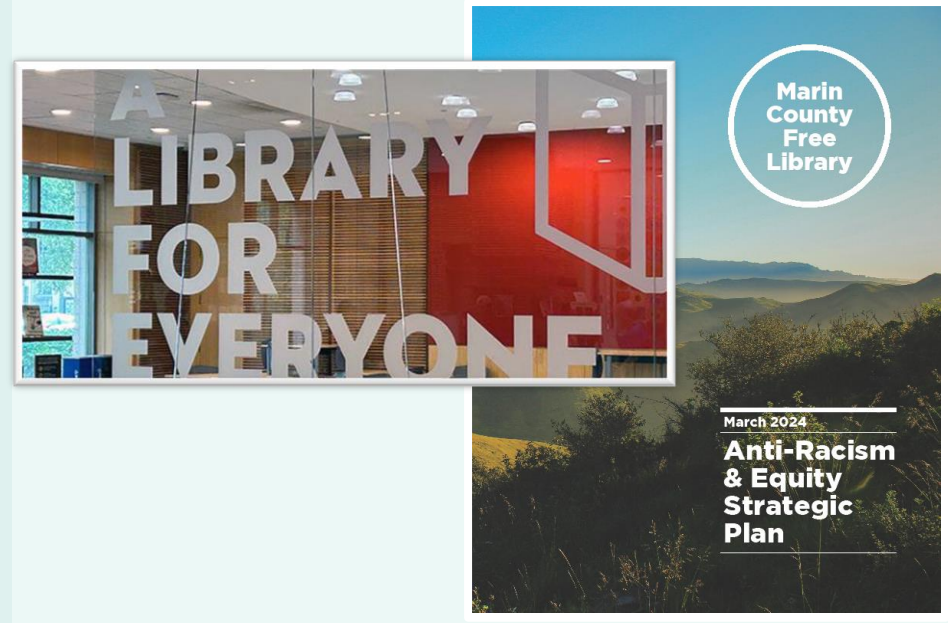
Creative Problem-solving for Communities
Do Good Columbia, ULC Innovation Award

Richland Library leads [Do Good Columbia](#), a two-day community workshop that brings together diverse stakeholders to develop creative solutions to community problems. In 2023, Do Good Columbia's design challenge was to strengthen support and collaboration among those working on issues of housing insecurity and homelessness.

Theme: Committing to DEI and anti-racism

Libraries are embracing Race Equity and Anti-Racism with a courageous vigor.

Anti-Racism



Strategic Pathways to Anti- Racism
Marin County Free Library & Oak Park Public Library

[Marin County Free Library's Anti-Racism & Equity Strategic Plan](#) prioritizes its role as a convener and advocate for racial equity. They focus on inclusive learning, equitable service, impactful collaboration, and community-centered spaces. Oak Park Public Library empowers voices by sharing resources aligned with community aspirations for diversity, equity, inclusivity, and empathy. The library's [strategic priorities](#) center on equity, anti-racism, engagement, learning, and stewardship.



Equity Through Education
Let's Talk About Race Curriculum at Richland Library

After the tragic events of Walter Scott’s murder and the Charleston Emanuel AME church shooting, Richland Library initiated small circles of dialogue to foster courageous conversations about race. Committed to offering resources for libraries, museums, nonprofits, educators, and individuals, [this curriculum](#) includes facilitation best practices, conversation guides, toolkits, videos, and a platform for community connection.

Theme: Building community at the neighborhood level

Library workers are building community through connecting community-based organizations and providing innovative programs based on community interest.

Librarian As Community Builder



Power Through Partnership

Monthly Community Based Organization Meet Ups

A librarian at Chicago Public Library spearheads a monthly meeting that unites local community organizations with the library, igniting a powerful collective impact through strategic partnerships. Even amidst the pandemic, this dedication remained unwavering, as the meetings seamlessly transitioned to digital platforms. CPL is taking ownership of [driving community change](#) by facilitating collective access to resources and support.



Storytelling To Build Community

Roy Kinsey, the Rapbrarian

A trailblazing black, queer rapper-librarian at Chicago Public Library is challenging norms with his powerful releases. [Kinsey](#)'s impact is felt in both his music and programming, fostering collective passions for self-expression and introspection. Utilizing his storytelling skills, Roy has developed storytelling and sharing programs like teen poetry slams and senior storytelling cypher sessions, to ignite creative celebrations of identity and community.

Bonus round!

Other libraries offering cool and innovative programming



Libraries Sow Seeds of Change

Libraries nationwide combat food insecurity and promote education with services like community gardens, seed libraries, and [test kitchens](#), offering access to fresh produce and empowering communities with sustainable food practices. These initiatives provide educational opportunities through workshops and programs while fostering self-sufficiency, community empowerment, and joy.



Making the Library Cool *Wilmington Library*

The Wilmington (DE) Institute Free Library [won an IMLS Honor Award](#) in 2022 for making the library appealing to audiences through celebrity events, talks, musical performances, and poetry slams. Guests include KRS-ONE, Master P, and the cast of In Living Color. Celebrating the diversity of the community, the events have increased library attendance and downtown development.



Libraries Addressing Censorship

Libraries across the nation are actively [addressing censorship concerns](#) within their collections through innovative and diverse service models. Recognizing the importance of intellectual freedom and access to diverse perspectives, libraries are implementing strategies that promote inclusivity while respecting community.



Influencing Library Membership on a Global Scale *The Book of HOV, JAY-Z Exhibit*

BPL collaborated with Roc Nation for the Jay-Z exhibit, creating limited-edition library cards that sparked a surge in membership. [The immersive exhibit](#), commemorating 50 years of hip-hop, is the only one of its kind to be housed in an active public space. Every BPL branch is offering a unique card, encouraging patrons to visit locations across the borough.

Boston Public Library

Strategic Plan

2025-2030

