The Seattle Public Library

Library Levy Background

Feb. 25, 2026

www.spl.org/Levy

Agenda

Levy Overview

- Library Budget
- Levy Categories

Administration & Central Costs

Hours & Access

- Open Hours

Helping Children

- Early Learning & Literacy

Feb. 19 Presentation: Collections, Building Maintenance, Technology & Online Services

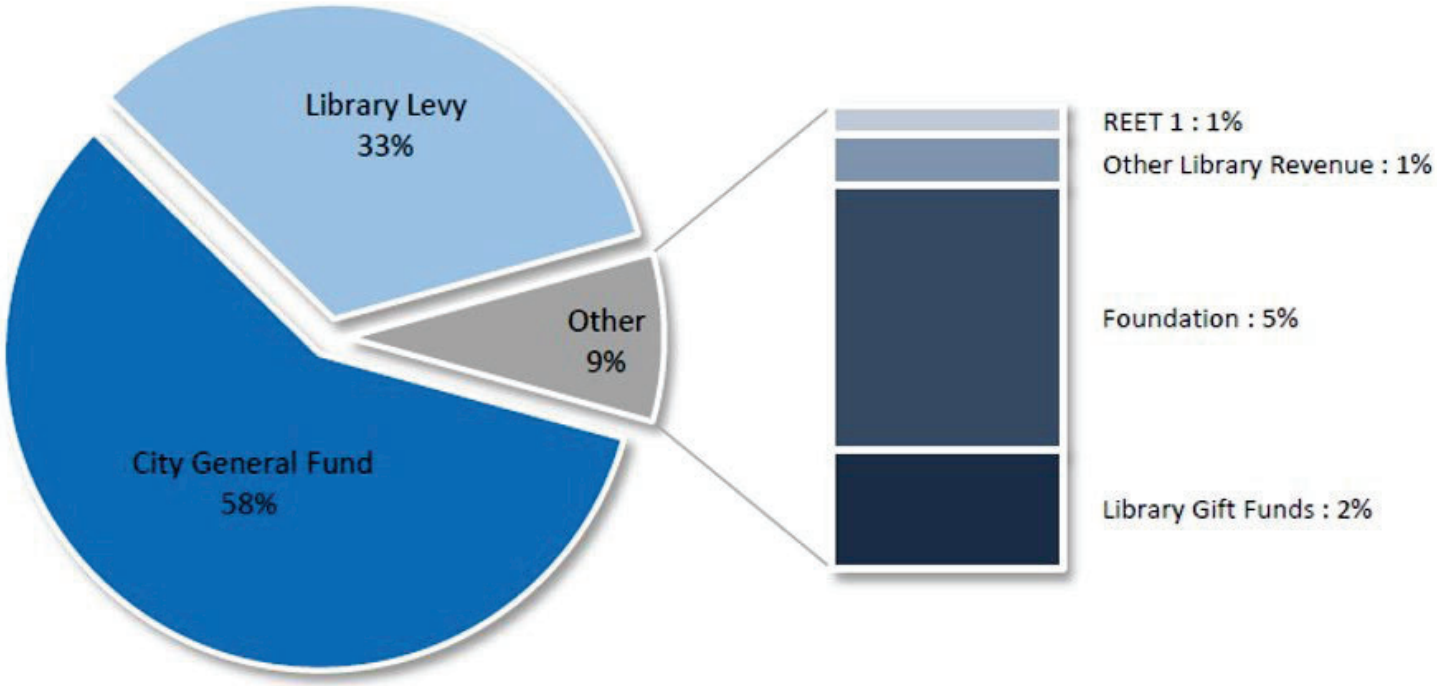
2026 Library Budget

Operating budget
$102.5M

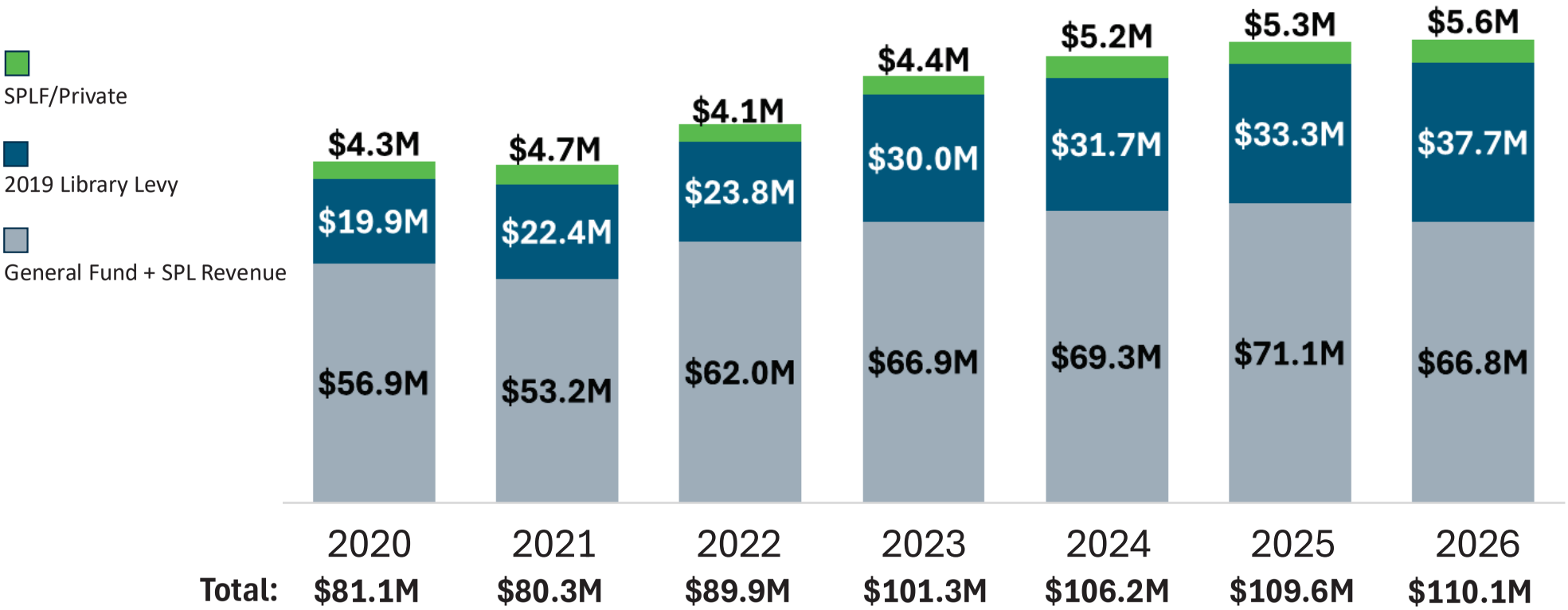
- $35.7M from levy

Capital budget
$2.6M

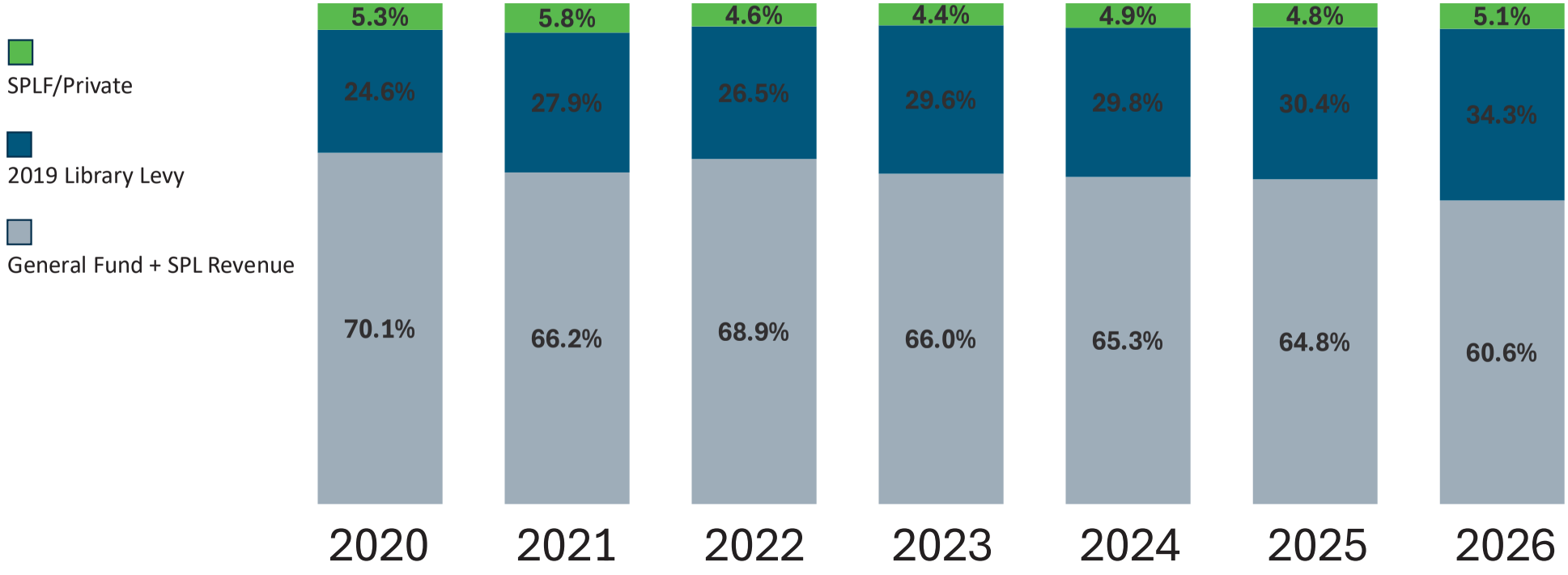
- $2.0M from levy
- $605k from REET



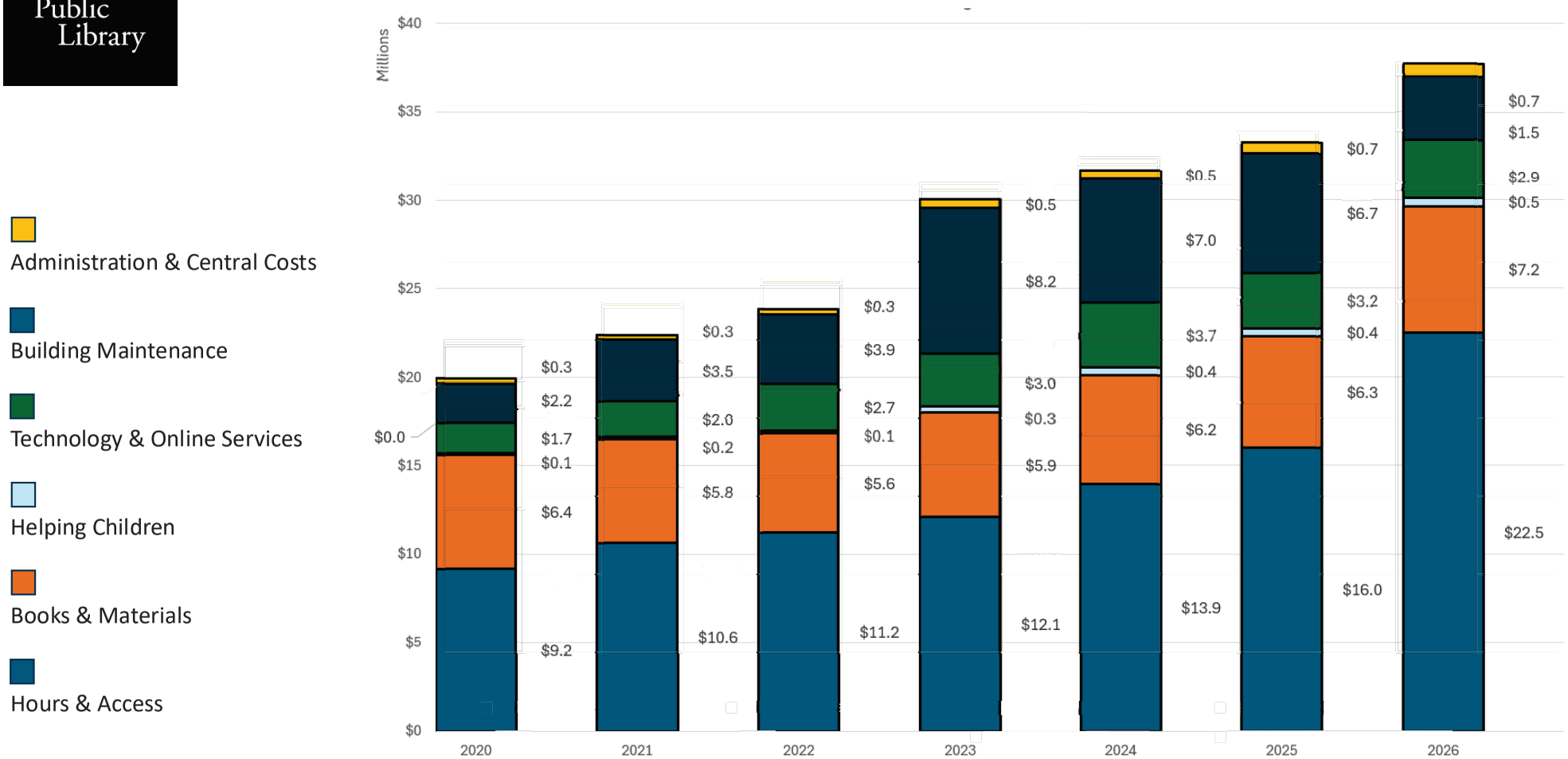
Library Budget: By Funding Source



Annual Levy Funding: Funding Source by Percentage



Annual Levy Funding: By Category



The Seattle Public Library

Administration & Central Costs

Overview

ADMINISTRATION & CENTRAL COSTS

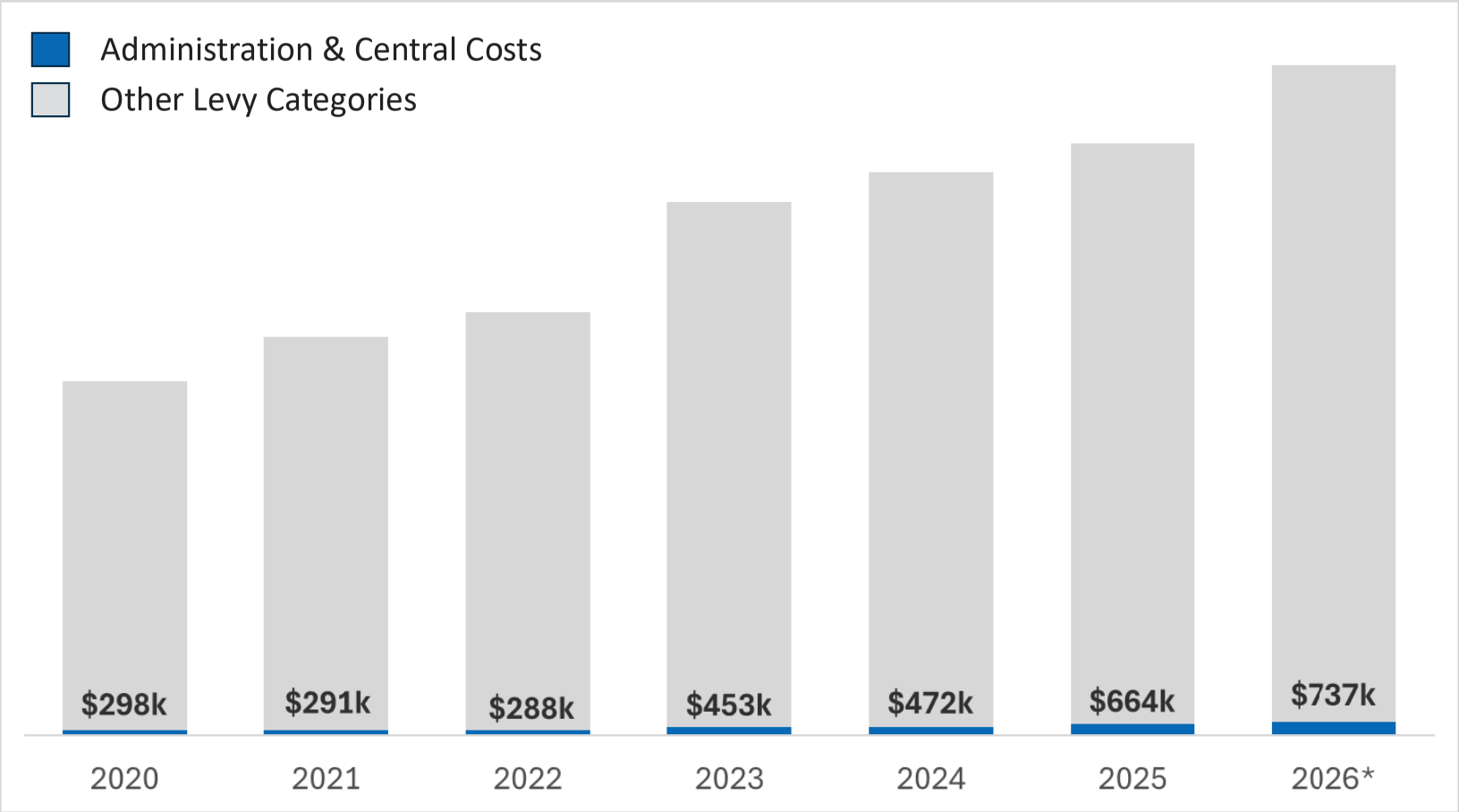
Provides funding for levy administration

- One part-time levy analyst
- Two part-time financial analysts

Provides funding for City of Seattle Central Costs

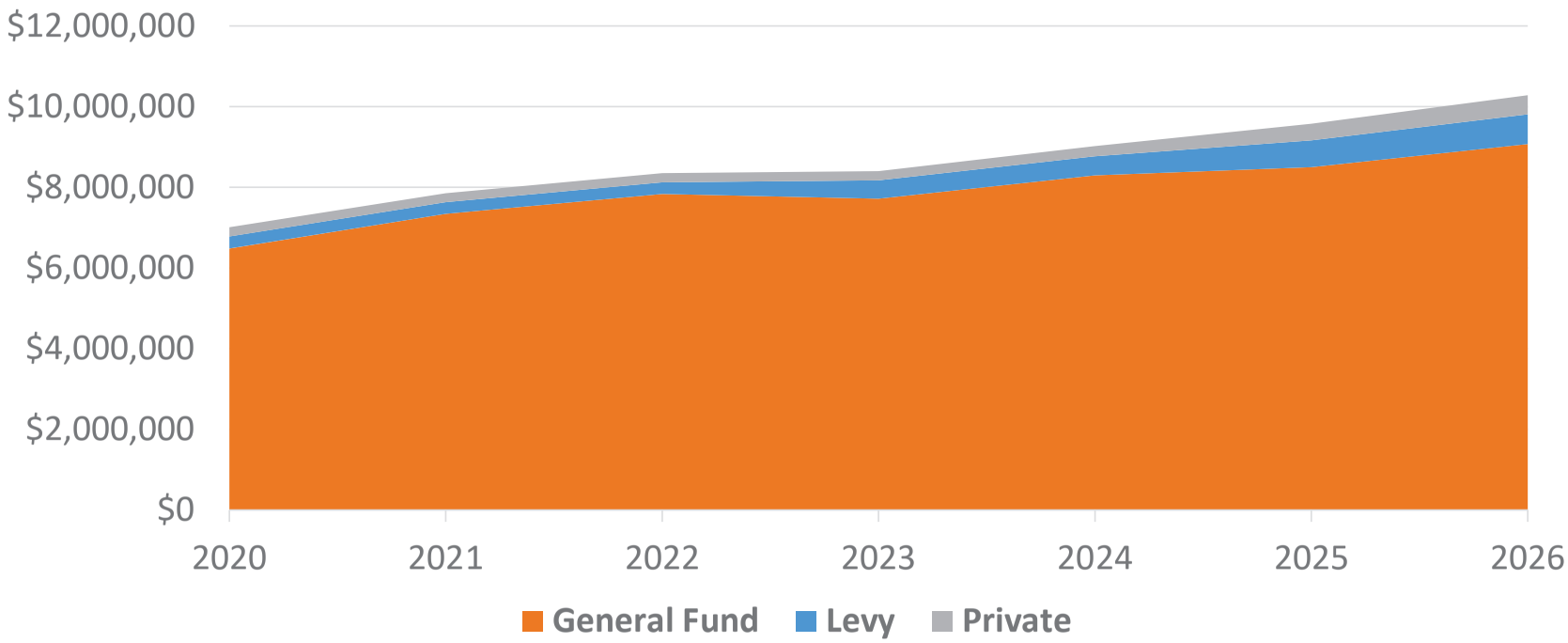
- Rate-base allocations for general services provided by and for City of Seattle departments:
  - Includes HR, IT and FAS
  - The Library relies on the City for limited services but has its own HR, IT, and Admin Services divisions
- Transferred from General Fund to the levy during budget development in 2023
  - $263k in 2023
  - $386k in 2024
  - $401k in 2025

Annual Levy Funding: Administration & Central Costs



Spending by Funding Source

ADMINISTRATION & CENTRAL COSTS



Spending by Funding Source

ADMINISTRATION & CENTRAL COSTS

Funding Source	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	*2026 budgeted*
General Fund	$6.48M	$7.34M	$7.83M	$7.72M	$8.29M	$8.50M	*$9.07M*
Library Levy	$0.30M	$0.29M	$0.29M	$0.45M	$0.47M	$0.66M	*$0.74M*
Private Funds	$0.23M	$0.22M	$0.23M	$0.23M	$0.25M	$0.41M	*$0.47M*

Opportunities

ADMINISTRATION & CENTRAL COSTS

Opportunities

- Administrative funding provides support for transparent and regular reporting of progress and performance
  - In-depth levy progress reports have been shared with the public through the life of the 2012 and 2019 levies
    - Started quarterly reporting for 2019 levy

Accomplishments

Open Hours & Access

Overview

HOURS & ACCESS

Open Hours provides community access to:

- 27 safe and welcoming public spaces
  - Cooling, warming and clean air centers
- Over 1.8M physical books and other items
- Information services staff
  - Answered over 37,000 patron questions through our Ask Us service in 2025 such as open hours, special collections inquiries, program information
- Free public meeting rooms at 22 locations
- Free private study rooms at 17 locations
- Thousands of free programs each year
- Free Wi-Fi, computers, device charging, assistive technology and more

Highlights

HOURS & ACCESS

Stabilized Open Hours

- Significantly impacted by unanticipated factors
  - 2020 pandemic closures and post-COVID hiring challenges, citywide hiring freeze,
  - Built hours back = 1,398 systemwide hours per week
  - Slightly higher than 2019 levels (~20 more hours per week)
  - More consistent schedules & fewer unexpected closures
- 14 locations open 7 days a week
  - Central, Ballard, Beacon Hill, Capitol Hill, Columbia, Douglass-Truth, Greenwood, High Point, Lake City, Montlake, Northeast, Northgate, Rainier Beach, South Park
- 12 locations open 6 days a week
  - Broadview, Delridge, Fremont, Green Lake, International District/Chinatown, Madrona-Sally Goldmark, Magnolia, NewHolly, Queen Anne, Southwest, Wallingford, West Seattle
- University Branch closed for construction

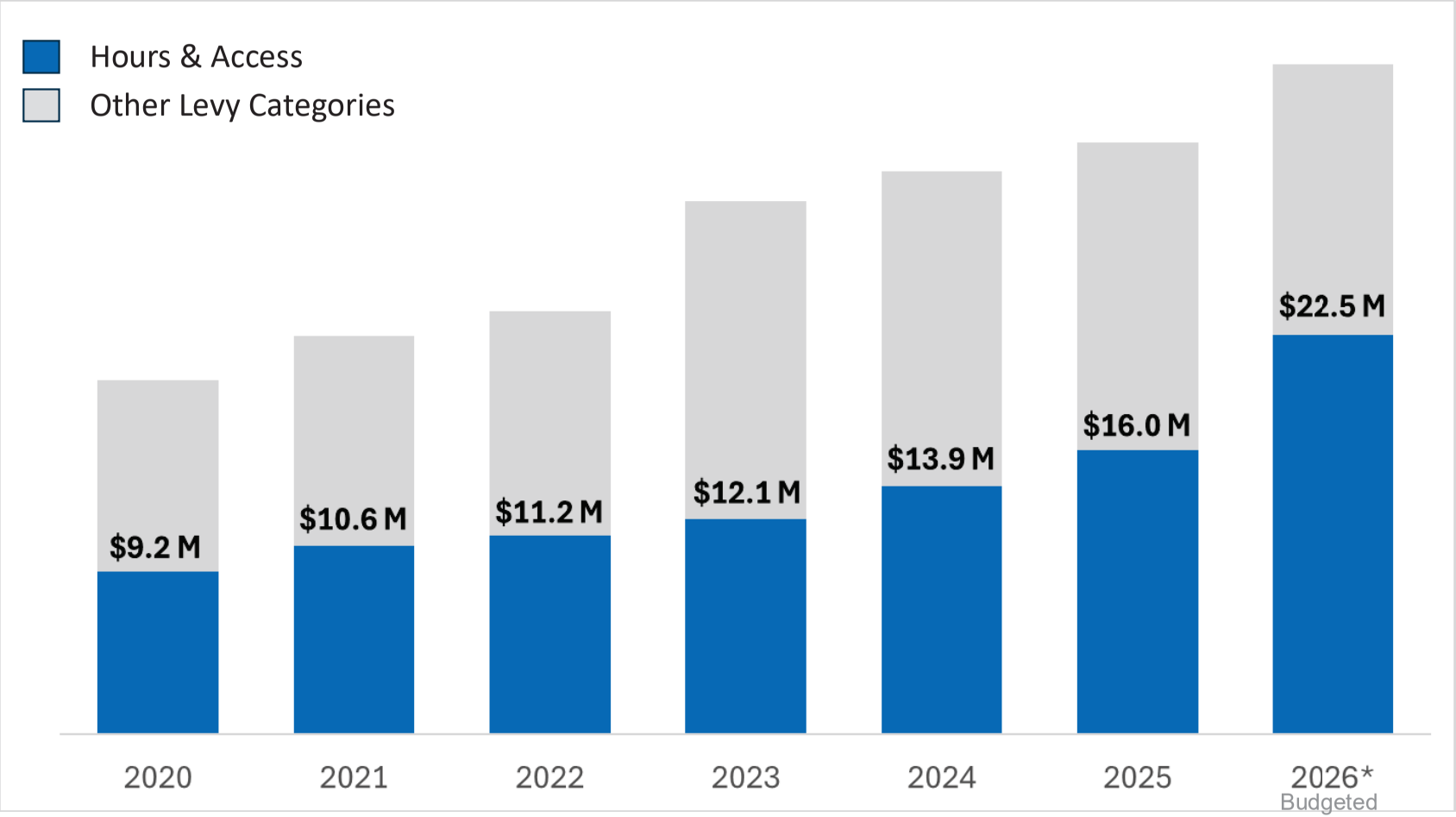
Increased Library Access

- Fine-free borrowing since 2020
- 24/7 pick-up lockers at 7 locations
- Automatic renewal of materials if not on hold for other patrons

Increased Security

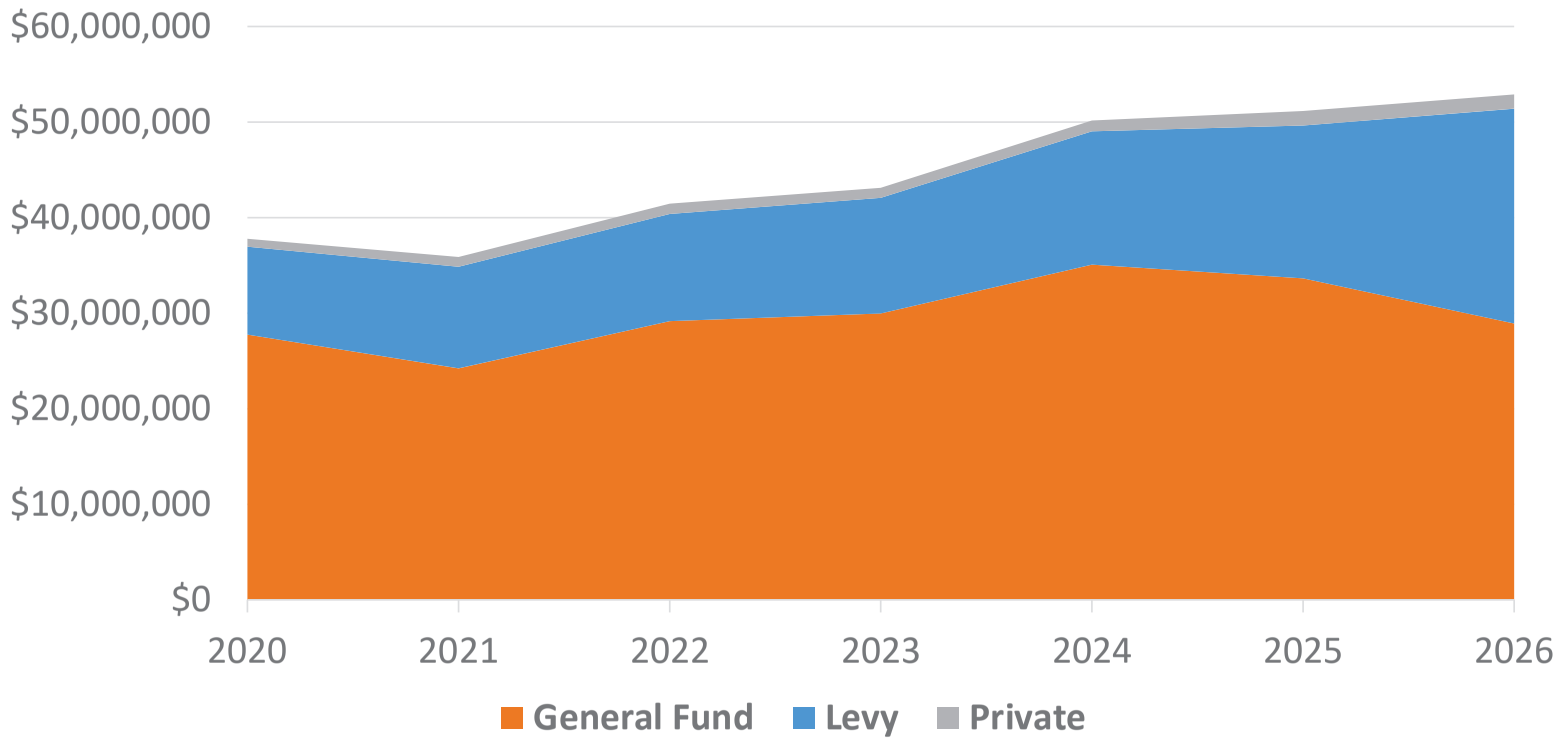
- Levy funds 9 security officers (24 staff total)
  - Essential personnel for public safety
  - Deployed from Central Library with special emphasis patrols at branches as needed
  - On duty early morning until late evening, seven days a week

Annual Levy Funding: Hours & Access



Spending by Funding Source

HOURS & ACCESS



Spending by Funding Source

HOURS & ACCESS

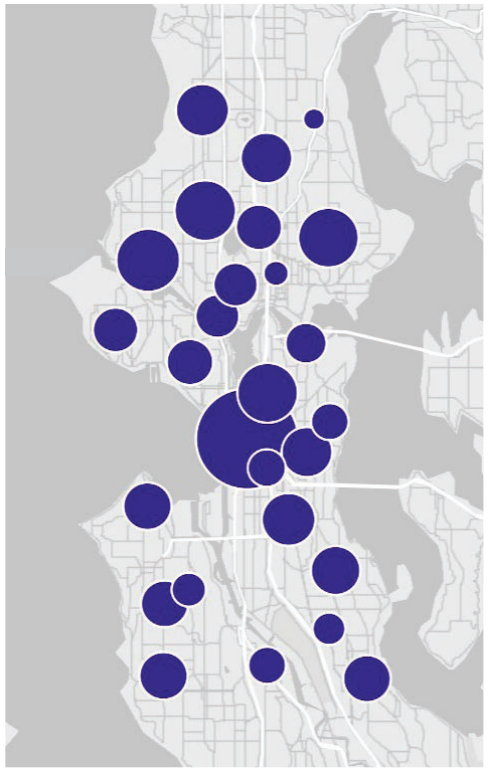
Funding Source	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	*2026 budgeted*
General Fund	$27.76M	$24.23M	$29.16M	$29.97M	$35.08M	$33.65M	*$28.91M*
Library Levy	$9.18M	$10.63M	$11.21M	$12.11M	$13.95M	$15.99M	*$22.48M*
Private Funds	$0.85M	$1.03M	$1.08M	$1.05M	$1.13M	$1.51M	*$1.50M*

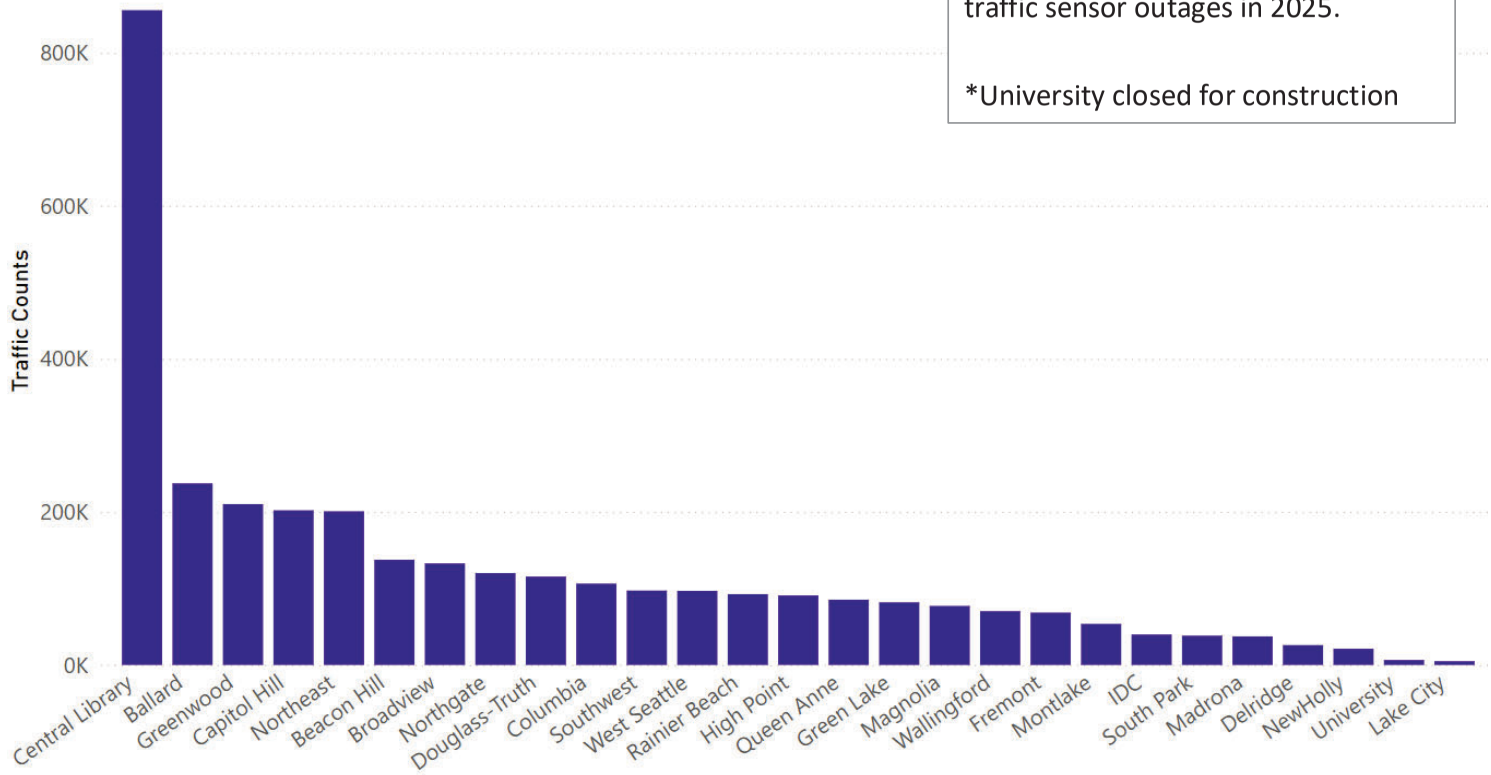
2025 Patron Traffic by Library Location

HOURS & ACCESS

*Lake City and NewHolly experienced traffic sensor outages in 2025.

*University closed for construction





Pickup Lockers: 24/7 Access

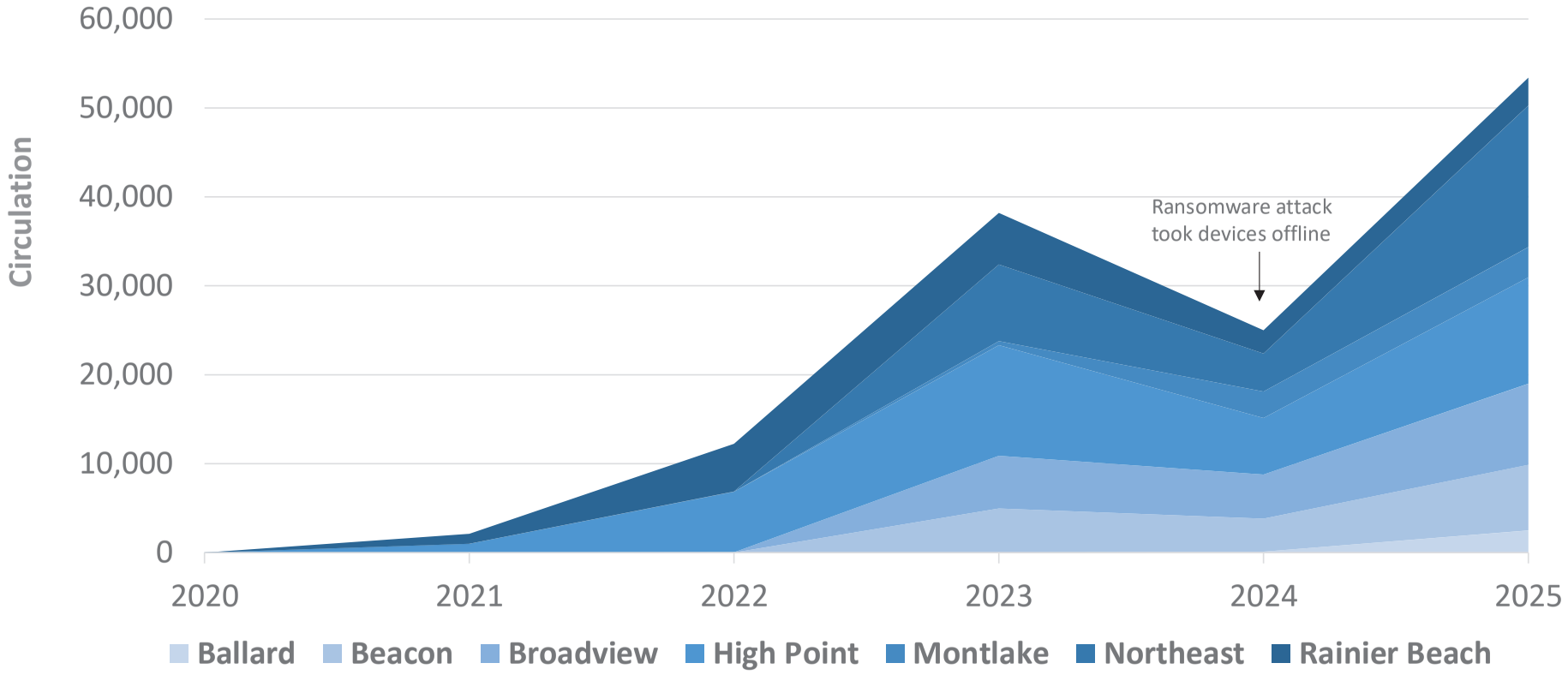
HOURS & ACCESS

Pick up your holds any time of day!

- Available at seven Library locations:
  - Ballard, Beacon Hill, Broadview, High Point, Montlake, Northeast, and Rainier Beach branches
- Instructions available in multiple languages
  - English, Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese
- Leveraged funding from multiple sources to provide this option for patrons:
  - Devices paid for with state grants and donations from The Seattle Public Library Foundation
  - Levy-funded CIP and IT teams install and maintain the devices

Locker Circulation Per Branch

HOURS & ACCESS



Pickup Lockers: Costs & Funding Sources

HOURS & ACCESS

Supported by a variety of funding sources since 2021:

$275,000: Seattle Public Library Foundation

- Devices at the Beacon, Broadview, High Point, Montlake, Northeast, and Rainier Beach branches

$91,000: State funds

- Device at the Ballard Branch

$86,000: General Fund

- System maintenance and service costs

$8,000 levy

- CIP/IT costs (construction, initial configuration)

Mobile Services: We Bring the Library to You!

HOURS & ACCESS

Four vehicles:

- **1 walk-on Bookmobile:** Book browsing for kids at preschools and childcare centers and for the public at community events
- **2 lobby stop trucks:** Material delivery to facilities for older adults and people with disabilities
- **1 delivery van:** Material delivery to facilities for older adults and people with disabilities

Books by Mail and Home Service:

- Delivers materials to your home (mail or delivery)
- For eligible patrons
    - Free service for those unable to travel to the Library

Mobile Services: We Bring the Library to You!

HOURS & ACCESS

Bookmobile & lobby stop vehicles serve:

- **Kids:** Preschools and childcare centers
  - Monthly visits
  - Eligibility requirements include:
    - Within Seattle city limits
    - At least 20 children enrolled
    - Not within easy walking distance to a library
    - Sites are free, low-cost, subsidized or serve primarily students with disabilities
- **Older adults:** Retirement homes, senior housing, and senior centers
  - For facilities that serve a significant number of residents or clients who are unable to visit a library due to age, or physical or intellectual disability
- **People with disabilities:** Living facilities, nursing homes, and group homes
  - For facilities primarily serving low-income people with disabilities

Mobile Services: We Bring the Library to You!

HOURS & ACCESS

Books by Mail and Home Service:

- Delivers materials to your home once a month
  - Mail or delivery
- Borrow any circulating library materials
  - Books, audiobooks, magazines, DVDs, and music CDs
- For eligible patrons
  - Free service for those unable to travel to the Library
  - For individuals who have an illness for six months or longer or are living with a disability

The Seattle Public Library

Mobile Services: Monthly Stops

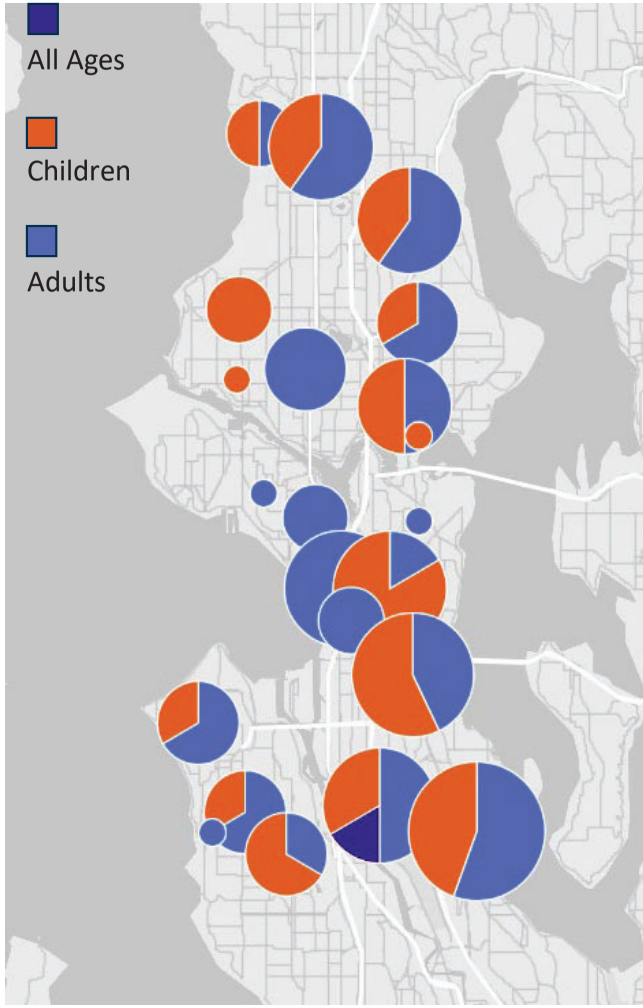
HOURS & ACCESS

Audience	Facility type	# of stops
Children	Preschool / Child Care	32
Adult	Adult family home	11
	Assisted Living	9
	Tiny House Village (Georgetown Village)	1
	Hospital (UW Center for Behavioral Health and Learning)	1
	King County Correctional Facility	1
	Low-income Housing	24
	Nursing Home	11
	Retirement Home	17
	Senior Center	3
All Ages	Tiny House Village (Camp Second Chance)	1

Mobile Services

HOURS & ACCESS

Mobile Services Stop locations By Zip Code



	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
# patrons* served	1,081	949	1,024	1,050	1,015	1,042
Circulation	38,608	62,074	59,727	62,066	45,753	52,741

*The number of patrons who check out materials using their individual library cards through lobby stops, Books by Mail and home delivery service.

Patrons who check out materials using institutional cards – such as students at preschools and people at adult family homes, assisted living facilities, encampments, etc. – are not included in this number due to the complexity of accounting for individuals. **Estimate for total number of patrons served in 2025 is 2,750.**

Library Equal Access Program (LEAP)

HOURS & ACCESS

LEAP Drop-in Assistive Technology Lab

- Located on Level 1 of the Central Library
- Mondays from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- Wednesdays and Fridays from noon to 6 p.m.
- Refreshable braille displays, CCTV magnifiers, height-adjustable computer desks

All locations offer:

- Screen reader software
- Screen magnification software
- An accessibility toolkit with magnifiers and writing guides

ADA accommodations

- Contact leap@spl.org or 206-615-1380 V/TTY

Literacy, Enrichment & Empowerment

HOURS & ACCESS

Activating Our Spaces

The Library leverages open hours, private funds, and community partnerships to offer programs for all ages, needs, and interests.

Thousands of programs and activities across all locations in 2025:

- Story times & play groups
- Teen drop-ins
- Older adult activities
- Author events
- Classes & workshops
- Arts, crafts & gallery exhibits
- Community celebrations
- Outreach activities

Literacy, Enrichment & Empowerment

HOURS & ACCESS

Program Category	Funding source	Programs
Early Learning	Levy	Story Time, World Language Story Time, Raising a Reader, Play and Learn
School K-5	Seattle Public Library Foundation and General Fund	Summer of Learning, Global Reading Challenge, Team Read, School Age Programming, Homework Help
Teen and Young Adult	General Fund	Future Pathways, Teen Workforce Development, Teen and YA programs, Homework Help
Digital Media & Learning	Seattle Public Library Foundation	Virtual Reality for Wellbeing, Nourishing Minds, KidsTeam, eSports, Kids Digital Art
Workforce Development & Adult Basic Ed	General Fund	Life Skills, In-language computer classes, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESoL), Adult education tutoring, Workforce Development
Entrepreneur and non-profit support	Seattle Public Library Foundation	Library 2 Business, Intellectual Property/Corporate Legal Consults, Business Credit Consults, 1-on-1 support
Outreach/Engagement	Seattle Public Library Foundation and General Fund	Community Engagement, Artist in Residence, Civic Engagement, QTBIPOC Artist Engagement
Literature & Humanities	Seattle Public Library Foundation	Seattle Reads, Author programs, Bullitt Lectures, Guest Curator
Older Adult Services	Seattle Public Library Foundation	Aging-In-Place and retirement, Healthy Aging, Creative Aging, Employment and Entrepreneur for older adults, Dementia-Friendly programs, Digital Literacy

Literacy Programs

HOURS & ACCESS

Early learning

- Story times & play groups
- Raising a Reader
  - Outreach program and parent engagement initiative

Student support

- LibraryLink with Seattle Public Schools
  - Instant access to online resources for SPS students & teachers; no Library card required
- Homework Help
  - Coordinated by Library staff, tutoring provided by volunteers
  - Drop-ins at Broadview, Columbia, Douglass-Truth, High Point, Lake City, NewHolly, Northgate, Rainier Beach, and South Park branches
  - 10,000 in-person sessions since 2020
  - 76% of participants report better understanding of homework assignments

Reading challenges for youth & adults

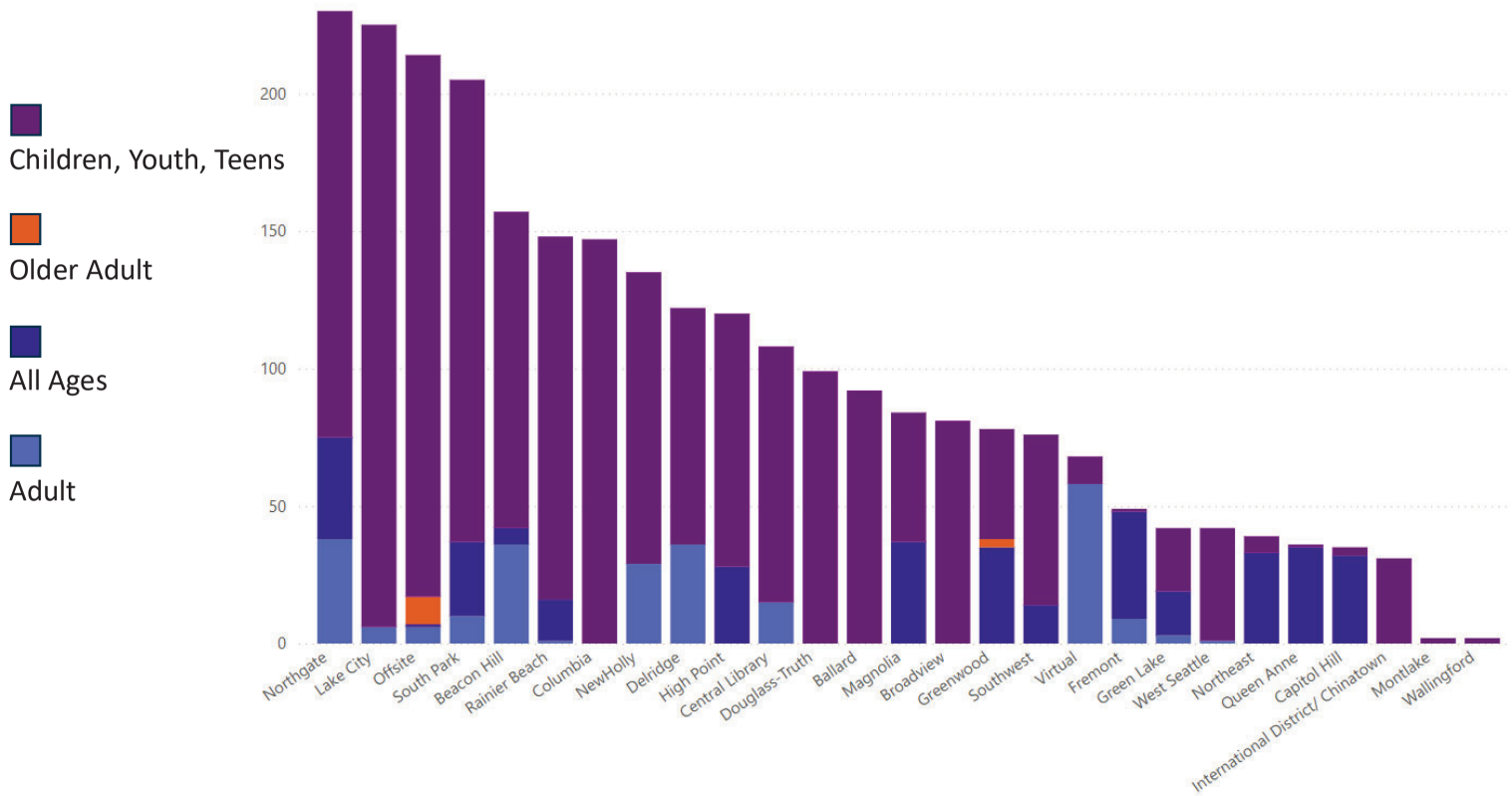
- Summer of Learning, Summer Book Bingo, Global Reading Challenge

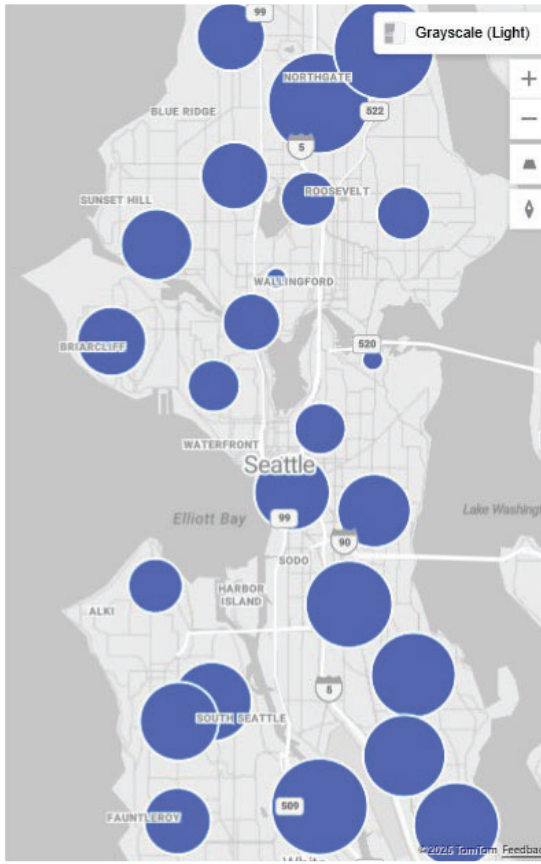
Digital literacy

- Basic skills, 3D printing, AI, cloud computing

2025 Literacy Program Sessions

HOURS & ACCESS





Enrichment Programs

HOURS & ACCESS

Events, celebrations, and enriching activities

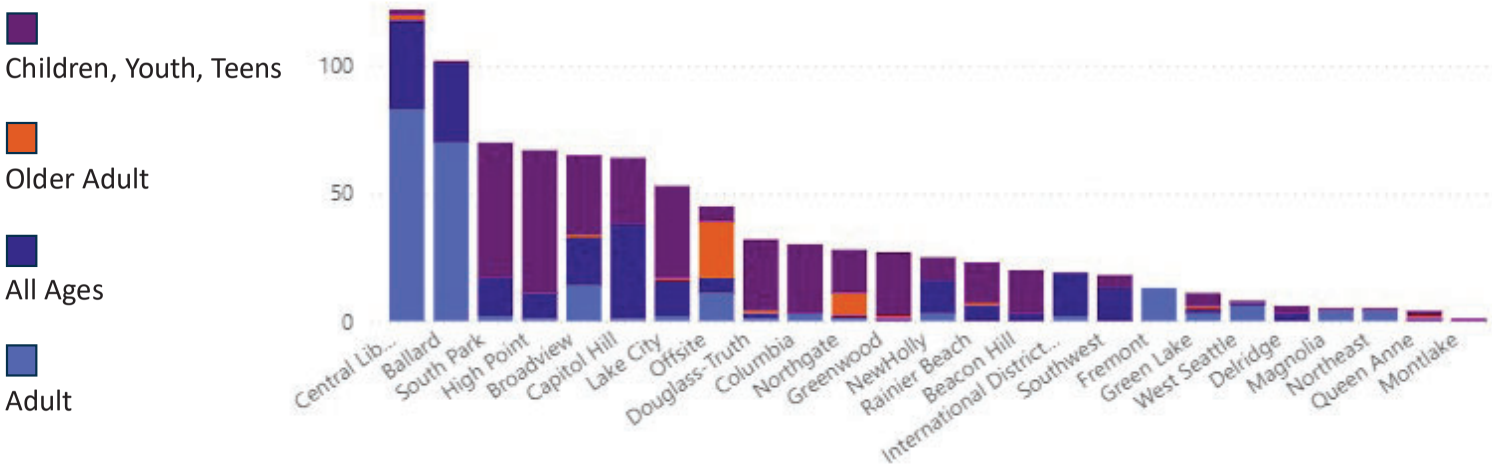
- Author readings, storytelling, open mics, musical performances, movie showings
- End of summer parties, Lunar New Year, Dia de los Muertos, branch anniversary parties
- Writing workshops, gardening classes, arts and craft drop-ins
- Free to attend and open to all. No Library card required. Popular events may require registration.

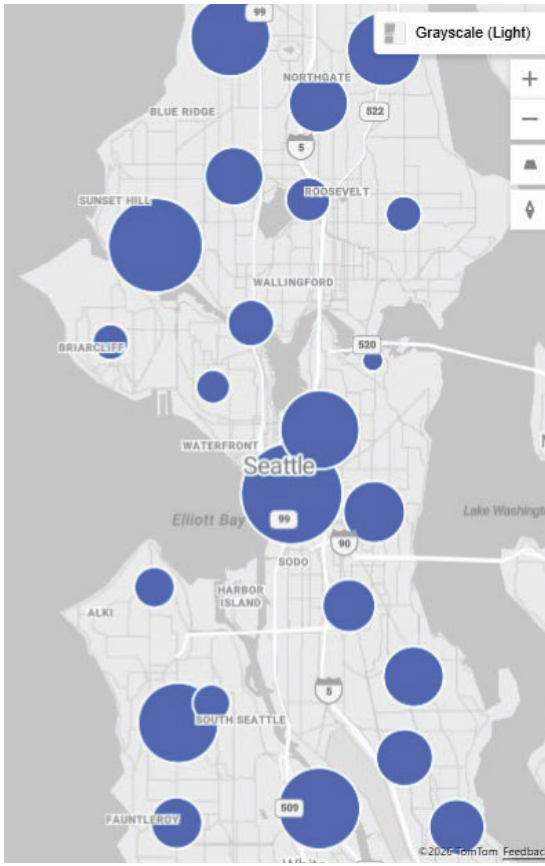
Museum Pass

- Free access to Seattle Art Museum, Seattle Aquarium, Woodland Park Zoo, and many others via library card

2025 Enrichment Program Sessions

HOURS & ACCESS





Empowerment Programs

HOURS & ACCESS

Empowering classes & workshops

- Resume essentials, job seeking & skill building
  - Partnership with Evergreen Goodwill
- Citizenship & English learning
  - Partnerships with Asian Counseling and Referral Service and Literacy Source
- Adult tutoring
- Older adult programming (estate planning, Medicare)

1:1 appointments

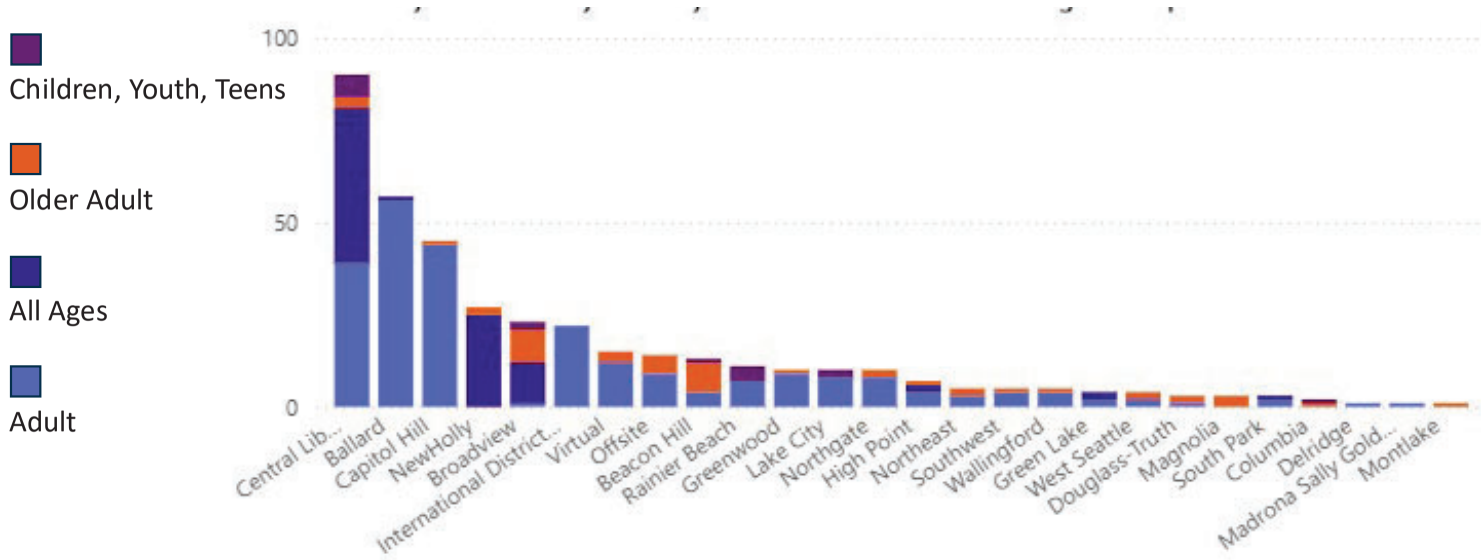
- Tax Help (Partnership with United Way, AARP)
- Library to Business: Research, legal consults, networking
- Genealogy & Seattle Room history research

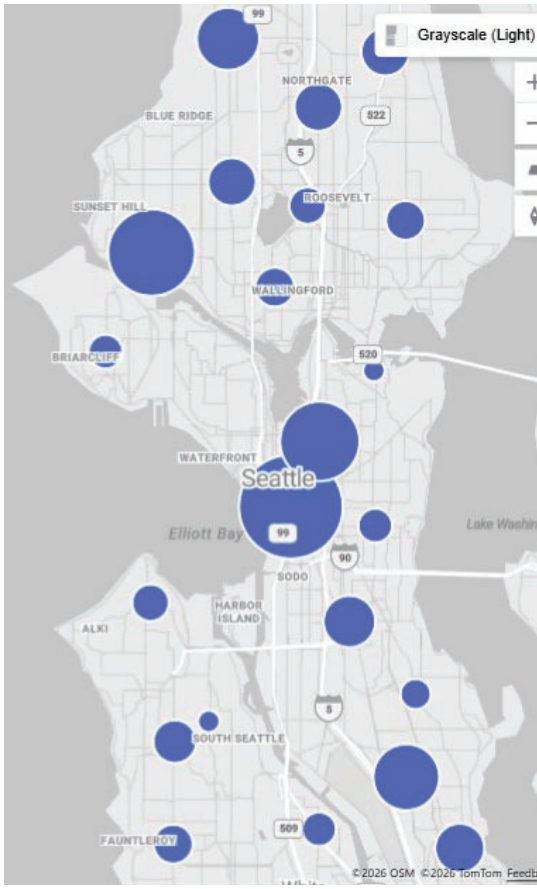
Resource fairs

- Free access to haircuts, clothing, bus tickets, social service referrals, snacks and more
  - 2025 = Downtown, Ballard, Lake City, South Park; many partners

2025 Empowerment Program Sessions

HOURS & ACCESS





Literacy, Enrichment & Empowerment

HOURS & ACCESS

Program managers and librarians responsible for developing and delivering this work

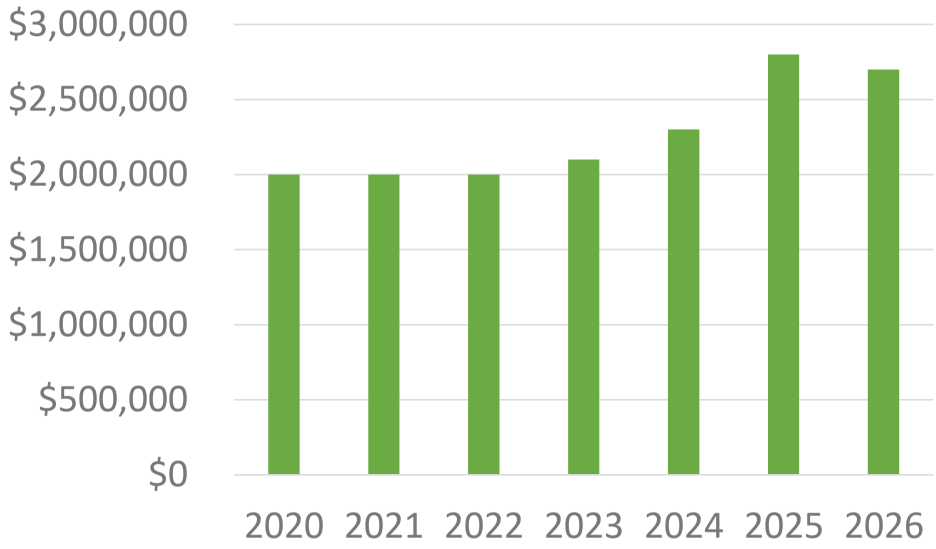
- 13 program managers help develop systemwide programs and programming framework
- ~6% of librarian time involves program work
- Programming staff (librarians & PMs):
  - 57.5 FTE funded by General Fund
  - 38 FTE funded by levy
  - 9 FTE funded by private dollars

Literacy, Enrichment & Empowerment: Private Funding

HOURS & ACCESS

General Fund & Library Levy: No direct funding provided for this work, but supported through librarian staffing hours

Private funds: Provides direct support for actual program expenses and contributes funding for 12 programming staff positions.



Funding Source	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	*2026 budgeted*
Private Funds	$2.0M	$2.0M	$2.0M	$2.1M	$2.3M	$2.8M	*$2.7M*

Impact on Library Patrons

HOURS & ACCESS

"It has been **immensely enriching**, even just knowing the resources are available. It's easy to take for granted but **there is no substitute.**"

"Sometimes emergencies, holidays, sickness just get in the way, so it is nice to know **we do not owe money on top of what is becoming a very expensive life**."

"Before this course, **I was afraid of using a computer**—worried I might break something. … Through this experience, I have learned that with practice, patience, and confidence, **I can overcome those fears and succeed**."

Opportunities

HOURS & ACCESS

Opportunities

- Levy investments provide the opportunity to scale programs citywide
- Changing patron needs and interests provide opportunity to rethink public spaces and uses
- Growing interest from patrons in offering more programs for learning, skill-building, and connecting with others

The Seattle Public Library

Accomplishments

Helping Children

Overview

HELPING CHILDREN

Kaleidoscope Play and Learn

- The only program fully funded by the levy
- For children ages 0-5 and their parents and caregivers
  - In partnership with community-based organizations
  - Weekly, 90-minute guided play sessions
  - Held at 7 Library locations
  - Supports school readiness, language development, and social skills
  - Offered in English, Amharic, Chinese (Mandarin), Somali, and Spanish
  - Bilingual delivery at select locations

Highlights

HELPING CHILDREN

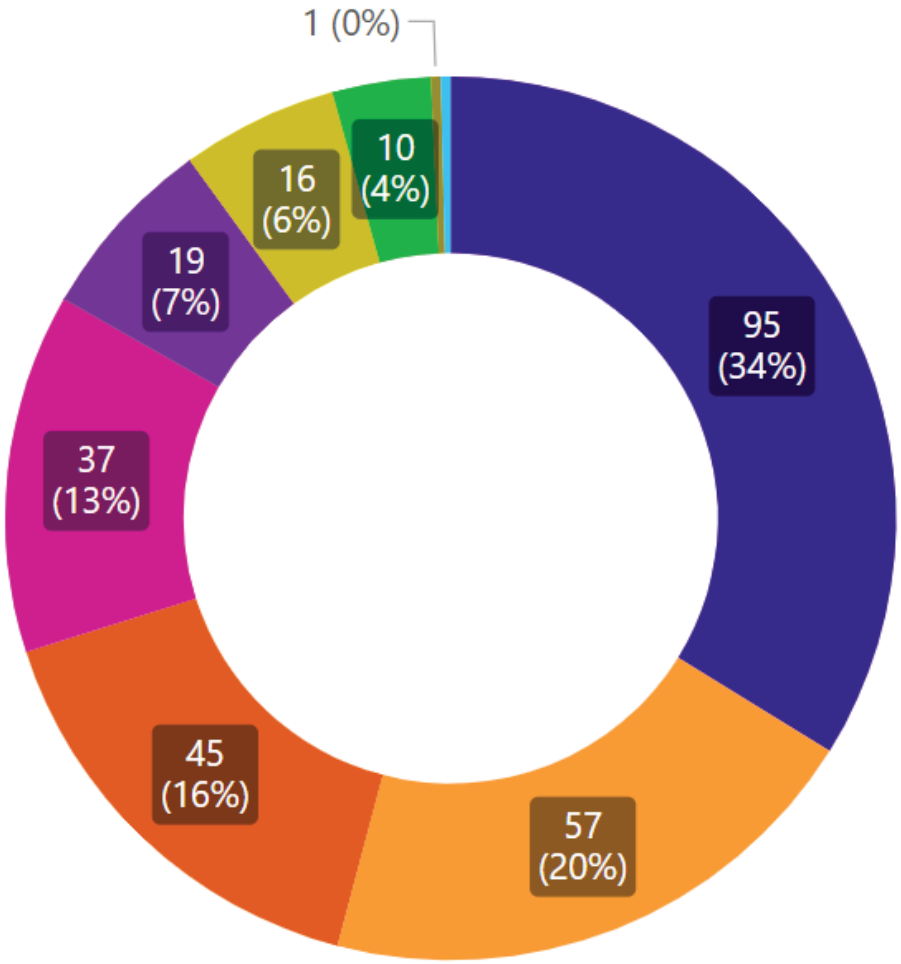
Kaleidoscope Play and Learn

- Nearly 300 sessions annually across seven branches
- Approximately 7,000 participants per year
- Post-participation surveys show participant satisfaction
    - 83% of parent and caregiver participants report increased understanding of activities that help children develop school-readiness skills

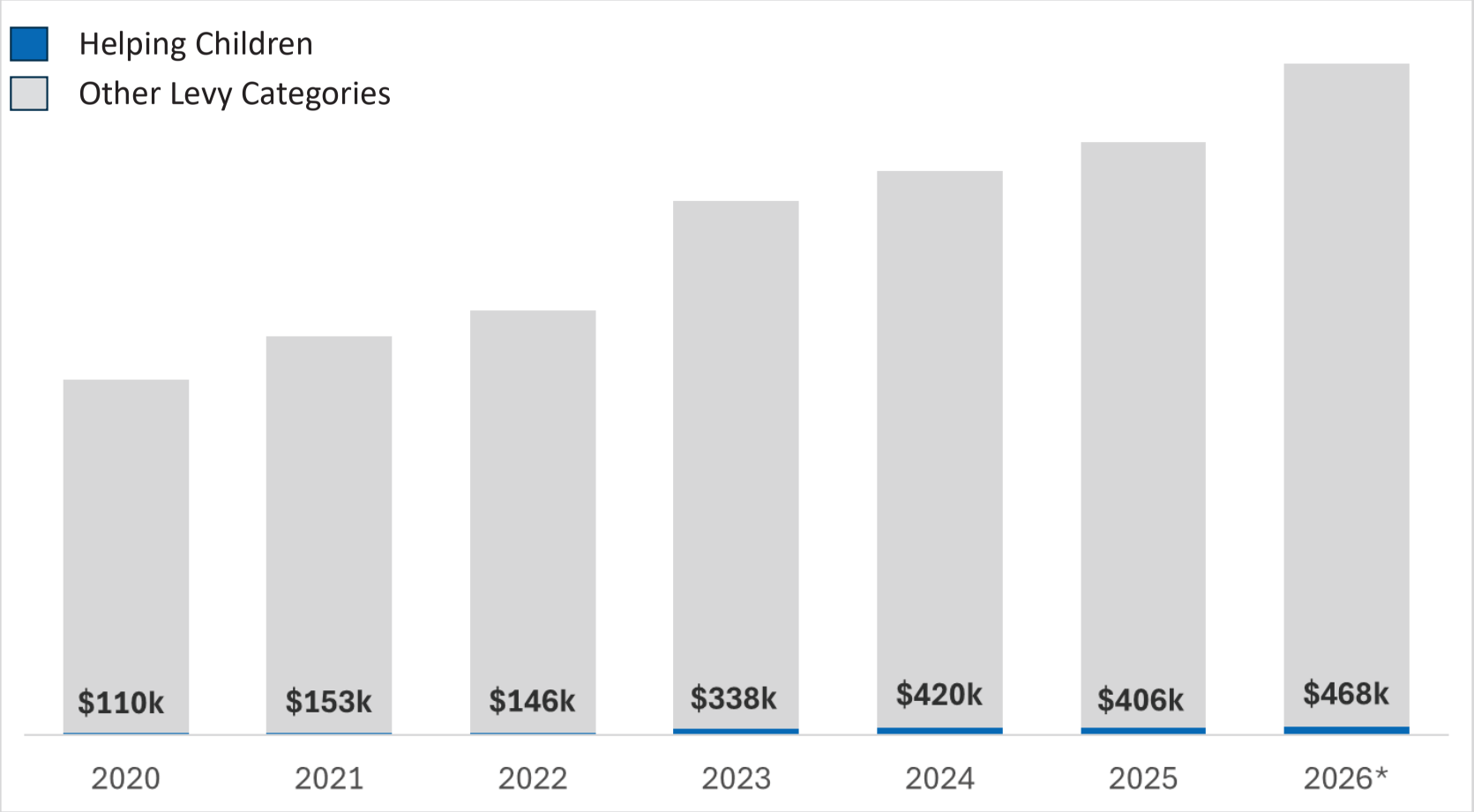
Play & Learns: Multilingual Offerings

HELPING CHILDREN

- Spanish
- English
- Mandarin
- Cantonese,Mandarin,Spanish
- Somali
- Cantonese,Spanish
- Mandarin,Spanish
- Cantonese
- Cantonese,Mandarin

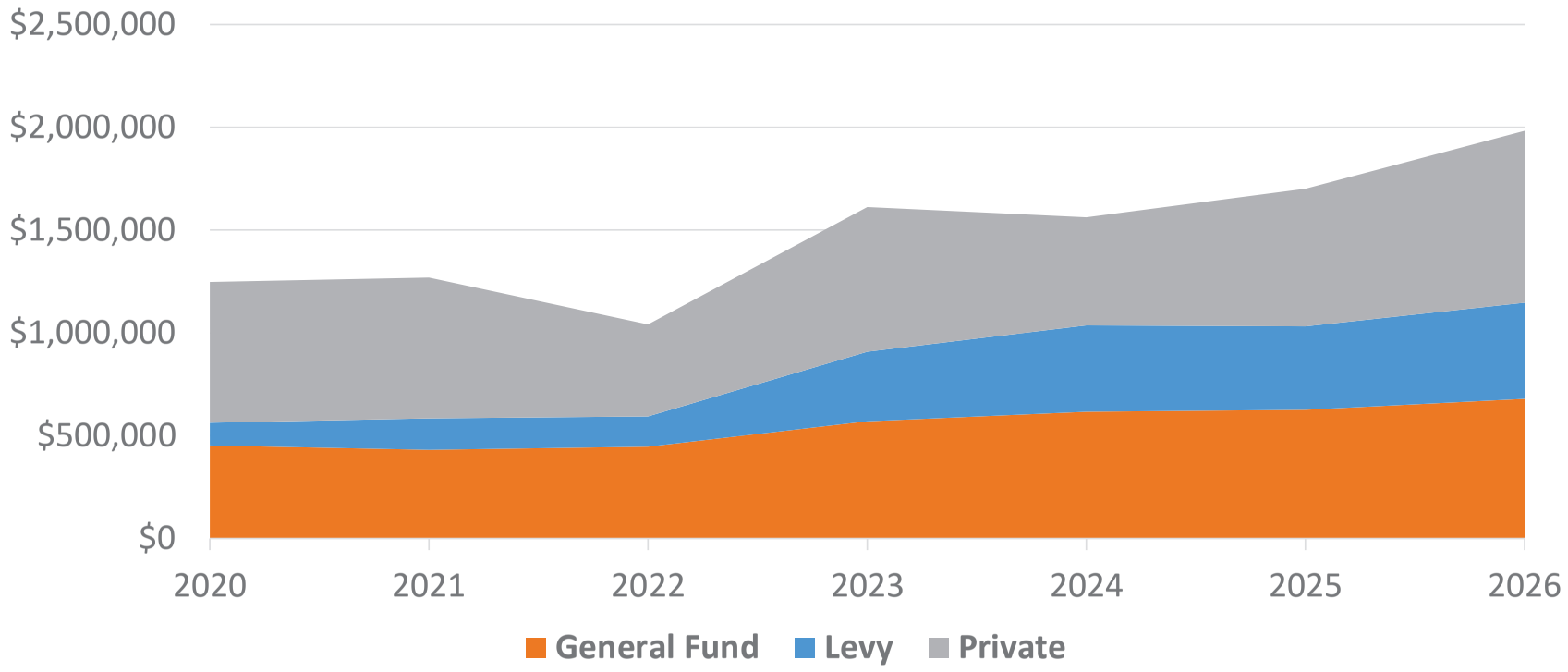


Annual Levy Funding: Helping Children



Spending by Funding Source

HELPING CHILDREN



Spending by Funding Source

HELPING CHILDREN

Funding Source	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	*2026 budgeted*
General Fund	$450k	$431k	$447k	$569k	$616k	$626k	*$679k*
Library Levy	$110k	$153k	$146k	$338k	$420k	$406k	*$468k*
Private Funds	$680k	$685k	$448k	$704k	$526k	$669k	*$836k*

Early Literacy Programs

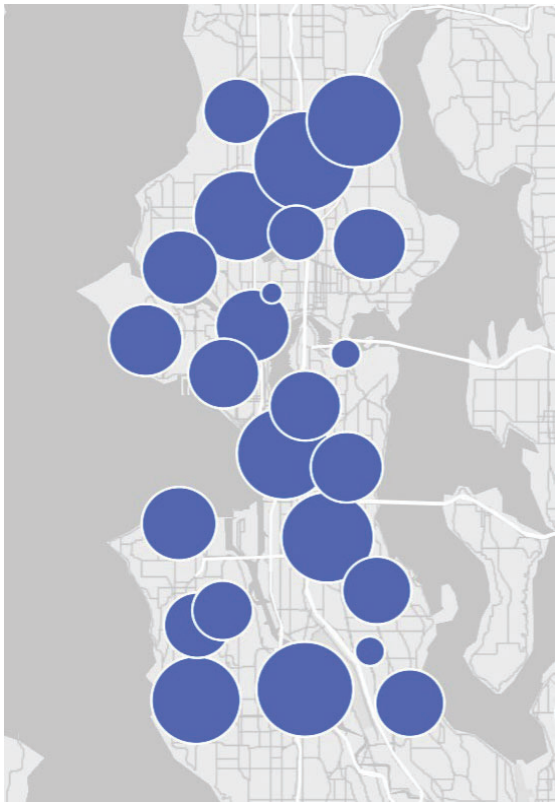
HELPING CHILDREN

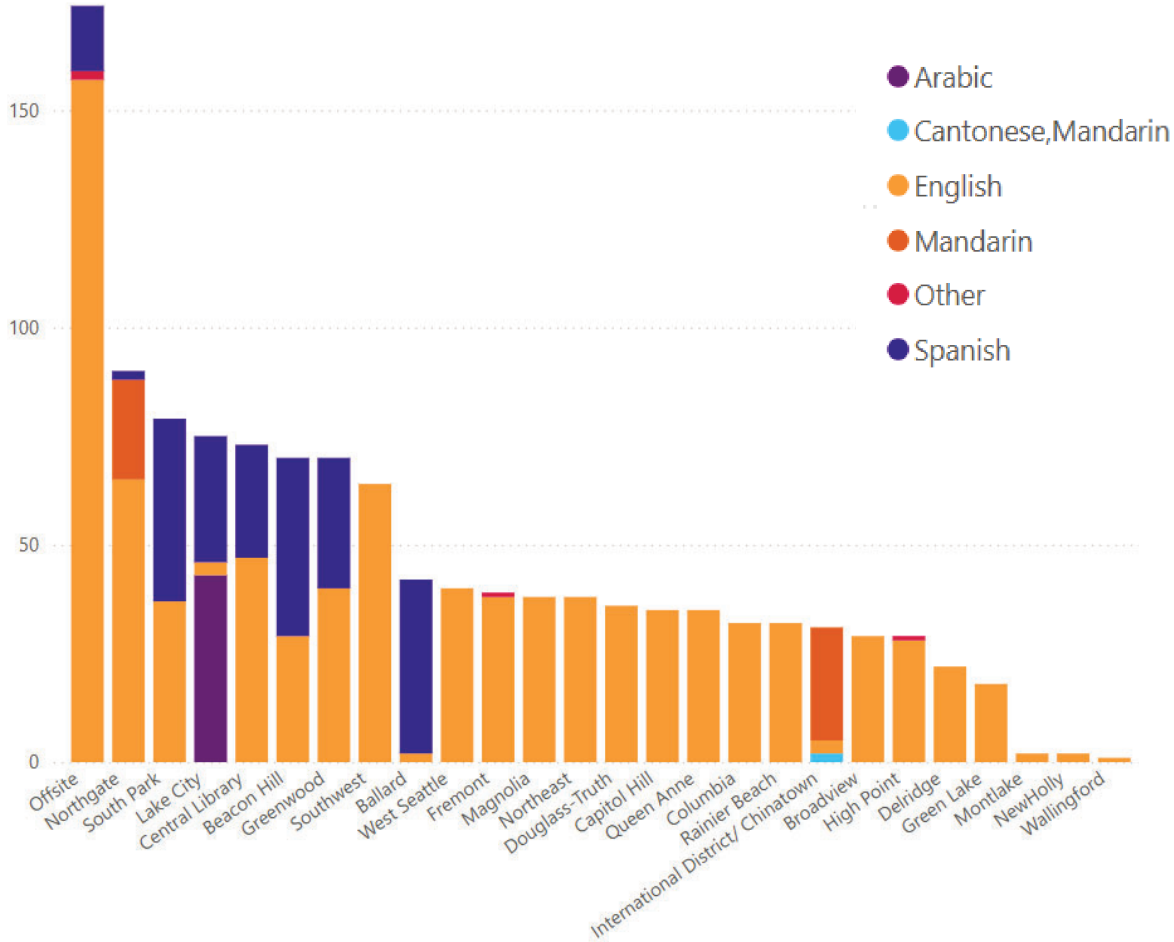
Levy dollars help support Library staffing needs, which helps support other children's programs, too:

- 1,100 story times in 2025
  - Family story time, firefighter story time, and more
  - Four languages citywide
- Raising a Reader
  - Outreach program and parent engagement initiative
  - Cultivates a love of reading, strengthens parent-child interactions
  - Held in a range of settings, including home visits, childcare programs, Head Start centers, and Seattle Preschool Program locations
  - Over 1,400 young children participate, ranging from 10 mos. to 9 yrs.
- Story Squad
  - Classroom set of books for grades 2-4
  - Title 1 schools
  - Pilot initiative: Bailey Gatzert Elementary

2025 Story Times: Languages & Locations

HELPING CHILDREN





2025 Story Times: Offsite

HELPING CHILDREN

Offsite Story Time	Sessions
Beacon Food Forest	1
Cooperative Children's Center	1
Delridge P-Patch	2
El Centro De La Raza - Cedar Crossing	9
Head Start (Emerson, James Baldwin, John Muir, Kimball, Olympic Hills, South Shore, Wing Luke)	104
High Point Neighborhood House	5
Kid's Company	2
Library Tour and Story Time	1
Lovable Nest Childcare	1
Nature Explorer Story Time Series	12
Neighborhood House - New Holly	2
Northwest Center Kids: Early Learning Center	7
Preschool (4 Amigos, Science North Acres Park, CISC, ReWA, South Shore, Delridge Launch, Artist Playground, Pinehurst Community Center)	33
Prime Time with Family Works	15
ReWa (Beacon Hill, Lake City, MLK)	19

Impact on Library Patrons

HELPING CHILDREN

"It is a wonderful structure and play time close to the community, and **we can make connections with other grandparents, families, and children**."

"The activities [my son] did at the program, such as learning how to share toys with other kids, follow directions and use scissor safely, are important. **All these things will help my son prepare for school.** Play & Learn provides a safe place for him to have social interaction with other children."

"**I feel supported without being judged.**"

Opportunities

HELPING CHILDREN

Opportunities

- Levy investment provides opportunity to offer more early literacy programs citywide
- Story times, play groups and other early learning activities are popular
- More opportunity to support other types early literacy programs and languages

The Seattle Public Library

Questions?

www.spl.org/Levy

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Thank you!

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