

Lied Scottsbluff Public Library

2024 – 2029 Community Needs Response Plan

Purpose Statement:

Community Needs Response Plans are essential for communicating an organization's goals and the strategies needed to achieve them. By developing and implementing the following plan, the Lied Scottsbluff Public Library will have a guiding document, reviewed annually, to enhance services to the community. This plan outlines the library's mission and vision, priority areas, and the goals and strategies directly addressing community needs. It will guide the director's allocation of financial resources and serve as a reference for all library staff. Additionally, it provides key stakeholders (including City administration, City Council, Library Board members, and the citizens of Scottsbluff) with a clear description of how the library will design services to meet community needs over the next five years.

The 2024–2029 Community Needs Response Plan was developed through a process involving feedback from the Library Board, Friends of the Library, City administration, and Library staff. The library also conducted a survey, both online and in print, receiving 282 responses. A focus group was also held to give additional feedback from the community. After reviewing all feedback and data and considering current budget allocations, the 2024–2025 Community Needs Response Plan was formulated.

Lied Scottsbluff Public Library Board Members:

Anne Radford – Board Chairperson
Beth Merrigan – Board Vice-Chairperson
Jessica Dutton – Board Member

Justin McMillen – Board Member
Vitoria Quezada – Board Member

Lied Scottsbluff Public Library Staff:

Richard Landreth, Library Director
Elaine Bleisch, Youth Services Librarian
Roberta Boyd, Technical Services Librarian
Liz Perez, Library Assistant
Hunter Walker, Library Technician
Brianne Mize, Library Technician

Michael Wright, Library Assistant
Jill Winchell, Library Assistant
Ethan Nelson, Library Assistant
Dawn Tallmon, Library Technician
Emily Meysenburg, Library Technician

Steering Committee for 2024-2029 Community Needs Response Plan:

Jessica Dutton, Board Member	Marg Dredla, Foundation Board Member
Ethan Nelson, Library Assistant	Sharaya Toof, Economic Development Director
Richard Landreth, Library Director	Elaine Bleisch, Youth Services Librarian

City of Scottsbluff Mission Statement:

"To be a model city that engages citizens to work with visitors, businesses and government entities to promote growth, sustainability and safety while creating an attractive, diverse and healthy community."

Lied Scottsbluff Public Library Mission Statement:

Lied Scottsbluff Public Library facilitates life-long learning and equitable access to information, materials, and resources.

Lied Scottsbluff Public Library Vision Statement:

Lied Scottsbluff Public Library provides enriching experiences and welcoming spaces, while promoting reading opportunities for all ages.

Community Profile:

The City of Scottsbluff is located in Scotts Bluff County in western Nebraska. As of 2024, the population of Scottsbluff was estimated to be 14,436. The racial make-up of Scottsbluff is 64% white, non-Hispanic. 29.9% of the population is Hispanic of any race, 0.5% African American, 3.8% American Indian, 0.7% Asian and 7% other race. Over 15.9% speak a language other than English and over 30% of those speak English less than "very well."

Based on the American Community Survey provided by the US Census Bureau, 88.5% of the population has attained a high school degree or higher. Approximately 27.6% of the population ages 25 and up have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. The graduation rate of Scottsbluff students is 86% in 2024.

Median household income rests at \$33,426, which is well below both state (\$38,073) and national (\$37,585) averages. 26.1% of Scottsbluff's population lives below the poverty level.

Assessment of Community Needs:

A community conversation was conducted to establish the needs within the community and the services the library could possibly provide. The following themes emerged as the top needs for the City of Scottsbluff:

Housing/economy: The need for affordable housing, particularly for young families. It was noted that there are constant pleas for housing on social media. Wrapped into this same issue is the perception of a stagnant economy where wages are not keeping pace with the cost of housing and goods/services.

Hospital/medical care: The need for quality medical services came up several times throughout the conversation. This need includes having specialists, lab services and mental health services located in Scottsbluff.

Recreational/social activities: There is a perception of a lack of social and recreational activities available. These types of services and amenities make a town more attractive to people looking to relocate. By having free, or low cost, services such as the library and zoo, full scale downtown shopping district, and a mall full of retail business, those that currently live in Scottsbluff will stay and shop in Scottsbluff.

Social services: Quality social services for homeless and poverty stricken individuals such as a homeless shelter and food bank. There are currently limited options for unhoused people in Scottsbluff.

Library Analysis:

Library Strengths	Opportunities (External)
• Youth programming	• Connect with Spanish speaking population
• Some well established programs	• Serve neurodivergent population
• Building location	• More passive and/or recorded programming
• Makerspace	• Makerspace
• Large # patron usage (8.85/capita vs average of 6.79/capita compared to similar size libraries)	• Greater collaboration with business community
• Dedicated staff work well together	• Collaboration with schools/educators
• Staff works well with public	• Serve child care providers/homeschool
• Staff mostly patron oriented	• College students
• Volunteer pool	• Outreach as a whole
• Strong Foundation	• Take advantage of staff development
• Strong Friends of the Library	
• Great community sponsors	
• Reputation	
• Place where people want to come	
Library Weaknesses (Internal)	Challenges
• High staff turnover (38% less than 1 year)	• Budget not keeping pace with economy
• Staff inexperience (12.5% with other library experience)	• Little cohesive support from City
• Low pay (\$1.41-\$2.51 lower than similar entry level position)	• Can be a societal "hot button" topic
• Constant staff training (basics - related to staff turnover)	• Building maintenance
• Short one full time staff position (Similar size libraries have 1 to 6 more FTE)	• Ability to adapt to changing tech/social needs
• Little staff time for collaboration	• Need more space for programs (makerspace/storytime)
• No/limited written procedures	• Short one full time staff position
• Inconsistency in applying policies/procedures	• Marketing in a fractured media environment
• Makerspace is flopping around	
• Communication needs streamlined	
• Collection development cycle is inconsistent	
• Outdated technology	
• Marketing the library	
• Programming gaps in some areas	
• The building itself needs help	

Specific Goals:

Throughout this process, there were three overarching areas that stood out: Consistency in applying procedures/policies to provide outstanding customer service, addressing marketing challenges to get the library message out and filling in/bolstering programming for patrons.

Goal 1: Create written procedures for ALL recurring activities in order to provide consistent customer service to patrons.

1. Staff will identify areas in which written procedures/practices need to be provided by June 30, 2025.
2. By August 31, 2025 these areas will be ranked by importance to determine the order in which these procedures are written. Procedures with most immediate need will be written first.
3. There will be a monthly check in thereafter to ensure continued advancement towards accomplishment of this goal.

(Note: With the high staff turnover rate, having written procedures will naturally lead to the creation of a formal on-boarding program for new staff. This program could easily be established within the time constraints of this plan.)

Goal 2: Provide an organized marketing plan to effectively get the library message out to the community to increase average program attendance by 10% over a 5 year period.

1. The library already has a very clear vision, so the first order of business is for staff to identify the audiences, channels and what services to promote by April 2025.
2. A comprehensive strategy for getting the library message out will be implemented by September 2025.
3. Beginning January 2026 staff will conduct quarterly check ins to ensure the strategy is working and the message is getting out. Make adjustments to the plan as needed thereafter.

Goal 3: Currently we do a phenomenal job programming for one patron demographic (preschool through 2nd grade) with gaps in services to other demographic areas. The goal is to implement new programming, both in house and outreach, within one year and evaluate its impact by comparing demographic data.

1. By March 2025 staff will compile a list of possible patron demographics in which to provide programming.
2. Targeted programming will begin by September 2025.

3. Beginning January 2026 staff will evaluate this goal quarterly to adjust needs as indicated by success of program attendance.

Evaluation of Plan

- Built into each goal/objectives, is a monthly or quarterly check in during a staff meeting. This ensures that all staff are working towards a satisfactory completion of the goal.
- The director, technical services librarian and youth services librarian will reflect on progress made monthly. They will report back to staff and celebrate progress made during staff meetings.
- Additionally, the director will include updates to the library board no less than quarterly.

Summary of Previous Accomplishments (2018-2023):

Since 2018, the library has had multiple directors/interim directors. This summary is from the perspective of the latest director.

Previous goal: The Library will empower the community's youth through engagement, education and enlightenment opportunities from birth through graduation.

Summary: The library continued to provide preschool storytime, summer reading program and programs for elementary/teenage children throughout this time.

Previous goal: The Library will create opportunities for individuals to access, interact and innovate using new technologies.

Summary: COVID disrupted this goal (MakerHub) and we have been working to get the programming running smoothly.

Previous goal: The Library will actively and consistently market its services and events to all.

Summary: The media available to the library has changed drastically since 2018. This is a fitting goal to continue for this next cycle.

The following goals were abandoned:

The Library will continue to expand and diversify its educational, cultural and enlightenment classes and workshops for adults, teens and children.

The library will cultivate a print and digital collection to better serve the educational, cultural and enlightenment needs of the community.

The Library will foster an organizational culture of education and innovation through professional staff development.