



# **Strong and Nimble – Friends Supporting Michigan Libraries**

Friends of Michigan Libraries, April 2025



# Description

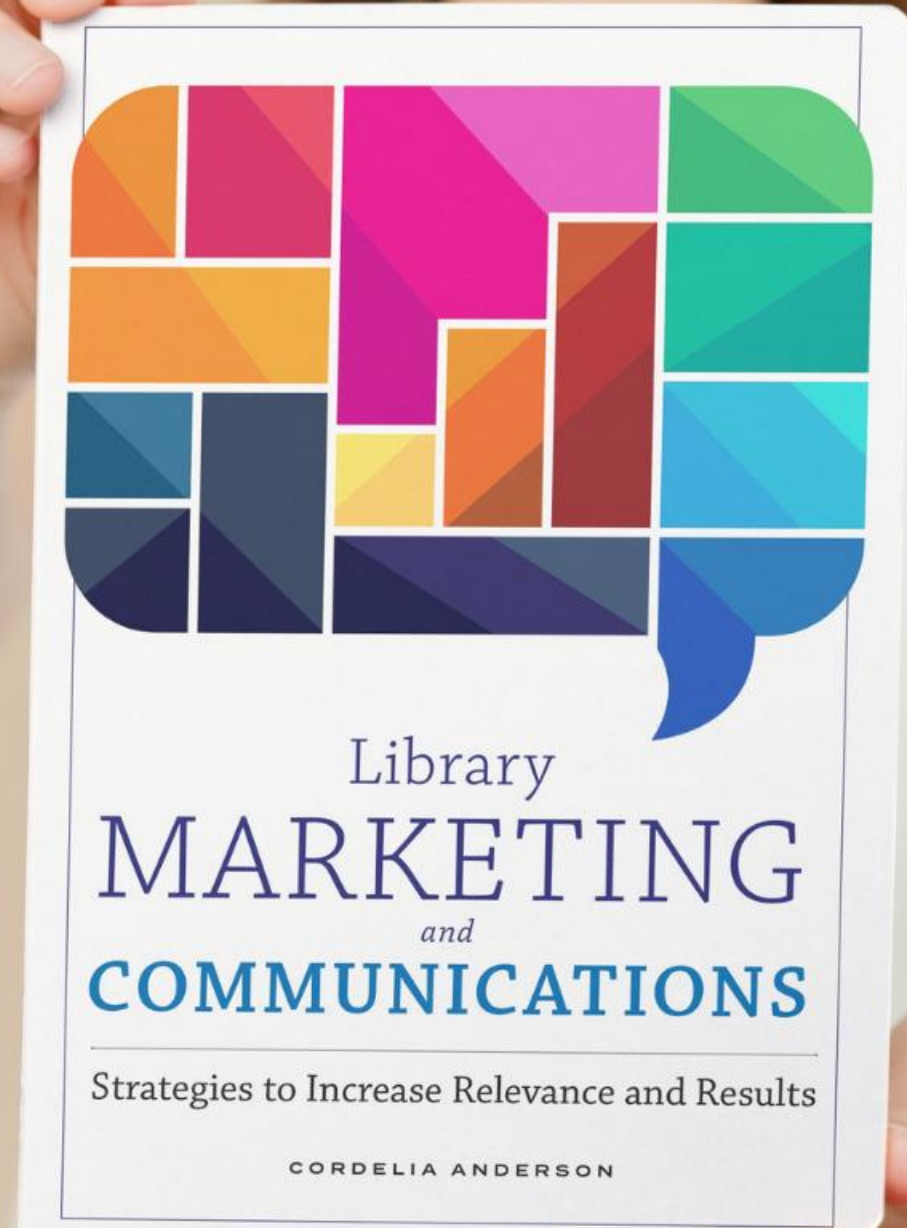
Discover strategies to build, sustain, and strengthen Friends groups to keep them strong and nimble as they adapt to the needs and challenges of present-day libraries. This presentation will explore why Friends organizations matter today more than ever, and how they can continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of libraries and their communities.

## **Key topics include:**

- The landscape of Michigan libraires.
- The vital role of Friends in supporting libraries.
- Strategies to keep Friends groups thriving and energized.
- Ideas for groups facing challenges or stagnation.
- Advocacy to help libraries maintain healthy collections and staff.

# Background

- 25 years in libraries; 15 years at Charlotte Mecklenburg Library in Charlotte, NC.
- Founded Cordelia Anderson Consulting in 2018.
- Author of *Library Marketing and Communications: Strategies to Increase Relevance and Results* from ALA Editions.
- Online Training at Niche Academy:  
<https://bit.ly/CACOnDemand>



# Work With Friends Groups

Projects have included branding, strategic planning, and general marketing support.



# Introduction

- Brief introduction and experience with Friends groups and libraries
- Goals: strengthening Friends groups, aligning with libraries, and addressing key challenges
- Acknowledge hybrid audience (in-person and Zoom attendees)



# **The Landscape of Michigan Libraries**



# Michigan Libraries

- Michigan has approx. 390 public libraries, according to 2023-2024 Michigan Public Library Statistics. Approx. 320 have only 1 location.
- Support organizations include the Library of Michigan, the Michigan Library Association, the Library Cooperatives of Michigan, and Friends of Michigan Libraries.



# Michigan Libraries

- Smaller, rural and upper peninsula libraries have unique challenges:
  - Limited transportation options and long travel times can make it difficult for patrons to visit physical library locations.
  - Limited funding compared to their counterparts in more populated areas of Michigan. Many rely on grants, millages, or donations to supplement their budgets.
  - Internet access can be unreliable or slow in many rural areas.
  - Hiring and retaining qualified staff can be difficult.
- Some libraries in the UP experience fluctuations in usage due to seasonal tourism. Harsh winters with heavy snowfall can affect library operations.



# Michigan's Economy

- Factors that could potentially impact library funding:
- Economy - Tariffs impacting major industries such as agriculture, automotive manufacturing, healthcare and retail.
- Population – Some counties are experiencing population losses attributed to an aging demographic, lack of high-paying jobs, and reliance on seasonal tourism.



# Library Funding Sources



## Somewhat Stable

- Local Property Taxes (Millages)
- Penal Fines (Traffic And Criminal Fines Collected by the Courts)
- State Aid to Public Libraries (Per Capita Funding Formulas)
- Contractual Agreements with Townships or Municipalities
- Individual Donations and Friends Groups



## Uncertain

- Federal Funding (LSTA Grants, IMLS)
- Endowments (Impacted by Stock Market)
- Grants and Private Foundations

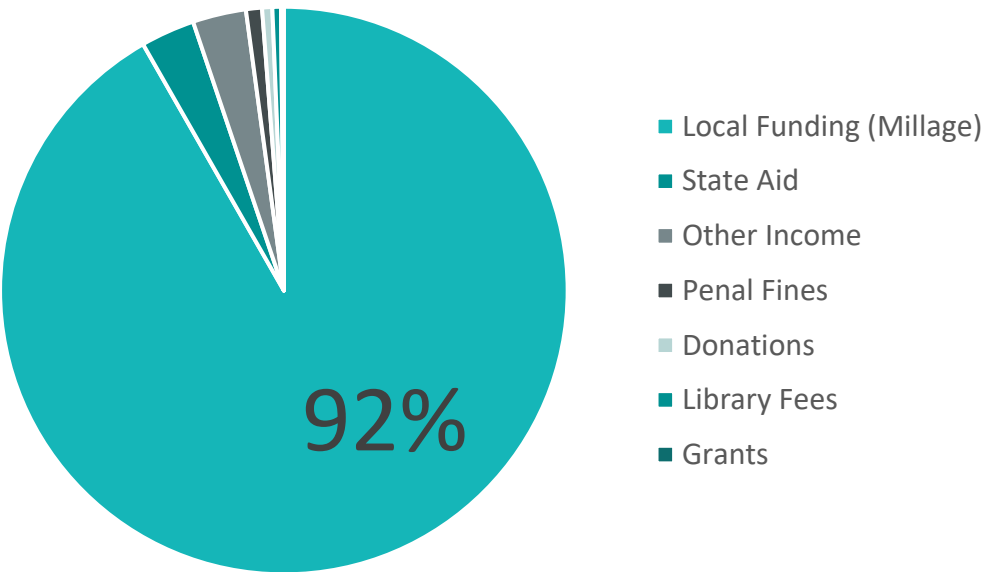


## Declining

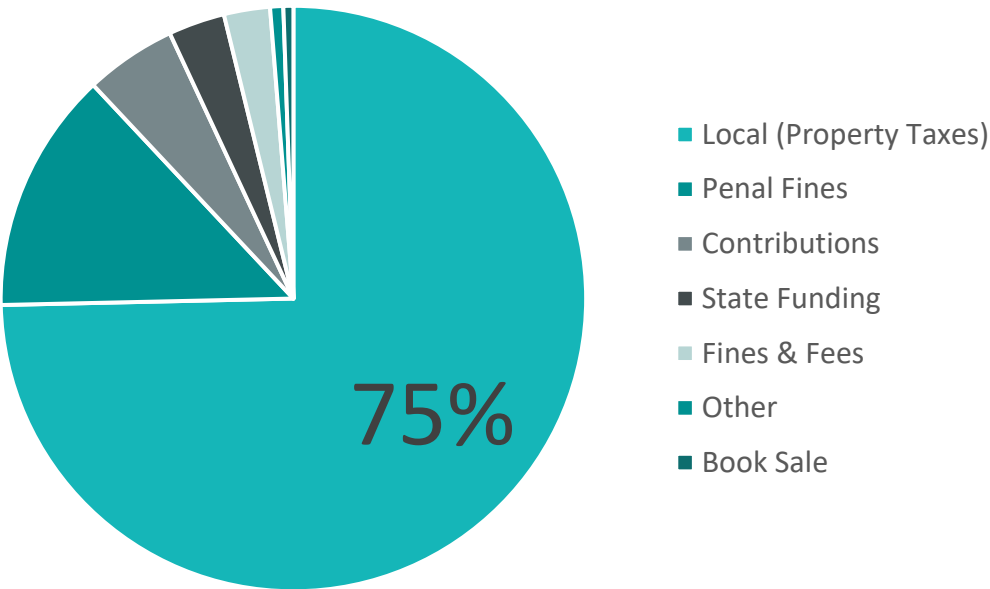
- Fees and Fines (Digital Borrowing, Elimination of Overdue Fines)

# Typical Library Budgets

Larger Library



Smaller Library





# **The Vital Roles of Friends in Supporting Libraries**

# Friends as Vital Allies for Libraries

- Libraries face challenges.
- Libraries can't advocate for public funding.
- Friends groups are vital allies.
- Friends support fundraising, programming, and advocacy efforts
- Friends' roles are evolving.



# Three Primary Roles

## Support of Programming

- Fund library programs (e.g., summer reading)
- Volunteer for events & tutoring
- Sponsor speakers & cultural events

## Fundraising

- Organize book sales & events
- Fund projects (tech, renovations, education)
- Assist with grants & sponsorships
- Supplement, but don't replace, public funding

## Advocacy

- Meet with officials to advocate for funding
- Promote library value via media & other channels
- Lead petitions, campaigns, and outreach

# Evolving Roles

- As libraries change, Friends groups also change.
- Friends can help cultivate grassroots support for libraries through events, fundraising and advocacy.
- Friends membership is aging nationwide; new strategies can help recruit new members.





# **Strategies to Keep Friends Thriving and Energized**



# Changing Demographics

- Younger generations, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, are volunteering less than their predecessors (IVolunteer International).
- Older volunteers tend to have more time to devote to task-heavy activities like events and book sales.
- Younger volunteers need more flexibility and volunteer opportunities suited to their skill sets. Ex: social media, online meetings, smaller recurring donations, etc.



## Friends of the Boise Public Library

Our mission is to promote the Boise Public Library & to provide financial support for library collections & programs.

Philanthropic Fundraising Services · Boise, Idaho · 61 followers · 11-50 employees

Message

Following



Home About **Posts** Jobs People

All Images Videos Articles Documents

Sort by: Top

### Create a job post

Get more qualified applicants when you post jobs on LinkedIn

Start posting



# Recruiting Members

- In order to recruit and engage members, position the Friends as a sought-after group to join.
- Put yourself on LinkedIn so members can add it to their profile under "Volunteer Work."
- Offer flexible roles, such as social media ambassador, that work with their talents and schedules.
- Plan networking events so Friends can mix and mingle.

# Rethinking Events

One of the successful initiatives of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Friends Council has been “**Final Draught,**” an event designed to engage younger audiences.

- It is a casual, after-hours event at a craft brewery or restaurant that brings together library supporters for networking and conversations with authors, thought leaders, and creatives.
- The event was specifically designed to appeal to younger professionals and community members who might not traditionally engage with the.
- By combining social interaction with intellectual discussions, Final Draught has drawn in new library supporters and raised awareness of library initiatives.



# Tips for Recruiting, Retention & Engagement

## Engage Young Leaders

- Provide leadership and advocacy roles that add career value while giving a voice to younger members.

## Provide Flexible and Impactful Participation Opportunities

- Schedule events and meetings that suit varied lifestyles and clearly define volunteer roles.

## Use Personalized Outreach and Inclusion

- Use direct invitations and cultivate an inclusive, diverse environment to grow membership.

## Promote Hands-On Involvement

- Encourage active service with opportunities that show direct impact.

## Leverage Networks Creatively

- Expand outreach beyond traditional circles to attract fresh perspectives.



# Engaging Friends as Storytellers

# What Is Your Friends Organization's Story?

*Hint: It's not your 501(c)(3) status. It is:*



The people whose lives are changed for the better by the library, because of your support.



A community that is made better by the library, because of your support.



The case for supporting Friends and libraries.

*These are the stories that will resonate with your audiences.*

# Storytelling Strategies

How Friends can use storytelling to get recognition for the Library, *and* show how Friends and libraries working together benefits the community.





## Story of Impact

- Maya attends the weekly Homework Help sessions held at West Boulevard Library.
- On her first visit in October, she was very shy. When our volunteer, Ms. Swift, tried to help Maya with her homework, she actually cried. Maya likes books but has not quite mastered reading, so I suggested we do “picture walks” where we look at the pictures instead of reading the story.
- Now, she likes reading stories and has no problem tackling new words within the story. With each visit I see Maya’s confidence level increasing. She has even learned how to check out her own library books.
- Maya is on her way to becoming a lifelong library user.

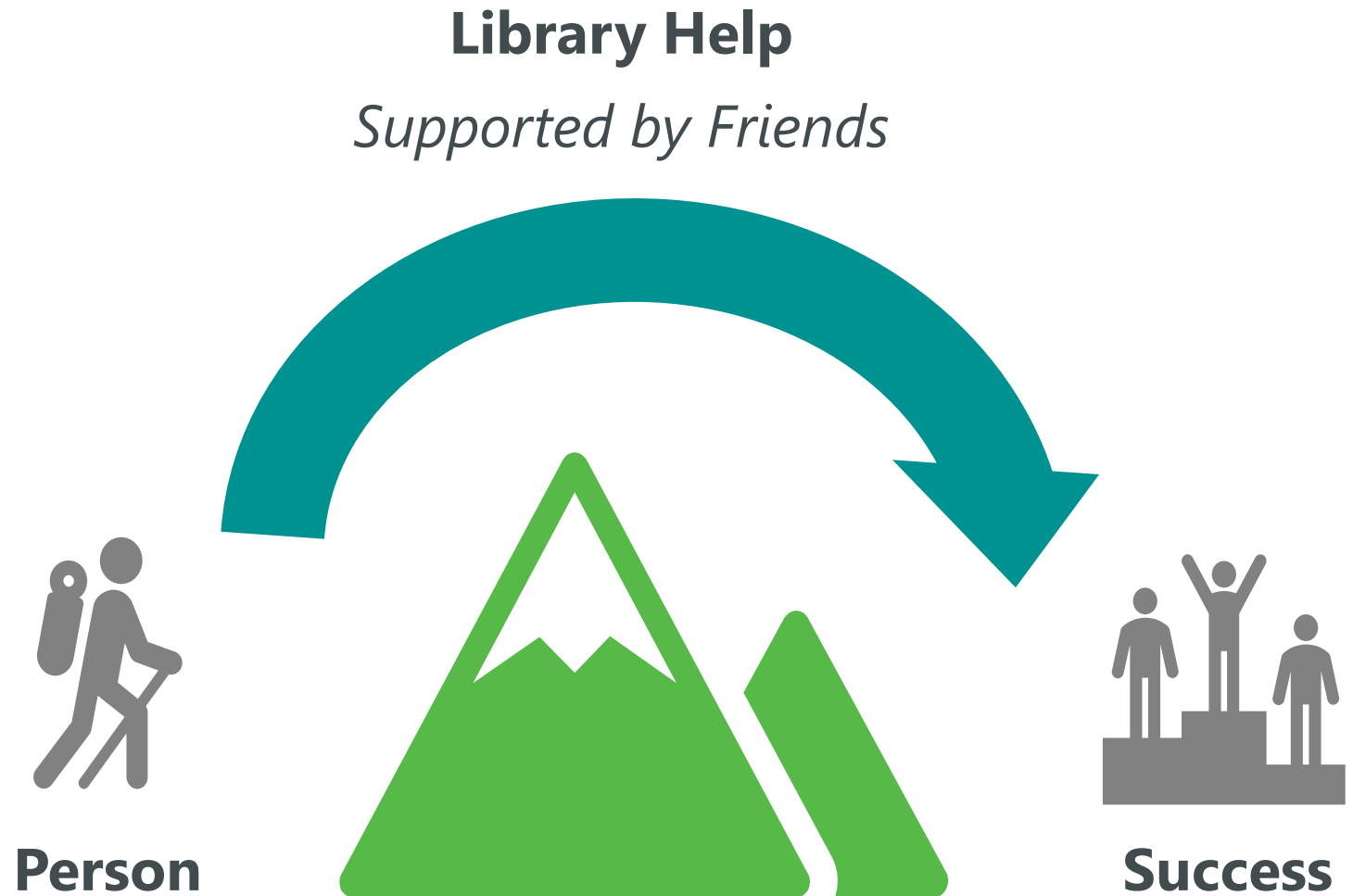
# Elements of a Story of Impact

Person

Problem

Library Intervention

Happy Ending





## Story of Impact

- Person: Maya
- Problem: She was shy and had trouble with reading.
- Library intervention: Library volunteer Ms. Swift encouraged her in low-stress ways such as “picture walks.”
- Happy ending: Maya now loves reading and checks out her own books.

*Who wouldn't want to support Maya?*



# Story of Impact + Case for Support

- Once you have captured their attention, you can make a case for support!
- Here are some examples:
  - The library changed Maya's life, and so can you! Join the Friends of the Library, and help us raise funds to support programs like homework help.
  - Did you know? The library offers 350 homework help programs just like this one last year. Help us reach even more children like Maya by joining the Friends of the Library!
  - Programs like this one are funded in part by State Funding. Want to help make sure these programs continue? Write your state legislator!

# Friends Telling Stories of Impact

- Heartfelt stories stick with people.
- Storytelling can build recognition for Friends and libraries alike.
- Consistent, regular, and well-told stories can build goodwill, increase membership, and support advocacy efforts.

FRIENDS *of the*  
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY



*“F. got a job at the organization where he did job training several years ago. He said he looked in the mirror last week and told himself, ‘I’m proud of you, F!’ All of the work learning to read and write more confidently has also benefitted his overall confidence as a person. I’m very proud of F!” - SFPL Project Read Tutor*

# Friends Impact Reports

- Some people respond well to stories, while others like statistics.
- Impact reporting will appeal to numbers people, and it will demonstrate your fiscal stewardship and transparency.
- Storytelling that speaks to the *heart* and the *head* balances your audiences' interests and paints a complete picture.

## COLLECTIONS

\$59,000 Print and Digital Resources

## SUMMER READING



\$22,000 Children's Program

\$16,000 Teen Program

## PROGRAMS + SUPPLIES



\$10,000 Children's Programs

\$10,000 Teen Programs

\$1,000 Adult Programs

## INCLUSION + OUTREACH



\$5,000 Translation Services

\$3,000 Outreach Services  
Take Me Home Project

## ADMINISTRATION



\$1,500 Library Communication

\$2,500 Employee Development

FRIENDS 2022  
PROGRAM GRANT



\$130,000

IN 2022, YOUR GENEROSITY FUNDED \$130,000 IN GRANTS

# Friends Recognizing Library Staff

- Recognizing and supporting library staff is a great way for Friends groups to contribute.
- Public library staff are often stretched thin, meeting the needs of their patrons, and forget to give themselves or their colleagues kudos.
- Friends groups can recognize library staff through appreciation events, social media posts, supporting professional development days, and other methods.



Photo credit: Hawaii State Senate

## Michelle Young, Waimea Public Library

As the Branch Manager of the Waimea Public Library, Michelle is a champion of literacy and community connection, and works tirelessly to ensure that no child is left without access to the transformative power of reading. Whether she's welcoming students to the library, ensuring there are always "honor back" books for children without library cards, or setting up a pop-up library in partnership with Kekaha Pop Warner Football, Michelle's priority is always reducing barriers to accessing books. Michelle was previously nominated in 2017, 2018 and 2023.

# Engaging Educators, Teachers & Community Leaders

- Friends and libraries can work together to develop and fund programs and services that meet community needs *and* solve community problems. Examples include:
  - Curriculum Support: Offer library resources to supplement lesson plans and classroom projects.
  - Professional Development Workshops: Provide opportunities for educators to learn about library programs and tools.
  - Student Literacy Initiatives: Partner with teachers on reading challenges and literacy events.
  - Library Advocacy: Engage community leaders to advocate for library funding and policies.
  - Volunteer and Mentorship Opportunities: Encourage educators and leaders to mentor youth through library programs.



# Challenges & Potential Solutions

For common issues facing Friends groups.

# Challenge: Stretched Resources

With potential negative impacts to funding, Library staff may have less time to devote to supporting Friends-related activities.

How can libraries and Friends align their priorities and efforts for greater efficiency and effectiveness?



## Possible Solution: Developing a Shared Vision

- Friends groups and libraries aim to enhance library services, increase community engagement, and advocate for the library's long-term sustainability.
- By aligning their efforts, they can avoid duplication and ensure that resources are used efficiently.
- Does your library have a Strategic Plan or set of goals? Where do the Friends fit in?
- Consider hosting a joint visioning session with the Friends and the Library Board.



The Library Trustees and Staff are pleased to share with you the [Library's strategic plan for 2025-2029](#). Based on input we received from the community survey, trends in public libraries, and recent plans for town and public safety offices, we have put forth a plan that not only enables us to continue to offer activities and services in which we excel but also meets the emerging needs of the community. If you have questions or comments about the plan, please

# Challenge: Strained Relationships

Without clear communication and a mutual understanding of roles, there can be misunderstandings and challenges.

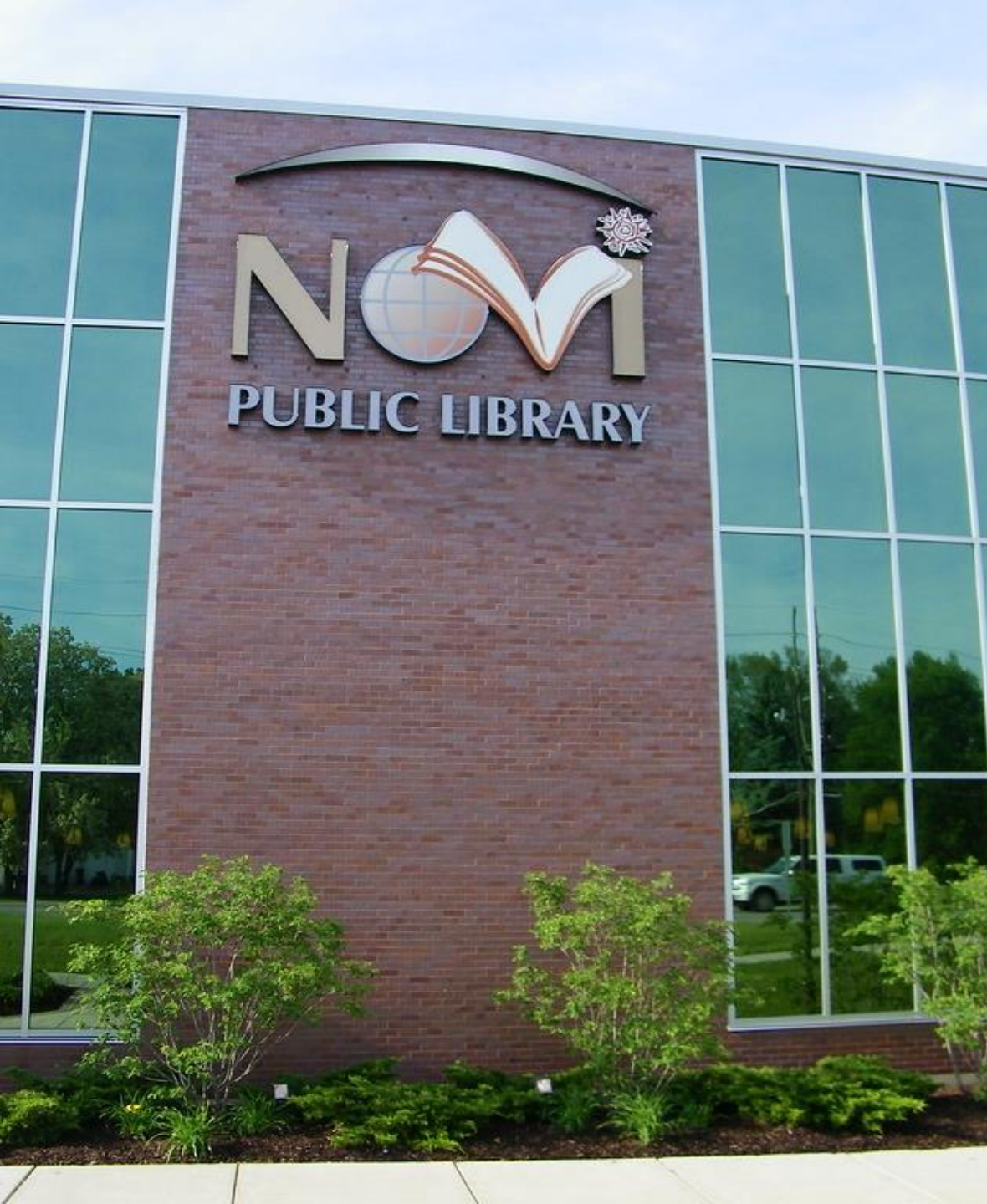
Libraries and Friends can avoid this through careful and intentional planning.



# Solution: Collaborating With Mutual Respect

- Library directors bring professional knowledge of library operations, trends, and community needs.
- Friends offer invaluable volunteer support, fundraising expertise, and community connections.
- Recognizing and respecting these complementary strengths leads to a more effective partnership.
- Strong relationships between Friends groups and library directors have led to successful partnerships that benefit both the library and the community.





## Example: Thriving Partnership

- **Novi Public Library** cultivated a thriving partnership between the Friends group and library leadership.
- Regular meetings and collaborative planning sessions ensured that both the Friends and library staff were aligned in their efforts.
- The Friends were encouraged to take an active role in fundraising and programming support while giving the library staff autonomy over operational decisions.
- The Library publicly acknowledged the Friends' contributions and created opportunities for them to be part of the library.

# Example: Friends / Foundation Integration

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library modernized and strengthened its Friends by integrating it into the Library Foundation.

- They brought the Friends under the Foundation and rebranded it as the “Friends Council.” This shift allowed them to align fundraising, volunteer efforts, and advocacy more closely with the library’s strategic goals and the community’s needs.
- The Friends benefited from greater resources, professional guidance, and expanded networking opportunities.
- The Friends Council became a vibrant, re-energized arm of the Library Foundation, with a focus on engaging a younger demographic while maintaining the core mission of advocating for and supporting the library.



## Challenge: Roles are Unclear

When roles are unclear, Friends and library staff alike can be left feeling frustrated and unable to perform their duties.





# Solution: Clear Roles & Responsibilities

## **Library Staff:**

- Manage library operations, programming, and collection development.
- Set library policies and ensure compliance.
- Provide guidance and support to FOL when needed.

## **Friends:**

- Fundraising and financial support for library initiatives.
- Volunteer efforts for special events or outreach.
- Advocate for library funding and community awareness.
- Do not interfere with daily operations or personnel matters.

# Example: Fundraising Roles & Actions

- **Friends Role:** Organize and promote fundraising events (e.g., book sales, silent auctions).
- **Library Role:** Provide insights on the library's financial needs and approve the allocation of raised funds.
- **Joint Action:** Collaborate to set fundraising goals and identify priority projects (e.g., new technology, programming, or facility upgrades).



## COMMUNITY BAG FUNDRAISER

DURING JANUARY 2025, when you purchase a reusable community bag from Stop&Shop, \$1 will be donated to the Friends of the Swampscott Public Library!

**BUY ONE TODAY AND  
SUPPORT YOUR LIBRARY!**



[www.stopandshop.2givelocal.com](http://www.stopandshop.2givelocal.com)



# **Friends & Advocacy**

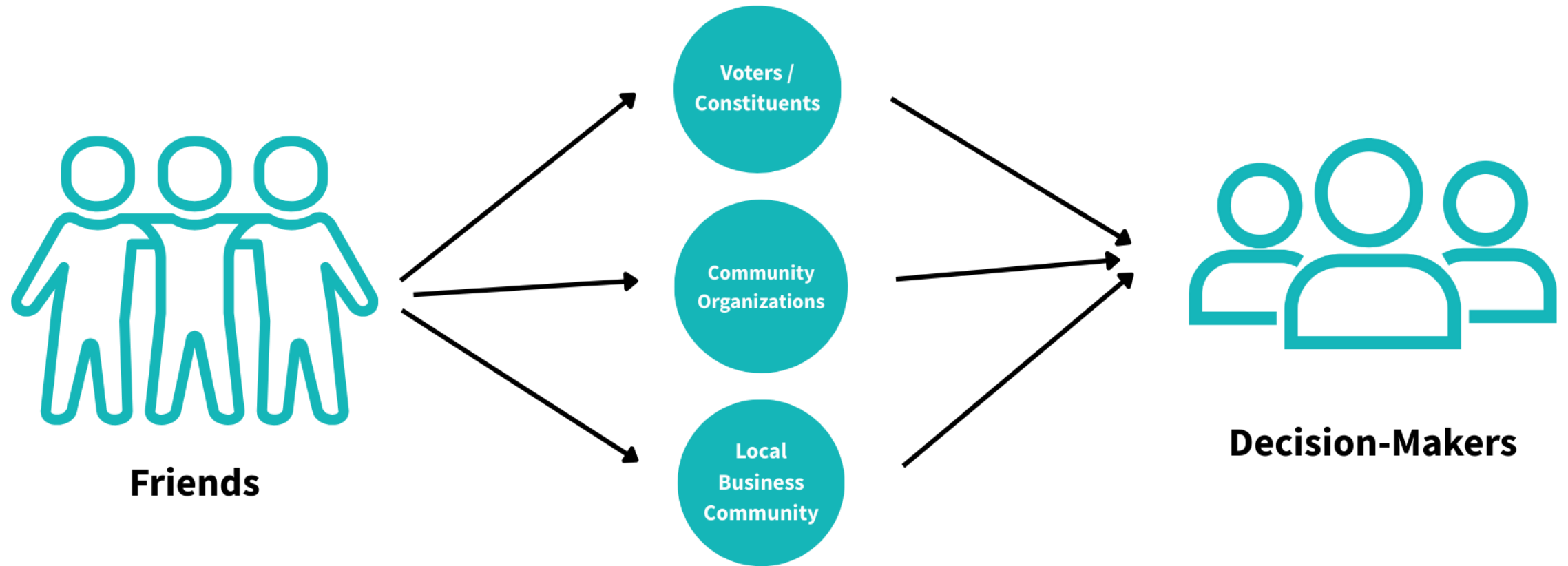
With libraries often facing challenges, how can Friends provide much-needed support?



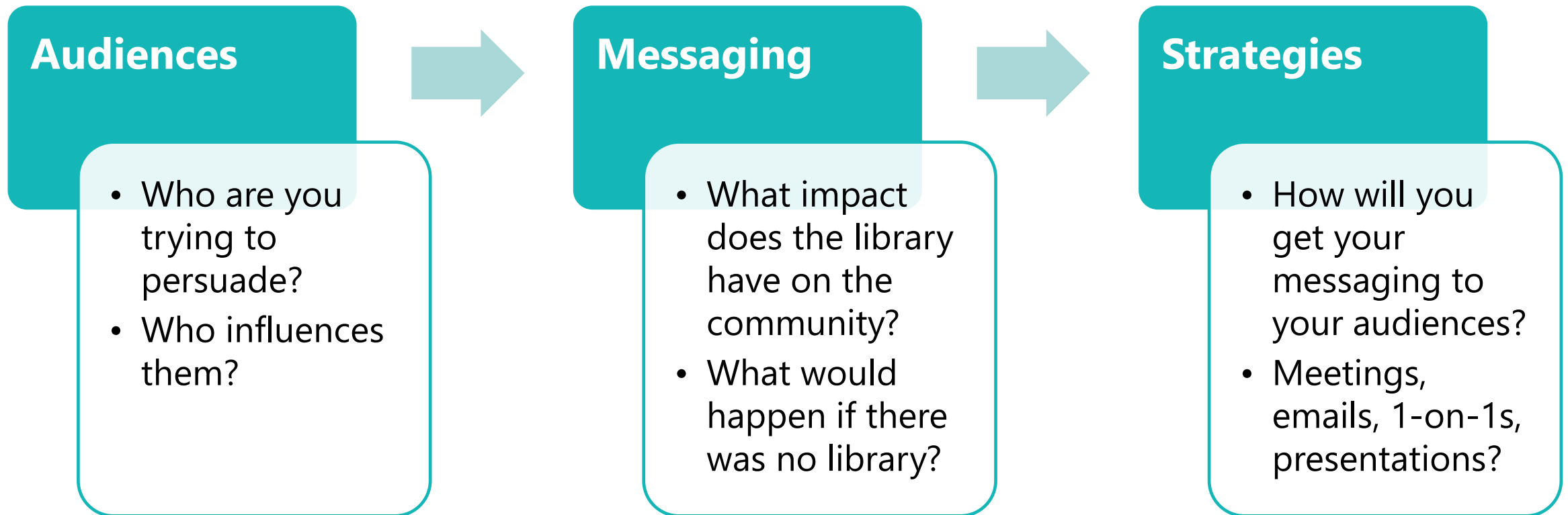
# Importance of Advocacy

- As we saw earlier, public funding is a BIG part of a library's budget.
- Friends fundraising can enhance programs and services, but the crucial staff needed to implement these are funded by public dollars.
- The best way for Friends to support staff and public funding is through advocacy.

# Determine Your Friends Advocacy Strategy



# Forming Your Strategy





# Mobilizing Your Friends

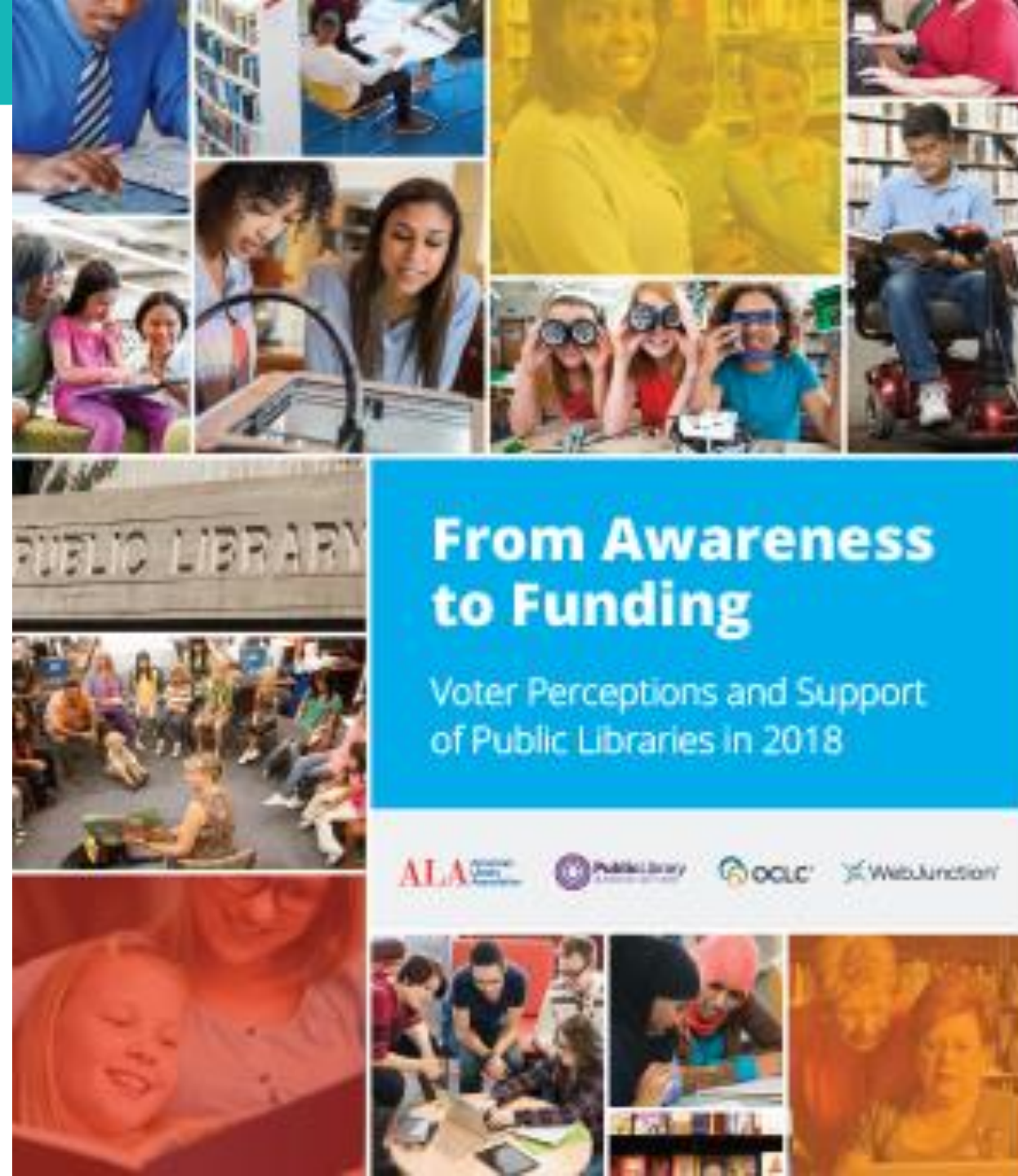
- Who is doing what, when, and how?
- Keep it simple! Make it easy for them to advocate.
- Tell them *who* you need them to advocate to.
- Share content, strategies, stories that they can use. Ex: "elevator speech."
- Communicate clearly what your *community* needs, and how the library is positioned to meet those needs.

# Developing Effective Messaging

- A strong message gives your Friends something to advocate for!

- Tips from "From Awareness to Funding (2018)"

[www.oclc.org/research/publications/2018/oclcresearch-awareness-to-funding.html](http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/2018/oclcresearch-awareness-to-funding.html)





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## Libraries boost economic development and local workforce skills



SCORE mentor Leo Cortjens shares tips with business owners attend a marketing workshop at Hall County's Blackshear Place Library

The value of public libraries has shifted way beyond books, with libraries serving as lifelong learning centers that tangibly impact local economic and workforce development.

# Tip #1: Target Public Awareness Efforts

Connect programs or services to larger stories about how the library supports **school-age children**, **workforce readiness**, or **small business development**.

## Tip #2: Leverage Positive Public Perceptions

Leverage areas where we see improving public perception, including helping provide **skills for the workforce** and providing an inviting **gathering place** for community members to **connect and learn**.

# EACH

## PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

Press

**Beach Public Library's Digital Library Offers 21st Century Skills to a Wide Variety of Free Business Resources**

Rebecca Tominaga

70.6128

rebecca.tominaga@lbpl.org

Digital Services Librarian

Beach Public Library

– The Long Beach Public Library (LBPL) continues to build its reputation through its [Digital Library](#), which offers free access to top professional resources that normally cost \$1,000 or more per subscription. With just a Library card, users can access business planning and entrepreneurship, management and strategic

## Student Virtual Library Card

### What is the Student Virtual Library Card?

A partnership between the Cecil County Public Library and the Cecil County Public School system allows all CCPS students to use their student ID at any library location in Cecil County and throughout our website. NO REGISTRATION needed. Simply use your student ID following the guidelines below.

### How Do I Log in?

If you have a 5-digit student ID:

Write your 5-digit ID in the spaces below to make your virtual card #

2188599 \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ 00

If you have a 7-digit student ID:

Write your 7-digit ID in the spaces below to make your virtual card #

21885 \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ 00

## Tip #3: Amplify Resources & Impacts for School-Age Children

Raise awareness of the vital roles that libraries play for **children and families**.

[BOOKS AND MORE ▸](#) [EVENTS AND PROGRAMS ▸](#) [SERVICES ▸](#) [YOUTH ▸](#) [ABOUT US ▸](#)[SEARCH](#)

! The Pikesville Branch will be closed on 8/27-28/2024 for a facilities project. Storyville at the Rosedale Branch will be closed from 8/30-9/21/2024 for upgrades, but the branch will remain open. All branches will be closed on Monday 9/2 for Labor Day. [VIEW ALL ALERTS](#)

[HOME](#) → [SERVICES](#) → [MEETING AND STUDY ROOMS](#)

### Services

[Get a Library Card](#)[Ask a Librarian](#)[Assistive Technology](#)[Borrowing](#)[Loan Periods and Fees](#)[Using the Catalog](#)[Borrowing from Other Libraries](#)[Digital Literacy](#)[Library by Mail](#)[Long-Term Lending](#)[Meeting and Study Rooms](#)[Mobile Library: Adult and Community Bookmobile](#)[Notary Services](#)[Passport Services](#)[Preservation Station](#)

## Meeting and Study Rooms

All reservations are subject to the [policy and fee structure](#). Technology, such as a projector, may also be available for a [nominal fee](#).

### Meeting Rooms

For questions about our meeting rooms, contact the Meeting Rooms Office by calling [410-887-6109](tel:410-887-6109) or by emailing [meetingrooms@bcpl.net](mailto:meetingrooms@bcpl.net).

Reservations are accepted for the current month and the following two months. For example, beginning December 1, reservations are accepted for dates through the end of February. Meeting rooms may be reserved during branch operating hours.

### How to Reserve a Meeting Room Online

You can use our online reservation system to view available spaces, reserve a meeting room and pay for your reservation.

# Tip #4: Engage The “Library as Office” Segment

Focus on the library traits that mean most to them: convenience, comfortable **work spaces**, and ample access to **computers and technology**.

# Tip #5: Promote Libraries As Community Hubs

Shine the spotlight on assets that are often overlooked: the library as a **safe and welcoming** place, a hub that **connects people** and gives them opportunities to learn together, and the positive impact of library on **local priorities**.

Home » News & Events » Older Adults » Get out & get social: Connect through library & community events



## Get out & get social: Connect through library & community events

August 15, 2024

By Older Adult Services Librarian Ian Gosse

Fall is right around the corner and as it starts to cool down, it's a great time to get out of the house and be social. If you're looking for ways to connect with your peers around town, here are some great options:

### 1. Older Adults Coffee Hour

Join us on the first Friday of each month, 9:30-11 am, to hang out, chat, and have a cup of coffee at the Main Library (a recent meet-up is pictured above). Next meet-up is **September 6**.

#### Recent news & stories

- [Get out & get social: Connect through library & community events](#)
- [The 2024 Booker Prize Longlist](#)
- [Celebrity book club round-up, August 2024](#)
- [Opioid awareness: Take a pouch, a life & meet community partner at the Main Library Idea Box](#)
- ['I am interested in working in libraries'](#)
- [Free Ravinia lawn tickets](#)
- [Learn for the fun of it: How-to, ho & crafting at your library](#)
- [Tech Tips: How to use & organize your smartphone home screen](#)
- [Fun & educational websites for kids \(librarian approved!\)](#)
- [8 ways to use your library to beat the heat](#)

#### News & stories categories

[Announcements](#)  
[Arts & Culture](#)  
[Authors & Books](#)  
[Businesses & Entrepreneurs](#)  
[Career Services](#)  
[Civic Learning](#)  
[Digital Literacy](#)



## Tip #6: Draw a Direct Connection Between Funding and Staff

- Share stories about staff expertise.
- Feature staff at events.
- Explain how funding is used to support staff.
- Examples: professional development, programming support, special collections, research.

# Friends & Advocacy

- Libraries are facing more challenges regarding their collections, their programs, and even their profession.
- Friends can support libraries by learning about how libraries work, showing up at community meetings, and correcting mis- and dis-information.
- They can also be important third-party messengers when situations get heated.
- You can learn more at [www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport](http://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport).

When a resolution was introduced that would ban and restrict books for minors at the public library, Friends of the Huntington Beach Public Library Dina Chavez thought the measure would be easily defeated.

Instead, the resolution passed 4–3, Chavez explained in “Championing Library Freedom: How Friends Groups Can Fight Back When Our Library Is Under Attack.”

Her Friends group found itself rallying supporters for over a year with hopes of reversing the ordinance. Supporters have attended council meetings, put up yard signs, and written letters to local media outlets.

She recommends teaching elected officials about collection development policies and focusing on successful programming that benefits the community. When making points, Chavez urged advocates to refrain from getting personal and avoid mentioning public figures by name.



## **Key Takeaways & Action Items**

# Key Takeaways

## **Friends Groups Are Vital Partners**

- Friends groups play a critical role in supporting libraries by fundraising, volunteering, advocating, and enhancing community engagement.

## **Adapting to Changing Needs**

- Friends groups must evolve to meet the changing needs of libraries and communities, especially as demographics and volunteer preferences shift.

## **Storytelling Boosts Engagement**

- Sharing impactful stories about the library's influence on individuals can inspire support, increase membership, and strengthen advocacy efforts.

## **Recruitment and Retention Strategies Matter**

- To attract and retain younger volunteers, Friends groups should offer flexible roles, leverage social media, and create networking opportunities.

# Key Takeaways

## **Stronger Partnerships Lead to Success**

- Clear roles, open communication, and aligned goals between Friends groups and library staff create a thriving and mutually beneficial partnership.

## **Advocacy is Essential for Sustainability**

- Friends groups can advocate for public funding, support library policies, and ensure that libraries continue to serve their communities effectively.

## **Challenges Require Innovative Solutions**

- Addressing common challenges, such as strained resources or unclear roles, through strategic planning and collaboration can strengthen Friends groups and library support.

# Additional Reading & Resources

- [librarystrategiesconsulting.org/2017/10/5-ways-friends-groups-attract-millennials/](https://librarystrategiesconsulting.org/2017/10/5-ways-friends-groups-attract-millennials/)
- [americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2021/07/08/recruit-retain-engage-friends-trustees/](https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2021/07/08/recruit-retain-engage-friends-trustees/)
- [foml.org/resources/useful-links/](https://foml.org/resources/useful-links/)
- [americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2025/01/02/into-the-future/](https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2025/01/02/into-the-future/)





## **Q&A and Discussion**



## Connect With Me

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