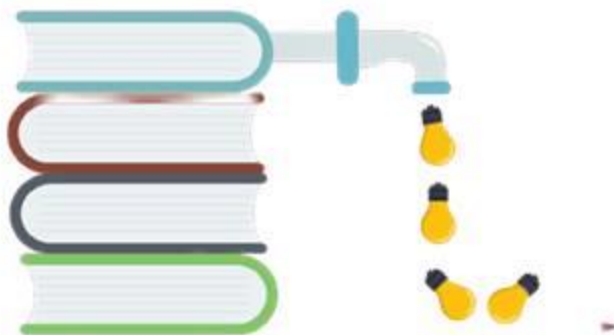


Sargent Township Library

Community Needs Response Plan 2023 - 2028



Mission Statement

The Sargent Township Library serves as an information center for all individuals in the Sargent area. We seek to inspire life-long learning, and provide research tools to serve and strengthen our community and ignite imaginations.

Community Profile

The Township of Sargent has a population of 627 citizens. The median age of our area is 50.2 years. Our largest population group is those aged 60-64. Ethnically, only 6% of the population reports being a different race than white. 95% of the population range 25 and over has at least a high school diploma. 17% have a bachelor's degree or higher. The Average household income is \$56,402 and the Median household income is \$50,288 - both below the state average/median. 19.07% of the population is below the poverty line. The mean travel time to work is 19.6 minutes.

Committee Members

Rhonda Pointer, Emily Jandreau, Jessica Fenske, Kina Stefka, Shirley Fiene, Gayle Mattox

Assessment of Community Needs

From July 25 – August 7, our committee did a survey of the Sargent area asking the following questions:

- How satisfied are you with living in Sargent?
- What do you like most about living in Sargent?
- What do you like least about living in Sargent?
- How would you categorize the quality of life in Sargent?
- Over the last 5 years, do you believe Sargent's quality of life has improved?
- What would you say is the most critical issue facing Sargent today?

This was an online survey. We advertised this survey by putting on Facebook, by personally inviting our friends and neighbors, and handing out flyers with a QR code to the survey. The city was kind enough to send out these invitations with a QR code in their monthly electric bill. We received 38 responses.

These are the results:

Of all the respondents, 74% are satisfied to very satisfied living in Sargent, 21% are indifferent, and 5% are dissatisfied.

Some of the comments on what they like most are:

Nice and caring people, quiet town, small town, family and friends, feel safe, great grocery store, small town values.

Some of the comments on what they liked least are:

High water problems, flooding of basements, lack of housing, small town gossip, limited opportunities, dead end town, not enough activities, mosquitos, drama, fighting instead of working together.

In the survey results, 69% believe the quality of life in Sargent is great to excellent, 26% believe the quality of life is average, 5% believe it is poor or awful.

Over the past 5 years, 55% believe the quality of life has stayed the same, 24% believe the quality of life has gone down, 21% believe that the quality of life in Sargent has improved.

Some comments on the most critical issue facing Sargent today:

Lack of new businesses, poor drinking water quality, lack of housing, community unity, water drainage, opportunities for kids, declining population, bringing new people in who add value, finding employees.

Township of Sargent

Strengths	Weaknesses
Nice, caring people	Lack of new business
Small, quiet town	Poor drinking water quality
Family & friends	Water drainage, flooding
Feel safe	Opportunities for kids
Grocery Store	Declining population
Values	Finding employees
Quality School System	Fighting and gossip
	19% below the poverty line

An Analysis of the Sargent Library's Strengths and Resources as well as Barriers and Opportunities for Improvement:

The second part of our survey dealt with our library's strengths and weaknesses. We asked the following questions:

- If you are a reader, where do you get your books?
- How often do you use the services of the Sargent Library?
- What services or items could we offer that would encourage you to use the library more often?
- What is the library doing well?
- Are the library's hours adequate or do we need to change the open hours? What time of the day or week would work better for you?

The majority of respondents said that they get their books from the library, Libby app, Amazon, borrowing from friends.

The survey showed that 22% of the respondents use the library weekly, 27% monthly, 27% yearly, and 24% never.

Some of the responses of services the library could offer: meeting room, more computers, check out eBooks from home, online access, printing/copier, more variety, newer books, reading contests, more hours. These responses were the most concerning because we offer plenty of public computers. Wi-Fi is available 24/7. We have new printer/copiers, and we purchase a number of new books every month. We are always open to new book requests, and we subscribe to Overdrive. So what these results told us is that we need to do a better job at advertising our services.

Responses to What is the library doing well?: Great selection of books, kids programs and events, never been there, Summer reading, Facebook posts, cake pans, copies, great variety of materials, Gayle does a great job, nice people, internet access. Obviously, these responses were more encouraging.

On the question about open hours: 13 felt they were adequate, 7 wanted more total hours, 5 wanted more evening hours.

Finally, there was a place for additional comments: “So happy we have a library,” “Gayle does a great job,” “Librarian is helpful and pleasant,” “love the library,” “very welcoming and comfortable,” “love the bench and new sign,” “an asset to the community,” “I want to see it grow.”

Talking within the planning committee, we think the biggest weakness of the library is the old building that is too small for many activities. Our strengths are our technology availability (computers, copy, printer), book club for adults, summer reading for kids, and art classes.

Sargent Township Library

Strengths	Weaknesses
Good variety of books	Building is old and costly to maintain
Good support from community	Not ADA compliant
Location – on Main Street	Building is too small for programing or events
Librarian	Never enough funding
Summer Reading for children	Lack of community awareness of resources
Adult Book Club	Lack of programs for infants and preschoolers
Technology availability	No private meeting room
New outside sign	Only open 15 hours/week
Adult Art Classes	Low Attendance at programs
Welcoming & comfortable	Not enough room for makerspace equipment

What all this means and where the library can contribute to community progress.

Based on these responses and our own observations, the planning committee decided the main issues that the library could address is better communication with the community, Opportunities for kids – infant to preschool, private meeting room, and the condition and size of our building.

Better communication: For the library to help the community of Sargent, we need to make known all the services that the library has available. We frequently advertise our programs and services on Facebook and in the newspaper. The problem is that not everyone sees our Facebook posts, and few people subscribe to our local newspaper. There is no use in starting new programs if no one knows about them or attends. We feel it would help if we started a monthly newsletter. This newsletter would promote our services and programs. We could send it to an email list. We could also print out the newsletter and make it available for pick up through the grocery store, bank, or city offices. We have decided to implement this immediately. Better communication is what will make our specific goals more effective.

Opportunities for Kids – infant to preschool: We would like to start a “1000 Books Before Kindergarten” Program. Reading to infants and toddlers has been associated as an early indicator of success in school. This would be a way to encourage lower income parents to read to their children. Currently, the infants, toddlers

and preschoolers are encouraged to take part in summer reading, but they rarely participate. This program would focus solely on the youngest members of our community and hopefully bring in more families to the library.

Private meeting room: We frequently get asked by insurance or social service reps if they could meet with a client at our library. (Currently, there is no place in the community for them to meet.) They are welcome to meet at our center table, but there is no privacy. We do have a smaller room in the library that is too small for a door, but could be closed off with a curtain. It would not be sound proof, but it would give a feeling of privacy. An additional option is to make the library available for use during closed hours. We would need to get a keyless entry so that clients could enter the library with a special code. This would also require a good policy on who would be allowed access and use agreements.

Condition and size of our building: The current building is over 100 years old. Everyone likes the character and uniqueness of it, but it is falling apart and expensive to maintain. Having programs for any age is difficult because our building is so small. There is no room for makerspace equipment.

As a township library, our funding comes directly from taxpayer funds. We can't ask the city or township for increased funding. Because of state funding lid limits, all we can expect is a 3% increase in taxes each year. So paying for a new building or addition would be very difficult. We will need to get nearly 100% grant funding or lots of donations. Another option would be moving into a different building that comes available.

Specific Goals

Goal 1: Start a 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program:

Work with the Friends of the Library to help with prizes for each 100 books read.

Research other libraries with this program to help us come up with different ideas on how to make this program a success.

We plan to start this program in the early months of 2024.

Goal 2: Private meeting room for adults and/or children needing to meet with counselor, social services, insurance agent, etc.:

Prepare and put up a curtain for this room by January of 2024.

Put a keyless entry lock on the front door. – May of 2024.

Research and develop a good policy on who will be allowed access and use of the library during closed hours.

Goal completed and accomplished by October 2024.

Goal 3: New or different facilities to better meet the needs of adults, teens, and children.

In 2024, start researching possible grants and other sources of funding for a new building or addition.

Our next steps will be flexible depending on what we discover during research. Our goal is to have a new building or addition by 2028.

Evaluation of Accomplishments

The goals that we have set out for our new accreditation period will be evaluated by attendance at the programs, observation, and community feedback.

This plan was approved by the Sargent Township Library Board on 8-26-2023.

This plan will be reviewed and updated annually.