



Essex County Library

Service Delivery Promise

The Essex County Library (ECL) is the community's connection to information resources and services for the residents living in the 7 local municipalities within the County of Essex.

ECL is governed by the Essex County Library Board and its Mission is to welcome you to a world of discovery, creativity and lifelong learning through accessible resources, programs, and innovative services.

It is the vision of the Essex County Library to provide welcoming spaces for its membership where:

- Knowledgeable staff are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the community
- Innovative ideas and cutting-edge technology are embraced
- Engaging programs and current comprehensive collections are created and
- Creative partnerships encourage social interaction and cultural vitality.

Essex County Library



Level of Service Statement

ECL is connecting residents to resources through our community branch locations, 24/7 online service centre, and outreach, partnerships, and programming services:

Town of Amherstburg	Amherstburg Branch, Amherstburg, Ontario
Town of Essex	Essex Branch, Essex, Ontario Harrow Branch, Harrow, Ontario McGregor Branch, McGregor, Ontario
Town of Kingsville	Cottam Branch, Cottam, Ontario Highline Branch, Kingsville, Ontario Ruthven Branch, Ruthven, Ontario
Town of Lakeshore	Comber Branch, Comber, Ontario Toldo Foundation Branch, Emeryville, Ontario Libro Centre Branch, Woodslee, Ontario
Town of LaSalle	William (Bill) Varga Branch, LaSalle, Ontario
Municipality of Leamington	Leamington Branch, Leamington, Ontario
Town of Tecumseh	Cada Branch, Tecumseh, Ontario
24/7 online service	www.essexcountylibrary.ca

ECL provides direct access to, and staffing support for, its collections, programs, and services. The 24/7 online service strengthens the library's collections and resources by providing access to its expanding digital content of eBooks, eMagazines and Databases, and supporting membership through self-service options.

2021 Achievements and Challenges

ECL's 2021 vision planned for the following service and project goals:

- Capital projects to achieve Board visions. Projects included: update/enhance the library's website, increase Open+ service to the Harrow location, minor renovation of the Harrow site, installation of security gates/ people counters at 2 site locations.
- Transition of operational software systems (Human Resources Information System (HRIS) project, website updates)
- Assessment of service delivery methods and options
- Assessment of ongoing operational cost due to COVID-19

The ECL was able to complete most of its objectives for the 2021 year. However, due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the provincial and local public health board regulations and restrictions, adjustments to service and service delivery were made.

Staffing

For most of the 2021 year, the ECL maintained the structure of operating with 8 small distinct teams. Members within each team would support the service delivery from one site location per municipality. As local health conditions changed, team's locations and sizes were adjusted.

Staff levels remain consistent as in the previous year for both the Union and Administrative staff. Throughout the 2021 year the ECL experienced several staffing vacancies mainly due to staff retirements. Those positions that were essential for public service were filled; all other positions remained vacant. All non-union Student Desk Clerk positions remained vacant through 2021; these positions will be filled as branch service levels increase, and when the local COVID-19 case count exposures at local high schools decrease.

Branch Services

ECL restructured their traditional system-wide staffing model into 8 working teams. This model reduces the risk of virus transmissions and potential exposure of multiple staff and limits the number of temporary branch

closures. This model will hopefully limit required testing, contact tracing and enhanced site cleaning.

This model requires service flexibility if a team cannot adequately provide for service. Flexibility may require a site to return to curbside pickup service, mailing service, or to limit public operating hours as needed.

This model will continue to be utilized as additional branches are opened for public access. ECL will continue to adjust its staffing model in reaction to the health of the community, the demands for service and availability of staff to support service needs.

The following services were maintained throughout the 2021 year:

- 60 public service hours per week at one site within each municipality
- Weekly hours were adjusted to:
 - 9A - 8P Monday thru Thursday
 - 9A - 5P Friday and Saturday
- Curbside service – when required due to temporary closures of sites (December 2020 - July 2021)
- Direct to home mailing for all Essex County Library members, regardless of location or proximity to a library branch
- Phone service – staff available to assist with phone inquiries and resource support
- Online digital content and information services
- Online programming via social media sites and virtual meeting platforms
- Programming kits – for home use

As of July 26th, 2021, the ECL opened the 7 main site locations for public access, one site per municipality. Each site providing public access to in-branch resources, WIFI and public computers, printing, and staff support.

Reopening Branch Services

As Covid-19 restrictions and regulations changed, ECL continued to expand access to branch services. The Libro Branch (Woodslee) site was opened for public service in August 2021, for its regularly scheduled 17 hours of public service.

Enhanced Community Services

The ECL previously committed funding to develop specific branches for technology upgrades to support an Enhanced Community Service Model. The following branches were renovated and scheduled to be opened:

- McGregor Centre – the McGregor branch was opened for public service on October 26, 2021. This site will be ready for Enhanced Community Service Access in mid December.
- Harrow Centre – The Harrow branch was renovated and will be opened for public service late November/ Early December and will be ready for Enhance Community Service Access in late January 2022.

The Enhanced Community Service locations will each provide 20 hours of staffing service per week and will provide an additional 29 hours of Enhanced Community Access service, for a total of 49 hours of access per branch per week.

Public and Community Services

The following services were maintained to support community access to resources and programming:

Online Services

ECL continued to cease all in-person programming and outreach services. Instead, ECL adjusted programming to an online platform providing services such as virtual story times, virtual site tours, visual arts spotlights, virtual book clubs, podcasts, online guest speakers and presenters for planned viewing through the ECL social media accounts.

Digital Access Card

ECL maintained a Digital Access Card for community residents to create a virtual library card so they could take advantage of all the eResources and eServices available through our 24/7 web portal.

Direct to Home Mail Delivery

ECL maintained mail delivery service for community members who have limited access to a library branch or cannot attend a branch for curbside pickup. Mailing provides patrons with a direct-to-home delivery of their resources, with return postage for an easy return option. The cost impact for mailing was relatively inexpensive as Ontario public libraries have access to a special library delivery rate through the Canada Postal Services. The

average package of 2-3 items has an estimated mailing cost of \$2.10 (including return postage).

Fees and Fines Amnesty

ECL continued to suspend all fees and fines as the Board recognized a patron's limited ability to return items, the delay for items to be processed due to material being cleaned and quarantined, and the general economic impacts on our community due to loss of employment due to COVID-19.

Staff Training

Staff training focused on the following areas:

- Ontario Library Association (OLA) Super Conference – virtual programs. OLA SuperConference was offered as a “live web-based event” or recorded session programs. Due to the virtual nature of the event, all ECL employee were able to attend sessions of their choosing.
- Crisis Intervention Programs – training to assist with defusing confrontational issues and interactions, this training was offered to all front-line employees.
- Truth and Reconciliation Training – The Essex County Library Board registered for training through “the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation” structure by the Indigenous University in Saskatchewan.

Capital Projects

Enhanced Community Services – Technology installations and branch renovations to support the Enhanced Community Service model, were completed at the McGregor and Harrow branch locations.

Security Gate/ People Counters – 2 gates were purchased and will be installed by year end at the Kingsville and LaSalle site location. This technology will be beneficial to support the following:

- Visual/ Auditory reminders to patrons who use self-service technology to check that all resources are scanned prior to leaving the facility
- Provide accurate daily counts of patron facility use.

Transition Services

HRIS project – in partnership with the County of Essex, ECL is participating in a migration of data from the current payroll and HR software systems to the TELUS combined VIP software solution. Migration of data and development of the new software solution will continue until mid-2022. This

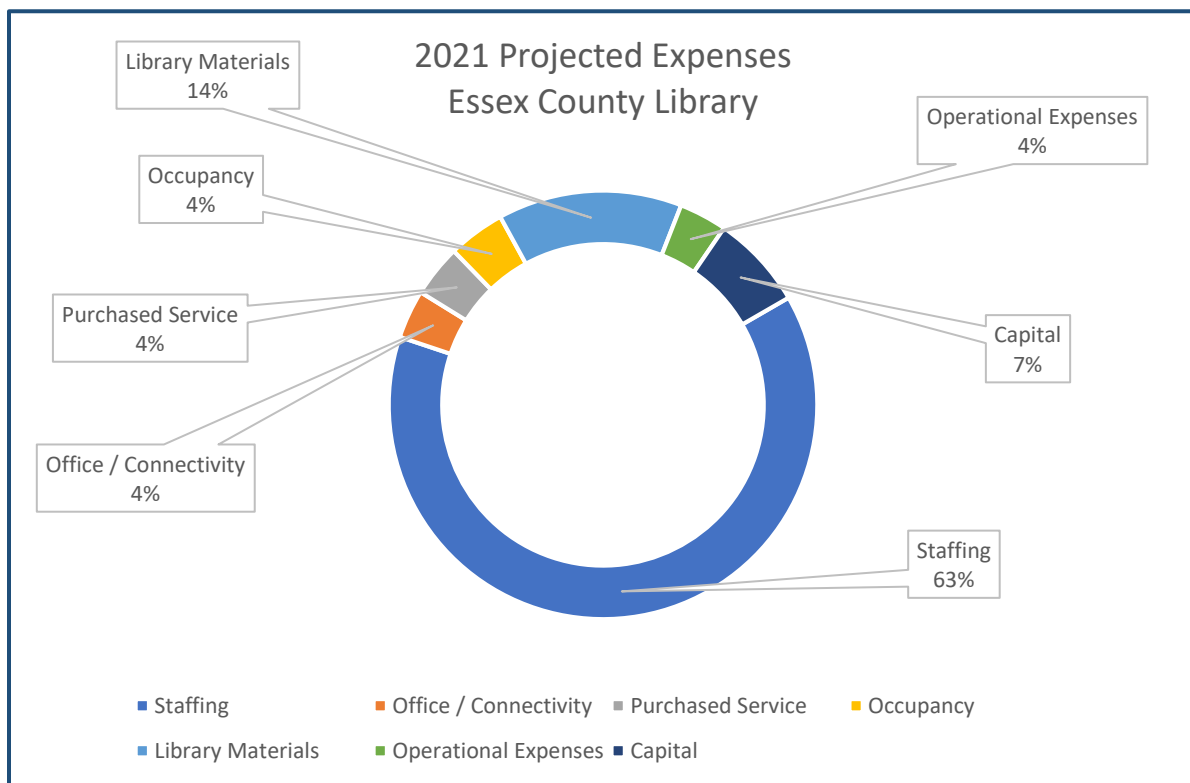
project demands a significant amount of staffing time and efforts, as such other projects and deliverables may be adjusted or delayed.

Web Portal upgrades – due to staffing changes and project demand the ECL web portal upgrade project was delayed until 2022.

Collection Services

Due to COVID-19, ECL reallocated collections funding to support the purchase of additional online resources and services. Spending for intangible collections increased to provide patrons access to online and virtual resources. Tangible collection spending and invoicing was impacted by supply chain delays in material availability and shipping.

The graph below illustrates Essex County Library’s key areas of spending for ECL for this past year - projected to December 31, 2021.



Opportunities and Challenges Facing ECL in 2022

The COVID-19 pandemic created an environment where ECL has had to restructure its traditional systems, programs, and services. It encouraged us

to be creative in how we continue to engage and interact with patrons as in-person programming for children, and to investigate new or different ways to deliver services. And, it has allowed us the opportunity to adopt new and supportive technology.

ECL approaches this change as both a challenge and an opportunity to investigate alternate service models, and to develop a balance that supports old traditions and new services. During the 2022 year, ECL's focus will be on returning a full range of information and programs through a restructured service model.

Cost of Operations

The return of libraries for public access in a healthy and safe manner will require maintaining an increase in cleaning and upfitting costs for each branch site. All open branches will require the installation of safety equipment and additional cleaning; this will have an ongoing impact on operational cost. The ECL Board will continue to monitor how to deliver service that is respectful of budget constraints.

Proposed 2022 Budget Plan

On September 29, 2021 – The Essex County Library Board reviewed the 2022 service objectives and project recommendations. The Board approved in theory for the CEO/ Chief Librarian to proceed with developing the 2022 budget estimates for their approval.

On October 20, 2021, the CEO/Chief Librarian met with the County of Essex (COE) Finance department to review the Board's budget estimates. The County Finance department requested the Board prepare budget estimates that realistically reflect the adjustments to the organization's operations due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It supports a slight adjustment to the structure of the organization and recommends reductions that would minimize the impact to service delivery.

On October 27, 2021, the ECL Board approved the 2022 Budget estimates for submission to Essex County Council (#21/66).

The proposed 2022 Budget provides for the following:

Staffing Wages and Benefits

The 2022 budget includes a contractual obligation increase of 1.4% from the previous year's wage allotment. The proposal is conservative in it estimates as it does not include adjustments for anticipated service implementation

for: programming and outreach, meetings attendance, Sunday service hours, or pay equity enhancements.

Information Services

Information Services and Collections are the core service of a public library. Public Libraries aim to provide a barrier-free access to information that supports educational and recreational interests of its residents. Resource collections should be contemporary, current, and relevant to support the broad interests of our residents. In a contemporary library, the delivery of a curated collection is through a variety of mediums such as traditional print/ hard copy materials (tangible collections) that are accessible to the public through our bricks and mortar facilities, whereas the broad and expanding electronic resources are accessible through the 24/7 web portal/ website.

Costs associated with collection development are influenced by the pricing of resources, the pricing for content licensing, the publishers'/ distributors' cost for access (platform cost), fluctuation of the US exchange rate, and the available discount rates from the distributors.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECL has observed an increased use of online resources and services. The 2022 budget reflects supporting a collection that is accessible to all users, reflects the demand for online resources and services, and our commitment to support traditional resource needs. The 2022 budget proposes an increase in funding to support online and electronic resources, and status quo funding for the tangible items. This budget allows ECL to continue to meet user demands for electronic resources and maintain the quality of the tangible resources collection.

Programming and Outreach

The ECL Board acknowledged in the previous budget a goal to expand community connections through partnerships and programming. The Board understands that programs and outreach services provide a venue to connect with our patrons, partners, and community members. Programming and outreach services often remove barriers that impact our communities from accessing our collections.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ECL had to restrict programming and outreach services and adjust to online and virtual events. As we continue to return to public services, in-person programming and outreach services will be essential for our service delivery. The Essex County Library will redirect the 12 hours of traditional circulation and desk attendance at small branch locations, to focus on providing community outreach and programming that

will meet the specific needs of the local communities. Staffing hours will be directed to provide programming such as storytime, parent and tot programs, adult programs, book clubs, class visit to local school, programming for senior adults (in home service), homework help, and Makerspace programs. This redirection of time is to provide quality service to meet local community needs.

Branches Services

As ECL transitions from the restriction of COVID-19 to a new service model, the following adjustments have been implemented:

Designated Main Branch Sites

One branch per municipality has been designated as a “main” service branch. Each of these branches will operate 60 hours per week, to provide a consistent level of service in all local municipal locations.

Enhanced Community Access Locations

The McGregor Centre and Harrow Centre branches will provide 20 hours of staff supported service and 29 hours of community access services, for a total of 49 hours per week per branch.

Libro Centre – Woodslee

The 2022 budget anticipates renovating the Lakeshore- Libro Centre (Woodslee) to adopt the Enhanced Community Access Service model. Renovations will include the installation of service and security equipment and technology to support community members having access to the facility outside of the scheduled 20 hours of staffed service.

Small branches transforming into Community Spaces

The proposed budget provides opportunity for small branch locations to be renovated and refreshed to create a small community space model. During the August 25, 2021, ECLB meeting, the Board discussed and approved the motion to approach the local communities of Lakeshore and Kingsville to consider a shared project of renovating and refreshing the small branch locations. The Board is asking local communities to commit to renovating their facilities to meet AODA requirements and to improve the overall appearance of the space. The Library Board would then commit reserve funding to update the furnishing and equipment to support a shared community space. The Board would reshape the collections within each space, install and maintain technology to support community access and use

of the space for small meetings and community programming, and restructure service to focus on programming and outreach opportunities.

The Board further supported the motion, if local communities did not agree to support a renovation of their space, the library would adjust its service delivery to support a Programming and Outreach model whereby it would adjust its services to the following:

- Programming and outreach within the local community
- Online access to resources and services
- Direct-to-home mailing
- Partnership with local service groups and community organizations
- Investigate book mobile delivery services
- Investigate community transportation to local neighbouring library facility

24/7 Online Website/Portal

The proposed budget recognizes the value of an appealing and easily accessible website/portal. As the demand for eResources and eServices increase, patrons require access through a site that is easy to navigate, supports self-service options and meets AODA requirements. ECL's web presence should connect to our ILS system, and content should be easy to maintain and push out through our social media and communication avenues. The one-time cost to install a new website, or webservice modules, would be supported through the ECL Capital Reserves, and annual license fees for the first year would be supported through the ECL Enhanced Services Reserve; therefore, the enhancements for web services will not impact the 2022 operating budget.

Transitional Services

The 2021 Budget supported the implementation of a new payroll and integrated HR software system. During the 2022 year the ECL will maintain the license for its current payroll and HR systems to support daily operations, and licensing for the new HRIS system as information is migrated and set up for use. The current budget supports the licencing for both systems. The final-year licencing cost for the new HRIS system will be supported through the County of Essex Reserves.

Further reserve funding is provided through the County of Essex to support the cost of staffing over time to complete the software migration process and maintain their regular duties and responsibilities.

Staff Support and Training

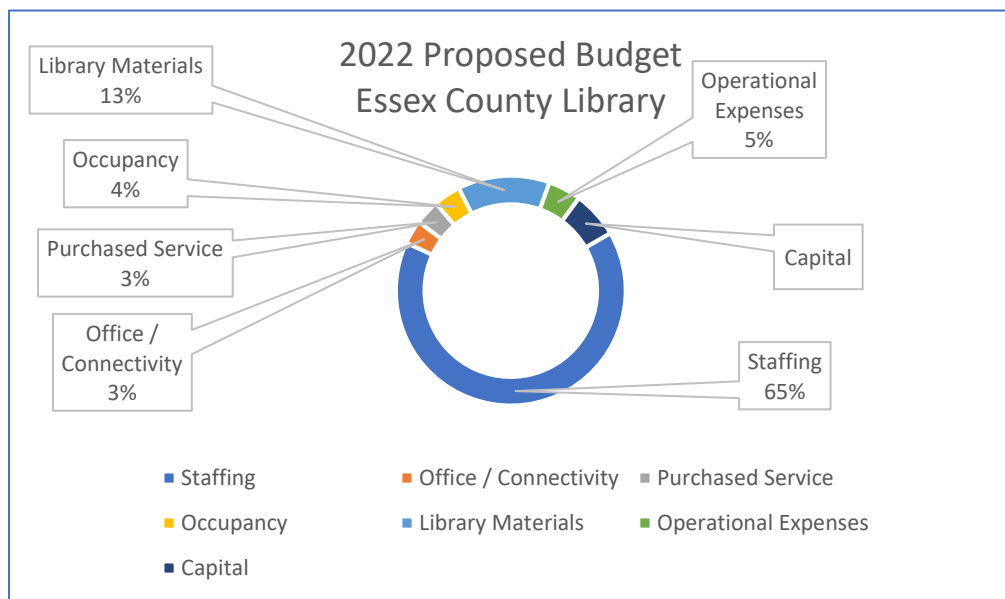
Continuous training is necessary to support an engaged workforce. The 2022 budget will focus to support technology and digital information literacy skills development, as well as rescheduling necessary Health and Safety training.

Contractual Services

ECL continues to use third-party contracts for janitorial services at branch locations. In 2022, janitorial contract services will be required for all site locations. Due to COVID-19, increased cleaning is required at all sites open to public service. Each site will maintain its regular cleaning services, plus additional daily cleaning of washrooms, and sanitization of high-touch services.

ECL also contracts services for electrical, plumbing and facility maintenance issues that are beyond basic repairs. As ECL operates from several aging facilities, the cost for contracted services continues to increase.

The graph below shows the key areas of proposed 2022 Budget spending.



Overall, the 2022 Budget for ECL, net of recoveries, totals \$6,026,200 (2.66% increase over the 2021 Budget of \$5,869,850).