



Northfield Public Library  
210 Washington St  
Northfield, MN 55057

June 24th, 2025

Sara Folsted  
Rice County Administrator  
320 Third Street NW  
Faribault, MN 55021

Dear Administrator Folsted and the Rice County Board of Commissioners,

I am writing to submit the 2026 proposal for Rice County funding for the Northfield Public Library. As in the past, the County is asking outside agencies such as the library to limit dollars requested for 2026 funding. For 2025, Rice County provided the Northfield Library a funding allocation of \$206,135. For our 2026 budget, we are asking for an increase in funding reflective of the impact of inflation on library budgets, potentially limiting our ability to meet demand for collections, especially digital collections, outreach services, and programs. We are asking for an increase of 4% to account for inflation and increased demand, which comes to \$214,380.

Rice County taxpayers get a tremendous return on investment when it comes to their libraries. Not only do we provide access to innumerable resources for learning and enrichment at no cost to our visitors, libraries also serve as hubs of activity in their communities, constantly evolving to meet demand. We offer meeting room space and use of the facilities to the public. We provide access to technology and bilingual instruction on how to use it. We provide cultural festivals, concerts, readings, performances, and story times, not just in the library but in city parks, schools, and other facilities all around the community. Last year the library opened its first satellite location in the Northfield Community Resource Center (NCRC), now serving the community alongside partners at Community Action Center, Rice County Social Services, Head Start, Northfield Community College Collaborative, Fifty North, and Healthy Community Initiative, in a location that is convenient for families and accessible to residents of all ages.

Included in this application is information on library budgets for 2025 and 2026, key indicators for past years, notable achievements for 2025 and important goals and measures for 2026. As in past years, our actual 2026 budget in the City of Northfield will not be finalized until December, 2025; the 2026 budget provided is proposed as noted.

Please let me know if you have questions or concerns regarding this application; I can be reached at 507.645.1801 or [natalie.draper@northfieldmn.gov](mailto:natalie.draper@northfieldmn.gov). I would prefer to present on **August 5th**, if possible.

Sincerely,

*Natalie Draper*

Natalie Draper, Library Director



## **2026 Rice County Request**

### **Mission**

Inviting exploration, empowering people, engaging community.

### **Agency Description and Services Provided**

The Northfield Public Library provides services, activities, staff support, use of facilities, and materials to the residents of Northfield and surrounding Rice County. Some examples of free library services include:

- Increased access to in-demand digital media through Hoopla, Overdrive, Kanopy and Roku boxes with streaming service subscriptions.
- Cultural programming for all ages in English and Spanish, including bilingual storytimes, Spanish-language business and technology courses, and a Hispanic Heritage Festival that attracts a diverse crowd of thousands of people to Northfield's Central Park each fall.
- Free faxing, scanning, and bilingual notary service.
- On demand help with technology, as well as longer sessions with staff by appointment.
- Municipal identification card sign-up for Northfield residents.
- Home delivery, Bookmobile and BookBike provide equitable access to the collection, resources, staff and services, meeting people where they are.
- The Library Oasis, a staffed satellite located within walking distance of k-12 schools and affordable housing, and near human services nonprofits such as Community Action Center, Head Start, and Fifty North.
- Meeting room spaces that accommodate community groups, educational events, and government partners.
- Convenient, full-service passport acceptance facility with evening and weekend hours.
- A weekly community concert series for all ages held in Way Park throughout the summer, and a variety of concerts in the library held year-round.
- An all-ages inclusive summer reading program.
- Creative technology kits that can be checked out and that include 360 and DSLR cameras, a printing press, educational OSMO coding toys, sewing machines, and augmented reality tools.
- Access to tools that support active lifestyles such as MN State Parks passes, birding kits, Nordic walking poles, and standard hiking poles.

### **Notable achievements for 2024-2025 include:**

- In September of 2024, we received national recognition as one of two libraries awarded honorable mention in the Library Journal "Best Small Library in America" awards.
- In May of 2025 we were recognized by Library Journal again with two on staff receiving "Mover and Shaker" awards. Angelica Linder, Outreach Manager was recognized as a "community builder" and Natalie Draper, Library Director, was recognized as a "change agent".
- With support from the Friends of the Library, we continued our grant-funded internship program designed to increase access to careers in libraries for Northfield Community College Collaborative and Northfield High School TORCH (Tackling Obstacles, Raising College Hopes) students.
- We have continued expanding home delivery of library materials, a lifeline to many in our community, with the help of volunteer delivery drivers and have expanded bookmobile service to serve Dundas and older adult facilities year-round.
- We continued our annual celebration of Asian American-Pacific Islander Heritage Month in partnership with St. Olaf's Asian Studies Department and Academic Civic Engagement Office welcomed more than 500 people to the library this year.



- Our Hispanic Heritage Celebration, now in its 8th year, was recently awarded a \$5,000 grant from SEMAC.

### Key performance measures

We continue to see increasing foot traffic in our flagship Carnegie location, the Library Oasis in the NCRC, and at off-site programs. Meeting room use has nearly doubled in the past two years and trends point to increasing demand. Electronic materials are driving the increase in adult circulation while juvenile circulation is still primarily print, with picture books leading. Finding ways to house a larger collection of picture books to meet rising local demand is a pressing challenge for us in future planning. We were forced to make the difficult decision to drastically reduce local Hoopla access due to rising costs of electronic audiobooks, the most popular item on the platform. We have shifted funds toward the shared SELCO Libby collection to meet demand for e-audiobooks but have concerns over our long term ability to meet rising demand for access to these popular resources.

Flagship location data	2022	2023	2024
Visitors (door count)	140,471	154,764	186,348
# cardholders	13,672	14,409	15,536
Hours open	3,163	3,155	4,176
Program attendance	19,338	17,840	14,112
Internet Sessions/Wi-Fi use	8,296/176,319	9,270/176,319	10,546/150,614
Circulation print/eBook	300,834	298,811	316,785
Meeting room use (non-library)	115	168	222

Oasis location data	2024
Visitors*	24,881
Hours open	992
Program attendance	281
Computer use	602
Circulation	4,579

\*The Oasis is located in a hallway so there is substantial foot traffic

<b>Bookmobile location data*</b>	<b>2024</b>
visits	1,173
circulation	1,310

\* With year-round service we are now able to report bookmobile statistics to the state as a distinct outlet

#### **Activities and Goals for 2026 include:**

- With grant funding we are able to continue vision planning efforts for the library's grounds that will proactively meet unique site challenges such as mitigating erosion and stormwater runoff, decreasing water consumption on site through turf irrigation, and increasing wheelchair- and stroller- accessible shaded outdoor spaces for work, education, gathering, and play. The vision plan will present a phased approach to renovating the library's grounds that will allow us to take advantage of grants and other funding opportunities.
- With the same grant funds we are working to expand access to library meeting spaces and technology to meet growing demand from remote workers, students, and those seeking telehealth access. Without sacrificing program or collection space, we will be adding a small study room and two small meeting spaces over the next year. We are also adding a backup generator so that we can continue to serve the needs of our workforce even during a power failure, and to operate as a cooling shelter during heat emergencies.
- Continuing expanded route schedule for the Bookmobile providing consistent service throughout the year to more parts of Northfield, Dundas and surrounding townships in our service area.
- We are planning for shelving replacements throughout the building to allow for a collection to grow, and utilizing movable shelving so that we can economize space for programming as well as collection storage.

#### **Rice County Funding**

Rice County funding from 2025 and earlier years is added into the library's general fund by the City of Northfield and is not earmarked in such a way that it pays for designated items in the library's budget. Funding that is held separate from the library's general operating funds include awarded grants, library gift funds, and capital campaign funds.

#### **2025 operating revenue**

- Rice County \$206,135
- City of Northfield \$2,248,106
- Fees\* \$10,000

\*Fines on overdue materials were eliminated in February, 2022. Fees in this case represents the replacement cost of lost or damaged items

#### **2025 Budget Information**

- Personnel wages and Benefits: \$1,584,898
- Supplies: \$75,500
- Services\*: \$377,102
- Other Charges\*\*: \$173,300
- Capital Outlay: \$23,500



- Debt Service: \$13,806

\*services include SELCO charges, telecom, IT charges, utilities, staff training and travel, consultant fees

\*\*Other Charges include Library Materials, Programming expenditures

**Total expenditures: \$2,248,106**

**2026 Proposed budget Information** (subject to change; finalized in December 2025)

**2026 operating revenue (requested)**

- Rice County \$214,380
- City of Northfield \$2,565,531
- Fees\* \$10,000 (est)\*

**2026 Expenditures**

- Personnel wages and Benefits: \$1,870,494
- Supplies: \$83,000
- Services\*: \$395,023
- Other Charges: \$182,709
- Capital Outlay: \$20,500
- Debt Service: \$13,806

**Total expenditures \$2,565,531**