



# Salem Public Library Strategic Plan

## Situation Assessment

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# Executive Summary

Libraries across the United States are evolving in response to demographic changes, emerging community needs, and the availability of new technologies. Salem Public Library (SPL) is no different. SPL, like many other library systems, is navigating new and emerging community and cultural trends, such as:

- The access to and use of technology has caused the relevance of libraries be simultaneously challenged and reinforced. The proliferation of e-books and online databases have positioned libraries to lead on important topics such as digital literacy, whereas technology companies such as Amazon and Google have drastically changed how patrons access books or seek out information.
- As communities like Salem become more diverse, and disparities become more pronounced, the role of libraries as an educational pillar is growing. Not only are libraries at the forefront of ensuring equitable access to information, but they also increasingly supplement our educational system by offering literacy resources and programming for a wide range of residents.
- The modern library is more than just books, or a place to access information. They are our new community centers, where residents can gather to learn new skills, access the internet to apply for jobs, or receive critical social services. The physical space libraries can offer are also used by community groups for training, events, and meetings, or to provide respite for the houseless and other marginalized people.

To better understand both national and community specific dynamics, we engaged with stakeholders to learn from them through a variety of ways: online survey, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. The purpose of this effort was to gather insights on current operations and the opportunities and challenges facing SPL as it prepares to develop a Strategic Plan. Seven key themes emerged from our stakeholder outreach and engagement efforts:

- 1 Stakeholders want SPL to center equity, diversity, and inclusion in all that they do.**
- 2 The Salem community is happy with SPL and would like the library to maximize its impact and reach to as many people as possible.**
- 3 SPL cannot bring its full value to the community due to resource constraints.**
- 4 The community wants SPL to increase accessibility.**
- 5 There is an opportunity for SPL to engage more with the local community.**
- 6 SPL has a passionate team that needs to strengthen its internal culture.**
- 7 Strengthening and standardizing systems, processes, policies, and procedures would improve employees' experience and SPL's services.**

It is within this context that SPL has made the important decision to engage in a strategic planning process to not only identify their long-term vision and direction, but to identify core services given limited resources. Strategic planning within this environment will be as much about focus and prioritization, as it will be about identifying innovative services to meet evolving community needs.



# Methodology

This report is a synthesis of the data collection and stakeholder engagement efforts conducted by Coraggio Group on behalf of Salem Public Library (SPL). The purpose of this effort was to gather insights on current operations and the opportunities and challenges facing the library as it prepares to develop a Strategic Plan. This report was developed in part by asking stakeholders questions about the following topic:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 Mission                                | 5 Library roles                          |
| 2 Values                                 | 6 Collection relevance                   |
| 3 Current and ideal reputation           | 7 Challenges and opportunities           |
| 4 Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) | 8 Organizational assessment (staff only) |

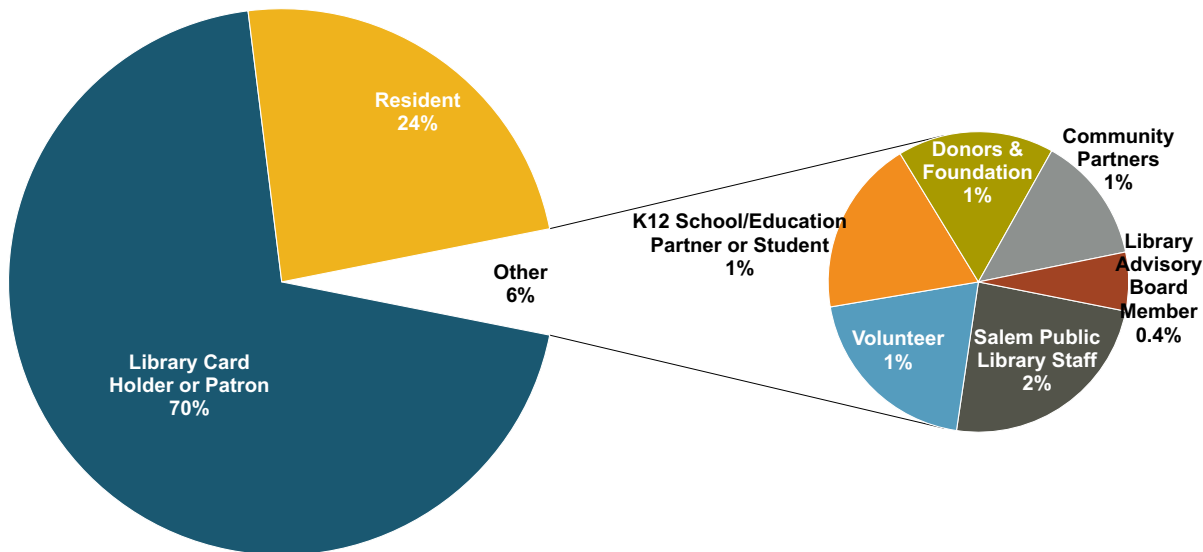
Stakeholder perspectives were captured from a range of partners, including representatives from Salem neighborhood associations, local non-profits, community-based organizations, the Library Advisory Board, Library Foundation, Friends of the Library, and the Teen Advisory Board, in addition to staff of SPL, the City of Salem, and the Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library Service. This included:

- 5 focus groups with a total of 35 focus group participants
- 11 one-on-one interviews

An online survey also ran from June 30, 2021, to July 31, 2021. To improve community accessibility, this survey was available in English, Spanish, Russian, Marshallese, and Chuukese. The survey received 1,522 total respondents from the following demographic groups:

**Figure 1 – Survey Respondents’ Affiliation to SPL N=1522**

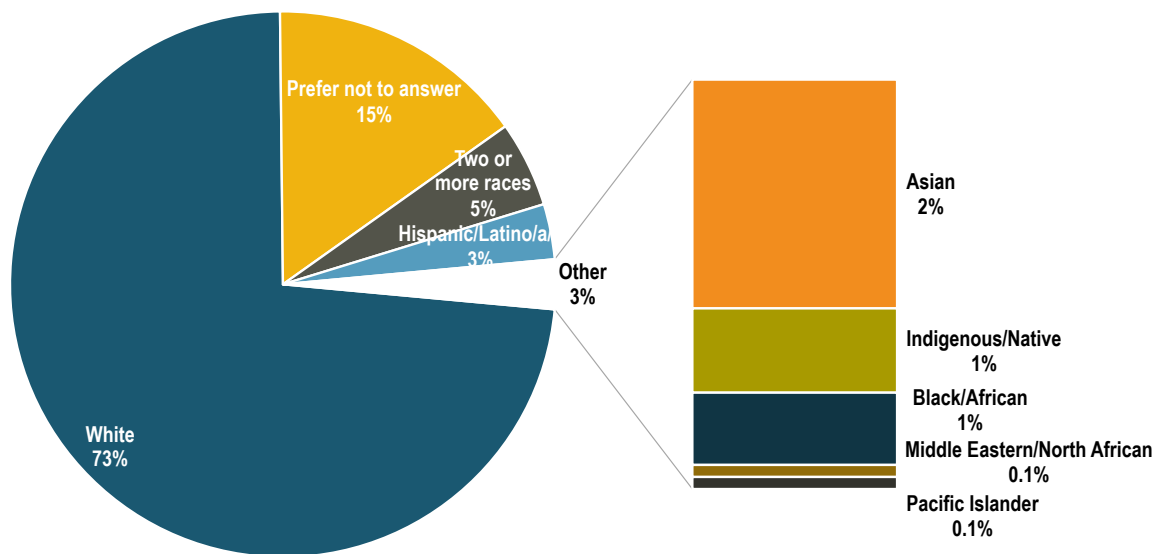
Please identify your primary relationship with Salem Public Library



Note: the survey was conducted almost a year ago and a lot has changed in this past year. It will be important to keep in mind that this survey is only a snapshot of SPL's situation at that period.

**Figure 2 – Survey Respondents’ Race and Ethnicity N=1160**

What is your race/ethnicity?



Coraggio supplemented this engagement with a review of documents and data provided by Salem Public Library and additional research to identify big picture trends affecting libraries nationwide, Salem’s community profile, and a benchmarking of SPL’s services compared to other libraries. Coraggio integrated these data sources with our research and findings from the surveys, focus groups, and interviews, to develop a comprehensive report. The summation of these findings are presented as key themes in the report. Each theme is supported by relevant data and quotations.

- Quantitative questions were analyzed using category means, percentage rates, and frequencies.
- Qualitative, open-ended questions were analyzed by assigning themes influenced by response content and Coraggio’s interpretation of those responses.









# Community Profile

## Populations and Communities:

The Salem Metro Area has 433,353 people as of 2020, according to the 2020 Decennial Census conducted by the United States Census Bureau.<sup>1</sup> Population has grown by approximately 1.0% per year since 2010 with almost all growth coming from non-White communities as shown in Table 1. Portland State University's Oregon Population Forecast Program projects a declining population by 2045 with an Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) of -0.3% between 2045 to 2070.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1 – Salem Metro Area Population and Race/Ethnicity**

Race and Ethnicity (Salem Metro area)	2010		2020		Absolute Change	Relative Change	AAGR
<i>Total population</i>	390,738	100.0%	433,353	100.0%	42,615	10.9%	1.0%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	85,682	21.9%	108,470	25.0%	22,788	26.6%	2.4%
<b>White alone</b>	277,460	71.0%	278,369	64.2%	909	0.3%	0.0%
<b>Black or African American alone</b>	3,300	0.8%	4,469	1.0%	1,169	35.4%	3.1%
<b>American Indian and Alaska Native alone</b>	4,670	1.2%	4,703	1.1%	33	0.7%	0.1%
<b>Asian alone</b>	7,193	1.8%	8,972	2.1%	1,779	24.7%	2.2%
<b>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone</b>	2,455	0.6%	4,013	0.9%	1,558	63.5%	5.0%
<b>Some Other Race alone</b>	490	0.1%	2,113	0.5%	1,623	331.2%	15.7%
<b>Population of two or more races:</b>	9,488	2.4%	22,244	5.1%	12,756	134.4%	8.9%

<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino by Race."

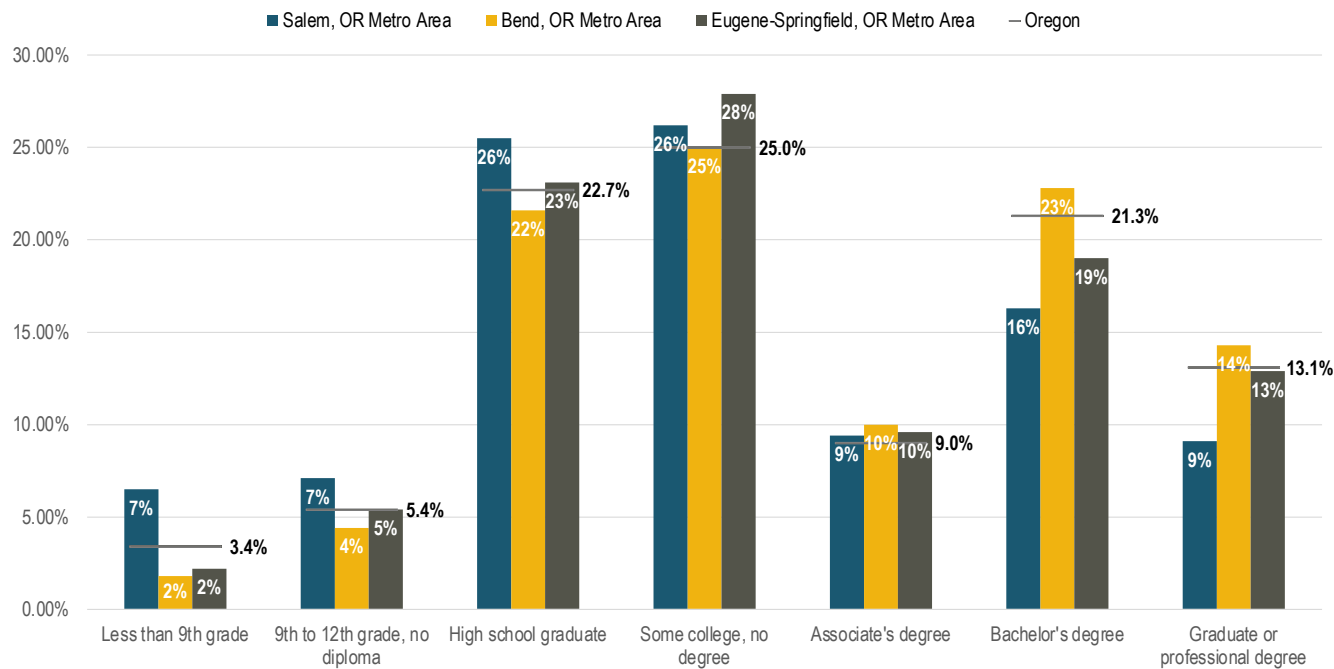
<sup>2</sup> Chen et al., "Oregon Population Forecast Program."

The 2020 American Community Survey estimates that 22.6% of residents in the Salem metro area speak a language other than English at home.<sup>3</sup> Of this group, 38.8% (or 8.8% of Salem metro area residents) speak English less than “very well”.

Salem is below the Oregon state average in education attainment, with 86.4% of the population aged 25 and older having a high school degree or higher, compared to 91.1% statewide. The difference is even more evident when comparing the Salem metro area against the Eugene-Springfield and Bend metro areas, where 92.5% and 93.8% of the same age group respectively are high school graduates or higher.

**Figure 3** shows highest education attainment of Salem residents compared to Eugene-Springfield, Bend, and the state of Oregon.

**Figure 3 – Highest Education Attainment**



Public libraries are typically most utilized by the young, old, and families with young children. According to the 2016-2020 American Community Survey, 24.2% of Salem’s population is 18 years old or younger and 22.5% are 60 years or older.<sup>4</sup> The total of both age groups comprise a larger portion of the population compared to the Portland and Eugene metro areas. This may indicate that the Salem region has a bigger need for a strong library system that can effectively serve both the young and old compared to other cities in Oregon.

<sup>3</sup> United States Census Bureau, “Language Spoken at Home.”

<sup>4</sup> United States Census Bureau, “Age and Sex.”



### Households and Income:

There are a total of 151,200 households within the Salem metro area and the average household size is 2.75.<sup>5</sup> 32.9% of these households have one or more people under the age of 18, higher than the Bend and Eugene-Springfield metro areas which are at 28.6% and 25.1% respectively.

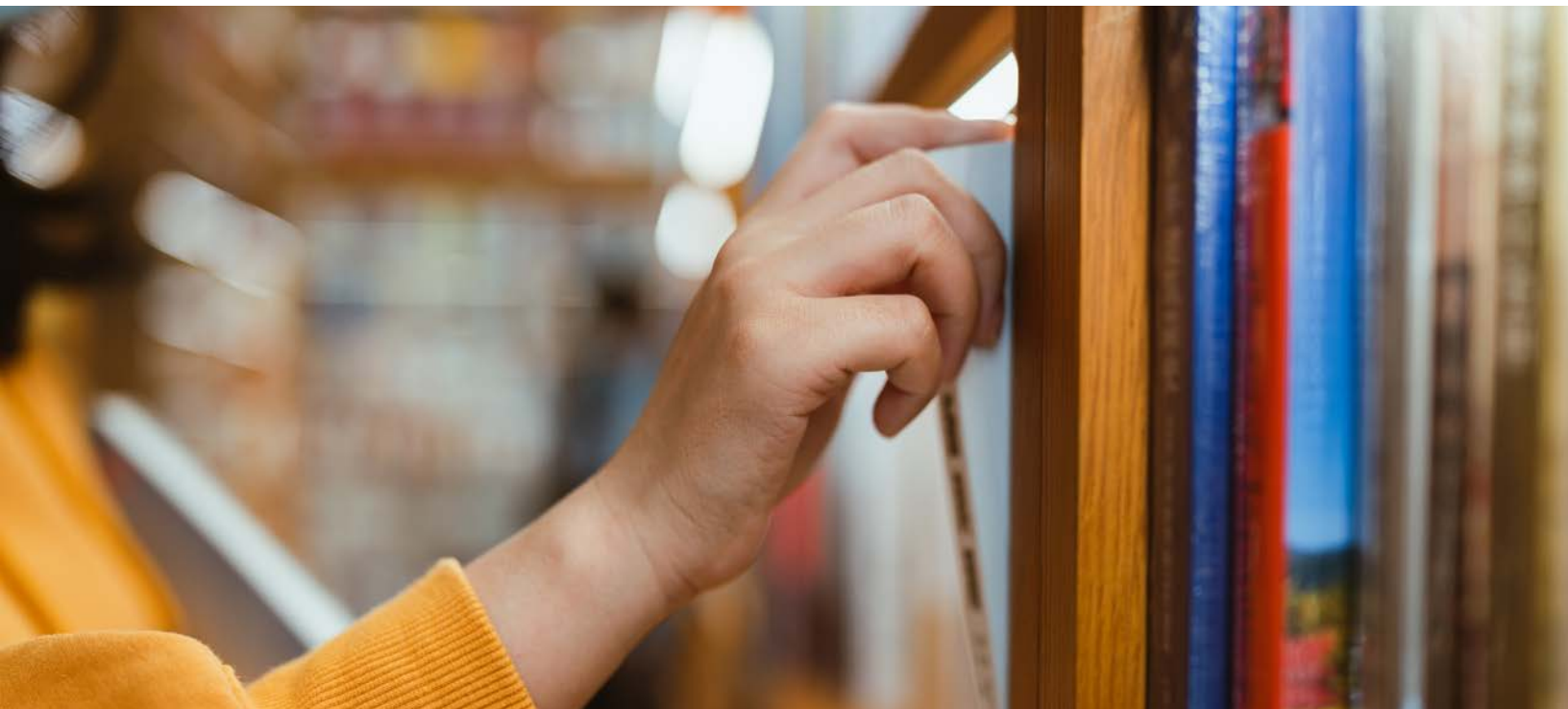
Income statistics for Salem metro area:

- Household median income is \$62,539, on par with the Oregon median income of \$65,667.<sup>6</sup>
- Median rent is \$1,045 a month, or \$12,540 a year. This equates to 20% of the median income in Salem.<sup>7</sup>

### Access to a computer and the Internet:

Marion County has a large percentage of its population (8.9%) that does not have a computer at home.<sup>8</sup> The only other county with more than 150,000 residents that has a higher percentage without a computer at home is Jackson County. Despite low computer ownership, Marion County has a relatively high internet penetration rate compared to other counties with only 16.2% without an internet connection.<sup>9</sup>

Neighboring Polk County (including West Salem) has higher home computer ownership (7.6% without a home computer) and internet penetration rates (14.9% without internet), indicating that residents in the county are more connected to electronic media.<sup>10</sup> Overall, Marion County is on par with other large and rural counties in Oregon such as Lane and Jackson County but lags Deschutes County and the tri-county region of the Portland metro area when it comes to computer and internet access.



<sup>5</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Households and Families."

<sup>6</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Income in the Past 12 Months."

<sup>7</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Selected Housing Characteristics."

<sup>8</sup> Institute of Museum and Library Services, "IMLS Indicators Workbook."

<sup>9</sup> Institute of Museum and Library Services.

<sup>10</sup> Institute of Museum and Library Services.





# Benchmarking

## Methodology:

For the benchmarking analysis, Coraggio Group utilized two different data sources: the Oregon Public Library (ORPL) Statistics dataset for 2019-2020 and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) dataset for nationwide public libraries. Note: the IMLS dataset contains data reported in the 2018-2019 Oregon Public Library Statistics.

The 2019-2020 data from ORPL was selected as the most recent data available prior to the temporary closure of Salem Public Library and provides the most reliable comparison to other libraries in the state. The IMLS dataset (ORPL 2018-2019) was selected as the most recent comparison available to similar libraries outside of Oregon. Coraggio Group also combined the data across the years to better understand how SPL has evolved between 2018 to 2021.

This analysis focused on two primary 'clusters' of public libraries to serve as benchmarks. The Oregon cluster includes all public libraries that serve a population of over 100,000 but excludes the Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library Service (CCRLS). The goal of this comparison is to identify how the experience of a resident in Salem compares to a resident elsewhere in Oregon. The second cluster consists of libraries across the nation that were selected for similar operating conditions using the library finder tool on the IMLS website. These libraries serve a similar population size, have a similar operational budget, and have very similar numbers of staff (in FTE terms). All libraries in this cluster are public libraries and are run by the local city. This second cluster provides insight on SPL's effectiveness in utilizing available resources compared to other libraries that are in a similar situation.

Five key areas of library operations were chosen for benchmarking: budget and general statistics, staffing, collection, circulation, and programs. Within each area, a few key data points were chosen to provide a holistic understanding of SPL's situation and its position relative to other libraries. All relevant statistics were converted into standardized data such as 'per capita' or 'per 1,000 population' to facilitate comparison.

## Summary of findings

**Figure 4 – SPL at a Glance**

	Salem public Library (2019-2020)	Cluster 1 (Oregon Public Libraries) SPL's ranking – 7 total	Cluster 2 (similar libraries nation- wide) SPL's ranking – 6 total
<b>Population</b>	167,400	5	2
<b>Branches</b>	1	5 with Hillsboro and Beaverton	4 with Ontario and Everett
<b>Library card holders (% of total population)</b>	71%	1	2
<b>Revenue/capita</b>	\$31.64	7	5
<b>Expenditure/capita</b>	\$24.46		
<b>% Expenditure on staffing</b>	88%		
<b>% Expenditure on collection</b>	12%		
<b>FTE Staff per 1,000 population</b>	0.27	7	4
<b>Collection/capita</b>	2.43	7	2
<b>Circulation/capita</b>	7.93	6	1
<b>Program attendance per 1,000 population</b>	143.79	6	1

Salem Public Library struggled to meet the standard of other public libraries in Oregon that serve a population of 100,000 or more. In almost every metric, SPL ranked lowest or second lowest among the seven public libraries included in this benchmark cluster.

Despite limited funding and resources, SPL has prioritized staffing and personnel, as well as its collection, spending almost the entirety of its operations budget on these two categories. SPL allocates a higher percentage of funding to these categories to compensate for the dollar amounts being relatively small, making SPL surprisingly competitive in specific areas. For example, despite operating at less than half the operating revenue of Hillsboro and Beaverton libraries, SPL manages to invest \$2.87 per capita in its collection, very comparable to the \$3.06 and \$3.46 per capita at Hillsboro and Beaverton respectively. In terms of programming, SPL organizes the fewest programs among this cluster of libraries yet managed a 14.3% attendance rate from the local community in 2019-2020. In the prior year, SPL achieved a whopping 41.3% attendance rate for programs, surpassing every library in this analysis, and indicating that SPL's programs are attractive and highly effective.

This trend is even more apparent when comparing SPL to the cluster of libraries across the country that share similar operating conditions (service population size, budget, and staffing). Within this cluster, SPL has competitive collection, circulation, and programming ratings, despite being on the lower end of revenue and staffing. In short, SPL has been able accomplish more with every dollar of funding than most other libraries in this comparison.



### Budget and General Statistics:

Salem Public Library has one main library and one branch in West Salem. SPL has a broad reach with around 70% of the service population having a library card. (See Table 2 and Table 4) Note that this figure counts all-time library card applications. According to 2018 estimates, only 15,878 or 25% of households have library cards that were used at least once in the last year. The large discrepancy between the figures reported to Oregon state and the estimates can be partially explained by the lack of an expiry for SPL library cards. No information is available on the reporting definitions of other libraries in this benchmark analysis. To ensure comparative reliability and accuracy, this report will primarily focus on the 70% figures that were reported to the Oregon state.

After getting residents through the door and getting them their library card, SPL does not have the resources to provide as strong of a library experience when compared to its peers in Oregon. Its revenue per capita is just above half the revenue per capita that the next lowest library has, which in turn results in SPL's operating expenditure per capita being the lowest among Oregon peers and even among libraries with similar operating limitations. In addition, revenue per capita appears to be on the decline in the recent years, exacerbating the challenge further.

It is essential to note that funding composition varies significantly from library to library (See Table 3). Library funding can be composed of funding from government general funds, funding from the library cooperative that the library is a part of, as well as additional funding sources such as foundations, grants, etc. What's unique about SPL's funding composition is the significant portion of their funding that comes from the City General Fund. The total amount they receive from the City is comparable to most other libraries in similar sized communities, however SPL doesn't have the additional level of funding from the library cooperative that many other libraries have to add up to supplement their budget. Eugene is one exception where a significant amount of their funding comes from the general fund as well, but they receive a much greater amount of funding per capita than SPL does creating a much larger total revenue amount.

**Table 2 – 2019-2020 Budget and General Statistics among selected Oregon Public Libraries**

Library	Population served	Library card-holders (% of population)	Branches + bookmobiles in addition to main Library	Total ops. revenue per capita	Total ops. expenditure per capita
Multnomah County Library	821,730	49%	18	\$108.09	\$102.56
Jackson County Library	221,290	62%	14	\$54.18	\$45.04
Deschutes Public Library District	193,000	44%	6	\$75.41	\$66.24
Eugene Public Library	171,210	59%	2	\$86.14	\$83.94
Salem Public Library	167,400	71%	1	\$31.64	\$24.46
Hillsboro Public Library	158,738	48%	1	\$74.56	\$46.24
Beaverton Public Library	149,392	67%	1	\$76.92	\$56.44

**Table 3 – 2019-2020 Funding Composition among selected Oregon Public Libraries<sup>11</sup>**

Library	City Revenue	County Revenue (incl. WC-CLS)	District Revenue (incl. CCRLS)	State Revenue	Total Federal Revenue	Other Revenue
<b>Multnomah County Library</b>	\$195,860	\$35,000	\$85,554,413	\$112,224	\$0	\$2,922,823
<b>Jackson County Library</b>	\$0	\$0	\$10,615,960	\$36,353	\$106,110	\$1,231,894
<b>Deschutes Public Library District</b>	\$0	\$0	\$13,913,365	\$63,294	\$0	\$577,320
<b>Eugene Public Library</b>	\$13,969,273	\$0	\$0	\$22,520	\$0	\$755,974
<b>Salem Public Library</b>	\$4,492,947	\$0	\$657,371	\$29,187	\$0	\$117,285
<b>Hillsboro Public Library</b>	\$6,087,857	\$5,553,058	\$0	\$17,033	\$0	\$177,295
<b>Beaverton Public Library</b>	\$5,170,196	\$6,090,115	\$0	\$15,696	\$0	\$215,884

**Table 4 – 2018-2019 Budget and General Statistics among similar libraries<sup>12</sup>**

Library	Population served	Library card-holders (% of population)	Branches + bookmobiles	Total ops. revenue per capita	Total ops. expenditure per capita
<b>Ontario City Library, CA</b>	178,268	61%	1	\$28.93	\$28.76
<b>Salem Public Library, OR</b>	165,265	70%	1	\$30.60	\$27.73
<b>Salinas Public Library, CA</b>	162,797	30%	2 + 1	\$35.55	\$29.36
<b>Orange Public Library, CA</b>	141,691	40%	2	\$41.51	\$37.47
<b>Roseville Public Library, CA</b>	139,643	81%	2	\$35.30	\$33.66
<b>Everett Public Library, WA</b>	111,800	37%	1	\$44.36	\$42.05

<sup>11</sup> This data is self-reported by libraries to the Oregon State. Some libraries chose to include funding from library cooperatives under 'County Revenue'. Example: Hillsboro Public Library and Beaverton Public Library include revenue from the Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) under county revenue. SPL chose to report its funding from Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library Services (CCRLS) under 'District Revenue' and is reflected accordingly in the data.

<sup>12</sup> Pelczar et al., "Public Libraries Survey FY2019."

**Table 5 – Time series of SPL’s Budget and General Statistics<sup>13</sup>**

Year	Population served	Library cardholders (% of population)	Total operating revenue per capita	Total operating expenditure per capita
2018 – 2019	165,265	70%	\$30.60	\$27.73
2019 – 2020	167,400	71%	\$31.64	\$24.46
2020 – 2021	168,970	70%	\$28.35	\$25.65

<sup>13</sup> State Library of Oregon, “2020-21 v1.3 Oregon Public Library Statistical Report Data.”





### Staffing:

88% of Salem Public Library's total operating expenditure is spent on staffing costs which comprise wages/salaries and employee benefits. This corresponds to 45% of operating revenue spent on wages. The overall spend on staffing is within expected bounds but spending 45% of revenue on wages is significantly higher than other libraries. **Table 6** shows in 2019-2020, SPL spent at least 6% more of its revenue on wages compared to other with other libraries in Oregon that serve a large population. According to the IBISWorld US Industry Report for Libraries and Archives, the industry spends 36.9% of revenue on wages.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, SPL spends about 47.3% of revenue on wages.

Despite the high percentage of revenue going to wages, SPL only manages to fund 45.35 FTE positions, corresponding to a ratio of 0.27 FTE staff per 1,000 residents. This is the lowest of all the Oregon libraries included in this comparison. For contrast, Multnomah County Library has the highest ratio at 0.65 FTE staff for every 1,000 residents. SPL only has 0.34 FTE positions per 10,000 circulations, creating more work managing circulations for each staff member. Of course, managing circulations is only a portion of staff responsibilities, but it provides an indication of how much 'mission-critical' work each staff needs to do.

When compared with other libraries with similar operating characteristics, SPL stands out with a low 0.25 FTE positions per 10,000 circulations. As these libraries share similar population and staff numbers, this is a stark difference. At its 2018-2019 staff and population levels, SPL staff were doing 33% more work than staff at the Roseville Public Library, and nearly 400% (4 times) the amount of work that staff at the Salinas Public Library were doing to manage their respective collections.

In short, the Salem Public Library has designated a significant amount of revenue to be used for staffing, yet it is still very understaffed compared to every public library in Oregon that serves a population of 100,000 or more. The high 'mission-critical' workload in managing circulations further exacerbates the issue. Ultimately, SPL is left with limited funds and staff capacity which makes it challenging for them to provide services that go beyond standard operation.

**Table 6 – 2019-2020 Staffing Statistics among selected Oregon libraries<sup>15</sup>**

Library	FTE Staff per 1,000 served	FTE Staff per 10,000 circulation	Staff expenditures as a percent of total expenditure	Wages as a percent of total revenue
Multnomah County Library	0.65	0.36	65%	36%
Jackson County Library	0.38	0.56	41%	25%
Deschutes Public Library District	0.51	0.47	65%	38%
Eugene Public Library	0.60	0.49	72%	39%
Salem Public Library	0.27	0.34	88%	45%
Hillsboro Public Library	0.56	0.46	86%	38%
Beaverton Public Library	0.47	0.32	82%	38%

<sup>14</sup> Zheng, "Libraries & Archives."

<sup>15</sup> State Library of Oregon, "2019-20 Oregon Public Library Statistical Report Data."

**Table 7 – 2018-2019 Staffing Statistics among similar libraries<sup>16</sup>**

Library	FTE Staff per 1,000 served	FTE Staff per 10,000 circulation	Staff expenditures as a percent of total expenditure	Wages as a percent of total revenue
Ontario City Library, CA	0.27	0.61	73%	No data
<b>Salem Public Library, OR</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>48%</b>
Salinas Public Library, CA	0.25	1.02	81%	No data
Orange Public Library, CA	0.28	0.55	66%	No data
Roseville Public Library, CA	0.28	0.33	59%	No data
Everett Public Library, WA	0.42	0.50	79%	No data

**Table 8 – Time series of SPL's Staffing<sup>17</sup>**

Year	FTE Staff per 1,000 served	FTE Staff per 10,000 circulation	Staff expenditures as a percent of total expenditure	Wages as a percent of total revenue
<b>2018 – 2019</b>	0.25	0.25	82%	48%
<b>2019 – 2020</b>	0.27	0.34	88%	45%
<b>2020 – 2021</b>	0.28	1.12	88%	49%

<sup>16</sup> Pelczar et al., "Public Libraries Survey FY2019."

<sup>17</sup> State Library of Oregon, "2020-21 v1.3 Oregon Public Library Statistical Report Data."

### Collection:

12% of the total annual expenditure is spent on maintaining and updating the collection at Salem Public Library. This is higher than the average of the comparison group of libraries, even that of Multnomah County Library, however, it still only amounts to \$2.87 per capita. Given that SPL already spends 88% of total expenditure on staffing, this 12% accounts for the remaining total expenditure, leaving very little to no funds for any other expenses. These high percentages are likely due in part to SPL's limited funding, requiring that money to be spent where it is needed most. SPL is the only library on this list that devotes almost all its expenditure into these two areas, which may indicate that other aspects of SPL's operations are not adequately funded.<sup>18</sup>

The Salem Public Library has 1.80 physical items per capita and 0.63 digital items per capita, and 2.43 total collection units per capita. These numbers are surpassed by all other selected libraries in Oregon, but SPL has more collection units per capita when compared with other libraries with similar operation limitations.

SPL's collection expanded 13% in 2019-2020 and 9.2% in 2020-2021, the lowest of all the Oregon libraries shown in **Table 9**. The digital collection drove most of the expansion with a 32% growth in 2019-2020 and in 2020-2021, and SPL's digital collection growth was higher than all other libraries with a 36% growth. Operating restrictions during this time caused SPL to put more funding into digital resources but this is not reflective of what SPL is able to achieve within the current budget landscape and regular collection maintenance.

The expansion rate of a collection is expected to slow down as the collection size increases. For example: purchasing 2.6 million items to double Multnomah County Library's collection is a much more difficult and expensive undertaking compared to doubling SPL's collection that comprises under 0.5 million items.

**Table 9 – 2019-2020 Collection Statistics among selected Oregon libraries<sup>19</sup>**

Library	Total Physical and Digital units per capita	Collection Growth (physical and digital)	Total collection expenditures per capita	Collection expenditures as a percent of total expenditure
Multnomah County Library	3.07	18%	\$10.01	10%
Jackson County Library	2.45	21%	\$5.70	13%
Deschutes Public Library District	4.91	22%	\$10.21	15%
Eugene Public Library	7.80	23%	\$7.15	9%
Salem Public Library	2.43	13%	\$2.87	12%
Hillsboro Public Library	3.06	20%	\$3.03	7%
Beaverton Public Library	3.46	18%	\$3.01	5%

<sup>18</sup> Library Research Service, "Definition of Terms."

<sup>19</sup> State Library of Oregon, "2019-20 Oregon Public Library Statistical Report Data."



**Table 10 – 2018-2019 Collection Statistics among similar libraries<sup>20</sup>**

Library	Total Physical and Digital units per capita	Collection Growth (physical and digital)	Total collection expenditures per capita	Collection expenditures as a percent of total expenditure
Ontario City Library, CA	1.70	No data	\$2.21	8%
Salem Public Library, OR	2.37	No data	\$3.33	12%
Salinas Public Library, CA	5.85	No data	\$2.07	7%
Orange Public Library, CA	1.88	No data	\$1.88	5%
Roseville Public Library, CA	1.50	No data	\$1.61	5%
Everett Public Library, WA	1.98	No data	\$6.00	14%

**Table 11 – Time series of SPL's Collection<sup>21</sup>**

Year	Total Physical and Digital units per capita	Collection Growth (physical and digital)	Total collection expenditures per capita	Collection expenditures as a percent of total expenditure
2018 – 2019	2.37	No data	\$3.33	12%
2019 – 2020	2.43	13%	\$2.87	12%
2020 – 2021	2.74	9%	\$2.99	12%

<sup>20</sup> Pelczar et al., "Public Libraries Survey FY2019."

<sup>21</sup> State Library of Oregon, "2020-21 v1.3 Oregon Public Library Statistical Report Data."

### Circulation:

The average resident of Salem does not utilize many library resources with only 10.04 and 7.93 circulations per capita in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 respectively. In 2020-2021, circulation fell drastically to 2.5 per capita, likely due to the renovations and pandemic related limitations that resulted in library closures and reductions in services. Due to the unique circumstance of the renovations, it would make sense to omit the circulation data for 2020-2021.

These low overall circulation numbers could partly be attributed to a limited local collection at SPL. However, the high turnover rate (number of circulations each item in the collection goes through in a year) indicates that the materials that are available at SPL are being utilized, more so than at many other libraries as shown in **Table 12** and **Table 13**. Similarly, SPL has a high number of interlibrary loans (ILLs) borrowed for every 1,000 circulations, up to 169.67 in 2020-2021 (see **Table 14**). This suggests that SPL increasingly functions as a point of access to a broader network of information through the cooperative, allowing patrons to find information not found in the local collection.<sup>22</sup>

**Table 12 – 2019-2020 Circulation Statistics among selected Oregon libraries<sup>23</sup>**

Library	Circulation per capita	Turnover rate	Interlibrary loans borrowed per 1000 circulation
Multnomah County Library	17.99	5.86	0.80
Jackson County Library	6.82	2.79	2.93
Deschutes Public Library District	10.89	2.22	28.27
Eugene Public Library	12.29	1.58	0.02
Salem Public Library	7.93	3.26	57.55
Hillsboro Public Library	12.33	4.03	340.00
Beaverton Public Library	14.54	4.20	320.88

<sup>22</sup> Library Research Service, "Definition of Terms."

<sup>23</sup> State Library of Oregon, "2019-20 Oregon Public Library Statistical Report Data."

**Table 13 – 2018-2019 Circulation Statistics among similar libraries<sup>24</sup>**

Library	Circulation per capita	Turnover rate	Interlibrary loans borrowed per 1000 circulation
Ontario City Library, CA	4.43	2.61	0.23
<b>Salem Public Library, OR</b>	<b>10.04</b>	<b>4.24</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Salinas Public Library, CA	2.41	0.41	0.00
Orange Public Library, CA	5.09	2.71	0.06
Roseville Public Library, CA	8.35	5.56	0.03
Everett Public Library, WA	8.39	4.24	1.01

**Table 14 – Time series of SPL's Circulation<sup>25</sup>**

Year	Circulation per capita	Turnover rate	Interlibrary loans borrowed per 1000 circulation
<b>2018 – 2019</b>	10.04	4.24	0.00
<b>2019 – 2020</b>	7.93	3.26	57.55
<b>2020 – 2021</b>	2.47	0.90	169.67

<sup>24</sup> Pelczar et al., "Public Libraries Survey FY2019."

<sup>25</sup> State Library of Oregon, "2020-21 v1.3 Oregon Public Library Statistical Report Data."



### Programs:

SPL has been a leader in prior years in library programming across the state and among similar libraries, bringing in over 413.14 people out of every 1,000 people served (41.3% of the service population) in 2018-2019. (see **Table 16**) Due to closures from renovations and the pandemic, this number has shrunk to only 48.51 per 1,000 served (4.9% of the service population) in 2020-2021. In addition, SPL programming was highly effective among children, bringing in 78% and 84% of all program attendance in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 respectively. (see **Table 17**)

These large declines in programs over a two-year time frame have undoubtedly impacted patron satisfaction. However, given the limited resources, SPL may need to be intentional around which programs are restarted and which are not.

**Table 15 – 2019-2020 Programs Statistics among selected Oregon libraries**

Library	Total programs	Total program attendance	Percent of total attendance at Children's programs	Program attendance per 1,000 served
Multnomah County Library	11,276	181,147	73%	220.45
Jackson County Library	2,912	42,413	76%	191.66
Deschutes Public Library District	1,919	69,143	67%	358.25
Eugene Public Library	1,513	41,470	75%	242.22
Salem Public Library	352	24,070	84%	143.79
Hillsboro Public Library	601	18,660	44%	117.55
Beaverton Public Library	1,414	52,475	86%	351.26

**Table 16 – 2018-2019 Programs Statistics among similar libraries<sup>26</sup>**

Library	Total programs	Total program attendance	Percent of total attendance at Children's programs	Program attendance per 1,000 served
Ontario City Library, CA	1,081	31,543	73%	176.94
Salem Public Library, OR	2,411	68,277	78%	413.14
Salinas Public Library, CA	1,393	30,100	94%	184.89
Orange Public Library, CA	588	22,846	83%	161.24
Roseville Public Library, CA	630	23,153	92%	165.80
Everett Public Library, WA	896	28,213	76%	252.35

<sup>26</sup> Pelczar et al., "Public Libraries Survey FY2019."

**Table 17 – Time series of SPL’s Programming<sup>27</sup>**

Year	Total programs	Total program attendance	Percent of total attendance at Children’s programs	Program attendance per 1,000 served
2018 – 2019	2,411	68,277	78%	413.14
2019 – 2020	352	24,070	84%	143.79
2020 – 2021	174	8,196	60%	48.51

<sup>27</sup> State Library of Oregon, “2020-21 v1.3 Oregon Public Library Statistical Report Data.”









# Themes

The key themes of this report (below) represent insights that stakeholders identified as being critical or that arose in the benchmarking process and were considered strategically significant in Coraggio's analysis:

- 1 Stakeholders want SPL to center equity, diversity, and inclusion in all that they do.
- 2 The Salem community is happy with SPL and would like the library to maximize its impact and reach as many people as possible.
- 3 SPL cannot bring its full value to the community due to resource constraints.
- 4 The community wants SPL to increase accessibility.
- 5 There is an opportunity for SPL to engage more with the local community.
- 6 SPL has a passionate team that needs to strengthen its internal culture.
- 7 Strengthening and standardizing systems, processes, policies, and procedures would improve employees' experience and SPL's services.



## Stakeholders want SPL to center equity, diversity, and inclusion in all that they do.

### Insights

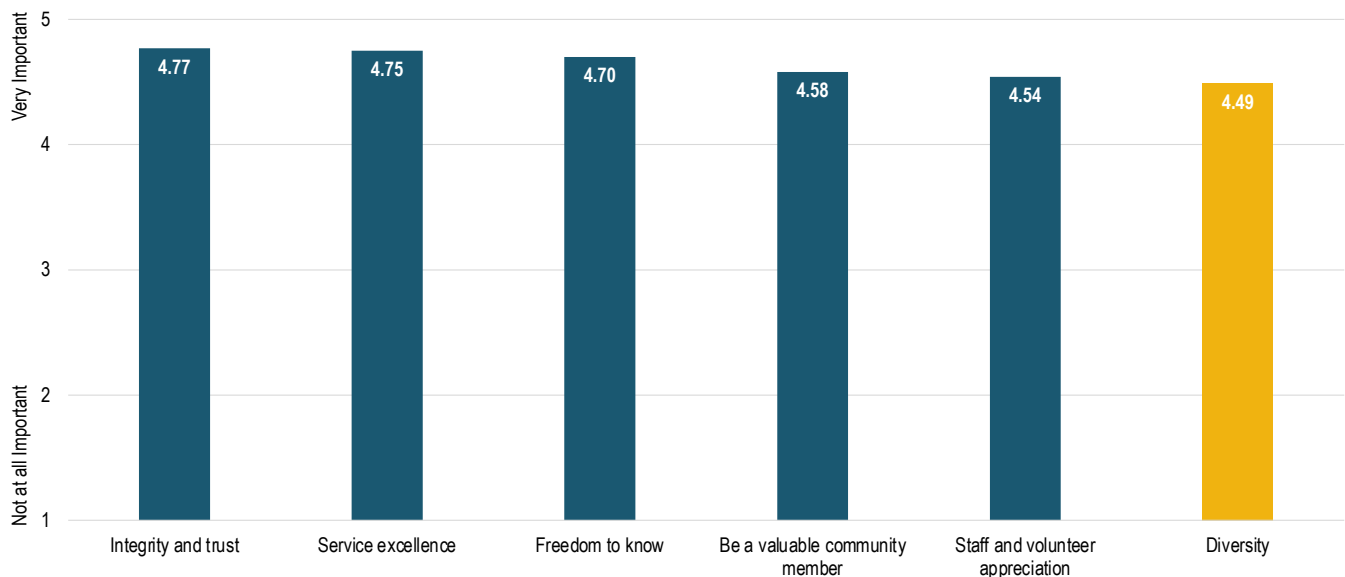
- Many stakeholders pointed to ways that SPL is already taking steps to be more equitable, diverse, and inclusive, however they also see significant opportunities to clarify and deepen this work. Many would like for SPL to be much more intentional in this regard. EDI is a factor within all the themes in this report.
- Diversity, like all of SPL's current values, was rated as important by stakeholders (see **Figure 5**) and Diverse was the word most frequently used to describe the SPL collection (see **Figure 6**). “Inclusive”, “accessible”, and “equity” were also the words stakeholders most frequently used to describe the existing or desired culture (see **Figure 7**). However, stakeholders gave just average ratings when it comes to SPL actively engaging and partnering with historically marginalized and underrepresented communities and effectively serving historically marginalized and underrepresented patrons (see **Figure 8**).
- Some stakeholders spoke of the library as a critical tool for building equity in the community and encouraged the City of Salem to see the value, importance, and possibilities for the library in this regard. Some even see the potential for the library to be a leader in terms of EDI within the City and broader community.
- It is deeply important to stakeholders, including SPL staff, that the library is a place that all community members feel not just welcomed, but truly included. With Salem's population growth primarily coming from non-White communities, stakeholders want SPL to better mirror the community in terms of staffing, the collection, programs, services, organizational culture, etc. (see **Figure 9**). The importance of SPL hiring more Spanish-speaking staff came up often. However, increased representation and more inclusive and equitable services for people from across wide range of areas of diversity also came up, including BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, people who are differently abled, deaf, or hard of hearing, as well as people living at the poverty line or experiencing homelessness.
- Many staff expressed a desire for a more strategic and focused approach to integrating EDI at SPL, including an action plan and training for staff. Some shared confusion exists about if and how the library was to fit into city-wide EDI efforts as they were unclear of the status of that work within the City.

## Implications

1. While it is important that SPL align with the City of Salem's EDI goals and initiatives, SPL may also want to identify their own library-specific EDI related goals and initiatives. Many potential focus areas are raised in other themes within this report.
2. Increasing diversity and representation within SPL staff and working towards SPL being a place where all staff and community members feel included should be prioritized.
3. The City of Salem Draft Equity Lens can be utilized across SPL to promote more equitable practices, policies, programs, and outcomes.
4. As highlighted in the community profile section of this report, the demographics of the City of Salem are shifting towards fewer residents that identify as white and more that don't speak English at home. Given these changes, a focus on EDI will be critical to ensure the library has the capabilities needed to serve its changing community into the future.

**Figure 5 – Salem Public Library Values N=1328**

Please rate how important you believe each value is in creating a positive culture and atmosphere for the library?





**Figure 6 – Library Collection Descriptors N=1129**

What words would you use to describe the library's collection?



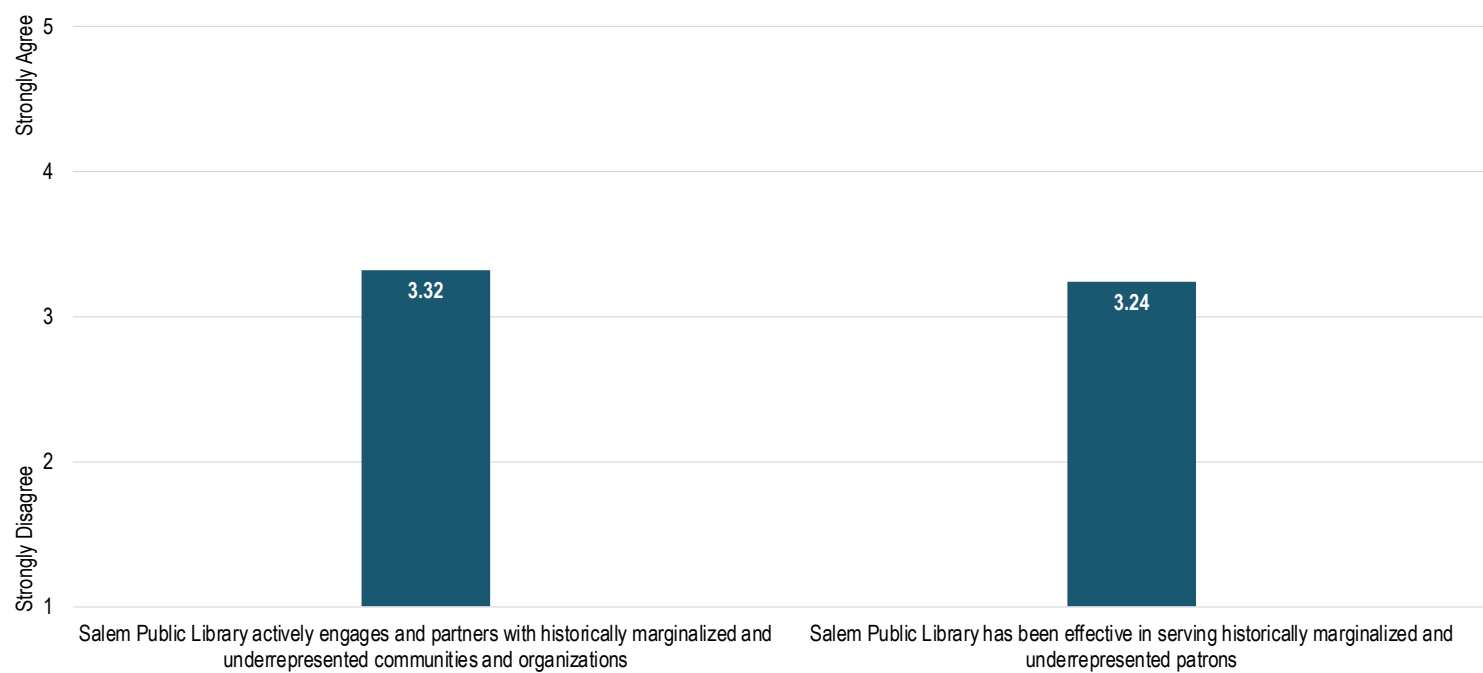
**Figure 7 – Other words that describe the culture/atmosphere N=1522**

Are there any other words you would like to suggest that better describe the existing or desired culture and atmosphere for the library?



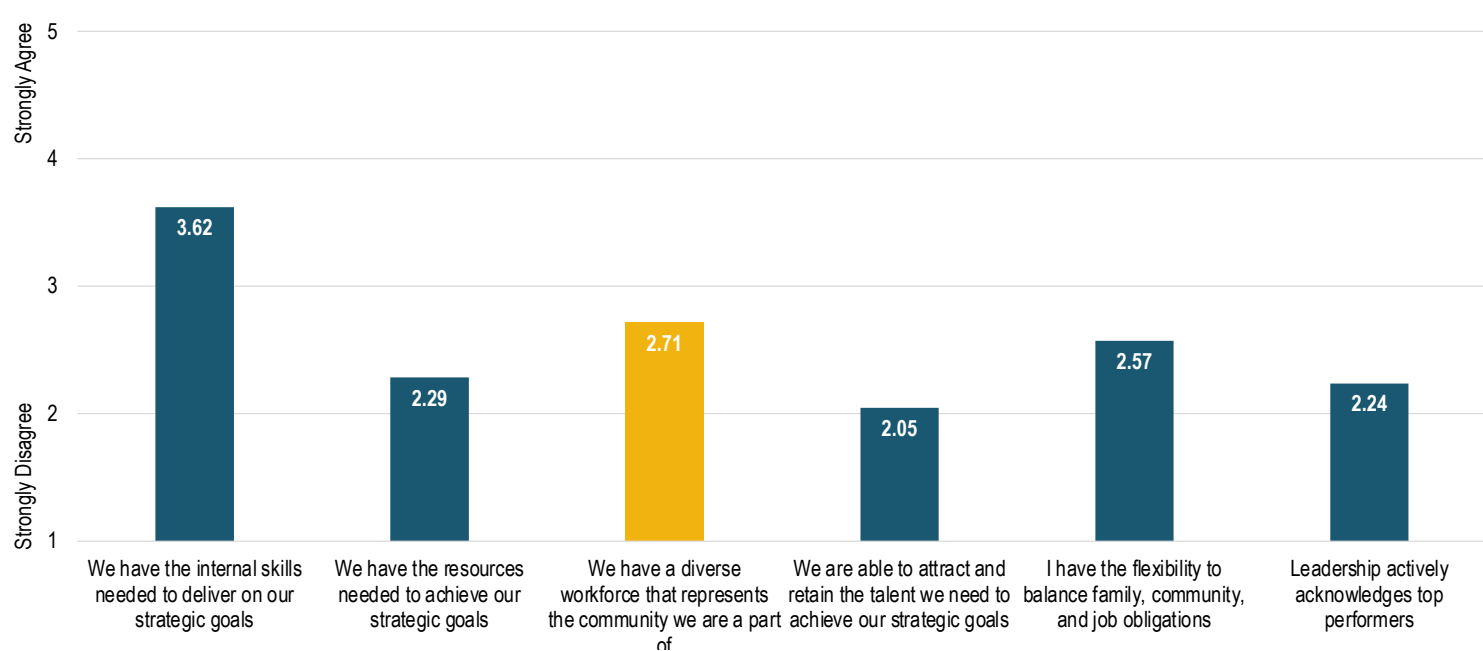
**Figure 8 – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion N=1129**

Please indicate your agreement with the statements below:



**Figure 9 – Capabilities, Rewards, and Talents N=21**

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding capabilities, talents, and rewards:



## What we heard

“We need to expand services and outreach to underrepresented communities, including LGBTQ+, BIPOC, the disability community, and people living at the poverty level.”

“There needs to be more bicultural and bilingual representation in their leadership team and employees who have a more nuanced understanding of what resources and programming need to be to serve the community. You need people who are willing to discuss interests with the community.”

“The library is about literacy and fostering a love of reading and to explore and be curious above the world. It is a significant equalizer for people and has important equity roles to play”

“I want the library to be known not just for serving the community but also as champions of inclusivity and diversity. I want to see more people in the library who aren’t cis/white/middle class.”

“We need to keep up with our Spanish language materials and add more materials in other languages. This needs to be a focus – a rich vibrant second language collection.”

“Library staff tried to get their own EDI sessions going specifically for the library and we were told we couldn’t do that and had to go with the citywide initiative, which has never trickled down to us.”

“If we focus on improving service for undeserved groups, it will benefit everyone. DEI needs to be our guiding light.”

“Strategically maximize the library as an agent of equality.”

“Ensure all library staff and volunteers are trained and knowledgeable in creating a truly inclusive environment.”

“The city needs a bilingual strategy to really engage and reach the community. This needs to happen at all levels. We need to serve Spanish speaking families but also other existing communities and new refugees.”

“Lots of people don’t see their culture at the library. If it is public, it needs to be representative.”

“We need DEI included in every element of what we do, it can’t be an afterthought. It must be interwoven with how we provide services, and how we do the work. We need structural support to protect us as we make progress in broader and more meaningful ways. Right now, we’re individually cobbling ideas together.”

“We need to address habit, location, and language to make sure the library reflects our community. This will take planning, intention, and commitment. It will not happen accidentally.”





## The Salem community is happy with SPL and would like the library to maximize its impact and reach as many people as possible.

### Insights

- Library card holders and residents of Salem appreciate the value that SPL brings to the community and are great promoters, giving the library a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 43 and 24 respectively. (see **Figure 10**)
- Focus group and interview participants often expressed positive sentiment, together with a desire to see SPL expand and reach more people, especially marginalized communities. While some stakeholders seemed to understand the resource constraints SPL is operating within and expressed appreciation for what SPL is still able to accomplish, many stakeholders are not aware of these limitations.
- Respondents believe that most of the roles that public libraries can play to serve patrons and the community are important and would like to see them fulfilled (see **Figure 11** and **Figure 12**). The role they believe is most critical for the community is promoting literacy and lifelong learning. Many stakeholders would like to see SPL support more community members and more diverse groups in areas of literacy and lifelong learning.
- Stakeholders see the mission of SPL as easy to understand and relevant to the future work that the library should be doing, however some stakeholders do not feel that the mission is personally critical to them. (see **Figure 13**)
- All survey respondents strongly believe SPL's current values are important in creating a positive culture and atmosphere for the library and would like to see them further embedded into the work that SPL does. (see **Figure 14**)
- Words such as “helpful”, “friendly”, “welcoming”, and “community” are used to describe SPL's current reputation and stakeholders desire to see this reputation continue. (see **Figure 15** and **Figure 16**)
- While SPL staff also expressed the sense that the community is generally very pleased with their services, they also noted instances where the community hasn't always seemed to understand, agree with, or appreciate the decisions SPL has made due to resource availability or staff's knowledge of best practices as library science experts and professionals. This may suggest a need for better two-way communication between the community and SPL.

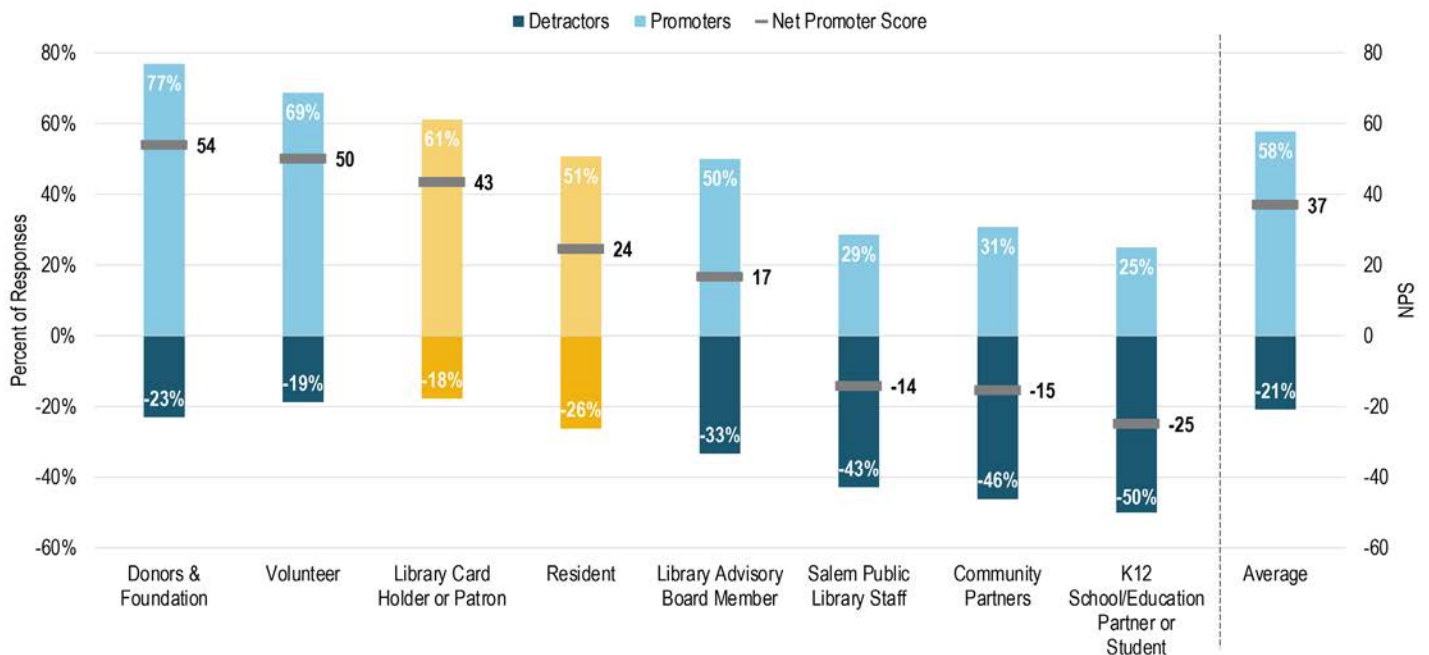
## Implications

1. SPL has a strong foundational relationship and reputation with the community. SPL can further demonstrate its value to the community by enhancing channels for two-way communication to both share more about services, benefits, and how decisions are made, as well as learning more about community interest and needs.
2. Given limited resources, it is especially important that SPL is intentional in prioritizing future roles and services based on community needs and priorities, such as promoting literacy and lifelong learning. While limitations may make it challenging for SPL to add more services, those that they do offer can be focused on increasing accessibility and remaining relevant, based on industry trends and community interests.
3. SPL's positive reputation and goodwill in the community provides it a strong foundation to garner the support and resources it needs for the successful implementation of the strategic plan.

**Figure 10 – NPS by Affiliation N=1241**

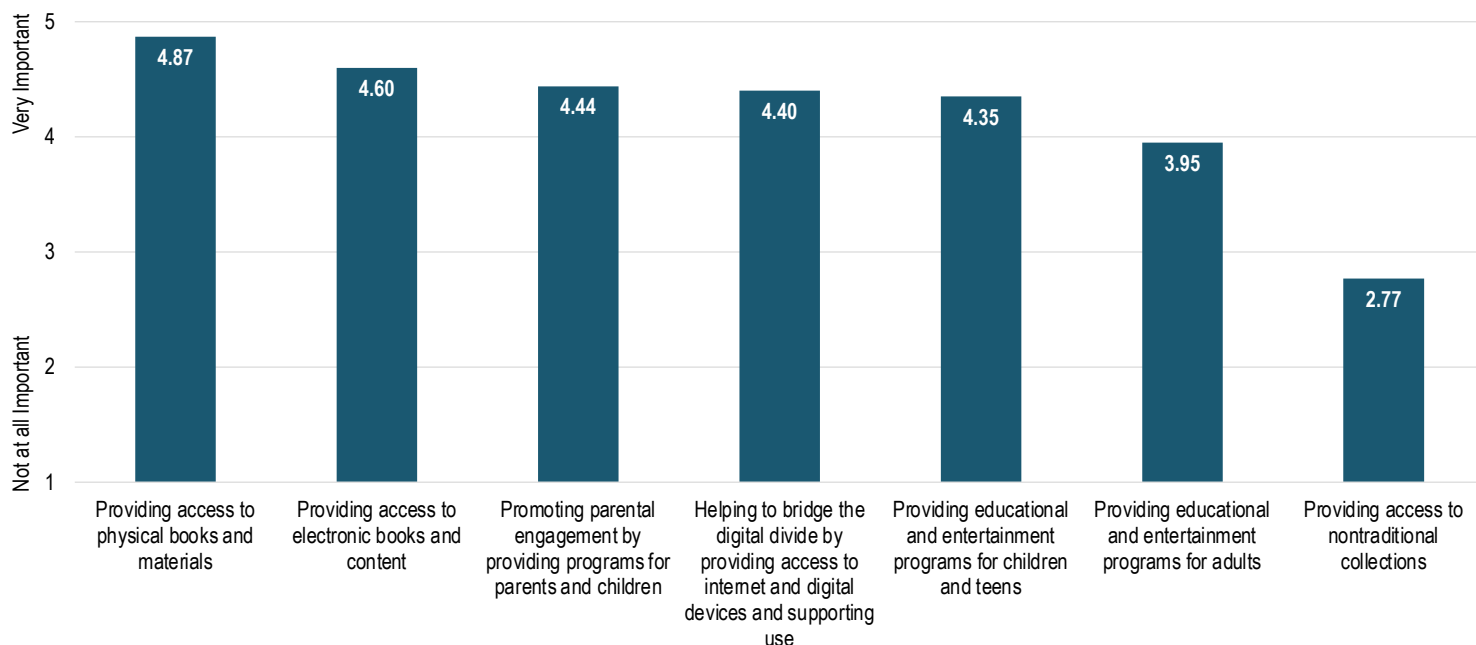
How likely is it that you would recommend working with or for SPL to a friend or colleague?

Score ranges from -100 to 100 with a score of 0 to 10 considered fair, 10 to 30 good, 30 to 50 excellent and 50+ world class.



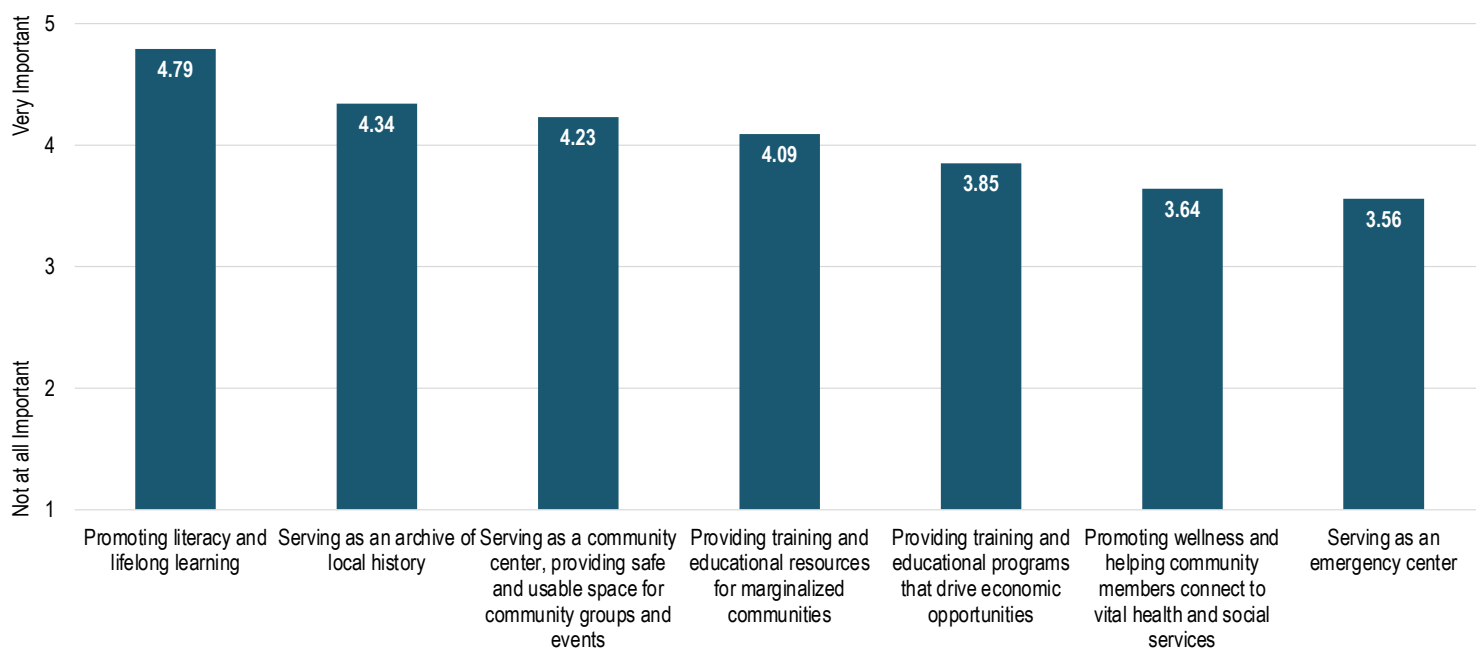
**Figure 11 – Roles for Patrons N=1230**

Please rate how important you think it is for Salem Public Library to play each of the following roles that public libraries can play for their **patrons**:



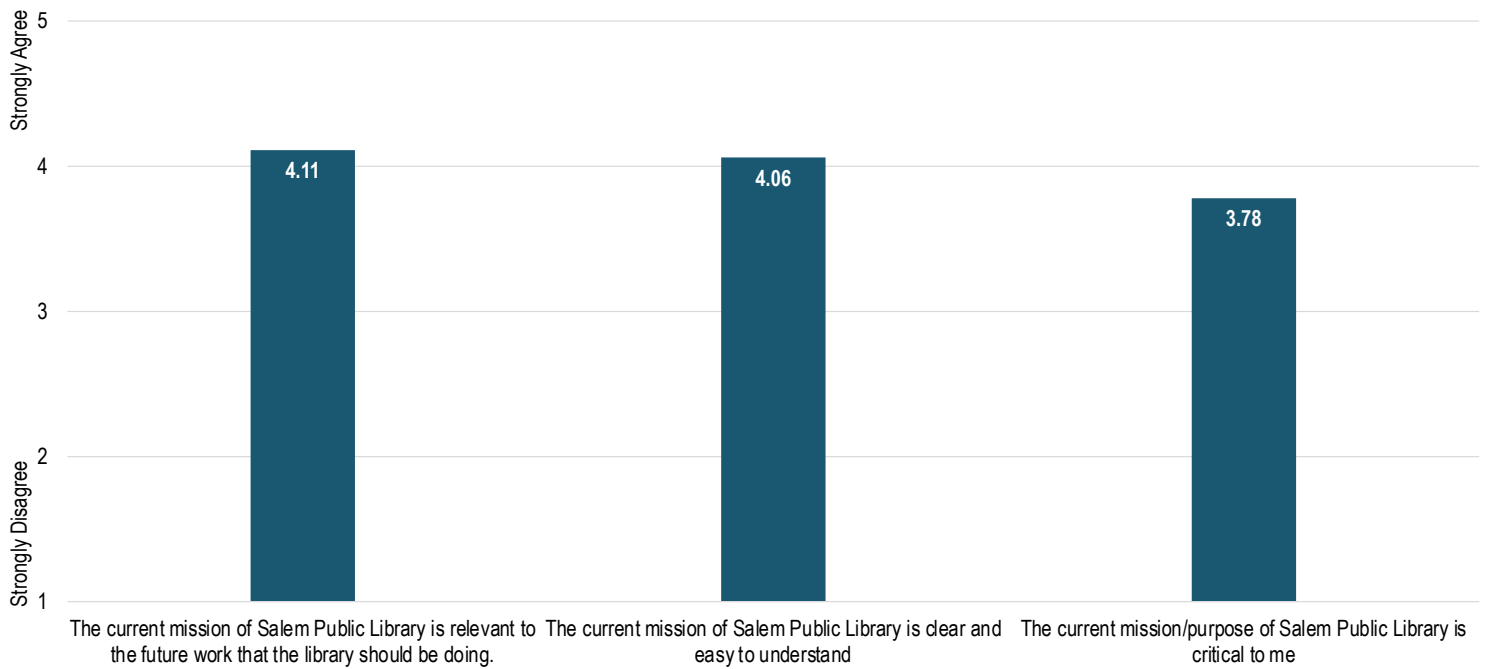
**Figure 12 – Roles for the Community N=1229**

Please rate how important you think it is for Salem Public Library to play each of the following roles that public libraries can play for their **community**:



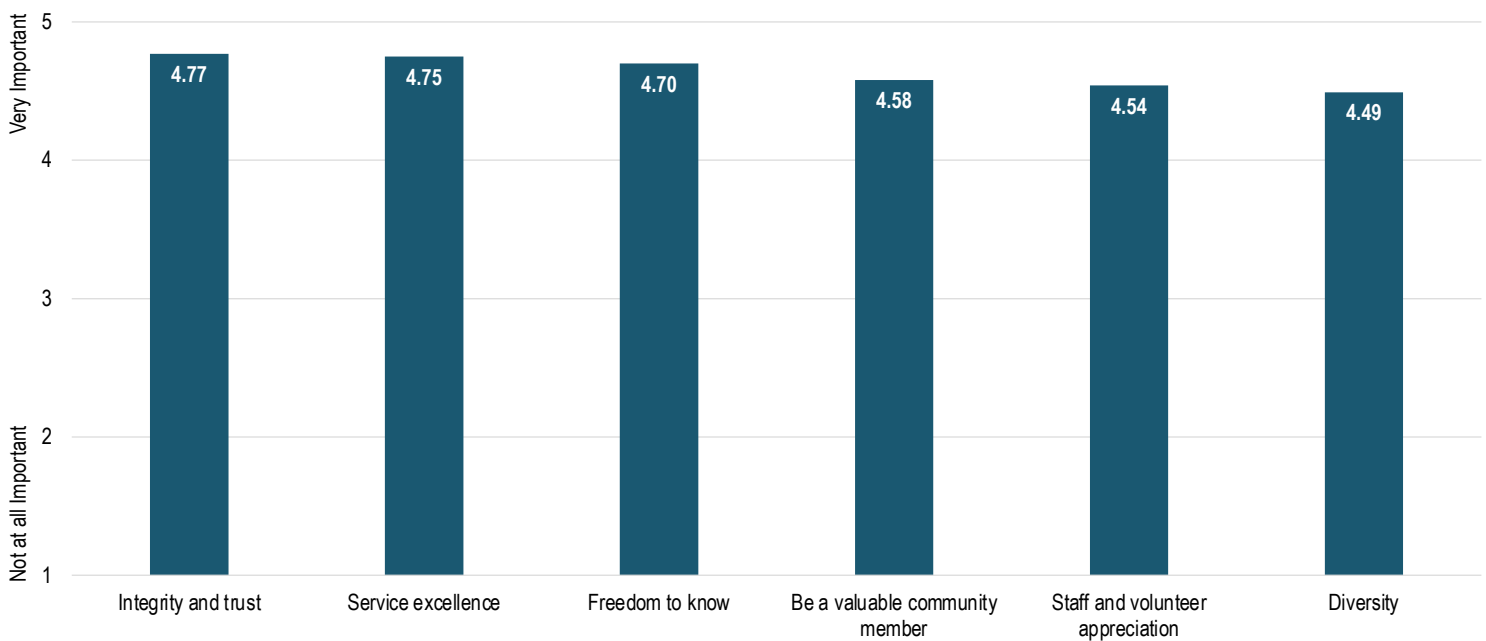
**Figure 13 – Mission N=1506**

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:



**Figure 14 – Salem Public Library Values N=1328**

Please rate how important you believe each value is in creating a positive culture and atmosphere for the library?





What three words do you believe best describe Salem Public Library's **current** reputation?



## What we heard

“They’ve done a great job to adapt to new things that come along. They need to continue doing that and be as dynamic as the world is.”

“For most people who use the library, they express a lot of love for us. They think it’s beautiful, they want to support it, they are excited to hear of things we do.”

“The library has partnered with the Teen Advisory Board to achieve our goals and our programs. They are great at listening to our ideas, expanding, and changing, so that all community members are seen and are respected.”

“We also have many supporters who are also not actually library users.”

“Library staff are doing the best they can but with terrible funding. It results in watered down services. Literacy is the most important thing, so maybe they should just focus on children’s books and programming.”

“The one thing we hear the most: what we’re not offering. They love us a lot, but they are always disappointed that we’re not offering more.”

“I think the library has been one of the most respected organizations in Salem. It’s our duty to keep it that way. We have to keep working together to maintain and build its reputation.”

“They have been an incredibly responsive and proactive partner. They are committed to reaching out and sharing resources and are very communicative.”

“When you show up to the library as a community member it feels welcoming, and the staff seem to be working really hard at making it even more inviting. You see a broad spectrum of the community there and that is a very healthy thing.”

“They pick books that the community would want to read together to start a conversation – that’s amazing!”

“The staff is incredibly creative and dedicated. They have great librarians. They are sincerely doing the best they can and everyone seems to love their jobs and have the community at heart- it shows in how happy they are to help people.”

## SPL cannot bring its full value to the community due to resource constraints.

### Insights

- Salem Public Library is managed by the City of Salem's Community Development department as opposed to as a separate city department, which is a common practice in other similar sized cities such as Hillsboro, Beaverton, and Eugene. This has led to a perception among some stakeholders that SPL is not as valued by the City as it could be, despite the important role the library can play in many of the City's current goals such as increasing quality of life and building equity in the community.
- As is outlined in the benchmarking research, SPL is operating with significantly less funding than comparable libraries (see **Table 2** and **Table 3**), presenting a major challenge for SPL (see **Figure 17**). SPL has had to rely on funding partners to support its existence and the services it provides, but stakeholders believe that continued reliance on funding partners is unsustainable.
- SPL's small budget results in spending a greater portion of its funding on staffing costs compared to any other major library in Oregon. Yet, in comparison to the same major libraries, the number of FTE staff per 1,000 population is half that of the other libraries. (see **Table 6**)
- Stakeholders believe the COVID-19 pandemic made the issue more apparent as the library struggled to maintain its services. Stakeholders believe SPL staff did a great job adapting library services, acquiring e-books for circulation, switching to virtual programming and much more. Yet, without sufficient resources, there were limited hours for curbside pickup, limited e-books causing patrons to wait several months for requests, and staff keeping programs and services running on a volunteer (unpaid) basis.
- Despite efforts made, SPL's closure and inconsistent service has left some patrons frustrated and expressing these sentiments to staff. Already understaffed and working at full capacity, staff are increasingly stretched thin and unable provide innovative solutions and services despite staff having great interest and expertise in such innovations.
- Due to resource constraints, SPL staff do not believe they have the resources required to deliver on the organization's strategic goals (see **Figure 18**).

## Implications

1. Public libraries play crucial roles as a community hub, improving literacy, and expanding economic opportunity for all residents, especially for low-income and marginalized communities. The City of Salem has an opportunity to consider, in partnership with SPL, options for increasing funding and resources for SPL, in alignment with city-wide goals to improve quality of life for residents and build equity in the community.
2. Elevating SPL's position within the City's organizational structure could signal the importance of the library to the Salem community and add value to the City's commitment towards creating a welcoming and livable community and a strong and diverse economy.
3. Continued lack of resources and increased workload on staff may lead to increased burnout and turnover, putting further constraints on an already overburdened library which could impact SPL's relationship and reputation the community.

**Table 2 – 2019-2020 Budget and General Statistics among selected Oregon Public Libraries**

Library	Population served	Library card-holders (% of population)	Branches + bookmobiles in addition to main Library	Total ops. revenue per capita	Total ops. expenditure per capita
Multnomah County Library	821,730	49%	18	\$108.09	\$102.56
Jackson County Library	221,290	62%	14	\$54.18	\$45.04
Deschutes Public Library District	193,000	44%	6	\$75.41	\$66.24
Eugene Public Library	171,210	59%	2	\$86.14	\$83.94
<b>Salem Public Library</b>	<b>167,400</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$31.64</b>	<b>\$24.46</b>
Hillsboro Public Library	158,738	48%	1	\$74.56	\$46.24
Beaverton Public Library	149,392	67%	1	\$76.92	\$56.44

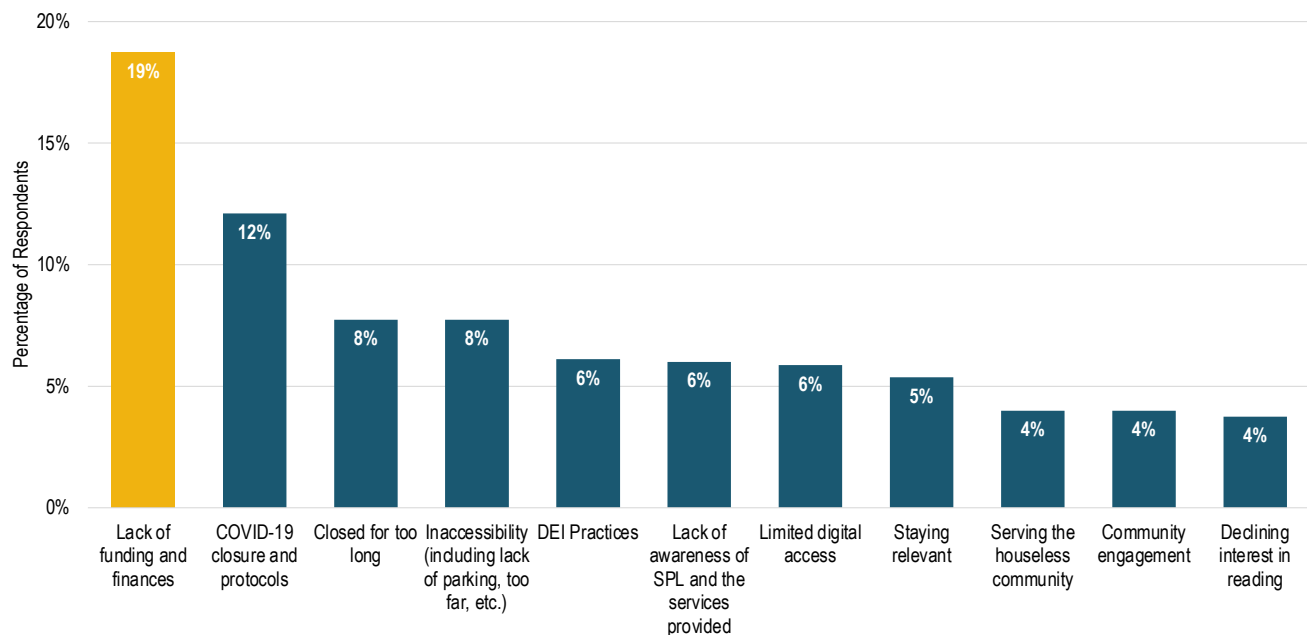


**Table 3 – 2019-2020 Funding Composition among selected Oregon Public Libraries<sup>11</sup>**

Library	City Revenue	County Revenue (incl. WCCLS)	District Revenue (incl. CCRLS)	State Revenue	Total Federal Revenue	Other Revenue
Multnomah County Library	\$195,860	\$35,000	\$85,554,413	\$112,224	\$0	\$2,922,823
Jackson County Library	\$0	\$0	\$10,615,960	\$36,353	\$106,110	\$1,231,894
Deschutes Public Library District	\$0	\$0	\$13,913,365	\$63,294	\$0	\$577,320
Eugene Public Library	\$13,969,273	\$0	\$0	\$22,520	\$0	\$755,974
<b>Salem Public Library</b>	<b>\$4,492,947</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$657,371</b>	<b>\$29,187</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$117,285</b>
Hillsboro Public Library	\$6,087,857	\$5,553,058	\$0	\$17,033	\$0	\$177,295
Beaverton Public Library	\$5,170,196	\$6,090,115	\$0	\$15,696	\$0	\$215,884

**Figure 17 – Challenges impacting SPL N=801**

What do you believe is the most significant strategic challenge impacting the library?



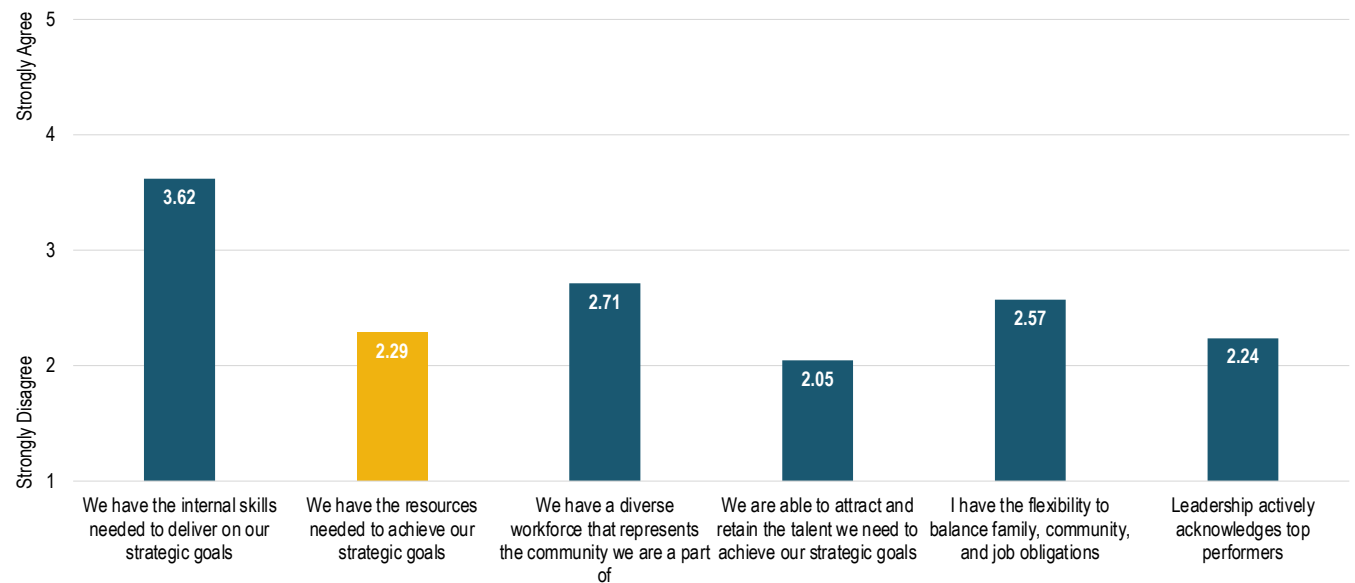
<sup>11</sup> This data is self-reported by libraries to the Oregon State. Some libraries chose to include funding from library cooperatives under 'County Revenue'. Example: Hillsboro Public Library and Beaverton Public Library include revenue from the Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) under county revenue. SPL chose to report its funding from Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library Services (CCRLS) under 'District Revenue' and is reflected accordingly in the data.

**Table 6 – 2019-2020 Staffing Statistics among selected Oregon libraries<sup>15</sup>**

Library	FTE Staff per 1,000 served	FTE Staff per 10,000 circulation	Staff expenditures as a percent of total expenditure	Wages as a percent of total revenue
Multnomah County Library	0.65	0.36	65%	36%
Jackson County Library	0.38	0.56	41%	25%
Deschutes Public Library District	0.51	0.47	65%	38%
Eugene Public Library	0.60	0.49	72%	39%
<b>Salem Public Library</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>45%</b>
Hillsboro Public Library	0.56	0.46	86%	38%
Beaverton Public Library	0.47	0.32	82%	38%

**Figure 18 – Capabilities, Rewards, and Talents N=21**

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding capabilities, talents, and rewards:



<sup>15</sup> State Library of Oregon, "2019-20 Oregon Public Library Statistical Report Data."

## What we heard

“We don’t have enough staff to do what we would like to do. With our current resources, we don’t have the capacity to do more – especially for the community.”

“It is exhausting to have people think we just need ideas. WE HAVE IDEAS. But, we have no time or resources to work on them.”

“It’s important to convince people who don’t use the library that it’s important for the community as a whole. A thriving city has a thriving library.”

“Building the political will and financial resources to support the library is what this strategic plan should be all about. We have to speak to how we are changing the collective lives of the community.”

“E-content use has skyrocketed. We were never funded for e-content and had to reallocate funding. Demand for this has gone up and stayed high. So, we don’t have a sustainable situation right now.”

“We have a lot of new items and equipment. We get them through grants, but if they break, we have nothing in place to be able to replace/repair them. So, we have to stop services and programs.”

“The library isn’t a priority for this city council. It’s one of the first places they look to for budget cuts because they don’t see us as an essential service. In 2001 we were in the 60 FTE range, now we’re at around 45.”

“We have to be careful how much we do, or else it becomes unsustainable especially if we start doing more with less, we create an expectation that it will continue. And when it doesn’t, people get upset.”

“People talk about branches, and we know that is a need, but we simply don’t have the human resources to do it. We can’t really staff the other small branch we already have.”

“We need to reenter the discussion of becoming a library district – this would stabilize funding. The last time we tried was a long time ago- 2004. We should reexamine the potential of having a dedicated tax funding stream.”

“If you look at where the library sits in the Salem comprehensive plan, it’s listed as an amenity. I don’t think it is an amenity. That tells you how it is viewed in the city. I don’t think people have seen the potential for it to play a primary role in addressing equity issues.”

“My understanding of where the library sits within the city organizational chart is problematic. I think they are in a group that includes police, fire, safety, etc. It sets them up for struggling with financial support.”

“Libraries are expensive programs but are focused on community well-being. If you look at Lake Oswego, one of the most prestigious places in the city is the library because they want to invest in a high level of quality of life.”

“People don’t realize how poorly funded and resourced our library is. We only have 2 locations in a city of 175,000. The average city of that size in the US would have 5 libraries. People here don’t have any basis for comparison, they don’t know what a top-notch library is like and don’t know what they are missing to have a nearby branch library that is designed for you and your family, focused on serving your community.”





## The community wants SPL to increase accessibility.

### Insights

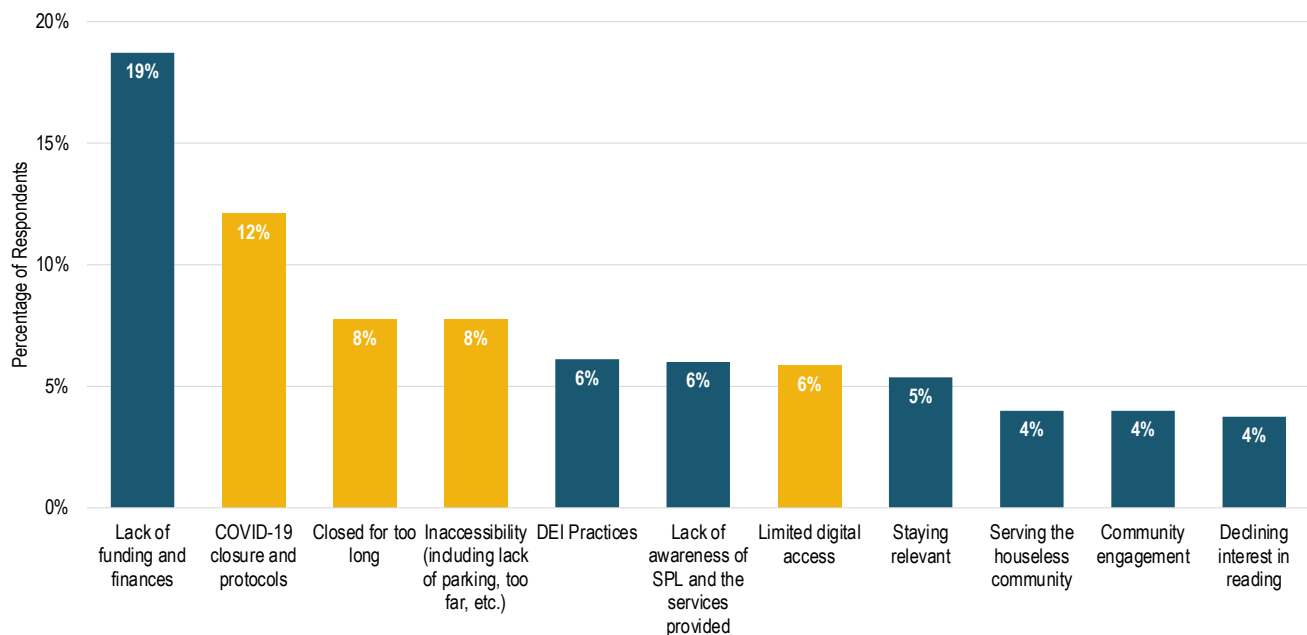
- There is a sense that a lack of accessibility is a significant issue with four out of eleven of the top strategic challenges that stakeholders named being related to access. (See **Figure 19**) Stakeholders also suggested being open, extending operating hours, and improving accessibility as top strategic opportunities for SPL. (See **Figure 20**).
- “Closed for too long”, “inaccessibility”, and “limited digital access” were cited more frequently as challenges by non-White survey respondents, indicating that accessibility issues may be disproportionately affecting underrepresented and underserved communities. (See **Figure 21**)
- Stakeholders saw the COVID-19 pandemic closures and protocols as a major challenge, and many wondered if the library could have made more effort to remain open and provide a safe public space for the community during a difficult period. (See **Figure 19**). This also seems to have impacted SPL’s reputation, with survey respondents describing SPL’s current reputation as “closed”, “limited”, and “inaccessible”, and describing the desired future reputation as “accessible”, “open”, and “available” (see **Figure 22** and **Figure 23**).
- Recent changes that SPL has made to increase accessibility have been noticed and greatly valued by community members. For example, the switch to free parking and removing fines from overdue books has received significant appreciation and support from stakeholders.
- Many stakeholders want SPL to add additional branch locations to increase accessibility for more of the Salem community, especially in the Keizer area and in East Salem, where many Latino community members reside. The number of branches that libraries serving similar population numbers varies widely (see **Table 2**). Those with a similar number of branches are in a much more densely populated areas however, indicating that Salem residents must travel further to reach a library. The fact that SPL’s two existing locations are just 1.7 miles apart and located within more affluent parts of the area, is seen as an accessibility concern for many stakeholders.
- Stakeholders would like to see SPL increase access to its e-book and virtual collections, having more copies of books to reduce wait times and reach more of the community, especially people for whom it is difficult to physically come to the library. They also view these tools as a resource in assisting community members with digital literacy.

## Implications

1. While resources are constrained, accessibility is an area where SPL may want to consider creative ways to reach more of the Salem community. This could include opportunities to leverage partnerships, as outlined in Theme 5. Equity should be a determining factor in any changes or additions SPL seeks to make.
2. There may also need to be some reputation and relationship repair that SPL can do with the community to let people know they are open again, even if hours and programs aren't yet back to full pre-pandemic levels.
3. Given the growing trend of libraries being used more regularly as community centers, a lack of access to the library and its resources could negatively impact the quality of life of Salem residents.

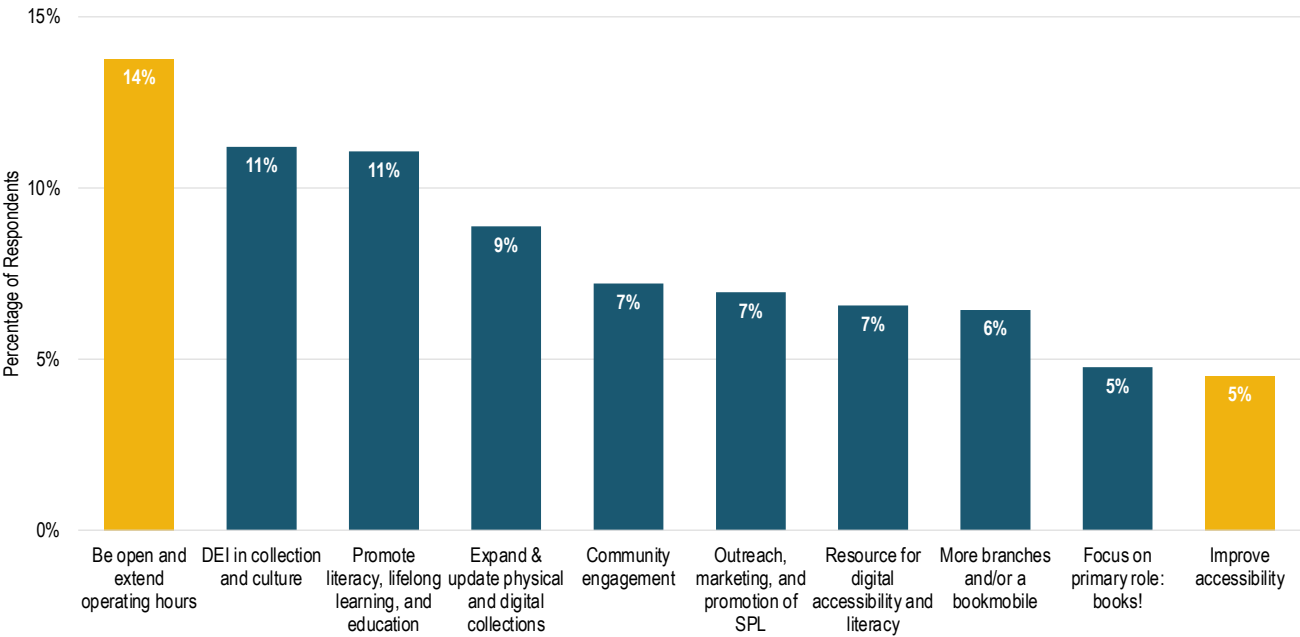
**Figure 19 – Challenges impacting SPL N=801**

What do you believe is the most significant strategic challenge impacting the library?



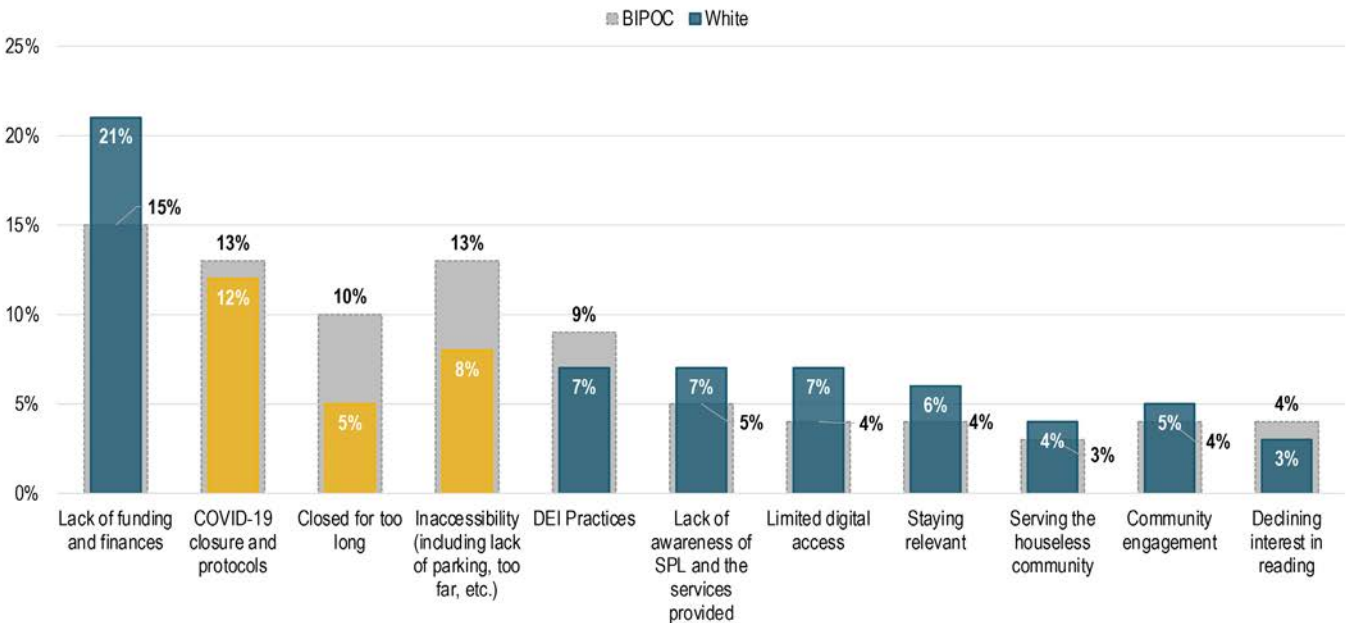
**Figure 20 – Strategic Opportunities for SPL N=777**

What do you believe is the single most significant opportunity for the library?



**Figure 21 – Challenges impacting SPL by Race N=801**

What do you believe is the most significant strategic challenge impacting the library?



What three words do you believe best describe Salem Public Library's current reputation?

What three words do you believe best describe Salem Public Library's current reputation?



What three words would you like to use to describe Salem Public Library's reputation **in the future**?





**Table 2 – 2019-2020 Budget and General Statistics among selected Oregon Public Libraries**

Library	Population served	Library card-holders (% of population)	Branches + bookmobiles in addition to main Library	Total ops. revenue per capita	Total ops. expenditure per capita
Multnomah County Library	821,730	49%	18	\$108.09	\$102.56
Jackson County Library	221,290	62%	14	\$54.18	\$45.04
Deschutes Public Library District	193,000	44%	6	\$75.41	\$66.24
Eugene Public Library	171,210	59%	2	\$86.14	\$83.94
Salem Public Library	167,400	71%	1	\$31.64	\$24.46
Hillsboro Public Library	158,738	48%	1	\$74.56	\$46.24
Beaverton Public Library	149,392	67%	1	\$76.92	\$56.44

## What we heard

“The library is a resource that goes beyond reading. People access internet there to look for jobs, sign up for benefits; these are things people haven’t been able to do otherwise. The library creates access.”

“I would like to be less building bound. It would be fantastic if we had more human resources to deploy being out in the community. We have had a bookmobile in the past, but just to be more present in the community outside our walls doing more active outreach; showing up in schools more.”

“We have one central branch and for a city as spread out as we are, we should have 5. It requires most people to drive to it and is difficult to access. It is out of reach for a lot of people who might want or need it most. It’s a great resource that’s the most accessible to the people who need it the least.”

“I’d love to see more internet hotspots that you can check out, devices such as Chromebooks, etc. I’m a big fan of bringing things to people, meeting people where they are; services that go out into the community to introduce the library to people.”

“Because of the library’s central location, everyone east of downtown has trouble getting there with public transportation. There used to be a parking issue, but now there is free parking. So, there are changes, but people don’t hear about it.”

“The building is huge and intimidating and from a pedestrian and bicyclist standpoint, it’s an island in the middle of a lot of traffic. If you are in a wheelchair and take the bus, you have to go up a terrible incline/gradient. It’s discouraging to exclude a whole community.”

“There was an issue with weeding the collection, but weeding is essential. You get new items; you also have to remove items. We need a broader community conversation about the role of the collection. It needs to be relevant, and relevance needs to be determined by and with the community.”

“We should be outreaching to and serving people in need and that includes houseless people. There aren’t a lot of places in Salem that houseless people can be welcomed. The library can be a source of dignity. It’s not the solution, but part of broader strategy to support all people in our community.”

“For early literacy you need a place, you need programs for ages 0-5yo kids. It must be convenient. It doesn’t work when it’s far away.”

“The website is terrible because it is a city website, and we need to make it much more user friendly and accessible.”

“More online services would help younger people who live farther away and don’t have access to a car. It can help young people have access to topics that are not readily available at school libraries or discussed.”

“You can learn about different ideas and ‘educate yourself’. Creating this culture of learning means that people can go there and feel like there is an openness to learn and feel less judged.”

“Parking was definitely a barrier to entry and it is great that we’ve addressed that. It took a lot of planning though.”

“I love the idea that the library is a place people can bring their questions and ask for information with a non-judgmental response.”

“We have a good number who come to the library who sign, but we don’t have anyone on staff who knows how to sign fluently.”

“Effectively addressing barriers to access can involve lots of different approaches. Technology needs to be seen as an essential vehicle for library services. More branches aren’t the only way we can succeed. We need to be in smaller neighborhoods with lobby stop-in’s types of locations; those things make a difference.”

## There is an opportunity for SPL to engage more with the local community.

### Insights

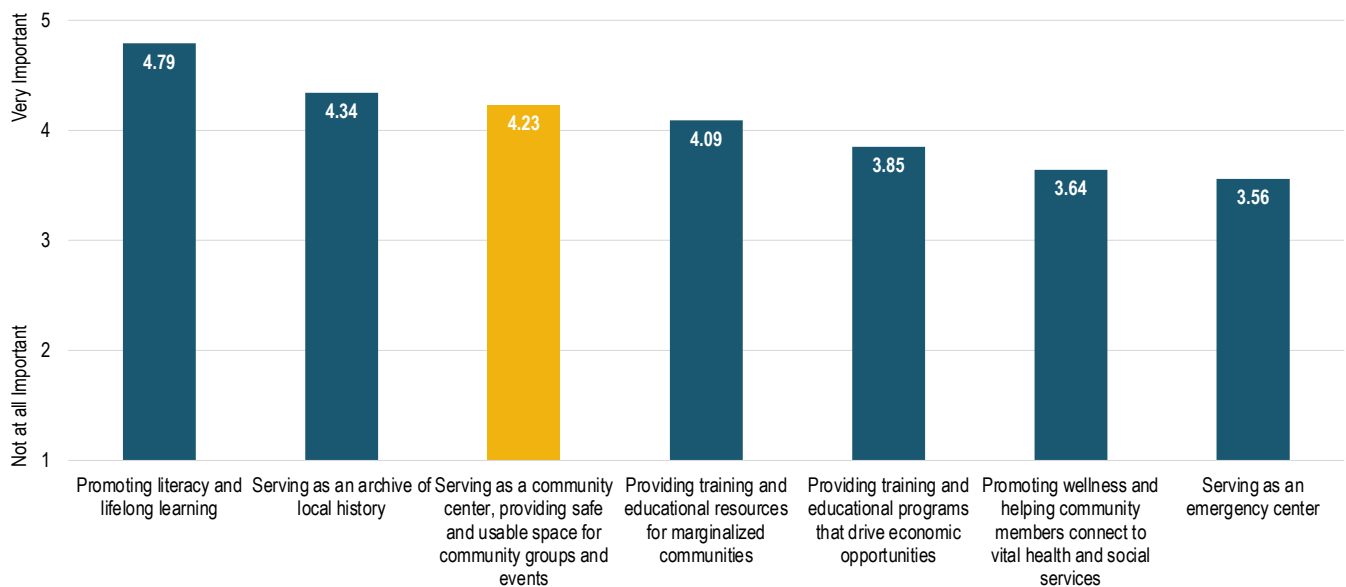
- Building on the last theme related to accessibility, stakeholders not only want the library to be a place that everyone can access, but also one that builds community. They see it as a unique public space that can serve as a community center where people can gather and connect with others (see **Figure 24**). In this way, stakeholders want SPL to do more to invite more people in, both individually and through partnerships.
- Additionally, stakeholders expressed a desire for SPL to do more outreach and to have a stronger presence outside of the library, in the community, meeting people where they are (see **Figure 25**). Many see this as an opportunity to expand their reach and to connect with a broader range of community members without adding more branches. Examples of ways to do this ranged from utilizing the bookmobile, to having programs or books available at community partner organizations' sites or in schools, to having drop off boxes located in other areas.
- Stakeholders see significant opportunities for SPL to build, deepen, and leverage partnerships to reach more of the community. This includes promoting literacy and lifelong learning, which is seen as SPL's most important role in the community (see **Figure 26**). Community leaders interviewed in the process, greatly value their existing partnerships with SPL and are eager to partner even more closely to achieve shared goals and in ways that wouldn't require SPL staff to carry the full load in delivering programming or providing resources.
- There are also opportunities for SPL to improve the visibility and promotion of the library and what they offer. Many spoke to the importance of all community members feeling some sense of connection to, or at least awareness of the library and what is offered, even if they don't utilize services themselves to increase the number of people that see the library as a critical community asset.
- To inform all these ways of connecting with and engaging the community, stakeholders want SPL to do more to ask and listen to the community to better understand their needs and interests in terms of services and resources provided. In an environment of limited funding and staff capacity, they want to ensure SPL is using their internal resources in the ways most valued by and impactful for the community.

## Implications

1. SPL is seen as a strong and valued partner, and they would benefit from further developing and deepening their partnerships. While building and maintaining partnerships takes time and resources, it can also allow SPL to reach more people, and to connect with members of the community they don't yet have relationships with. Many partners seem willing to co-develop and deliver services and programs, given SPL's staffing limitations.
2. Community outreach may need to be a role and expertise that SPL prioritizes resourcing as there is significant interest both internally and externally in more capacity in this area. Additionally, current SPL leaders may need to examine their responsibilities to determine how they can have a stronger community presence.
3. SPL can consider the most impactful and achievable ways for them to invite more people into the library, to foster a sense of community, and to serve as a resource hub for the community.
4. Another way SPL may want to better engage with the local community is through increasing the channels for two-way communication between the library and the community. The library can better promote services, share their impacts, provide the "why" behind decisions, and in turn, learn more about the community's interests, needs, and experiences related to the library.

**Figure 24 – Roles for the Community N=1229**

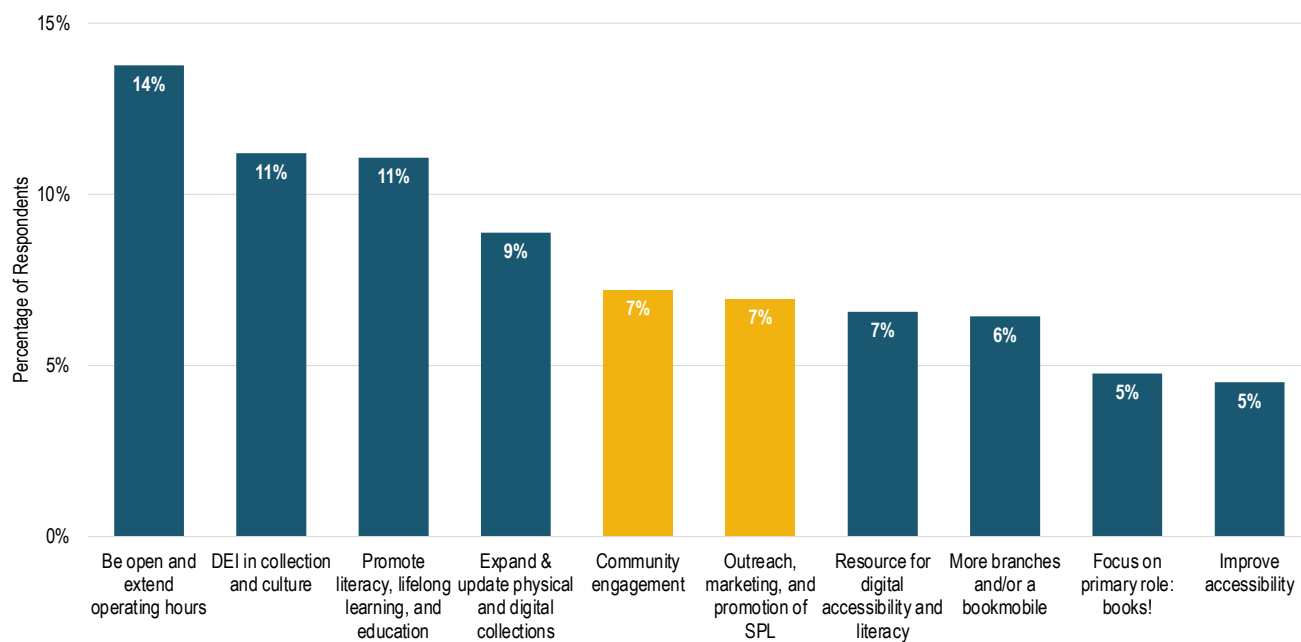
Please rate how important you think it is for Salem Public Library to play each of the following roles that public libraries can play for their **community**:





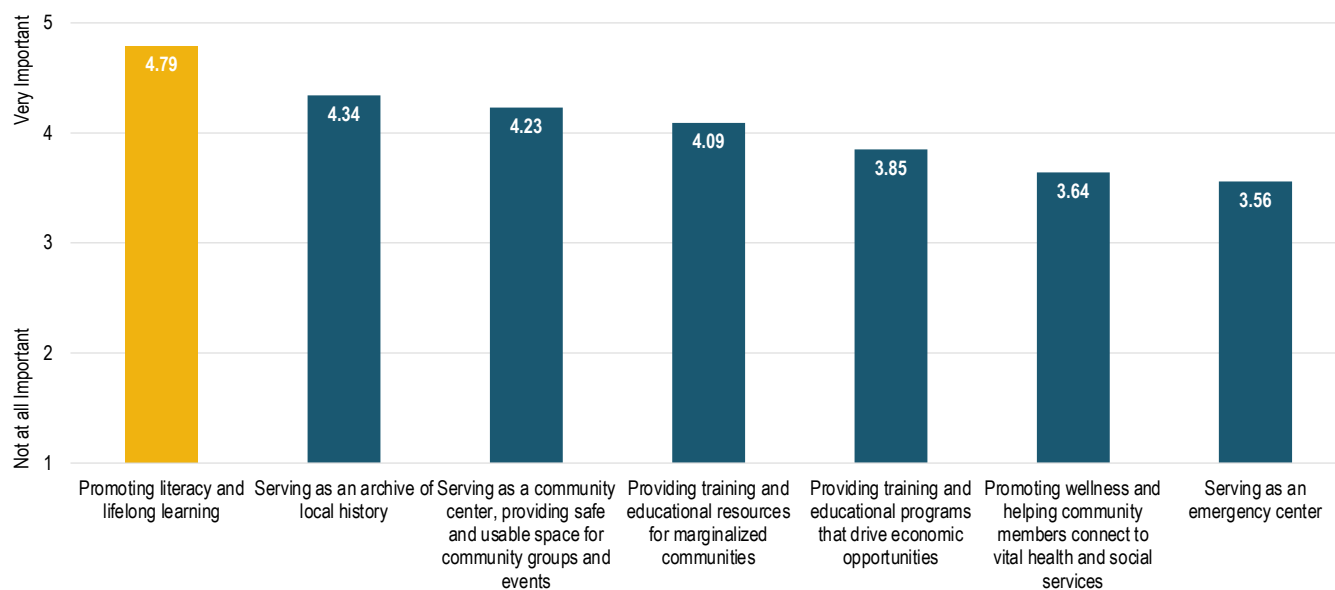
**Figure 25 – Strategic Opportunities for SPL N=777**

What do you believe is the single most significant opportunity for the library?



**Figure 26 – Roles for the Community N=1229**

Please rate how important you think it is for Salem Public Library to play each of the following roles that public libraries can play for their **community**:



## What we heard

“We need more community buy in. We lost the community relations position, so we don’t have anyone going out there to nurture positive opinions. People aren’t even aware that we are underfunded and understaffed.”

“We need to connect with library advocates who are out there in underserved populations. It’s a lot easier for someone already in the community who is trusted to get the word out.”

“Let’s reach out and welcome people. This ‘well, the door’s open; they can come in if they want’ isn’t getting us where we need to be.”

“We need to think outside the box, the box being the physical library itself. If we think more creatively about our library, we can do a lot more things.”

“Libraries have a real need to move beyond what they traditionally have been. They need to be vital and key component of a sense of community. They should reflect the community and create the community.”

“Even if we put more branches in, we still need to be out of the branches building relationships.”

“The Book Bags have been tremendous for us as a community partner. The last set was primarily in Spanish. I wish people understood the impact of being able to provide books to families in the parents’ primary language.”

“We have a space at our affordable housing community where they could offer story time to get kids reading earlier in life and help people better understand the library. It could be for our residents, but also open to anyone.”

“SPL could do more within the CCRLS to lead, share insights, and be a part of the conversation.”

“The library administration has not been well known. The City Librarian and others need to get out and have a face in the community. We need more people to feel more personal awareness, connection, and even dependence on the library. When people don’t understand the library and decisions it impacts perceptions.”

“You have to invite people in from the community to learn their needs, you can’t just assume what their needs are. Let people know you are ready to try new ways of doing things. Really explore how the different cultures are living. Learn, listen, and that is what it takes to come up with the right programs for the community.”

“A primary purpose is to be one of the few public spaces that is open and accessible for anyone who wants to come. It is a gathering space, not just a distribution center. It is a rare and cherished role that libraries play.”

## SPL has a passionate team that needs to strengthen its internal culture.

### Insights

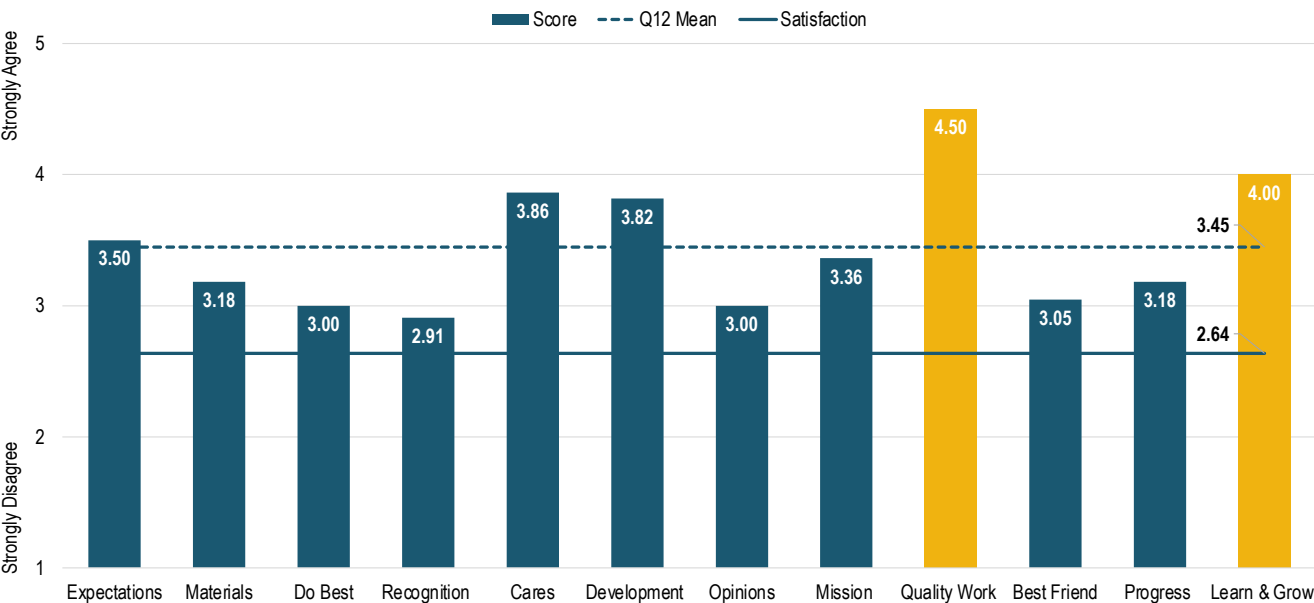
- SPL staff are incredibly passionate about the work that they do. They see their fellow employees as being committed to doing quality work and they value the opportunities they have to learn and grow in their role (see **Figure 27**). However, there are concerns about the organizational culture and its impact on SPL's ability to attract, support, and retain employees (see **Figure 28**)
- Many of the scores and responses on the internal organizational assessment portion of the survey completed by SPL staff indicate a challenging work environment with low levels of staff satisfaction and engagement. Scores related to strategy and leadership were especially low (see **Figure 29**). It is important to acknowledge that SPL has experienced a leadership transition in the City Librarian role since this survey was completed in late 2021.
- SPL staff described a challenging internal culture and atmosphere in the survey using words like “chaotic”, “reactive”, “rudderless”, and “overwhelmed” that limits their ability to do their best work (see **Figure 30** and **Figure 31**).
- Staff want to feel better valued in their workplace through recognition and more opportunities for their opinions to be shared and utilized in meaningful ways (see **Figure 32** and **Figure 33**).
- As has been mentioned in other areas of this report, there is a desire from stakeholders for SPL to diversify its staff. However, there are concerns about SPL's ability to attract and retain a more diverse team based on the level of inclusion within the work environment for individuals of diverse backgrounds (see **Figure 34**).
- SPL staff expressed a high-level change needed in order for the organization to be more successful, but they also expressed a high level of personal readiness to take on such changes (see **Figure 35**). Their lower scores related to the organization's ability to take on changes are likely related to the staffing constraints they are experiencing.

### Implications

1. It is critical that SPL attend to improving organizational culture and that internally facing initiatives are a part of the next strategic plan. However, given the changes that have occurred since staff completed the survey, SPL leadership and staff will need to reflect on what would be the most impactful areas of the organization to focus on right now and they may need to gather more current input from staff.
2. This strategic plan presents an important opportunity for SPL to establish clear organizational goals and to involve the full team in the implementation of the plan. Staff's interest and readiness to take on change is promising and will be important to engage and harness.

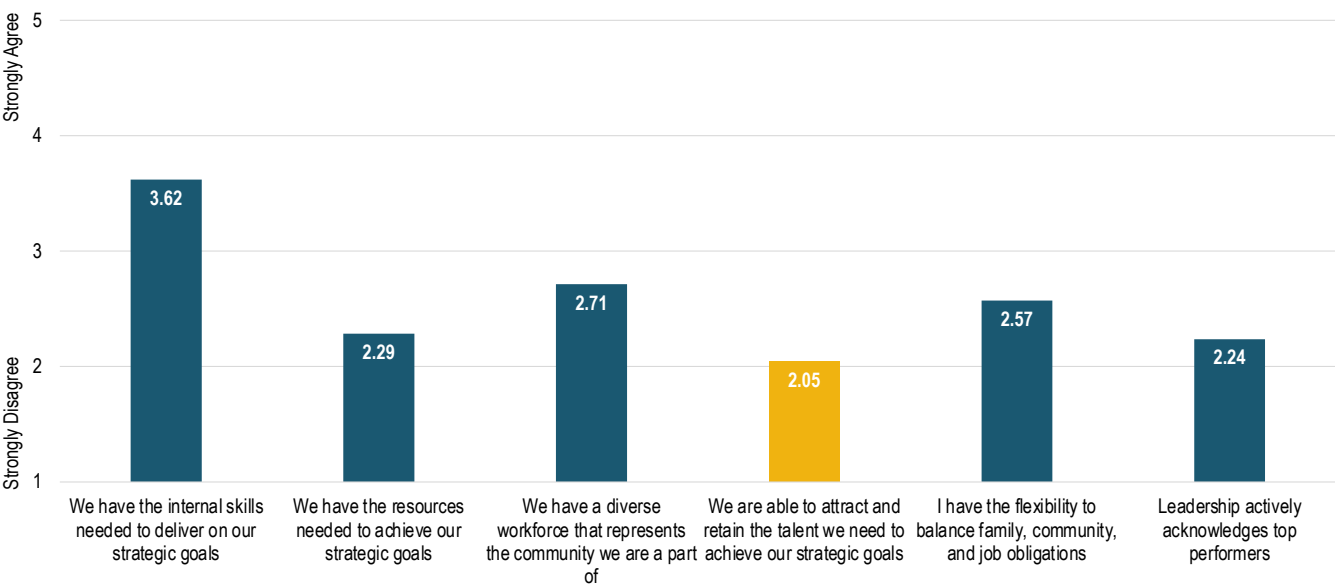
**Figure 27 – Gallup Q12: Employee Engagement N=22**

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements:



**Figure 28 – Capabilities, Rewards, and Talents N=21**

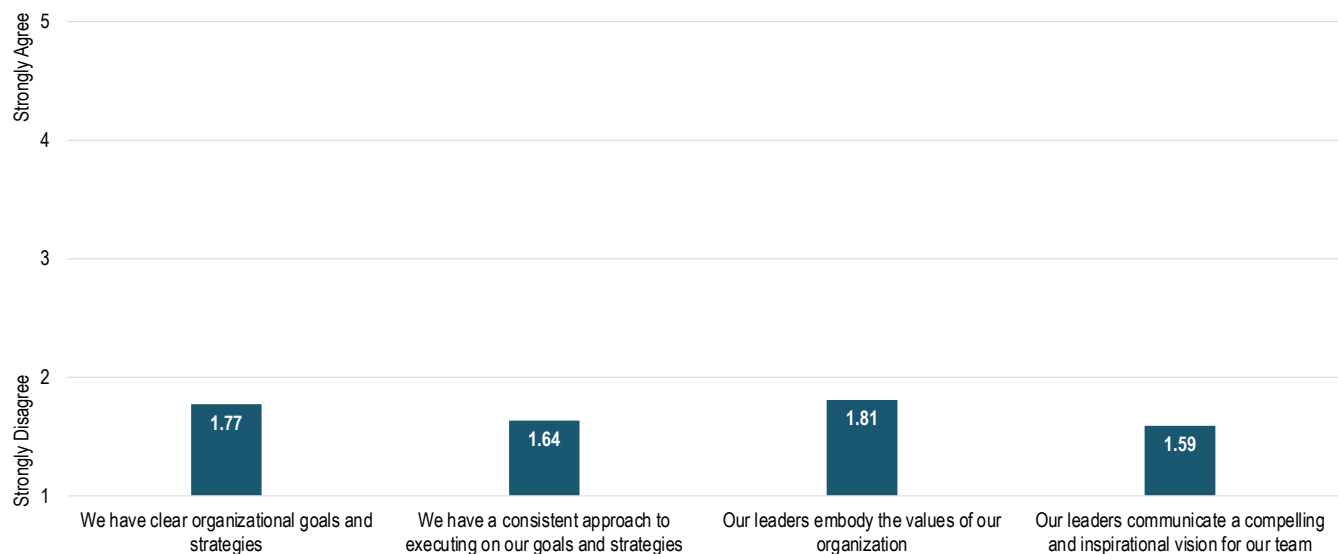
Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding capabilities, talents, and rewards:





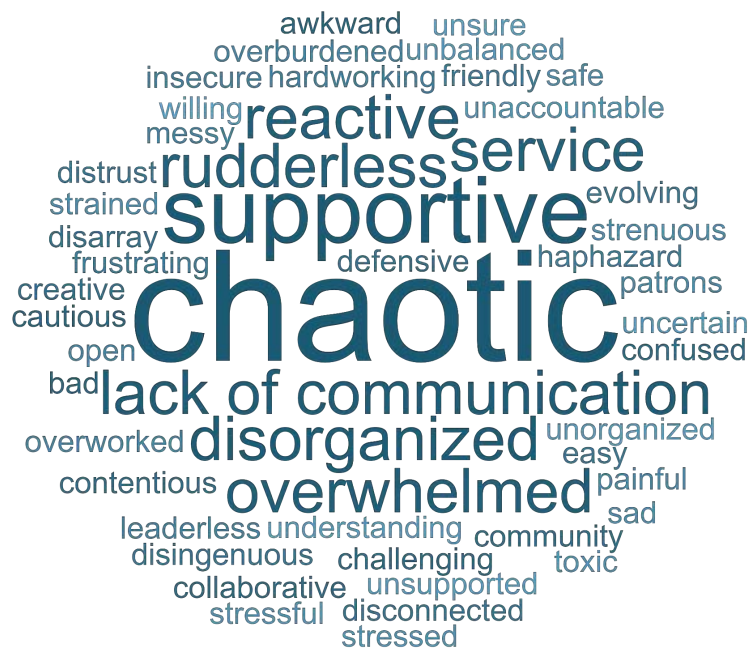
**Figure 29 – Strategy and Leadership N=22**

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding strategy and leadership:



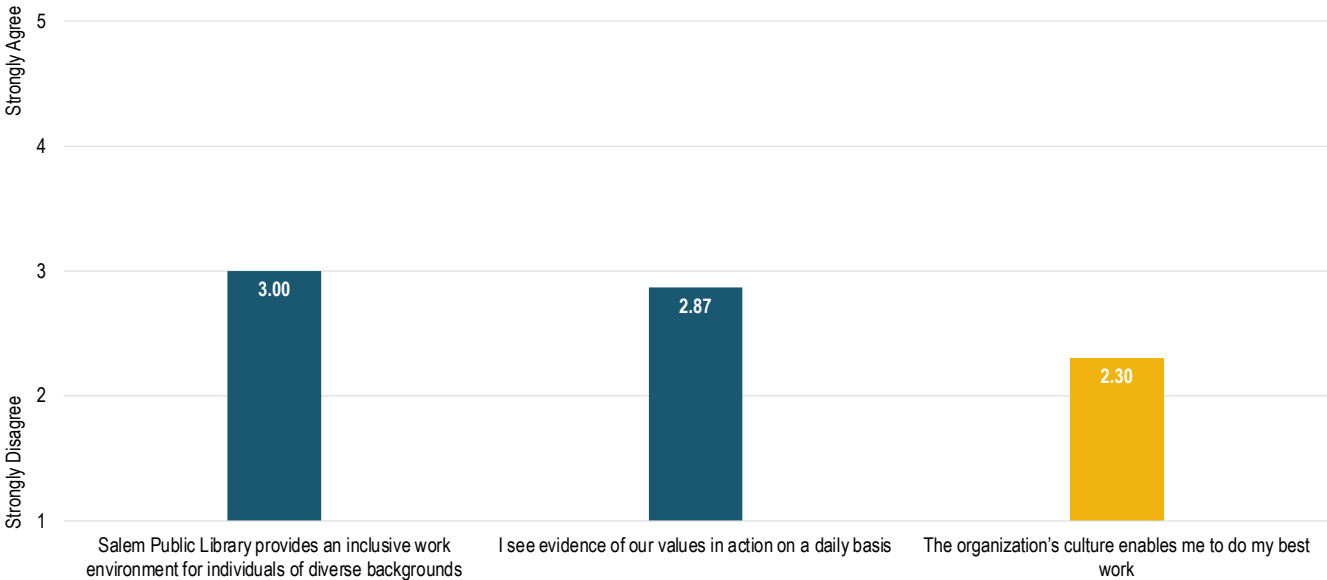
**Figure 30 – Culture and Atmosphere Descriptors N=22**

What three words best describe Salem Public Library's current organizational culture?



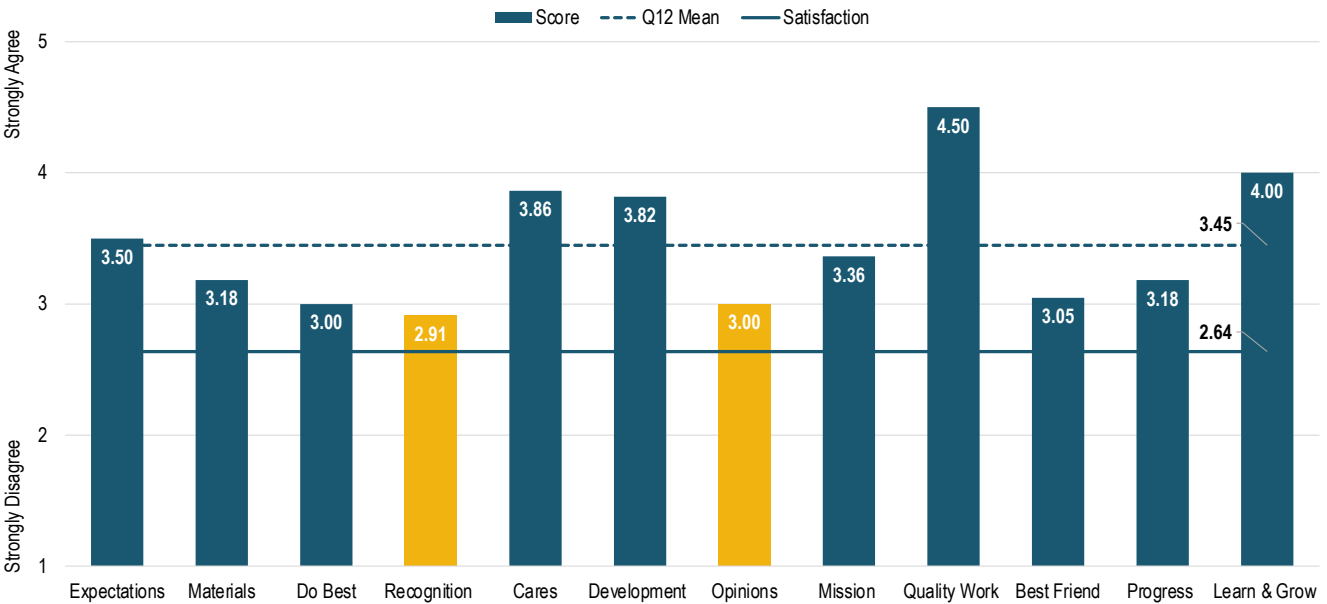
**Figure 31 – Internal Organizational Culture N=23**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement:



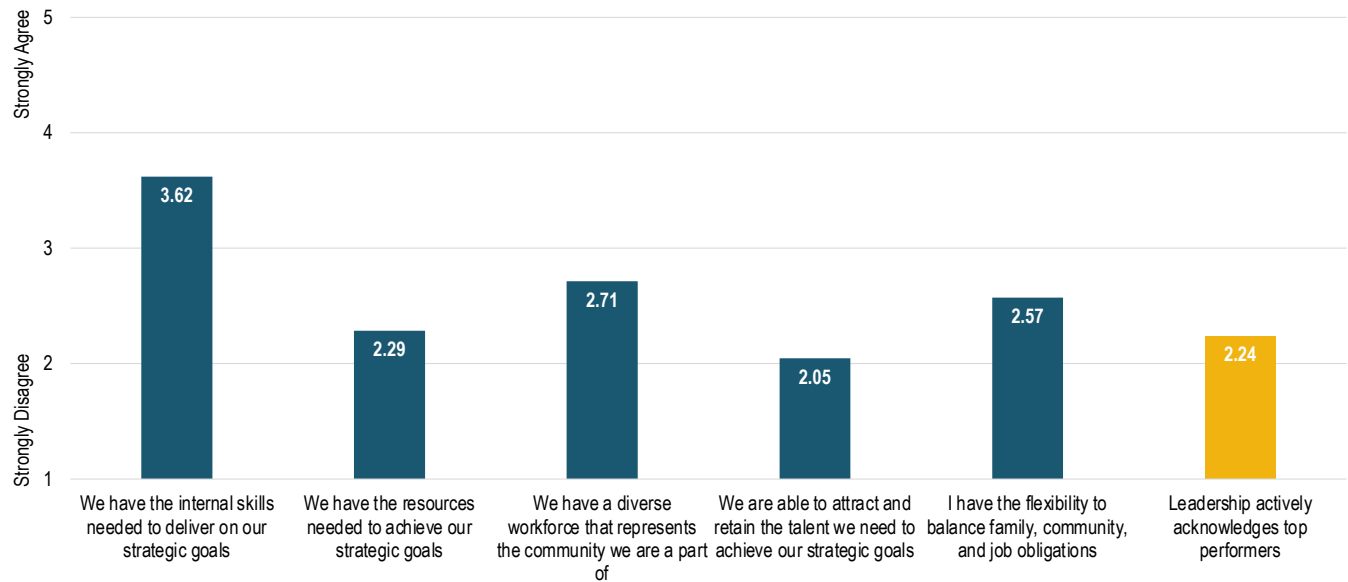
**Figure 32 – Gallup Q12: Employee Engagement N=22**

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements:



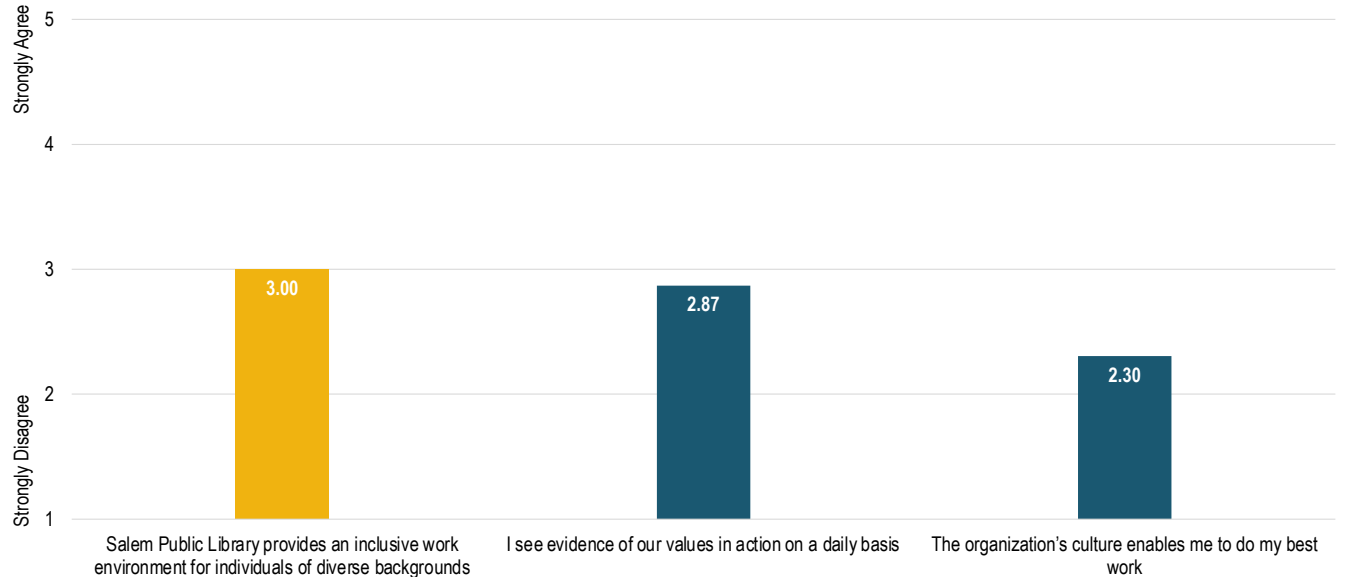
**Figure 33 – Capabilities, Rewards, and Talents N=21**

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding capabilities, talents, and rewards:



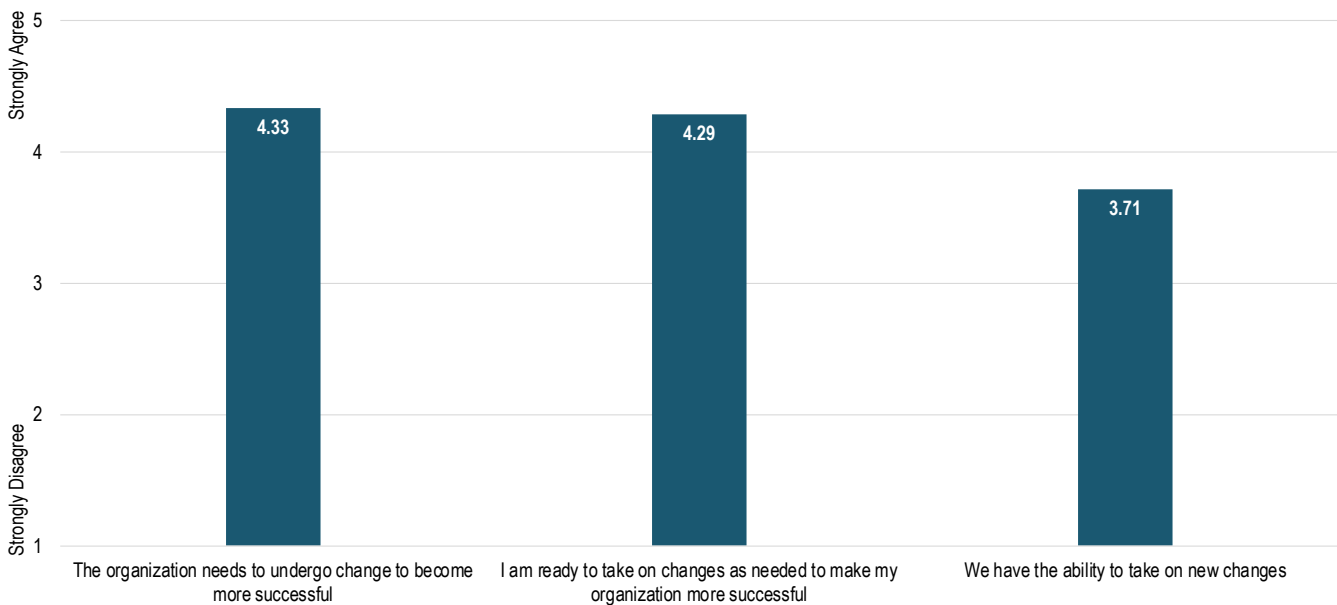
**Figure 34 – Internal Organizational Culture N=23**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement:



**Figure 35 – Organizational Change N=21**

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding change:





## What we heard

“We have built a really good team at the library throughout all the departments. They are dedicated to serving people and getting people access to what they need and want.”

“For me, to know that I can make an impact on lives is amazing.”

“I would only recommend working at SPL to people who I know can self-manage. It is not a place that provides much support and can have toxic elements.”

“SPL has a bad reputation with staff of color. We have had horrible experiences of micro aggressions that lead staff to have emotional burnout and leave. We need to root out this abusive behavior and make sure staff know this is a safe space. The city claims to not allow this type of behavior, but experience shows that is not true.”

“There is work to be done in terms of helping staff members feel appreciated especially in terms of their background.”

“To work here, you need to be comfortable figuring things out on your own. If you’re waiting for guidance, it’s not coming.”

“We have some managers that are very challenging to work with. There is a lack of support that has caused others to leave.”

“There used to be someone who helped a lot with translation work and one day she was gone. I don’t think they filled her position, at least not with someone who could fit the role of Spanish translator, that in turn hurt the community.”

“Stability in leadership is really important for the library. They seem to have gone through a number of leaders. You would hope that you can have a group of leaders that stay to see this plan through.”

“I’ve heard there’s a pretty big staff turnover. I don’t know why, but it affects the work at the library, and trickles down to the families and people that use the library.”



## Strengthening and standardizing systems, processes, policies, and procedures would improve employees' experience and SPL's services.

### Insights

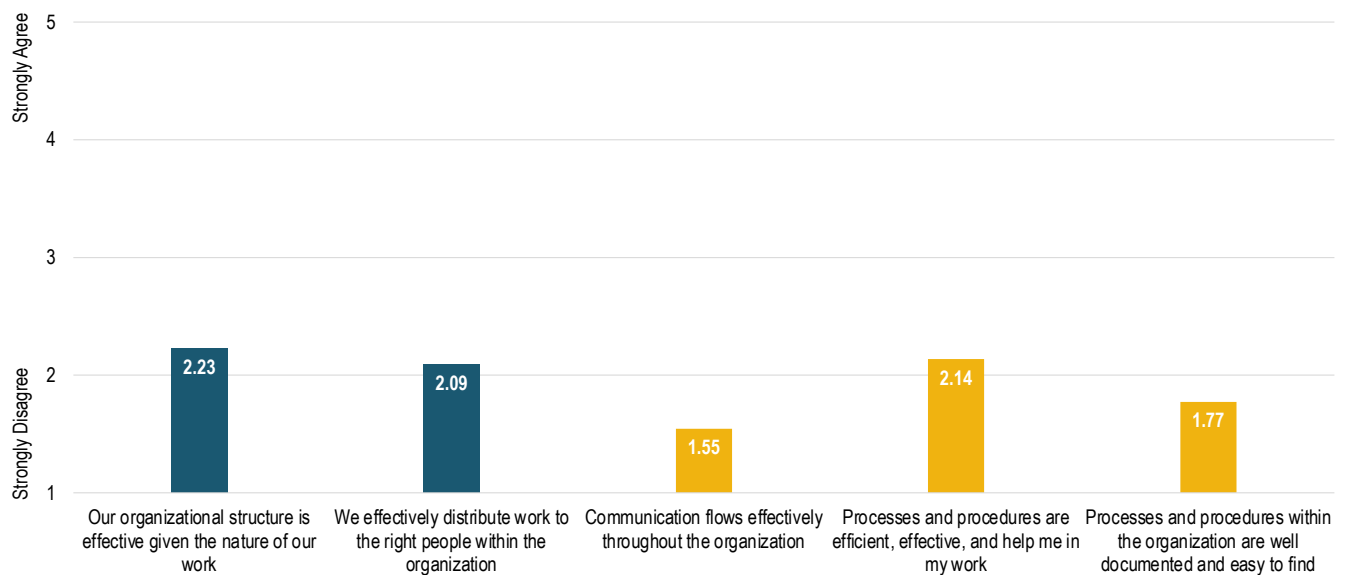
- Gaps, variation and inefficiencies in SPL's systems, processes, policies, and procedures is negatively impacting SPL employees' day to day experience of their workplace and in some cases, also impacting patrons' experience of the library.
- Staff are eager to strengthen, standardize, document, and ensure all current and future staff are trained on key organizational systems, processes, policies, and procedures (see **Figure 36**). They pointed to the recent development of the Collections Policy as a successful example of this.
- SPL staff also identified ways in which they believe patrons' experiences could be improved with more efficient, effective, and equitable processes, policies, and procedures. The process and policies related to applying for a library card and the user experience of the SPL website were shared as examples of improvement opportunities.
- The flow of communication within the organization was a process related area where staff expressed a significant need for improvement (see **Figure 36**).
- While staff feel confident in having the internal skills needed to deliver on strategic goals (see **Appendix 1.7**), they identified a need to strengthen the processes and procedures related to executing on organizational goals and strategies in order to achieve them (see **Figure 37**). Staff and volunteers also have a less positive view of SPL's mission, indicating that within the organization, there may be a lack of clarity and direction regarding SPL's purpose and future (see **Figure 38**).
- When compared to other libraries across the state, SPL has significantly less staff per the number of people served and the number of items in circulation (see **Table 6** and **Table 9**). Unless staffing levels increase, this dynamic makes the efficiency and effectiveness of SPL's systems, processes, policies, and procedures even more critical to improve.

## Implications

1. Continuous improvement can be a powerful staff engagement tool. SPL should consider how to leverage staff members' interest in increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and consistency within the organization. SPL can begin to build a culture of continuous improvement by identifying a few key systems, processes, policies, and procedures to assess, improve, document, and transparently share.
2. In addition to identifying improvement opportunities to strengthen staff members' experience, SPL can consider key aspects of patrons' experience processes to improve such as the website and library card application process as noted above.
3. The strategic plan presents an important opportunity for SPL to build its capabilities related to strategic initiative implementation so that the team can achieve the established goals.

**Figure 36 – Organizational Structure and Processes N=22**

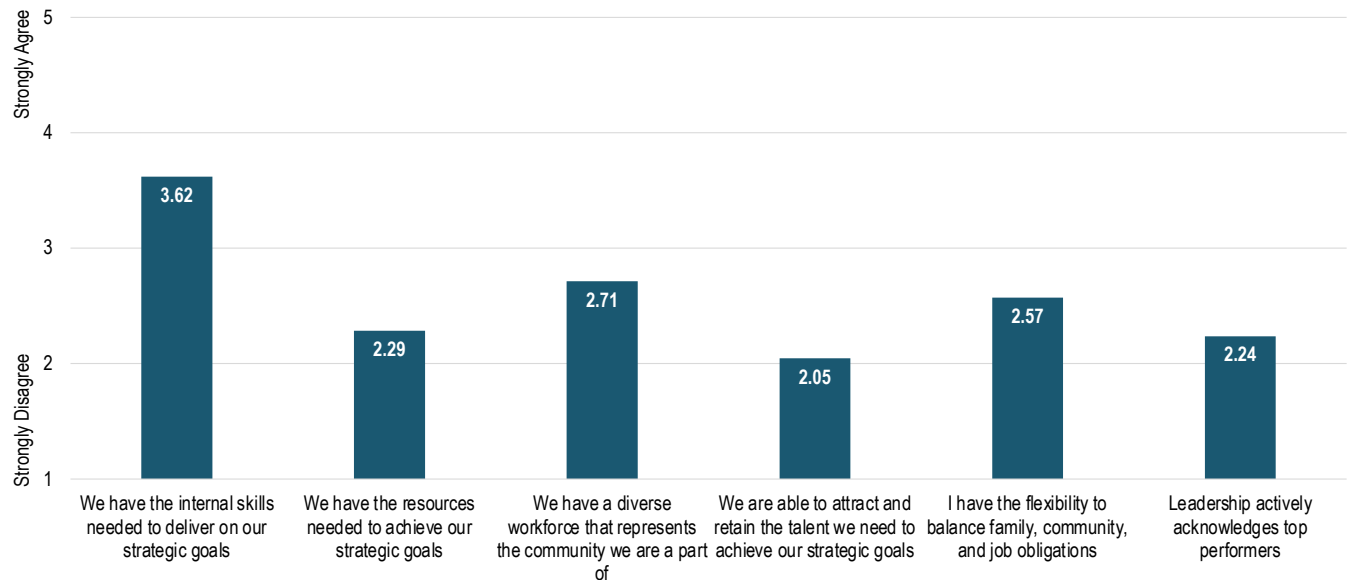
Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding organizational structure and processes:





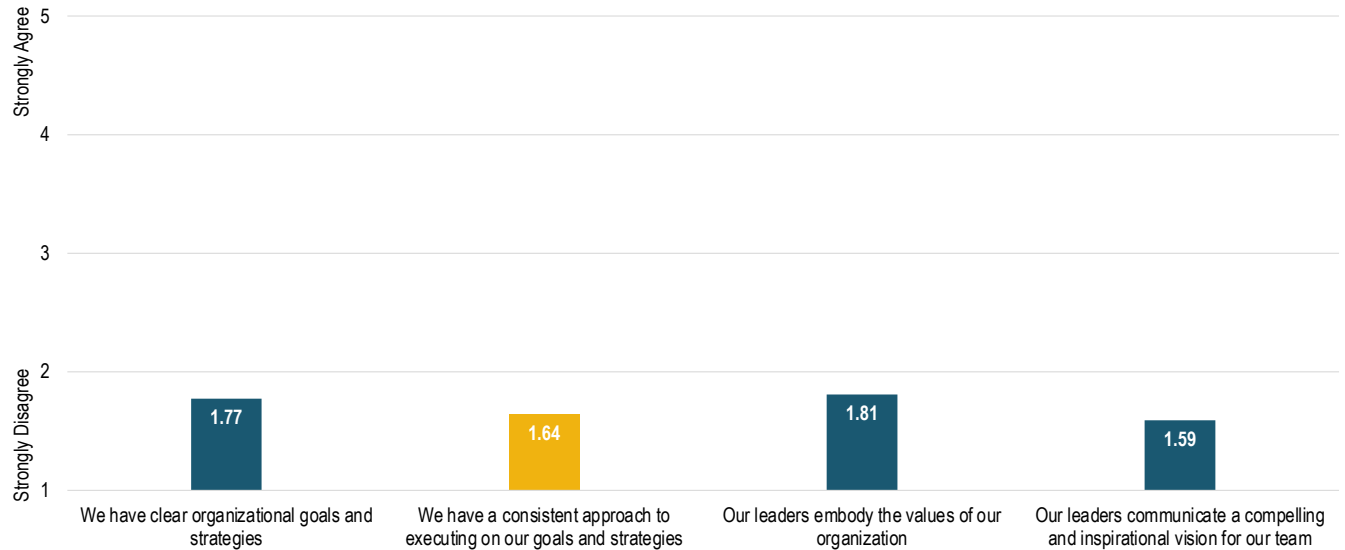
## Appendix 1.7 – Capabilities, Rewards, and Talents N=21

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding capabilities, talents, and rewards:



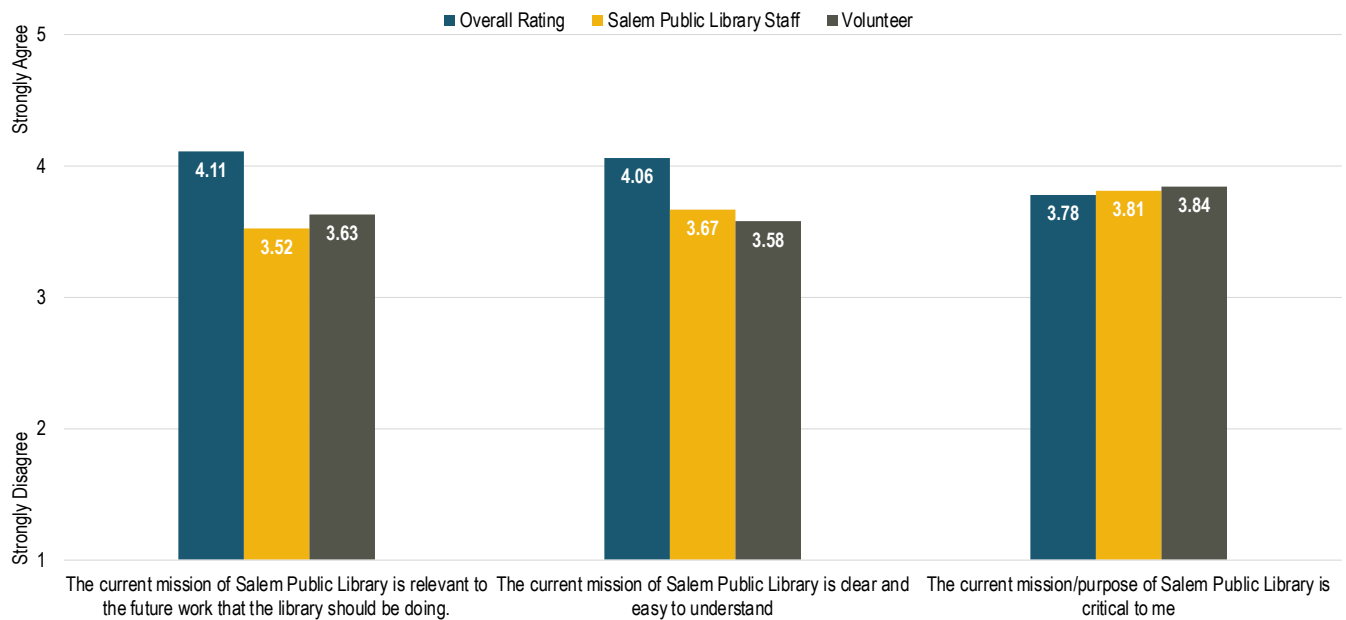
## Figure 37 – Strategy and Leadership N=22

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding strategy and leadership:



**Figure 38 – Mission by Affiliation N=1506**

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:



**Table 6 – 2019-2020 Staffing Statistics among selected Oregon libraries<sup>15</sup>**

Library	FTE Staff per 1,000 served	FTE Staff per 10,000 circulation	Staff expenditures as a percent of total expenditure	Wages as a percent of total revenue
Multnomah County Library	0.65	0.36	65%	36%
Jackson County Library	0.38	0.56	41%	25%
Deschutes Public Library District	0.51	0.47	65%	38%
Eugene Public Library	0.60	0.49	72%	39%
Salem Public Library	0.27	0.34	88%	45%
Hillsboro Public Library	0.56	0.46	86%	38%
Beaverton Public Library	0.47	0.32	82%	38%

<sup>15</sup> State Library of Oregon, "2019-20 Oregon Public Library Statistical Report Data."

Table 9 – 2019-2020 Collection Statistics among selected Oregon libraries<sup>19</sup>

Library	Total Physical and Digital units per capita	Collection Growth (physical and digital)	Total collection expenditures per capita	Collection expenditures as a percent of total expenditure
Multnomah County Library	3.07	18%	\$10.01	10%
Jackson County Library	2.45	21%	\$5.70	13%
Deschutes Public Library District	4.91	22%	\$10.21	15%
Eugene Public Library	7.80	23%	\$7.15	9%
Salem Public Library	2.43	13%	\$2.87	12%
Hillsboro Public Library	3.06	20%	\$3.03	7%
Beaverton Public Library	3.46	18%	\$3.01	5%

## What we heard

“We don’t even have an operations manual. There is no concrete set of procedures for ‘how to library’. When I started it was very intimidating and I had to run around figuring it out, all while trying to do your job and understand how the organization works as a whole.”

“Some of the things built into getting a library card are so onerous and complicated. It’s ridiculous how long it takes to get things going. We also need procedures for exceptions when people don’t meet the traditional mold like unhoused people or grandparents that aren’t legal guardians.”

“We need clear role assignments for specific initiatives that the library has identified as a service goal.”

“It’s a pain to pass any sort of policy. The process just goes on, and on, and on.”

“We need a strong commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion that we can use to shape policies and procedures and specific actions and goals.”

“We don’t have clear procedures and guidelines. So, we have to take a lot of time from each other, in order to communicate and get the information we need. Because we don’t have things written down.”

“In the strategic plan, we need to include technical infrastructure pieces. It’s not often seen and is not client facing. But the work we do is important.”

“I’d like to see an onboarding process. How you get trained is dependent on who you shadowed. Right now, the onus is on new staff members to figure out the job.”

“We all feel confident in how we do our job, but when we compare notes, it’s not standardized.”

“We need more trust and support from city leadership. For example, just to purchase one item, I have to go through a very lengthy process.”

<sup>19</sup> State Library of Oregon, “2019-20 Oregon Public Library Statistical Report Data.”

“In short, we need the space and time to get the house in order. We have a lot of deferred maintenance and a lot of basic things missing. It’s not like we’re doing okay and just need to update, there is a gap.”









# Industry Overview

Libraries across the nation are facing changes brought on by changing demographics, new technologies, political and cultural dynamics, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Below are industry shifts and social trends that libraries across the nation are facing that the Salem Public Library should consider as it develops its strategic direction

## Demand: Travel Trends

### Technological Adaptability and e-Books

Recent technological advances have seen the relevance of libraries simultaneously challenged and reinforced. The proliferation of e-books and online databases at an increasingly affordable price has somewhat replaced the need to go to a library.<sup>28</sup> These changes also place libraries in prime position to lead the way in digital literacy, helping patrons access information they need. To effectively harness this, libraries need to be able to adapt to these changes. Building a collection of e-books mitigates the wear and tear that physical books endure and eliminates the costs of late or nonreturned items.<sup>29</sup> Shifting away from physical catalogs to computer-based systems has expanded library offerings. Currently, 59.1% of libraries offer virtual reference systems and 95% offer online public access catalogs.<sup>30</sup> The ubiquity of social media, especially among younger demographics and young parents have opened an entirely new marketing channel that libraries can leverage to improve usage among age groups that make up the majority of patrons.

Technological advancements have placed the burden on libraries to adapt. Those that do, find new needs and opportunities within communities, while those that are unable to make that shift face challenges related to meeting evolving community needs.

### Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Practices

Public libraries have been trying to define and articulate their role in providing equitable access to information for all communities and what that looks like. This is not an 'issue' to be solved, but a perspective through which the entirety of a library's operations reflects a focus on EDI. Libraries are recognizing the need to be very intentional in recruiting a representative group of staff and building a collection that features diverse voices and facilitates multilingual access to information. Patrons are looking to libraries to provide better services to disabled people with assistive technologies and staff who are trained to support disabled individuals in using the library and attending programs.<sup>31</sup> A popular and easy shift that many libraries are making is moving towards being fine-free. In 2019, the American Library Association (ALA) council passed a resolution declaring library fines a form of social inequity as it presents an economic barrier to access library services and disproportionately affect underserved and underrepresented communities.<sup>32</sup> Libraries that have adopted this practice have already seen an uptick in membership and usage.

<sup>28</sup> Zheng, "Libraries & Archives."

<sup>29</sup> Zheng.

<sup>30</sup> Zheng.

<sup>31</sup> American Library Association, "State of America's Libraries Report 2020."

<sup>32</sup> American Library Association.

### Increased Parental Involvement in Building Literacy<sup>33</sup>

In the past, the responsibility of building literacy has been primarily laid upon schools. However, research has shown that parental engagement in education reduces or eliminates the literacy gap between children whose mothers have varying levels of education. High-income households have the means to spend more on enrichment activities for their children and have extra time for parents to spend nurturing their children compared to lower-income households.

Public libraries are starting to recognize their ability to offer spaces and programs for families to spend time together learning side-by-side. This presents public libraries with the unique opportunity to help level the playing field for future generations and promoting equity.

### Community Resource

The modern public library is more than just books, some venturing as far as to say, “if there is something that can’t be checked out at your public library, it likely hasn’t been invented yet”.<sup>34</sup> At the Beaverton City Library, patrons are able to check-out kitchen equipment, outdoor equipment, and games. These non-traditional collections are a means for libraries to enable patrons to access skills and experiences (cooking, outdoor recreation, etc.) that they would otherwise be unable to access. Similarly, libraries have also become a center for digital literacy and training within communities. Many libraries have 24/7 free Wi-Fi access, providing a much needed 21<sup>st</sup> Century resource for their communities.

As public libraries increasingly take on multifaceted roles, many are changing and becoming modern ‘community centers’ where local residents can gather to learn new skills, network, and access resources. Some libraries are going even further, developing capacity to help community members access information on health or social services as a tangible way of providing community services.<sup>35</sup> Another popular role that libraries are taking on is helping drive economic opportunity through skills training and small business support.<sup>36</sup>

### Accessibility will be key for Libraries of the Future

Social awareness of disabilities and barriers to access continues to grow, pointing the spotlight at public services and spaces to improve accessibility. Public libraries are no different and have made strides in remodeling physical spaces and locations to improve access. Many libraries across the nation are investing into assistive technology such as captioning services, programs and environments that cater to the disabled community, and hiring and training staff to be able to assist patrons who need additional help. Ultimately, a library that cannot be accessed by those who need it most will be unable to meet the needs of the community.

More recently, libraries have taken additional steps that align with emerging and shifting community priorities. As environmental sustainability becomes more important, libraries around the country are exploring partnerships with local public transit systems, and improving infrastructure to facilitate patrons commuting by foot, bike, or public transport.<sup>37</sup> Another shift that libraries are making is bringing libraries to people rather than expecting patrons to visit libraries. Part of this shift happens through digital circulations, but other innovative technologies that have been trialed include book delivery robots and smart lockers.<sup>38</sup> Libraries are also increasingly seeking out co-location opportunities when opening new branches.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> American Library Association.

<sup>34</sup> American Library Association.

<sup>35</sup> American Library Association.

<sup>36</sup> American Library Association.

<sup>37</sup> American Library Association.

<sup>38</sup> American Library Association.

<sup>39</sup> American Library Association.

## Social Trends

### Distrust of Government

Americans are less trusting of government today than they were half a century ago. According to the Public Library Quarterly, 73% of Americans trusted the federal government to “do what is right” in 1958. In 2015, that number dropped 54% to an abysmal 19% of Americans.<sup>40</sup> Public libraries being typically a unit of the municipal or county government ought to be concerned with this trend. Reduced support from the public could translate into a loss of funding, policy voice, and stature; directly impacting library operations.<sup>41</sup> So far, public libraries have been relatively unscathed, with 66% of Americans believing that closing the public library will have a major impact on their communities.<sup>42</sup>

### Value Articulation

Libraries are not spared from the shift to a return-on-investment (ROI) focused model that has impacted all aspects of the public sector. As distrust grows, the public wants increased accountability for their tax dollars. Libraries tend to stand up well to the scrutiny with one study on Texas Public Libraries calculating a ROI for public libraries of \$4.64 for every dollar spent.<sup>43</sup> However, much of the value that a public library brings to a community is not easily quantified but must somehow be justified. For example: how does one quantify the value of helping children learn to read or providing materials to a senior adult?<sup>44</sup> These are important roles, but the ROI model is unable to provide an accurate quantitative measure. Quantifying return-on-investment is and will remain important, but new ways to demonstrate value will be especially relevant and helpful to the continued support and funding of public libraries.

### Censorship

As Americans' trust in the government to make good decisions continues to decline, calls for censorship in libraries are becoming more commonplace. These challenges to intellectual freedom typically focus on material that address topics such as LGBTQIA+, or themes related to race, religion, and social justice. Many of these challenges are pursued by well-organized groups that are intent on banning materials they deem pornographic or unsuitable for minors.<sup>45</sup> According to the April 2020 Special Report by American Libraries, a serious concern are the efforts by these groups to “pass state legislation that would make it possible to sue or criminally prosecute librarians and educators for providing or lending constitutionally protected, mainstream materials to minors”.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Smith, “Top Ten Challenges Facing Public Libraries.”

<sup>41</sup> Smith.

<sup>42</sup> Smith.

<sup>43</sup> Bureau of Business Research, “Texas Public Libraries: Economic Benefits and Return on Investment.”

<sup>44</sup> Smith, “Top Ten Challenges Facing Public Libraries.”

<sup>45</sup> American Library Association, “State of America's Libraries Report 2020.”

<sup>46</sup> American Library Association.

## Changing Interests

Visiting libraries is the “most common cultural activity Americans engage in by far” with U.S. adults taking an average of 10.5 trips to the library in 2019. This exceeds the frequency adults in the U.S. attended live music, theatrical events, or visited a national park, historical park, museum, or casino.<sup>47</sup> The latest research points to the prevalence of smartphones and other smart devices significantly diminishing our capacity to concentrate.<sup>48</sup> Young people and children are especially prone to being addicted to technology with 77% of people aged 18 to 24 likely to reach for their phones when bored.<sup>49</sup> This phenomenon and the constant need for instant gratification might mean that even if the public deems libraries as important, public library usage may slowly decline.

As an early indicator of what may come, the 2017 Reading at Risk report from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) showed a 1.9% drop from 54.6% to 52.7% of adults who read any book during the year.<sup>50</sup> This decline in reading among adults should be of concern to public libraries that serve to provide community access to books. Finding new and innovative ways to encourage reading will be important to the relevance of public libraries.

## Competitive Landscape

According to the IBISWorld US industry report on libraries and archives, public libraries enjoy relatively low internal competition and major players (the Library of Congress) only control a relatively small market concentration. Libraries are mostly publicly funded and not-for-profit, with estimated operating surplus accounting for about 3.4% of industry revenue.<sup>51</sup> Even among privately owned and operated libraries, surplus is relatively small as they compete with public libraries.<sup>52</sup>

Public libraries are facing increasing external competition from two primary sources. University and corporate libraries are the first group, with an increasing number of these organizations offering access to the public with a fee. These libraries are typically better resourced and compete with public libraries around research services and information management services.<sup>53</sup> Internet sources form the second group of competition as resources are increasingly available online at a lower cost and with better accessibility. Publishers and other sources have responded by moving more resources online, in some cases offering direct access, removing the need for the library to be an intermediary. Libraries have responded by shifting towards competing on value-added services rather than on the traditional model of access to (more) materials.<sup>54</sup> IBISWorld expects these trends will continue and project an increase in competition over the next five years.

## Amazon and other Bookstores

Amazon and other book retailers such as Audible, Barnes & Noble, and Book Bin are typically not classified as direct competitors to libraries but are certainly related. In the past, bookstores were a separate industry and in some ways were a complement to libraries. Recently however, more attention has been given to the disruption that Amazon has and is causing to the market for books and information. As the retailer expands in the publishing sector, more books/e-books (and audiobooks under its Audible label) are becoming exclusive to Amazon. Their policies have refused the sale of downloadable e-book copies of these Amazon exclusive titles to public libraries.<sup>55</sup> Hence, their monopoly is not only affecting bookstores, but increasingly affects libraries. Should this trend continue, public libraries risk irrelevance among their patrons due to external limits on the supply of new titles that patrons are seeking out.

<sup>47</sup> American Library Association.

<sup>48</sup> Smith, “Top Ten Challenges Facing Public Libraries.”

<sup>49</sup> Smith.

<sup>50</sup> National Endowment for the Arts, “U.S. Trends in Arts Attendance and Literary Reading: 2002-2017.”

<sup>51</sup> Zheng, “Libraries & Archives.”

<sup>52</sup> Zheng.

<sup>53</sup> Zheng.

<sup>54</sup> Zheng.

<sup>55</sup> Fowler, “Want to Borrow That E-Book from the Library? Sorry, Amazon Won’t Let You.”



## Google

Google, while less directly involved, has a monopoly on information. Any individual seeking out information is more likely to turn to Google first before visiting their local library. This aligns with democratizing information, but government antitrust lawsuits filed in late 2020 argue that Google's monopoly is blocking competitors and prioritizing its own inferior services.<sup>56</sup> Put simply, searching for a book on Google will likely bring more advertisements prompting the purchase of the book (that Google can profit from), rather than leading to sources of information such as a nearby library that could check out the book for free.

<sup>56</sup> Fowler.



# Appendices

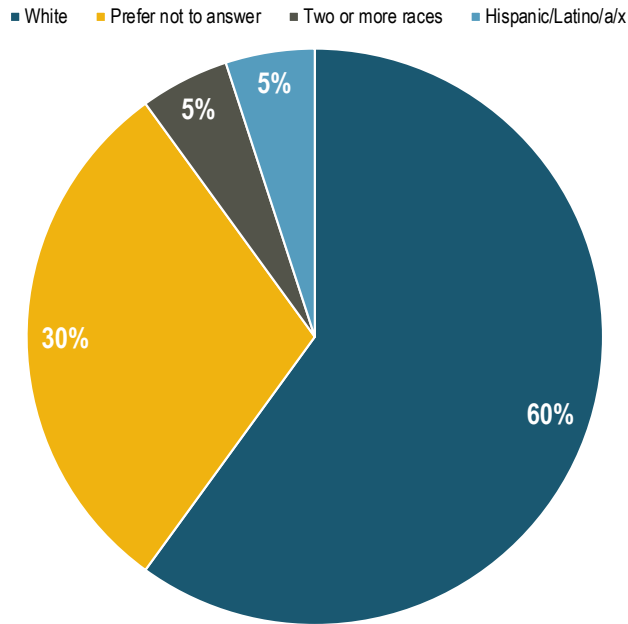




## Appendix 1: Internal Organizational Assessment

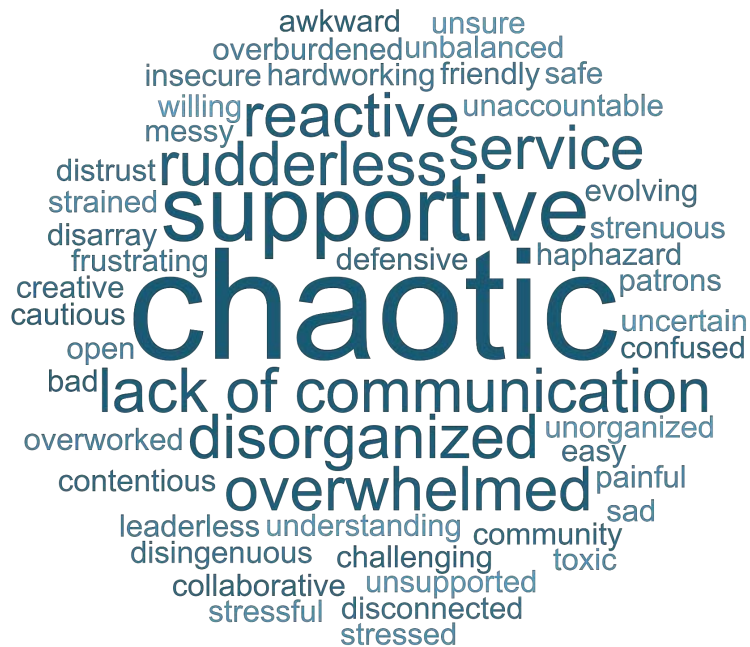
## Appendix 1.1 – Salem Public Library Staff Demographics N=20

What is your race/ethnicity?



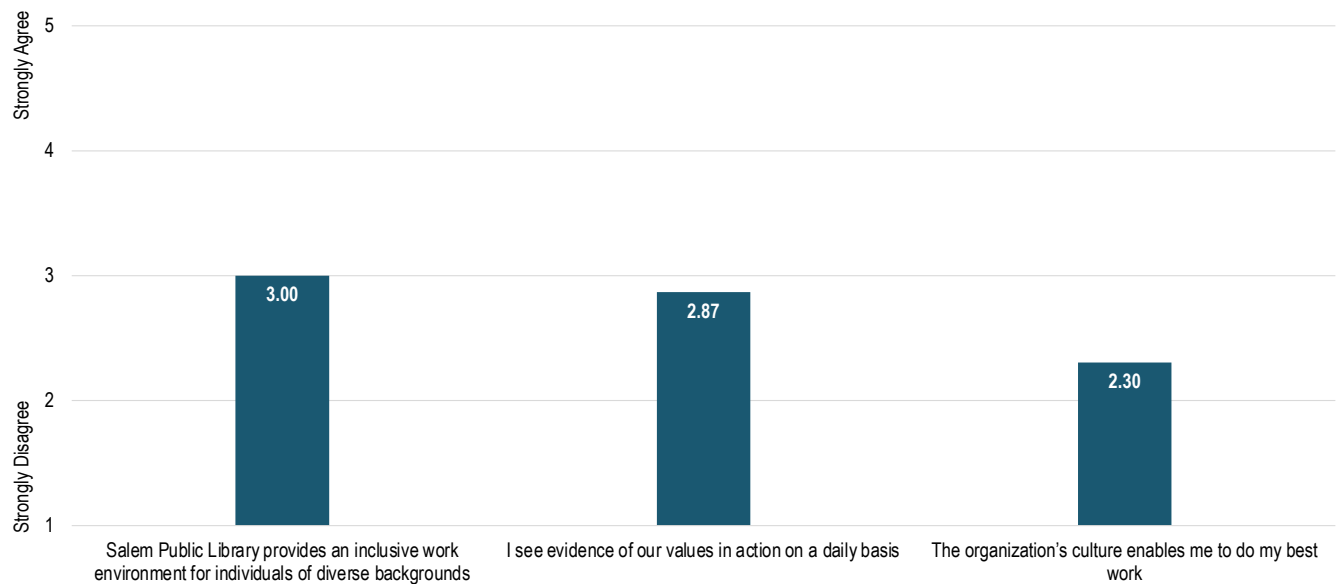
## Appendix 1.2 – Culture and Atmosphere Descriptors N=22

What three words best describe Salem Public Library's current organizational culture?



## Appendix 1.3 – Internal Organizational Culture N=23

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement:



### Why focus on employee engagement?

"A highly engaged workforce means the difference between **a company that thrives** and one that struggles. When employees are engaged, they are passionate, creative, and entrepreneurial, and their **enthusiasm fuels growth**. These employees are **emotionally connected to the mission and purpose** of their work."

- 20% higher productivity
- 24%-59% lower turnover
- 40% lower quality issues
- 10% higher patron loyalty
- 41% lower absenteeism

#### Growth

12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.
11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.

#### Teamwork

10. I have a best friend at work.
9. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
8. The mission and purpose of my organization makes me feel my job is important.
7. At work, my opinions seems to count.

#### Management Support

6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.
5. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best.

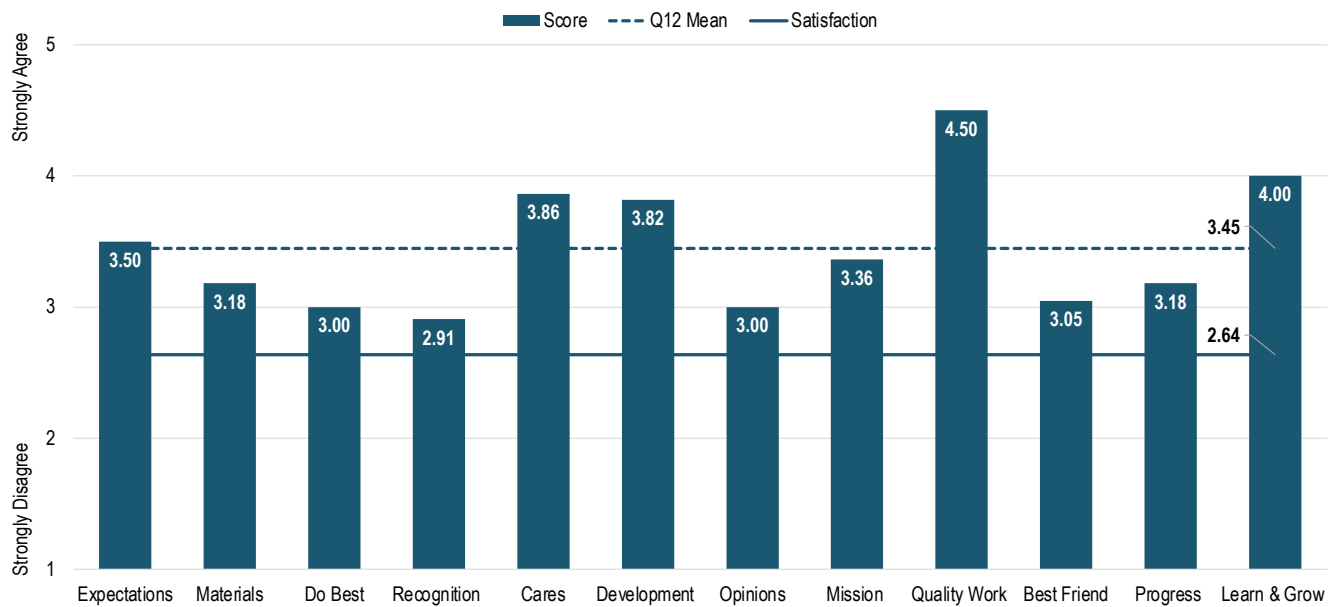
#### Basic Needs

2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
1. I know what is expected of me at work.



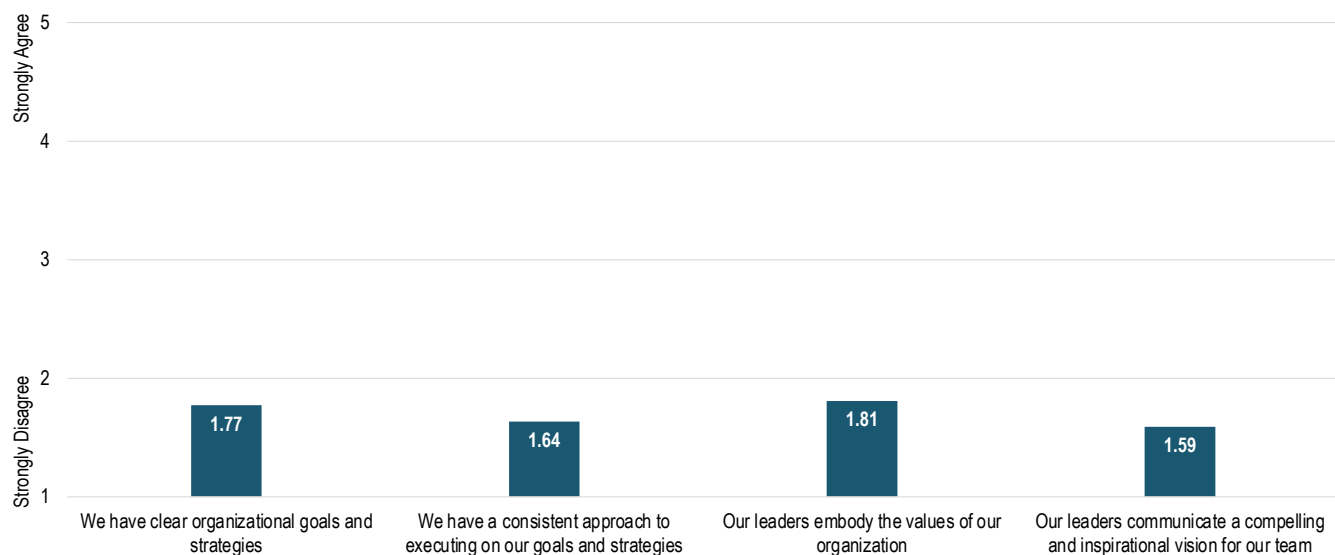
## Appendix 1.4 – Gallup Q12: Employee Engagement N=22

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements:



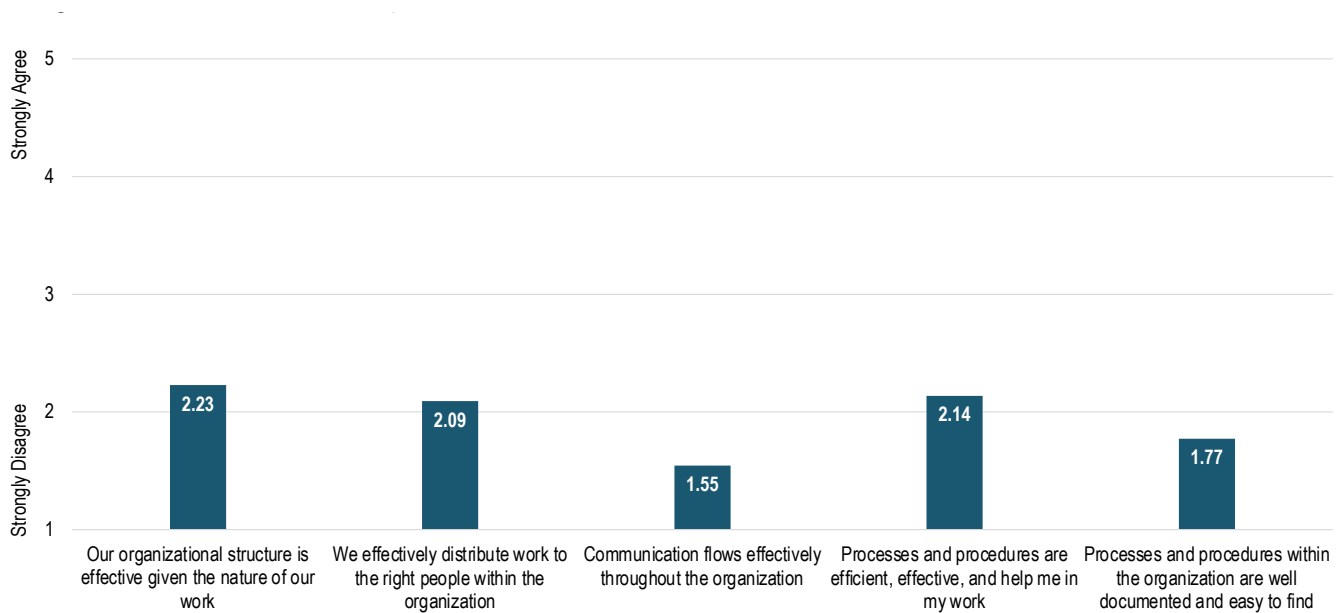
## Appendix 1.5 – Strategy and Leadership N=22

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding strategy and leadership:



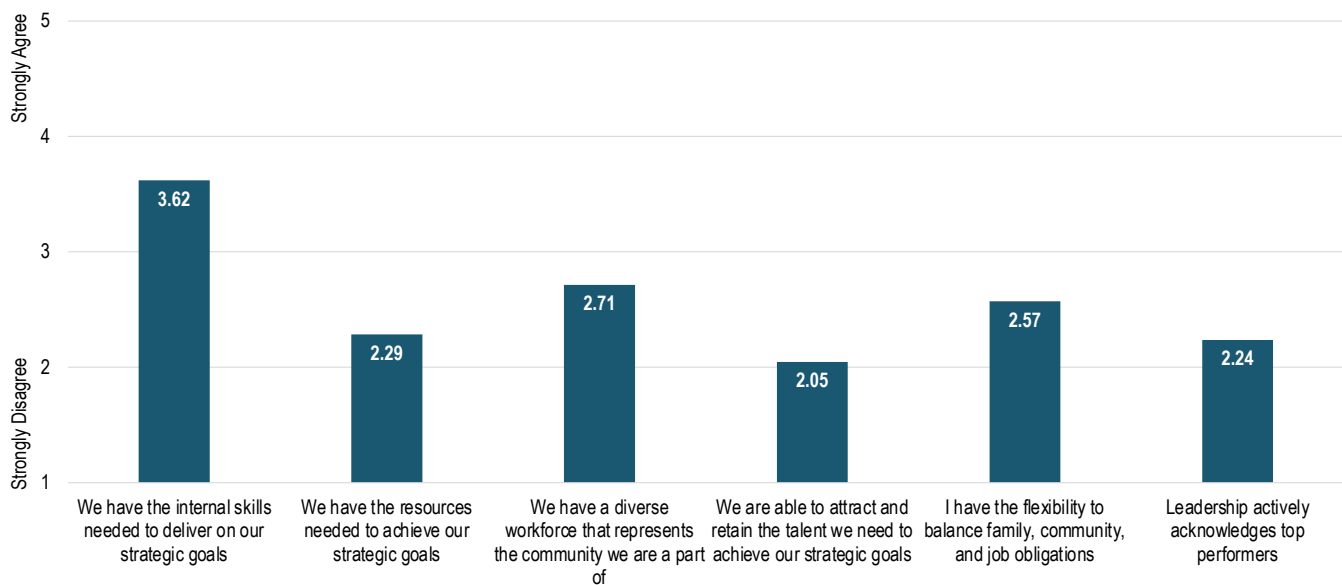
## Appendix 1.6 – Organizational Structure and Processes N=22

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding organizational structure and processes:



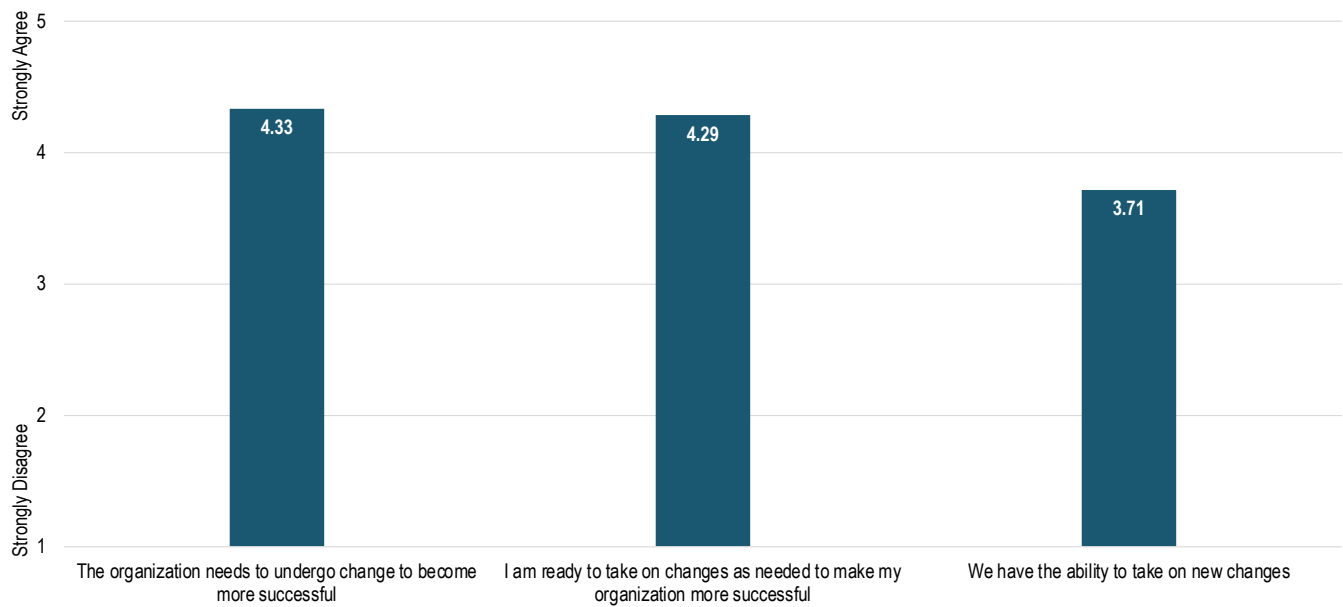
## Appendix 1.7 – Capabilities, Rewards, and Talents N=21

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding capabilities, talents, and rewards:



## Appendix 1.8 – Organizational Change N=21

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements regarding change:









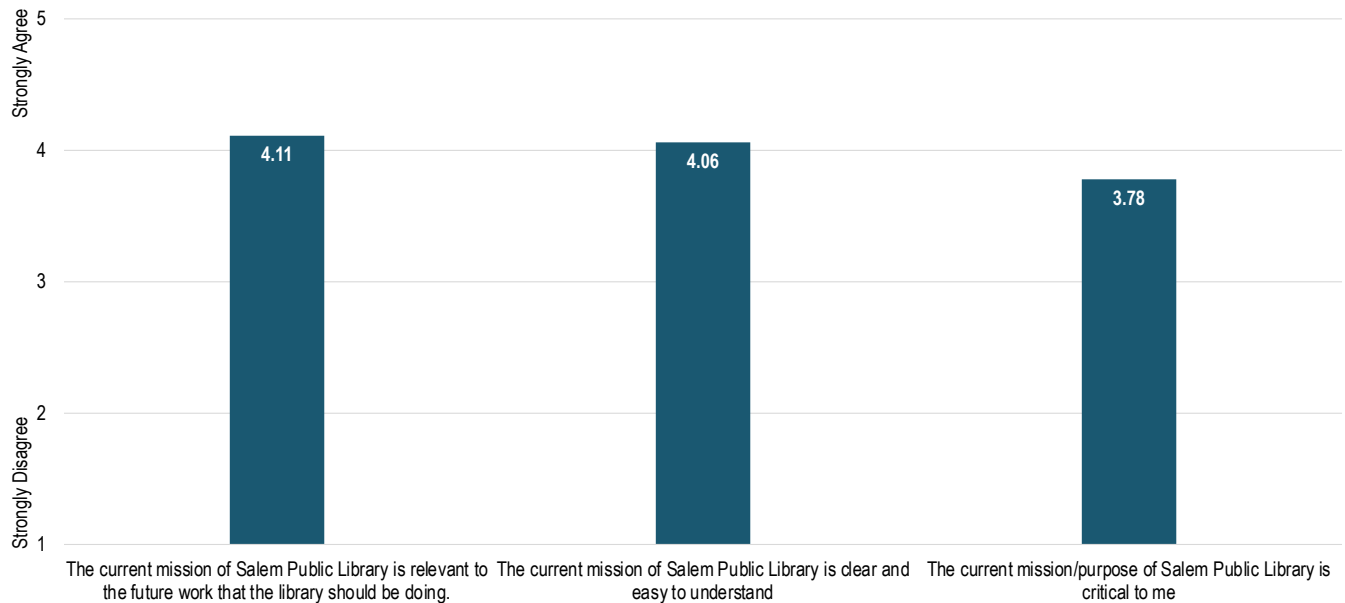




## Appendix 2: Stakeholder Engagement

## Appendix 2.1 – Mission N=1506

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:



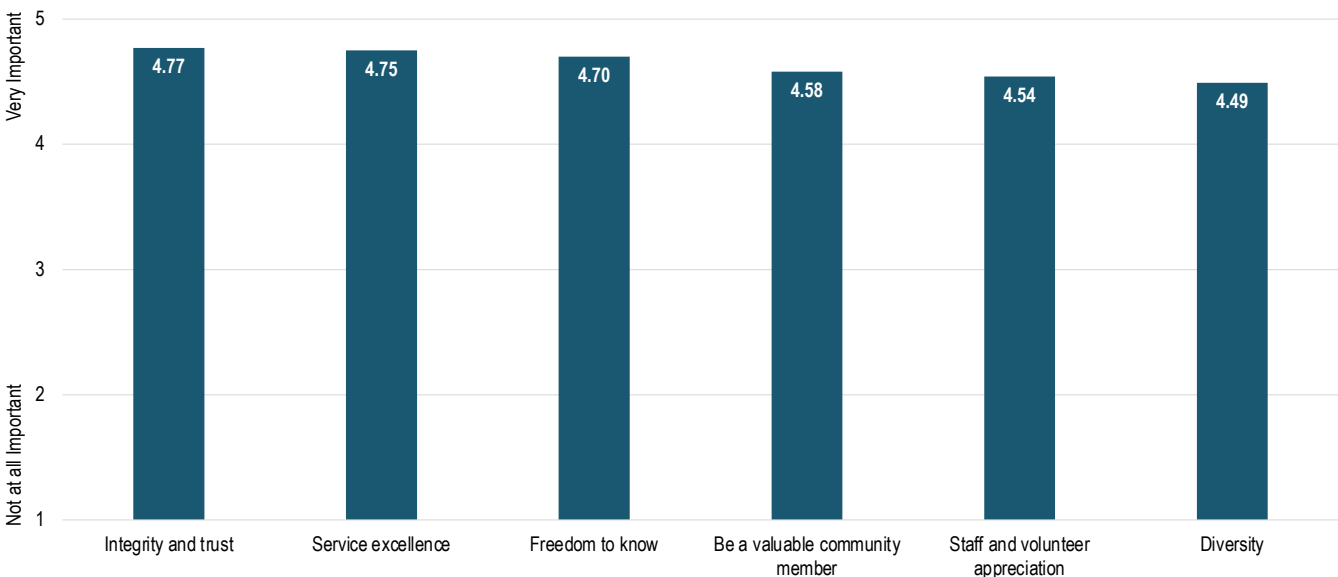
## Appendix 2.2 – Additional Words to include in the Mission N=1522

Are there any other words you would like to suggest including in the future mission of Salem Public Library?



**Appendix 2.3 – Salem Public Library Values N=1328**

Please rate how important you believe each value is in creating a positive culture and atmosphere for the library?



**Appendix 2.4 – Other words that describe the culture/atmosphere N=1522**

Are there any other words you would like to suggest that better describe the existing or desired culture and atmosphere for the library?



What three words do you believe best describe Salem Public Library's current reputation?

What three words do you believe best describe Salem Public Library's current reputation?



What three words would you like to use to describe Salem Public Library's reputation **in the future**?





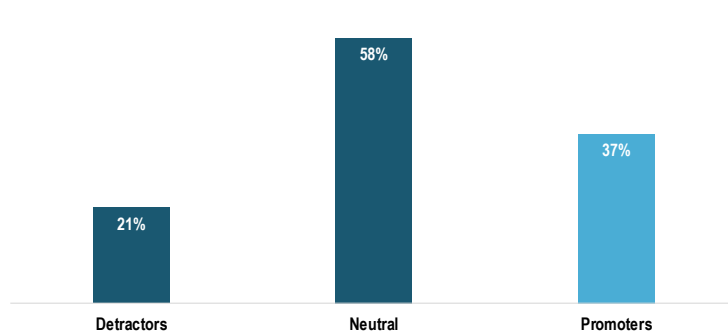
## Appendix 2.7 – Net Promoter Score (NPS) N=1241

How likely is it that you would recommend Salem Public Library to a friend or colleague?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Detractors						Neutral		Promoters	

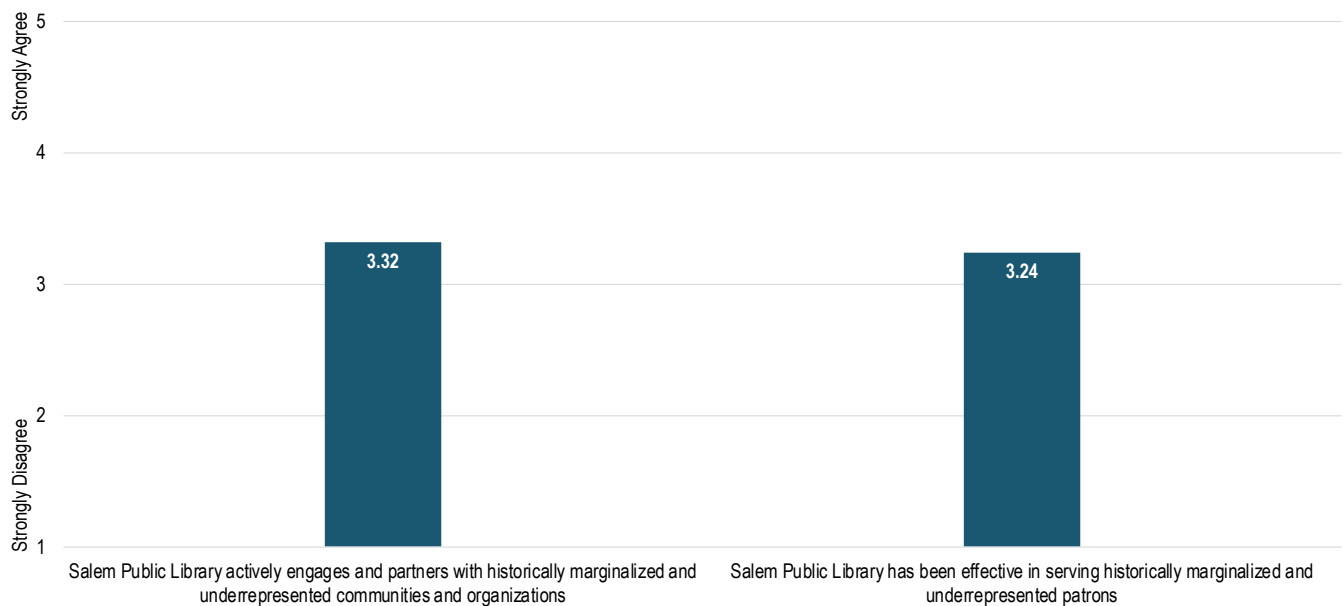
The NPS measures stakeholder perception of Salem Public Library. Score ranges from -100 to 100 with a score of 0 to 10 considered fair, 10 to 30 good, 30 to 50 excellent and 50+ world class.

NPS = % of Promoters - % of Detractors



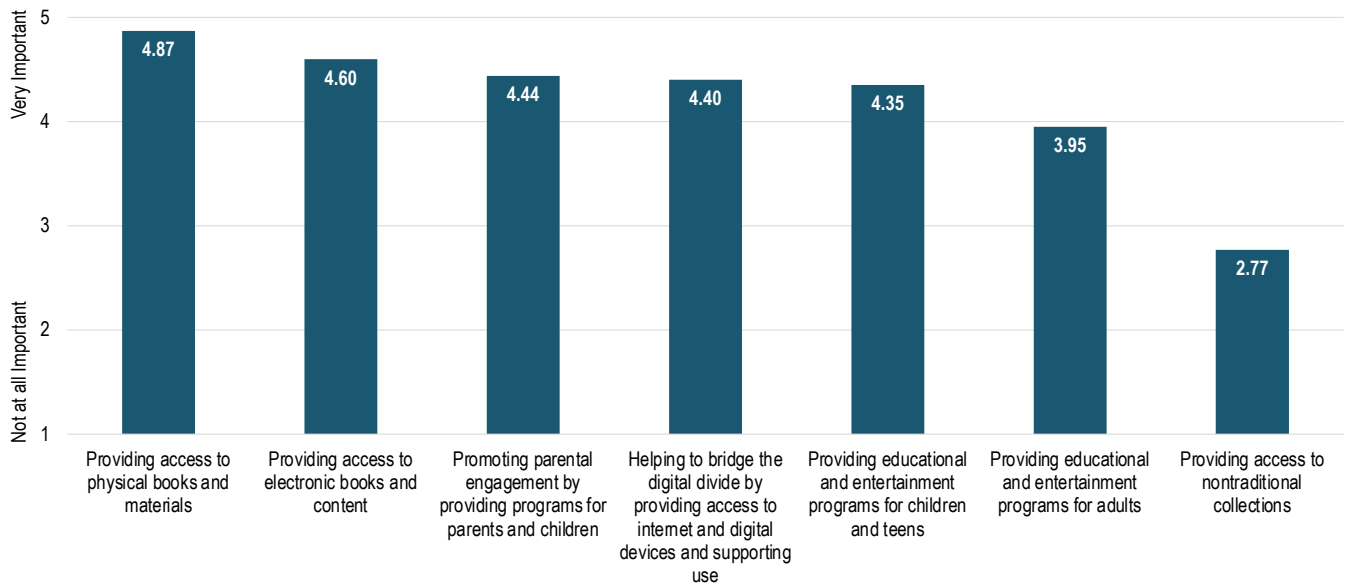
## Appendix 2.8 – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion N=1129

Please indicate your agreement with the statements below:



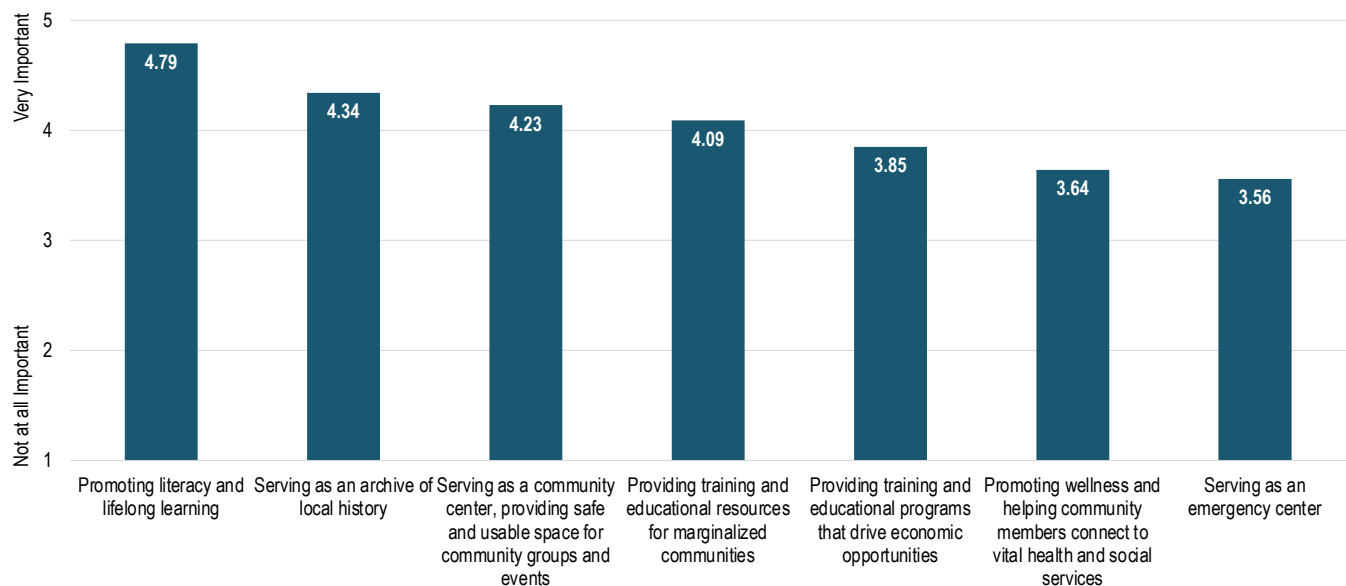
## Appendix 2.9 – Roles for Patrons N=1230

Please rate how important you think it is for Salem Public Library to play each of the following roles that public libraries can play for their **patrons**:



## Appendix 2.10 – Roles for the Community N=1229

Please rate how important you think it is for Salem Public Library to play each of the following roles that public libraries can play for their **community**:



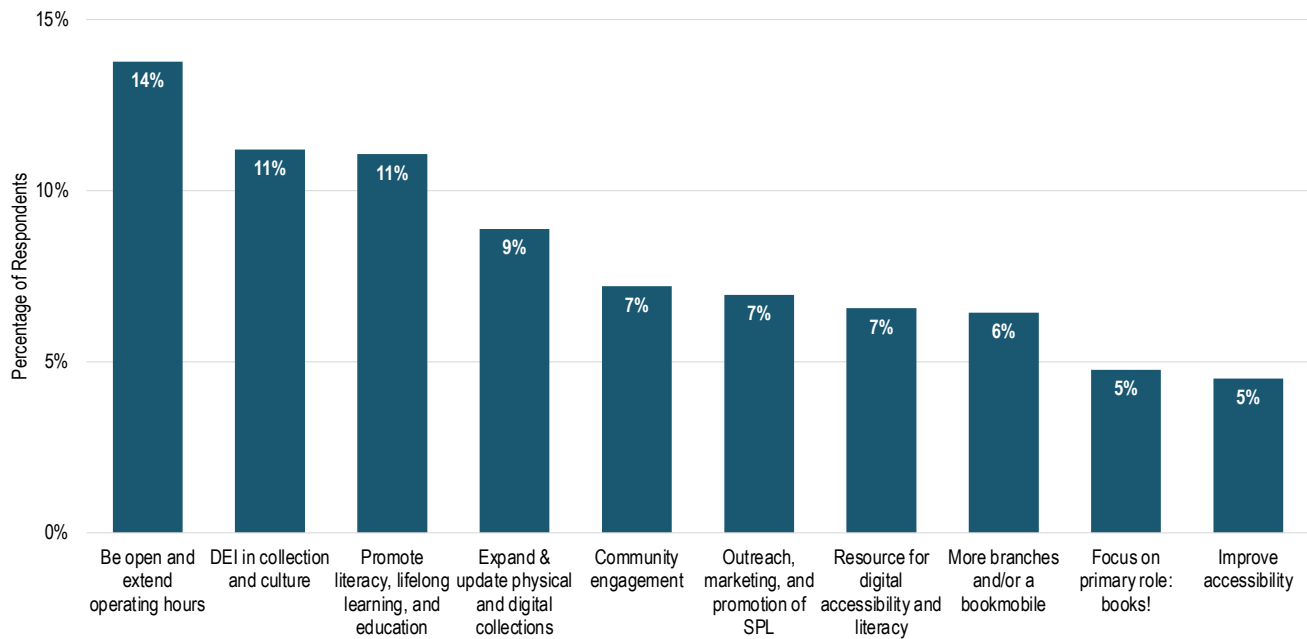
What words would you use to describe the library's collection?

Please list the type of materials you believe the library needs more of:

[illegible]

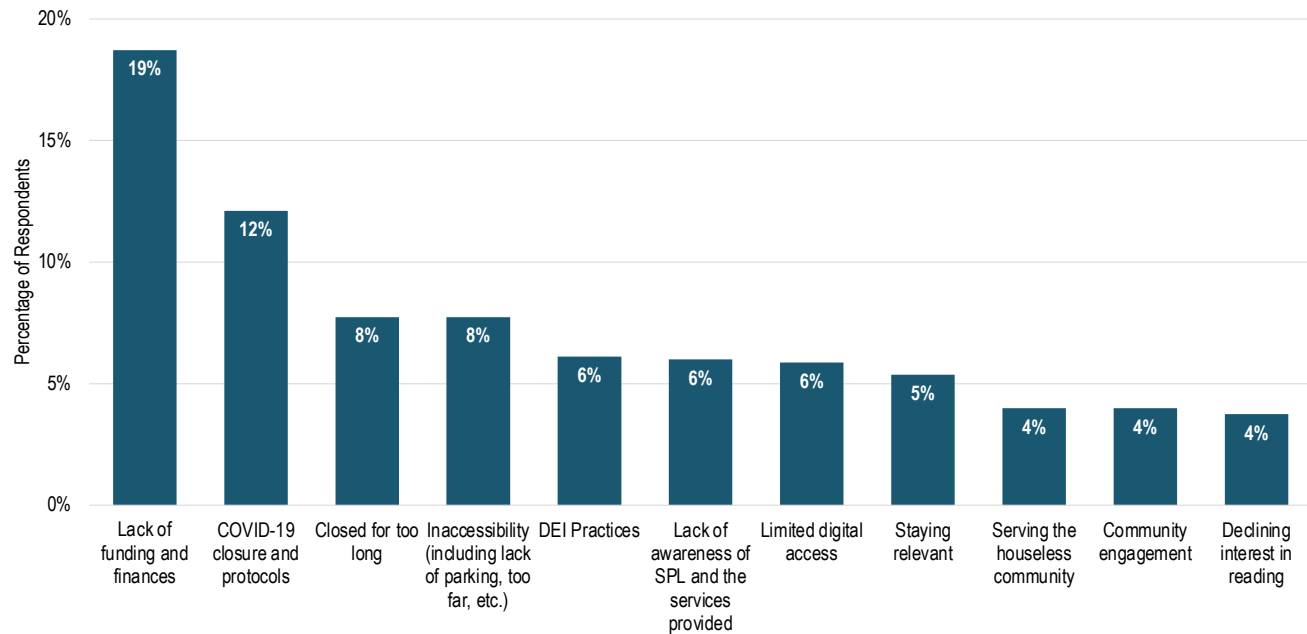
## Appendix 2.13 – Strategic Opportunities for SPL N=777

What do you believe is the single most significant opportunity for the library?



## Appendix 2.14 – Challenges impacting SPL N=801

What do you believe is the most significant strategic challenge impacting the library?









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