

STRATEGIC PLAN

ACUSHNET PUBLIC LIBRARY
FY2027 - FY2032

SUBMITTED BY LIBRARY DIRECTOR, ELISABETH BOTELHO
LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES, ALAN MINER, CHAIR
OCTOBER 23, 2026



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Approval of Board of Library Trustees & Trustee Listing.

Library Board of Trustees:

Alan Miner, Chair

Jeri Howland, Secretary

Jennifer Alves

Nancy Francis

Eileen Wilmarth-Guerette

John Roy

Strategic Plan was approved in the Board of Trustees meeting held on October 23, 2026

Mission and Vision Statement.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Acushnet Public Library is to inspire lifelong learning and strengthen the entire community through its materials, programs, and services in a welcoming space that is open to all.

Vision Statement

The Acushnet Public Library will strive to be the cultural, educational, technological and social hub of the Acushnet community.

Who We Are.

The Acushnet Public Library, formerly known as the Russell Memorial Library opened in 1930. It is located in the town of Acushnet, which lies along the Acushnet River and covers 19 square miles. Acushnet was officially incorporated as a town in 1860. The name “Acushnet” comes from the Wampanoag Cushnea, which means “peaceful resting place near water.” On its borders lie the city of New Bedford and the towns of Fairhaven, Freetown, Mattapoisett, and Rochester. The Acushnet Public Library moved to the former site of the Community Center at 232 Middle Road in 2015.

The Acushnet Public Library is a member of the SAILS Library Network. Through SAILS, library patrons can access the collections of over 70 libraries. In addition to the integrated library system software, SAILS provides cataloging services, technical support, and continuing education. The SAILS system allows users to search the catalog, reserve materials, and renew items from home. The Library is also a member of the Massachusetts Library System (MLS). MLS provides interlibrary delivery, interlibrary loan services, online databases, staff training, summer reading materials, and professional consultants at no charge to the library.

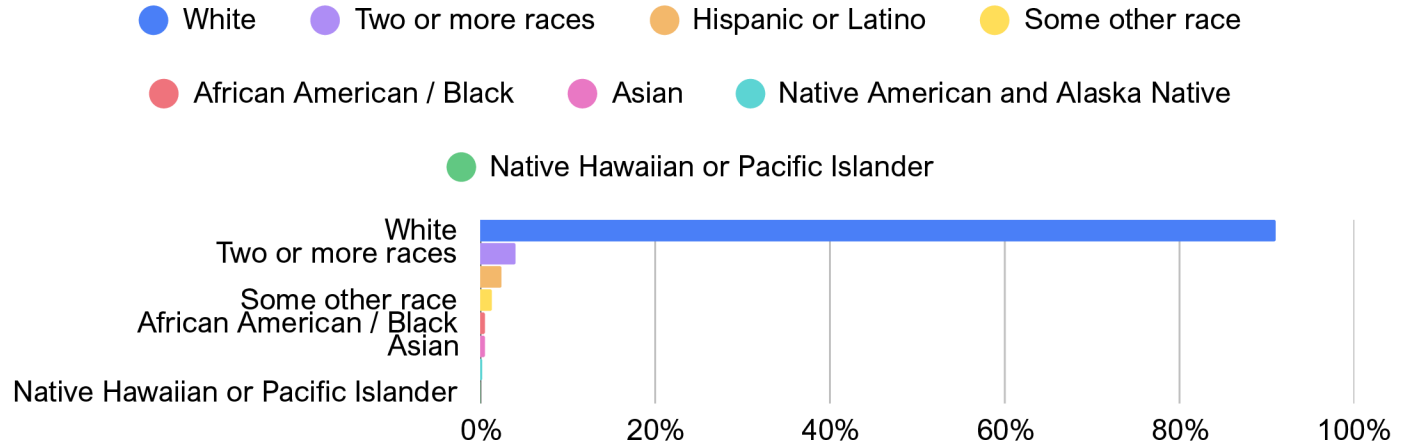
The Acushnet Public Library had 3,930 registered borrowers in FY26, and 2,887 of those borrowers resided in Acushnet. In FY26, the library housed 28,858 physical items, including books, DVDs, audio, and non-print materials. The library offers monthly programming, such as storytimes, reader’s groups, history clubs, drop-in crafts, and LEGO Club. Groups like the Friends of the Acushnet Public Library and local cultural councils, along with state aid and the library gift fund, fund special events such as the Summer Reading Program and Summer Concert Series. The Community Room also serves as a meeting space for nonprofit groups in the community. The library continues to inspire lifelong learning and strengthen the entire community through its materials, programs, and services, in a welcoming space that is open to all.

Brief Community Description.



According to the 2020 Decennial Census, the town had a population of **10,559**.

Community Demographics

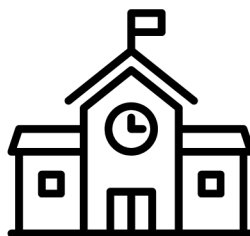


In the 2023 American Community Survey, **22.5%** of Acushnet's population are **65** years and older and the median age is **46.1** years, while **19.2%** are under 18 years old.

Median household income is **\$91,050** and **5.1%** live below poverty level



Comparisons between the 2023 and 2021 American Community Surveys show an increase in disability. Mobility difficulty (**6.2% versus 4.9%**) and vision difficulty (**1.8% versus 1%**) are rising.



The town has **two public schools**. The Acushnet Elementary School serves preschool through fifth grade, while the Albert F. Ford Middle School serves sixth through eighth grade. There is no high school in town. District 2025 - 2026 enrollment was **924**.

Methodology.

The methodology utilized for the strategic plan leveraged the experience and expertise of the Massachusetts Library System (MLS) and included three phases: planning, implementation, and data analysis.

Planning

Planning for the Acushnet Public Library's strategic plan kicked off on September 16, 2025 with the library director attending a Zoom session titled "Welcome to Introduction to Strategic Planning for Libraries" hosted by the MLS. Based on instruction from this session, she created an initial timeline and reached out to Katherine Adelberg, an MLS library consultant. Katherine reviewed the timeline and provided feedback, which was then incorporated into the draft.

Katherine and Elisabeth discussed the phases of the strategic plan via phone on December 8th, 2025. Next steps included:

- Creating social media posts to request community engagement.
- Emailing Town of Acushnet department heads to request participation in the strategic plan process.
- Creating a survey to accompany the Town Census (see Addendum 2).
- Creating a survey that could be accessed in the library or at home (online and paper versions) (see Addendum 2).
- Completing an environmental scan (with associated data) to help inform library utilization trends and functions within Acushnet, specifically. This included:
 - Acushnet's race and ethnicity breakdown
 - Age distribution across the town
 - Health data (levels of disability, including areas impacting the library such as mobility and vision difficulty)
 - Education trends in town (school enrollment numbers)
 - Town history
 - Library history
 - Library operations (programs and levels of attendance, patron counts, checkout statistics, number of home deliveries, computer usage, community room utilization)

Implementation

Elisabeth began posting the requests for engagement via the library Facebook and Instagram pages, as well as in-house flyers. Based on the results of this outreach, an eight-member committee was created, balancing community members, town leadership, and library staff.

Methodology.

Members included:

Victoria Alfaro, Acushnet Town Planner
Briana Chang, Friend of the Acushnet Public Library
Chief Thomas Farland, Acushnet Fire Chief
Kristin Flynn, Acushnet Finance Committee
Jeri Howland, Library Trustee
Jonathan Kastin, Library Technician II
Ivy Krull, Library Technician I
Alan Miner, Library Trustee, Chair

Elisabeth coordinated with the group to schedule an in-person meeting at the library. Materials prepared and distributed in advance of the meeting included a survey from MLS, gathering initial thoughts from all committee members and describing the in-person meeting to come.

The Strategic Planning Committee meeting was held at the library on February 4, 2026 and attended by all committee members.

After a presentation of the town demographics, library utilization, and pertinent historical elements, Elisabeth and Katherine facilitated a focus group-style meeting, utilizing the MLS-tested strategic plan question set and a grounded theoretical approach. This means that as questions vetted by MLS were asked and answered, further probes were initiated by the facilitators to ensure clarity and depth of information (see Addendum 1 for question layout and format).

In addition, Elisabeth created a Feedback Door on the sliding doors into the children's room so that patrons of all ages could easily contribute their thoughts on the library. Staff decorated the door with text bubbles, and patrons of all ages wrote what they "love about the library" on hearts and what they "wish for at the library" on genie lamps. This Feedback Door remained up for two months (see Addendum 3).

Data Analysis

Responses from the Town Census forms were manually added by library staff (verbatim) to the same Google Form utilized by other online participants. This ensured one repository of feedback from all survey respondents.

Notes were compiled of the responses on the Feedback Door and summarized into themes.

Assessment of User Needs.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Strategic Planning Committee met on February 4, 2026 with MLS consultant Katherine. Multiple exercises were conducted. Part one: the meeting started off with a visioning exercise in which participants described the library in one word, their dream library in one word, and their dream community. Part two: participants completed a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) exercise*. Part three: the committee was asked what their wish is for the library. After the meeting, Katherine provided Elisabeth with a document containing the meeting results and discussed it with her in a Zoom meeting on March 10, 2026.

*Addendum 1

SURVEY

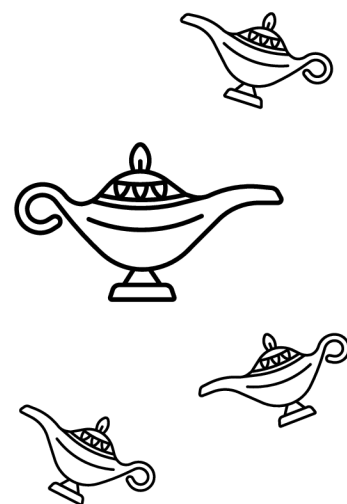
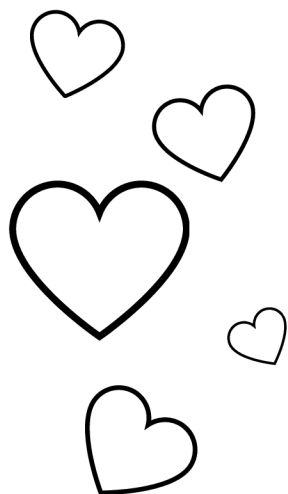
We distributed two types of surveys to the public. The first survey was mailed to Acushnet residents in the town's census. Surveys were mailed out in late December 2025 with the assistance of the town clerk's office. We received 905 surveys, which were subsequently mailed back to the town and then manually entered into a Google Form by library staff for statistical purposes. A second survey was developed in digital format and also made available in print within the library. Patrons could respond via the Google Form or on paper. A total of 49 responses were received from this survey. All data from both surveys were systematically organized in an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed to inform the strategic plan.

*Addendum 2

FEEDBACK DOOR

In-house, we created a Feedback Door on the doors leading into the Children's Room. Any age participant could write their wish and loves for the library. One door had "What would you wish for at the library?" Participants wrote their responses on a genie lamp. The other door said, "What do you love at the library?" and responses were written on a heart. We received 194 responses and entered them into an Excel sheet under two categories: love and wishes for the library. Responses were evaluated for strengths and weaknesses of the library.

*Addendum 3



Acushnet Public Library

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GOAL 1: **The library will continue to build awareness of the library within the community, town departments, schools, and other partners to strengthen Acushnet.**

OBJECTIVES:

- The library will seek partnerships with other town departments.
- The library will strengthen its bond with the school district by being seen as an extension of continuing education outside the school.
- The library will explore expanding its outreach by attending community events.
- The library will maintain its current presence on social media, in local newspapers, and in in-house flyers, while exploring other marketing channels.

GOAL 2: **The library will offer relevant programming that reinforces its mission statement to inspire lifelong learning in adults, teens, tweens, and children.**

OBJECTIVES:

- The library will continue offering staff-led programming for all ages.
- The library will explore new programming for adults, teens, tweens, and children by keeping up with trends in library programming.
- Explore collaborating with other local libraries and town departments on programming.

Acushnet Public Library

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GOAL 3: The library will continue improvements to its collections and services to benefit the community by making the library a place to build literacy skills, and knowledge, with access to technology services.

OBJECTIVES:

- Increase circulation of physical items by 1% annually.
- Explore shorter wait times for ebooks and eaudio.
- Create and implement a weeding schedule for physical collections.
- Ensure that library technology remains up to date and relevant.

GOAL 4: The library will remain a welcoming space for all by continually improving its facilities to meet the needs of the community as a public space.

OBJECTIVES:

- Create and maintain a facilities schedule to ensure the building remains in excellent condition.
- Explore means to make the physical space more accessible to more people.
- Hours will be reviewed.
- Materials will be even more accessible outside of the library building, through homebound delivery and during library outreach events.

Addendum 1.

S.O.A.R. Results

Strategic Planning Committee

Part Two of Meeting Held on February 4, 2026

Strengths

- Bringing the community together.
- Community impact.
- High-quality programs for children and adults.
- Welcoming environment.
- Friendly staff.
- Outdoor space.
- Strong collections.
- Always free.

Opportunities

- Expanding partnerships with Senior Center, high schools, town departments, etc.
- Building on success of outdoor space.
- Expanding programming, increase community classes, library of things.
- More community awareness of what the library offers.

Aspirations

- Continued stable funding and staffing.
- Increasing library use and engagement.
- Adapting collections and services to meet community needs.
- Fostering a community-wide love of reading and learning.
- Exploring transportation and bookmobile/pop-up library options.

Results

- Even more town residents are using the library.
- All age groups are represented in the library.
- Library parking lot is consistently full.
- More visits, usage, events, partnerships.
- Library is embedded in town infrastructure and the community.

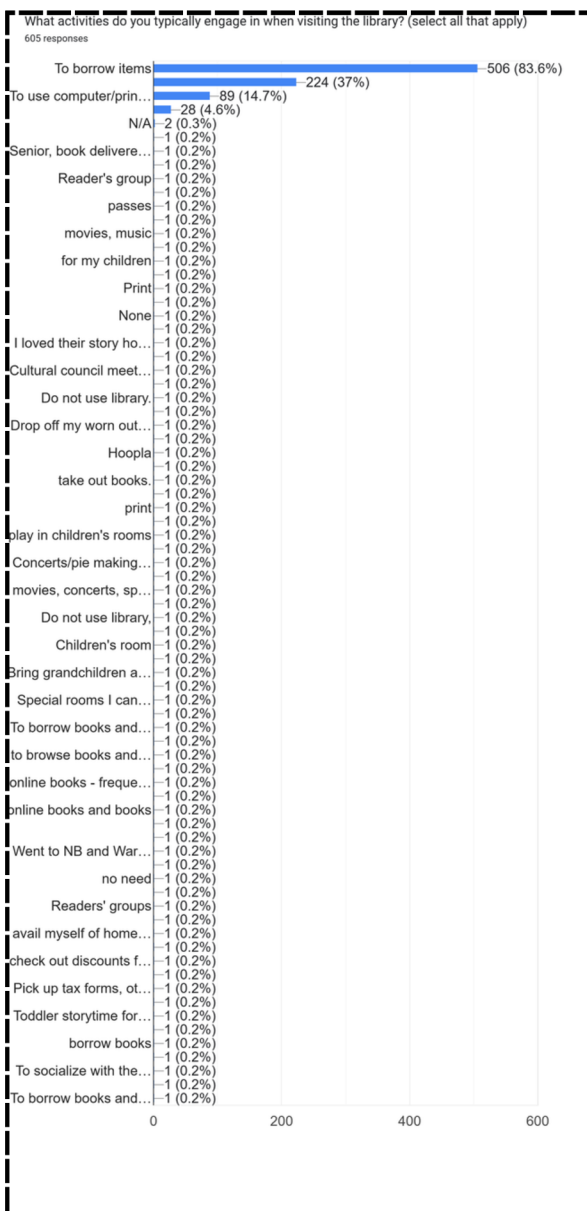
Sample of survey added in with town census in January 2026. Plus, a small sample of survey results.

ACUSHNET PUBLIC LIBRARY (A BRIEF STRATEGIC PLAN SURVEY)
 (Help us plan for the library's future!) Fill out the survey online here: forms.gle/dHuRCDysTesVer99

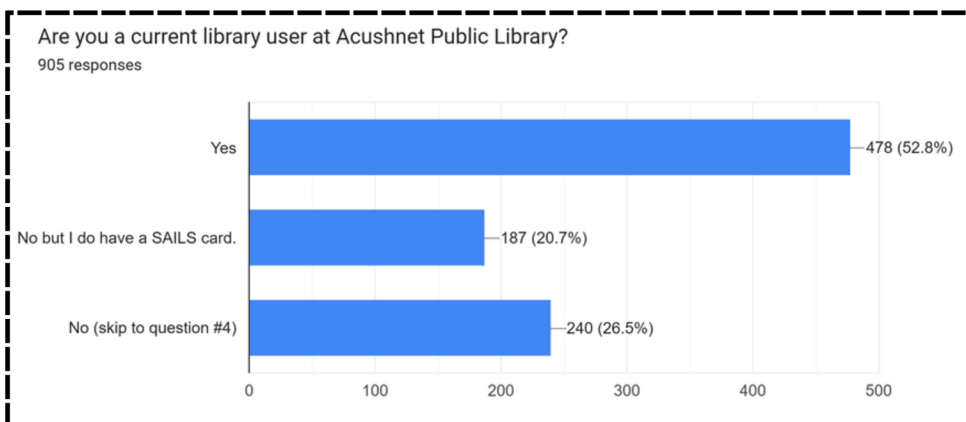
- Are you a current library user at Acushnet Public Library?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No, but I do have a SAILS library card.
 - ☐ No (skip to question #4.)
- What activities do you typically engage in when visiting the library? (select all that apply)
 - ☐ To borrow items
 - ☐ Attend events and programs
 - ☐ Use the computer/printer/fax
 - ☐ To use a group study room
 - ☐ Other: _____
- Do you use our digital resources? If so, which ones?
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Overdrive/Libby
 - ☐ Hoopla
- Why are you not a library user?

Any additional comments? What can we improve? What do you like about the library? etc....

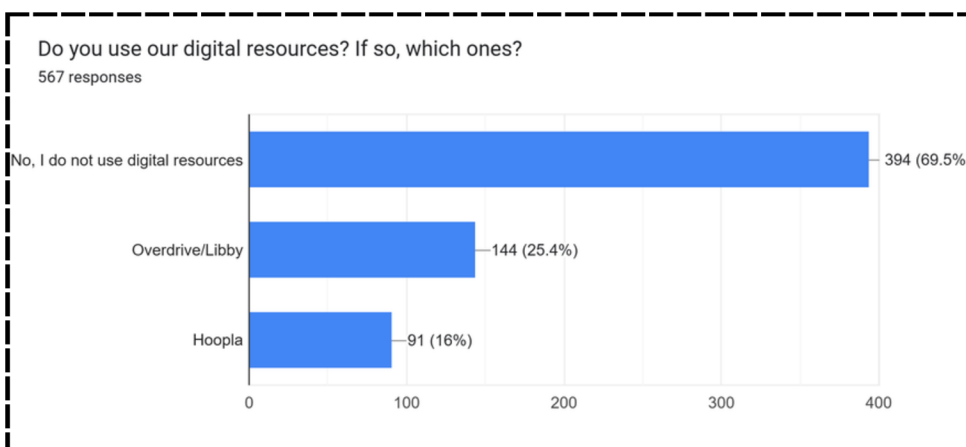
Question 2.



Question 1.



Question 3.



Addendum 3.

SMALL SAMPLE OF RESULTS FROM FEEDBACK DOOR LOVE

I love the library keeps up with new books in series they have.
I love the size of the library. It's the perfect size!
Love the library. Always can get books I want.
I love Thursday Night Reader's Group!
The great staff!
The library has hours that make it very accessible! Staff also so friendly!
The ambiance friendly, bright, warm (space and staff). All the activities and programs it provides.
All the books and series. I love!
Free access to books!
I love visiting all of the libraries. Fun free place to take my daughter. Love the SAILS app toO!
I enjoy the bookclubs and meeting new people and discussing many subjects. Learning.
I love to pick out books and have fun!
Graphic novel selection
To get books, coloring pages, voting every month, and the librarians.
All the staff are so very helpful and friendly.
Love the SAILS app and all staff everywhere I go!
I love the staff - they are very welcoming.
I love quiet and helpful ideas to make my life better.
I like books on functional medicine and nutrition.
I love the Acushnet Library: The Thursday AM Bookclub. The outdoor summer concerts. The author talks. The library staff.
Book Club! Summer concert, attractive atmosphere, welcoming.
I love, love, love the library. The selections and the ladies and gent our always there for me. Helpful and easy to talk to. Reading is my passion.
Everything. The best people.
Friendly people / staff, community puzzles and cookbooks.
Staff. Book Club, DVD's and Books.

Addendum 3.

SMALL SAMPLE OF RESULTS FROM FEEDBACK DOOR WISH

I wish that there was a big unicorn and it could read with me.
I wish for more board games.
I wish for more LEGO books.
I wish for a water dispenser here at the library.
Video games.
I wish the library had more teen graphic novels.
More awesome books.
I want to read 500 books.
More toys.
More arts and crafts.
LEGO friends at the LEGO.
I wish for the library to make LEGO day everyday.
I wish for there to be more books and there to be reading corner for kids.
More adult craft events.
A comfy seating area for relaxing and reading.
More space.
Board games.
More Harry Potter.
I wish there was 27 books.
More books.
I wish for a bigger graphic novel section.
Local history.
Kermit the Frog doll.
A bouncy house.
I wish that there was stuffys.