

Finger Lakes Library System Free Direct Access Plan 2022-2026

The Free Direct Access Plan is a State approved agreement between the Finger Lakes Library System (FLLS) and the State Education Department's Division of Library Development of the New York State Library. This is required by Commissioner's Regulations 90.3 (a) through (d)(4).

The Free Direct Access Plan reflects our system's commitment that no resident in the area served by the Finger Lakes Library System will be excluded from direct or on-site access to the resources of any system's member libraries on the basis of age, cultural, economic, civic or other status. The document provides the process for our member libraries to both identify and place restrictions of excessive and unfair use of resources that have a negative impact on services a member library provides their resident borrowers.

The Finger Lakes Library System services the public libraries of five counties: Cayuga, Cortland, Seneca, Tioga and Tompkins. All public libraries in these five counties are members of the Finger Lakes Library System.

Definitions for the purposes of this Plan:

a. Direct Access:

Services provided to all active cardholders of a library and to the cardholders of the system via outreach services. This typically includes the authorization to checkout library materials and use the subscription services offered by that library.

b. Local Residents:

Individuals residing or owning property upon which taxes are paid *within* a library's chartered-to-serve area. These individuals are eligible to apply for a library card at their local library without paying any fees.

c. Non-residents:

Individuals residing *outside* of one of the five counties served by the system. Non-residents are eligible to apply for a library card at any Finger Lakes Library System member library, subject to the requirements imposed by that library for individuals residing outside its chartered-to-serve area. Restrictions may occur on services to non-residents, such as out-of-system interlibrary loan, if the membership of the Finger Lakes Library System so chooses.

d. System Residents:

Individuals residing *within* the boundaries of the Finger Lakes Library System, i.e., within one of the five counties, but *not within* any member library's chartered-to-serve area. These individuals are eligible to apply for a library card at any Finger Lakes Library System member library, subject to the requirements imposed by that library for individuals residing outside its chartered-to-serve area.

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.

All member libraries offer direct access and on-site use to all local residents, non-residents, and System residents subject to the requirements imposed by the individual library and Commissioner Regulations. Free on-site use of the total resources of the system by all individuals residing within the boundaries of the system is

a requirement of this regulation. Included in free on-site use is the use of computers and access to the Internet. Preference for such service may be given to local residents.

All libraries in the Finger Lakes Library System take part in and agree to abide by Finger Lakes Library System's One Card, Many Libraries service. The One Card, Many Libraries service started on September 1, 2016 and was planned and initiated by our member libraries and FLLS over the course of 2016. The service and its components is discussed and evaluated by our members on at least a quarterly basis during our FALCONS (Finger Lakes Automated Library Consortium) member library meetings. This service allows access to all patrons' records in the library system from any library. Patrons can borrow library materials from any of the 33 member libraries with their library card instead of having to have a card with each individual member library.

2. Describe how the system will assure that those patrons 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.

All chartered and registered libraries in the Finger Lakes Library System area are members of the System.

(a) Member library that withdraws from membership:

Finger Lakes Library System services, including interlibrary loan services, will be offered to System residents of withdrawn member libraries' chartered service area under the same conditions as those offered to local residents and System residents.

In accordance with Commissioner's Regulations, the services of the Central Library will be available to these local and System residents.

(b) Chartered and registered library that was never a member of the system (currently none exist):

The System and member libraries will serve the residents of this library's chartered service area under the same conditions they serve all other System residents of the five counties.

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

Serious inequities and hardships occur when the circulation of materials to non-resident borrowers and System residents is excessive and significantly deprives local residents the borrowing of materials in a reasonable period.

The condition may also apply when municipalities refuse to fund library service thus creating an economic hardship for a member library. If this were to occur, Finger Lakes Library System will work with the member libraries and their trustees to help them approach local funding sources and their advocacy efforts for support for increased funding. Documentation of such refusal shall be forwarded to the Commissioner of Education.

4. Describe what constitutes excessive out-of-chartered service-area borrowing in the system.

Excessive borrowing occurs in a member library when the circulation of materials to non-resident borrowers reaches 20% of the total circulation of such materials. Excessive borrowing is determined by statistical reports from the automated circulation system operated by the Finger Lakes Library System.

5. Unserved and Underserved Populations

5. a – Describe the unserved and the underserved populations within the system.

The unserved population as defined by CR90.3(a)(10): “unserved means those individuals residing in geographic areas that are within the boundaries of a public library system, but outside the boundaries of a chartered service area of a library which is a member of that system.” Unserved populations exist in some areas of Cayuga, Cortland, Seneca, and Tioga Counties. Tompkins County has no unserved population.

Color-coded maps developed by the Division of Library Development serve to define the unserved area. The map can be viewed at: <https://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/libservice-area-maps/quarterly-maps/unserved-map.pdf>.

The underserved are those individuals as defined by CR90.3(a) (11) and (b) below. There are no underserved populations because all libraries currently meet Minimum Standards of the State of New York.

5. 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.

The criteria for determining an adequate level of support is the member library’s ability to comply with minimum standards contained in New York State Education Law and New York State Commissioner’s Regulations as reported by member libraries on their annual report to the state. All of the member libraries of the Finger Lakes Library System meet those standards.

5. 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.

The effort to secure better funding for our member libraries is ongoing and something Finger Lakes works on with all of our member libraries on a regular basis both individually and at a county level. System assistance is available in exploring funding options, developing strategies, and planning presentations to both library staff and their boards.

The Finger Lakes Library System worked with all of our member libraries throughout 2016 to create a One Card, Many Libraries service, which became effective on September 1, 2016. This service allows library patrons from Cayuga, Cortland, Seneca, Tioga and Tompkins counties to use their current library cards to borrow materials from any of the Finger Lakes Library System’s 33 member libraries. The One Card, Many Libraries service provides a more unified, seamless library experience and offers users free access to the wealth of materials and resources provided by System libraries. By allowing patrons to access each of our libraries with one card, we are making our libraries more welcoming and convenient.

(a) Unserved: The Finger Lakes Library System, working in cooperation with member libraries, strives to strengthen library service and expanding charters to include those unserved. The System encourages funding through school and special district referenda. In areas where school or special district appropriations are inappropriate or unachievable, the Finger Lakes Library System will assist libraries in exploring other options for library funding.

(b) Underserved: Finger Lakes Library System continually works with the boards of member libraries to seek additional funds via local and county support. Upon the request of a member library, Finger Lakes Library System will offer to assist the library in its efforts to expand the availability of library services to the unserved and underserved. Finger Lakes Library System does, and will continue, to conduct workshops relating to better and improved service to library populations.

5. d - Provide a timetable for such actions.

(a) Issue of the Unserved: This will be a continuing effort during 2022-2026.

(b) Issue of the Underserved: Immediate on approval of this plan by the Division of Library Development.

5. e - Identify who will be responsible for these actions.

(a) Issue of the Unserved: Board of Trustees of member libraries and Board of the Finger Lakes Library System along with the FLLS Executive Director

(b) Issue of the Underserved: Board of Trustees of member libraries and Board of the Finger Lakes Library System along with the FLLS Executive Director.

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 and upon sufficient and appropriate documentation submitted to the Finger Lakes Library System, and after appropriate notification of the member libraries of the Finger Lakes Library System, member libraries may:

- i. Restrict loans of printed materials less than one-year old from acquisition date based on hardship, as defined in sections three and four above.
- ii. Restrict loans of non-print materials and equipment based on hardship, as defined in sections three and four above.
- iii. Restrict access to electronic resources based on hardship, as defined in sections three and four above.
- iv. The member library will propose a time frame for the beginning and end of the requested modifications. At the end of the modification time frame the library will review data as outlined in section three to see if a hardship still exists.

(b) With the prior approval of the Commissioner for requests falling outside of this plan and after specific approval by the Finger Lakes Library System Board and of a majority of the member libraries:

- i. The member library will provide documentation to Finger Lakes Library System Board of Trustees indicating the serious inequities and hardships affecting the residents of the library's chartered service area.
- ii. The member library will include in the documentation the proposed modifications it intends to make to address the serious inequities and hardships that differ from those in section 4 above.
- iii. The member library will also describe the expected impact on local resident and non-resident borrowing after the modifications are approved and implemented.
- iv. The member library will propose a time frame for the beginning and end of the requested modifications.
- v. The waiver request by the library has been approved by a majority of the member libraries of the Finger Lakes Library System
- vi. The waiver requested will be forwarded by the Finger Lakes Library System Board of Trustees to the Commissioner of Education for action.



Connecting Public Libraries in
Cayuga, Cortland, Seneca, Tioga, and Tompkins Counties

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.

Finger Lakes will distribute a copy of this Plan once it is approved by the Commissioner and hold a discussion at a System Meeting concerning details of the plan and compliance. Finger Lakes will require member libraries to certify that their library is in compliance with the Free Direct Access Plan on an annual basis with the Finger Lakes Library System during the System's FALCONS meeting.

Finger Lakes shall also be responsive to any queries or complaints about possible non-compliance by our member libraries and work with the member library and their board to ensure their agreement with the Free Direct Access Plan.

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

The Finger Lakes Library System reviewed, updated and revised this plan in conjunction with revising the Finger Lakes Library System Plan of Service for 2022-2026. A Plan of Service committee of the FLLS Board of Trustees started in the spring of 2021 reviewing the previous document. County-wide focus groups, along with a meeting of the Central Library, were held discussing the Plan of Service and Free Direct Access Plan during the summer of 2021. The Free Direct Access Plan was also discussed at quarterly FALCONS meetings in 2021 and during our monthly Directors' Meetings starting in April of 2021. Member libraries could review the plan and add comments or suggestions. The Free Direct Access Plan was approved by the Finger Lakes Library System Board on September 29, 2021.