



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Phase Two Consultation Results and Draft Priority Areas

**Date:** October 8, 2024

**To:** Strategic Planning Steering Committee

**From:** City Librarian

#### SUMMARY

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The purpose of this report is to present the results of the phase two consultations and the recommended draft priority areas for the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan. The development of the recommended draft priority areas has been informed by various inputs, including internal and external consultations, the environmental scan, expert forums, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, scenario planning, and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee strategy session.

The recommended four draft priority areas for the Strategic Plan 2025-2029 are:

1. Democracy, civic engagement and social connections
2. Shared community spaces
3. Learning and growth
4. Awareness and access

The plan will also include a focus on staff within each priority. Toronto Public Library (TPL) will invest in staff to deliver the services our community needs by providing them with the necessary tools, learning and collaboration opportunities to achieve the Library's organizational priorities.

Draft outcomes have been developed for each of the priority areas to describe the specific impact TPL will have over the next five years.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The City Librarian recommends that the Strategic Planning Steering Committee:

1. receive the phase two consultation results as outlined in Attachment 1;
2. receive the draft priority areas and outcomes for the Strategic Plan 2025-2029 as outlined in the report; and
3. recommend the draft priority areas and outcomes to the Toronto Public Library Board for approval, and ask the Board to direct staff to prepare a draft of the Strategic Plan with strategic objectives and key actions.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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This report has no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN**

The consultation results and the draft priority areas will enable TPL to develop an impactful Strategic Plan. This plan will help TPL to continue to fulfill its legislated mandate of providing a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the unique needs of the community.

## EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The focus areas and the consultation plan for the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan have been developed considering TPL's Equity Statement and the City's Equity Lens. This ensures ongoing integration of access and the removal of barriers for equity-deserving groups in the City of Toronto. Accessibility and engagement of equity-deserving groups are key components of the consultation and engagement process for the development of the Strategic Plan, ensuring that the broadest range of voices have been heard through the process, and that the Strategic Plan reflects the perspectives and needs of equity-deserving groups. The approach strives to achieve equitable outcomes for all.

## DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on December 4, 2023, the Board approved [Creating a New Strategic Plan: 2025-2029](#), including the terms of reference for the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the Roadmap for development of the next Strategic Plan.

At its meeting on January 11, 2024, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee considered the [Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Focus Areas and Consultation Plan report](#) and recommended that the Board receive the areas of focus for the environmental scan for information and approve the consultation plan and implementation.

At its meeting on January 29, 2024, the Board received the areas of focus for the environmental scan as outlined in the [Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Focus Areas and Consultation Plan report](#) and approved the consultation plan and implementation.

At its meeting on April 15, 2024, the [Strategic Planning Steering Committee received the Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Summary and Internal Consultation Phase One Results](#) report.

At its meeting on May 3, 2024, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee considered the [Strategic Plan: External Consultation Phase One Results and Phase Two Consultation Plan report](#) and recommended that the Board receive the first phase of external consultation results for information and approve the

focus areas for the second consultation phase resulting from the May 3, 2024 strategy session for implementation.

At its meeting on May 27, 2024, the Board received the environmental scan summary and the internal consultation phase one results as outlined in the [report presented at the April 15, 2024 Steering Committee meeting](#) and the external consultation phase one results as outlined in the [report presented at the May 3, 2024 Steering Committee meeting](#), and approved the focus areas for the second consultation phase resulting from the [May 3, 2024 Strategic Planning Steering Committee strategy session](#) for implementation.

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

TPL's vision is to be recognized as the world's leading library by informing and inspiring Toronto and its communities, making Torontonians more resilient, more knowledgeable, more connected and more successful. As the city continues to grow and evolve, the Library plays an increasingly important role in providing the vital ingredients that Torontonians need to thrive.

To advance its vision, the Library is developing a new five-year strategic plan that will guide and shape its work. The plan will be informed by a comprehensive environmental scan, ongoing engagement and consultation with staff, the public, and stakeholders.

The Strategic Plan describes the value and outcomes that the Library will deliver to Toronto's residents and communities. It is developed based on the following strategic planning principles:

1. Grounded in TPL's vision, mission, values, Statements and brand;
2. Responsive to City and community needs;
3. Integrated with the community;
4. Outcome-focused, actionable and drives continuous improvement.

In December 2023, the TPL Board approved the Roadmap for developing the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan. On May 27, 2024, the [Toronto Public Library Board approved the focus areas for the phase two consultations](#) that resulted from the [May 3, 2024 Strategic Planning Steering Committee strategy session](#) for the

new Strategic Plan. The second consultation phase took place from June to August 2024 and helped refine and validate the key focus areas that were identified through the first phase of consultation.

## COMMENTS

### Phase Two Consultation Results

Eight focus areas were identified for further exploration in the second consultation phase based on the research, environmental scan and input from the first phase of consultations. The focus areas are listed below.

1. Awareness and availability of library services
2. Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development
3. Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy
4. Environmental sustainability
5. Reading, learning and growth
6. Social connections and mental well-being
7. Technology and digital inclusion
8. Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study and do work

The purpose of the second consultation phase was to validate and prioritize the focus areas in order to identify the priorities for the Strategic Plan, and to identify potential action items to execute on the plan. The target audiences for the second phase included all staff, underrepresented audiences from the first phase of public consultations, community partners, industry experts, and stakeholders. This phase took place from June to August 2024. Key activities included:

- A survey and idea exchange with staff and the public using a digital engagement platform called ThoughtExchange;
- Local staff engagement sessions;
- Focus groups with targeted and underrepresented audiences, e.g. non-library users, equity-deserving groups, vulnerable persons;
- Expert forums on Digital Inclusion and Social Connectedness;
- Feedback sessions with Indigenous Communities; and
- Meetings with key stakeholders including Toronto Public Library Foundation Board and Toronto Public Library Workers Union Local 4948.

Overall, 1,216 staff, public, community partners and stakeholders participated in the second consultation phase. The results of the second consultation phase outlined in Attachment 1 validated and refined the scope and direction of the new Strategic Plan.

### **SWOT Analysis and Scenario Planning Results**

Library staff conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis as part of the strategic planning process. The analysis included a range of internal and external inputs, such as the environmental scan, staff and public consultations, the TPL Board Strategic Planning Steering Committee session, the 2023 TPL Risk Register, and financial reports. The findings of the SWOT analysis are outlined in Attachment 2. The results of the SWOT analysis confirmed and validated the eight identified focus areas. This provided valuable insights that will guide the development of the strategic priorities, outcomes, and implementation plan moving forward.

Additionally, library staff used a scenario planning technique called wind-tunneling to evaluate how future changes could impact the eight identified focus areas. The results of the scenario planning exercise outlined in Attachment 2 helped to validate and further prioritize the focus areas. By considering the potential impact on each focus area within the given scenarios, library staff gained valuable insights that will effectively guide the development of the strategic priorities, outcomes and implementation plan.

### **Draft Priority Areas**

Cross cutting analysis of the inputs from the second consultation phase – including staff and public consultations, SWOT analysis, scenario planning – were used to identify the draft priority areas. Attachment 3 includes more information about how the draft priority areas were informed by the inputs.

The recommended four draft priority areas for the Strategic Plan 2025-2029 are:

1. Democracy, civic engagement and social connections
2. Shared community spaces
3. Learning and growth
4. Awareness and access

The plan will also include a focus on staff within each priority. TPL will invest in staff to deliver the services needed by TPL's communities by providing them with the necessary tools, learning and collaboration opportunities to achieve the Library's organizational priorities.

Draft outcomes have been developed for each of the priority areas to describe the specific impact TPL will have over the next five years.

Additionally, environmental sustainability emerged as a key theme in the research, environmental scan and inputs from the consultations. TPL will develop a Sustainable Development Goals Commitment Statement as part of the new Strategic Plan that will identify how existing library services support these goals, as well as additional actions.

An outline of the recommended draft priority areas and outcomes, prepared for the draft Strategic Plan, are listed below.

## **Priority Areas**

### **1. Democracy, civic engagement and social connections**

We will embed opportunities for social connection, civic dialogue and information literacy in everything we do, so that residents have the skills required to sustain a healthy democracy.

**The need:** We live in an increasingly polarized world that is driven by rapidly changing technology and misinformation, where loneliness and social isolation are creating significant challenges to health and community well-being. TPL has a critical role in sustaining democracy in a time of widespread threats to democratic values and freedoms by invoking the strength of libraries as champions of equity, trusted sources of accurate information, and conveners for civic engagement.

**Overall outcome:** TPL will become the centre for social connection, community dialogue and strengthening democratic values.

**Priority outcomes:**

- Torontonians are more connected to each other and their communities, and have a strong sense of belonging.
- Torontonians are well-informed, able to engage in respectful dialogue and empowered to participate in community decision-making, contributing to a free and just democratic society.
- Torontonians have the ability to navigate various information sources and apply critical thinking skills to assess the accuracy, reliability, and credibility of the information.

**Focus on staff outcome:**

- Our staff have the skills they need to facilitate opportunities for social connection, to support information literacy in the digital age and to champion democratic values.

**2. Shared community spaces**

We will accelerate the enhancements of our physical and online spaces to establish more welcoming, safe, inclusive, and sustainable multi-use environments that build resilience and belonging in every neighbourhood.

**The need:** Toronto is facing a shortage of public spaces, increasing the need for shared community spaces. TPL offers access to welcoming, safe, inclusive, and free public spaces to connect, study, learn, and work.

**Overall outcome:** TPL's physical and online spaces will become destinations of choice for work, study, collaboration, culture and learning.

**Priority outcomes:**

- Torontonians have access to modern, multi-use library spaces that cater to diverse needs in every neighbourhood in the city.
- Torontonians feel welcome, included and safe in library spaces that provide the social infrastructure to gather, collaborate, and build connections.
- Torontonians have sustainable library spaces that are built and maintained to reduce greenhouse gases and are resilient to the risks posed by our changing climate.

**Focus on staff outcome:**

- Our staff have the supports, partnerships and expertise they need to make our spaces more welcoming and inclusive. They have the spaces and support they need to collaborate, learn and thrive.

**3. Learning and growth**

We will expand learning opportunities for all ages to develop multiple literacies and personal and professional skills, so that residents can thrive, build economic resilience, and adapt to new technologies, such as AI.

**The need:** During the pandemic, students experienced significant setbacks in their reading and math skills. TPL plays a crucial role in nurturing a passion for reading and supporting ongoing learning and development at all ages. This includes a strong focus on fostering digital literacy skills essential for thriving in the digital age. In addition, as the cost of living in Toronto continues to rise, libraries can serve as a navigator to help individuals access vital resources to help address affordability, and offer programs to teach skills that address economic resilience, including job search supports and professional skills development.

**Overall outcome:** TPL will become the leading hub in Toronto for high-quality, self-directed, and free lifelong learning.

**Priority outcomes:**

- Torontonians have easy access to in-person and online learning opportunities to develop skills that support their personal and professional goals.
- Torontonians have the digital literacy skills they need to adapt to changes in technology and thrive in the modern world.
- Children and youth have the literacy skills required to succeed and thrive.

**Focus on staff outcome:**

- Our staff have the knowledge, tools, training and supports they need to support the development of multiple literacies and skills that our customers need.

#### **4. Awareness and access**

We will increase awareness and availability of library services, so that residents in every neighbourhood have equitable access to services that meet their changing needs.

**The need:** TPL offers many valuable services and resources to Toronto residents. However, we heard that we could do more to promote and raise awareness of these services so that more people can benefit from them. Additionally, the library should expand its services to ensure more people can access them equitably, regardless of their social or economic status and where they live in the city.

**Overall outcome:** TPL collections, programs, spaces and services are easy to access and well used.

#### **Priority outcomes:**

- All Torontonians become members of TPL, are aware of what we offer and use a broad range of library services.
- Torontonians can access library collections, programs, spaces and services equitably in neighbourhoods across the city where, when and how they want to.
- Torontonians have access to diverse and innovative collections and services that reflect our customers' evolving interests and needs.

#### **Focus on staff outcome:**

- Our staff have the knowledge, tools and skills to deliver high quality, personalized service in a complex and changing environment. They are aware of what is happening at the library, and act as champions for the library in their communities.

#### **Next Steps**

Library staff will finalize the draft priority areas, including strategic objectives and key actions, and present the draft plan to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee in November and the Board in December.

## CONTACT

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## SIGNATURE

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City Librarian

## ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Phase Two Consultation Results
- Attachment 2: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: SWOT Analysis and Scenario Planning Results
- Attachment 3: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Mapping of Focus Areas to Draft Strategic Priority Areas
- Attachment 4: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Phase Two Consultation Results and Draft Priority Areas Presentation

## Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Phase Two Consultation Results

### Overview

Eight focus areas were identified for further exploration in the second consultation phase based on the research, environmental scan and input from the first phase of consultations. The focus areas are listed below.

1. Awareness and availability of library services
2. Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development
3. Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy
4. Environmental sustainability
5. Reading, learning and growth
6. Social connections and mental well-being
7. Technology and digital inclusion
8. Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study and do work

The purpose of the second consultation phase was to validate and prioritize the focus areas in order to identify the priorities for the Strategic Plan, and to identify potential action items to execute on the plan. The target audiences for the second phase included all staff, underrepresented audiences from the first phase of public consultations, community partners, industry experts, and stakeholders. This phase took place from June to August 2024. Key activities included:

- A survey and idea exchange with staff and the public using a digital engagement platform called ThoughtExchange;
- Local staff engagement sessions;
- Focus groups with targeted and underrepresented audiences, e.g. non-library users, equity-deserving groups, vulnerable persons;
- Expert forums on Digital Inclusion and Social Connectedness;
- Feedback sessions with Indigenous Communities; and
- Meetings with key stakeholders including Toronto Public Library Foundation Board and Toronto Public Library Workers Union Local 4948.

### ThoughtExchange process

ThoughtExchange is a unique survey tool that offers an innovative approach to engaging participants. Unlike traditional surveys, participants can confidentially and independently share their thoughts and engage with those of others. First,

participants are invited to share their ideas and then to review and rate the thoughts of others by adding stars to thoughts that are most important to them.

## **Internal phase two consultation results**

In the second consultation phase, 401 Toronto Public Library (TPL) staff members provided input through a ThoughtExchange survey and idea exchange, as well as facilitated local staff engagement sessions.

### **Survey and idea exchange**

From June 12 to July 10, 2024, TPL conducted a staff survey and idea exchange using ThoughtExchange. The survey was available online and promoted on various internal communication channels.

A total of 284 staff members took part in the survey and had the opportunity to share their thoughts and engage with those of others. In total, 241 thoughts were shared, and 7,781 ratings were given. The participants included a mix of public service, support, and management staff, with approximately 42% (121) of participants who had not participated in the first phase of consultations.

Staff were asked to rank the eight focus areas based on their importance for TPL to have the greatest impact for Toronto residents, with 1 being the most important, 8 being the least important. Below are the results of the ranking of the focus areas by staff:

1. Awareness and availability of library services
2. Reading, learning and growth
3. Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study and do work
4. Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development
5. Social connections and mental well-being
6. Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy
7. Technology and digital inclusion
8. Environmental sustainability

Additionally, staff were asked to share and rate ideas on what the library can do to support the top focus areas identified. The comments were coded and analyzed using qualitative data analysis tools. The comments were grouped by focus area and subthemes were identified. The top five subthemes with the most thoughts

are: marketing and promotion (34), multi-use spaces (16), reading and information literacy programs (15), staffing levels (13), and social services/safe and welcoming spaces (11).

<b>Focus area</b>	<b>Subtheme</b> (number of thoughts)	<b>Sample thoughts</b> (rating out of 5)
Awareness and availability of library services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing and promotion (34)</li> <li>• Staffing levels (13)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Share the information on what we do more widely on all mediums.” (4.2 rating)</li> <li>• “We definitely need more staff in general.” (4.3 rating)</li> </ul>
Reading, learning and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading and information literacy programs (15)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Emphasis on fundamental skills (literacy, reading, critical thinking, etc.) by promoting programs, ideas, books, etc. (4.0 rating)</li> </ul>
Social connections and mental well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social services (11)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Embedded social workers in libraries.” (3.7 rating)</li> </ul>
Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study and do work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-use spaces (16)</li> <li>• Safe and welcoming spaces (11)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Have more study spaces/quiet study spaces in branches, especially older branches where there is a lot of demand.” (3.8 rating)</li> <li>• “Expand the Library Safety Specialist program.” (3.8 rating)</li> </ul>

### **Local staff engagement sessions**

In June and July 2024, four facilitated local staff engagement sessions were held as another method to gather input from staff. A total of 117 staff members participated in these sessions. Similar to the ThoughtExchange survey and idea exchange, staff were asked to rank the eight focus areas based on their

importance for TPL to have the greatest impact for Toronto residents and share ideas on what the library can do to support the top focus areas.

The ranking of the focus areas was consistent with the survey; however, “Technology and Digital Inclusion” was mentioned more frequently within the top five focus areas. Additionally, staff shared some unique ideas, such as their observation of how the use of library space has evolved since the pandemic and their rationale for ranking based on the specific needs of their community.

## **External phase two consultation results**

In the second consultation phase, 815 public members and key stakeholders provided input through a ThoughtExchange survey and idea exchange, focus groups, expert forums, interviews and meetings.

### **Survey and idea exchange**

From June 12 to July 24, 2024, TPL conducted a public survey and idea exchange using ThoughtExchange, a digital engagement platform. The survey was available online and in branches for TPL customers and other Toronto residents. The survey was aimed at groups underrepresented in the initial consultations, including youth, seniors, vulnerable persons, newcomers and international students, non-users, as well as 2SLGBTQ+, Black, and Indigenous Communities.

A total of 649 public members completed the survey and had the opportunity to share their thoughts and engage with those of others. In total, 524 thoughts were shared, and 12,158 ratings were given. Compared to the first phase of public consultations, there was an increase in participation from ‘less frequent users’ (+4%), East York residents (+7%), Scarborough residents (+3%), youth (+2%) and seniors (+14%) and males (+3%). Approximately 68% (405) of participants did not take part in the phase.

Participants were asked to rank the eight focus areas based on their importance to them and their community, with 1 being the most important, 8 being the least important. Below are the results of the ranking of the focus areas by the public:

1. Reading, learning and growth
2. Awareness and availability of library services
3. Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study and do work
4. Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy
5. Technology and digital inclusion
6. Social connections and mental well-being
7. Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development
8. Environmental sustainability

Additionally, participants were asked to share and rate ideas on what the library can do to support the top focus areas identified. The comments were coded and analyzed using qualitative data analysis tools. The comments were grouped by focus area and subthemes were identified. The top five subthemes with the most thoughts are: expand and enhance collections (72), programming (62), marketing and promotion (52), longer evenings and weekend hours (38) and reading and information literacy programs (26).

<b>Focus area</b>	<b>Subtheme</b> (number of thoughts)	<b>Sample thoughts</b> (rating out of 5)
Reading, learning and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand and enhance collections (72)</li> <li>• Programming (62)</li> <li>• Reading and information literacy programs (26)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Continue to have new, high quality books for all ages and topics.” (4.3 rating)</li> <li>• “Provide programs, speakers, authors, experts in various fields in branches both big and small.” (4.1 rating)</li> <li>• “Collaborate with TDSB to ensure that every parent/caregiver within their priority 150 Model schools is provided with a library card.” (4.2 rating)</li> </ul>

<p>Awareness and availability of library services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing and promotion (52)</li> <li>• Longer evenings and weekend hours (38)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “More people need to know the full scope of what the TPL does.” (4.2 rating)</li> <li>• “Provide library branches in areas of high density with long operating hours including on Sunday.” (4.3 rating)</li> </ul>
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**Focus groups**

In July 2024, four facilitated focus groups were held to gather input from Black-serving agencies, vulnerable populations, senior newcomers and the City of Toronto’s Lived Experience Advisory Group. A total of 26 people participated in these sessions. Similar to the ThoughtExchange survey and idea exchange, participants were asked to rank the eight focus areas based on their importance to them and their community and share ideas on what the library can do to support the top focus areas.

The ranking of the focus areas was consistent with the survey; however, “Awareness and Availability of Library Services” was the top priority for all groups. Additionally, participants expressed that “Reading, Learning and Growth” should always be core principles of the library, and continuous learning is crucial to support job search and personal development. Moreover, they also emphasized the importance of standardizing library programs across all branches, providing safe and welcoming spaces that are well-maintained and clean, and offering access to technology and staff expertise in areas such as AI (artificial intelligence).

**Expert forums**

**Digital Inclusion Forum**

On June 18, 2024, leaders in technology, artificial intelligence and digital disruption, along with library staff, gathered to discuss how the Library can continue to deliver on its commitment to enhancing access and fostering digital and information literacy skills. The 52 participants also explored ways to collaborate with partners to have the greatest impact in bridging the digital divide and ensuring all residents can equally participate in the digital economy.

The event featured insightful talks by distinguished speakers. Sam Andrey from the Dais presented the latest Toronto's Digital Divide report, which was published in May 2024, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to digital inclusion to achieve fairer outcomes. Manal Siddiqui from World Economic Forum and Accenture provided guidance to the participants on governing emerging technologies in an era of exponential change.

The roundtable discussions that followed explored two questions. The questions and a summary of the key themes from the discussions are provided below.

**How can TPL improve or focus our work to continue addressing the digital divide and digital literacy gaps in Toronto?**

- Introduce more digital literacy programs such as AI literacy, digital privacy, cybersecurity protection, gaming
- Increase more awareness of services through partnerships, outreach, targeting audiences (seniors and youth)
- Continue to provide technology access including device lending

**How can the Library work with new and existing partners to have the greatest impact in bridging the digital divide and ensuring all residents are able to participate equally in the digital economy?**

- Offer learning paths for staff to enhance their skills
- Form partnerships with strong AI and scholarly partners to address governance and ethical considerations
- Identify partners to deliver digital literacy programs and reach target audiences

**Social Connectedness Forum**

On July 23, 2024, TPL hosted a second expert forum to further explore the growing issues of loneliness and social isolation. A total of 54 participants, including experts in fostering community connections and library staff, took part in the event. The attendees discussed how the Library can maintain its commitment to being a welcoming and inclusive space that fosters connections and helps build community.

During the event, Mohamed Huque from the Toronto Foundation presented findings from the 2023 Vital Signs Report. Pete Bombaci from Genwell discussed

the importance of human connection to the mental and physical well-being of Canadians. Michael Aucoin from Gerstein Crisis centre shared his experience leading the Finding Recovery Through Exercise, Skills and Hope (F.R.E.S.H.) program.

The roundtable discussions that followed explored two questions. The questions and a summary of the discussions are provided below.

### **What does social isolation look and feel like in your communities or communities you've seen?**

- Loneliness and social isolation affect everyone
- It is considered one of the biggest unaddressed impacts of the pandemic, leading to a fear of socialization
- The world is becoming increasingly polarized

### **What should the library do to build the structures that create belonging?**

- Provide physical space for community building, co-working and co-location with other social services
- Employ more community librarians and social workers to engage in social prescribing and warm transfers
- Offer more programs that enhance social connection, health, and social skills
- Create more awareness of the services available
- Build stronger partnerships with social services

### **Feedback sessions with Indigenous Communities**

TPL engaged consulting firms KPMG LLP and Mokwateh to gather Indigenous feedback and perspectives that will shape the development of the Library's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan. To date, the consultants have interviewed 12 participants, including library users, non-users, and Toronto service providers. They conducted five key informant interviews and one focus group. Four preliminary key themes were found when summarizing the conversations with potential opportunities and feedback for consideration for TPL. Participants also emphasized the importance of ongoing staff learning and development to effectively support the delivery of Indigenous initiatives at the library.

## **1. Library awareness and usage**

Both users and non-users are unaware of the full offerings of the library and recommend increased promotion and partnerships.

Potential opportunities:

- Partnerships with other community members could increase use
- Representation of Indigenous Peoples in staff and locations
- New ways of promoting the library are needed

## **2. Inclusion of Indigenous communities**

All participants would like to see more inclusion of Indigenous art, events, and community engagement.

Potential opportunities:

- Promote and lead more Indigenous programming
- Engage communities using digital channels
- Strengthen connection to local communities
- Leveraging artwork to create welcoming spaces

## **3. Barriers to the library**

Participants shared that past negative experiences with the library could make patrons feel unwelcome and prevent participation.

Feedback:

- Feeling welcome in the space is critical
- Accessibility concerns at physical locations
- Lack of connection to their day-to-day needs

## **4. Supporting skills and culture**

All participants found the library has an important role to play in helping preserve Indigenous culture and support skills development.

Potential opportunities:

- Archiving and teaching Indigenous languages
- Book collections on Indigenous culture and issues
- Workshops for select skills specific to communities
- Information literacy programs are needed

In addition to the feedback sessions, insights from 47 Indigenous respondents in the public survey conducted during the first phase of consultations highlighted several important community issues. The top issues included the cost of living

(58%), housing (56%), mental health and well-being (40%), the aging population (31%), and community and public spaces (31%). Respondents suggested that TPL could extend services to lower-income communities to help with literacy and technological challenges, share space with local non-profits, and enhance support for unhoused individuals. These recommendations underscore the importance of fostering community engagement and inclusivity within the library.

## Conclusion

The results of the second consultation phase validated and refined the scope and direction of the new Strategic Plan. The results of the consultation process were found to be consistent with the environmental scan, providing valuable insights that will inform and shape the strategic priorities, outcomes, and actions moving forward. Attachment 3 includes more information about the draft strategic priorities and how they were informed by these inputs.

## Strategic Plan 2025-2029: SWOT Analysis and Scenario Planning Results

### SWOT analysis overview

Library staff conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis as part of the strategic planning process. The analysis included a range of internal and external inputs, such as the environmental scan, staff and public consultations, the TPL Board Strategic Planning Steering Committee session, the 2023 TPL Risk Register, and financial reports.

The results of the SWOT analysis, provided below, confirmed and validated the eight identified focus areas. This provided valuable insights that will guide the development of the strategic priorities, outcomes, and implementation plan moving forward.

### Strengths (internal)

Strengths		
Responsive programming, collections and services	Good reputation, valued and trusted public institution	Expert staff
Geographic reach and welcoming public space for all	Improved project management, business planning, policies and procedures, data and IT systems	Effective financial management

#### **Responsive programming, collections and services**

TPL provides broad and diverse collections, community programs, and information services that promote equality, innovation, and access to support the community.

#### **Good reputation, valued and trusted public institution**

TPL has a strong reputation as the busiest urban public library system in the world, offering accessible, inclusive, trusted and flexible services.

### **Expert staff**

TPL is customer service focused. The staff team consists of well-educated and motivated professionals who are dedicated, knowledgeable, and passionate. Staff are open to new opportunities and developments and continuously improve their skills to meet customer needs.

### **Geographic reach and welcoming public space for all**

TPL provides a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment for everyone in the city, including vulnerable communities. With 100 branches conveniently located across the city and increasing open hours, the Library offers a multi-use space for work, study, and leisure, catering to a wide geographic reach.

### **Improved project management, business planning, data and IT systems**

TPL has made significant progress in library planning, business processes, and IT systems. The library has established a project management office, enhanced business planning practices, and developed a digital strategy with a focus on foundational elements.

### **Effective financial management**

TPL effectively manages budgets, communicates financial results, and secures funding. The TPL Foundation also helps raise funds to enable innovation and enhance programs, services, collections, and spaces.

### **Weaknesses/Challenges (internal)**

<b>Weaknesses</b>		
Balancing resources and organizational priorities	Aging technology systems and manual processes	State of Good Repair (SOGR) backlog
Staffing challenges	Lack of awareness of programs and services	

### **Balancing resources and organizational priorities**

TPL faces challenges in balancing resources with its priorities. There is a need to continue to mature the business planning processes that have been established, particularly in allocating resources to large system projects.

### **Aging technology systems and manual processes**

Outdated technology systems can result in service outages, and reliance on manual processes can create inefficiencies in the overall system, slowing down operations.

### **State of Good Repair (SOG) backlog**

TPL faces challenges related to aging infrastructure, limited capital funding, coordination with external agencies and unplanned closures due to maintenance and extreme weather.

### **Staffing challenges**

TPL experiences staffing challenges as a result of collective agreement requirements that extend the time to fill vacant positions, along with challenges in hiring specialized talent in areas such as IT, compounded by higher levels of absence and job accommodation post-pandemic.

### **Lack of awareness of programs and services**

TPL faces challenges related to raising awareness of library service including limited capacity for marketing, effectively communicating the library's value, and a general lack of public understanding about the library's modern role and services. Additionally, branch staff have limited capacity for outreach efforts.

### **Opportunities (external)**

<b>Opportunities</b>		
Support City strategies and Contribute to community resilience	Respond to growing needs of vulnerable populations	Skills development and personal growth
Strengthening existing and developing new partnerships	Address demand for free public space and foster social connections	Increase information access, digital media and information literacy skills

### **Contribute to community resilience**

The library supports and contributes to City strategies, and plays a crucial role in enhancing community resilience by contributing to poverty reduction and promoting equity, aligning with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Respond to growing needs of vulnerable populations**

Libraries address the increasing needs of vulnerable populations by building capacity for trauma-informed approaches, forming community partnerships to offer social services and hiring specialized roles such as social workers to support public service staff.

### **Skills development and personal growth**

Libraries support skills development and personal growth by addressing gaps in public education and providing affordable resources for lifelong learning and life skills, such as financial and AI (artificial intelligence) literacy. They also focus on fostering their internal workforce to ensure staff effectively meet customer needs.

### **Strengthening existing and developing new partnerships**

Libraries explore efficient and innovative ways to deliver services by expanding community-based services and leveraging the expertise of other agencies and community groups.

### **Address demand for free public space and foster social connections**

With few free public spaces remaining in Toronto, the library stands out as one of the city's few free "third spaces" between home and work. This presents an opportunity to enhance civic engagement and foster social and community connections.

### **Increase information access, digital media and information literacy skills**

Libraries are well positioned to provide digital media and information literacy skills and enhance access to reliable information, while leveraging the Library's reputation as a trusted information source.

## Threats (external)

Threats		
Increasingly complex/diverse residents' needs and expectations	Changing skills and competencies required by staff	Socioeconomic, political and environmental instability
Business model disruption and competition	Public perception of the relevance of the library	Inflation and increasing funding pressures

### **Increasingly complex/diverse residents' needs and expectations**

As residents' needs become more complex and diverse, the library must adapt to increased infrastructure requirements, rising program demands, and changing demographics. This includes addressing changes in retail experiences and meeting the needs of customers with complex vulnerabilities and mental health issues.

### **Changing skills and competencies required by staff**

The skills and competencies required by staff are evolving. In particular, there is an increasing need for advanced technological skills.

### **Socioeconomic, political and environmental instability**

Socioeconomic, political, and environmental instability affects libraries in several ways. Rising public safety concerns and violent incidents impact staff morale and customer perceptions of safety. Climate change brings hotter temperatures and severe storms that impact library buildings and operations, while cyber attacks are increasingly disruptive to organizations.

### **Business model disruption and competition**

Libraries face challenges from business model disruptions and competition due to the rapid advancement of technology. The increasing demand for e-books and e-audiobooks, together with competition from low-cost streaming services, requires libraries to adapt and innovate to stay relevant.

### **Public perception of the relevance of the library**

Public perception of the library's relevance can contribute to lower usage rates. Some beliefs include the notion that "nobody uses the library anymore" or assuming that public libraries have not kept pace with new technologies.

### **Inflation and increasing funding pressures**

Inflation and increasing funding pressures are affecting libraries. The rising costs of digital services and content, such as e-books, are putting a financial strain on libraries. To secure the necessary funding, libraries need to advocate for greater investment while addressing public perceptions of their value, impact, and relevance.

## **Scenario planning overview**

In scenario planning, wind-tunneling is used to evaluate how future changes could impact an organization's ability to achieve its strategic objectives. Earlier this year, library staff were tasked with identifying the most significant trends for the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, as well as the most uncertain trends for the next five years, based on research and environmental scan findings. They then developed potential future scenarios, which represented extreme versions of the identified threats, based on these trends.

At a workshop in August 2024, staff reviewed the potential future scenarios and identified the top three focus areas from the second consultation phase that are the most important for each scenario. They were also asked to provide a brief explanation for why each focus area was selected for each scenario.

The results of the scenario planning exercise, outlined below, helped to validate and further prioritize the focus areas. By considering the potential impact on each focus area within the given scenarios, library staff gained valuable insights that will effectively guide the development of the strategic priorities, outcomes and implementation plan.

## **Scenarios and related focus areas**

### **Future scenario: Increased polarization and civil unrest**

The social and economic divide is only getting bigger. Society is divided into silos that have replaced civil debate with polarized disagreement and violent protests. In a world that is becoming increasingly violent, hateful, and unstable, there is little to no faith in institutions and mainstream media. Increased disinformation further separates people, and hate crimes and harassment are accepted as the norm. AI and algorithms are being used to radicalize, polarize, and spread racism and political instability. Lack of support for equity-deserving groups to achieve higher education and skills development results in increased unemployment for these groups. The most vulnerable are left without a voice in society and can either choose to be the victim or resort to violence to have their voices heard. The future looks grim, both politically and economically.

Related focus areas:

- Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy
- Awareness and availability of library services
- Technology and digital inclusion

### **Future scenario: Climate crisis**

The effects of climate change are evident worldwide, with more frequent extreme weather events and destruction impacting humans and wildlife. People and businesses are slow to adopt sustainable technologies and prioritize sustainable practices because they are expensive and innovation is lacking. As a result, society faces significant challenges, with the majority struggling to survive due to escalating environmental and social crises. This leads to an increase in refugees and social unrest. Only the wealthy can protect themselves, while vulnerable populations suffer from greater health impacts and worsening living conditions.

Related focus areas:

- Environmental sustainability
- Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development
- Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study and do work

**Future scenario: Inadequate social services**

Underserved and vulnerable people are being left behind due to inadequate government investments and support for basic necessities, which has led to increased health challenges, homelessness, and economic struggles. Income supports are failing to keep up with the rising cost of living and are becoming increasingly difficult to access. There is a noticeable societal divide due to the wide gap between the rich and poor. For example, the high cost of post-secondary education and lack of investments in support for lower-income people to obtain education and employment. Additionally, there has been a rise in drug use and deaths from toxicity. Youth facing mental health challenges are feeling unmotivated, sad, and helpless about their future, while seniors are experiencing loneliness and lack of support. Newcomers and low-income individuals are struggling with housing and integration into the community.

Related focus areas:

- Social connections and mental well-being
- Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development
- Awareness and availability of library services

## Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Draft Strategic Priority Areas

The table below indicates how the focus areas and the results of the second consultation phase informed the recommended draft strategic priority areas.

		Draft Strategic Priority Areas				
Overall Ranking	Phase Two Focus Areas (inputs)	Democracy, Civic engagement and social connections	Shared community spaces	Learning and growth	Awareness, and access	Sustainable Development Goals Commitment Statement
1	<b>Awareness and availability of library services</b> (staff, public, internal analysis)				✓	
2	<b>Reading, learning and growth</b> (staff, public, internal analysis)			✓		
3	<b>Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study and do work</b> (staff, internal analysis)		✓			
4	<b>Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy</b> (public, internal analysis)	✓				
5	<b>Social connections and mental well-being</b> (staff, internal analysis)	✓	✓			
6	<b>Technology and digital inclusion</b> (staff, public, internal analysis)			✓		
7	<b>Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development</b> (staff, internal analysis)			✓		
8	<b>Environmental sustainability</b> (internal analysis)		✓			✓
		<b>Focus on staff</b>				



# strategic plan 2025-2029

## phase two consultation results & draft strategic priority areas

**Strategic Planning Steering Committee**

October 8, 2024

1. Progress update (Slides 3-4)
2. Phase two consultation results
  - Staff engagement (Slides 8-15)
  - Public engagement (Slides 16-30)
  - SWOT analysis (Slides 31-38)
  - Scenario planning (Slides 39-41)
3. Draft strategic priority areas and outcomes (Slides 43-60)
4. Discussion
5. Next steps

# progress update

## Phase 1 Inputs

1. Environmental Scan Findings
2. Staff Consultation Themes
3. Top Public Issues
4. Public Consultation Themes

## Phase 2 Consultation

- Focus Areas

## Oct. 8 meeting

- Review results of phase two consultations
- SWOT analysis and Scenario Planning results
- Draft Strategic Priorities

## Next meeting

- Draft Strategic Plan and Implementation Plan

# steering committee 2024 milestones

chair elected,  
environmental scan focus  
areas & consultation plan  
january

phase one external  
consultation results & focus  
areas (workshop)  
may

finalize strategic plan and  
implementation plan  
november



environmental scan &  
phase one internal  
consultation results  
april



phase two consultation  
results, draft strategic  
priority areas  
october



## phase 2 consultation results

- To validate and prioritize the focus areas and identify potential action items to execute on the plan
- Target audiences for the second phase included all staff, underrepresented audiences from the first phase of public consultations, community partners, industry experts, and stakeholders
- Phase two took place from June to August

# phase two focus areas

- Awareness and availability of library services
- Cost of living, economic resilience, and skills development
- Democracy, civic engagement, and information literacy
- Environmental sustainability
- Reading, learning, and growth
- Social connections and mental well-being
- Technology and digital inclusion
- Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study, and do work



**staff engagement**

**401 staff members** engaged from June to July

- ThoughtExchange survey | **284 responses**
- Four facilitated local staff engagement sessions | **117 staff**

# Thought Exchange survey participation



284

Participants



241

Thoughts



7,781

Ratings

# focus areas ranking

Where should the library focus in the next five years? Please rank (1 to 8) the following focus areas based on their importance for TPL to have the greatest impact for Toronto residents. (1 being the most important, 8 being the least important). You can organize your choices by dragging and dropping from the list.

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Answer</b>
#1	Awareness and availability of library services
#2	Reading, learning and growth
#3	Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study and do work
#4	Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development
#5	Social connections and mental well-being
#6	Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy
#7	Technology and digital inclusion
#8	Environmental sustainability

# idea exchange themes

What can the library do to support the top focus areas you identified? This could be a new idea, something we can do more of, or the tools and resources that will be needed to deliver on the focus areas.

Focus area	Subtheme (number of thoughts)
Awareness and availability of library services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marketing and promotion (34)</li><li>• Staffing levels (13)</li></ul>
Reading, learning and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading and literacy programs (15)</li></ul>
Social connections and mental well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social services (11)</li></ul>
Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study, and do work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multi-use spaces (16)</li><li>• Safe and welcoming spaces (11)</li></ul>



# sample thoughts

- “Share the information on what we do more widely on all mediums.” – 4.2 rating
- “We definitely need more staff in general.” –4.3 rating
- “Strengthen partnerships with community organizations.” -4.0 rating
- “Pay visits to senior homes to let them know about our services.” -3.8 rating
- “Extra care must be taken to ensure the layout of new branches meet the needs of the community.” (design for multi-use) -4.3 rating
- “Expand the Library Safety Specialist program and make it permanent.” -3.8 rating
- “Immigration is increasing in our city, English Conversation Circles, Reading Circles, ESL classes should be more available at TPL.” -3.9 rating
- “Implement seniors hubs similar to youth hubs across the city.” -4.0 rating
- “Upgrade all buildings and technology to be energy efficient and environmentally friendly.” -3.9 rating
- “Continue to create spaces for respectful public discourse.” -3.8 rating



# local staff engagement sessions

## summary of findings

- “Technology and digital inclusion” mentioned more frequently as a priority
- Some unique ideas, e.g. use of space post-pandemic, focus on trade jobs
- Provided rationale for ranking, e.g. operational vs. strategic, core services, community specific
- More appreciation for strategic planning process



**public engagement**

**815 public members** engaged from June to August

- ThoughtExchange survey | **649 responses**
  - Four facilitated focus groups | **26 participants**
  - Indigenous feedback sessions | **12 participants**
  - Digital Inclusion Forum | **52 participants**
  - Social Connectedness Forum | **54 participants**
  - TPLF Board session | **8 participants**
  - Local 4948 Union session | **14 participants**
- + third-party residents survey results

# Thought Exchange survey participation



649

Participants



524

Thoughts



12,158

Ratings

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# participation phase 1 comparison

More participation from:

- 'less frequent users' (+4%)
- East York (+7%) and Scarborough residents (+3%)
- Youth (+2%) and Seniors (+14%)
- Males (+3%)

# focus areas ranking

Where should the library focus in the next five years? Please rank (1 to 8) the following focus areas based on their importance to you and/or your community. (1 being the most important, 8 being the least important). You can organize your choices by dragging and dropping from the list.

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Answer</b>
#1	Reading, learning and growth
#2	Awareness and availability of library services
#3	Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study and do work
#4	Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy
#5	Technology and digital inclusion
#6	Social connections and mental well-being
#7	Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development
#8	Environmental sustainability

# idea exchange themes

What can the library do to support the top focus areas you identified? This could be a new idea, something we can do more of, or improve on.

Focus area	Subtheme (number of thoughts)
Reading, learning and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expand and enhance collections (72)</li><li>• Programming (62)</li><li>• Reading and information literacy programs (26)</li></ul>
Awareness and availability of library services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marketing and promotion (52)</li><li>• Longer evenings and weekend hours (38)</li></ul>

# thoughts word cloud

highly rated



# sample thoughts

- “Continue to have new, high quality books for all ages and topics.” – 4.3 rating
- “Provide programs, speakers, authors, experts in various fields in branches both big and small.” -4.1 rating
- “Collaborate with TDSB to ensure that every parent/caregiver is provided with a library card.” -4.2 rating
- “Open 7 days a week.” -4.3 rating
- “Libraries are one of the only places you can go to sit, read, socialize, use a washroom, have air conditioning, etc. that don’t expect payment.” -4.2 rating
- “I really like branches that have gallery/museum spaces.” -3.9 rating
- “More people need to know the full scope of what the TPL does.” -4.2 rating
- “Promote civic learning within the community.” -3.9 rating
- “I would love to see additional free programs for seniors and teens.” -4.0 rating
- “Learning new skills such as money management, independence, social skills.” -3.9 rating

## focus group participants

- Black-serving agencies
- City of Toronto's Lived Experience Advisory Group
- Senior newcomers
- Vulnerable populations

# focus group summary of findings

- Awareness and availability of library services is a top priority for all groups
- Reading, learning and growth should always be core principles of the library. Continuous learning is crucial to support job search and personal development.
- Standardization of library programs across all branches is important
- Libraries are considered as a third space, and they should provide a safe and welcoming environment for all. The appearance and cleanliness of the library are very important.
- Libraries should have access to the latest technology and expertise in areas such as AI

# Indigenous feedback sessions overview

- Engaged consulting firms KPMG LLP and Mokwateh to gather Indigenous feedback and perspectives
- Interviewed 12 participants, including library users, non-users, and Toronto service providers
- Conducted five key informant interviews and one focus group
- Four preliminary key themes were found when summarizing the conversations with potential opportunities and feedback for consideration for TPL

# Indigenous feedback sessions

## preliminary key themes

- **Library awareness and usage:** Both users and non-users are unaware of the full offerings of the library and recommend increased promotion and partnerships
- **Inclusion of Indigenous communities:** All participants would like to see more inclusion of Indigenous art, events, and community engagement
- **Barriers to the library:** Participants shared that past negative experiences with the library could make patrons feel unwelcome and prevent participation
- **Supporting skills and culture:** All participants found the library has an important role to play in helping preserve Indigenous culture and support skills development

# digital inclusion forum

- Offer more digital literacy programs e.g. AI literacy, digital privacy, cybersecurity protection, gaming
- Create more awareness of services e.g. partnerships, outreach, target audiences (seniors and youth)
- Continue to provide technology access including device lending
- Provide learning paths for staff to enhance their skills
- Form partnerships with strong AI and scholarly partners to address governance and ethical considerations
- Identify partners to deliver digital literacy programs and reach target audiences



# social connectedness forum

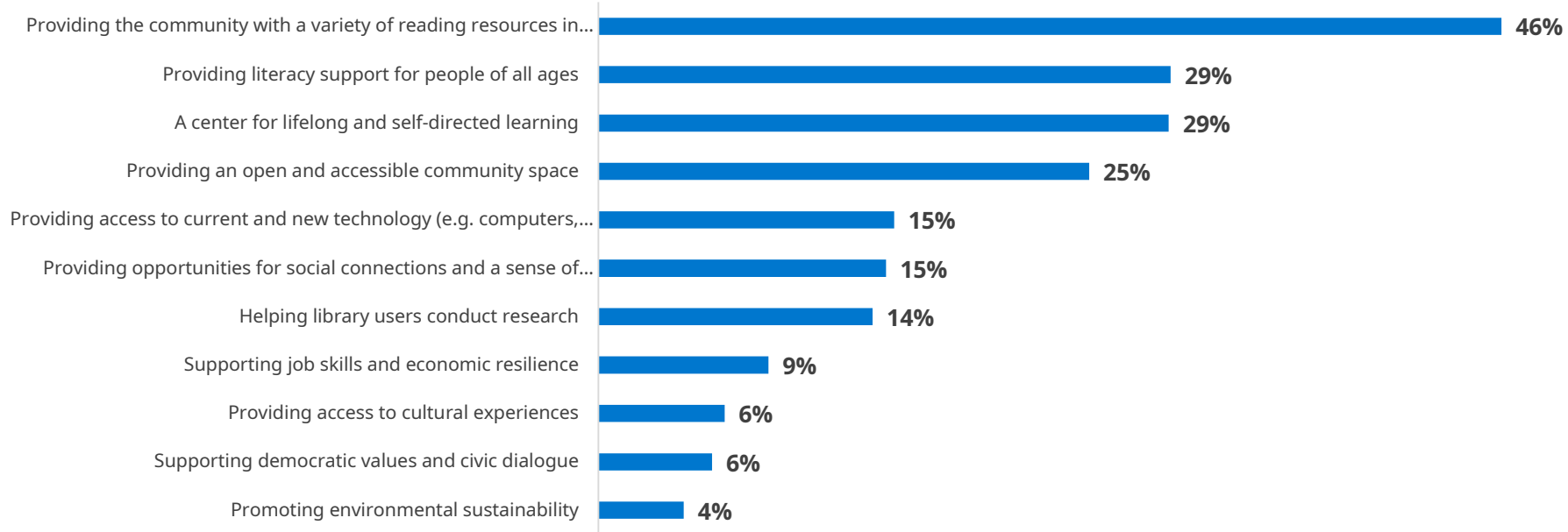
## What should the library do to build the structures that create belonging?

- Provide physical space for community building, co-working, and co-location with other social services
- Employ more community librarians and social workers to engage in social prescribing and warm transfers
- Offer more programs that increase social connection and health and develop social skills
- Create more awareness of services
- Build stronger partnerships with social services



# third-party residents survey results

Services related to reading, literacy, and learning are the top three priorities for library users, with 46% respondents believe that offering a variety of reading resources in different formats is the most important aspect of a public library. This is followed by providing literacy support for all ages (29%) and serving as a hub for lifelong and self-directed learning (29%).





# SWOT analysis

# SWOT analysis

- SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- Strategic planning technique for assessing the performance, competition, challenges and potential of an organization
- Draws from internal sources (strengths or weaknesses) and external forces (opportunities or threats)
- Helps to inform our next strategic priorities and implementation plan

# SWOT analysis

	Favourable	Unfavourable
Internal	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are we doing well?</li><li>• What resources do we have?</li><li>• What advantages do we have?</li></ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where can we improve?</li><li>• Where are we lacking resources?</li><li>• What do other people say we don't do well?</li></ul>
External	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can we expand our reach? Services?</li><li>• How is our field changing? How can we take advantage of those changes?</li></ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How are customer trends changing?</li><li>• What are competitors doing?</li><li>• What obstacles do we face?</li><li>• Are there any standards/policies and/or legislation changing that might negatively impact us?</li></ul>

## Internal

- Environmental Scan
- Phase 1 and Phase 2 Staff Consultations
- TPL Board Strategic Planning Steering Committee Session
- Strategic Plan 2020-2024
- Accountability Framework (balanced scorecard, KPIs)

- 2023 Risk Register
- Financial Reports

## External

- Phase 1 and Phase 2 External Consultations
- Expert Forums
- TPL 360 Public Consultation
- Customer Feedback

# strengths

STRENGTHS (internal)		
Responsive programming, collections and services	Good reputation, valued and trusted institution	Expert staff
Geographic reach and welcoming public space for all	Improved project management, business planning, policies and procedures, data and IT systems	Effective financial management

# weaknesses/challenges

WEAKNESSES/CHALLENGES (internal)		
Balancing resources and organizational priorities	Aging technology systems and manual processes	State of Good Repair (SOGR) backlog
Staffing challenges	Lack of awareness of programs and services	

# opportunities

## OPPORTUNITIES (external)

Support City strategies and contribute to community resilience	Respond to growing needs of vulnerable populations	Skills development and personal growth
Strengthen existing and developing new partnerships	Address demand for free public space and foster social connections	Increase information access, digital media and information literacy skills

THREATS (external)		
Increasingly complex/diverse residents' needs and expectations	Changing skills and competencies required by staff	Socioeconomic, political and environmental instability
Business model disruption and competition	Public perception of the relevance of the library	Inflation and increasing funding pressures



**scenario planning**



wind-tunneling

# wind-tunneling

- A method to help groups test how future changes might affect their ability to achieve strategic objectives
- Identifies critical planning points where flexibility and adaptability are needed
- Highlights which priorities may need to be reinforced
- Tests different priorities in various potential future scenarios

# wind-tunneling results

Future scenario	Related focus areas
Increased polarization and civil unrest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy</li><li>• Awareness and availability of library services</li><li>• Technology and digital inclusion</li></ul>
Climate crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Environmental sustainability</li><li>• Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development</li><li>• Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study and do work</li></ul>
Inadequate social services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social connections and mental well-being</li><li>• Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development</li><li>• Awareness and availability of library services</li></ul>



questions?

**tpl:**



**draft strategic priority areas**

Strategic priorities are:

- Evidence based and reflect data and input gathered through research and consultation
- Are strategic and forward looking, not operational
- Identify outcome-focused areas where we want to close the gap between where we are currently and where we want to be in five years
- Reflect where we will focus our efforts, resources and investment over the next five years

Our commitments to Equity, Reconciliation and Intellectual Freedom will be integrated throughout

# strategic plan development process



		Draft Strategic Priority Areas				Sustainable Development Goals Commitment Statement
Overall Ranking	Focus Areas (inputs)	Democracy, civic engagement and social connections	Shared community space	Learning and growth	Awareness and access	
1	Awareness and availability of library services <i>(staff, public, internal analysis)</i>				✓	
2	Reading, learning and growth <i>(staff, public, internal analysis)</i>			✓		
3	Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study, and do work <i>(staff, public, internal analysis)</i>		✓			
4	Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy <i>(public, internal analysis)</i>	✓				
5	Social connections and mental well-being <i>(staff, internal analysis)</i>	✓	✓			
6	Technology and digital inclusion <i>(staff, public, internal analysis)</i>			✓		
7	Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development <i>(staff, internal analysis)</i>			✓		
8	Environmental sustainability <i>(internal analysis)</i>		✓			✓
		Focus on staff				

# strategic priorities

## key elements

1. Outcomes (what success looks like)
  - Overall outcome (TPL will....)
  - Customer outcomes (So that Torontonians can.....)
  - Staff outcome
2. Strategic Objectives (what we want to achieve)
3. Actions (how we will achieve this)
4. Key Performance Indicators (how we will measure the change)
5. Alignment to City of Toronto strategies

# draft priority areas

## Priority 1

### **Democracy, civic engagement and social connections**

We will embed opportunities for social connection, civic dialogue and information literacy in everything we do, so that residents have the skills required to sustain a healthy democracy.

## **Focus on staff**

Staff are key to achieving our organizational priorities. We will invest in staff to deliver the services our community needs by providing them with the necessary tools, learning and collaboration opportunities.

## Democracy, civic engagement and social connections

**The need:** We live in an increasingly polarized world that is driven by rapidly changing technology and misinformation, where loneliness and social isolation are creating significant challenges to health and community well-being. TPL has a critical role in sustaining democracy in a time of widespread threats to democratic values and freedoms by invoking the strength of libraries as champions of equity, trusted sources of accurate information, and convenors for civic engagement.

“Create welcoming spaces for engaging in dialogue of concerns and issues people care about.”

“Teach courses on critical literacy skills and information literacy skills.”

“Have more community events that bring people together.”

“More community and social activities for adults that aren’t “how to do your taxes.”

## Democracy, civic engagement and social connections

### Outcomes

**TPL will become the centre for social connection, community dialogue and strengthening democratic values.**

### So that...

- Torontonians are more connected to each other and their communities, and have a strong sense of belonging.
- Torontonians are well-informed, able to engage in respectful dialogue and empowered to participate in community decision-making, contributing to a free and just democratic society.
- Torontonians have the ability to navigate various information sources and apply critical thinking skills to assess the accuracy, reliability, and credibility of the information.
- Our staff have the skills they need to facilitate opportunities for social connection, to support information literacy in the digital age and to champion democratic values.

### Proof points

- In the second consultation phase for staff and the public, the “Civic engagement” focus area ranked sixth and fourth, and the “Social connections” focus area ranked fifth and sixth, respectively (consultation)
- The use of AI in schools raises ethical concerns among educators, but also presents an opportunity to encourage critical thinking (environmental scan)
- Social isolation considered one of the biggest unaddressed impacts of the pandemic (social connectedness forum)

# draft priority areas

Priority 1	Priority 2		
<p><b>Democracy, civic engagement and social connections</b></p> <p>We will embed opportunities for social connection, civic dialogue and information literacy in everything we do, so that residents have the skills required to sustain a healthy democracy.</p>	<p><b>Shared community spaces</b></p> <p>We will accelerate the enhancements of our physical and online spaces to establish more welcoming, safe, inclusive, and sustainable multi-use environments that build resilience and belonging in every neighbourhood.</p>		

## Focus on staff

Staff are key to achieving our organizational priorities. We will invest in staff to deliver the services our community needs by providing them with the necessary tools, learning and collaboration opportunities.

## Shared community spaces

**The need:** Toronto is facing a shortage of public spaces, increasing the need for shared community spaces. TPL offers access to welcoming, safe, inclusive, and free public spaces to connect, study, learn, and work.

“Continue providing spaces for everyone in the community to gather, learn, seek help, and play.”

“Keep spaces safe, free, accessible, welcoming for all users.”

“Keep library spaces clean and improve quality of furniture.”

“Upgrade all buildings and technology to be energy efficient and environmentally friendly.”

## Shared community spaces

### Outcomes

**TPL's physical and online spaces will become destinations of choice for work, study, collaboration, culture and learning.**

### So that...

- Torontonians have access to modern, multi-use library spaces that cater to diverse needs in every neighbourhood in the city.
- Torontonians feel welcome, included and safe in library spaces that provide the social infrastructure to gather, collaborate, and build connections.
- Torontonians have sustainable library spaces that are built and maintained to reduce greenhouse gases and are resilient to the risks posed by our changing climate.
- Our staff have the supports, partnerships and expertise they need to make our spaces more welcoming and inclusive. They have the spaces and support they need to collaborate, learn and thrive.

### Proof points

- In the second consultation phase for staff and the public, this focus area ranked third for both staff and the public (consultation)
- Shortage of public spaces in Toronto (public consultation)
- Growing need for co-working and shared spaces (public consultation)
- Libraries are considered as a third space and should provide a safe and welcoming environmental for all (public focus group)

# draft priority areas

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	
<p><b>Democracy, civic engagement and social connections</b></p> <p>We will embed opportunities for social connection, civic dialogue and information literacy in everything we do, so that residents have the skills required to sustain a healthy democracy.</p>	<p><b>Shared community spaces</b></p> <p>We will accelerate the enhancements of our physical and online spaces to establish more welcoming, safe, inclusive, and sustainable multi-use environments that build resilience and belonging in every neighbourhood.</p>	<p><b>Learning and growth</b></p> <p>We will expand learning opportunities for all ages to develop multiple literacies and personal and professional skills, so that residents can thrive, build economic resilience, and adapt to new technologies, such as AI.</p>	

## Focus on staff

Staff are key to achieving our organizational priorities. We will invest in staff to deliver the services our community needs by providing them with the necessary tools, learning and collaboration opportunities.

## Learning and growth

**The need:** During the pandemic, students experienced significant setbacks in their reading and math skills. TPL plays a crucial role in nurturing a passion for reading and supporting ongoing learning and development at all ages. This includes a strong focus on fostering digital literacy skills essential for thriving in the digital age. In addition, as the cost of living in Toronto continues to rise, libraries can serve as a navigator to help individuals access vital resources to help address affordability and offer programs to teach skills that address economic resilience, including job search supports and professional skills development.

“Provide more programs for children that celebrate reading.”

“Programs that help seniors to keep up with technology and protect themselves.”

“Continue providing free services to facilitate people gaining skills.”

“More certification programs where you can sign up, do the work, and get a certificate at the end.”

## Learning and growth

### Outcomes

**TPL will become the leading hub in Toronto for high-quality, self-directed, and free lifelong learning.**

### So that...

- Torontonians have easy access to in-person and online learning opportunities to develop skills that support their personal and professional goals.
- Torontonians have the digital literacy skills they need to adapt to changes in technology and thrive in the modern world.
- Children and youth have the literacy skills required to succeed and thrive.
- Our staff have the knowledge, tools, training and supports they need to support the development of multiple literacies and skills that our customers need

### Proof points

- In the second consultation phase for staff and the public, this focus area ranked second and first, respectively (consultation)
- High and increasing cost of living in Toronto (environmental scan)
- Students suffered deep learning setbacks in reading and math during the pandemic (environmental scan)
- Services related to reading, literacy and learning are the top three priorities for library users (third-party survey)

# draft priority areas

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
<p><b>Democracy, civic engagement and social connections</b></p> <p>We will embed opportunities for social connection, civic dialogue and information literacy in everything we do, so that residents have the skills required to sustain a healthy democracy.</p>	<p><b>Shared community spaces</b></p> <p>We will accelerate the enhancements of our physical and online spaces to establish more welcoming, safe, inclusive, and sustainable multi-use environments that build resilience and belonging in every neighbourhood.</p>	<p><b>Learning and growth</b></p> <p>We will expand learning opportunities for all ages to develop multiple literacies and personal and professional skills, so that residents can thrive, build economic resilience, and adapt to new technologies, such as AI.</p>	<p><b>Awareness and access</b></p> <p>We will increase awareness and availability of library services, so that residents in every neighbourhood have equitable access to services that meet their changing needs.</p>

## Focus on staff

Staff are key to achieving our organizational priorities. We will invest in staff to deliver the services our community needs by providing them with the necessary tools, learning and collaboration opportunities.

## Awareness and access

**The need:** TPL offers many valuable services and resources to Toronto residents. However, we heard that we could do more to promote and raise awareness of these services so that more people can benefit from them. Additionally, the library should expand its services to ensure more people can access them equitably, regardless of their social or economic status and where they live in the city.

“Open longer hours and more days.”

“More people need to know the full scope of what the TPL does.”

“More programs and services at different locations.”

“Continue to invest in the print collection and online subscriptions.”

## Awareness and access

### Outcomes

**TPL collections, programs, spaces and services are easy to access and well used.**

### So that...

- All Torontonians become members of TPL, are aware of what we offer and use a broad range of library services.
- Torontonians can access library collections, programs, spaces and services equitably in neighbourhoods across the city where, when, and how they want to.
- Torontonians have access to diverse and innovative collections and services that reflect our customers' evolving interests and needs.
- Our staff are have the knowledge, tools and skills to deliver high quality, personalized service in a complex and changing environment. They are aware of what is happening at the library, and act as champions for the library in their communities.

### Proof points

- In the second consultation phase for staff and the public, this focus area ranked first and second, respectively (consultation)
- Many respondents were unaware of services TPL provides, including school assignment help, access to specialized technology, and entrepreneurial support (third-party survey)
- Standardization of library programs across all branches is important for newcomers and vulnerable persons (public focus group)

# draft priority areas

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
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## Focus on staff

Staff are key to achieving our organizational priorities. We will invest in staff to deliver the services our community needs by providing them with the necessary tools, learning and collaboration opportunities.

# discussion questions

- Do the draft priority areas clearly reflect the needs and opportunities we've heard in the consultation process?
- How will these priority areas and outcomes help the library to be successful over the next five years?



**next steps**

**tpl:**

# steering committee 2024 milestones

chair elected,  
environmental scan focus  
areas & consultation plan  
january

phase one external  
consultation results & focus  
areas (workshop)  
may



finalize strategic plan and  
implementation plan  
november

environmental scan &  
phase one internal  
consultation results  
april

phase two consultation  
results, draft strategic  
priority areas  
october



**thank you**

**tpl:**