2025 Public Library Services for Strong Communities Survey

Survey: librarybenchmark.org | Deadline: December 13, 2025

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 and ALA 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: Community Needs, Services, Programs, Partnerships, and Facilities. The 18 survey questions are multiple-choice, select-all-that-apply, and open-ended. Only one question asks for a numerical entry; 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 13, 2025.

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.

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 (https://www.ala.org/pla/data/plasurveys). The survey results will also support additional research and advocacy on behalf of public libraries.

2025 Public Library Services for Strong Communities Survey

This document is a copy of the survey *for reference purposes*. Please enter responses in your library's account in Benchmark: Library Metrics and Trends.

Section 1: Community Needs

1. Thinking about your community's most pressing needs and priorities, which of the areas below is your library currently striving to address with partnerships, programs, or services, or are developing plans to address in the future? If any areas are not applicable at this time, please select N/A.

	Currently Addressing	Planned for future	N/A
Accessibility and supporting people with disabilities			
Civic engagement			
Climate change and sustainability			
Digital equity			
Economic development and job-seeker support			
Equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice			
Food insecurity			
Homelessness			
Literacy and educational achievement			
Public health and wellbeing			
Other community needs (please describe):			

Section 2: Services

Formal services are those specifically planned, promoted, and offered by the library. The service may occur in the library or another facility, and the person providing the support may or may not be a member of the library staff. These services are often delivered one-on-one.

Informal services are areas in which the library assists patrons as needed, including by appointment, but the library does not specifically plan or promote this type of support. Assistance may or may not be provided by a member of the library staff and may be considered by your library as reference or referral transactions.

2. Does your library offer formal services to assist patrons with any of the following government services? If not formally offered and delivered by the library, do you informally assist patrons with any of these services?

	Yes, formal	Yes, informal	Yes, both	No
ACA, Medicaid, Medicare, or other health insurance enrollment				
Drivers' licenses or state IDs				
Elections (e.g., voter registration, ballot drop-off, polling place)				
Immigration and naturalization				
Notary services				
Passport application acceptance				
Referrals to social services				
Rental assistance (e.g., Section 8)				
Student aid application (e.g., FAFSA)				
Tax preparation/filing				
Unemployment filing				
Veterans' services				
Vital records				
Other government services (please indicate if formally or informally provided):				

3. Does your library offer any of the following support services?

Note: This list of support services purposefully does not include digital literacy services (e.g., assistance with devices or online resources) as those services are part of the PLA Technology Survey.

	Yes, formal	Yes, informal	Yes, both	No
Business development				
English language learning/ESL				
Food security support services				
GED/diploma student support				
Homebound or by mail services				
Job and career services				
Legal information services				
Older adult (age 65+) services				
Reentry services post-incarceration				
Other support services (please indicate if formally or informally provided):				

Section 3: Programs

Programs are defined as events, or a series of events, organized by the library or its partners that are open to the library's patrons and community members. Programs may be held in-person or virtually, on- or off-site. Unlike the services described above, programs are offered to a group of patrons, not one-on-one.

Note: This list of programs services purposefully does not include digital literacy programs as those are covered in greater detail on the PLA Technology Survey.

4. Does your library offer any of the following types of programs for *children*?

Children are defined as those ages 0 to 11.

	Yes	No
Book clubs		
Children's after-school or homework programs		
Early literacy programs (e.g., play & learn, storytime, StoryWalk, etc.)		
Family engagement programs		
Health and wellness programs (e.g., yoga for kids)		
Homeschooling programs		
School-aged literacy programs		
School preparation or grade transition programs		
STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) programs		
Summer reading program		
Other children's programs (please describe):		

5. Does your library offer any of the following types of programs for *teens*?

Teens are defined as those ages 12 to 18.

	Yes	No
Book clubs		
College or trade school preparation programs		
Financial literacy programs		
Games and gaming programs		
Health and wellness programs (e.g., Adulting 101, cooking programs)		
Media or information literacy programs		
STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) programs		
Summer reading program		
Teen advisory group or board		
Teen after-school or homework programs		
Other teen programs (please describe):		

6. Does your library offer any of these *adult* or *general interest* programs?

	Yes	No
Adult education/literacy classes		
Art, music, or cultural programs		
Book clubs		
Business development programs		
Civic and community engagement programs		
English language learner classes or networking		
Financial literacy programs		

Health and wellness programs		
History or genealogy programs		
Media or information literacy programs		
Programs or classes in languages other than English		
Repair or "Fix-it Clinic" programs		
Self development (e.g., hobbies, crafts)		
Summer reading program		
Workforce development programs		
Other adult or all-ages programs (please describe):		

7. What programs does the library offer specifically for *adults age 65+?*

	Yes	No
Cognitive health and social connection		
Digital literacy and technology help		
Family/caregiver programming		
Financial literacy (e.g., retirement planning, scam prevention)		
Physical health and wellness programs (e.g., chair yoga, walking groups)		
Other programs for adults age 65+ (please describe):		

Section 4: Partnerships

8. Does your library have a partnership with any of the following types of entities?

A **partnership** is a mutually beneficial arrangement between the library and another entity where both parties assist or support one another and work together toward a shared goal. Partnerships are different from professional courtesy or cooperation, where the library assists another entity but does not receive assistance in return (or vice versa). Examples of partnerships may include (but are not limited to) sponsoring activities or events together; working together jointly to develop and deliver programs or services; and sharing costs for staff, resources, or programming. Note that partnerships do not include grants received, contractors or vendors hired by the library, or in-kind donations.

Partnerships may be formal or informal:

- A **formal partnership** occurs when there is a written agreement or other documentation that outlines the expectations of both parties (e.g., an MOU, email, bylaws, etc.) and may serve as a binding document.
- An **informal partnership** occurs when the library and another entity have a non-binding agreement (e.g., verbal) or longstanding relationship where each party supports or assists the other but does not formalize the agreement in writing.

	Yes, formal	Yes, informal	Yes, both	No
Cultural arts organization, museum, or historical society				
Early childhood providers or centers (e.g., daycares, pre-schools)				
For-profit business (e.g., restaurant, bookstore, sports teams, etc.)				
Institution of higher education (including vocational schools and academic libraries)				
K-12 school or school district (including public, charter, and private schools)				
Local interest group (e.g., quilters guild, poetry club, etc.)				
Non-profit or community-based organization (e.g., charity, foundation, advocacy group, faith-based organization, Lion’s Club, Rotary, VFW, etc.)				

Other libraries or library systems				
Senior residences, centers, retirement homes, or other organizations for older adults				
State, local, county, or municipal government (e.g., employment office, health and human services department, police, tourism department, parks and recreation, etc.)				
Tribal organization (e.g., tribal government, tribal council, etc.)				
Other (please describe):				

Section 5: Facilities

For this section, we ask that you continue to 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. For these questions, please note that **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, has set hours, etc.).

9. How many of your current library locations were *built* or received a *major renovation* within the last three years (since 2022)?

If none, please enter 0.

Built	Count of locations
Major renovations	Count of locations

10. How would you describe the *overall* condition of your library facilities?

○ Very good ○ Good ○ Fair ○ Poor

Definitions

- *Very good*: The facilities are functional for their intended purpose and meet the library's needs without repair or replacement beyond routine maintenance. Facilities may be up-to-date with current technology, recently repaired, replaced, and/or renovated.
- *Good*: The facilities are functional for their intended purpose and meet the library's needs without repair or replacement beyond routine maintenance. The facilities may have cosmetic damage that does not significantly impact functionality.
- *Fair*: The facilities are currently functional for their intended purpose and at least somewhat meets the library's needs. The facilities may need some degree of repair or replacement beyond routine maintenance to better meet the library's needs or improve functionality.
- *Poor*: The facilities need repair or replacement beyond routine maintenance. They not functioning as expected and/or does not meet the library's needs.

Please share any specific comments you have about the condition of your library's facilities and the extent to which they meet community needs.

11. Please indicate whether your library has recently (since 2022) added or renovated any of the following types of spaces or are currently developing plans to do so in the future. If your library is in the midst of making any of these additions, choose the "Added or renovated" option.

	Added or renovated	Planned for future	N/A
Art or music studio			
Auditorium or large community event space			
Coworking spaces			
Dedicated programming space by age			
General use (for staff or the public)			
Maker space (including digital media production lab)			
Meeting or study rooms for public use			
Outdoor space			
Renovations/upgrades to physical plant (e.g., HVAC system, roof, foundation, etc.)			
Other recent or planned additions (please describe):			

12. Do any of your library locations currently have any of the following types of physical spaces that can accommodate in-person programs or events?

	Yes	No
Dedicated children's space(s)		
Dedicated teen space(s)		
Fixed maker space (e.g., digital media lab, FabLab, etc.)		
Large meeting space or auditorium (for more than 25 people)		
Mid-size meeting space (for approximately 10-25 people)		

Outdoor programming space		
Technology training space (e.g., classroom or computer lab)		
Other spaces for programming (please describe):		

13. Does your library have any of the following types of vehicles to offer mobile programming and outreach?

	Yes	No
Bookbike		
Bookmobile		
Cybermobile or mobile technology lab		
Mobile job center		
Other outreach vehicle		

14. Does your library have any of the following emergency designations within your community?

	Yes	No
Cooling/warming center in extreme temperatures		
Distribution center during a public health emergency		
Evacuation or reunification center		
Hub for community members or first responders during disaster recovery		
Other emergency designations (please describe):		

15. Green or Energy-Saving Initiatives: Please indicate whether your library currently has these green or energy-saving initiatives in place in at least one location, or whether your library has plans to add these in the future.

	In place currently	Planned for future	N/A
Electric vehicle charging stations			
Energy-efficient lighting systems (e.g., LEDs)			
High efficiency cooling			
High efficiency heating			
Net zero energy buildings			
Recycling (for staff or patrons)			
Solar panels			
Stormwater management			
Water conservation			
Wind generator			
Other onsite renewable energy (e.g., geothermal)			
Other green or energy-saving initiatives or certifications (please describe):			

Section 6: Final Thoughts

16. Describe how your community's needs have changed in the last three years (since 2022), and how the library has adjusted its services, programs, partnerships, and facilities to meet those changed needs.

17. How does your library evaluate the impact of its programs, services, partnerships, and facilities? Select all that apply.

- ❒ Community needs assessment (by patron surveys or community data analysis)
- ❒ Outcome evaluation (using Project Outcome surveys or other tools)
- ❒ Output measures (circulation, door count, program attendance, etc.)
- ❒ Patron satisfaction surveys (annual or service/program-specific)
- ❒ Other evaluation methods (please describe):

18. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! Please take a moment to describe any other issues or concerns related to how your library is addressing current and future community needs that were not reflected in this survey. In particular, please explain challenges or successes and trends you are watching for the future.

2025 Survey
Public Library Services for Strong Communities

Instructions

Log into your library's Benchmark account (librarybenchmark.org) to enter your responses for the 2022 Public Library Services for Strong Communities Survey. Please submit your responses by **Saturday, December 13, 2025**.

Click on "Surveys" in the menu at the top and select "2025 Services 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. It should take 30-45 minutes to complete this survey on behalf of your library.

We recommend using the **Survey Worksheet** (a PDF form) to collect responses before entering them in the online form. This form is provided for your convenience and contains FAQs about the survey.

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.).

Unless otherwise stated, your responses should reflect the **current situation** within your library at the point in time when you are completing this survey.

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

A glossary of terms can be found below.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact the project team at plabenchmark@ala.org.

Glossary

The terms below are organized by the section of the survey in which they appear.

Community Needs

Libraries are key partners in the work of supporting their communities, where they play a big role in helping provide knowledge, understanding, and resources in support of **community needs**. These needs are often identified or accessible in local community metrics, indices, and assessments, or even within the library's own data. Use this question to specify how your library is supporting your community in addressing these needs.

For example:

- If your library is an area of the country prone to natural disasters (wildfires, hurricanes, extreme temperatures), do you partner with community groups to offer disaster preparedness programs? Do you have generators for the library? These types of activities would fall under "Climate change and sustainability."
- Are your locations polling places? Do you have staff who notarize mail-in ballots? Have you provided space for listening sessions conducted by your local elected officials? All these activities would fall under "Civic engagement."

Services

Formal services:

- are those specifically planned, promoted, and offered by the library,
- may occur in the library or another facility,
- may or may not be provided by a member of the library staff, and
- are often delivered one-on-one.

Informal services:

- are those in which the library assists patrons as needed, including by appointment,
- are services not specifically planned or promoted by the library,
- may or may not be provided by a member of the library staff, and
- may be considered by your library as reference or referral transactions.

Services can be offered both formally and informally. For example, if the library has a promoted partnership with AARP to provide tax preparation services to seniors by appointment (a formal service), and library staff also help direct patrons to online sites to find the tax forms they need (an informal service).

Programs

Programs defined as events, or a series of events:

- are organized by the library or its partners,
- are open to the library's patrons and community members,

- may be held in-person or virtually, on- or off-site, and
- are offered to a group of patrons, not one-on-one or passively.

Summer Reading Program refers to any of the variety of names for the library program offered during the summer to any age group – i.e., Summer Learning Program, Summer Library Program, etc.

Children are defined as those ages 0 to 11.

Teens are defined as those ages 12 to 18.

Partnerships

A **partnership** is a mutually beneficial arrangement between the library and another entity where both parties assist or support one another and work together toward a shared goal. Partnerships are different from professional courtesy or cooperation, where the library assists another entity but does not receive assistance in return (or vice versa).

Examples of partnerships may include (but are not limited to) sponsoring activities or events together; working together jointly to develop and deliver programs or services; and sharing costs for staff, resources, or programming. Note that partnerships do not include grants received, contractors or vendors hired by the library, or in-kind donations.

Partnerships may be formal or informal:

- A **formal partnership** occurs when there is a written agreement or other documentation that outlines the expectations of both parties (e.g., an MOU, email, bylaws, etc.) and may serve as a binding document.
- An **informal partnership** occurs when the library and another entity have a non-binding agreement (e.g., verbal) or longstanding relationship where each party supports or assists the other but does not formalize the agreement in writing.

A library could have both formal and informal partnerships with a single entity. For example: the library may begin a formal partnership requiring an MOU with their local K-12 school district to offer library accounts to all students, while continuing the informal annual visits from summer school classes to their local branch for Summer Reading Program prize pick up.

Facilities

Location refers to your single main library or any of your library branches or outlets that are usually open to the public and provide services to the community (e.g., lends books, offers public access to computers, has set hours, etc.).

Major renovation generally refers to one-time major projects. It may or may not require extended closure of a location, or utilize only capital revenue to complete,

but generally refers to more than moving collections or refreshing furnishings and equipment.

Condition of facilities may be defined as:

- **Very good**: The facilities are functional for their intended purpose and meet the library's needs without repair or replacement beyond routine maintenance. Facilities may be up-to-date with current technology, recently repaired, replaced, and/or renovated.
- **Good**: The facilities are functional for their intended purpose and meet the library's needs without repair or replacement beyond routine maintenance. The facilities may have cosmetic damage that does not significantly impact functionality.
- **Fair**: The facilities are currently functional for their intended purpose and at least somewhat meets the library's needs. The facilities may need some degree of repair or replacement beyond routine maintenance to better meet the library's needs or improve functionality.
- **Poor**: The facilities need repair or replacement beyond routine maintenance. They not functioning as expected and/or does not meet the library's needs.

A **meeting space** is a room or area designated by your library for the purpose of holding meetings, whether in-person or virtual. Examples of meeting spaces include meeting rooms, study rooms/pods, alcoves, auditoriums, and conference rooms.

Final Thoughts

Evaluating Impact

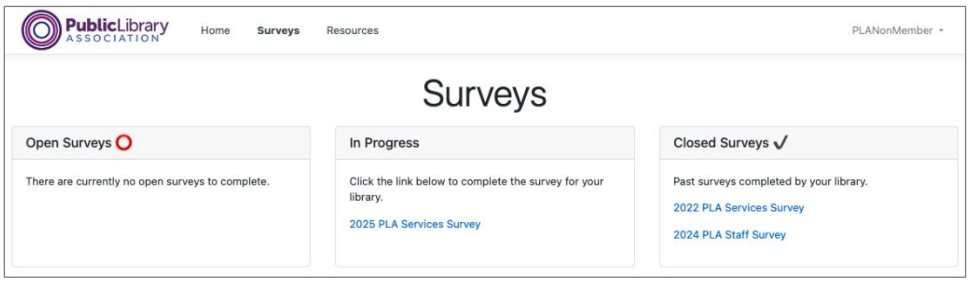
- A **Needs Assessment** is a systematic process for determining the gaps between current and desired conditions, where the discrepancy between the two must be measured to appropriately identify the need. The need can be a desire to improve current performance or to correct a deficiency.
- **Outcome Evaluation** refers to the quantitative or qualitative measures of change in an individual as a result of participating in a program or utilizing a service. *What good did the library do? How have patrons been changed as a result of their interaction with the library?*
- **Output measures** capture how much the library does, such as the number of programs offered and the number of people who attend them.
- **Satisfaction surveys** ask patrons about their level of satisfaction with the services or experiences provided.

Additional Questions?

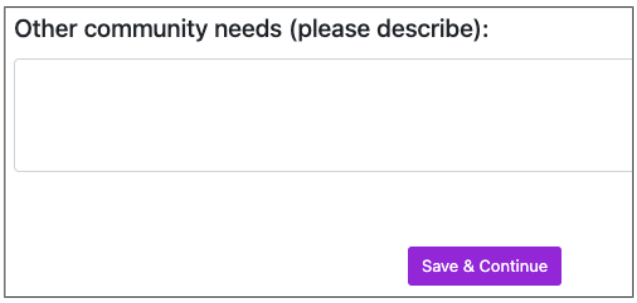
Need further clarification on a question or response option, please contact the project team at plabenchmark@ala.org.

Survey Navigation

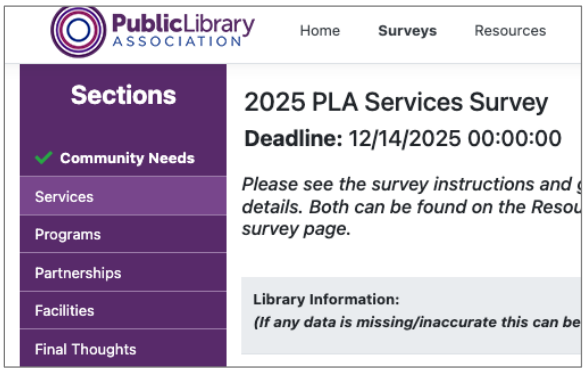
To start the 2025 PLA Services for Strong Communities Survey, log into Benchmark, and click on **Surveys** at the top. You will initially find the **2025 PLA Services Survey** under Open Surveys on the left. Once you have clicked on it, it will move to a new In Progress section.



Navigate between survey sections using the menu at the left of the screen. There is a **Save & Continue** button at the bottom of each section.



Once a section is completed, it will be marked with a **green** checkmark in the survey navigation pane.



There is a **Save and Submit** button at the bottom of the last section of the survey. You also have the option to **Export** your survey once completed.