

# NEKLS

## What we do

As a regional library system, the Northeast Kansas Library System (NEKLS) is called by state statute (K.S.A. 75-2547) to contribute to the provision of library services to all citizens of the state.

To understand the purpose of a regional system like NEKLS, one first needs to understand that libraries are essential to the communities they serve.

### Libraries . . .

- ✓ Encourage patrons of all ages to achieve **literacy**: reading skills, information and digital literacy, financial literacy, health literacy, etc. This is accomplished through library-sponsored programs and learning resources and broad library collections.
- ✓ Provide programs that **enrich lives and build community**. Summer reading, story times, after-school STEAM programs, book clubs, trivia nights, movie nights, etc.
- ✓ Curate **special collections** that encourage exploration and innovation. Some libraries have maker spaces where patrons engage in hands-on experiences to learn new skills and create. Some libraries circulate “things” such as tools, seeds, binoculars, fishing poles, etc.
- ✓ Boost **local economies**. Libraries promote entrepreneurship, support small businesses, and assist individuals with career development. Here, patrons can learn new job skills, prepare a resume, apply for jobs, hold a meeting with a client, create a business plan, etc. Also, businesses recognize the value of having a public library in the community where their employees live and work.
- ✓ **Preserve local history**. Some libraries participate in projects to digitize photographs and other artifacts, record oral histories, and promote genealogical research.
- ✓ Offer **educational resources** and opportunities to everyone. Here, patrons explore a new hobby, research a class project, complete a class or training, plan a vacation, etc. The library might be the only free source of access to the internet.
- ✓ Libraries provide access to **entertainment**. Here, patrons can find a good book or check out a new movie.

**Regional library systems work to make libraries stronger.** In fact, NEKLS endeavors to inspire and empower member libraries to engage, educate and add value to their communities. We accomplish this mission in several ways . . .

- ✓ **Consulting services** that help library directors and library boards to work through challenges and arrive at good solutions. The goal is to foster strong governance of the library – e.g. sound policies, responsible budget practices, proper personnel practices, and legal compliance.

- ✓ Diverse **continuing education and training opportunities** that strengthen the knowledge and skills of library staff and library boards to better serve the community. For various reasons, many libraries cannot offer training opportunities to staff. NEKLS fills this gap through training and education opportunities provided by NEKLS staff or an outside expert. NEKLS partners with other Kansas regional systems on some training opportunities. In addition, NEKLS provides deeper training to new library directors and orientation sessions for new board members.
- ✓ Ongoing development and support for an online **learning management system** that supports continuing education and training for library staff and boards.
- ✓ Technical assistance to library staff and financial support that provides more cost-effective **digital content** to patrons – ebooks, audiobooks, videos, periodicals, etc.
- ✓ Coordinating the **Next shared catalog**, which allows participating libraries to share collections.
- ✓ Coordinating **statewide courier service**, ensuring patrons receive materials from other libraries in a timely manner. The sharing of materials affords patrons access to a broader selection of information and saves libraries from having to purchase every item that patrons may seek.
- ✓ **Impactful grants** (accounting for over 44% of 2024 budgeted expenses). NEKLS projects to provide over \$1.3 million spread throughout our 14 county region in the form of continuing education grants, courier subsidies, digital content, library development grants to public libraries, competitive grants, including school library grants and literacy grants, and other subsidies.
- ✓ Other programs and services, including E-Rate assistance and website hosting.

## How we are funded

All Kansans are taxed for library service. Member public libraries levy taxes from within their legal taxing area (city, township, district or county). NEKLS, as a special taxing district, collects an ad valorem tax and other taxes (e.g. motor vehicle) from those areas of the region *not* taxed by a local public library. NEKLS uses these funds judiciously to provide the services, resources and grants described above.

As a result, member libraries and NEKLS effectively partner to ensure all Kansans in the 14-county service area enjoy access to strong library services.

The proposed NEKLS budget for 2024 does not exceed the revenue neutral rate. However, increases in expenses – including courier subsidy to libraries, materials, utilities, fuel, grants to member libraries, and wages – will require the budget to grow 5.5%. This increase will be funded through a combination of ad valorem, motor vehicle and other taxes as well as a transfer from the System’s Capital Improvement Fund.

**1.291 mills** 2023 mill levy

**1.160 mills** 2024 Revenue Neutral Rate (the mill levy rate necessary in 2024 to generate the same amount as the 2023 ad valorem tax revenue)

**1.138 mills** Proposed mill levy rate for 2024