



Community Engagement & Program Priorities Survey

Survey Results (February – March 2026)

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Purpose of This Survey

The Sylvan Lake Municipal Library conducted this community survey between **February 27 and March 13, 2026**, gathering **90 responses** to help us understand how residents use the library, what programs and services matter most, and what barriers may prevent participation.

The goal of this survey was to:

- Learn which programs, spaces, and services people value most.
- Identify scheduling, access, or awareness challenges that impact participation.
- Understand community priorities—such as early literacy, teen engagement, seniors programming, and digital literacy—to guide future planning.
- Gather suggestions and ideas directly from residents to help shape a welcoming, accessible, and community-focused library.

Your input helps ensure the library continues to evolve in ways that reflect the needs, interests, and experiences of the people it serves.

Want to talk about this report?

- If you have questions, ideas, suggestions, or concerns about what you read here, we'd love to hear from you.
- You can continue the conversation anytime by emailing sylvan.library@prl.ab.ca

Executive Summary

Overview of General Comments

The **2026 Sylvan Lake Municipal Library Community Survey** gathered **90 responses** between **February 27 and March 13, 2026**. Residents expressed strong appreciation for the library as a welcoming, community space. Many highlighted the value of programs for kids, teens, adults, and seniors, and shared positive experiences with staff and the library environment. Some respondents also identified barriers such as scheduling conflicts, limited awareness of programs, and space constraints during busy events.

Top Five Insights

1. **The Library Builds Community:**

A large majority (**89%**) said the library helps them feel connected to Sylvan Lake. Many described it as a safe, inclusive place where people of all ages can meet, learn, and feel supported.

2. **Early Literacy, Teens, and Seniors Are Key Priorities:**

If resources are limited, residents want the library to focus on Early literacy & family programs, Teen engagement, Seniors programming, Book clubs, and Digital literacy and tech help. These categories consistently ranked highest among priority choices.

3. **Scheduling Is the Main Barrier:**

The biggest obstacle to participation is schedule conflicts (55%). Others include uncertainty about whether a program is “for me,” not knowing about events, transportation challenges, and crowding during peak programs. Preferred times include weekday evenings, Sunday afternoons, and flexible scheduling.

4. **Strong Interest in Outreach & Off-Site Programs:**

While in-library programs remain the top choice (91%), many respondents also value programs in community centres, local coffee shops, and outdoor spaces. These options help reach people who may not always come to the building.

5. **Free Materials Matter—and the Community Is Willing to Help:**

86% said offering free materials is important. Among those who used them, most found them very helpful and said they made participation easier. Residents strongly support cost-saving approaches such as sponsorships, volunteer-led programs, and co-hosted events. Many are also willing to donate supplies or volunteer their time.

Interpreting the Survey

Respondent Demographics

Survey responses reflect a broad mix of residents, with strong representation from families, long-time locals, and older adults. Most respondents were between **25–44 years old (41%)** or **65+ (30%)**, and over half reported households that include **adults 18–64**, while many also include children or teens. About **41%** of respondents have lived in Sylvan Lake for more than a decade, and nearly one-quarter are relatively new (1–3 years). A small group of newcomers (<1 year) also participated, many of whom shared that the library helped them integrate into the community. Overall, the demographic profile shows an engaged cross-section of residents who use the library for learning, connection, and family activities.

Section A: Library Use & Awareness

Survey results show that the Sylvan Lake Municipal Library is widely used and well-known within the community. Nearly **80%** of respondents use the library **monthly or more often**, including **46%** who visit **weekly**. Most people engage with the library by borrowing books, attending programs, using the space to study or meet, or accessing digital resources.

Awareness of programs is strong but not universal. While many participants stay informed through **Facebook/Instagram**, the **library website**, and the **email newsletter**, a notable number indicated that they sometimes **don't know about available programs** or are **unsure whether events are meant for them**. These gaps contribute to participation barriers, alongside common scheduling conflicts.

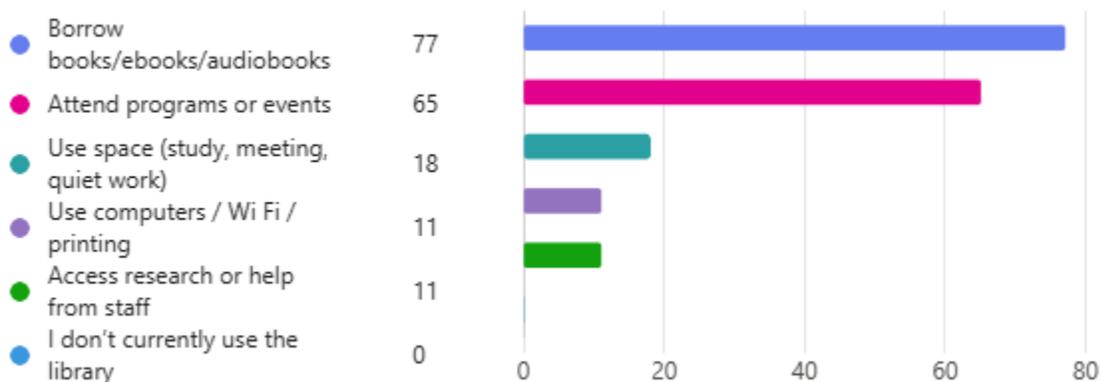
Overall, residents demonstrate a strong connection to the library and recognize its role as a resource hub. Continued emphasis on clear, consistent promotion—and making programs easy to understand at a glance—can further improve awareness and support even higher engagement across all age groups.

Section A: Survey Responses

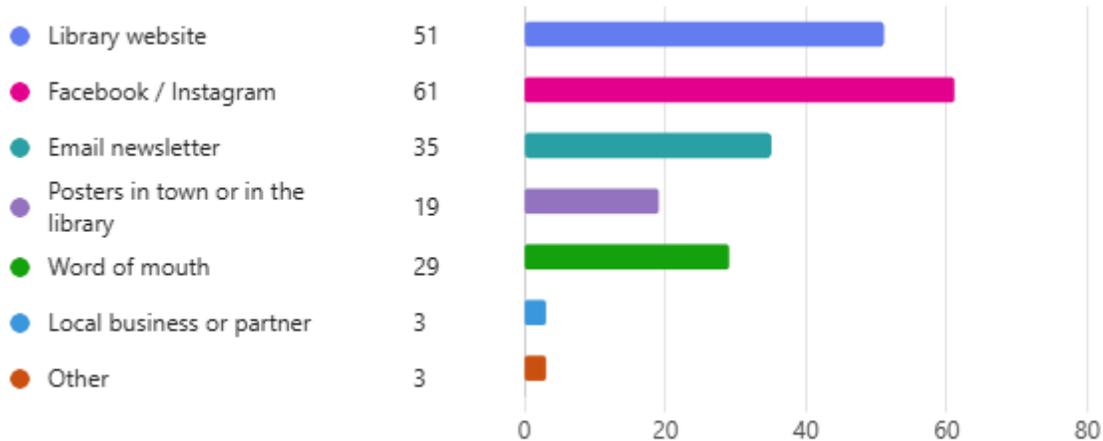
How often do you use the library (in person or online)?



How do you typically use the library?



How do you first hear about library programs?



Section B: Program Participation & Engagement

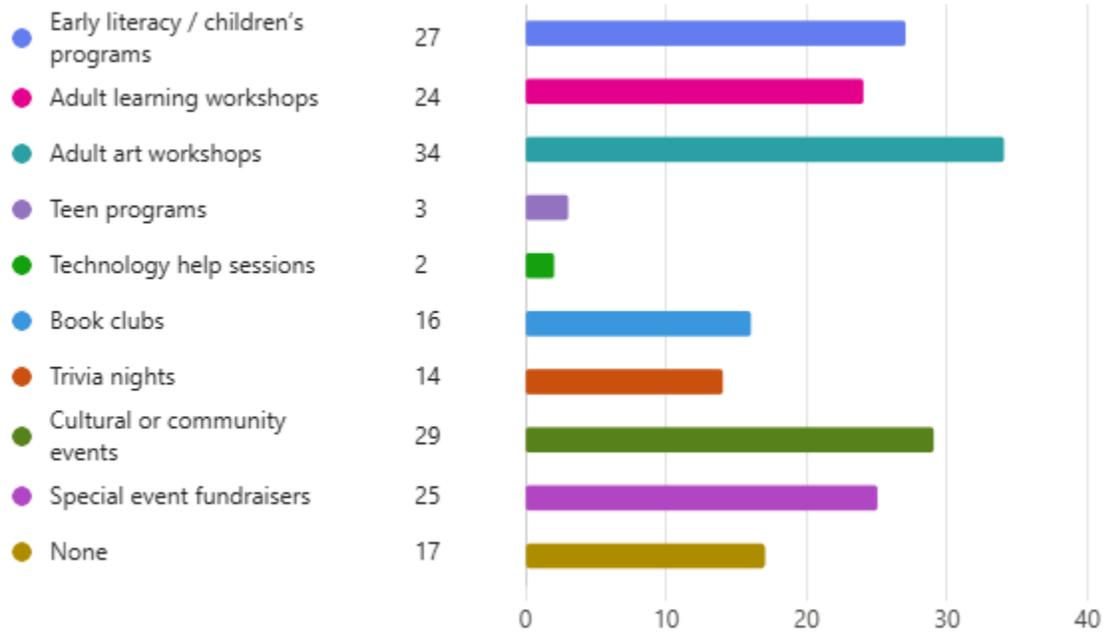
Survey responses show strong engagement with the library's programs, with many residents attending multiple events throughout the year. Popular offerings include adult art workshops, cultural and community events, early literacy programs, and book clubs—reflecting diverse interests across age groups. While some respondents attend only occasionally, a significant portion participate frequently, with many joining **3–10+ programs annually**.

Feedback highlights how programs help residents build skills, meet new people, and feel connected to the community. Outreach efforts—such as pop-ups, school visits, and co-hosted events—were also viewed positively and, for many, made it easier to participate. At the same time, participation is shaped by barriers like busy schedules, uncertainty about whether programs are suited to them, and limited space during high-demand events.

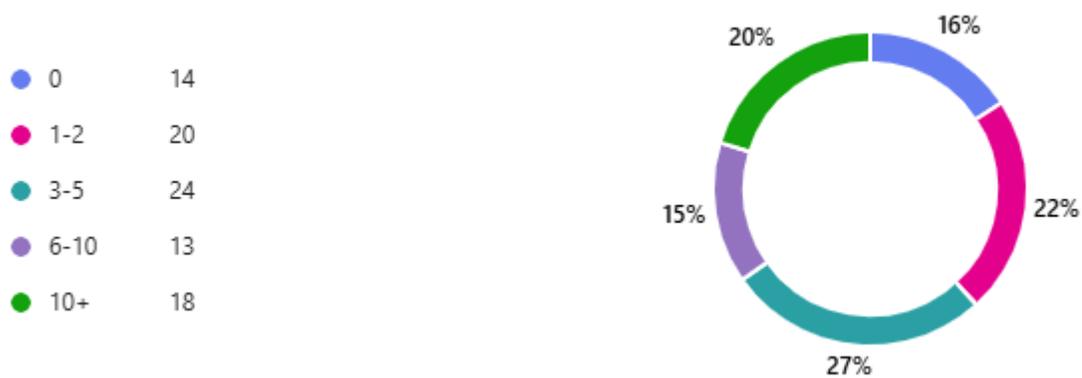
Overall, the findings underscore that library programs are a meaningful part of community life, offering learning, creativity, and social connection across all ages. Continued outreach, accessible scheduling, and varied program types will help sustain and strengthen this engagement.

Section B: Survey Responses

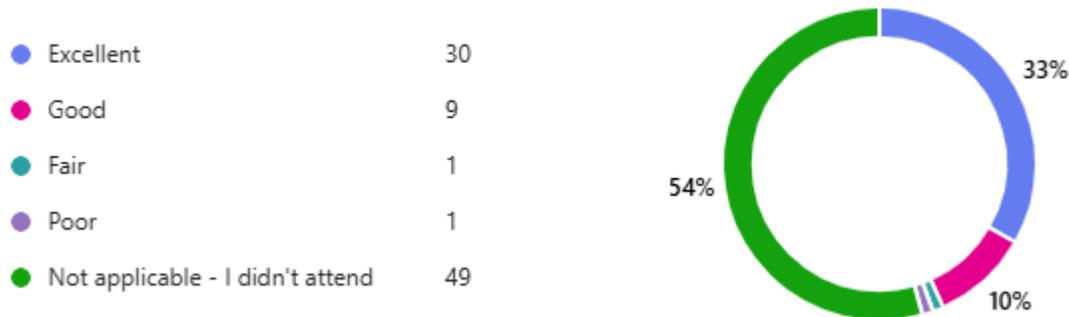
Which library programs have you attended in the past year?



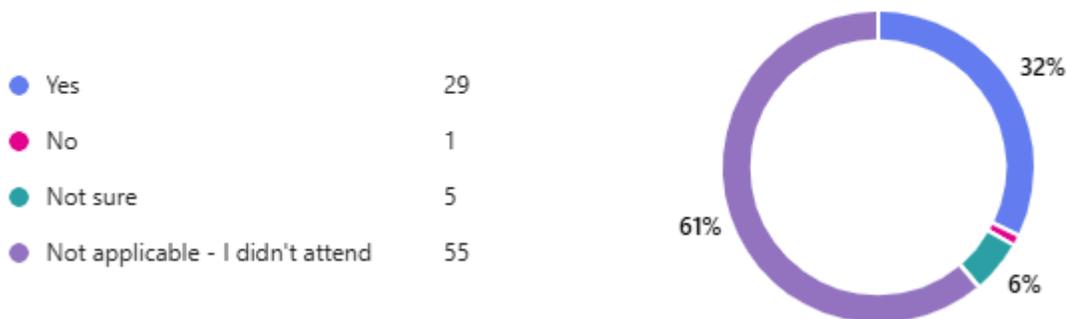
How many library programs or events have you attended in the last 12 months?



How would you rate your experience participating in an outreach event?



Did the library's outreach events make it easier for you to participate?



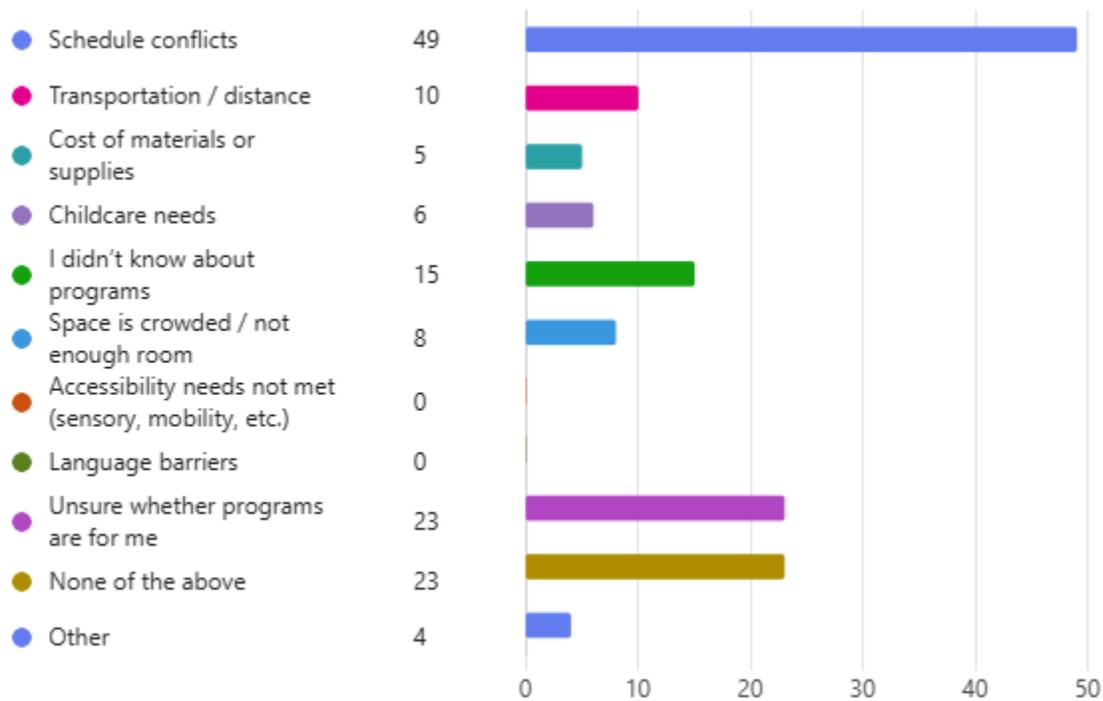
Section C: Barriers & Access

Survey responses highlight several challenges that can make it difficult for residents to fully participate in library programs and services. The most common barrier is **schedule conflicts**, with more than half of respondents noting that program times don't always align with their availability. Others reported feeling **unsure whether certain programs are meant for them**, or that they simply **weren't aware** of what was being offered. Additional access issues included **transportation or distance**, **crowded spaces during popular events**, and **childcare needs**.

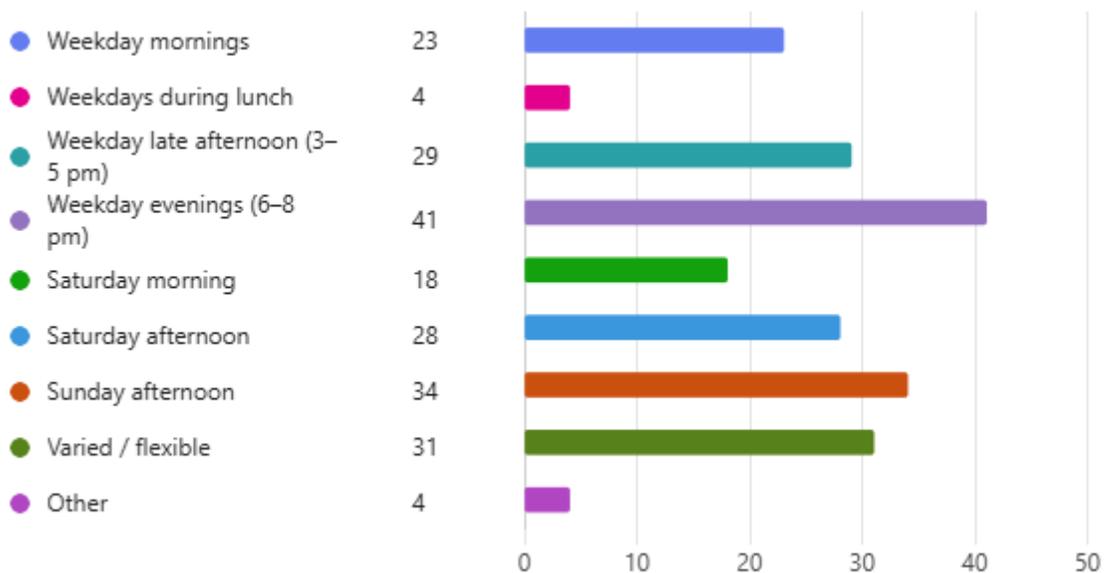
While many participants experience no barriers at all, these findings show that improving **clarity of program descriptions**, continuing **consistent promotion**, and offering a **wider range of program times and formats** (including off-site or flexible options) can help reduce obstacles. Strengthening access in these ways will support even broader community participation and ensure residents can take part in the programs that matter most to them.

Section C: Survey Responses

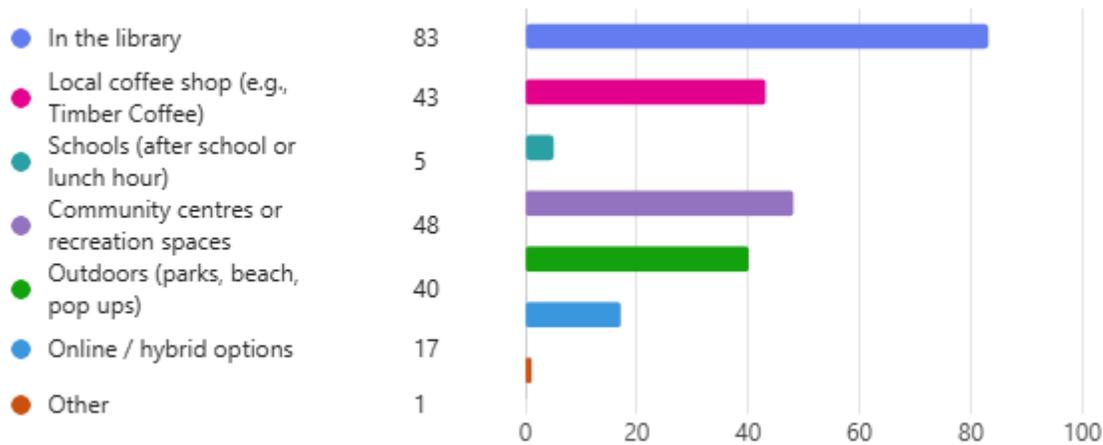
What makes it hard to attend or use library programs?



Which days/times work best for you?



Where do you prefer to attend programs?



Section D: Community Connection & Impact

Responses throughout the survey reflect the deep and positive role the Sylvan Lake Municipal Library plays in community life. Many residents described the library as a **safe, welcoming, and inclusive space** that supports people of all ages.

Comments frequently highlighted how programs, staff interactions, and shared spaces help foster **belonging, social connection, and personal growth**. For newcomers, the library often served as an early point of connection, helping them meet people and feel rooted in the community.

Participants also emphasized the library's value as a **community hub**—a place to learn, make friends, access resources, and participate in meaningful activities. Several noted that the library provides essential support, especially as other community services face strain or reductions. The free pantry, outreach efforts, and variety of programs were cited as tangible ways the library supports residents' wellbeing.

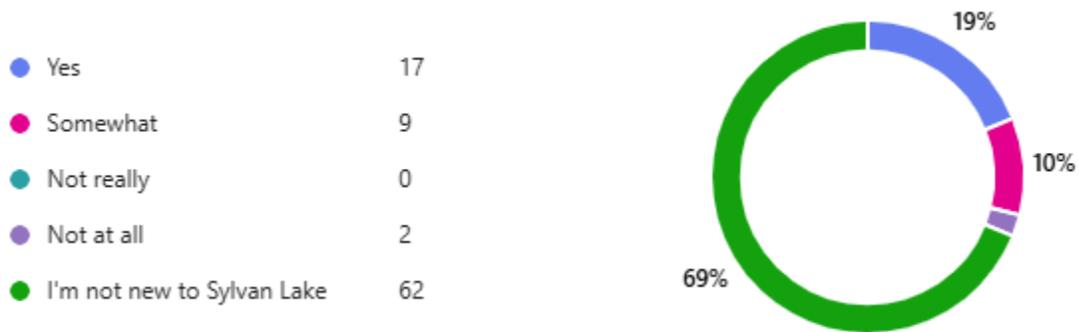
Overall, the feedback demonstrates that the library is seen not just as a building or collection of materials, but as a **vital "third space"** that strengthens community connection, supports families, and enriches the quality of life in Sylvan Lake.

Section D: Survey Responses

The library helps me feel more connected to my community.



If you are new to Sylvan Lake (moved within the past 3 years), has the library helped you integrate into the community?



For youth/parents: Have off-site youth or teen programs increased your (or your teen's) engagement with the library?



Section E: Volunteerism & Partnerships

Survey responses show strong community willingness to support the library through both volunteerism and partnerships. Many residents expressed interest in helping with programs, donating supplies, or contributing small financial sponsorships. In fact, more than half of respondents indicated they would consider **donating materials**, while large numbers were open to **volunteering** or **joining a Friends or advocacy group**.

Residents also showed clear support for partnerships as a way to strengthen programming and keep services affordable. Co-hosted events, collaborative workshops, and sponsorships from local businesses were seen as highly acceptable and effective approaches for stretching limited resources.

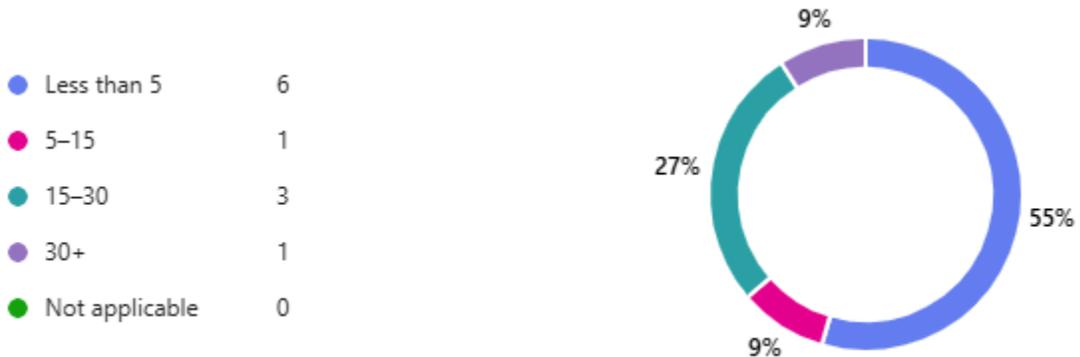
Overall, the feedback demonstrates that the community values the library enough to actively contribute to its success. With strong readiness to volunteer and broad support for partner-based programming, the library has a solid foundation for expanding capacity, increasing program variety, and deepening local connections.

Section E: Survey Responses

Have you volunteered with the library in the past year?



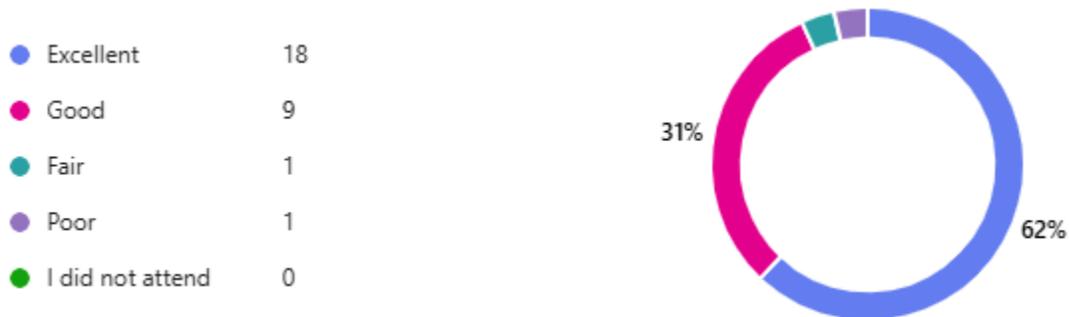
Approximately how many volunteer hours did you contribute?



Did you participate in any library-hosted or co-hosted events with partner organizations?



How would you rate the quality of co-hosted or partnership programs?



Section F: Access to Free Library Materials

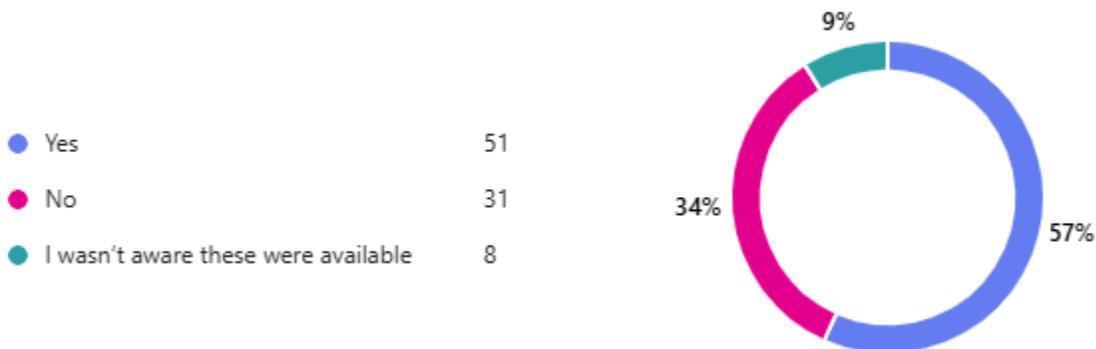
“**Free program materials**” refers to consumable or single-use supplies provided at no cost to participants during library programs or outreach activities. These materials support hands-on learning, creativity, and engagement and may include items such as craft supplies, literacy-building materials, activity sheets, workshop tools, wood-burning materials, or other consumables used during library-led sessions.

Survey results show that these free materials play an important role in making programs accessible and enjoyable for residents. A large majority of respondents indicated that free materials are a valuable community service, with many noting that they made it easier to participate—especially for families and those on limited budgets. Among those who had received them, most found the materials **very helpful**, and many said the availability of free supplies directly influenced their ability to attend.

Overall, the findings highlight that providing free materials reduces financial barriers, supports equitable access to hands-on learning, and strengthens community participation across age groups.

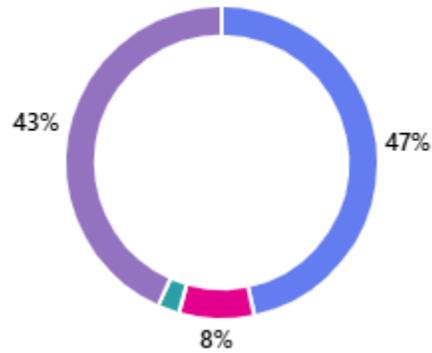
Section F: Survey Responses

Have you attended library programs that provided free materials?



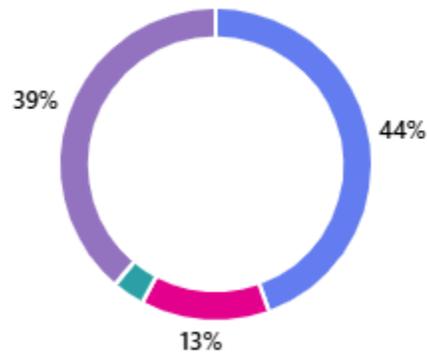
How helpful were these free materials for you or your household?

● Very helpful	42
● Somewhat helpful	7
● Not helpful	2
● Not applicable	39



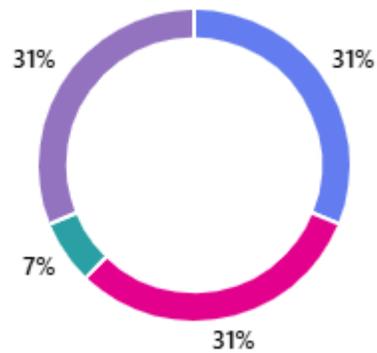
Did access to free materials make it easier for you to participate in library programs or activities?

● Yes	40
● Somewhat	12
● No	3
● Not applicable	35



If the library had not provided free materials, would you still have participated?

● Yes	28
● Maybe	28
● No	6
● Not applicable	28



Do you believe offering free materials is an important service for the community?



Section G: Budget Priorities in a Tight Year

Survey results show that when resources are limited, residents want the library to focus on the programs and services that deliver the greatest community benefit.

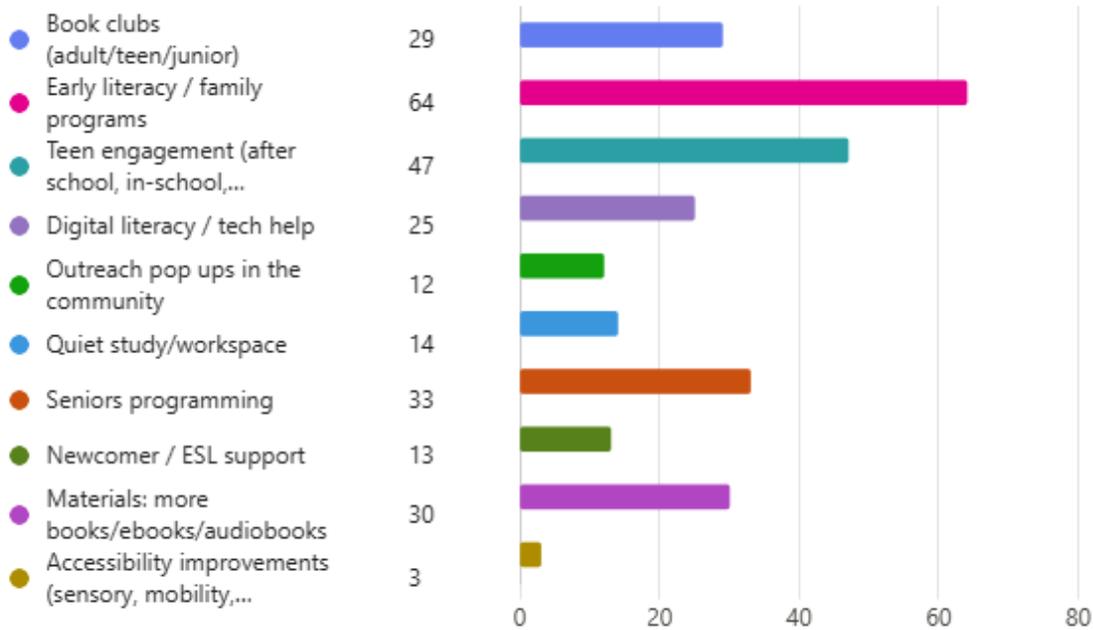
Early literacy, teen engagement, seniors programming, book clubs, and digital literacy support emerged as top priorities, reflecting strong demand across all ages. Respondents emphasized that these core offerings build essential skills, foster inclusion, and strengthen community connection.

At the same time, residents expressed openness to a variety of **cost-saving approaches** to help protect high-impact services. Sponsorships and donations, volunteer-led sessions, and co-hosted programs with partner organizations received broad support, along with supply-lite program designs. Fewer respondents supported reducing programs or hours, underscoring a desire to preserve access even during financial constraints.

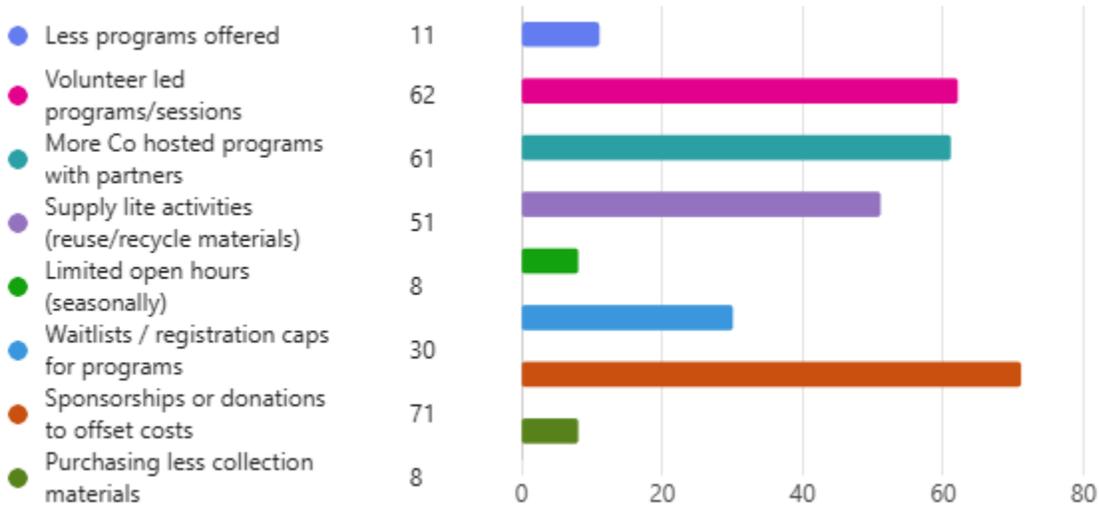
Overall, the feedback demonstrates that the community understands the realities of a tight budget but strongly values maintaining accessible, meaningful programming. Residents are willing to collaborate through partnerships and volunteerism to help ensure the library can continue delivering high-priority services.

Section G: Survey Responses

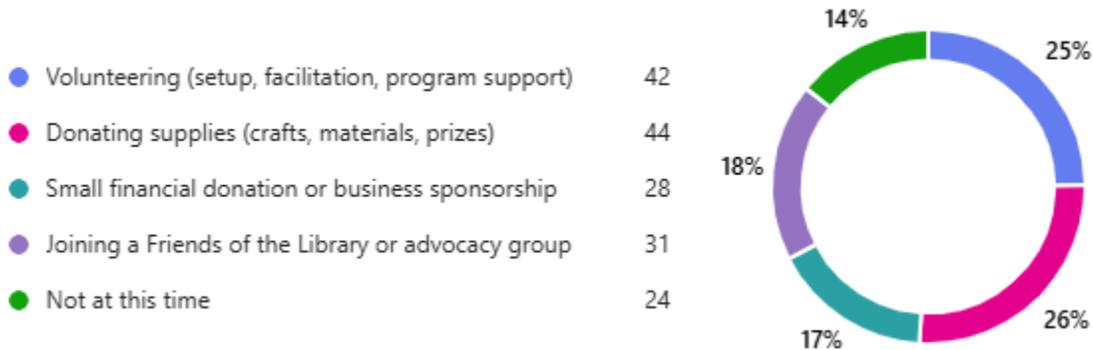
If resources are limited, which should we prioritize? (Select your top 3)



To stretch resources, which cost-saving approaches are acceptable?



Would you consider supporting the library in any of the following ways?



Section H: Open Feedback

Open-ended responses provided rich insight into how residents experience the Sylvan Lake Municipal Library and what it means to them. Many comments emphasized the library's role as a **safe, welcoming, and inclusive community space**, with numerous participants describing it as a "hub," a "third space," and a meaningful point of connection for families, newcomers, seniors, and longtime residents alike. Respondents repeatedly highlighted positive interactions with staff, the impact of book clubs and programs on building friendships, and the library's importance in fostering belonging and lifelong learning.

Several comments also pointed to the value of **outreach efforts**, the **free pantry**, and the library's ability to support vulnerable community members—especially in a time when other social services are strained. While some feedback expressed concerns or differing perspectives on programming focus, the majority of comments reflected strong appreciation for the library's inclusivity, accessibility, and community-building impact.

Overall, the open feedback portrays a library that is deeply valued, widely trusted, and central to the social fabric of Sylvan Lake—an essential resource that residents rely on not just for books and programs, but for connection, support, and a sense of belonging.

Section H: Survey Responses (unedited)

What types of programs or outreach events would you like to see more of?

- Preteen programs, teen programs, mom nights
- More science/stem based workshops for kids
- Art, homeschool events, guest author readings
- Single parents programs Adults with reading challenges program
- Support for marginalized groups. Employment support digital and tech services for all ages. Fraud literacy etc.
- More events for the kids during the week days

- Can we get more programs that involve the community. I saw last summer Blackfalds library connect with Boston Pizza to bring a story & pizza time to children. We have Panago right next to the library would they want to help out with this program? Parented program Also, what about Party Chef? Maybe activities that connect the library & community.
- Years ago the library (or maybe Friends of Library group) would walk up and down the very busy summer beach with a wagon full of books. I can't remember if they were to lend or to purchase by donation. Was like a mobile little free library. Not sure if that made much money in donations or not.
- Album listening parties; book release parties
- Enjoy art ones, resource events such as lawyer /wills
- Seniors programs
- Community literacy events We previously lived near Strathcona County and enjoyed family events in the evenings.
- For youth and early literacy for new moms
- creative/artsy type
- We love the book clubs and art programs, especially art programs that offer art varieties that are challenging to do in a home setting, like stained glass, pottery, floral arranging. Also really interested in the gardening programs.
- I think it would be cool to have a book club where we read more Young Adult literature open to all age groups.
- Creative opportunities, learning all sorts of things offered by owners of shops who sell materials such as jewelry making, candle making, and anything that may be available.
- Gardening/ nature /local history talks
- Gardening related
- Crafts, travel movies, small children activities
- More programs for moms with children under school age, after school programs for youth
- Educational and art programs
- Cooking in a healthy manner
- More book clubs for different types of genres, ex. spicy romances or rom-fantasy, fantasy, crime, etc. Especially for adults.
- Art classes for Adults/Seniors
- I think the current quantity and variety of programs offered is terrific. Continue to offer programs and events that serve all in the community.
- Composting/waste reduction/importance of disposing hazardous mtls (which may have been done already); Mental Health info/where to get info/addressing the negative stigma; Historical walking tours
- I think if the library could expand on anything, it would be to do more for the community maybe with the little free pantry or being able to offer more meals somehow? I don't know.
- LGBTQIA2S+ :safe places to meet and more supports & programs Some wildlife programs we are grateful to have access to the current programming.

Any other comments about how the library impacts you or the community?

- The kids and I really love the book clubs and art programs offered. We just have a busy schedule atm

- The librarians and the staff are pushing lgbtq ideology through their programs and banned book clubs, using public funds to favor this group above others as demonstrated in the parade and banned booked clubs and shelves for books that are highly inappropriate for you g readers to have free access to. As a publicly funded entity it offends me that they do this with public money and I refuse to step in the doors.
- Thank you all for your hard work!!!! My child and I are beyond in love with the library
- My family utilizes the library often and I already volunteer. The impact of the Library in the community is that it offers a free, safe space for all. It is vital to the community in that it creates a space where young and old can meet on common ground and socialize.
- I love taking my kids here, it's something they get to run some energy out of and they're learning to take care of books and really enjoy them
- I see our library staff overseeing young people/children in supportive ways in that safe space.
- I'm grateful for the online and Overdrive services.
- With recent cuts to various social programs that traditionally offer care to vulnerable individuals, the library is more important than ever. The library offers a multi-use safe space that gives people somewhere to spend time, this is a great benefit to the community and the town of Sylvan Lake
- I love the library, it gets me out of the house at least once a month doing something fun!
- Safe space to go for all ages, contact with people, learning new information
- This facility and its staff are essential for a growing healthy community.
- Library has been integral to feeling like a part of Sylvan Lake. My children really enjoy the events!
- The library is the community. It is an important part of our town.
- Community connection is everything
- Both as a young girl and in adulthood the library has always been a place I feel welcomed and is a great starting point to connect with any of the communities I have moved to in the past.
- Our library is a beloved resource for our family and in many ways is our touchstone into our community.
- When I first came to the community I had a really hard time acclimating. I felt like I had work, events I went to because of work and no one else. Joining library book clubs gave me something to do outside of work that I enjoyed. I also feel because of library events and activities I was able to make friends, which has helped a ton.
- I love the library. I love that my grandkids frequently use. I feel its very small for the size of Sylvan Lake. Its a appreciated space.
- It is the HUB of the community
- Unfortunately I do not utilize the library for personal use, (which I really should more) however I think it is a huge resource for our community, caregivers, youth and teens. The free pantry is also super important for those in need. The fact that it is a no questions asked is very important as the stigma around needing food or supplies makes it incredibly hard for someone to even ask for support.
- I loved the story time for preschoolers when my children were that age .(40+ years ago)
- Books are critical to shaping a young mind. Good books, that is, not trash.

- I believe it impacts the Sylvan community by fostering learning, understanding and providing people with a sense of connection. What also stands out to me is its commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion.
- It's a great place to gather! I know it makes a huge positive difference in the community.
- I really appreciate this Library! I moved here 3 1/2 years ago. It was the first place that I connected with other people. I attended Adult and Senior art classes. [The Staff] is awesome!!! Love her smile and positive outlook. I now use the Library to borrow books as I joined a bookclub! The Bookclub has helped me make new friends! The staff at the Library are so helpful and friendly. The Library is the first place in Sylvan Lake that welcomed me as a new local! Thank you!
- We have met friends at the children's programs.
- Just that libraries are so important
- The library is central to community wellbeing, connection, and information. In an age of virtual dominance, never has the role of a library been more important in providing real world supports to its patrons. I love that the Sylvan Lake Library is a supportive, inclusive space for all where learning in community is celebrated.
- Libraries are important for all communities. The amount of activities, supports, events, etc., this library provides is amazing. You are all amazing and wonderful and add so much to our community.
- The Library is a great stimulus for a sense of community, of belonging, being accepted. Workshops enrich your knowledge/skill set and expand one's interests with minimal or no cost, making it affordable to everyone who has limited financial access.
- The library does so much with what it does get and I would love to see it have more resources to do so much more. I get the feeling that this is a survey created because the library is possibly facing cuts somehow? I really hope that doesn't happen.
- Important 'third space' for the entire community

Next Steps

What We're Considering (Data-Informed Actions)

Near-term (next 3 months)

- **Schedule mix:** Retain weekday evenings for high-demand programs; keep Saturday and late-afternoon options where feasible. Consider Sunday afternoons for special event programs.
- **Program focus:** Prioritize early literacy, teens, seniors, book clubs, and digital literacy/tech help in upcoming cycles.
- **Promotion:** Standardize a “Who is this for?” line in every listing; promote consistently on Facebook/Instagram, website calendar, and email.
- **Affordability:** Continue free materials for core programs, funded via sponsorships, volunteer-led sessions, co-hosted events, and supply-lite designs. Continue with waitlists where demand exceeds capacity.

Medium-term (3–12 months)

- **Pop-up footprint:** Expand community centre, coffee shop, and outdoor pop-ups (spring–summer), while keeping most events in-library—the clear top preference.
- **Wayfinding & space:** Explore small layout tweaks or additional sessions for popular programs to reduce perceived crowding.
- **Newcomer on-ramps:** Pilot short, low-commitment “intro to the library” sessions and ESL/newcomer support touches, given positive integration feedback from newer residents.
- **Volunteer pipeline:** Create a lightweight volunteer onboarding and a donation wish-list (craft supplies, prizes) so willing residents can help immediately.