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**Shaping Our  
Library  
Together**  
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## **GATHERING INPUT**

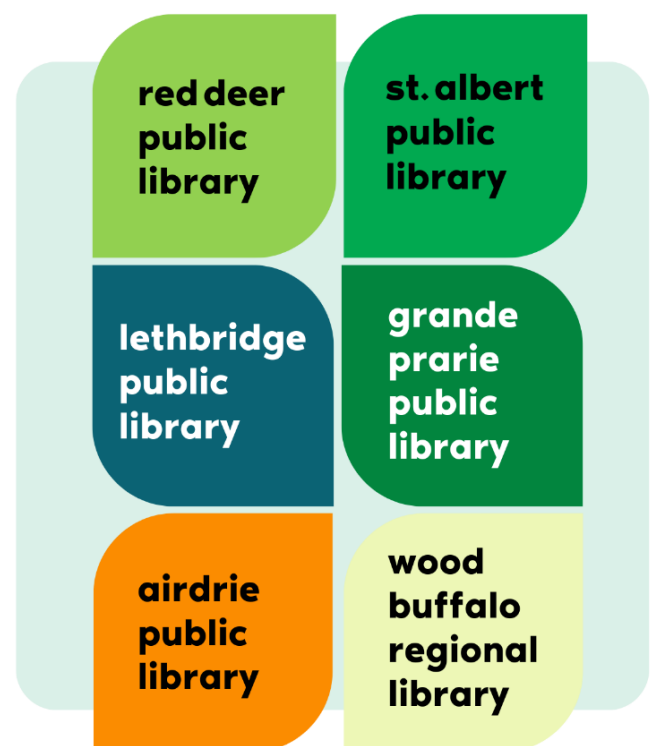
# INTRODUCTION

From August to November 2024, Strathcona County Library (SCL) undertook a **Community Needs Assessment** to create a new strategic plan for 2025-2028. Under the *Alberta Libraries Act*, a public library is required to conduct this kind of assessment as one way to ensure that a library's services remain responsive and relevant to the residents it serves.

Our process began with a series of interviews with CEOs from seven libraries across Alberta, as well as libraries serving similar-sized populations in other provinces, to find out what engagement processes they had used in their communities. We asked about which techniques had resonated most with their community members, which had provided their libraries with the most meaningful data, and what their experiences had been if they had worked with public engagement consultants.

Their advice confirmed that our engagement process should combine online surveys with targeted in-person opportunities to help us reach out to residents less likely to engage through usual library channels. These interviews also helped us to compile a set of potential engagement questions that would invite community input, as well as a list of practical requirements to consider when contracting with public engagement consultants.

## ALBERTA LIBRARIES INTERVIEWED



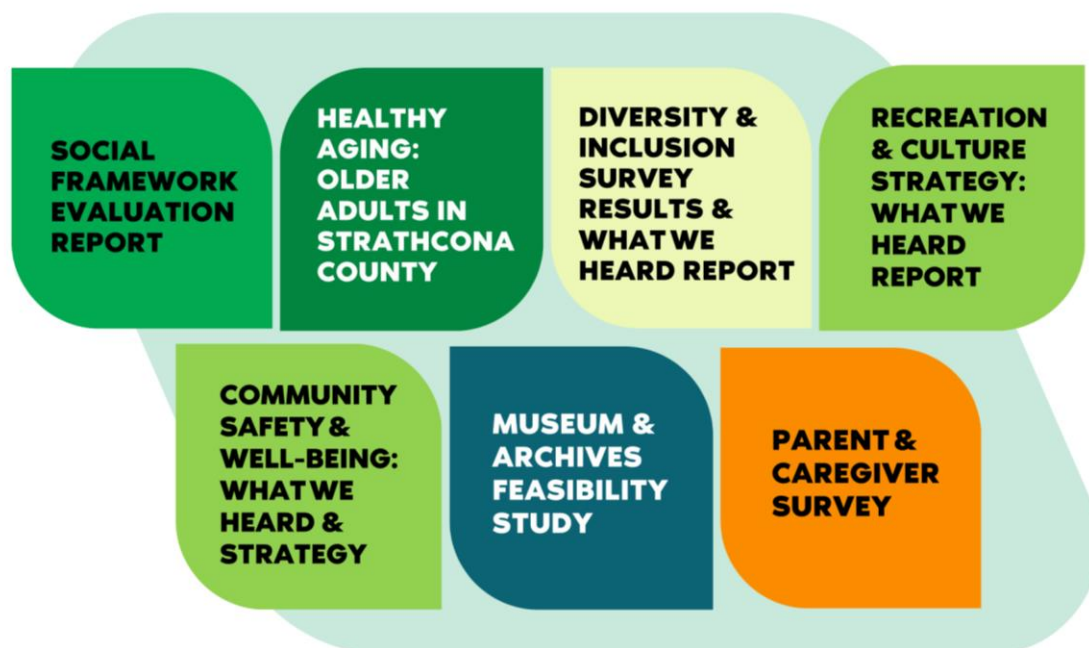
## COMMUNITY DATA REVIEW

The next step we took was to review recent engagement efforts completed by other organizations in Strathcona County and to analyze current community data, trends in the library industry, and trends in our own internal data.

Community data we reviewed included:

- County demographic data from the most current census (2024).
- Findings reports from Strathcona County's online engagement platform, *County Voice*.
- Recent public engagement reports from other community organizations on diversity and inclusion, recreation and culture, parents and caregivers, and healthy aging.
- Reports on initiatives like the County's Social Framework and Community Safety and Well-Being strategy.
- Current trends in library practices, as reported in professional library journals.
- Internal library service statistics, program data and trends over the past few years.

### STRATHCONA COUNTY REPORTS REVIEWED



# GATHERING INPUT

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

We used Strathcona County's online engagement platform, *County Voice*, to host our survey and reach out to library and non-library users throughout our community.

A communication campaign was developed to get the word out about the survey using a variety of methods:

- In print (e.g. bookmarks, posters, paid newspaper ads in, the library's program guide).
- Online (e.g. library website, social media channels, e-newsletter, partner websites).
- Through word of mouth (e.g. at programs, service desks, on the Bookmobile).

We also promoted the survey through ads on utility bills and by popping up at local farmer's markets to catch the attention of rural residents.

## IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT

To gather input face-to-face, we wanted to find a public engagement expert who could help us to reach out to all corners of our community and to hear from as many audiences and perspectives as possible. We also wanted our staff and Board to have similar experiences to the public when providing their input. Through a request-for-proposal process, we selected a local firm, *Dialogue Partners*, to help us plan and conduct a series of facilitated meetings, workshops and community pop-ups across the County between September and October of 2024.



Dialogue Partners talking to families and children at Millennium Place



## WHAT WE ASKED

Using what we learned from other successful engagements, we asked questions designed to inspire responses about personal needs and about the needs of others in the community. Whether in person or online, all respondents were asked these core questions.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Tool	Participation	Additional Details
<b>Online Survey</b>	1259 responses	October 1 to 23, 2024
<b>In-Person</b>	322 interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strathcona County Library</li> <li>South Cooking Lake</li> <li>Millennium Place</li> <li>Josephburg Seniors Centre</li> <li>Ardrossan Recreation Complex</li> </ul>
<b>Strathcona County Advisory Committee Meetings</b>	4 groups x ~24 participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessibility Committee</li> <li>Indigenous Committee</li> <li>Next Gen Committee</li> <li>Seniors Committee</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Sessions</b>	2 sessions x ~75 participants* 1 session x 10 participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitated, daytime, staff only</li> <li>Facilitated, Management Team</li> </ul> <i>*Library pages invited to provide input at times convenient for them.</i>
<b>Board Session</b>	1 session x 8 participants	In-person
<b>TOTALS</b>	1698 participants 1605 public responses + 93 library responses	(1259 online + 346 in-person) (Staff + Managers + Board)

We so appreciate our community engagement partners! Many thanks to:



Strathcona County's Public Engagement staff, for sharing their expertise and their generosity in hosting our community survey on *County Voice*, the County's public engagement platform.



Dialogue Partners, our Public Engagement consultants who helped us to reach out to residents all across our community.