2022 Survey
Public Library Services for Strong Communities

Survey: librarybenchmark.org | Deadline: December 10, 2022

The Public Library Association (PLA), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), is conducting this survey to better understand how public libraries across the nation serve and contribute to sustaining their communities now and into the future. The Public Library Services for Strong Communities Survey gathers information about your library’s programs, services, partnerships, and facilities that are geared towards meeting needs and fostering resilient communities. While public libraries are not the only entities engaging in sustaining communities, this survey aims to understand how and in what circumstances libraries do engage, through their own efforts and partnerships.

We ask that you respond to questions at the library administrative entity level. This is the same level at which you report annual statistics to your state library agency. Some questions ask about whether your library offers resources/services in "at least one location." A location refers to your single main library or any of your library branches that are usually open to the public and provide services to the community (e.g., lends books, offers public access to computers, etc.). Additionally, unless otherwise stated, your responses should reflect the current situation within your library at the point in time when you are completing this survey. A glossary of terms is available with the survey instructions.

Your input will help to ensure that findings from the survey reflect the unique characteristics of your library as well as similar libraries across the country. In addition, your responses will enable PLA to provide nationally representative data to inform elected officials, the media, and funders about public library initiatives and needs. Findings from the survey will be analyzed and reported in aggregate across all public libraries and in groups of similar libraries. PLA will use results from the survey to advocate on behalf of public libraries at the national level. In addition, PLA will make a summary of aggregate results freely available on its website to share the results widely. Results will be incorporated into the Benchmark: Library Metrics and Trends data tool.

The survey does not request your name or the names of any staff members, and your library’s survey responses will remain private. To read ALA’s privacy policy, please visit http://www.ala.org/privacypolicy.

It should take 30-45 minutes to complete this survey. You do not need to complete the survey in one session. Rather, you may save your responses and return to the survey at another time. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact the project team at plabenchmark@ala.org.
Additional Survey Information

What type of information does this survey collect?
The main sections on the Public Library Services for Strong Communities Survey are: Services, Programs, Partnerships, and Facilities. The 19 survey questions are multiple-choice, select-all-that-apply, and open-ended; no questions on this survey ask you to report any annual output measures.

Who should complete the survey?
One person should complete the survey on behalf of a single library at the administrative entity level. Often that person is the library director, administrator, or data coordinator. However, you may need to work with other staff or library branches to complete some of these questions.

How do I enter my library’s responses?
Log into your library’s account at https://librarybenchmark.org/. Click on “Surveys” in the menu, and then you will see this survey listed under “Open Surveys.” The survey will remain open through Saturday, December 10, 2022.

Why should my library complete the survey?
Your participation will help make the results powerful and actionable for your library and libraries across the country. Your input will enable PLA and ALA to provide nationally representative data to engage and inform elected officials, the media, and funders about public library initiatives and community needs. PLA also will share aggregate results widely with the field, develop tools for peer comparison, and plan relevant professional development opportunities. In addition, the survey questions may inspire new ideas for your library. The data we collect in 2022 will serve as a baseline, and when we next ask these questions (in 2025), we will see how the field has evolved.

How long will it take?
We estimate the survey will take 30 to 45 minutes to complete. However, you may need to gather some information from colleagues before or during the process. We recommend reviewing all the questions beforehand to help you prepare.

How will the survey results be used?
The survey results will be incorporated into the Benchmark data dashboards, so your library will be able to see how you compare to your peers and to other libraries in the United States. PLA will publish a report summarizing the aggregate results on the PLA website and will use the survey results to advocate on behalf of public libraries at the national level.