



WINNEFOX LIBRARY SYSTEM

# Strategic Plan

2026-2030

## ABOUT THE WINNEFOX LIBRARY SYSTEM

The Winnefox Library System exists to strengthen libraries by sharing expertise, resources, and access to materials and services in support of each member library's mission. Winnefox serves thirty public libraries in Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Waushara and Winnebago counties with a population of over 325,000 residents. We also work with several contractual partners, providing accounting services to partner systems and support for the Northeast Wisconsin (NEWI) Continuing Education Partnership. The work of Winnefox exists in tandem with member libraries and partners, who provide access to all—fairly, freely, and without barriers.

The Winnefox Library System Board of Trustees provides fiscal oversight and policy setting and consists of twenty-three member representatives appointed by the County Boards of Supervisors from the five counties we serve.

## OUR PURPOSE FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

*We believe in the transformative power of libraries and are committed to supporting our members and partners. This commitment leads to strategic planning that centers their missions and results in lasting impact.*



We believe in libraries. We believe our members and partners play a vital role in strengthening their communities. Through their resources, welcoming spaces, and deep expertise, libraries lead and support literacy initiatives, foster genuine connections, and champion lifelong learning, freely and equitably for all.

We believe our purpose is to support each of our members and partners in achieving their critical missions. Our strategic planning process and the resulting plan are intended to make sure our libraries and partners are confident in our services and know that they are at the heart of our work.

There are a number of reasons an organization develops a strategic plan: to prioritize work, to understand stakeholder needs, and to have a framework in place for decision making. These motivations certainly apply to our system. But our goals extend further: we want the process, the plan, and the actions that follow to drive meaningful, lasting outcomes for our system, our staff, and our members.



Through this strategic work, we sincerely hope that:



Our members are better positioned for success -- well-supported, well-connected, and able to access the people and resources they need with ease and efficiency.



Our staff thrives in a stable, supportive environment that makes this plan not only aspirational but achievable.



Our system's reputation and financial health are strengthened and sustained well into the future.



Our partners receive services that reflect their needs and make their work easier and more impactful.



Our communities gain a deeper awareness of and appreciation for libraries and library systems, and recognize and support the essential role they play in our shared civic life.

# THE PROCESS

*We engaged key stakeholders - staff, members, partners, and our board - in a variety of ways to ensure our plan reflects the needs of those we serve.*

Winnefox Library System began the strategic planning process in March 2025. It was supported by a planning team made up of the system director, system staff, and a system board member, and facilitated by consultants from [WiLS](#).



The multi-phase process started by gathering data and information and engaging with the system's many key stakeholders, including our staff, members, partners, and board. Ensuring the plan reflects the needs of those we serve was a top priority. In addition, the data we collected will serve as a valuable benchmark, guiding our efforts and helping us assess progress in the years ahead.

Data gathering included:

- A stakeholder survey which received 51 responses from member library directors, staff, and trustees as well as system board members,
- A system staff Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) session,
- A member engagement session with 22 attendees,
- Contractual partner focus groups and an interview, and
- A questionnaire for Winnefox Library System Board members.

Consultants at WiLS provided the planning team with data sets, a data-focused webinar, and a planning worksheet designed to help identify emerging goals and measurable objectives from the collected information. These tools formed the foundation of the strategic plan, which the team refined during a framework development meeting and through subsequent rounds of editing.

# OUR PLAN: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## Organizational Clarity and Health

By clarifying our work, investing in the right staffing, encouraging professional growth, and maintaining sound financial stewardship, we will continue to create a stable foundation that allows us to meet member needs and explore new opportunities together.



Ensure staffing levels that support member and partner needs, sustain consistent service delivery, allow for thoughtful service expansion, and promote a healthy work-life balance for system staff.

Support and encourage system staff as they explore new opportunities, develop their skills and abilities, and perform their work.

Continue to prioritize financial stability and oversight to enable consideration of new approaches and responsive service to member needs and requests.

Collaborate intentionally to redefine and modernize the relationship between the Oshkosh Public Library and Winnefox Library System, aligning it with the evolving needs and priorities of both organizations.

## Enhancing Efficiency

We strive to make it easy for members and partners to get the help they need, when they need it, by improving access to tools, information, and expertise and by supporting smoother and more efficient collaboration for all.



Invest in the right tools, resources, and system experts to remove unnecessary barriers to efficiency.

Improve operational processes to ensure seamless access and intuitive use for members, system staff, and contractual partners.

Maintain and enhance cornerstone services and resources to best meet member and partner needs.

Increase member libraries' and contractual partners' understanding of system services and available resources.

## Fostering Strong Connections

At the Winnefox Library System we are committed to building and supporting healthy collaborations among member libraries, partners, and system staff. Through intentional relationship building, Winnefox will empower librarians to meet their local community needs.



Create and cultivate ways for interested groups to connect, share knowledge, champion ideas, and exchange resources.

Continue to prioritize personalized connections between system staff and member library directors and staff.

Strengthen relationships with key supporters and decision-makers of the system and its members, including library trustees, library boards, and county boards.

Provide member libraries with the tools and knowledge to connect and communicate with the communities they serve.

## Championing Libraries

Our system, members, and partners have powerful stories to tell about the impactful work they do. Winnefox will champion their voices and provide the tools and support they need to share their stories.



Serve as a centralized source of resources, expertise, and data to advocate for and promote libraries at statewide, county, and local levels.

Work to emphasize the role and value of library systems at the local, regional, and state levels, ensuring sustainable funding with downstream benefits for members.

# COMMUNICATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

*Our commitment extends beyond the written plan: we are dedicated to continually involving our staff, members, partners, and broader community in setting priorities, adapting our day-to-day and year-to-year work to meet evolving member needs, and consistently improving what we do*

In many ways, the planning process is just as important, if not more so, than the final strategic plan itself. Engaging our stakeholder community, analyzing key data, and shaping system-wide priorities that reflect both is not a one-time effort. Our commitment extends beyond the written plan: we are dedicated to continually involving our staff, members, partners, and broader community in setting priorities, adapting our day-to-day and year-to-year work to meet evolving member needs, and consistently improving what we do.

Winnefox Library System worked in collaboration with WiLS' data analyst to establish meaningful benchmarks to assess progress toward our goals. These benchmarks will be reviewed regularly, and results will be shared openly with the board, members, and other stakeholders to ensure transparency and foster shared accountability.

Recognizing that needs and conditions evolve over time, our system will implement an annual process, grounded in community involvement, to ensure our activities remain aligned with the priorities of our members and partners. We will regularly share updates on progress toward our strategic goals, using established opportunities for connection such as our annual member meeting, scheduled board meetings, and staff gatherings. These touchpoints will support open, two-way communication. We want our members and partners to understand what we're working on, why it matters, and how we're using data to evaluate our efforts and make informed adjustments as needed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This strategic planning process relied on our members and partners, our board and our staff. We are incredibly appreciative of those who completed surveys, attended an engagement session, filled out a questionnaire, or spent time with us in either a focus group or interviews. This plan reflects what you shared with us and it is stronger because of your input.

A special nod to the strategic planning team for their commitment to our system and the development of this plan.

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## PLANNING TEAM

Marcy Cannon, Business Manager

Andrew Prellwitz, Library System Trustee

Angela Schneider, Public Library Development Consultant

Clairellyn Sommersmith, Executive Director

And finally, we thank Melissa McLimans, Laura Damon-Moore, and Kim Kiesewetter from WiLS for their strategic planning services.