ARARAT LIBRARY SERVICES

DRAFT STRATEGY
2021-2026
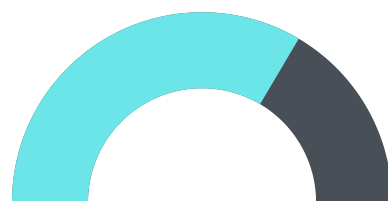
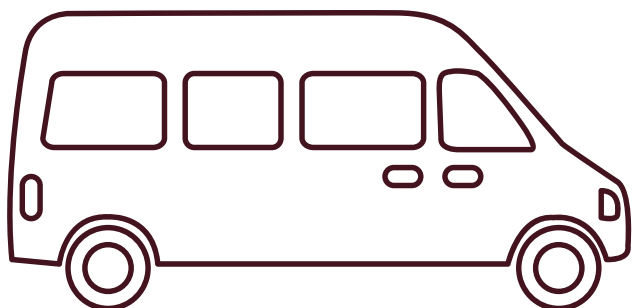MAY 2021 // TO BE REVIEWED MAY 2026

OUR SERVICES

Ararat Regional Library services are highly valued by the Ararat Rural City community and play a large part in enriching daily life in and around our municipality.

3,822
Items borrowed per month
(2021 average)

134
Users of Outreach mobile service per month
(2021 average)

3,439
current library members (April 2021)

Spaces

- Ararat's Library services operate out of the main branch in Ararat, with a smaller branch housed within the Lake Bolac Information and Business Centre, and an Outreach mobile service supplying our outlying rural communities.

Online & Digital

- Free public WiFi available in the Ararat and Lake Bolac library facilities
- Internet on public computers available
- Library catalogue and e-books available online
- Printing, copying and scanning available

Collection

- Print, large print items
- Talking books, DVDs
- Magazines
- E-books, e-magazines
- Local history resources

Programs

- Storytime and baby rhyme time sessions - fun learning experiences for young children
- School holiday program - free activites for school age children
- Genealogical society - operates from Ararat library
- Locally authored book launches
- Various other community, groups and clubs.

THE FUTURE

As global trends influence local public library policy, libraries are adapting into places of knowledge, creativity, social connection, enterprise and innovation.

Increasing our membership, developing our library spaces, offering innovative programming and providing increased digital connectivity are all areas where Council can develop and expand the library service – providing extraordinary experiences and services to our communities.

This Strategy provides a road map for our Library service to embrace this evolution, positioning our library service to strengthen and contribute significantly to the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of Ararat Rural City.

The aim of this document is to outline a strategy and determine the priorities for our library service for the
next 5 years...

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The future direction of the Ararat Regional Library Service is influenced by many external factors, as well as Council's strategic direction. This strategy will be underpinned by the information and recommendations contained in these key documents.

External Strategic Drivers

Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries	Sets out recommended minimum standards and best practice guidelines for service delivery levels for public library services in Australia.
Victorian Public Libraries 2030 Strategic Framework	The Victorian Public Libraries 2030 project identified key future opportunities for libraries to play a key part in communities into the future. Key findings: 1. Capitalise on five prominent and emerging social trends: creativity, collaboration, brain health, dynamic learning and community connection. 2. Successfully adapt to these future trends by adopting a broad sense of purpose and identity. 3. Feature and accommodate elements of two strategic options in 2030: the Creative Library and the Community Library. 4. Occupy a relevant and prominent position at the centre of their local community in 2030.
Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) "Council Libraries Audit Report" 2019	The November 2019 VAGO report on Libraries highlights the role of the Council Library continuing to evolve from traditional book lending to supporting community interaction and inclusion. A contemporary library: - Is a neighborhood hub providing free, safe and creative spaces for local communities • Provides electronic access to library collections and e-resources including audio books, electronic books and online newspapers and magazines. • Delivers a variety of cultural, literacy and skill development progress for children and adults.

Internal Strategic Drivers

Ararat Rural City Council Community Vision 2031

Over the next ten years Ararat Rural City Council will develop into a community characterised by:
- Communities that are enhanced by access to artistic, cultural, sporting and recreational opportunities that meet needs and expectations.
- Volunteering is a key part of community life and its resurgence has breathed new life into a range of community organisations and activities. Ararat Rural City is a place that is known for its cultural inclusion and connection to traditional owners.

Ararat Rural City Council Plan 2021-2025

The Council Plan 2021–2025 sets out strategic objectives that Council will pursue over the next four years. It details actions and initiatives that will be undertaken to achieve these strategic objectives. The Library Service Strategy will contribute where possible to all elements of the Council Plan, in particular;

5. Enhancing community life
We will work with the communities of Ararat Rural City to maintain social cohesion, support community activity and cultural life, and enhance safety.

5.1 Open up Council's arts and culture assets to greater community participation, ownership and engagement in decision-making.

5.2 Develop models of volunteering that recognise, support and properly utilise the skills that community volunteers bring to community life.

5.3 Partner with community groups, not-for-profits, and traditional owner organisations to develop Ararat Rural City as a more inclusive and diverse community.

Ararat Regional Library 2019 Service Review Report

This internal service review analysed the performance of the service in the context of Council's operations and made recommendations around improvements and opportunities.

Ararat Rural City Community Engagement Policy and feedback from our community

This strategy will be developed with extensive consultation with our community including current Library users, and also those members of the community who don't engage with the Library. Council's Community Engagement policy will help guide this consultation process.

LIBRARY TRENDS & OPPORTUNITIES

When considering our future plan, we need to take account of what is happening across other public library services and identify key issues and challenges for the future.

Embracing technology as a core sevice

Libraries play a key role in providing access to digital devices and the Internet, and in fostering digital literacy at basic and more advanced levels.

As technology changes the way we learn, connect and collaborate, it is becoming essential that Libraries become digital hubs with access to up to date technology and connectivity that enables the community to navigate the technological requirements of life.

Enforced social isolation of the COVID-19 Pandemic has also dramatically accelerated the need for the community to participate in the digital world.

Libraries as urban placemakers

Libraries draw a significant level of visitors who, by simply going to the library, activate surrounding spaces, which in turn provides economic benefit to nearby shops and businesses. As a result, libraries are seen as key anchors or placemakers in urban planning or regeneration.

New public libraries are being built using inspirational design and architecture with the view of placing an urban centre on the map, and when co-located with other venues, a valuable multi-functional community hub is created.

Redefining Library spaces

The way people use libraries is changing, so the design and function of libraries must evolve to meet these emerging challenges.
Libraries are more than just places for books. Spaces are being increasingly occupied by informal social activities as well as providing venues for structured group activities. Wi-Fi and e-resources are enabling library spaces to become multifunctional.

Because of their public accessibility, libraries as creative spaces enable users to share their knowledge while creating and learning simultaneously. The demand is for more interactive environments, and our customers now need innovative library configuration. Library automation is impacting on design and layout, as online services enable people to access collections and resources at home.

With the financial constraints placed on councils to maintain public buildings such as community halls, there is a growing emphasis on engaging with communities in new ways. Libraries, through close connection to their communities, are well placed to play an important role in developing a new model for community spaces.

Lifelong learning and partnerships

Public libraries are focused on programs and partnerships, as well as maintaining their more traditional role. The physical implications of these programs and partnerships include an emphasis on flexible spaces that can be accessed out of hours, such as meeting rooms, training rooms and multi-purpose spaces. The rising popularity in programs and partnerships is an indication that despite the growth of digital and online resources, the physical library is relevant and in demand as a social space. Libraries today continue to provide what we might call 'traditional' services. However, it is clear our local communities expect public libraries to also provide services that reflect the role of the modern public library as a community facility where people can socialise and experience lifelong learning outside schools and tertiary institutions.

The demand for resources and services to support lifelong learning activities is expected to increase.

Looking ahead

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Ararat Library Service will aim to provide a range of services and programs over the next five years to enable our residents to learn, connect and innovate.

We will achieve this through a program of change structured around 3 broad action-driven initiatives.

LEARN
CONNECT
INNOVATE

Strategic Initiative 1:

Digital Technology as a core service

Grow our digital and online services as the driving core service delivered by our Library. Ensure cutting edge technology is available and accessible to our community, supported by high-speed internet.

Actions..

1. Ensure high speed internet is available throughout all facilities and offsite for the Outreach program

2. Complete a Library IT roadmap to ensure Library service needs are catered for through the IT strategy.

3. Development of workshops and outreach sessions promoting digital literacy to identified groups

Strategic Initiative 2:

Welcoming destination and flexible spaces

Develop our Library facilities into flexible, multi-use venues which are welcoming and engaging for all sections of the community by providing a wide range of quality events, activities, programs and services.

Actions..

1. Complete the LLIP Ararat Library Upgrade. The refurbishment will allow a more flexible use of the library space to enable innovative programming and expanded room for study and quiet areas.

2. Explore the concept of multiple Council services being made available to ratepayers through the Library as a customer service point. (Co-location of services).

3. Ensure Ararat Library can meet future social infrastructure expansion needs through long term Council planning.

Strategic Initiative 3:

Activate and Engage through programs and partnerships

*Further expand the Library into the community education and learning space.*

Actions..

1. Deliver adult literacy programs

2. Build upon our Outreach service and utilise the new technology in our Outreach van to deliver digital literacy sessions to our rural communities.

3. Explore opportunities to collaborate or partner with other agencies or areas of Council to deliver events, activities and services from the library space.

4. Explore opportunities to facilitate networking and support local business and community sector.

MEASURING SUCCESS

To measure the success of this strategy, we will monitor a range of different indicators, both quantitative and qualitative.

Customer feedback, visitation, membership and borrowing will all provide an indication of success. We are required to report monthly on internal key performance indicators and also annually to the State Government through the Local Government Performance Reporting framework (LGPRF).
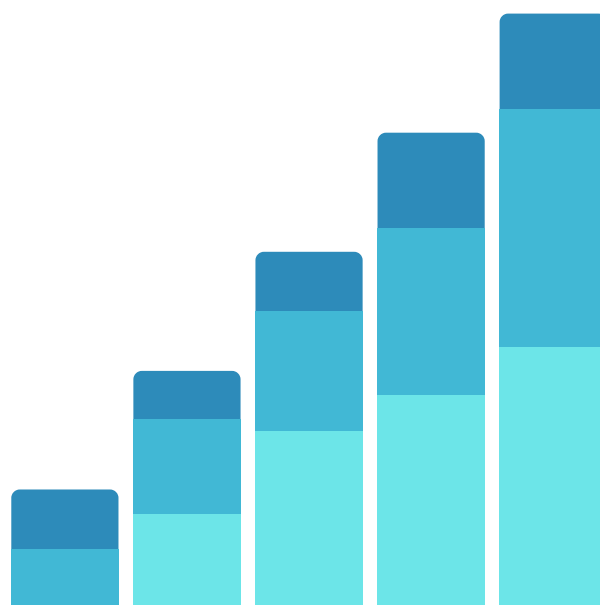
Key performance indicators

The success of the Ararat Regional Library Strategy can be measured through both new and existing key performance indicators.

Currently internal KPI's are measured monthly, Council also report on specific Library performance indicators to the State Government annually.
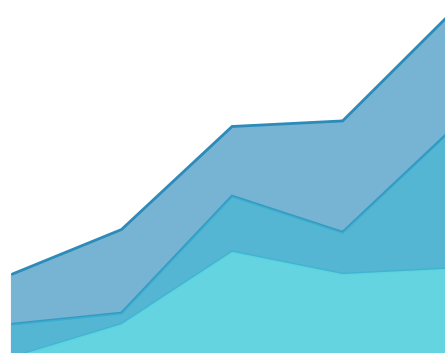
STATE GOVERNMENT LGPRF REPORTING - ANNUALLY

Key Performance Indicator	2019/2020
LB1 Physical library collection usage	2.39
LB2 Proportion of library resources less than 5 years old	54.05
LB3 Cost of library service per population	$25.75
LB4 Active library borrowers in Municipality	11.75%

INTERNAL REPORTING - MONTHLY

Key Performance Indicator	2019/2020 Average Monthly
Number of visitors to the library	2294
Number of visits to the library per head of municipal population	.198
Number of participants in the Outreach program	100
Number of participants in story time and rhyme time programs	236
Total % of municipal population who are library members	20/21 measure
Number of E-books borrowed	20/21 measure
Number of internet users	20/21 measure
Number of attendees to new literacy and digital literacy programs	20/21 measure

IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION

This strategy sets out strategic initiatives and actions which will guide Council's decision making and activities for our Library service over the next five years. In addition to these objectives, the Library service will remain responsive to any issues or opportunities which arise.

Council will be the lead in implementing this strategy and will seek partnerships where possible to deliver the best outcomes for the community.

Council will review and evaluate the strategy on an ongoing basis.

Annual progress reports will be made to Council and additionally captured through the LGPRF reporting framework.