



ATHENS  
REGIONAL  
**library**  
SYSTEM

# Updated Strategic Plan

**2023–2028**

## **Vision**

Engaging Communities — Exceeding Expectations

## **Mission**

We welcome, empower  
and encourage everyone to discover,  
imagine, and become lifelong learners.



# Introduction

It is an honor to present the updated Strategic Plan for the Athens Regional Library System. Building upon the visionary foundation laid by our previous leadership, we are officially extending this roadmap through 2028. This extension ensures that our goals remain both aspirational and achievable as we continue to evolve alongside the communities we serve.

The Athens Regional Library System is a vibrant network of eleven locations across Clarke, Franklin, Madison, Oconee, and Oglethorpe counties. We are proud to serve more than 250,000 residents, each bringing a unique background and perspective to our libraries. While our five counties are distinct, we are united by a singular mission: to provide exceptional service that meets the needs of every individual who walks through our doors.

## Honoring the Past and Present

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the previous team and the original Strategic Planning Committee for creating the robust framework we use today. Their initial work, led by Fast Forward Libraries, LLC, set a high standard for what our libraries can achieve.

Equally important is the input of our current staff, many of whom participated in both planning processes. This updated plan is a collective effort shaped by the expertise of our entire team. During our Staff Professional Development Day on November 19, 2025, every staff member present contributed their insights and passion to refine our strategic goals. Their commitment to our patrons and their unique understanding of our community's needs have been instrumental in ensuring this extension reflects our current reality. It is because of this shared vision that we move forward with a clear, energized path.

## Looking Toward 2028

As we extend this plan through 2028, we continue to be a place where:

- Everyone is welcome, and inclusiveness is the norm.
- Creativity and lifelong learning are sparked through modern resources.
- Community connections are forged through new partnerships and personal interactions.
- The love of reading continues to be the heartbeat of our organization.

On behalf of our knowledgeable staff, thank you to our residents, government officials, Boards of Trustees, and Library Friends for your continued support. We look forward to serving you through 2028 and beyond.

Beth McIntyre  
Executive Director  
January 2026



# Values

The Athens Regional Library System emphasizes a customer-centered culture. We accomplish this through the everyday practice of our organizational values. It is through our values that we provide an atmosphere and work environment that is:

## Accessible

We are committed to ensuring library services are available and accessible for every individual in our service area. We accomplish this through our policies and procedures, specialized staff training, proactive community outreach, the creation of tailored programs and exhibits, and the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified workforce that reflects the public we serve. Our goal is to remove barriers and create a positive, lasting impact on everyone who interacts with us. By embodying these values, we empower all people to expand their horizons in an environment designed for easy navigation and safe exploration.

## Supportive of our COMMUNITY

We support the success of our community and strengthen the connections we all share. This library is an accessible public resource for the open communication of ideas and information. Our facilities, collections, hours, and services reflect and enhance our community. We engage our community by being responsive and by making a difference. We are full participants in our vision, mission, goals, activities, and plans.

## RESPECTFUL

We treat every person fairly and impartially, providing equitable access to all library resources, information, and technology, and taking into account the individual's needs and requirements. We improve lives by providing services and resources to everyone without consideration of social status, education level, ability, ethnicity, ideas, personal beliefs, age, sexual identity, gender, or citizenship status. We believe, without exception, in validating all voices and treating everyone equitably.

## Committed to EXCELLENCE

We are committed to the highest standards of performance, quality, and service. We act with integrity, honesty, and confidentiality. We focus on the needs and expectations of the community and of our residents. We are empowered to continuously improve and expand our individual and organizational knowledge, skills, abilities, and activities.

## WELCOMING

We believe "helpful" is an active word with a human element. We connect with patrons and each other in positive ways. We help people make the best use of the library. We celebrate the individual uniqueness of our patrons or staff; we anticipate the needs of the individual and community and we adapt to better serve them. As libraries, technologies, and people change, we will transform the resources, services, and programs that we offer. We understand that our connection with people is unique and vital.

# Strategic Goal 1

## We are vital to the community.

We are an essential resource that inspires lifelong learning in the communities we serve. Through enhanced services and partnerships, we are the library system our communities need for continued growth and vitality.

### Objectives

- 1.1 Increase awareness of library resources.
- 1.2 Promote library resources through an engaging patron experience.
- 1.3 Foster partnerships and seek new community connections.
- 1.4 Create welcoming spaces that meet the needs of our residents and library users.
- 1.5 Inspire community members to learn and grow throughout their lifetime.

### Anticipated Results

- Increase in overall library usage
- Community members report receiving excellent customer service
- Increase in and reported satisfaction with partnerships
- Community members report feeling safe and welcome
- Community members report that their needs are being met
- Program attendees report that they had a positive experience



# Strategic Goal 2

We reflect, foster and include communities of all backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences.

Our services reflect and support all the populations we serve. Our libraries provide materials and programs that celebrate a wide variety of cultures and connect community members from different backgrounds and with varying abilities. We also provide expansive access to all library services and further equip the community to confidently explore new technologies.

## Objectives

- 2.1 Identify ways to better support our underserved populations.
- 2.2 Ensure physical & digital resources respond to changing community needs.
- 2.3 Eliminate barriers that limit access to library services and technology.
- 2.4 Develop partnerships to help provide inclusive programming that is available to all and reaches previously underserved populations.
- 2.5 Create opportunities for community members to meet, learn from each other, and celebrate various cultures.

## Anticipated Results

- Community members report that the collection meets their needs
- Increased use of accessible technology resources and services
- Community members report satisfaction with technology access
- Increase in program attendance and overall library usage
- Increase in cultural programs



# Strategic Goal 3

We are a dynamic and valuable organization that is essential for the future of our communities.

We effectively communicate the value our libraries bring to the community by expanding connections with local leaders. We seek grants and other sponsorship opportunities. We systematically and compellingly communicate our successes by reporting our success measures and widely sharing our community impact.

## Objectives

- 3.1 Strengthen relationships with community leaders to ensure understanding of the library's uses, value, and financial needs.
- 3.2 Investigate and pursue additional funding sources to support and enrich the lives of community members.

## Anticipated Results

- County and city leaders report that they value the library
- Increase in conversations with county and city leaders
- Increase in visits to the library by county and city leaders
- Increased fundraising and grants



# Strategic Goal 4

We learn and grow together to foster a positive and thriving work environment.

We collaborate to build positive work cultures that empower staff to grow and succeed. We meet individual and team goals through expanded training, two-way communication, and learning opportunities. We build trust and improve retention by prioritizing equitable wages and increasing transparency.

## Objectives

- 4.1 Foster a culture of mutual respect by truly listening to each other and thoughtfully responding.
- 4.2 Create opportunities to engage with and learn from each other to promote excellent team dynamics.
- 4.3 Continue to increase trust by transparently working to provide equitable wages.
- 4.4 Invest in staff growth by funding both MLIS degree programs and specialized job-specific professional development for all staff.

## Anticipated Results

- Increase in staff retention
- Staff members report that they feel trusted, heard, and part of a team
- Staff members report high job satisfaction
- Staff members report that their strengths are utilized



# Next Steps

## Implementation and Evaluation

Staff have developed activity plans to guide implementation, and many activities have already been completed. Implementation and evaluation are continual processes. The timing of certain activities will be determined by priority and influenced by various factors, such as funding and other resource allocation. Review and adjustment of the activity plan will happen on a regular basis.

Evaluation of the plan will be ongoing once implementation is underway. The status of the plan and its implementation will be reported regularly to trustees and stakeholders.



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