

# Mid York Library System Free Direct Access Plan 2022-2026

*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.*

Approximately 17% of the population of the Mid York Library System resides outside chartered service areas. However, all those individuals reside in municipalities with populations under 10,000, so they are entitled to library service under Commissioner's Regulation 90.3 at any System member library. 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. Furthermore, many member libraries derive income from outside their chartered service areas (notably village libraries receiving funds from towns and school districts), so there is an additional implied contract for library services.

*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.*

Given the interdependence of Mid York's member libraries and their heavy dependence on System services, it is extremely unlikely that a library could withdraw from System membership and still survive as a viable entity. By way of example, it is highly doubtful that a local library could survive the loss of automation services, interlibrary loan, delivery, and centralized technical services. If a library should withdraw, member libraries and / or the System will continue to provide library service to those individuals in the withdrawn library's chartered service area, based upon the contractual service implications of county financial support.

There are no chartered and registered libraries within the Mid-York service area that are not members of the System.

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

According to Commissioner's Regulation 90.3, "Serious inequities and hardships mean those conditions which adversely affect resident borrowers of member libraries." This definition, however, assumes a certain insularity for each library that is simply not true in the Mid York Library System. Individually, many member libraries are small, with limited collections. However, with 43 libraries located in literally every population center in the three counties, with a deeply embedded ethic of cooperation among all libraries, and with a widespread and ubiquitous computer and telecommunications network in place, municipal and charter boundaries have little meaning for member libraries and their users. Users visit whatever library is most convenient, and the libraries accept a high percentage of reciprocal nonresident 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.

*5. a) Describe the unserved and the underserved populations within the system.*

*b) Describe the criteria used by the system to identify libraries as having an inadequate level of local income to support the delivery of acceptable library services (underserved). List those libraries so identified.*

*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.*

*d) Provide a timetable for such actions.*

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

The Mid York Library System’s population, according to the 2010 census, is 372,839. Of those, 87,397 reside outside the chartered service areas of the member libraries and are therefore unserved by charter. However, the county funding described in Section 1 above means that all residents of the System service area are served by contract. Therefore, there are no legally unserved persons.

The traditional measure of adequacy of service is based on per capita activity, funding, circulation, reference questions, program attendance, etc., etc. Per capita measures are especially misleading in the Mid York Library System, however, because of the large number of libraries chartered to serve small areas (usually villages) that actually derive much of their funding and their use from outside their legal service areas (generally towns and school districts).

The mission of the Mid York Library System is to expand and improve library service. In the context of inadequate library service and underserved populations, Mid York will continue to do what it has done successfully for many years – leverage its collective buying power to take advantage of economies of scale, in order to create and maintain a level of library service otherwise impossible in an area which is economically depressed and suffers from one of the largest population declines in the country. The System’s Plan of Service 2022-2026 and the annual action plans that accompany it describe these efforts in detail.

Each local library is charged with securing local funds (village, town, city, school district) for operating support. The Mid York Library System, as part of its Plan of Service, coordinates funding efforts at the county level on behalf of all libraries in their respective counties. In each case, the effort to secure more and better funding is an annual, ongoing, continuing project.

*6. Describe the conditions under which modifications to the free direct access plan can be made:*

- a) *Without the prior approval of the Commissioner of Education*
- b) *With the prior approval of the Commissioner of Education*

Libraries that experience excessive out of chartered service area borrowing as defined in Section 4 above may, upon appropriate public notice and without further approval from the System or the Commissioner of Education:

- Place restrictions on the loan of library resources, said restrictions to be limited to nonprint materials and equipment, and print materials less than one year from the acquisition date and purchased with local funds.
- Place restrictions on attendance at library programs, provided such programs are supported entirely by local funds.

Further proposed restrictions to library service access must be approved by a majority of member libraries and by the System Board of Trustees before transmission to the Commissioner of Education for approval. The request for restrictions must be accompanied by the following, in a form acceptable to the Division of Library Development: documentation of the need for the restrictions, a description of the proposed modifications to free direct access, an analysis of the expected results of the change, a timetable for the restrictions, and 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 the approval of the free direct access plan by the member libraries, the Mid York Board, and the Commissioner of Education, it will be distributed to all member libraries. The plan will be accompanied by a memorandum from the System explaining a) that this plan is required under Commissioner's Regulations; b) that it has been approved by a majority of member libraries as the guide to direct public access to library service in Mid York; and c) that member libraries are required to abide by it. In the unlikely event that any member library deliberately fails to comply, Mid York will quietly point out the plan's requirements to the offending library.

*8. Describe how the system obtained member library input to the plan for free direct access.*

The free direct access plan and its implications were discussed at a Directors Advisory Council meeting, with a follow up survey to quantify input.

*This plan was approved by the MYLS Board on September 16 2021.*