

# Long Range Plan 2020-2023

## Topsham Public Library



Facilitated and Presented by:



# Topsham Public Library Long Range Plan 2020-2023

## Introduction/Executive Summary

The Topsham Public Library Board of Trustees is pleased to present a Long-Range Plan for 2020-2023. This plan is the result of many months of surveys, discussion, and work on the part of the board and staff. In a nutshell, it points the way for our next three years and outlines our focus and goals. As with any plan, it is possible that new information will become available that may require modification, however we believe that our over-arching mission and the flexibility of this plan will provide us with a clear and concise vision for the future.

The four areas that we will focus on are:

- **Community Engagement and Relationships:** to increase the visibility of the Topsham Public Library in the community and foster participation by strengthening connections between the community and the library
- **Finance and Development:** to increase the donor base, establish long-term investment revenue and assess the financial support for long-term needs of the Topsham Public Library
- **Technology:** to keep up with changing technology and user expectations of the Topsham community
- **Facilities:** to maintain and provide patrons and staff with an adequate a welcoming space to meet their needs and the needs of the community

We are grateful to Ann Marie Bartoo of Corner Marketing Consulting and Francis Eberle of Price Associates for facilitation of the Long Range Planning process. Additionally, we acknowledge the work of the Board Coordination Committee:

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Larry Fitch  
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Assistant Director, Cyndi Burne  
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# Topsham Public Library Long Range Plan 2020-2023

## **Present**

The Topsham Public Library Board of Trustees recognizes the importance of creating long range plans to guide and to point the way for successful library service in Topsham. The previous plan was adopted originally in 2014. In 2017, a revision of the plan was created with specific activities and completion timelines, and was extended to 2019. As the library celebrated its fifteenth anniversary, a significant bequest of over \$770,000 was received. This generous gift, along with the successful completion of most of the action items from the 2017 plan, occasioned the desire to reevaluate the progress made and think ahead to the next chapter of Topsham Public Library.

## **The Long-Range Planning Process**

To accomplish this goal, the library board hired outside consultants, a team from Price Associates and Corner Market Consulting, in September, 2019.

From the Board of Trustees, a working group was established to carry the load of developing a draft plan. This working group first reviewed needs and then developed mission and vision statements for the organization. With this completed, they then identified key areas that represented the most current critical areas of need at the library. Four focus areas emerged from this work: Community Engagement and Relationships, Finance and Development, Technology, and Facilities. With these areas in hand, four smaller work groups were formed with the task of outlining goals, objectives, action steps, and key participants, as well as budget needs and potential collaborators.

The mission, vision, goals and details surrounding specific activities for the next three years were presented to the Board of Trustees for review and approval in January, 2020. The result is this Long Range Plan. The members of the Board of Trustees are excited to present this plan to the community of Topsham.

## **Mission:**

The Topsham Public Library connects resources, programs and services to the community to stimulate personal growth and enrichment.

## **Vision:**

The Topsham Public Library is *the* access point for traditional and innovative resources to meet the informational, social and cultural needs of an evolving community.

## **Values**

Access

Diversity

Education & Lifelong Learning

Intellectual Freedom

Preservation

Confidentiality

Professionalism

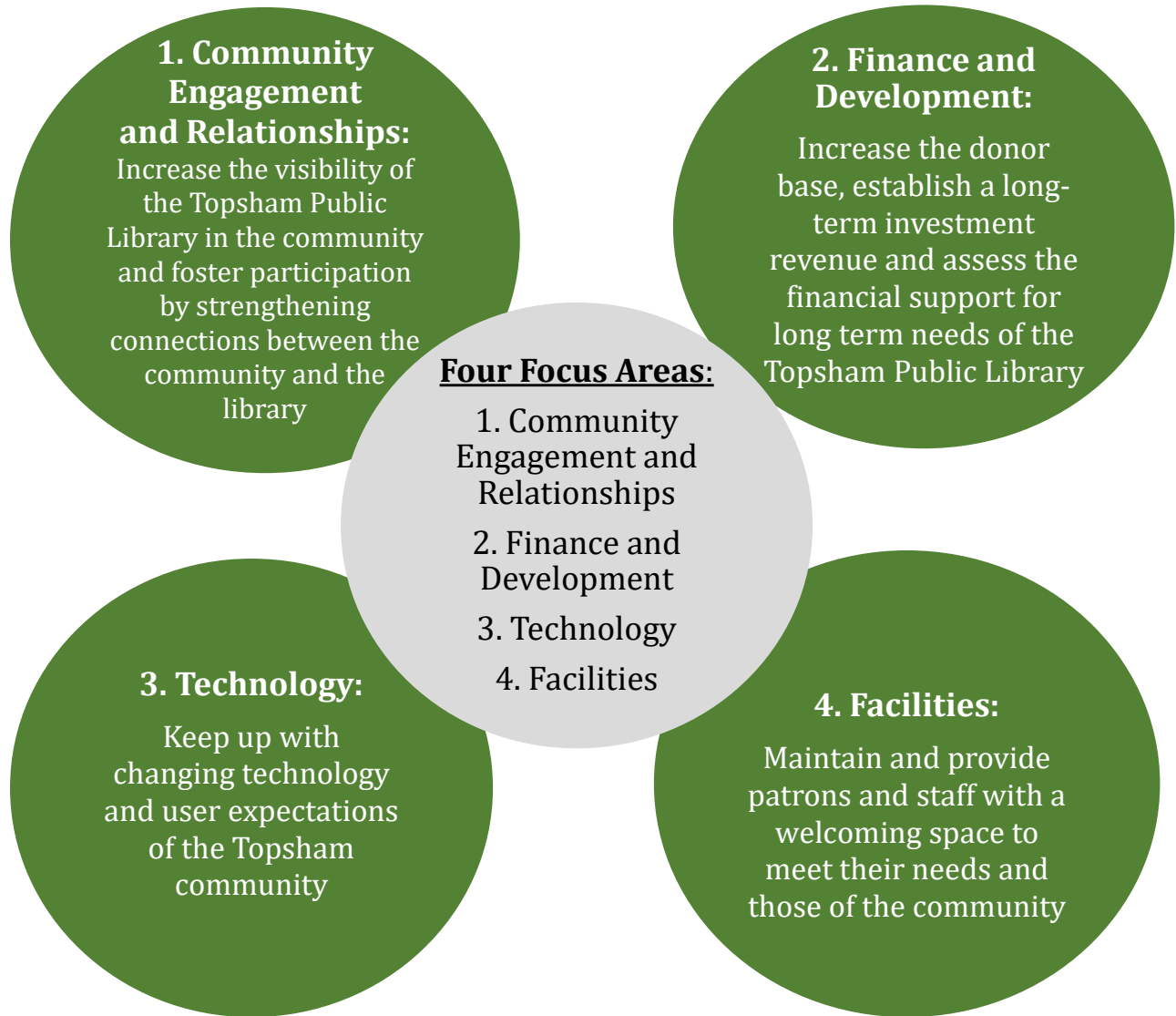
Democracy

Public Good

Service

Social Responsibility

## Long Range Plan Focus Areas



### **Focus Area 1: Community Engagement & Relationships**

#### **Background**

The Topsham Public Library's success in many ways revolves around the rich relationships it has developed, both long and short term. As the library continues its trajectory as a "community center for all", the relationships within the community are critically important. The board has recognized that in order for the library to be able to maintain current relationships and anticipate new ones, intentional strategies will need to be designed and implemented.

The library's ongoing relationship with the town and its inclusion in the Topsham Comprehensive Plan Update was one of several indicators that prioritized this focus area on the list of four focus areas in the library's long range plan. The library's positive and long-standing working relationship with the town precipitated inclusion of specific activities on which the two groups will collaborate, including:

- Efficient, professional and comprehensive library service to the community
- Economic development through relationships with local business and workforce development programs
- Private sector partnerships to host enrichment and skill building workshops
- Social, recreational and community event programming at the library
- Dissemination of local information, especially on energy technology and weatherization
- Address space concerns at the library
- Communication about the basics of government happenings

#### **Present**

The library currently assesses programming and services on an as-needed basis, but we believe it is necessary to develop indicators that measure efficacy of the programs at both the internal and external levels. Changing program needs are monitored but it is expected that keeping a finger on the pulse of Topsham through advisory groups will insure that community needs are met.

The possible changes in the town's comprehensive plan about a town center, walkable destinations for residents, and meeting the needs of its school-aged residents, and retirees will all be considerations in how the library can and will respond in its role as a "Community Center for all."

#### **Future**

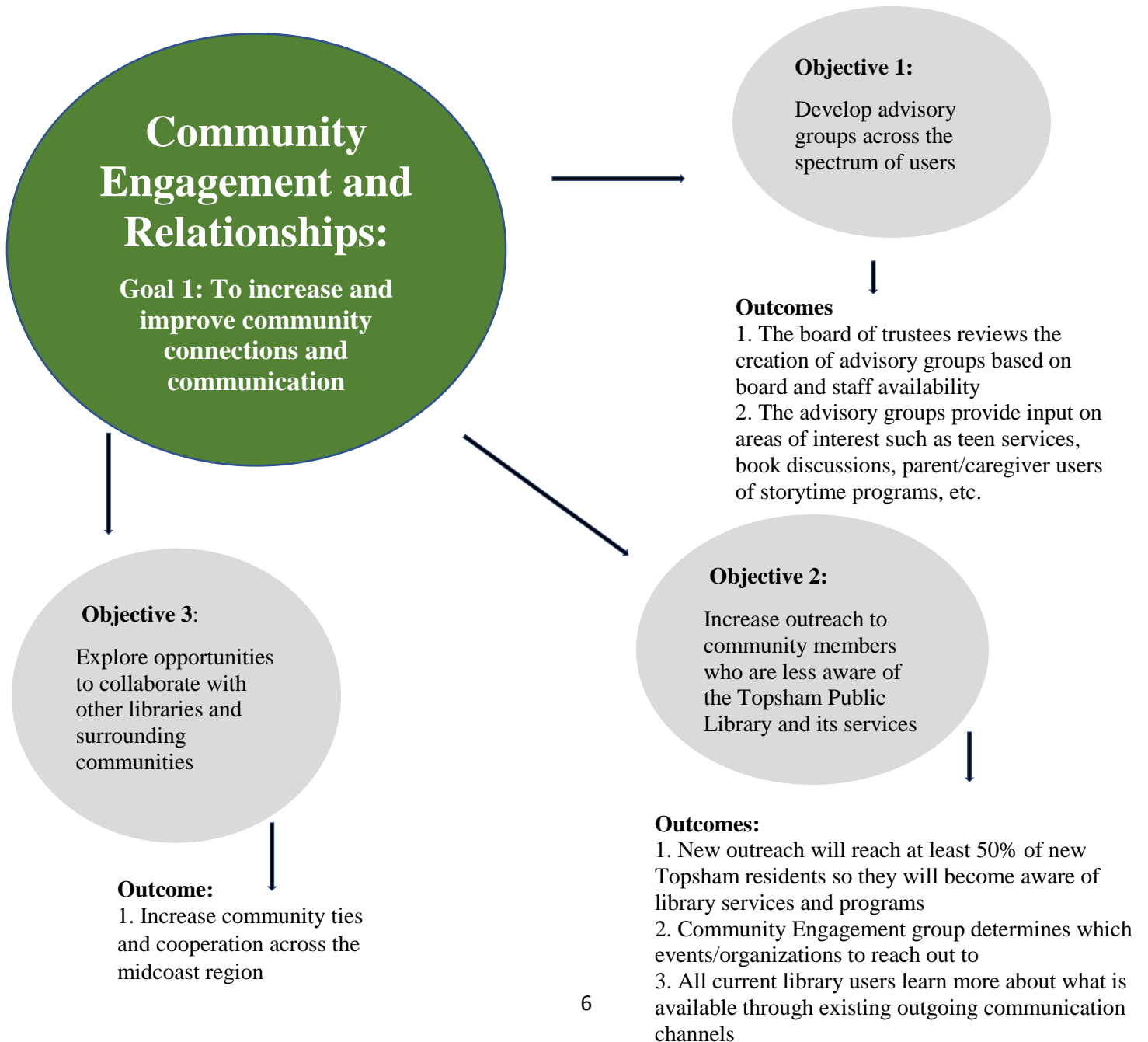
The library's physical plant also plays a part in the relationship with its users. A feasibility study is currently underway to assess whether it is now meeting and if it can meet the future needs of the community. Additionally, it will review short term changes in the physical space to make sure that the library is using the building to its best advantage. (See Facilities section in this document.)

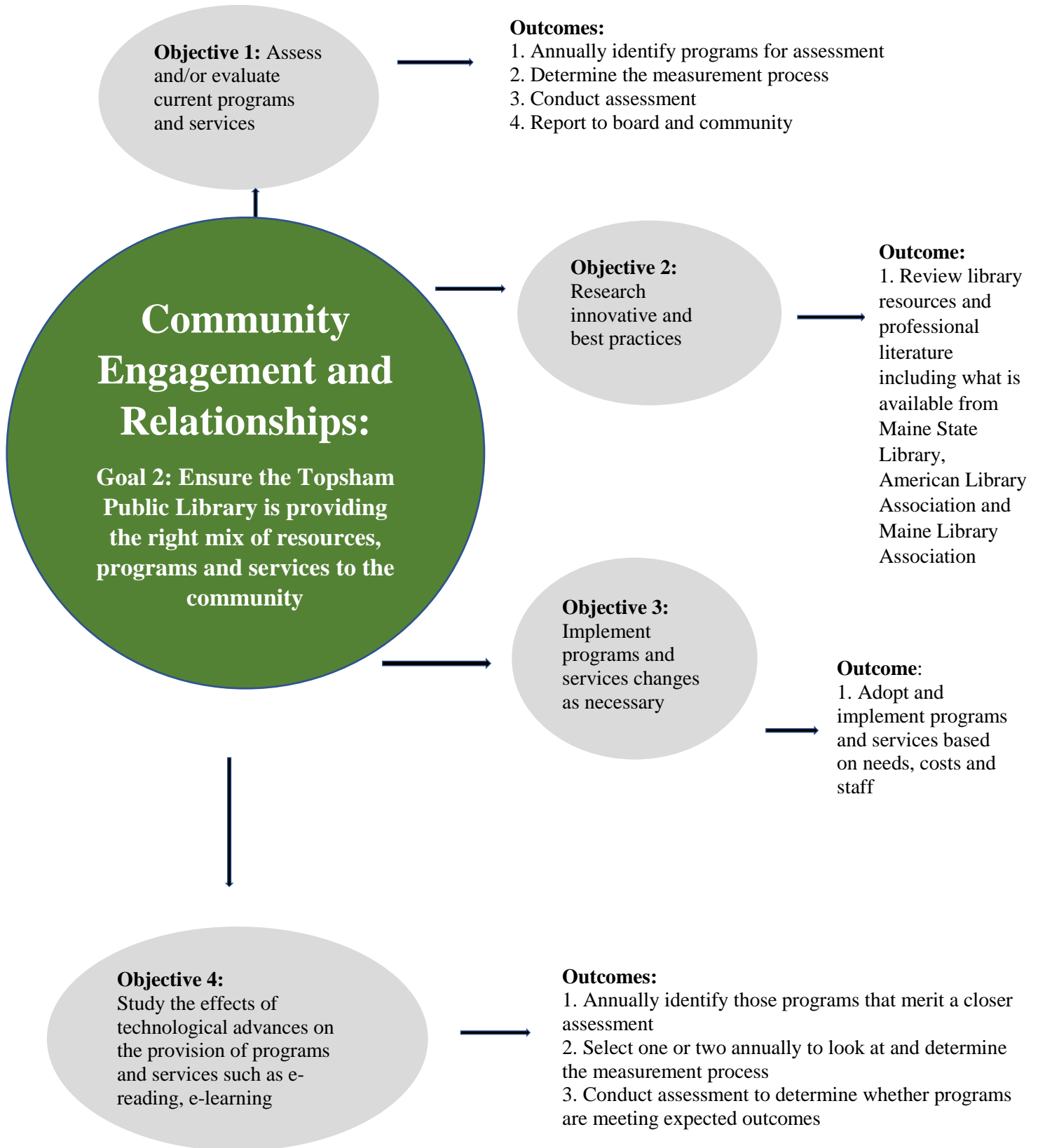
# Topsham Public Library Long Range Plan 2020-2023

The goals for the Community Engagement & Relationships focus area are:

- *To increase and improve community connections and communication*
- *To ensure the library is providing the best possible mix of resources, programs and services to the community*
- *To continue the strong relationship between the library and the town of Topsham*

These three goals will be implemented through improving public awareness of the library, seeking feedback from users, and designing tools that allow the ongoing assessment of resources, programs and services. From greeting library patrons at the door, to seeking and responding to their ongoing suggestions for improved delivery of services, to maintaining working relationships with partners (including the town administration), the library understands its responsibility to seek feedback on a regular basis, and to effectively respond to that feedback.





**Objective 1:**  
Continue to foster a close working relationship with the board of selectmen, town finance committee and the town manager

**Outcomes:**

1. Continued support from the town's governance structure for the Topsham Public Library's vision and mission
2. Increased credibility for the board of trustees with the town's elected and appointed leaders

**Community Engagement and Relationships:**  
**Goal 3: Continue to foster a strong relationship between the Topsham Public Library and the Town of Topsham**

**Objective 2:**  
Implement the Topsham Public Library's responsibilities outlined in the 2019 Topsham Comprehensive Plan Update

**Outcomes:**

1. Increased visibility for the Topsham Public Library as a partner in the broader Topsham community
2. Added support for the Topsham Public Library's mission and vision



## **Focus Area: Finance & Development**

### **Background**

Since its founding in 1931, the Topsham Public Library has enjoyed many types of support from the town. Between the time it was originally housed on the second floor of the Androscoggin Engine House and today, the town has provided space, assistance, and material support as well as interest in the library mission. In 2004, a permanent structure was built on Foreside Road, and the library now operates predominantly as an independent facility with a growing base of users and an ever-increasing list of services and resources it provides to the community. As a result, the library requires measured increases of financial support, which include a thoughtful blend of both public and private monies.

Eighty-five percent of the Topsham Public Library's operating budget is allocated from the town. The additional fifteen percent comes from the library's own fundraising efforts and reliance on The Friends of Topsham Public Library. This relationship is codified in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the town and library administrations.

The library strives to diversify its financial support, so that not all its services rely solely on funding by the town. As part of the effort to continue this trend, the staff position of Development Coordinator was added to assist in the ongoing process of identifying, soliciting, and stewarding a variety of gifts, including annual and planned gifts from donors and grants from foundations and corporations. With the increasing demands on the library to provide up-to-date technology, more services to individuals, families and groups, as well as to serve as a community hub, the focus on improving and increasing fundraising efforts has become even more of a priority.

### **Present**

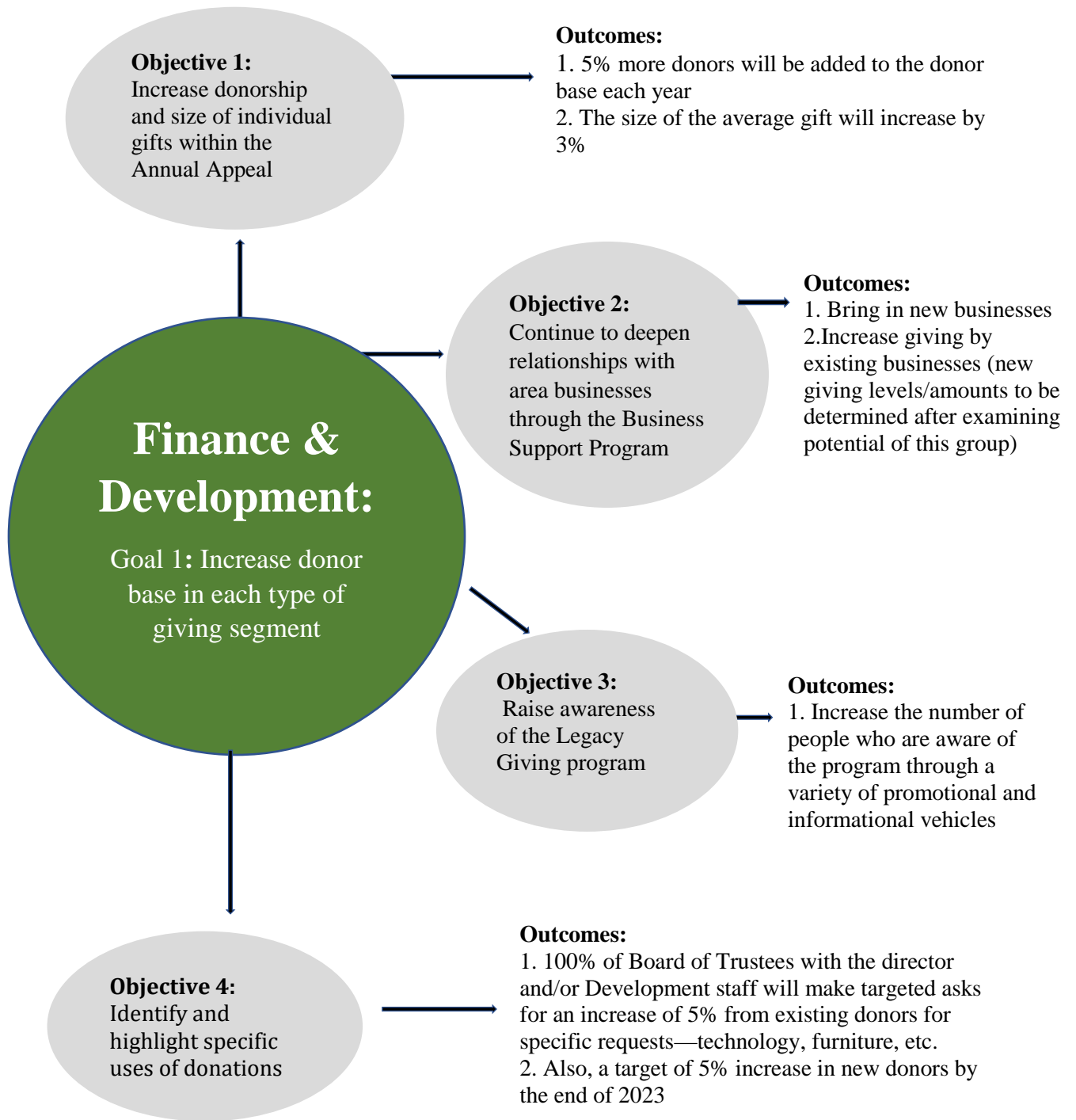
Not surprisingly, finance and development has surfaced as one of four priority areas for the library's long range plan, and related activities are currently scheduled to commence in January of 2020.

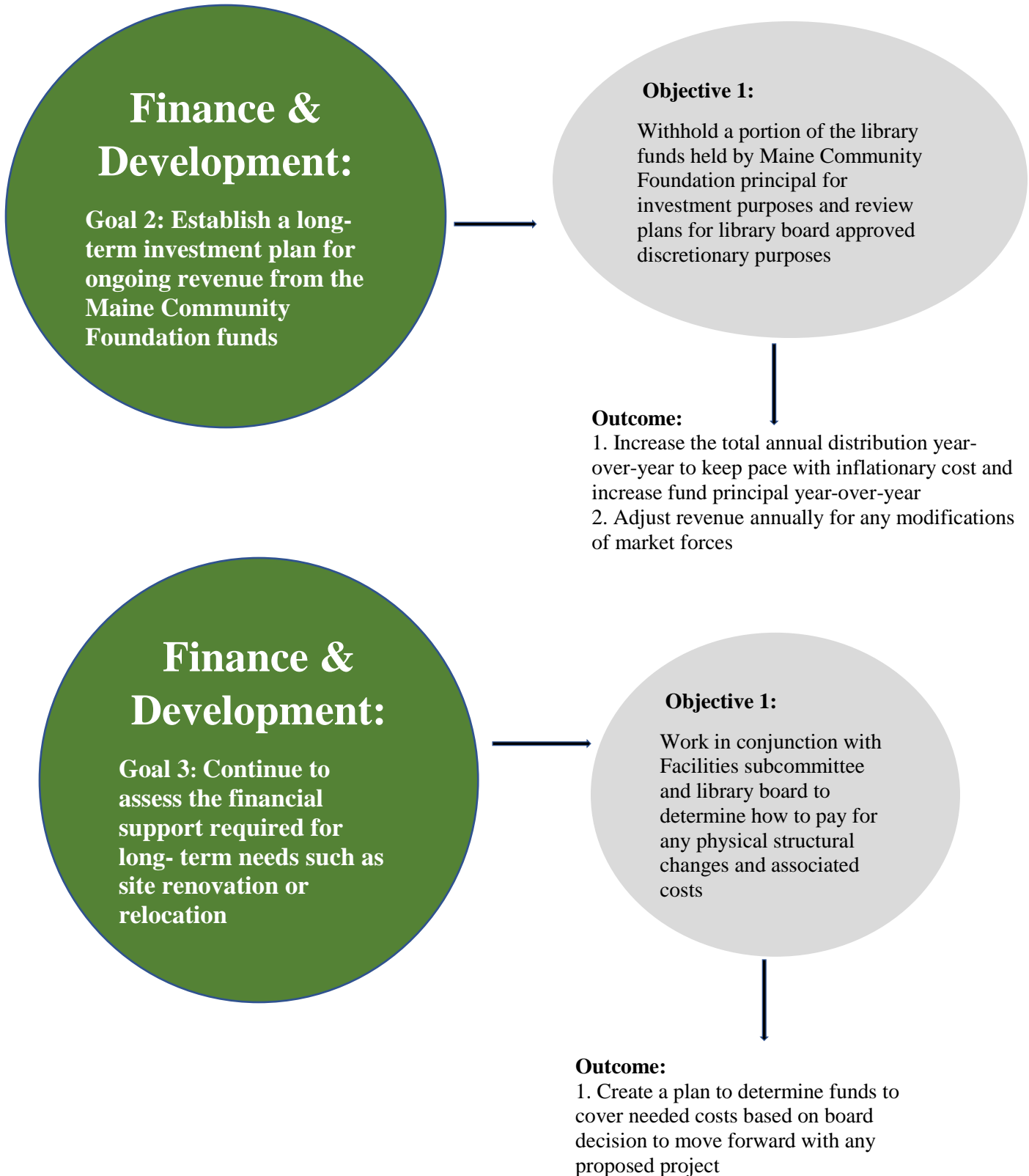
### **Future**

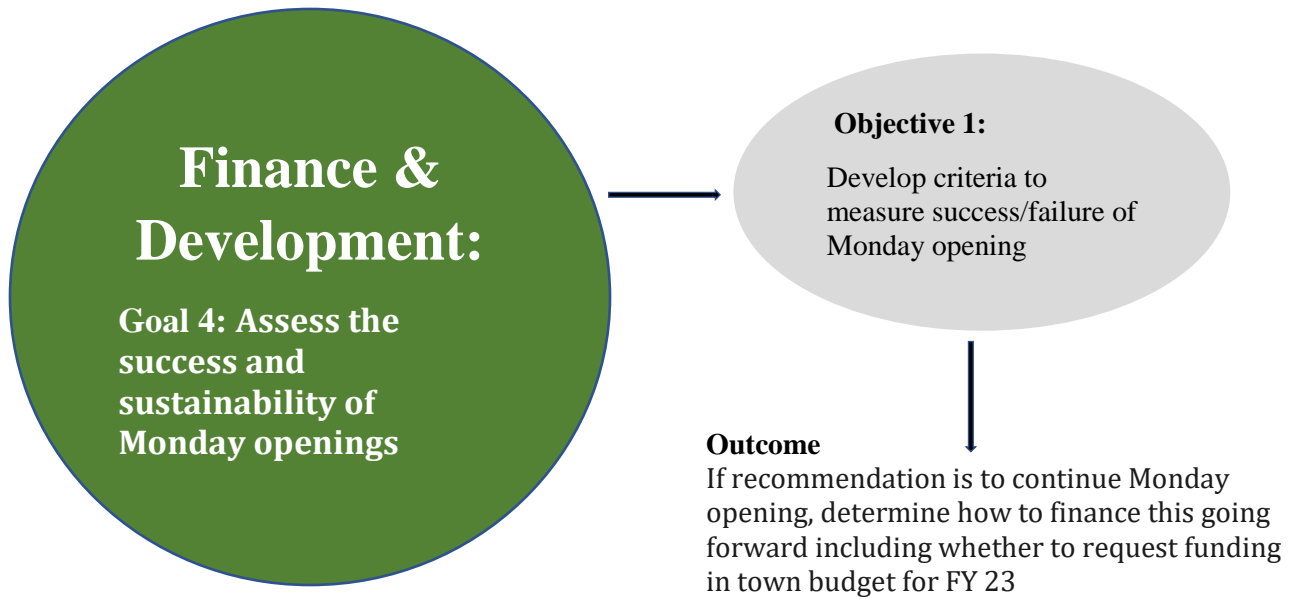
Three goals of Finance and Development are:

- *To increase the donor base in each type of giving program*
- *To establish a long-term investment revenue stream from the library's investments*
- *To continue to assess the financial support required for long-term needs*

Broad action steps to achieve these goals include: expanding fundraising efforts; implementing a plan to generate revenue from investments to support new initiatives; and exploring the necessary resources needed to address issues involving the physical plant and evolution of technology.







## **Focus Area: Technology**

### **Background**

Technology is a necessary part of services in 21<sup>st</sup> century libraries. The Topsham Public Library has made it a priority to keep pace with technological advances.

In 1998, the library had one public computer. By the time it moved to the Navy Annex, four computers for public use were available, along with several more assigned to staff. During this time, the library joined the Minerva consortium and upgraded the Integrated Library Service (ILS) system, as well. In 2004, the library moved to its current location on Foreside Road and purchased eight patron computers, the cost of which was underwritten by Lee Toyota of Topsham. Since then, the library has financed technology through a combination of grant awards, donations, and earmarks in the operating budget. By seeking several large grant awards and assistance from the State of Maine, as well as increases in the technology and personnel lines in the operating budget, the library was able to acquire high-speed Internet, ten patron computers, three wireless pods providing WIFI connection throughout the building, and update AV equipment in the Highlands Community Room. Technological support for patrons was recently provided by the first full-time staff expert.

### **Present**

Because of their exposure to technology in many areas of their lives, Topsham Public Library user populations expect multiple levels of service, starting with basic online and printing/copying, to reliable wireless access as well as access to online databases through the state funded Digital Maine collection. Organizations hosting meetings and programs at the library expect reliability in both audio and video equipment. Remote users rely on the expansion of e-book and e-audio collections available through CloudLibrary. The most recent user survey conducted by the library shows that 24.7% of respondents indicated digital materials such as e-books and e-audiobooks rate as “extremely important.” Narrative responses from surveys further support the need to continue to offer services focusing on technology. A few examples of feedback include:

“Not having a computer at home, the computers at the library are invaluable!”

“Providing computer help services.”

“...to see digital collections increased.”

“Expanding selection of e-books and audio books and better digital technology for borrowing e-books.”

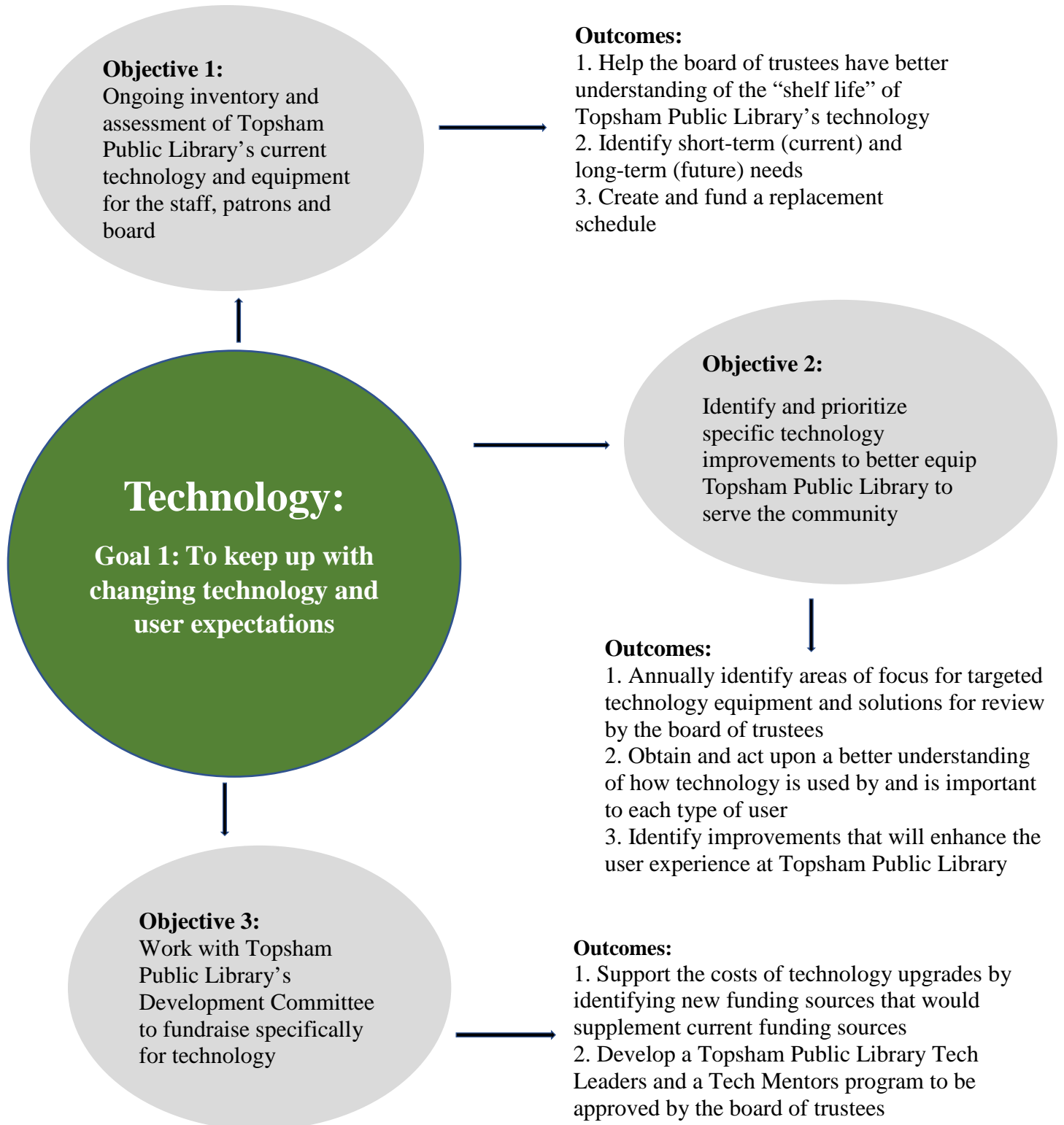
### **Future**

With this feedback, in combination with ongoing assessment of the Topsham Public Library’s state of technology by staff, led to the determination that technology would be one of four focus areas for the library’s Long Range Plan.

The goal of the Technology Focus-is:

- *To keep up with changing technology and user expectations*

Broad action steps include creating a detailed inventory of existing technology, designing a maintenance schedule of that technology, and creating a plan to invest in future technology.



**Focus Area: Facilities**

**Background**

The library has been located on Foreside Road in Topsham since its construction in 2004. At the time it was planned and constructed, there was significant discussion about the need for a modern library facility. The town of Topsham took out the first bonds ever utilized to fund 1.5 million dollars of the project while the library fundraised a million dollars. All in all, the town residents use the library well and often, with nearly 225 people a day coming through the doors.

**Present**

The library is housed within 13,000 square feet. After 15 years, this space, and in some instances its design, have become outdated. With an ever-expanding materials collection, the one hundred and fifty seat Highlands Community Room that is in constant demand, and the needs for staff and meeting, tutoring and studying spaces ever increasing, all spaces at the library are currently stretched to their limit.

According to staff and user feedback, two areas that surface as needing immediate attention are office space for growing staff, and spaces to serve children and teens. User surveys have also provided helpful data. When users were asked “Where do you think the library should focus its resources over the next five years?” recurring themes of programming and space surfaced, reflected by several responses, below:

“Perhaps expanding the size of the teen area w/ teen study space.”

“Continue to expand its collections...more quiet spaces.”

“Continue expanding services...perhaps making teen space more teen enticing?”

“Fostering more community gatherings such as symposiums/lectures.”

**Future**

In order to begin addressing the immediate as well as projected long-term space needs, the library retained a Maine-based architectural and design firm, Arcadia Designworks. A board sub-committee and the director are working with the firm as they execute a needs assessment and generate possible solutions to better utilize the facility as the user base grows and as programming, services and resources also grow to meet their needs.

The goal of the Facilities Focus Area is:

- *To provide patrons adequate space to meet their library needs, staff the space to complete tasks and an environment for the community to feel welcome and expand their horizons*

Broad action steps to achieve this goal will include identifying and prioritizing space needs and exploring possible related solutions.

