

TO: Josephine Community Library District Board of Directors
FROM: Kate Lasky, Library Director
DATE: August 21, 2024
SUBJECT: FY 2023-24 Annual Report

INTRODUCTION

Josephine Community Library District, established as a special library district in May 2017 under ORS 357, serves the residents of Josephine County through its branches located in Grants Pass, Illinois Valley, Williams, and Wolf Creek. The FY 2023-24 report marks the district's sixth full year of operation, highlighting a continued recovery from the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This annual report offers a comprehensive overview of the library district's achievements, resources, and community impact over the past fiscal year. It delves into the core services provided by the library, strategic planning efforts, and the programs and services offered, with detailed statistics on collection development, circulation, early literacy initiatives, and technology advancements. Additionally, the report covers partnerships, volunteer engagement, financial administration, grants, and facilities management.

A significant focus of FY 2023-24 was the library's commitment to repairing and rebuilding its branch facilities to enhance service delivery. Notably, innovative building projects were completed in Williams and launched in the Illinois Valley.

In Williams, the district collaborated with the library foundation to construct a new branch at 158 Tetherow Road, which opened in October 2023. The new facility features 1,000 square feet of library space, a dedicated children's area, updated technology with broadband Internet, an ADA-compliant restroom, and an asphalt parking lot with 12 spaces, including one ADA space. These improvements led to increased library usage, reflected in higher numbers of checked-out materials, program participation, and new library card registrations.

In Illinois Valley, the district and its partners undertook a renovation of the existing branch at 209 W. Palmer in Cave Junction. This project will expand the library from 4,264 square feet to 6,094 square feet, including a new 1,788-square-foot community meeting space with a demonstration kitchen, an early learning center with a maker space, and an outdoor learning area for STEAM programs. While the branch closed to the public in March 2023, with temporary curbside services offered through the Illinois Valley Senior Center, the anticipated reopening is set for October 2024. The closure has impacted library usage statistics, which are reflected in the data presented in this report.

This report aims to provide stakeholders with a clear understanding of the library district's progress, the challenges faced, and the strategic initiatives undertaken to continue serving the community effectively.

CORE SERVICES

The core services of the library define the fundamental constant in the library’s work, laying the foundation for strategic planning, materials and program development, and services for all ages.

- **Collection.** Maintain and circulate a curated and balanced collection of catalogued books and other materials selected for a wide range of interests for adults, youth, and children in the community.
- **Facilities.** Provide a pleasant experience and convenient space for library users, with trained volunteers and professional staff available for guidance in the acquisition of information.
- **Technology.** Provide access to the Internet and a variety of digital media with subsequent digital skills training.
- **Early Literacy.** Provide special programming to encourage children’s literacy.
- **Lifelong Learning.** Provide adult programs that encourage lifelong learning.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The library’s strategic plan is the overarching document developed by the Board of Directors that guides daily operations, including mission, vision, values, goals, projects, and key performance indicators. In FY 2023-24, the board of directors authorized a new strategic plan, the [2024-2027 Strategic Direction](#), representing post-COVID goals and initiatives.



Figure 1: Josephine Community Library District 2024-2027 Strategic Direction.

The 2024-2027 Strategic Direction builds on the core services with a focus on reimagining library services and investing in the people and culture of the organization as described in the summary statements below. The following initiatives represent the goals of the library system from 2024 to 2027:

1. Work with community partners to implement county-wide building and technology projects.
2. Develop a programming roadmap with community input that includes expanded offerings for children and underserved populations.
3. Develop and implement a community engagement strategy that increase the number of active users and leverages visibility of building projects.
4. Strengthen existing employee retention activities with a focus on improved work/life balance and provide competitive wages and benefits.
5. Reinvent the roles staff and volunteers collectively play to share a strong library culture.
6. Execute a volunteer recruitment strategy that closes the gap on the ration of volunteers to staff required to deliver optimal service.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The library offers a diverse range of materials in various formats to ensure that all community members have access to the information they need. These formats include print, audio, and digital materials, such as books, magazines, audiobooks, ebooks, research and subscription databases, and online resources tailored to the community's information needs.

In January 2024, library management established FY 2018-19 as the benchmark year for measuring recovery from the pandemic. This benchmark is prominently featured in the annual report and serves as a reference point for goal setting through 2027.

During FY 2023-24, the overall usage of library materials and participation in programs either increased or remained stable as the library worked to meet the FY 2018-19 benchmarks. For instance, while the Illinois Valley branch saw a 29 percent decrease in the number of items borrowed, the Williams branch experienced a 77 percent increase in circulation due to new construction. Overall, circulation and turnover remained stable, with a 1 percent margin of error. Notably, ebook checkouts increased by 5 percent.

Facility construction and renovation also influenced the acquisition of new items, leading to a 12 percent decrease in acquisitions. Despite this, the number of new library cards issued each month averaged 245.

The use of online library resources, including databases, showed mixed results, with some areas experiencing growth while others saw declines. The highest usage was recorded in patron online account access and the Mango language learning tool. However, in FY 2023-24, the library discontinued the collection of Wi-Fi login session data due to the rising costs of tracking software and the reduced need for this data for the State Library of Oregon's annual statistical report, as mandated by ORS 357.417 and due each October.

Figures 1 –5 accompanying this narrative illustrate these trends, providing a clearer understanding of the library's performance and the impact of ongoing recovery efforts.

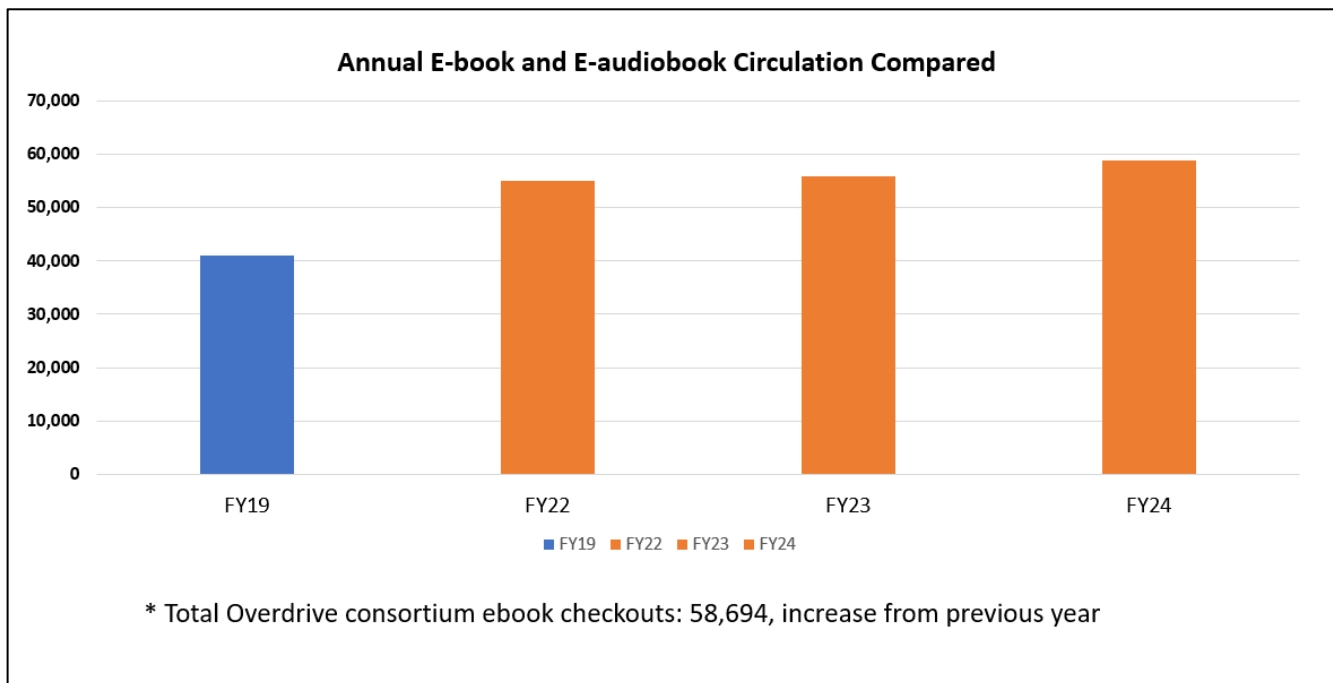
Number of Items Borrowed

Branch				
	Pre-COVID	Post-COVID		
	FY19	FY22	FY23	FY24
Grants Pass	210,921	152,080	197,242	194,591
Illinois Valley	38,520	27,087	31,487	22,498
Williams	10,470	8,365	10,527	18,671
Wolf Creek	8,258	6,843	8,019	9,090
Total	268,169	194,372	247,275	244,850

* FY22 facilities restricted 6 months with full access reinstated January 2022

* FY24 Illinois Valley branch closed March 2024 for renovation

Figure 2: Pre- and post-COVID comparison of annual circulation of materials.
Data does not include ebook borrowing.



* Total Overdrive consortium ebook checkouts: 58,694, increase from previous year

Figure 3: Pre- and post-COVID comparison of ebook circulation.
In FY23-24, the district circulated 58,694 ebooks, representing a 5% increase in lending.

Pre-COVID		Post-COVID		
	FY19	FY22	FY23	FY24
New library cards	2,953	*2,353	*3,179	2,956
Materials added	13,469	6,824	9,087	7,949
Computer use	12,889	4,310	8,387	8,176

Figure 4: Pre- and post-COVID comparison of new library card registrations, materials added, and computer use, demonstrating continued recovery efforts.

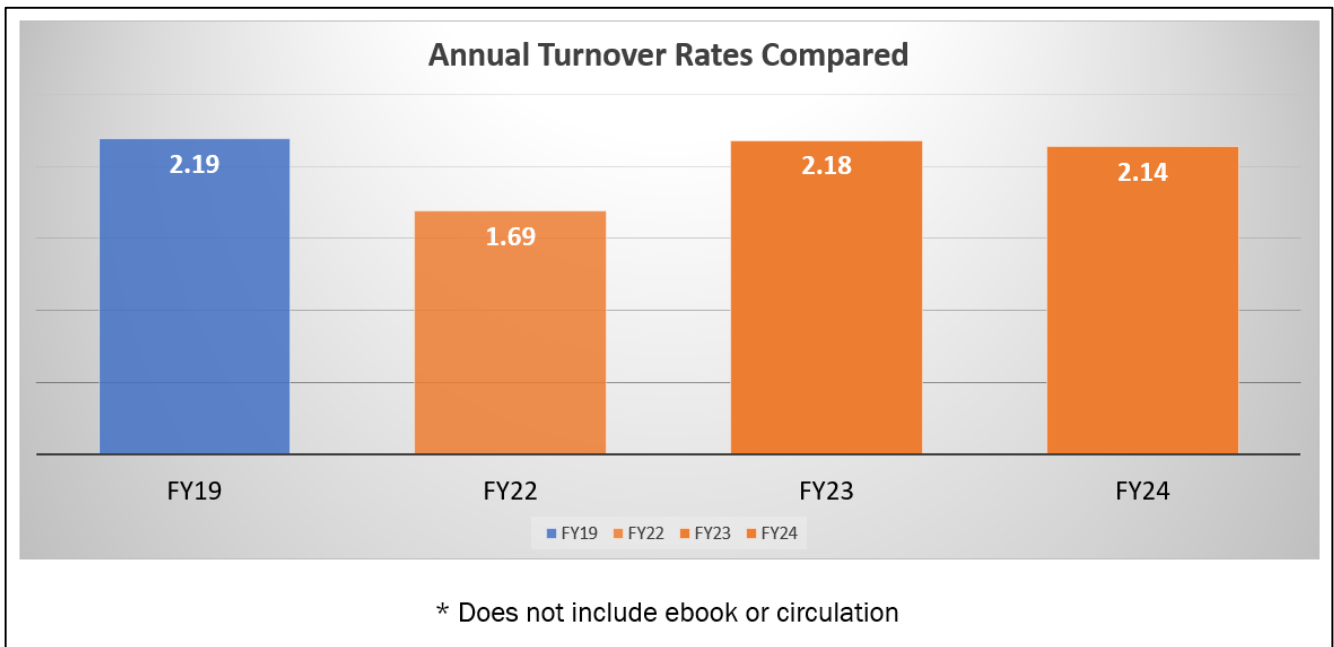


Figure 5: Pre- and post-COVID comparison of turnover rates, representing how frequently a single item is checked out. FY23-24 impacted by Illinois Valley branch closure for renovation.

Digital Resources

	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	Cost	Renewal date
Online catalog logins	45,357	39,201	41,099	40,000	part of ILS (iii, Polaris)	n/a
Gale searches	1,756	1,890	2,781	1,495	State Library sponsored	n/a
LearningExpress sessions	50	48	60	n/a	State Library sponsored	Expired 11/23
Novelist (clicks)	4,144	5,093	4,434	277	\$2,974 per year	Renewed 1/24
Mango sessions	136	443	327	678	\$3,307 per year \$9,095 3-year contract	Expired 3/23 Renewed 3/26

Figure 6: Annual database usage compared.

Early literacy and lifelong learning

In FY 2023-24, Josephine Community Library remained committed to fostering early literacy through a variety of programs designed to engage young minds and support early development. The library offered 355 youth programs, attracting 10,051 participants, not including those involved in the 2024 Summer Reading Program. Popular programs such as Kindergarten Toolbox, Bugs-R-Us, and Teen and Tween Book Boxes were among the highlights, providing children with interactive and educational experiences that promote essential literacy skills.

To enhance early literacy outreach, the library hired a full-time early literacy outreach coordinator and expanded storytime sessions both onsite and offsite, partnering with organizations like the Boys & Girls Club, Head Start, Sunny Wolf Charter School, and the Josephine County Housing Authority. These efforts aimed to reach new patrons and remove barriers to access, ensuring that all children in the community have the opportunity to develop foundational literacy skills.

The annual Summer Reading Program, the library's signature event, played a critical role in preventing learning loss and encouraging a lifelong love for reading. In 2024, 634 participants registered for the program, collectively logging an impressive 245,356 minutes of reading through the customized online engagement tool sponsored by the library foundation. Additionally, 6,000 community members of all ages were reached through related programs and partnerships during the summer. The library also partnered with the Grants Pass Daily Courier and local businesses, raising \$10,000 for advertisements that promoted fun activities to keep youth reading over the summer.

To better serve Spanish-speaking families, the library partnered with Project Youth Plus, an organization dedicated to supporting low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented youth. Through this partnership, the library employed a Spanish outreach Intern who translated materials on the library website, social media, and promotional content across all four branches. A monthly Spanish-language parent support group (Noche en Comunidad) and a Spanish-language version of the Kindergarten Toolbox program were also introduced, further expanding access to early literacy resources for Spanish-speaking families.

The library’s commitment to lifelong learning was evident through the diverse range of programs offered in FY 2023-24, catering to adults and lifelong learners in the community. A total of 71 adult programs, both virtual and in-person, were hosted, drawing 2,476 participants – an increase from the previous year. Programs ranged from history and astronomy workshops to author talks and WWI history series, ensuring that the library met the varied information needs of the community.

The library’s services extended beyond traditional programs, with offerings like the Library of Things, which lends useful tools and objects, and interlibrary loan services that fulfilled 760 requests, allowing patrons to access materials not available within the library’s collection. Patrons could also suggest new purchases for the library, with 379 suggestions fulfilled, representing an 89 percent fulfillment rate. These services ensured that the library remained a vital resource for information, education, and personal growth.

Outreach was a strong focus in FY 2023-24, with the library reaching approximately 15,842 residents through presentations, tabling, and remote registration of new library cards. These efforts were designed to address strategic planning initiatives and inform the community about available resources and address any barriers to access.

In partnership with local organizations and through strategic outreach initiatives, the library continued to support lifelong learning and community engagement. Whether through the Summer Reading Program, school visits, or specialized programs like Sprout a Reader and Baby’s First Book, the library’s lifelong learning initiatives ensured that community members of all ages had access to the resources and opportunities needed to continue learning and growing throughout their lives.

Technology

At Josephine Community Library, technology is more than just a tool – it’s a gateway to equitable access, bridging the digital divide and ensuring that everyone in our community has the resources they need to thrive. By offering free internet access and a range of digital resources, the library plays a vital role in fostering learning, creativity, and literacy. Our technology services keep the community informed, engaged, and empowered to participate fully in today’s digital world.

JCLD Website Engagement				
	FY22	FY23	FY24	Notable change
Visitors	43,876	35,761	57,990	+62%
Page views	167,095	118,978	196,225	+65%
Sessions	78,904	61,709	95,352	+55%
Spanish language	502	970	3,017	+211%
JosephineLINK	2,203	1,879	4,177	+122%

Figure 7: Annual website usage compared.

Beyond providing state-of-the-art technology, our dedicated staff and volunteers are here to support patrons with one-on-one instruction and technical assistance, ensuring that everyone can confidently navigate the digital landscape. We offer computer basics training to help individuals acquire essential skills needed in today's technological world. This training covers important topics such as online privacy and safety, how to access ebooks and audiobooks, online tax filing assistance, and file management. In FY 2023-24, the library maintained 50 high-speed internet access computers across all four branches, serving 8,176 logged users. Additionally, we offered 40 hotspots and 10 laptops equipped with Microsoft Suite for in-home use, extending our digital reach beyond the library walls.

The library's virtual presence also continues to grow, offering patrons access to a wealth of information and resources from anywhere. This year, website usage saw significant increases across all areas, particularly in the Spanish language section and the community resource directory, JosephineLINK. Through JosephineLINK, patrons can easily find up-to-date information on hundreds of local organizations, including contact details, hours of operation, and website links. This directory, curated and regularly updated by our librarians, allows users to browse by category or search by keyword. Community members can also contribute by adding new organizations through the "Submit a Listing" feature, ensuring the directory remains a comprehensive and current resource for all.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are the cornerstone of Josephine Community Library's ability to fulfill its mission and extend its reach within the community. By collaborating with local, state, and national nonprofit organizations, the library enhances its services, increases community engagement, and supports initiatives that align with its core values of providing materials and programs, promoting early literacy, advancing technology, fostering lifelong learning, and maintaining open and welcoming facilities.

In FY 2023-24, the library worked with a diverse range of service partners, which are detailed in Figure 8. These partnerships fall into three key categories: service partners, funding and networking partners, and associations. Service partners are organizations that collaborate with the library to offer programs, workshops, storytimes, and other services that benefit both children and adults in the community. Currently, the district has established partnerships with 44 service organizations, significantly expanding the library's impact and outreach.

Additionally, library staff play an active role in the community by holding leadership positions in various local and state organizations, including Asante, the Chamber of Commerce, Literacy Council, Oregon Library Association, Oregon REFORMA, and public radio. These roles not only strengthen the library's connections within the community but also ensure that the library remains a vital and engaged community institution.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

In partnership with the four Rotary Clubs in Josephine County, the library administers Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. [Dolly Parton's Imagination Library](#) is a book-gifting program that mails free books to children. Every child under the age of five in Josephine County is qualified to

receive a book by mail, at no cost to their families every month until their fifth birthday. Every year, a diverse batch of books is selected for each age group including bilingual books in Spanish and English, with options for braille and audiobooks. This past year, 24,704 books were mailed to children in Josephine County and 580 children graduated out of the program. Since launching, 6,169 Josephine County children have received 135,822 books.

Josephine Community Library District FY24 Service Partners	
Asante Three Rivers Medical Center	Josephine County Public Health
Boys & Girls Club of the Rogue Valley	KAJO/KLDR Radio
Chamber of Commerce	Kiwanis Club of Grants Pass
Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians	National Parks Service
Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library	Options of Southern Oregon
Easterseals Oregon	Oregon Books and Games
Four Rotary Clubs in Josephine County	Oregon Caves National Monument
Foster Grandparents of Southern Oregon	Oregon Humanities
Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History	OSU Extension Services
Grants Pass Astronomers Club	Project Youth+
Grants Pass Daily Courier	RSVP
Grants Pass School District 7	SO Health-E
Grants Pass Garden Club	Southern Oregon Historical Society
Grants Pass YMCA	Southern Oregon Japanese Association
Head Start	State Library of Oregon
Illinois River Valley Arts Council	Sugarloaf Community Association
Josephine County Cultural Coalition	Sunny Wolf Charter School
Josephine County Family Court	Therapy Dogs International
Josephine County Food Bank	Three Rivers School District
Josephine County Jail	UCAN
Josephine County Parks	Williams Community Preschool

Figure 8: List of active service partners.

Volunteers

The library system in Josephine County has a unique history that has forged a deep and lasting connection with the community it serves. In 2007, a county funding crisis led to the closure of all four library branches. In response, a group of dedicated volunteers rallied to raise awareness, funds, and support to reopen the libraries in 2009 as a nonprofit organization. For nearly a decade, these volunteers sustained library services, relying on their commitment and donated funds until voters approved the formation of a special district in 2017.

This legacy of volunteerism is deeply embedded in the culture of Josephine Community Library. Even as a tax-funded district, the library continues to thrive thanks to the efforts of around 240 volunteers annually. These volunteers are integral to daily operations, from cataloging books and issuing library cards to assisting patrons with technology and providing information services.

Volunteer engagement not only supports library functions but also fosters government transparency and community involvement. The program offers community members, particularly seniors, opportunities to shape the library’s culture, build friendships, and engage in lifelong learning. Volunteers serve as ambassadors, helping neighbors meet their information, education, and enrichment needs.

In FY 2023-24, volunteer engagement saw a 12 percent increase in hours from the previous year. However, overall volunteer participation remains below pre-pandemic levels. To address this, the library board has made volunteer engagement a strategic priority for 2024-2027, aiming to meet the 2019 benchmark for volunteer hours by 2027 – a goal that represents a 46 percent increase from current levels.

Volunteer Hours

Branch				
	Pre-COVID	Post-COVID		
	FY19	FY22	FY23	FY24
Grants Pass	22,860	9,865	13,136	15,353
Illinois Valley	2,765	1,332	1,929	1,502
Williams	711	629	812	929
Wolf Creek	354	156	354	447
Total	26,690	11,981	16,230	18,229

* FY24 Illinois Valley branch closed March 2024 for renovation

Figure 9: Pre- and post-COVID comparison of recorded volunteer hours.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

In May 2017, a permanent library tax rate of 39 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value was established through voter approval. The library system serves a population of 40,924 residents in the noncontiguous areas surrounding the branch libraries in Grants Pass, Illinois Valley, Williams, and Wolf Creek.

In FY 2023-24, the district received approximately \$1,602,130 in tax revenue. In its sixth year of library operations utilizing a budget of \$4,000,000, the library completed several facilities and equipment upgrades, most notably opening a newly rebuilt branch library in Williams.

The final budget for FY 2023-24 was \$4,578,936 with an unappropriated ending fund balance of \$720,350. Preliminary analysis of actual general fund expenditures for the fiscal year equal \$1,888,012 with grant expenditures totaling \$89,777. The library district ended the year with \$1,339,444 in General Fund and Enhanced Fund cash carryover, \$6,869 of which is restricted for grant-funded projects. The district ended the year with \$1,001,574 in the Reserve Fund and \$26,790 in the Maintenance Fund.

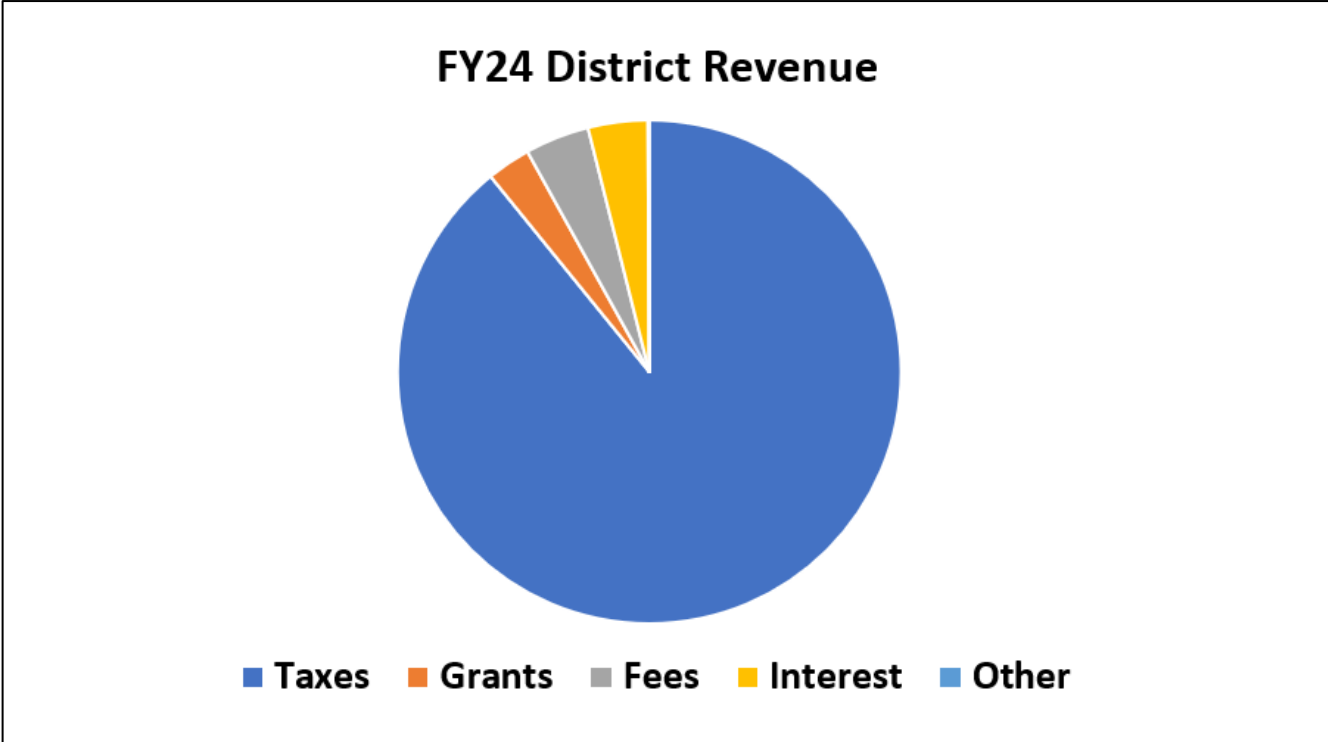


Figure 10: FY23-24 library district revenue by major category.

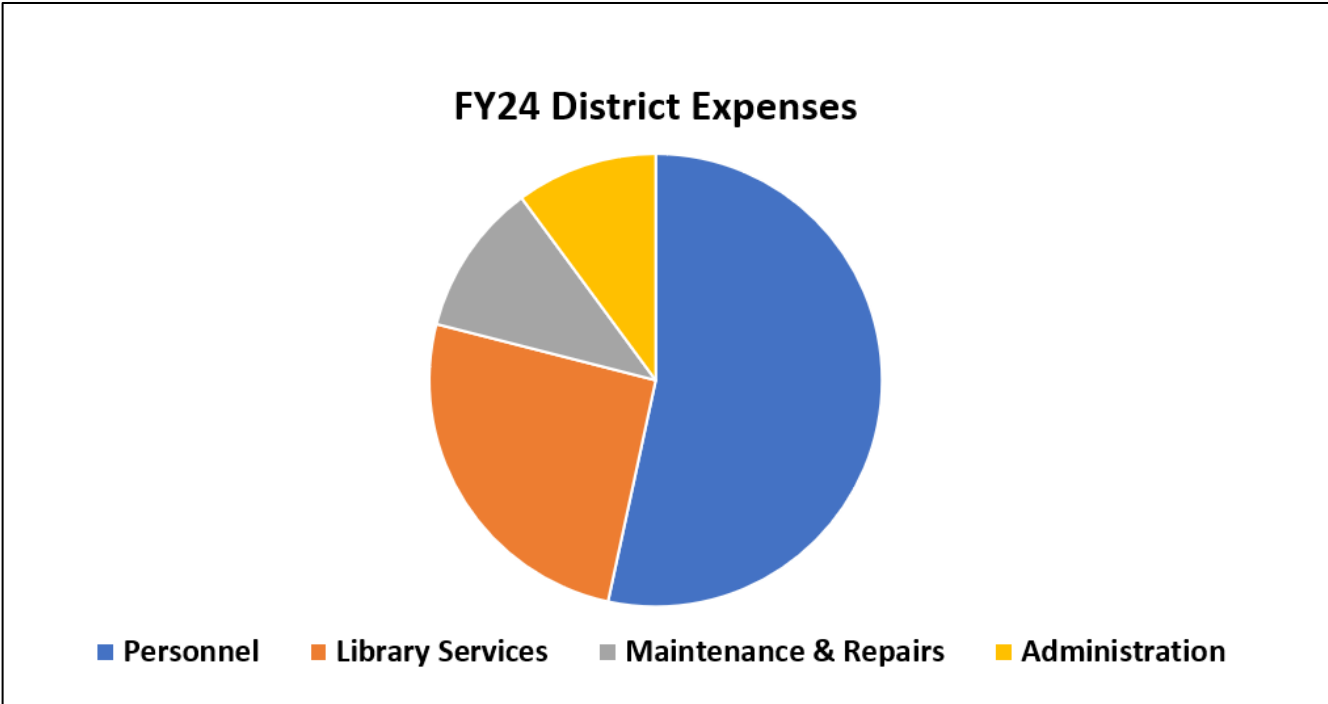


Figure 11: FY23-24 library district expenses by major category.

Grants

JCLD seeks grants to fund projects beyond the provision of the standard operations budget. In FY23 the district expended \$89,777 in restricted grant revenue. The largest grant received included \$25,000 from the Dorothy Thompson Fund. The complete list of grant funders includes A Greater Applegate, AllCare Health, Chaney Family Foundation, Dorothy Thompson Fund, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Ford Family Foundation, Grants Pass Kiwanis Club, Josephine Community Library Foundation, Oregon Community Foundation, and State Library of Oregon for the Ready to Read Grant.

Josephine Community Library District FY24 Grant Funders	
A Greater Applegate	Ford Family Foundation
AllCare Health	Grants Pass Kiwanis Club
Chaney Family Foundation	Josephine Community Library Foundation
Dorothy Thompson Fund	Oregon Community Foundation
FCC/E-Rate	State Library of Oregon

Figure 12: List of active service partners. Does not include grants received by Josephine Community Library Foundation.

FACILITIES

Facilities are a core service of Josephine Community Library, providing welcoming and convenient spaces where community members can engage with resources, technology, and each other. These spaces are designed to offer a pleasant experience, supported by trained volunteers and professional staff who are always available to assist users in acquiring the information they need.

Recognizing that a library system needs appropriate space for collections, people, programming, and functional operations, the district and the Josephine Community Library Foundation have established a strong partnership to improve facilities across the county. To achieve this goal, the foundation funded the development of a Facilities Master Plan, published in February 2019, which has formed the basis of a community capital fundraising campaign.

Since the publication of the [Facilities Master Plan](#), the library foundation has successfully raised \$5.5 million for the Illinois Valley and Williams capital projects and the Grants Pass property purchase. Funding for these projects has been secured through grants from grantmaking organizations, government funds, and donations from thousands of individuals who believe in the importance of enhancing library facilities. For more information about capital campaign projects and construction timelines, visit jclfoundation.org.

The district owns the Illinois Valley branch, while the library foundation owns the Wolf Creek and Williams facilities. The Grants Pass building remains under the ownership of Josephine County government. In December 2018, the district renewed its lease with the county for the Grants Pass building at a symbolic fee of \$1 per year, extending through December 2025, with an option for a five-year renewal. This arrangement reflects the county's commitment to supporting its residents by providing affordable access to essential community services.

Currently, two of the four library branches are undergoing significant renovations or are in the planning stages for new facilities, thanks to partnerships with the library foundation and the City of Cave Junction. Planning and fundraising for the new Williams library were completed in October 2023, enabling the addition of essential amenities such as running water and a bathroom to the rural branch. The Illinois Valley branch is also undergoing an extensive remodel, funded by a Community Development Block Grant, with completion expected in FY 2024-25.

CONCLUSION

The FY 2023-24 report highlights a year of significant progress and resilience for the Josephine Community Library District. As the district continues to recover from the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the library has demonstrated its unwavering commitment to serving the community through strategic initiatives, partnerships, and the enhancement of core services.

This year marked substantial achievements in early literacy, lifelong learning, and technology, ensuring that patrons of all ages have access to the resources and support needed to thrive in today's world. The library's dedication to improving its facilities, as evidenced by the successful capital campaigns and ongoing renovations, underscores its role as a vital community hub.

Volunteer engagement remains a cornerstone of the library's success, with a strategic goal to significantly increase volunteer hours by 2027. This commitment to community involvement, coupled with strong financial stewardship, positions the district to continue its mission to serve our community through access to 21st Century library service, providing equitable access to information, fostering lifelong learning, and supporting the diverse needs of Josephine County residents.

As the district looks ahead to the implementation of the 2024-2027 Strategic Direction, the focus will be on reimagining library services, expanding community engagement, and investing in the people and culture that drive the library's success. With a foundation built on collaboration, innovation, and a deep connection to the community, Josephine Community Library is well-equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.