AUBURN PUBLIC LIBRARY
STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-30 INPUT
BOT AND FRIENDS OF APL BOARD SOAR ANALYSIS RESULTS 2025

BACKGROUND

A SOAR brainstorming session was held on June 9, 2025, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., with 8 participants (5 Library Trustees and 3 Friends of the Auburn Public Library Board members). Facilitated by Barbara Alevras, PMP, of Sage Consulting Services, participants identified numerous Auburn Public Library (APL) strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results (performance/progress metrics).

After the session, participants completed a survey ranking the ideas they generated, indicating which ones they considered most important for the Library's future success. The number in parentheses after each supporting input section's italicized citation shows the idea's score, calculated as a weighted average. The higher the score, the higher the priority assigned by participants.

The results of the SOAR activities are presented below.

LIBRARY STRENGTHS

Summary of Library Strengths:

SOAR exercise attendees noted that the Auburn Public Library is a vibrant, well-utilized community hub that residents deeply value. High participation across children's, adult, and senior programs underscores its broad appeal and reputation for quality. Patrons experience a clean, well-organized facility with convenient access and ample parking, all of which contribute to consistently high use and satisfaction.

The Library's success is rooted in strong leadership and a capable, responsive staff. The Director is recognized as an educational leader and effective change agent who follows through on initiatives, while the cross-trained staff demonstrates flexibility and professionalism. APL also benefits from dependable financial support, strong partnerships with town departments and schools, and a proactive approach to grant funding.

Together, these strengths position the Library as a trusted, innovative institution with a solid foundation for future growth. Continued investment in marketing, communications, and visibility will further enhance its already strong connection with the Auburn community.

Overall Highlights:

- **High Use + Strong Leadership:** A thriving institution with trust and momentum.
- **Well-Maintained Facility + Quality Programs:** A strong daily experience for patrons.
- **Funding and Partnerships:** Sustainability and town alignment.

- **Room for Growth:** Elevate marketing visibility and continue developing innovative funding strategies.

Highlights: The following are the key trends and highlights grouped by theme and weighted by emphasis:

1. **The Library Is Vibrant and Highly Valued:** The Library is well-used, well-loved, and clearly seen as a vital community hub.
   - **Trend:** Sustained community demand and high visibility are hallmarks of a healthy, trusted institution.
   - **Supporting Input:**
     - *"Busy/Well-Utilized"* (14.25) and *"Patrons Value the Library"* (11.00) indicate strong community engagement and relevance.
     - Wide participation in *children's, adult, and senior programs* reinforces that the Library effectively serves all ages.

2. **Strong Leadership and Staff Culture:** Leadership and staff excellence are defining strengths.
   - **Trend:** Strong internal culture and leadership capacity enable ongoing innovation and follow-through.
   - **Supporting Input:**
     - The *Director* is recognized as both a *change agent* and an *educational leader* committed to literacy.
     - *Staff responsiveness, cross-training,* and *ability to take direction* speak to teamwork and adaptability.

3. **Quality Programming and Services:** The Library provides diverse, high-quality offerings that cater to the community's interests.
   - **Trend:** APL is a cultural and educational resource center with programs and collections that extend well beyond its walls.
   - **Supporting Input:**
     - The *variety and quality* of programs — especially for children and seniors — are highly valued.
     - *Museum passes* and *interlibrary loan* (ILL) show a breadth of access beyond the local collection.

4. **Effective Operations and Facilities:** The Library's facility and operations create a positive user experience.
   - **Trend:** Operational excellence contributes directly to APL's positive reputation and high utilization.
   - **Supporting Input:**
     - *Clean, well-organized facility* and *ample free parking* reflect attention to accessibility and comfort.
     - These operational strengths support continued high use and satisfaction.

5. **Financial and Institutional Support:** The Library benefits from strong town, Friends, and grant-based funding.

    -   **Trend:** APL has a solid financial foundation and well-established collaborative relationships, indicating a strong platform for future growth.
    -   **Supporting Input:**
        o   *Dependable financial support* and *innovative grant-seeking* show resourcefulness and stability.
        o   *Strong partnerships* with the town and schools underscore integration within the broader municipal ecosystem.

6. **Communications and Community Connections:** Marketing and community relationships are recognized but not yet dominant strengths.

    -   **Trend:** Communication and visibility are present and valued but could be leveraged further to strengthen outreach and advocacy.
    -   **Supporting Input:** *Effective marketing and communication* and *town-wide administrative support* ranked lower, suggesting potential growth areas, but were still recognized as positives.

LIBRARY OPPORTUNITIES

Summary of Library Opportunities:

The Library is well-positioned to expand its role as a central community hub. The need for a welcoming civic gathering space and APL's capacity for future facility expansion present an exciting opportunity to strengthen the Library's position as the town's heart for connection, learning, and safety.

As Auburn's demographics evolve, the Library can deepen its impact by reaching new and underserved audiences, including teens and residents with fewer resources. Rising social isolation and the ongoing demand for free, reliable information highlight the Library's growing importance as both a connector and a trusted information source.

With unrealized community goodwill and untapped financial opportunities, the Library has fertile ground to expand partnerships, attract new supporters, and pursue innovative funding models. Together, these opportunities point to a dynamic future—one where the Library continues to grow its relevance, reach, and resilience in meeting the community's changing needs.

Overall Highlights:

-   **Community-Centered Growth:** Strong interest in making the Library a central civic hub.
-   **Capacity for Expansion:** The physical site is well-suited for potential facility improvements.
-   **Emerging Audiences:** Teens, underserved residents, and new demographic groups present opportunities for engagement.
-   **Information Literacy Leadership:** Growing need for reliable, curated information services.

- **Relationship and Funding Potential:** Untapped community and financial support can fuel future innovation.

Highlights: The following are the key trends and highlights grouped by theme and weighted by emphasis:

1. **Expanding Role as a Community Hub:** The Library has a clear opportunity to strengthen its role as a central gathering place and community anchor.
   - **Trend:** The community sees APL as a natural "third place." It's a public space for connection, comfort, and safety with potential for physical growth to support it.
   - **Supporting Input:**
     - *Need for a Community Gathering Place* (8.00) and *Community Needs Shelter from Inclement Weather* (2.50) show interest in using the Library as a welcoming, reliable civic space.
     - The Library's *physical lot can accommodate expansion* (8.25), positioning it to respond to this need through future facility improvements.

2. **Strengthening Community Engagement and Support:** There's unrealized goodwill and potential for stronger community partnerships and advocacy.
   - **Trend:** APL can cultivate deeper and broader community participation, from teens to donors, by engaging new audiences and building stronger ties.
   - **Supporting Input:**
     - *Unrealized Community Support* (6.50) and *Unexplored Financial Sources* (5.75) point to opportunities for new relationships, sponsorships, and advocacy initiatives.
     - *Untapped Tween/Teen Population* (5.75) represents both a programmatic and engagement opportunity for future growth.

3. **Responding to Social and Demographic Shifts:** Evolving demographics and social patterns are reshaping community needs. The Library is well-positioned to respond.
   - **Trend:** By aligning services with changing populations and social needs, APL can increase its impact and equity in service delivery.
   - **Supporting Input:**
     - *Changing Local Demographics* (5.00) and *Underserved Less Affluent Residents* (3.25) highlight opportunities to ensure equitable access and inclusion.
     - *Increasing Social Isolation* (3.50) reinforces the Library's role as a connector and antidote to isolation through programming and gathering spaces.

4. **Expanding Access to Reliable Information:** The demand for credible, current, and free information continues to rise.
   - **Trend:** The Library can leverage its credibility to become an even stronger source of accurate, up-to-date information and learning support for residents of all ages.
   - **Supporting Input:** *Interest in Free Information and Resources* (9.25) and *High Volume of Fast-Moving Information* (8.25) underscore the Library's growing importance as a trusted information hub in an era of misinformation and rapid change.

LIBRARY ASPIRATIONS

Summary of Library Aspirations:

The Auburn Public Library aspires to be a forward-looking institution that combines professional excellence with a deep commitment to community learning, inclusion, and engagement. A top priority is attracting and retaining highly qualified staff with diverse skills, including technology, marketing, programming, and community outreach expertise. This will help ensure that the Library remains innovative, responsive, and people-centered.

Looking ahead, the Library envisions maintaining up-to-date technology and serving as a trusted information hub where residents can access, navigate, and apply knowledge in a rapidly changing world. It seeks to be recognized as a welcoming, inclusive space for lifelong learning and multigenerational connection. APL aims to reflect Auburn's diversity and promote civic dialogue and cultural enrichment.

At the same time, the Library intends to operate efficiently, steward its resources wisely, and maintain a modern, functional, and inviting facility. These aspirations reflect a commitment not only to operational excellence but also to strengthening Auburn's civic life by preparing residents, especially those from underserved groups, with the skills and confidence needed to thrive in a dynamic community.

Overall Highlights:

- **People-First Focus:** Staff excellence and inclusivity top the list of long-term aspirations.
- **Technology and Access:** A modern, tech-savvy library remains central to APL's identity.
- **Learning and Connection:** Lifelong learning, multigenerational engagement, and civic participation are core goals.
- **Operational Strength:** Efficiency, modernization, and functional spaces enable the Library to deliver on its mission.

Highlights: The following are the key trends and highlights grouped by theme and weighted by emphasis:

1. **Commitment to Professional Excellence**: The Library aspires to attract and retain highly qualified, skilled staff who can meet evolving community needs.
   - **Trend:** A forward-looking investment in people and positioning of staff as the Library's greatest asset and key to sustained excellence.
   - **Supporting Input:**
     - The highest-rated aspiration — *Attract/Retain Highly Qualified Staff* (8.50) — emphasizes the value placed on professional expertise, specialized skills (e.g., marketing, technology, programming), and cross-functional experience.
     - This reflects an understanding that strong staffing is central to delivering high-quality, innovative services.

2. **Technology Leadership and Information Access**: Keeping pace with technology and information access is essential to the Library's future relevance.

   - **Trend:** A focus on being both high-tech and high-trust — ensuring the community can access, understand, and use information in a fast-changing world.

   - **Supporting Input:**

     o *Offer Current Technology* (8.00) and *Serve as Information Hub* (7.75) both highlight a desire for the Library to remain the trusted place for digital literacy, device access, and credible information.

     o These aspirations build on Auburn's existing strength as a resource for reliable information.

3. **Lifelong Learning and Inclusion**: The Library envisions itself as a welcoming, inclusive place for personal growth across all ages and backgrounds.

   - **Trend:** A human-centered aspiration — fostering belonging, curiosity, and lifelong learning in an inclusive environment.

   - **Supporting Input:**

     o *"Be Viewed as a Place for Lifelong Learning"* (7.50) and *"Be Inclusive"* (7.00) demonstrate a commitment to accessibility, equity, and continuous learning for all.

     o *Facilitate Multigenerational Engagement* (2.25) reinforces this inclusive vision, creating opportunities for people of all ages to learn and connect.

4. **Operational and Facility Excellence**: **Auburn aims to ensure the Library operates efficiently and provides a modern, functional, and attractive facility.**

   - **Trend:** A well-run, modern facility is seen as essential infrastructure for achieving the Library's mission.

   - **Supporting Input:** *Operate Effectively and Efficiently* (7.00) and *Maintain a Modern Facility* (5.50) express a commitment to continuous improvement, resource stewardship, and ensuring the building remains welcoming and up-to-date.

5. **Civic and Cultural Leadership**: The Library aspires to strengthen Auburn's civic fabric and cultural life.

   - **Trend:** APL seeks to become not only a center of learning but a catalyst for civic participation and community well-being.

   - **Supporting Input:**

     o *Inspire Civil, Civic Community Engagement* (6.25) and *Serve as a Robust Center for Cultural Activities* (3.50) highlight the Library's potential to foster dialogue, creativity, and connection.

     o *Facilitate Life Skills and Employment Readiness for Underserved Populations* (2.75) adds a practical, community-support dimension to this civic vision.

Summary of Library Results (progress/performance metrics)**:**

The Library will measure its success through strong staffing stability, community engagement, and growth in programs and services. Maintaining a stable, skilled workforce is viewed as the foundation for sustained excellence, supported by ongoing professional development and recruitment of qualified staff. Expanding programs for diverse audiences, increasing attendance, and deepening community partnerships reflect APL's commitment to meeting residents' evolving needs.

The Library will also track steady growth in in-person and online patron participation alongside rising satisfaction and positive feedback. Investments in technology, facility upkeep, and a stable budget demonstrate sound resource management and adaptability to modern service expectations. Collectively, these metrics highlight a results-driven culture that values continuous improvement, data-informed decision-making, and meaningful community impact.

Overall Highlights:

- **Top Priority:** Stable, skilled staffing and robust programming are viewed as the most critical performance drivers.
- **Balanced Focus:** Measures cover engagement, satisfaction, access, and financial health.
- **Forward-Looking:** Technology investment and data tracking ensure continued relevance and responsiveness.
- **Community-Centered:** The Library defines success not just in numbers, but in relationships, reach, and reputation.

Highlights: The following are the key trends and highlights grouped by theme and weighted by emphasis:

1. **Stable and Skilled Staffing:** Staffing stability and professional development are top performance indicators.
   - **Trend:** APL values staff retention and growth as core to operational health and service quality, emphasizing a sustainable, well-supported workforce.
   - **Supporting Input:**
     o *Maintain a Stable Staffing Level* (16.50) ranked highest overall, indicating that retention, morale, and institutional continuity are considered crucial to long-term success.
     o *Increased # Job Applicants* (7.25) and *Increased # Staff Professional Development Opportunities* (9.00) underscore an interest in both recruitment and continuous skill-building.

2. **Expanding and Diversifying Programs:** Growth in programming is a clear performance benchmark.
   - **Trend:** APL defines success in part by the vibrancy and inclusivity of its programming, which expands both reach and participation.
   - **Supporting Input:**

- o *Increased # Programs by Type/Audience* (16.00), *Increased # Programs Offered* (10.25), and *Increased # Program Attendees* (10.50) all ranked highly, showing a strong focus on both output (quantity) and engagement (attendance).
  - o Emphasis on *variety by audience* reflects a commitment to reaching broader and more diverse community segments.

3. **Strengthened Community Connections:** Collaboration and patron relationships are seen as central to success.

   - **Trend:** APL measures progress not only by what it offers, but by how deeply it connects through partnerships, trust, and customer satisfaction.

   - **Supporting Input:**

     - o *Increased # Collaborations with Community Groups* (15.00) and *Increased # Positive Feedback* (15.50) indicate strong attention to reputation, satisfaction, and partnership building.

     - o *Consistently Improving Patron Feedback* (11.50) and *Decreased # Complaints* (9.00) reflect a balanced focus on both positive outcomes and responsive service recovery.

4. **Expanded Access and Engagement:** Increased use of both physical and digital resources is a key metric for measuring success.

   - **Trend:** Success encompasses both in-person and digital participation, with a continued focus on access equity and online service delivery.

   - **Supporting Input:**

     - o *Increased # of Library Visitors* (11.25), *# of Website Visitors* (9.00), and *# of Library Cards* (10.00) indicate strong interest in overall reach and engagement.

     - o *Increased Time on PCs* (9.00) and *# of On-Site PC Users* (6.75) highlight the Library's ongoing role as a technology access point.

5. **Technology and Infrastructure Investment:** Technology performance is directly tied to the Library's ability to evolve and meet modern needs.

   - **Trend:** APL recognizes that sustained investment in technology and facilities underpins innovation, user experience, and staff efficiency.

   - **Supporting Input:**

     - o *Increased # Technology Offerings* (12.25) and *Increased $ Allocated to Technology* (10.50) reinforce a commitment to staying current and capable.

     - o *Stable Budget Sufficient to Maintain/Update the Facility* (10.75) ensures that financial planning keeps pace with modernization goals.

6. **Data-Driven Service and Continuous Improvement:** The Library aspires to measure success comprehensively through patron data, usage trends, and performance metrics.

   - **Trend:** A strong culture of assessment and accountability. Use of data to demonstrate impact and guide future improvements.

   - **Supporting Input:** The consistent emphasis on *increasing feedback, attendance, and use* across all categories shows a commitment to tracking meaningful progress and making informed decisions.

SOAR EXERCISE INPUT PRIORITIZATION RESULTS

Following the SOAR Exercise brainstorming session, participants completed a survey ranking the ideas they generated, indicating which ones they thought were most important to the Library's future success. **NOTE:** The score in parentheses is calculated based on a weighted average for each response option and then sorted in descending order from most to least important.

The results of the SOAR Exercise Input Prioritization Survey are presented below.

PRIORITIZED LIBRARY STRENGTHS: SOAR Exercise participants brainstormed the Library's current strengths and ranked them from 1 (most important) to 16 (least important) for the Library's future success.

1. The Library is Busy/Well-Utilized (14.25)
2. Clean, Well-Organized Facility (13.00)
3. Large Variety of High-Quality Children and Adult (esp. Seniors) Programs (11.00)
4. Patrons Value the Library (11.00)
5. Strong Director; Initiates and Implements Change (follows through) (11.00)
6. Large Variety of Museum Passes (9.25)
7. Director is Educational Leader; Committed to Books and Literacy (9.00)
8. Staff is Responsive; Takes Direction Well (8.75)
9. Large Collection with ILL Services (8.25)
10. Strong Partnerships with Town Departments (esp. town admin and schools) (7.00)
11. Convenient Location with Ample, Free Parking (6.75)
12. Good, Dependable Financial Support from Town, Friends, and Grants (6.00)
13. Staff is Cross-Trained (6.00)
14. Pursues Innovative Supplemental Funding (e.g., grants) (5.25)
15. Effective Marketing/Communications with Community (4.75)
16. Town-Wide Administrative Support (4.75)

PRIORITIZED LIBRARY OPPORTUNITIES: Library opportunities were brainstormed and ranked from 1 (most important) to 11 (least important) for the Library's future success.

1. Interest in Free Information and Resources (9.25)
2. High Volume of Fast-Moving and Changing Information (8.25)
3. Library's Physical Lot Can Accommodate Expansion (8.25)
4. Need for a Community Gathering Place (aka civic space, community hub) (8.00)
5. Unrealized (untapped) Community Support (6.50)
6. Unexplored Potential Sources of Financial Support (5.75)
7. Untapped Tween/Teen Population (5.75)
8. Changing Local Demographics (5.00)
9. Increasing Social Isolation (3.50)
10. Underserved Population of Less Affluent Residents (3.25)
11. Community Needs Shelter from Inclement Weather (hot/cold, tornadoes, etc.) (2.50)

PRIORITIZED LIBRARY ASPIRATIONS: Library aspirations were brainstormed and ranked from 1 (most important) to 11 (least important) for the Library's future success.

1. Attract/Retain Highly Qualified Staff (library professionals, specialty skills like marketing, and tech, experience w children's/adult programs, cross-functional experience) (8.50)
2. Offer Current Technology; Provide Access to Information and Devices (8.00)
3. Serve as Information Hub (7.75)
4. Be Viewed as a Place for Lifelong Learning (7.50)
5. Be Inclusive (7.00)
6. Operate Effectively and Efficiently (7.00)
7. Inspire Civil, Civic Community Engagement and Interaction (6.25)
8. Maintain a Modern Facility (function and aesthetics) (5.50)
9. Serve as a Robust Center for Cultural Activities (3.50)
10. Facilitate the Delivery of Life Skill Activities; Prepare Underserved Populations for Employment (2.75)
11. Facilitate Multigenerational Engagement (2.25)

PRIORITIZED LIBRARY RESULTS: Library results (progress/performance metrics) were brainstormed and ranked from 1 (most important) to 20 (least important) for the Library's future success.

1. Maintain a Stable Staffing Level (16.50)
2. Increased # Programs by Type/Audience (16.00)
3. Increased # Positive Feedback (15.50)
4. Increased # Collaborations with Community Groups Serving Targeted Constituencies (15.00)
5. Increased # Services Offered (13.75)
6. Increased # Technology Offerings (devices and web services) (12.25)
7. Consistently Improving Patron Feedback (surveys, focus groups, interviews) (11.50)
8. Increased # Library Visitors (in facility and on website) (11.25)
9. Increased # Traditional Circulation Stats (10.75)
10. Stable Budget is Sufficient to Maintain/Update the Facility (10.75)
11. Increased # Program Attendees (10.50)
12. Increased $ Allocated to Purchase/Maintain Current Technology (10.50)
13. Increased # Programs Offered (10.25)
14. Increased # Library Cards (10.00)
15. Decreased # Complaints (9.00)
16. Increased # Staff Professional Development Opportunities Offered (9.00)
17. Increased # Website Visitors (9.00)
18. Increased Amount of Time on Library PCs (9.00)
19. Increased # Job Applicants (7.25)
20. Increased # On-Site PC Users (6.75)