



Caswell County Public Library Community Needs Assessment

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Executive Summary

- This community needs assessment is part of a larger project to develop a strategic plan for the Caswell County Public Library.
- The assessment is based on demographic data for Caswell County, library usage and funding data, surveys of county citizens and library staff, focus groups, meetings, and interviews with local community leaders.
- The demographic data for Caswell County reflect the fact that the county is less educated, is poorer, and has fewer young people than the state as a whole.
- Demographic trends show that the level of education for county residents is improving faster than for the state as a whole but that poverty is increasing and the percentage of young people is decreasing at a faster rate than for the state.
- The Caswell County Public Library's resources are relatively well used but the library is poorly funded, relative to other county libraries in North Carolina.
- Since 2004-2005, in almost every area, usage of the Caswell County Public Library has grown much faster than has usage of county libraries in the state as a whole. The exceptions are users of Internet computers per capita and materials expenditures per capita.
- A survey of county residents found strong support for the library, particularly its roles in early childhood literacy and education and in supporting school students. The greatest number of suggested improvements was related to a larger library facility.
- A survey of library staff found that those individuals consider books for children, Internet access computers, and programs for children to be the most important library services.
- Focus groups, interviews with community leaders, and other meetings found strong support for a new or expanded library facility, for the library staff and its programs, and for increased funding for the library.
- This report recommends four areas for future focus for the Caswell County Public Library:
 - Expanded or new library facility
 - Children and teens
 - Computers and Internet access
 - Increased local funding

Introduction

In June 2012, the Caswell County Public Library received a federally funded LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) grant to conduct a community needs assessment as part of a larger project to develop a strategic plan for the library.

The library was motivated to engage in a strategic planning process because it had recently changed its status from a member library in a three-county regional library system to a stand-alone county library and because it did not currently have a strategic plan in place.

The community needs assessment has been conducted by Dr. Robert Burgin, a library consultant with more than 30 years of experience in library education, library consulting, and library administration.

Methods

The methodology employed in this community needs assessment has included:

- An examination of demographic data and demographic trends for Caswell County.
- An examination of library usage and funding data and library usage and funding trends for the Caswell County Public Library.
- A survey of the citizens of Caswell County.
- A survey of the staff of the Caswell County Public Library.
- Meetings with the Caswell County Public Library staff and the Caswell County Public Library Board.
- The establishment of a Steering Committee to oversee the strategic planning process and an initial meeting with that group.
- Meetings with two focus groups made up of citizens from Caswell County.
- Interviews with local community leaders.

The usual strengths and weaknesses of data analysis, focus groups, surveys, and interviews apply to this evaluation, but more importantly, these methods enabled community stakeholders as well as library staff to provide input to the community needs assessment process. The validity and reliability of the evidence provided through these methods is reasonably strong.¹

¹ The demographic data and the library usage and funding data have been reviewed by the appropriate governmental agencies for validity and reliability. Focus group and interview input is valid, particularly as no library staff were present, allowing participants to speak freely and provide honest feedback. Focus groups were small but representative of the community being

Demographic Data

A summary of the most recent demographic data for Caswell County is shown in Table 1 below.² The data for Caswell County are listed for 16 measures and compared with the median for all 100 counties in North Carolina. Caswell County's rank among the 100 counties is also shown, and the table is sorted by Caswell's rank.

Table 1. Caswell County Demographic Data

Measure	Caswell	NC Median	Caswell Rank
Percentage Lacking Basic Literacy Skills, 2003	18.5%	14.5%	22nd
Percentage in Poverty, 2006-2010	21.7%	16.9%	22nd
Percentage Non-White, 2011	36.0%	22.9%	32nd
Population 65 Years and Over, 2011	16.7%	15.7%	35th
Unemployment, September 2012	9.5%	9.4%	49th
Land Area, 2010	424.9	462.7	58th
Median Household Income, 2006-2010	\$36,927	\$40,180	67th
Total Population, July 2011	23,403	55,107	78th
Median Value of Homes, 2006-2010	\$97,500	\$124,300	79th
Population Under 18 Years of Age, 2011	19.8%	22.5%	81st
Population per Square Mile, 2009	55.8	113.1	81st
Percentage of Persons 25 and Over with High School Degree or Better, 2006-2010	75.0%	80.0%	82nd
Percentage Hispanic, 2011	3.3%	6.1%	82nd
Percentage of Persons 25 and Over with Bachelor's Degree or Better, 2006-2010	11.1%	16.3%	88th
Population Change, April 2000 to July 2011	0.9%	9.8%	89th
Population Under 5 Years of Age, 2011	4.6%	5.8%	93rd

served by the library. In combination with the survey results, the validity and reliability of both tools were increased. Survey results have high reliability as all respondents answered the same questions and each response was consistently analyzed.

² The majority of the data comes from the United States Census Bureau (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37000.html>). Unemployment data are from the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Employment Security (<http://www.ncesc1.com/pmi/rates/ratesmain.asp>). Literacy data are from the National Center for Educational Statistics (<http://nces.ed.gov/naal/estimates/overview.aspx>).

The demographic data for Caswell County reflect the fact that the county is:

- Relatively less educated. Caswell County ranks in the bottom one fourth of North Carolina counties in terms of the percentage of individuals over 25 with a high school degree or better as well as the percentage of individuals over 25 with a bachelor's degree or better. The county also ranks among the 25 counties in the state with the highest rates of illiteracy.
- Relatively poor. Caswell County ranks among the top quarter of the state's counties in terms of the percentage of individuals living in poverty and among the bottom quarter in terms of median value of homes. These data do not, however, suggest extreme poverty.
- Relatively lacking in young people. Caswell County ranks in the bottom 20 North Carolina counties in the percentage of people under 18 years old and in the bottom 10 counties in the percentage of people under 5 years old.

Demographic Trends

Table 2 below shows several demographic trends based on a comparison of data from 2000 and 2011. The percentage change for each measure is shown for Caswell County and for the state of North Carolina as a whole.

Table 2. Caswell County Demographic Changes, 2000 to 2011

Measure	Caswell	NC
Percentage of Persons 25 and Over with High School Degree or Better	11.1%	6.9%
Percentage of Persons 25 and Over with B.A. or Better	33.7%	16.0%
Percentage in Poverty	50.7%	26.0%
Median Value of Homes	20.7%	37.7%
Median Household Income	5.5%	16.3%
Population Under 18 Years of Age	- 14.7%	- 2.9%
Population Under 5 Years of Age	- 19.3%	- 3.0%
Population 65 Years and Over	28.5%	10.0%
Total Population	- 2.1%	20.0%

The demographic trends reflect themes that parallel those noted above:

- Improving level of education. The level of education for Caswell County residents has improved at a faster rate than that of the state as a whole, both in terms of the percentage of individuals over 25 with a high school degree or better and the percentage of individuals over 25 with a bachelor's degree or better. In both cases, the rate of change for Caswell County has been roughly twice that of the state.
- Increasing poverty. Caswell County has seen increasing rates of poverty over the past decade. The percentage of individuals living in poverty has increased by half and at a rate nearly twice that of the state as a whole. The median value of homes and the median household income have, on the other hand, increased much more slowly than for the statewide population.
- Loss of younger people. In the past 10 years, the percentage of Caswell County residents under 18 years old and under 5 years old has dropped at a rate much greater than that of the state as a whole. Likewise, the number of individuals 65 years of age and older has increased at a much higher rate than for the state. Caswell County is also one of only a handful of counties in North Carolina to have lost population between 2000 and 2011, and this may indicate that families with young children are leaving the county.

Library Usage and Funding Data

Data regarding library usage and funding for the Caswell County Public Library are shown in Table 3 on the following page.³ As with the demographic data above, the library data for Caswell County are listed for 17 measures and compared with the median for the 54 county libraries in North Carolina. Caswell County's rank among these county libraries is also shown, and the table is sorted by Caswell's rank. (These data represent 2010-2011 because these are the most recent statistics available for the entire state.)

The usage and funding data for the Caswell County Public Library reveal several aspects of library service:

- Library resources are relatively well used. In five areas, the Caswell County Public Library ranks among the top half of all county libraries in North Carolina. These include reference questions per capita, which indicates that the library serves an important role in meeting the information needs of the county citizens,

³ Library usage and funding data are from the Caswell County Public Library and from reports by the State Library of North Carolina (<http://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/ld/aboutlibraries/statistics.html>).

and program attendance per capita, which reflects the hard work of library staff in providing programs for a wide range of age groups, particularly children and teens. The library's cost per circulation figure is among the best in the state and indicates that the staff is efficient in its use of library funding. Likewise, turnover rate (which measures the average number of times a library book is checked out in a year) reflects the fact that the library's collection is heavily used, in spite of its relatively small size. The number of library visits per capita also shows relatively heavy use of the library facility by the county's citizens.

Table 3. Caswell County Public Library Usage and Funding Data

Measure	Caswell	NC Median County Libraries	Caswell Rank
Reference Questions Per Capita	0.98	0.45	7 th of 52
Program Attendance Per Capita	0.30	0.17	11 th of 54
Cost Per Circulation	\$3.62	\$4.25	19 th of 54
Turnover Rate (Circulation per Book)	2.12	1.74	22 nd of 54
Library Visits Per Capita	3.16	3.01	24 th of 54
Total Circulation Per FTE Staff	13,663	14,871	32 nd of 54
FTE Staff per 25,000 Population Served	5.75	6.24	33 rd of 54
Book Volumes Per Capita	1.48	1.73	35 th of 54
Print Circulation Per Capita	2.43	2.94	40 th of 54
Materials Expenditures Per Capita	\$1.31	\$1.81	42 nd of 54
Public Internet Workstations Per 5,000 People	2.11	3.25	43 rd of 54
Non-Print Circulation Per Capita	0.33	0.76	46 th of 54
Percentage of Population Registered	31%	53%	48 th of 54
Library Income Per Capita (Total)	\$11.51	\$17.30	50 th of 54
Personnel Expenditures Per Capita	\$6.89	\$11.87	51 st of 54
Users of Internet Computers Per Capita	0.37	0.76	52 nd of 54
Library Income Per Capita (Local)	\$6.09	\$14.63	53 rd of 54

- The library is poorly funded, relative to other county libraries in North Carolina. The most striking of the library statistics is that the Caswell County Public Library ranks next to last among the state's county libraries in local funding per capita.

In fact, the library receives less than half the median per capita local funding of county libraries in North Carolina. This lack of local funding impacts other measures and explains why Caswell ranks in the bottom half of county libraries in FTE staff per 25,000 population served, book volumes per capita, and Internet workstations per 5,000 people. Without adequate funding, the library cannot provide adequate resources to the citizens of Caswell County.

Library Usage and Funding Trends

Table 4 on the following page shows trends in the usage and funding of the Caswell County Public Library based on a comparison of data from 2004-2005 and 2011-2012. The percentage change for each measure is shown for Caswell County and for the county libraries in North Carolina as a whole. The table is sorted in order of the percentage change for the Caswell County Public Library.

The usage and funding trends show the following:

- In almost every area, usage of the Caswell County Public Library has grown much faster than has usage of county libraries in the state as a whole. For example, since 2004-2005, program attendance per capita has more than doubled for Caswell while shrinking by almost a third in county libraries across the state. Print circulation, percentage of the population registered, and non-print circulation have also doubled, while growth rates in the county libraries of North Carolina have been much lower. The library staff is to be commended for its efforts.
- In only three areas has the Caswell County Public Library fared less well than the state's county libraries as a whole. Users of Internet computers per capita has risen by 42.1 per cent in the past six years but has trailed the state average. This statistic is likely impacted by the change in the number of public Internet workstations per 5,000 people, which dropped 9.7 per cent in Caswell while increasing 29.2 per cent statewide. This drop may reflect the fact that the size and layout of the Gunn Memorial Library facility make it difficult to add more Internet workstations, the lack of funding, or the library's priorities.
- Materials expenditures per capita dropped 38.8 per cent for Caswell between 2004-2005 and 2011-2012, more than twice the drop of 18.5 per cent experienced by county libraries throughout the state. This drop came in spite of slight increases in total and local funding to the Caswell County Public Library and may reflect a change in the library's priorities or a one-time windfall in materials funding in 2004-2005.
- The drop in cost per circulation was slightly greater in Caswell than in the state as a whole, but this is a positive sign, as cost per circulation measures the overall

efficiency of the library staff in turning resources (like funding) into results (like books being checked out).

- While local funding for the Caswell County Public Library slightly outpaced the average for county libraries in the state between 2004-2005 and 2011-2012, the difference was very slight and hardly enough to make up the gap in local funding that was noted above.

Table 4. Caswell County Public Library Usage Changes, 2005 to 2012

Measure	Caswell	NC County Libraries
Program Attendance Per Capita	107.6%	- 30.3%
Print Circulation Per Capita	105.8%	0.4%
Percentage of Population Registered	103.2%	11.8%
Non-Print Circulation Per Capita	97.5%	17.9%
Book Volumes Per Capita	43.6%	- 9.4%
Turnover Rate (Circulation per Book)	43.3%	10.5%
Users of Internet Computers Per Capita	42.1%	62.9%
Total Circulation Per FTE Staff	30.8%	27.6%
Reference Questions Per Capita	15.8%	- 6.3%
Library Visits Per Capita	14.3%	10.6%
Library Income Per Capita (Local)	6.7%	5.5%
Library Income Per Capita (Total)	5.9%	0.8%
Personnel Expenditures Per Capita	4.4%	3.4%
FTE Staff per 25,000 Population Served	- 0.3%	- 18.8%
Public Internet Workstations Per 5,000 People	- 9.7%	29.2%
Cost Per Circulation	- 21.7%	- 19.3%
Materials Expenditures Per Capita	- 38.8%	- 18.5%

Survey of the Public

As part of the needs assessment process, the Caswell County Public Library conducted a survey of the citizens of the county in October 2012. A total of 239 individuals responded.

The results of the survey have been provided to the library staff in a separate report, and the following points summarize the survey findings:

- The survey respondents considered the library's roles in early childhood literacy and education and in supporting school students to be the most important for the community.
- 50 per cent of the respondents rated the library as excellent in meeting their needs; another 38 per cent rated it as very good. Compared with other libraries that have participated in similar surveys, these numbers are quite high.
- The greatest number of suggested improvements was related to a larger library facility. Increased collection size and selection and greater funding for the library were also mentioned.
- 74 per cent of the survey respondents rated the quality of customer service and support provided by the library as excellent. Again, compared with other libraries that have participated in similar surveys, this represents a very strong result.
- When asked how customer service could be improved, respondents most often cited more staff, a larger facility, and greater funding for the library.
- The largest percentage of respondents (43 per cent) reported using the library 2 or 3 times per month.
- 79 per cent of the respondents rated books for children as very important, and 78 per cent rated programs for children as very important. Books for adults and young adults and support for school homework were the next highest rated services and programs.
- 50 per cent of those who listed a factor that limited their use of the library mentioned the size or layout of the library.
- A large number of respondents made positive comments about the library and the staff. Typical were remarks like "the library is one of the best kept secrets in the area" and "We are very fortunate to have such an active, progressive programs with great staff members in our county."

Survey of the Staff

As part of the needs assessment process, the Caswell County Public Library also conducted a survey of the library staff in October 2012. A total of 5 staff members responded.

The results of the survey have been provided to the library staff in a separate report, and the following points summarize the major findings:

- When asked how well the library is meeting the needs of its patrons, 4 staff members rated the library as 7 or higher on a 10-point scale, indicating that they felt that the library is doing a good job of meeting those needs.
- When asked to elaborate on their ratings of the library in meeting patron needs, staff members most often noted that the library staff does an excellent job in spite of budget cuts, limited staff, and a small facility.
- Three services and resources were rated as very important by all of the staff members: books for children; Internet access computers; and programs for children. By contrast, only 40 per cent of staff rated the library's support for school homework as very important.
- Staff members were asked to list the greatest strengths of the Caswell County Public Library, and the library's programs for children, customer service, and the dedication of the staff were the most frequently mentioned strengths.
- Staff members were also asked to list the library's greatest opportunities for improvement. The needs for more space, more funding, and more staff were the most frequently mentioned.
- Staff members were asked to list their top five priorities for the library to concentrate on now and in the foreseeable future. All but one staff member noted the need for a larger facility and the need for more programs. Three mentioned the need for more staff. Three mentioned the need for more computers, another cited more technology, and another noted the need to help patrons with the library's computers.
- Staff members were asked to rate their work environment, and for the most part, staff members were very positive. Staff members were especially likely to agree that they receive praise frequently for doing good work, that their fellow employees are committed to doing quality work, and that their input seems to count.

Focus Groups, Interviews with Community Leaders, and Other Meetings

The project consultant spoke to nearly 50 Caswell County citizens in direct interviews, focus groups, and other meetings. (See Appendix 1 for a list of those who were interviewed or who attended one of the meetings.) The following themes were the most frequently mentioned by these individuals.

The need for a new or expanded facility. Almost all of the individuals who were interviewed or who attended one of the meetings mentioned the need for more space. Specific issues related to the library's lack of space included:

- The lack of space in the current facility makes it almost impossible to accommodate the large attendance at library programs. The children's Summer Reading Program is, in fact, so popular that it must be held at the local civic center because more people attend than can legally occupy the library.
- Programs must currently be held in the middle of the library, and as one person pointed out, "some folks don't like the noise and chaos, but we can't separate it in this building." Another person noted that attendance at programs might even be limited by the lack of space in the library.
- In addition for the need for more space in the library itself, several of the individuals noted the need for additional parking. As one person pointed out, "Some people leave because the parking lot is full."
- In spite of the library's small size, several individuals noted that it was well located (within walking distance of the high school and the center of Yanceyville) and well used. One member of the library Friends group described it as "a community center" and a "true community hub."
- In spite of the need for a new facility, several people noted that county-funded capital projects are rare in Caswell County. The county jail that is currently being constructed was described as the first new county building in 40 years, and another person pointed out that there have been no bond issues in the county in 16 years, except for schools.

The quality of the library staff and programs. A large number of the individuals who were interviewed or who attended one of the meetings provided very positive feedback about the library staff.

- One respondent called them "good people," and a member of the library's Friends group called them "the best staff anywhere." A county employee noted that the staff is "always willing to help." Another library user described the staff as being "like family."
- A large number of people praised the library's children's programs and singled out the children's librarian in particular. ("The kids love Ms. Becky.") One local official said that he would "put the library's children's programs up against anything anywhere."
- Several individuals complimented the new library director. One called her "outgoing and energetic" and said that she was "creating a welcoming atmosphere."

The need for increased services. Several of the people who were interviewed or who attended one of the meetings suggested ways in which the library could increase services to its users. These suggestions included:

- More and newer computers. Several individuals, including two local officials, mentioned the need for more computers and for upgraded computers.
- More services and activities for teens. Several individuals pointed out the need to provide teens in Caswell County with something to do. One individual cited the lack of a Boys' Club, a Girls' Club, or a movie theatre in the county and noted that there is "nowhere else for kids to go."
- More hours, especially in the evenings.

Library funding in general. Several individuals argued that the library is underfunded. There were two primary reasons cited for this lack of funding.

- First, there was a concern that a large number of people, especially those who make funding decisions, do not appreciate the value of the library for the community. One local official blamed the library's lack of funding on the "perception of community leaders that the library is not needed."
- Second, some individuals tied the lack of funding for the library to their perception that Caswell County (from which the library receives the majority of its funding) is a poor county and can't afford to fund the library at a higher level.

Needs of the community. Those who were interviewed and those who attended one of the meetings were asked to discuss the needs of the community being served by the library. Some of the most frequently mentioned needs included:

- Education. As one local official noted, "[Everything] revolves around education." Another local official stated that the school system was fairly strong but that it needed to develop more partnerships.
- Jobs. Several individuals said that Caswell County lacked job opportunities for its citizens. A local official noted the lack of employers in the county and pointed out that the largest employer in the county are the two prisons. Another talked about the lack of industries in the county.
- Workforce development. Another local official pointed to a high drop out rate in the county and the lack of skilled workers. More than one person cited the low percentage of college graduates in the county. As one member of the library's Friends group put it, Caswell County has "poor demographics for business creation."

Caswell County demographic, geographic, and other factors. Several individuals shared information about the county's demographics, geography, and other factors,

some of which may have an impact on the library's future direction. Among the most frequently cited demographic factors were these:

- A large number of Caswell County residents work outside the county. One local official estimated that 65 to 70 per cent of the residents work in surrounding counties. Another noted that this fact often led to a sense of "apathy" about the county and its services.
- A large number of Caswell County residents live in Yanceyville or on the perimeter of the county.
- The county has a high poverty rate. One local official noted the high poverty rate in Caswell County and suggested that the library could provide the poorer citizens with access to services and resources that they can not otherwise afford, like computers, the Internet, help seeking jobs, and the like.
- Yanceyville is home to the Caswell County campus of Piedmont Community College, and there may be opportunities for partnerships between the public library and the college.

Recommended Areas for Future Focus

The following recommended areas for future focus are based on an analysis of demographic data and demographic trends for Caswell County, usage and funding data and trends for the Caswell County Public Library, a survey of the citizens of Caswell County, a survey of the staff of the Caswell County Public Library, and information gleaned from meetings with the Caswell County Public Library staff and the Caswell County Public Library Board, an initial meeting with the Steering Committee overseeing the strategic planning process, two focus groups made up of citizens from Caswell County, and interviews with local community leaders.

These recommendations represent the areas of focus that this consultant feels would help the Caswell County Public Library best meet the needs of the citizens of Caswell County.

Recommended Area # 1 – Expanded or New Library Facility

The current library facility – the Gunn Memorial Public Library in Yanceyville – is inadequate to meet the needs of the citizens of Caswell County. The library was built in 1965 and expanded slightly in 1982. Expanding the current facility or building or acquiring a new, larger facility would greatly enhance the library's ability to serve the county's residents and support its future areas of focus.

- The 1998 guidelines of the North Carolina Public Library Directors Association recommend 0.65 square feet per capita in total library building space. That would equal just over 15,000 square feet for Caswell's current population. By contrast, the current library facility is just 7,500 square feet. (Other formulas for estimating the recommended size of a library facility yield an even larger building.)
- The greatest number of suggested improvements on the survey of Caswell County citizens was related to a larger library facility.
- When the community survey asked how customer service could be improved, respondents most often cited a larger facility, along with more staff and greater funding for the library.
- On the community survey, half of those who listed a factor that limited their use of the library mentioned the size or layout of the library.
- When staff members were asked to list the library's greatest opportunities for improvement, the need for more space was the most frequently mentioned, along with the more funding and more staff.
- Staff members were asked to list their top five priorities for the library to concentrate on now and in the foreseeable future. All but one staff member noted the need for a larger facility.
- Almost all of the individuals who were interviewed or who attended one of the meetings mentioned the need for more space.
- The lack of space in the current facility makes it almost impossible to accommodate the large attendance at library programs. The children's Summer Reading Program is, in fact, so popular that it must be held at the local civic center because more people attend than can legally occupy the library.
- The public library is a potentially important institution in a county with Caswell's demographics – less educated than the rest of the state and poorer than the rest of the state. Unfortunately, without an adequate facility, even the best library staff cannot meet the demands made on the library.

Recommended Area # 2 – Children and Teens

The Caswell County Public Library does an excellent job of providing programs for children and teens. In fact, the library ranks 11th out of the 54 county libraries in the state in program attendance per capita, and much of this attendance is at programs for children and teens.

Good organizations build on their strengths, and consequently, the Caswell County Public Library should consider programming for children and teens as one of its most important areas of focus for the next five years. The library should also consider expanding its focus on children and teens to include ensuring that preschool children

enter school ready to learn and ensuring that students in school have the resources they need to succeed.

- Respondents to the community survey considered the library's roles in early childhood literacy and education and in supporting school students to be the most important roles for the community.
- Community survey respondents also ranked books for children and programs for children as the most important of the library's services and programs. Books for adults and young adults and support for school homework were the next highest rated services and programs.
- On their survey, 100 per cent of the library staff rated programs for children and books for children as very important.
- Library staff most frequently listed the library's programs for children as one of the library's strengths.
- A large number of the individuals who were interviewed or who attended one of the focus groups praised the library's children's programs. One local official said that he would "put the library's children's programs up against anything anywhere."
- The proximity of the library to the high school makes it a convenient destination for teens after school.
- While Caswell County has a relatively small percentage of its population under 5 years of age and under 18 years of age, these children and teens have few other outlets or activities. There is no Boys' Club in the county, no Girls' Club, no movie theatre, and no mall. The public library may be the only source of healthy activities for a large number of children and teens in Caswell County.

Recommended Area # 3 – Computers and Internet Access

The citizens of Caswell County are relatively poor and are becoming poorer more rapidly than are individuals across the state. Consequently, the citizens of Caswell County are less likely to have access to computers and to the Internet than are their counterparts in other counties.

The library can provide a valuable resource to these individuals by providing computers and Internet access and by providing staff support to individuals using them.

- Several of the people who were interviewed or who attended one of the meetings mentioned the need for the library to have more and more up-to-date computers. This need was, in fact, noted by two local officials.
- One local official noted the high poverty rate in Caswell County and suggested that the library could provide the poorer citizens with access to services and

resources that they can not otherwise afford, like computers, the Internet, help seeking jobs, and the like.

- The Caswell County Public Library ranks among the bottom 25 per cent of county libraries in North Carolina in terms of public Internet workstations per 5,000 people and in terms of users of Internet computers per capita.
- Providing computer and Internet access helps individuals who are seeking jobs in several ways. Almost all companies now require job applications to be submitted online. Most employment opportunities are now advertised online. Most companies now want to hire individuals with computer and Internet skills.

Recommended Area # 4 – Increased Local Funding

The most striking of the library statistics shown in Table 3 is that the Caswell County Public Library ranks next to last among the state's county libraries in local funding per capita. In fact, the library receives less than half the median per capita local funding of county libraries in North Carolina.

This lack of local funding impacts everything that the library staff tries to accomplish and explains Caswell's rank in the bottom half of county libraries in FTE staff per 25,000 population served, book volumes per capita, and Internet workstations per 5,000 people. Without adequate funding, the library cannot provide adequate resources to the citizens of Caswell County nor fulfill its future areas of focus.

- When asked how customer service could be improved, respondents to the community survey most often cited greater funding for the library, along with more staff and a larger facility.
- For library staff, greater funding for the library was among the most frequently mentioned ways of improving the library.
- Local funding for the Caswell County Public Library did slightly outpace the average for county libraries in the state between 2004-2005 and 2010-2011, but the difference was very small and hardly enough to make up the gap in local funding that has been noted.
- While Caswell County is a relatively poor county, several other poor counties do a better job of funding their libraries.
- In 2010-2011, counties in North Carolina allotted, on average, 1.44 per cent of their local budgets to public libraries. Caswell allotted just 0.6 per cent.
- For a number of years, Caswell County has been part of a regional system, which received additional funding from the State Library. Now that the county no longer belongs to the regional system, that extra state funding is no longer available, and the county needs to increase funding to make up for that shortfall.

- Attempts to increase local funding to the library will likely require a greater degree of advocacy by local citizens. Several of those interviewed raised the concern that a large number of people, especially those who make funding decisions, do not appreciate the value of the library for the community.

Next Steps

This report, along with its recommendations, will be forwarded to the Steering Committee that the Caswell County Public Library has created to oversee its strategic planning process. The Steering Committee members will consider the recommendations of the report and will pass along its own set of recommendations for future areas of focus to the library staff.

The Steering Committee is urged to consider the list of library service responses created by the Public Library Association and outlined in Appendix 2. These represent possible future areas of focus for the Caswell County Public Library.

The staff will then work with the consultant to draft a strategic plan for the library based on these recommendations. The plan will include areas of focus for the library, goals for each area, and measurable objectives for each goal.

That draft plan will then be reviewed by the Steering Committee, which will provide feedback and suggestions to the staff. The library staff will then incorporate the feedback from the Steering Committee and create a final version of the plan, which will be approved by the Steering Committee.

The final version of the plan will then be presented to the Caswell County Library Board for its consideration and approval.

Following Board approval, the plan will guide the staff of the Caswell County Public Library in the day-to-day operations of the library for the period of time covered by the plan.

Appendix 1

The following individuals were interviewed by the consultant or attended one of the meetings held by the Caswell County Public Library as part of this community needs assessment project.

Mike Adkins	Donna Kimbro, Steering Committee
Dr. Walter Bartlett, President, Piedmont Community College	Lisa Lipscomb, Friends of the Library
Janie Bason, Library Staff, Steering Committee	William Long
Mel Battle, Steering Committee	Erica Lowdermilk, Friends of the Library
Brandi Beame, Steering Committee	Kim Monroe, Steering Committee
Sarah Bradsher	Melvin Paylor, Steering Committee
Sherri Brandon, Library Board	Nicholas Pennix
Harriet Brandon, Town Manager, Milton	Shana Poole
Haynes Brigman, Town Manager, Yanceyville	Rev. Paul Robinson
Bill Bush, Steering Committee	Deborah Rudd, Friends of the Library
Bill Carter, County Commissioner	Betty Sartin, Steering Committee
Dieontra Clark, Steering Committee	Noah Schmitt
Rebecca Dellinger, Library Staff	Paula Seamster, Clerk to the Board
Tamara Durden	Darya Shaw, Library Board
Deborah Evans	Linda Short, Steering Committee
Paco Gonzalez, Steering Committee	Chelsea Stewart, Library Staff
Rhonda H. Griffin, Library Staff	James Taylor
Dylan Haire	Robert Thomas, Steering Committee
Nate Hall, County Commissioner	Sheri Turner, Steering Committee
Karen Hanville, Library Staff	Ahmod Walker
Bob Hanville, Library Board	Betsy Watlington, Library Board, Friends of the Library
Kevin Howard, County Manager	Allan Weaver, Friends of the Library
Trish Howard, Library Board	Shannon White, United Way, Caswell County
Doris Hyler, Library Staff	Lucindy Williams, Steering Committee
	Frannie Wrenn

Appendix 2

Public Library Association *Strategic Planning for Results* Library Service Responses

These library service responses are taken from Sandra Nelson's book, *Strategic Planning for Results*, and serve as the core of the Public Library Association's strategic planning process. They represent roles that a public library might fulfill in order to meet the needs of the communities that it serves.

Because it is better for public libraries to provide a few strong services rather than providing a lot of poor or mediocre services, public libraries should generally focus on a handful of these roles.

1. Be an Informed Citizen: Local, National, and World Affairs

Citizens will have the information they need to support and promote democracy, to fulfill their civic responsibilities at the local, state, and national levels, and to fully participate in community decision-making.

2. Celebrate Diversity: Cultural Awareness

Residents will have programs and services that promote appreciation and understanding of their personal heritage and the heritage of others in the community.

3. Connect to the Online World: Public Internet Access

Residents will have high-speed access to the digital world with no unnecessary restrictions or fees to ensure that everyone can take advantage of the ever-growing resources and services available through the Internet.

4. Create Young Readers: Emergent Literacy

Preschool children will have programs and services designed to ensure that they will enter school ready to learn to read, write, and listen.

5. Discover Your Heritage: Genealogy and Local History

Residents and visitors will have the resources they need to explore their heritage, to connect the past with the present through their family histories, and to understand the history and traditions of the community in which they live.

6. Express Creativity: Create and Share Content

Residents will have the services and support they need to express themselves by creating original print, video, audio, or visual content in a real-world or online environment.

7. Explore and Know Our Community: Community Resources and Services

Residents will have a central source for information about the wide variety of programs, services, and activities provided by community agencies and organizations.

8. Get Fast Facts: Ready Reference

Residents will have someone to answer their questions on a wide array of topics of personal interest.

9. Information Fluency: Know How to Find, Evaluate, and Use Information

Residents will know when they need information to resolve an issue or answer a question and will have the skills to search for, locate, evaluate, and effectively use information to meet their needs.

10. Learn to Read and Write: Adult, Teen, and Family Literacy

Adults and teens will have the support they need to improve their literacy skills in order to meet their personal goals and fulfill their responsibilities as parents, citizens, and workers.

11. Make Career Choices: Job and Career Development

Teens and adults will have the skills and resources they need to identify career opportunities that suit their individual strengths and interests.

12. Make Informed Decisions: Health, Wealth, and Other Life Choices

Residents will have the resources they need to identify and analyze risks, benefits, and alternatives before making decisions that affect their lives.

13. Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning

Residents will have the resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives.

14. Stimulate Imagination: Reading, Viewing and Listening for Pleasure

Residents who want materials to enhance their leisure time will find what they want when and where they want them and will have the help they need to make choices from among the options.

15. Succeed in School: Homework Help

Students will have the resources they need to succeed in school.

16. Visit a Comfortable Place: Public and Virtual Spaces

Residents will have safe and welcoming physical places to meet and interact with others or to sit quietly and read and will have open and accessible virtual spaces that support social networking.

17. Welcome to the United States: Services for New Immigrants

New immigrants will have information on citizenship, English Language Learning (ELL), employment, public schooling, health and safety, available social services, and any other topics that they need to participate successfully in American life.