



Northfield Public Library
210 Washington St
Northfield, MN 55057

June 4th, 2026

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 2027 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 2027 funding. For 2026, Rice County provided the Northfield Library with a funding allocation of \$206,135. For our 2027 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. It is only with strong support from the County that we are able to continue to provide the high level of service that we are known for.

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, but libraries also serve as hubs of activity in their communities, constantly evolving to meet demand. 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.

We offer meeting room space and use of the facilities to the public, use of which has increased dramatically over the past few years. Most notably we have seen an increase in use of our meeting rooms for virtual meetings, job interviews, tutoring, testing, and telehealth visits. We also bridge the digital divide in our community by providing access to technology and bilingual instruction on how to use it. In uncertain economic times, with rapidly developing AI technology leaving many vulnerable to scams, or just in need of up-skilling to remain competitive, libraries are an affordable way to keep people connected, keep them safe and informed, and to support workforce development needs. It is for these reasons that in 2025 the library was awarded a \$500,000 federal grant through the Minnesota Department of Education to make capital improvements to the library in support of workforce, education, and telehealth monitoring.

We don't just reach people inside our building, but also through extensive outreach efforts that take us beyond Northfield. The Library Oasis is a convenient satellite location serving alongside our partners at Community Action Center, Rice County Social Services, Head Start, Northfield Community College Collaborative, Fifty North, and Healthy Community Initiative. We also continue to provide, and have expanded, Bookmobile and home delivery service to underserved areas, assisted living facilities, at larger community events, and to portions of greater Rice County, including Dundas and Nerstrand. Last fall we launched a new partnership with A Great Day Farm in Dundas, providing regular visits to their accessible and inclusive farm designed to welcome people of all ages with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Included in this application is information on library budgets for 2026 and 2027, key indicators for past years, notable achievements for 2025-2026 and important goals and measures for 2027. As in past years, our actual 2027 budget in the City of Northfield will not be finalized until December 2026; the 2027 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. I would prefer to present to the Board on **August 18th**, if possible.

Sincerely,

Natalie Draper

Natalie Draper, Director of Library Services



2027 Rice County Request

Mission Statement

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 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, both in Northfield and in surrounding parts of Rice County including Dundas and Nerstrand.
- 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.
- Large and small meeting room spaces that accommodate community groups, educational events, and government partners.
- Convenient, full-service passport acceptance facility with evening and weekend hours.
- 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 2025-2026 include:

- Total active borrowers increased by more than 10% in 2025.
- In addition to the data reported in the table below, the library executed 1,480 passport applications in 2025, made 920 home deliveries, and notarized 397 documents.
- NPL was the 2026 recipient of the [President's Award for Community Partners](#) from St. Olaf College.
- In partnership with the Yarmakov family and local artist, Rocky Casillas Aguirre, we launched a Social Story on our website. Social Stories are intended to make visits to the library more enjoyable and predictable for people with autism and other sensory processing disorders. <https://mynpl.org/socialstory>
- We added a large collection of games and activity sets for youth and families thanks to funding from the Pat Lamb and Ele Hansen Charitable Trust through Northfield Shares.
- With a Community Reads grant from SELCO we published a community cookbook in collaboration with Latino cooks living in Northfield.
- We secured funding from College City Sertoma to install hearing loop in the Bunday Room and at service desks to improve communication access for those with hearing loss.

- Awarded \$500,000 Multi-purpose Community Facility Capital Projects Fund Grant to support community revitalization, connectedness and equity by promoting education, work and health
- Supported by the Friends of the Library, we have been able to continue our IMLS grant-funded internship program designed to increase access to careers in libraries for 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, Nerstrand, and older adult facilities on a year-round basis.
- 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 and welcomed nearly 1,000 people to the celebration this year.
- Our Hispanic Heritage Celebration, now in its 9th year, was just awarded a \$6,000 grant from SEMAC for this year's event, which will take place in September.



Photo taken at a winter bookmobile visit to Nerstrand Big Woods State Park, early 2026. Staff promoted birding kits, hiking poles, and State park passes, as well as trail guides and library programs.



Key Performance Measures

We continue to see increasing foot traffic in our flagship Carnegie location in downtown Northfield, 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 eliminate 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.

In the 2024 Minnesota Public Library Annual Report, the library began reporting Oasis activity measures as a distinct outlet, and with expanded year-round bookmobile service, the bookmobile is also now reported as a distinct outlet. For the purposes of this summary, all three outlets are aggregated.

All location data	2022	2023	2024	2025
Visitors (door count)	140,471	154,764	186,348	200,790
# cardholders	13,672	14,409	15,536	16,633
Hours open	3,163	3,155	4,176	4,167
Program attendance	19,338	17,840	14,112	17,110
Computer/wifi	8,296/176,319	9,270/176,319	10,546/150,614	8,168/149,752
Total collection use	300,834	298,811	270,208	315,430
Meeting room use	115	168	222	317



Recent Annual report data comparison



*Libraries in Group 6 serve populations of 24,000-71,999.



Data source: Minnesota Public Library Annual Report, collected and maintained by State Library Services in the Minnesota Department of Education.

Activities and Goals for 2027 include:

- We are focused on sustainability, accessibility and safety in 2026-2027, with a goal of achieving sustainable library certification through the Sustainable Libraries Initiative by the end of 2027.
- With grant funds we are continuing planning efforts for the library's grounds to proactively address unique site challenges such as significant erosion and stormwater runoff. We will also decrease water consumption on site and increase wheelchair- and stroller- accessible shaded outdoor spaces for work, education, gathering, and play.
- With the same grant funding, 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 have added a study room and two small meeting spaces over the next year. We are also remodeling the youth services department, replacing existing shelving with mobile shelving to increase accessibility and offer flexible program space.
- This grant funding enables us to complete a new master plan for future improvements throughout the building to allow for the collection to grow without sacrificing space for programming and seating areas.
- We are continuing to assess and expand the 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 plan to complete the installation of hearing loop to improve communication access for those with hearing loss in the Bunday Room and at service desks.

Rice County Funding

Rice County funding from 2026 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.

2026 operating revenue



- Rice County \$206,135
- City of Northfield \$2,464,689
- Fees* \$5,000

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

2026 Budget Information

- Personnel wages and Benefits: \$1,888,457
- Supplies: \$75,000
- Services*: \$335,023
- Other Charges**: \$155,709
- Capital Outlay: \$10,500

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

**Other Charges include Library Materials, Programming expenditures

Total expenditures: \$2,464,689

2027 Proposed budget Information (subject to change; finalized in December 2026)

2027 operating revenue (requested)

- Rice County \$214,380
- City of Northfield \$2,565,531
- Fees \$5,000

2027 Expenditures

- Personnel wages and Benefits: \$2,037,773.27
- Supplies: \$98,500
- Services: \$373,723
- Other Charges: \$177,750
- Capital Outlay: \$5,500
- Transfer Out (Oasis): \$3,900

Total expenditures: \$2,697,146.27