

BUDGET VOTE FAQ-Alfred

1. Why is the library budget vote being held a different day than the school budget vote?

Last year, a clerical error forced us to hold a separate vote from the school. We learned through this process that separating the vote helped residents understand that the libraries' funding levies are separate from the school's budget. We intend to hold the libraries' vote separately into the future, so voters know the two measures are separate finances.

2. Why are the libraries asking for a budget increase?

Like many organizations, the libraries are facing higher costs from inflation and minimum-wage increases, which directly affect our ability to maintain services. This increase helps us keep pace with expenses, continue expanding programs and services, and pay staff fairly. The total tax bill for a home assessed at \$100,000 is \$92.46 to support two libraries.

- That's about \$1.77 per week—roughly \$0.25 per day.
- Alfred's proposed levy is \$183,504, which is \$53.09 per year on a home assessed at \$100,000.

3. Can libraries get grants to help their budgets?

The libraries can and do apply for many grants throughout the year! Alfred averages about \$10,000/year in grant funding (since 2017). Many of these grants are for specific projects such as programs and collections. For example, this year we received grant funding from the Arts Council of Wyoming County to host a performance by Shake on the Lake later this summer and host a three-week summer art series for adults.

Another consideration with grants is that they are not guaranteed funding. We can apply for grants, but many granting organizations receive many applications for a limited supply of money. Grants available for one year are not necessarily available for the next year. We cannot count on grant funds to balance our budget. We can apply for grants for projects, programs, and collections for very specific things. These grants often supplement our operating budget and allow our operating budget to stretch further.

1. Why should we vote for the library budget?

Libraries are one of the few free public spaces left—and they offer far more than books. A “yes” vote keeps essential, no-cost services available to everyone, including:

- Help navigating health insurance
- Connections to community resources (e.g., early intervention)
- Wi-Fi hotspots, plus museum and park passes
- Digital skills support, job search help, and test prep
- A welcoming place to meet, study, and play
- A warm waiting space (including for bus riders)
- Printing, copying, and faxing

This investment pays off. The EveryLibrary Institute estimates that every \$1 taxpayers invest in the Alfred Box of Books returns \$3.18 in community resources, services, programs, and collections.

Here's what that support delivered in 2025:

- 5,790 in-person visits.
- 165 free programs (about 3/week), serving 1,494 attendees (+14% from 2024).
- 15,623 total circulations: 10,193 physical checkouts and 5,430 digital checkouts (e-books, magazines, audiobooks, and video).
- 3,907 Wi-Fi sessions (+33% from 2024).
- Early Literacy attendance up 37%.

Libraries strengthen communities, and Alfred is no exception. We partner with local schools, colleges, nonprofits, and community groups to reach more residents—and we support local businesses through purchases and collaborations. A strong library helps keep Alfred connected, informed, and thriving.

4. What are your goals for 2027?

Our major goal is to purchase our building and property from Alfred University. In 2025, we received architectural studies and concept designs on our current site. These plans included creating substantial additions to the current library to include meeting room/ program space, space to grow collections, dedicated work space, and quiet meeting or study rooms. The plans also included a small parking lot.

This year we are also working on our long range plan for 2027-2031. We are seeking input from community members, and this will guide services for the next five years. We're eager to learn about ways we can address needs.

5. Do federal cuts to library services affect the library?

There continues to be threats to federal library funding. While these cuts do not immediately affect the Box of Books, impacts will be felt by local libraries. The primary impact will be to the state library, which receives \$8 million dollars from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). However, the state library does important things to support libraries such as paying for our access to NOVELNY research databases (\$3 million dollars). Governor Hochul has included a significant increase to state library services in her Executive Budget to help offset these cuts. However, because of that her budget proposes cuts to library aid and construction aid, which directly impact local libraries. The state library also administers the Talking Book and Braille Library, a service that is free for all libraries within the state to access and provide. This service is very important to visually impaired and/or aging individuals.

Federal cuts to other services could impact access to rural broadband internet. With agreements with the Southern Tier Library System, Alfred pays just \$110/month for high-speed internet and technology. This is subsidized through various federal funds that are currently threatened.

If federal funding supports were to be enacted, libraries' operating budgets would need to support the level of services their communities have come to expect.

6. What can individuals do to support local libraries?

The most important thing is to vote on budget referendums. Libraries operate on very small budgets strictly to give back to the community. Voting for the library budgets ensures libraries are funded on a local level and sustainable for the future.

The second most important thing is to visit the library. If you're a regular library user, you most likely know of all our services. But regulars learn about new things all the time! If you haven't been to the library recently, stop in to see all the exciting things going on- whether its programs in progress, or just seeing how people are using the space. Find out what is going on at the library. Visit our website or social media.

Tell your friends about the library. If you learned something, used a service, borrowed an item that you are really excited about, be sure to tell a friend! Word of mouth is still one of the most powerful marketing mechanisms we have despite social media.

Contact your local representatives and tell them how much libraries mean to you. Each year around the beginning of the new year, the Southern Tier Library System launches an advocacy campaign that includes asking library users to fill out a postcard. Thousands of postcards are collected around the system and delivered to our state representatives. Fill out a postcard and we do the rest! This is a big show of how much people appreciate their libraries.