



The Power To Imagine

Free Direct Access Plan 2027-2031

Introduction:

The Free Direct Access Plan (FDAP) is a State-approved agreement between the Mid York Library System and the New York State Education Department's Division of Library Development, required under [Commissioner's Regulations §90.3\(a\) through \(d\)\(4\)](#).

The FDAP reflects Mid York Library System's commitment to ensuring equitable access to library services throughout the System service area. Through reciprocal borrowing and shared resources, residents may access materials and services at member libraries regardless of where they live within the System.

The Plan also establishes the process by which member libraries may address excessive non-resident use that creates inequities or negatively impacts services provided to their resident borrowers.

Commissioner's Regulations 90.3 (a) Definitions:

Resident borrower means an individual who resides within the boundaries of the chartered service area of a public or association or Indian library as defined in section 253 of the Education Law and who is a library cardholder at that library.

Non-resident borrower means an individual who resides outside the boundaries of the chartered service area of a public or association or Indian library as defined in section 253 of the Education Law and who is a library cardholder at that library or at another member library of the public library system who is a system cardholder.

Local income means funds supplied by local taxing agencies which may be municipalities, school districts or special districts. These funds may be from the library's sponsoring municipality or from a non-sponsoring municipality in payment for library services.

Unserved means those individuals residing in geographic areas that are within the boundaries of a public library system but outside the boundaries of the chartered service area of a library which is a member of that system.

Underserved means those individuals residing in geographic areas that are within the chartered service area of a member library and which the public library system had identified as having an inadequate level of local income to support the delivery of acceptable library services.

Free Direct Access:

1. Describe how all individuals residing within the boundaries of the system but outside a member public library's chartered service area will receive library services.

Mid York Library System is committed to ensuring equitable access to library services for all residents within the system service area, including those residing outside a member library's chartered service area.

All Mid York Library System member libraries receive state funding. In addition, many member libraries receive local funding support through municipalities, school districts, county support, and public funding approved by taxpayers throughout the region. As a result, residents throughout the Mid York Library System service area contribute to and support library services across the System. In addition, each of the three county governments (Madison, Oneida, and Herkimer) contributes funding to their respective public libraries and to the Mid York Library System, specifically or by implication to compensate those libraries for nonresident use.

All member libraries participate in reciprocal borrowing and share a common library card and integrated library system. Residents may obtain a free library card from any member library, allowing them to borrow materials and access services throughout the System, including shared digital resources, public computers, and Internet access.

As required by [Commissioner's Regulation §90.3\(a\) through \(d\)\(4\)](#), neither the Mid York Library System nor its member libraries charge individuals for library cards.

2. Describe how the system will assure that those persons living within the system boundaries in an area where a member library chooses to withdraw from the system, or where a chartered and

registered library was never a member of the system, will be served by the system.

- a) In the event that a library withdraws from the System, residents of the library's chartered service area will continue to have access to services as described in #1 above. Residents within affected areas may continue to access services through reciprocal borrowing, shared digital resources, and resource sharing among member libraries.
- b) Residents served by a newly chartered and registered library, which has not joined the System, will be entitled to access to library services as described in #1 above.

3. Describe what the system considers "serious inequities and hardships" and the criteria used by the system to make the determination.

The System considers "serious inequities and hardships" to be conditions that adversely affect resident borrowers of member libraries or significantly limit their access to library materials and services. Hardships may occur when nonresident use places a disproportionate demand on a library's resources without adequate financial support from the municipality or service area generating that use.

4. Describe what constitutes excessive out of chartered service area borrowing in the system.

For purposes of this plan, "excessive out of chartered service area borrowing" shall be either:

- a) 50% of a library's total annual circulation to persons residing outside the library's chartered service area; or
- b) 25% of a library's total annual circulation to residents of any one municipality outside the library's chartered service area.

These thresholds are intended to balance equitable access with local sustainability.

5. Analyze the library resources available to unserved and underserved population residing within the system's boundaries. Such analysis should include, but should not be limited to:

a. Describe the unserved and the underserved populations within the system.

The 2020 Census population of the Mid York Library System's three-county service area is 361,180. Of that total, 284,936 residents live within a member library's chartered service area. The remaining 76,244 residents reside outside a chartered service area and are therefore considered unserved. However, the county funding described in #1 above means that all residents of the System service area are served by contract.

Several municipalities and school districts that include unserved residents provide financial support to local libraries that offer services to those residents. Because all residents have access to library services through member libraries and county-supported resource sharing, Mid York does not identify any residents as functionally unserved.

The System identifies underserved libraries and communities by evaluating the adequacy of local support based on a member library's ability to:

1. Meet the Minimum Public Library Standards established by the Commissioner's Regulations;
2. Fulfill its IT Costing Model payments to the System; and
3. Contribute to the shared downloadable e-book and audiobook collection.

Libraries unable to meet these criteria may be identified as having insufficient local funding to support the delivery of acceptable library services.

b. Describe any deficiencies in library resources currently available to individuals residing within the system's boundaries.

The System evaluates library resources based on a library's ability to provide consistent, equitable, and sustainable service to its community. Due to the rural nature of the region and varying levels of local funding, access to library services is not uniform across the System.

Deficiencies in library resources may include limited staffing, reduced open hours, aging technology, inadequate broadband access, limited collections and programming support, and facility or accessibility challenges.

These challenges may disproportionately affect small and rural libraries with limited local funding capacity.

c. Describe the actions the system will take to expand the availability of library services to unserved and underserved individuals residing within the boundaries of the system.

The System encourages and supports member libraries in exploring ways to strengthen and sustain library service for unserved and underserved populations. This may include expanding chartered service areas, pursuing more stable funding models (school or special district), seeking additional municipal or county support for nonresident use, and supporting local funding increases through advocacy and budget initiatives.

d. Provide a timetable for such actions.

Supporting member libraries in exploring district library models and advocating for sustainable funding are ongoing efforts of the Mid York Library System, provided through consultations, workshops, and regular communication with member libraries.

e. Identify who will be responsible for carrying out these actions.

The System's Executive Director and Library Services Coordinator will be responsible for carrying out the actions related to becoming district libraries and advocating for improved funding.

6. Describe the conditions under which modifications to the free direct access plan can be made without the prior approval of the Commissioner of Education AND with the prior approval of the Commissioner of Education.

Certain modifications to the plan for unrestricted direct access may be made with the approval of the majority of member libraries and without prior approval from the Commissioner of Education.

1. Member libraries that experience excessive nonresident borrowing as defined in #4 above may, upon appropriate public notice, place restrictions on the loan of library resources. Such restrictions are limited to nonprint materials and equipment, and printed materials less than one year from the acquisition date, that were purchased with local tax funds.

2. Member libraries may place restrictions on attendance at library programs, provided those programs are supported entirely with local tax funds.

Additional restrictions and/or modifications may be requested by individual libraries and must be approved by a majority of the member libraries and by the System Board of Trustees before transmission to the Commissioner of Education for approval. The request for restrictions must include the following, in a form acceptable to the Division of Library Development:

- a) Documentation showing the inequities and hardships affecting resident borrowers of the library making the request;
- b) Description of the proposed restrictions/modifications (may not include charging for services);
- c) Description of the anticipated impact from implementation of modifications;
- d) Specific time period for which modifications will be implemented (renewals are required to extend beyond specified end date);
- e) System recommendations for addressing the underlying problem(s).

7. Describe how the system will assure that member libraries are complying with the system free direct access plan approved by a majority of member libraries.

Following approval of the Plan by the member libraries, the System Board of Trustees, and the Commissioner of Education, the Plan will be distributed to all member libraries along with a memorandum explaining that the Plan is required under Commissioner's Regulations, has been approved by a majority of member libraries, and must be followed as a condition of System membership.

In the unlikely event that a member library fails to comply with the Plan, the System will work collaboratively with the library to bring it into compliance. If those efforts are unsuccessful, the library may be subject to review its System services and membership status, including participation in consulting services, the integrated library system, interlibrary loan, and delivery services.