

2024-2028

STRATEGIC PLAN: REPORT

Norfolk County
Public Library
Delhi • Port Dover • Port Rowan • Simcoe • Waterford

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Land Acknowledgement

“We acknowledge the many nations who call this land home. We acknowledge the indigenous and non-indigenous brothers and sisters who walked this land in the past and to those who walk it today, this the traditional and treaty lands of the Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-nah-bay), Neutral, and Haudenosaunee (Ho-deh-no-show-nee) peoples.



Message from Board Chair, Kimberly Earls

As Chair of the Norfolk County Public Library Board,

I am so proud to be part of the team that developed the new strategic plan for the library. The effort was collaborative, and we sought input from staff, public and other county organizations. The process to develop the plan was extensive and we received so much valuable input. Thank you for all your comments and ideas put forth.

The Norfolk County Library is an anchor to our communities; a place of trust, fun and inspiration. I think the strategic plan reflects that spot we hold in our communities and creates a strong vision for the future of the Library where everyone feels welcomed and inspired. We are very fortunate at the Norfolk County Public Library to have fantastic programming that encourages connections and learning; we also have great technology and innovative spaces, and I think this strategic plan builds on the foundation of innovation and community connection that we already have.

The strategic plan will guide our programming, and decisions at the library so that we can continue to be a place that reflects the needs and vision of residents and visitors now and into the future.

I sincerely hope that you come out to one, or all, of our Norfolk County Public Library branches and explore the wonderful resources that were developed with you in mind!

Sincerely,

Kimberly Earls

Chair, Norfolk County Public Library Board

Message from CEO, Julie Kent



The 2024-2028 Strategic Plan will guide Norfolk County Public Library for five years. As the world advances, the use of the Norfolk County Public Library continues to soar. The challenges brought forth by the pandemic presented the library with a unique set of obstacles. However, we survived and thrived through unwavering determination, demonstrating remarkable adaptability and resilience. The experience has solidified our relevance and value in the eyes of the community, reassuring you of our ability to overcome any future challenges. We achieved this by introducing innovative programs and services that have garnered immense enthusiasm from the community and library users. During those challenging years, the obstacles shared by all have sparked a renaissance in utilizing our collections, particularly our digital and electronic resources.

This strategic plan is a testament to our unwavering commitment to meeting the community's current needs and expectations. Consultations with the community, our dedicated staff, and the library board of trustees informed its development. All initiatives developed shall align with our strategic priorities, ensuring that we continue to serve you effectively.

The library is constantly evolving, consistently responding to our community's social, technological, and economic challenges. We are profoundly grateful to have five Branches where members can, at no charge, sit and enjoy a good book, learn something new, explore, study, attend programs, use technology, meet people, and so much more. Few places in the County can match the unique ambiance of a public library. We aim to create a space that becomes your oasis.

We appreciate your input in helping us create this plan. Your support and commitment to the library have helped us understand what the community envisions for its public library. We're excited to bring this vision to life, building community and inspiring change together.

Sincerely,

Julie Kent, Hons. BA., MLIS
Chief Executive Officer

Development of Strategic Plan

Methods

The 2024-2028 Strategic Plan will guide Norfolk County Public Library for five years. As the world advances, the use of the Norfolk County Public Library continues to soar. The challenges brought forth by the pandemic presented the library with a unique set of obstacles. However, we survived and thrived through unwavering determination, demonstrating remarkable adaptability and resilience. The experience has solidified our relevance and value in the eyes of the community, reassuring you of our ability to overcome any future challenges. We achieved this by introducing innovative programs and services that have garnered immense enthusiasm from the community and library users. During those challenging years, the obstacles shared by all have sparked a renaissance in utilizing our collections, particularly our digital and electronic resources.

This strategic plan is a testament to our unwavering commitment to meeting the community's current needs and expectations. Consultations with the community, our dedicated staff, and the library board of trustees informed its development. All initiatives developed shall align with our strategic priorities, ensuring that we continue to serve you effectively and in a way that resonates with your needs.

The library is constantly evolving, consistently responding to our community's social, technological, and economic challenges. We are profoundly grateful to have five Branches where library visitors and users can, at no charge, sit and enjoy a good book, learn something new, explore, study, attend programs, use technology, meet people, and so much more. Few places in the County can match the unique ambiance of a public library. We aim to create a space that becomes your oasis.

We are thrilled to bring the community's vision to life. Your input, support, and commitment to the library have been invaluable in understanding what the community envisions for its public library. We are excited to work together to build community and inspire change.

Process

Where we are:

- Community surveys
- Participant evaluations
- Staff input

Where we want to be:

- Mission
- Vision
- Values

How we get there:

- Strategic directives
- Action items
- Evaluation



Committee

The Strategic Planning Committee was established by resolution of Norfolk County Public Library Board. Members are staff and board members. The Committee's Term of Reference are also established by board resolution (See Appendix D).

Timeline

The new strategic plan began in late fall 2022 and continued into early spring of 2023. Staff provided input during an all-staff training day in November 2023. Community surveying in December 2023. Ongoing program evaluation input informed the plan from responses collected throughout 2023. The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed a draft plan in February 2024.

Summary of Community Survey

Community input is one of the three input components that inform the Strategic Plan. The Library continuously listens to its community and provides services that meet its needs.

For this strategic plan, community input occurred via a community survey. The survey was made available online and in print available at each Branch. The community survey received 211 responses, and those valuable insights were extrapolated to inform strategic planning and operational improvements for the Norfolk County Public Library.

Common themes include:

- Continue to provide a welcoming, comfortable, and accessible library spaces
- Develop and deliver more programs for teens and older adults
- Improve communication about library offerings
- Enhance digital resources and increase access to technology

These findings will guide the library's efforts to better serve its community in the coming years.

See Appendix B for detailed information about the community survey, including methodology.

Library Usage

Of the 211 respondents, 92% indicated that they have a Norfolk County Public Library card. Over 66% indicated that nothing prevents them from using the library.

What prevents people from accessing the library:

- The library has limited operating hours, 19%
- The library doesn't have what they want, 5%
- Wait time for material is too long, 6%
- What I want is often checked out, 6%
- Lack of transportation, 2%

What are the community's favourite things:

- It's free, 80%
- It's open to everyone, 66%
- The wide variety of books and other things to borrow, 65%
- Convenient locations, 65%
- Help is available, 57%

Library's Strengths

- Respondents praised the library's collection,
- The variety of programs for children
- Overwhelmingly positive and supportive comments about friendly and helpful staff.
- Mention of technology and services offered by the library.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Respondents suggested different methods of communication for improved audience reach when publicizing available programs, events, and resources.
- Requests for more programs, especially for different age groups such as teens and older adults.
- A desire for a wider selection of print books and physical collection items was expressed.

Summary of Program Participant Input

Evaluating all iterations of library programs and events is mandatory to drive continuous improvement, ensure accountability, make evidence-based decisions, meet participant's and the community's needs and expectations, and demonstrate the impact of Library programs. It is a crucial practice that informs the Library to develop and deliver high-quality services and enhance the overall effectiveness of the library. Evaluating programs and events ensures the library complies with library policies, OP-06 Adult Programming Policy, OP-11 Young Adult Services Policy, and OP-10 Childrens Services Policy. See Appendix C for questions and methodology.

From July 2023 – February 2024, 143 participants of Library programs were offered the opportunity to provide feedback.

How did you hear about this Library Program?

- Social Media 20%
- Friends and family 10%
- When at Library, posters and staff 18 %
- Website 8%
- Newsletter 5%
- Sign out front 6%

What did you like?

- Storytime 10%
- Crafts 13%
- Interactive 5%
- Child-centered 15%
- Music and songs 19%
- Fun 11%

What are some topics or ideas for future programs you would like to see?

- Suggestions were varied from baking for kids, more technology-based programs, Minecraft and video game challenges, more themed programs and events, beginner knitting and crocheting classes, music-based programming, and escape rooms.

Norfolk County Public Library: Strategic Plan 2024-2028

Vision

Connecting people, information, and ideas that enrich lives and foster healthy communities where hope takes root and wonder soars.

Mission

The Library is a welcoming inclusive community place that inspires meaningful connections.

Values

The Library promotes . . .

Adaptability | Creativity | Curiosity | Diversity | Equity

Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority 1: Expand our Reach

- Empower staff to engage with library users and partners, creating positive relationships and connections.
- Encourage community use and increase awareness of the Library as a space for enrichment and development.
- Increase partnerships with organizations, businesses, education institutions.

Strategic Priority 2: Adapt and Grow with the Community

- Ensure facilities, collections, and resources are accessible.
- Strengthen the focus on programming that is reflective of and supports a diverse range of users across the Norfolk community.
- Initiate a mechanism for community input, feedback and two-way communication.

Strategic Priority 3: Workplace Culture

- Celebrate a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community.
- Provide professional development opportunities to foster positive working relationships which support mental health and wellbeing.
- Leverage employee engagement and enrich the employee experience to directly contribute to the library's success.

Strategic Priority 4: Promote Digital Discovery

- Be responsive to rapidly changing technology and to the unique needs of the Norfolk County community.
- Engage and support the community with technology services.
- Align services and supports with the priorities of Norfolk County Strategic Plan and local businesses where possible and appropriate.

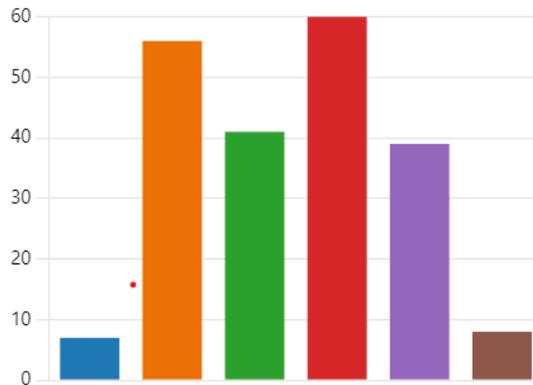
Appendix A: Community Survey

The survey opened in late November 2024 closing on December 15th. Both an online and in print version allowed for ease of use and submission. To encourage participation, the incentivized survey offered respondents the opportunity to enter a draw for an iPad. An online randomizing tool selected the winner.

Survey Questions and Responses

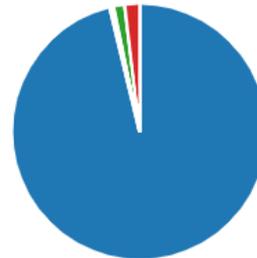
1) How old are you?

17-25 years	7
26-40 years	56
41-55 years	41
56-70 years	60
71-80 years	39
81+ years	8



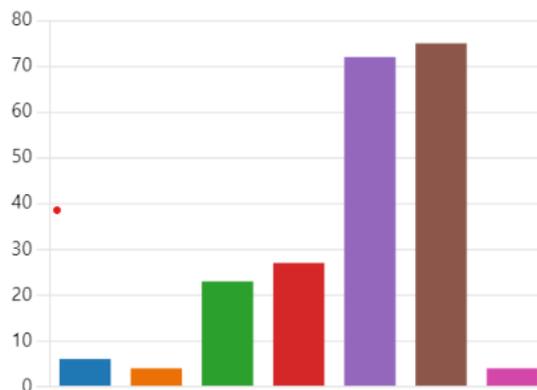
2) What is your Norfolk County residency status?

Permanent	203
Seasonal	1
Visitor	3
Other	4



3) How long have you lived in Norfolk County?

Less than a year	6
1 – 2 years	4
3 – 5 years	23
6-10 years	27
11+ years	72
I've always lived in the County	75
Prefer not to answer	4



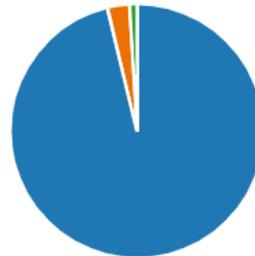
4) If you are a parent or caregiver, please indicate the age(s) of your child(ren). Please check all that apply.

● 0-3 years	28
● 4-6 years	22
● 6-11 years	28
● 12-17 years	26



5) Do you have Internet access at home?

● Yes	203
● No	6
● Unreliable	2
● I don't know	0



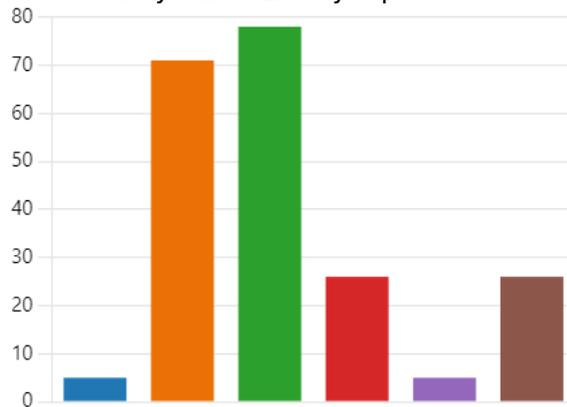
6) Do you have a Norfolk County Public Library Card?

● Yes	195
● No	13
● Unsure	3

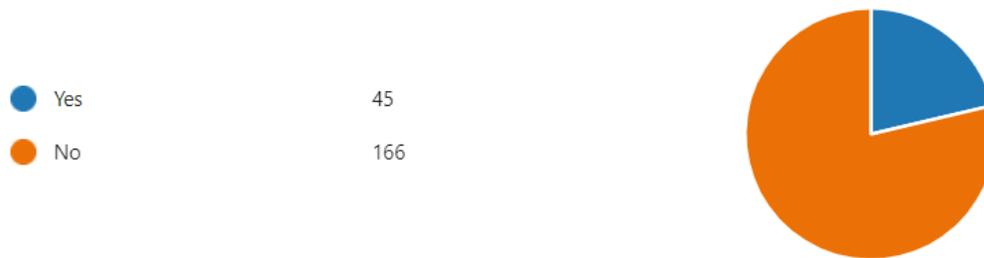


7) On average, how often do you visit the Norfolk County Public Library in person?

● Daily	5
● Weekly	71
● Monthly	78
● Yearly	26
● Never	5
● Other	26



8) Do you visit other public libraries (outside of Norfolk County)?



9) If you answered “yes” to the above question, please tell us why you visit public libraries that are located outside of Norfolk County.

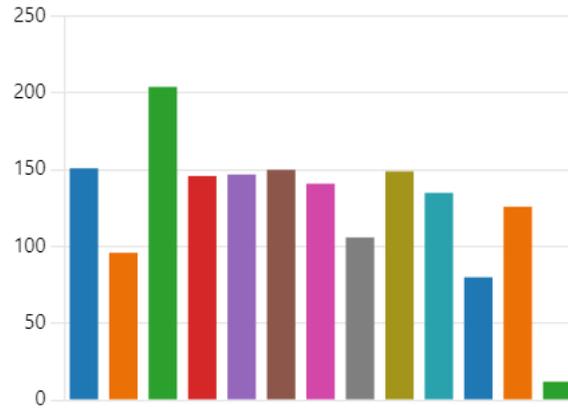
- Where our cottage is.
- We enjoy visiting different libraries. Each library is unique and should be a reflection of their local communities.
- I used to work for Oxford County Library and still have a membership card with the OCL.
- Woodstock
- Haldimand Public Libraries
- I work in Brantford and sometimes use their space for a quiet area on Mondays when the Delhi branch is closed.
- I work in Brantford and sometimes use their space for a quiet area on Mondays when the Delhi branch is closed.

10) Whether you’ve ever been to a Public Library or not, what do you think a Public Library is? Please check all that apply.

- Free books, programming, community hub
- books, friendliness, helpfulness, a smile
- Borrowing books, community hub, information on community events and resources, safe & quiet space, place to learn & grow.
- Programs, inclusive, friendly staff.
- Cornerstone of local communities.
- books, toys, kids programming, access to services like audio books, wifi, printing.
- Community space to borrow books and media. Hosts programs and events that encourage arts, reading, and other media.
- Community-based resource
- Social good, culture, dignity, intellectual freedom, literature, discovery, curiosity, support

11) A Public Library is a place . . .

● to study	151
● to meet people and socialize	96
● to get books	204
● to use the internet and comput...	146
● to go with your kids	147
● to find and check information	150
● to read	141
● to be creative	106
● to learn things	149
● that has programs for all ages	135
● where you need to be quiet	80
● where you can get help	126
● Other	12



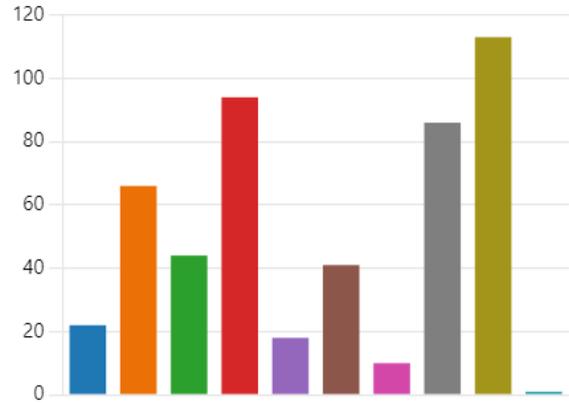
12) What is your general impression of Norfolk County Public Library?

● Positive	176
● Somewhat positive	28
● Somewhat negative	6
● Negative	1



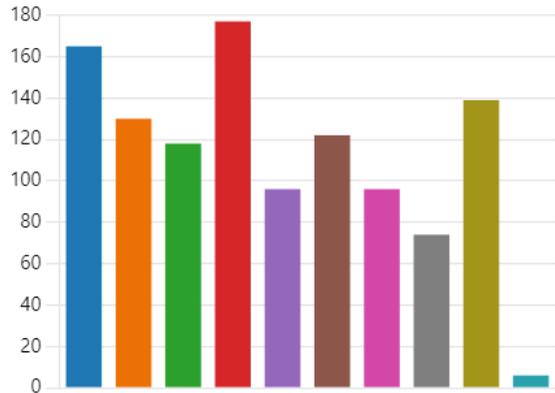
13) Who do you think benefits most from Norfolk County Public Library? (Select your top three answers.)

● Babies and toddlers	22
● Students	66
● Adults	44
● Young children	94
● Newcomers and new Canadians	18
● Parents	41
● Youth and teens	10
● Retired people, seniors	86
● Everyone	113
● Other	1



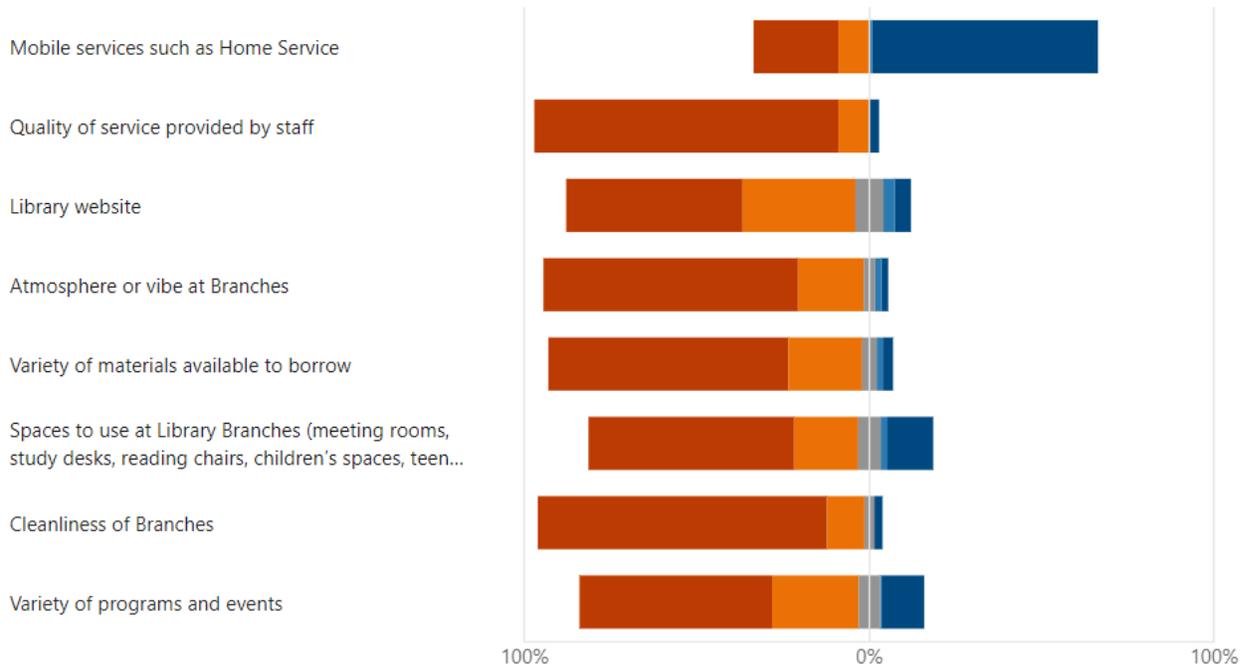
14) How should visiting Norfolk County Public Library make you feel? (Please check all that apply.)

● Relaxed	165
● Happy	130
● Inspired	118
● Comfortable	177
● Curious	96
● Respected	122
● Grateful	96
● Excited	74
● Part of the community	139
● Other	6



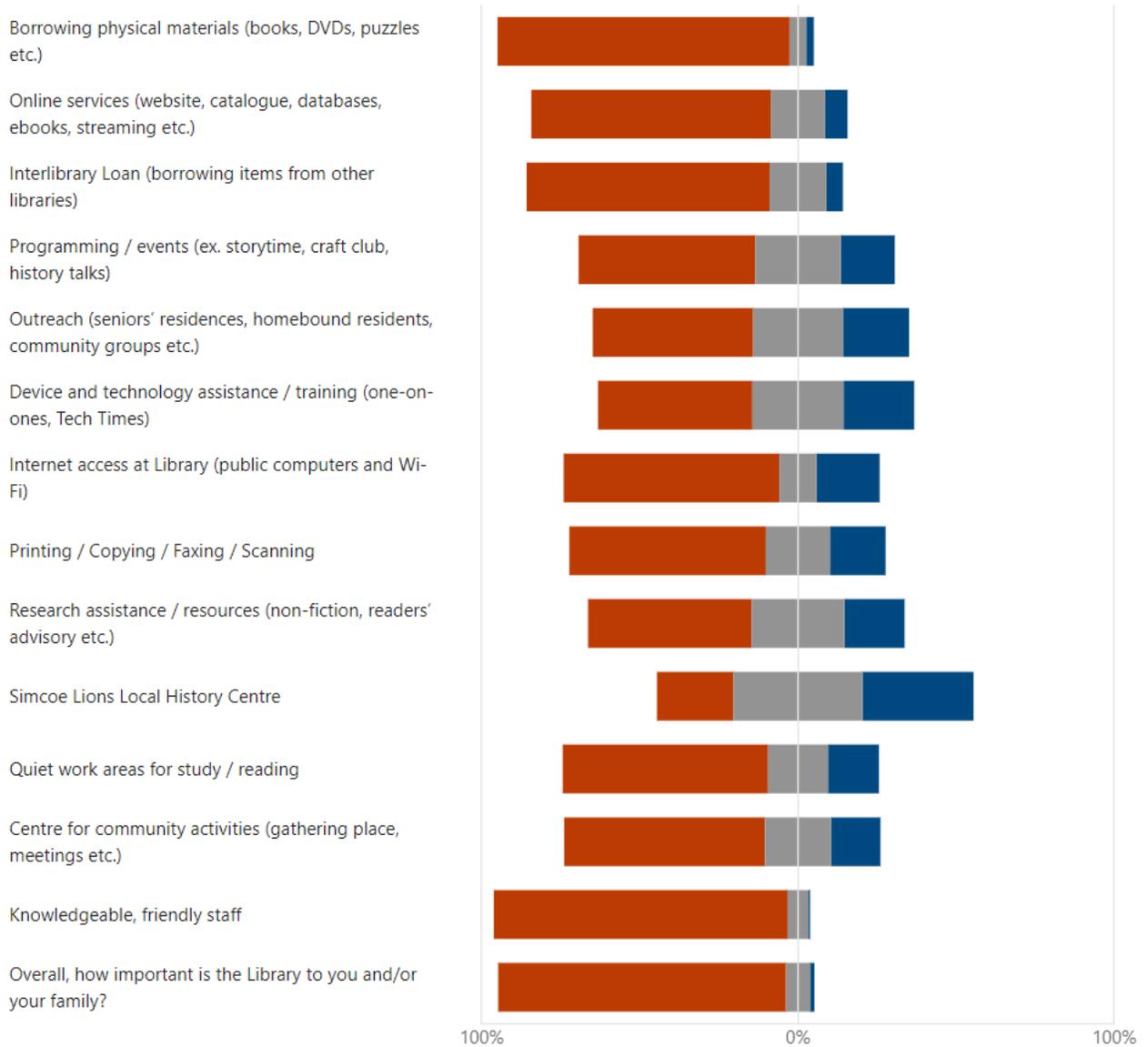
15) How would you rate the following?

■ Good
 ■ Somewhat good
 ■ Somewhat poor
 ■ Poor
 ■ Does not apply to me



16) How important are each of the following Norfolk County Public Library services to you?

■ Important ■ Undecided ■ Not Important



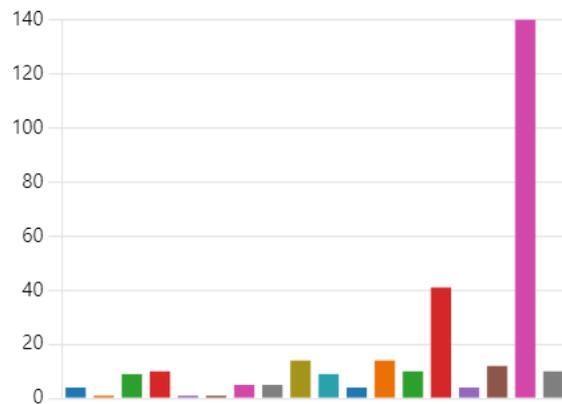
17) When you use Norfolk County Public Library, how often do you ask for assistance?

Always	9
Usually	33
Sometimes	117
Rarely	48
Never	4



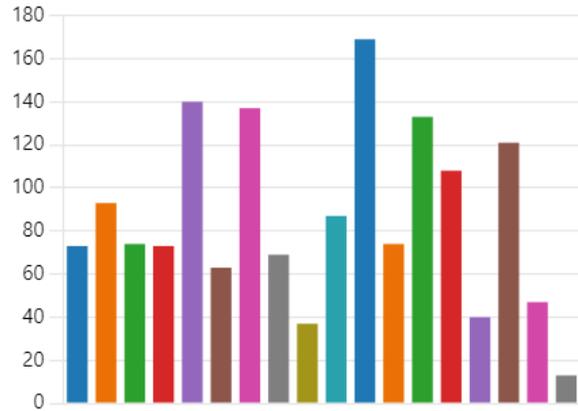
18) What prevents you from accessing Norfolk County Public Library? Please check all that apply.

Lost book or card	4
Physical barriers	1
I only use NCPL digital and onli...	9
Think I own fines	10
I'm not interested	1
I don't feel welcome	1
Lack of transportation	5
The Library is too noisy	5
Wait time for requested materia...	14
Safety concerns	9
Library items are handled by to...	4
What I want is often checked out	14
I buy materials	10
Library has limited operating ho...	41
Using the Library is too complic...	4
It doesn't have what I want	12
Nothing prevents me because I ...	140
Other	10



19) What are your favourite things about Norfolk County Public Library? (Please check all that apply.)

● I can learn new things	73
● It's a place where I can spend ti...	93
● Interesting events and programs	74
● Online services and resources	73
● It's open to everyone	140
● I can find my own quiet space	63
● The wide variety of books and o...	137
● I can find something new or sur...	69
● It's full of life	37
● It makes me feel like I'm part of ...	87
● It's free	169
● It's quiet	74
● Convenient location(s)	133
● It's an organization I can trust	108
● I can be around other people	40
● Help is available	121
● Interacting with others	47
● Other	13



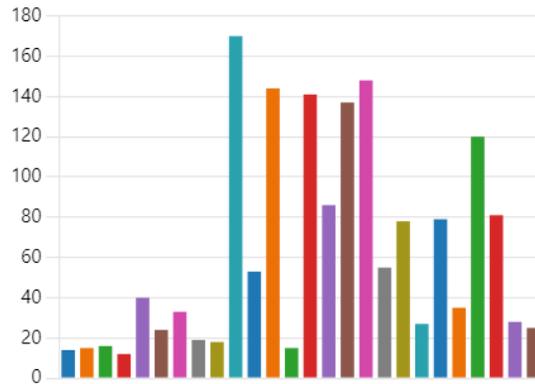
20) Did you know that the collections and programs at Norfolk County Public Library are free?

● Yes	195
● No	16



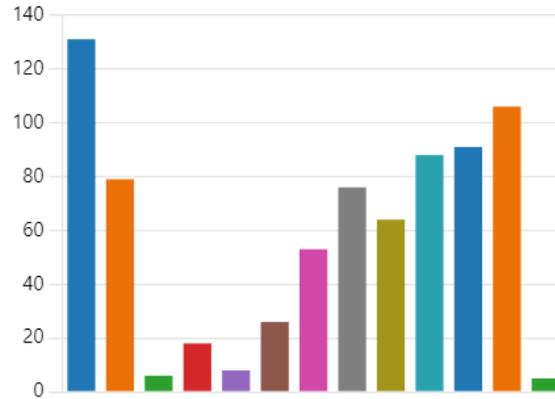
21) Listed below are some current Norfolk County Public Library resources, services, and reasons people use the Library. Which of these do you already know about. (Please check all that apply.)

- Borrow a spotting scope for bir... 14
- Borrow a VHS digitization kit 15
- Borrow a cassette to MP3 Conv... 16
- Borrow a human anatomy mode... 12
- Borrow a sewing machine 40
- Borrow a Code-a-Pillar 24
- Borrow a Snap Circuit kit 33
- Borrow an Ozobot or a Solar Ro... 19
- Borrow a Makey Makey kit (elec... 18
- Bring children to events and lea... 170
- Borrow access pass to Provincial... 53
- Rent Library meeting rooms 144
- Borrow a stamp kit 15
- Borrow print books and books o... 141
- Borrow book club kits 86
- Borrow eBooks and eAudioBook... 137
- Attend events and learning pro... 148
- Use the mobile printing service 55
- Suggest books the Library could... 78
- Watch Library video on the NCP... 27
- Use and learn to use creative to... 79
- Use the sound & recording stud... 35
- Borrow movies and TCV shows (... 120
- Borrow music (CDs or through t... 81
- Use the resources in the Simcoe... 28
- Cognition Kits with games, puzz... 25



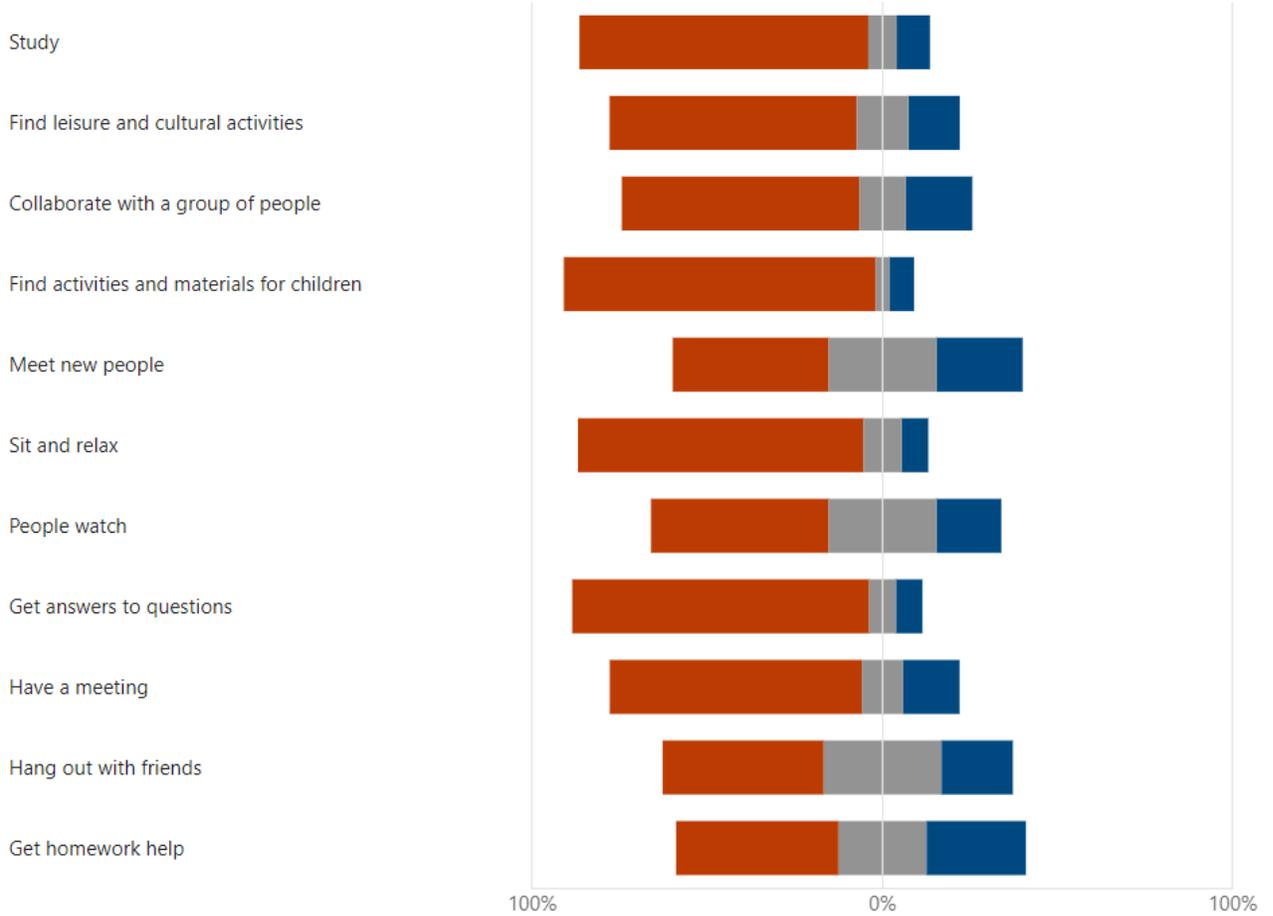
22) Where have you heard about Norfolk County Public Library's resources, programs, and services?

Library website	131
Facebook	79
X (previously known as Twitter)	6
Instagram	18
YouTube	8
Radio	26
Newspaper	53
Library Program Calendar	76
Library eNewsletter	64
Signs, or posters	88
Word of mouth	91
Library staff	106
Other	5



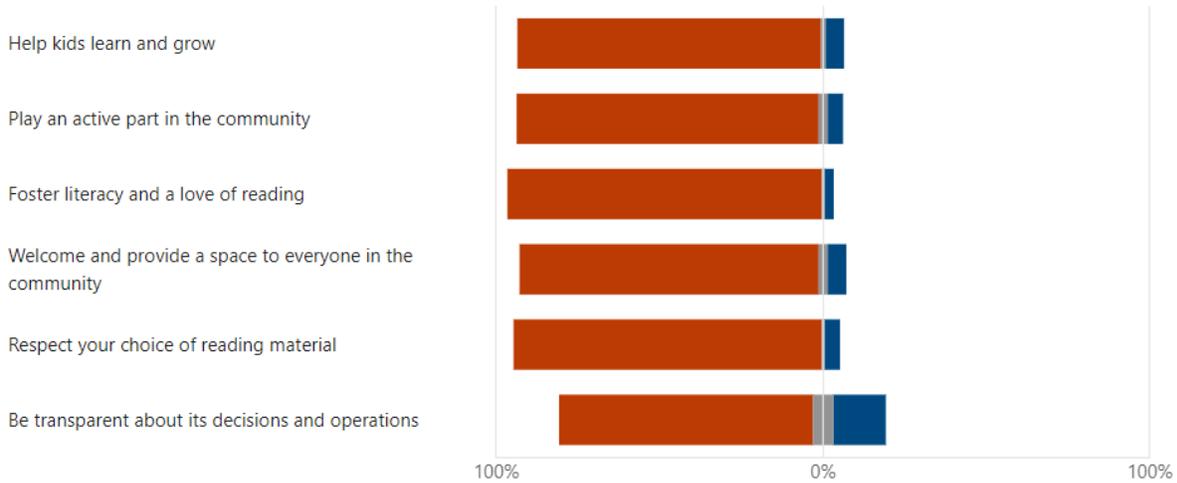
23) Please check all that apply. Would you consider Norfolk County Public Library as a place to...

■ Yes ■ No ■ I don't know



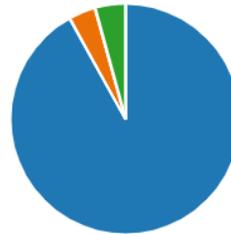
24) Do you trust Norfolk County Public Library to...

■ Yes ■ No ■ I don't know



25) Do you recommend Norfolk County Public Library to friends and family?

● Yes 194
 ● No 8
 ● I don't know 9



26) What do you like and value most about Norfolk County Public Library?

- Free books, programming, community hub
- books, friendliness, helpfulness, a smile
- Borrowing books, community hub, information on community events and resources, safe & quiet space, place to learn & grow.
- Programs, inclusive, friendly staff.
- Cornerstone of local communities.
- books, toys, kids programming, access to services like audio books, wifi, printing.
- Community space to borrow books and media. Hosts programs and events that encourage arts, reading, and other media.
- Community-based resource
- Social good, culture, dignity, intellectual freedom, literature, discovery, curiosity, support

27) How could Norfolk County Public Library be improved to better benefit you, your family, or the community?

- More programs for youth and young adults. Current programs are geared mainly to small children and seniors.
- Continue to be current with materials and programs

- I can't think of anything. NCPL is a first-rate service. Please benefit the people of Norfolk by continuing to do what you do, and please, please resist all funding and programming cuts. We need you.
- Host more community events or information sessions. I think once people get in the door, a lot of the services speak for themselves, and the environment is very warm and welcoming - that's not something that can be promoted as effectively as if someone were to experience it. Getting people to come in and see the space is going to really open their minds to the many ways the library can help.
- Have more after school programming to kids? - Loved when they had the cursive writing and typing classes that could be signed up for. Could do other things like that with minimal cost and available in local branches (i.e. knitting for kids, etc.).
- Have more ads for what's available. Have longer hours.

28) If you have any other comments about Norfolk County Public Library, please include them here:

Appendix B: Programming Feedback from Participants

Evaluating programming is required by policy. The evaluation form is made available to all participants and/or parents and caregivers for all iterations of each program. There is signage available with a QR code for easy online access to the form.

Questions:

- 1) Date of Program
- 2) Branch
- 3) Name of Program
- 4) How did you hear about this Library program?
- 5) What did you like?
- 6) What are some topics or ideas for future programs you would like to see?

Appendix C: Staff Input

On November 21, 2023, staff participated in an interactive, hands-on session, Cover Story. The "on the cover" workshop is a creative and engaging way to gather input from staff members. In this workshop, staff work in small groups and create cover pages, headlines, hashtags, image content, sidebars, and the bottom line for a hypothetical scenario or situation.

During the workshop, staff members were not just participants, but key contributors to the future of our library. They were encouraged to imagine themselves as contributors to the cover story or to use the cover story framework to explore what a future cover story might look like and say about the library. Staff collaborated in a spirit of teamwork, brainstorming ideas, writing content, and imagining the future library. The goal was to stimulate innovative thinking, foster collaboration, and gather diverse perspectives from the staff, emphasizing their value and the importance of teamwork in our organization.

Using an interactive workshop format, staff participated in a playful and non-intimidating environment that encouraged staff members to think outside the box and share their insights. It

was an effective way to tap into the team's collective imagination and generate creative ideas for the organization. Staff provided input on the future of the Library with ideas and suggestions including:

- Connecting to a diverse audience
- Offering services, programs, and outreach that are more accessible, diverse, and inclusive
- Develop spaces dedicated to Youth
- Bridging gaps between generations
- Fostering more use of technology and digital resources
- Makerspace printing press
- Augmented realism and AVR

Appendix D: Terms of Reference, Strategic Planning Committee

Norfolk County Public Library Board Committee: Strategic Planning	
TERMS OF REFERENCE	
1.0 Authority	<p>The Strategic Planning Committee is established by the NCPL Board to determine the library’s future directions.</p> <p>The NCPL Board acts in accordance with the Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, c P.44.</p>
2.0 Role and Purpose	This Committee is responsible for the development and drafting of a Strategic Plan every four years and for the quarterly reviews of the plan with revisions as necessary.
3.0 Composition	Committee members include the NCPL CEO and 4-6 library board trustees as determined by the Library Board.
4.0 Mandate	The Strategic Planning Committee is responsible for the development of the Strategic Plan in consultation with the CEO and for monitoring its implementation.
5.0 Scope of Work	This plan will include recommendations for Mission, Vision, and Value statements; investigation of needs including space and capital needs; defining measurable goals and objectives; and assigning roles and functions within the plan.
6.0 Meetings	Committee meetings will be held quarterly with supplemental meetings as required.
7.0 Staff Support	The CEO or designate prepares all necessary materials and distributes them to members as required. The Strategic Planning Committee Chair will provide supplemental materials as deemed necessary.
8.0 Reports	The Committee reports to the NCPL Board.
9.0 Amendment, Modification, Variation	The terms of reference may be amended, varied, or modified in writing after consultation and agreement by the committee members and ratified by the NCPL Board.