

'24-'26

Strategic Plan.

1st Quarter Update
2026



2024-2026 Strategic Goal:

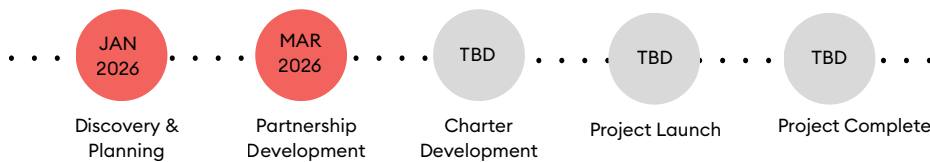
Celebrate distinctive communities by proactively prioritizing meaningful partnerships and patron relationships, finding commonalities with our neighbors, and intentionally connecting resources.



2026 Initiative #1

Assess food insecurity trends across Kent County using current ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) and other demographic data, public health reports, and community partner insights. Based on findings, create an integrated food model for at least three branches and/or bookmobile serving high-need populations and leverage KDL's reach for partners doing this work. Identify and secure at least one sustainable funding stream (e.g., community foundation grant, local sponsorship, or annual giving campaign) per branch to support ongoing food supply.

Project Timeline: January 2026 – TBD (Discovery & Planning)



2026 Q1 Update: Food Access

On Track

Paused/Delayed

Canceled

Completed

Food insecurity remains a persistent and growing challenge across Kent County. Currently, 41% of Michigan households fall within the ALICE category – a number projected to rise. When communities face both literacy challenges and food access issues, supporting basic needs in spaces like libraries helps remove barriers to learning. As a trusted community resource and gathering place, KDL is well positioned to play a meaningful role in addressing these challenges.

The project is currently in the discovery and planning phase and has not yet been formally approved. Jaci Cooper, Director of Projects and Planning, has begun serving on the Kent County Food Policy Council to better understand local trends, existing services, and potential partnership opportunities. Early conversations have identified several promising possibilities, including snack distribution during programs and potential collaboration with mobile food distributions.

As partnerships are further developed, the PMO will begin formal project initiation, including drafting the project charter, confirming pilot locations, and establishing a project team and timeline. This deliberate approach is intended to ensure KDL complements rather than duplicates existing efforts and delivers the greatest possible impact in addressing community food access.

Strengthening Community

2024-2026 Strategic Goal:

Celebrate distinctive communities by proactively prioritizing meaningful partnerships and patron relationships, finding commonalities with our neighbors, and intentionally connecting resources.



2026 Initiative #2

Launch a Community Memory Project hosted on KDL.org, including both a public submission portal and a browsable digital archive that captures the stories, images, and histories of Kent County residents. Facilitate 4 to 6 storytelling workshops in partnership with local organizations (both in branch and in the community to encourage community participation). By the end of year one, curate and publish a featured selection of submitted stories to showcase the depth and diversity of lived experiences across the county.

Project Timeline: April 2026 – June 2027



2026 Q1 Update: Community Memory

On Track

Paused/Delayed

Canceled

Completed

In an increasingly digital and fast-paced world, local and personal histories are at risk of being lost. While the value of preserving family stories is widely recognized, many individuals lack access to the tools, platforms, and support needed to document and share their experiences. Traditional archives have often prioritized official records, leaving everyday lived experiences underrepresented. This initiative seeks to shift that approach by actively co-creating a community-driven archive that ensures all residents have the opportunity to preserve and share their stories.

The initiative will be led by Tricia Hetrick, Regional Manager II, who originally proposed the project in 2025, and Randy Goble, Director of Engagement will be the project's sponsor. In March, the PMO met with Hetrick to review and finalize the project charter and confirm the project team and timeline. A kickoff meeting is scheduled for April 20, which will formally launch the project and begin research and work.

Strengthening Community

2024-2026 Strategic Goal:

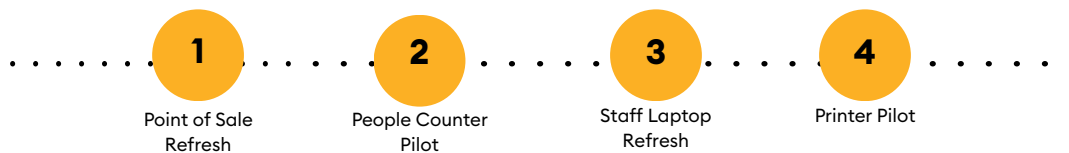
Proactively explore evolutions in the ever-changing technological landscape to optimize resources, enhance services and embrace education on adoption.



2026 Initiative #1

Evaluate the library's primary hardware needs by assessing the laptop distribution and public PC refresh schedule, POS system, people counters, and scanner/copier/printers to ensure efficiency, reliability, and alignment with patron and staff needs. Findings will guide a prioritized roadmap for future hardware investments.

Portfolio Timeline: January 2026 – December 2026



2026 Q1 Update: Hardware Refresh

This strategic initiative is being managed as a portfolio of related projects, allowing for focused evaluation and phased decision-making across multiple hardware priorities.

On Track

Paused/Delayed

Canceled

Completed

Point of Sale Refresh: This project will replace KDL's existing POS system with Square Registers and Terminals to improve usability, integration, and long-term cost efficiency. Since kickoff, the team has completed testing and piloting at three branches. Pilots have been overwhelmingly successful. The project is now preparing for a phased rollout to all KDL branches, which should be complete by early May.

People Counter Pilot: This pilot is evaluating a cloud-based visitor counting system to replace manual tracking and provide more accurate, real-time data. Sensors have been installed at the Cascade Twp. and East Grand Rapids branches. Next steps include evaluating pilot results and developing a recommendation for future implementation and budget planning.

Staff Laptop Refresh : The staff laptop refresh began in January with a phased rollout designed to refine processes and address issues in real time. As part of this effort, devices are being updated to Windows 11 to ensure staff are comfortable with the system ahead of future patron PC upgrades. Deployment began with leadership, expanded to Service Center departments, and is now reaching branch staff. This measured approach is helping ensure a smoother transition and stronger long-term support model.

Printer Pilot: The printer pilot is exploring alternatives to KDL's current print infrastructure ahead of future replacement needs. The Cascade Twp. and Kentwood branches are testing printers and providing feedback on speed, quality, and overall staff and patron experience. The pilot is also assessing the reliability of automatic supply ordering, which requires sufficient time for supplies to deplete and reorder cycles to occur. Findings will guide future investment decisions.

Technology

2024-2026 Strategic Goal:

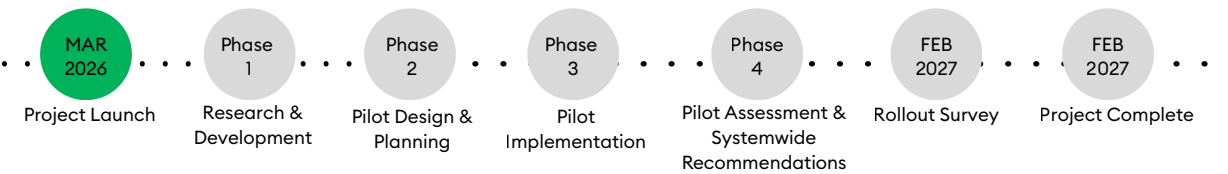
Strategically focus efforts on defining and providing exciting, valuable core programming that gives people access to experience and invites further exploration of KDL's services and spaces.



2026 Initiative #1

Launch a three-branch KDL Lab pilot to test activities and layouts that maximize space and engagement while requiring minimal staff involvement, using the results to share a long-term strategy for systemwide implementation.

Project Timeline: February 2026 – February 2027



2026 Q1 Update: KDL Lab Revamp

On Track **Paused/Delayed** **Canceled** **Completed**

This initiative addresses the challenge that KDL's existing Lab spaces, which were introduced over a decade ago, have not kept pace with evolving STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) learning trends, digital literacy, or how children and families engage in self-guided, hands-on exploration. Many labs lack visibility, consistent purpose, and clearly defined learning outcomes, limiting their impact as destination spaces within branches. This project aims to establish a clear, modern vision for KDL Lab through branch pilots that test immersive digital and physical experiences, spatial layouts, and activity models designed to maximize engagement while requiring minimal staff facilitation. Insights from these pilots will inform future design standards and long-term strategy for systemwide implementation.

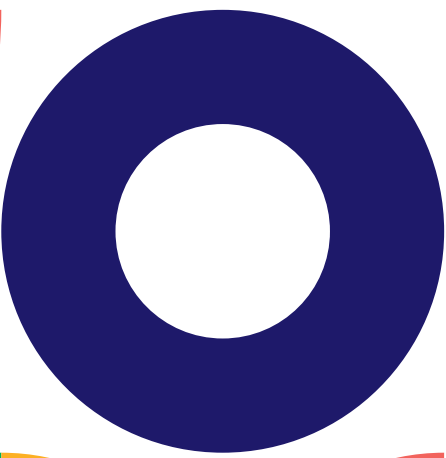
Brittany Zuehlke, Branch Outreach & Programming Specialist, will lead this project, with Jaci Cooper as project sponsor. In March, this project held its kickoff meeting where the PMO and Zuehlke shared the project's goals, timeline and team expectations.

Core Programming

Initiatives from 2025.

The following initiatives launched in 2025 and continue into 2026.

Updates are included to ensure progress, transparency and continued alignment with the 2024-2026 Strategic Plan.



2024-2026 Strategic Goal:

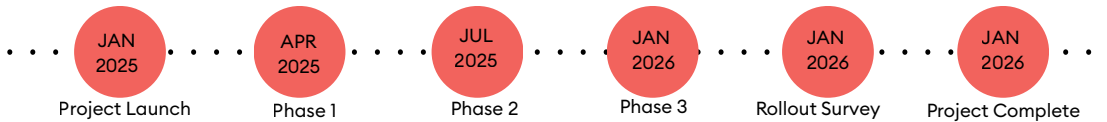
Celebrate distinctive communities by proactively prioritizing meaningful partnerships and patron relationships, finding commonalities with our neighbors, and intentionally connecting resources.



2025 Initiative #1

Evaluate community partnerships by accessing data to establish reciprocity and shared goals, develop a partnership intake process and prioritize relationships and partnerships at the branch and system levels to reveal where there may be gaps or overlaps. Create a “Who is My Community” sheet & map for each branch so key partnerships are highlighted and communicated.

Project Timeline: January 2025 – January 2026



2026 Q1 Update: Community Partnerships Evaluation

On Track

Paused/Delayed

Canceled

Completed

In January, a final Communication Bulletin was shared with staff, providing tools, resources, and clear expectations for the new partnership processes developed by the project team. Following this communication, a rollout survey gathered feedback on staff understanding and confidence in applying and training others on the new processes. Responses consistently pointed to increased clarity, with staff highlighting the value of the new tools, Community Maps, and clearly defined partnership structures. As one staff member shared:

“Even if you’re not directly involved in branch outreach, this project brought so much clarity and created real opportunity to learn. As a former ABL, the difference between branch and systemwide outreach was always hard to grasp. It wasn’t clear who we partnered with or how KDL chose to move forward in a way that aligned with our vision and strategic plan. This initiative addressed all that – with deep thought and strategy. The guides and infographic are simple and effective, removing guesswork around processes, partnership types, and relationship development. The ‘My Community Maps’ visualize KDL’s commitment to uplifting each branch’s unique community while highlighting opportunities for expanded impact. This information is valuable to every staff member because it provides real context about the community and reinforces our mission.”

On January 30, the PMO met with project leader Craig Buno and his team to review the project’s goals and deliverables and to celebrate the work accomplished. This initiative required navigating ambiguity, rethinking existing practices, and developing a more strategic, structured approach to partnerships. Early indicators suggest this work will position KDL to be more impactful, agile and effective in building and sustaining community partnerships moving forward. The PMO extends its deepest thanks to Buno and his team: Adam Flynn, Brittany Zuehlke, Clare O’Tsujji, Hannah Lewis, Hennie Vaandrager, Josh Bernstein, Jennifer DeVault, Julie Ralston, Kurt Lardie, Leigh Verburg, Monica Walen, Randy Goble, Sara Magnuson, Shelley Roosien, Sheri Glon, Susan Erhardt and Ty Papke.

Strengthening Community

2025 Strategic Initiative:

Proactively explore evolutions in the ever-changing technological landscape to optimize resources, enhance services and embrace education on adoption.



2025 Initiative #1

Strengthen and promote technology instruction in the library by ensuring staff have the training and equipment to assist patrons at the desk and in one-on-one sessions with emerging technologies. Evaluate tech tutoring to create clarity and centralized processes around offerings and align efforts with ENTf's digital inclusion strategies and the National Digital Inclusion Alliance to tackle the expanding digital divide with best practices and existing framework.

Project Timeline: April 2025 – April 2026



2026 Q1 Update: Tech Tutoring Revamp

On Track

Paused/Delayed

Canceled

Completed

This quarter, the project team focused on Phases 3 and 4 of the initiative, with an emphasis on systemwide training, implementation, and planning for integration with other services following the project's closeout. By the end of January, all branches had received in-person training on providing Tech Help and scheduling appointments through Bookings.

To support consistent implementation, project leader and User Experience Manager Morgan Hanks, hosted weekly drop-in Teams sessions for managers to share feedback and troubleshoot issues in real time. Branch feedback led to updates to the training checklist, creating more flexibility for staff to respond to patron needs, while clarifying expectations. In February, the team continued monitoring the new Tech Help process while developing a dedicated [webpage](#) to promote and inform patrons of the service. While there is strong potential for future expansion, the page currently provides clear guidance on the types of Tech Help available, including which services are offered as walk-ins and which require appointments. The team also curated a set of referral resources for requests that fall outside the scope of KDL services.

In late March, a rollout survey was distributed to staff to assess the effectiveness of training, materials, and checklists. Results will be compiled and shared with Hanks and her team as part off the project closeout in April.

Technology

2024-2026 Strategic Goal:

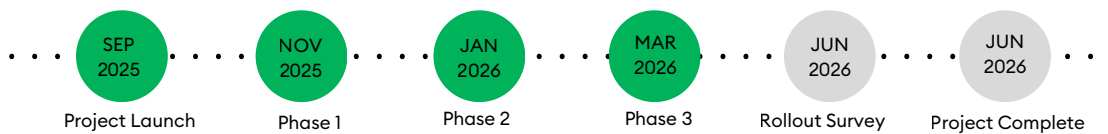
Celebrate distinctive communities by proactively prioritizing meaningful partnerships and patron relationships, finding commonalities with our neighbors, and intentionally connecting resources.



2025 Initiative #1

Develop a clear framework and timeline for cross-promotion and invite-back strategies within our programs to enhance visibility and engagement, and to maximize the reach and impact of our services across all branches. Establish guidelines to streamline promotional efforts and ensure consistent messaging.

Project Timeline: September 2025 – June 2026



2026 Q1 Update: Cross Promo

On Track

Paused/Delayed

Canceled

Completed

Between January and March, the Cross Promotion project team focused on moving from Phase 2 into Phase 3. Early work centered on aligning marketing, collections, and cross-promotion tools, while reviewing and finalizing key deliverables for systemwide use. Through iterative discussions and an in-person brainstorming workshop, the team clarified ownership, simplified approaches, and identified strategies that would be practical and sustainable across branches.

As the project progressed, focus shifted to rollout planning, staff training and long-term sustainability. The team finalized monthly systemwide focuses and developed flexible approaches to promoting collections and databases based on branch capacity.

During Phase 3 work, the team identified KDL's May training summits as a key opportunity to deliver training, reinforce strategies, and build staff buy-in. To support this, they requested and received a project extension, moving the timeline to June to better align with these efforts and strengthen long-term success.

March focused on developing training materials for the May summits, assigning presenters and content owners, creating a training and evaluation plan, and establishing long-term ownership of the cross-promotion calendar. Overall, the project is progressing from an initially ambiguous concept to a clearly defined, staff-ready framework with concrete next steps for implementation.

Core Programming

2024-2026 Strategic Goal:

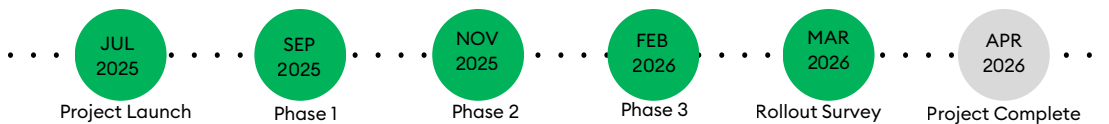
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2025 Initiative #2

Define and establish pathways for core programs, ensuring structured development and implementation. Create a schedule to regularly reassess and refine each core program. This initiative aims to maintain program relevance, ownership and effectiveness over time.

Project Timeline: July 2025 – April 2026



2026 Q1 Update: Core Programming

On Track

Paused/Delayed

Canceled

Completed

This initiative made significant progress over the past quarter, with a strong focus on building clarity and consistency around Core programs. In January, the project team analyzed staff survey data from September to identify areas of confusion and lower confidence, using those insights to shape targeted training.

To support long-term success, the team updated over 24 procedures to reflect new terminology and introduced tags for branch-sponsored programs on KDL's website. These changes will improve clarity for branch staff, Patron Services, and managers when accessing and reporting on location-specific programming data.

Recognizing competing staff demands, the team requested a project extension in late January due to overlapping mandatory compliance training. This decision helped ensure the effectiveness of the Core Programming training.

In February, training was rolled out to all staff, covering distinctions between Core programs and branch-sponsored program, the role of workgroups in program planning, and guidelines for program preparation. The training also included a knowledge check aligned with the original September survey to measure growth in understanding.

In March, the PMO distributed a rollout survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the project and training. Results will be shared with the team at the project closeout meeting in April.

Core Programming