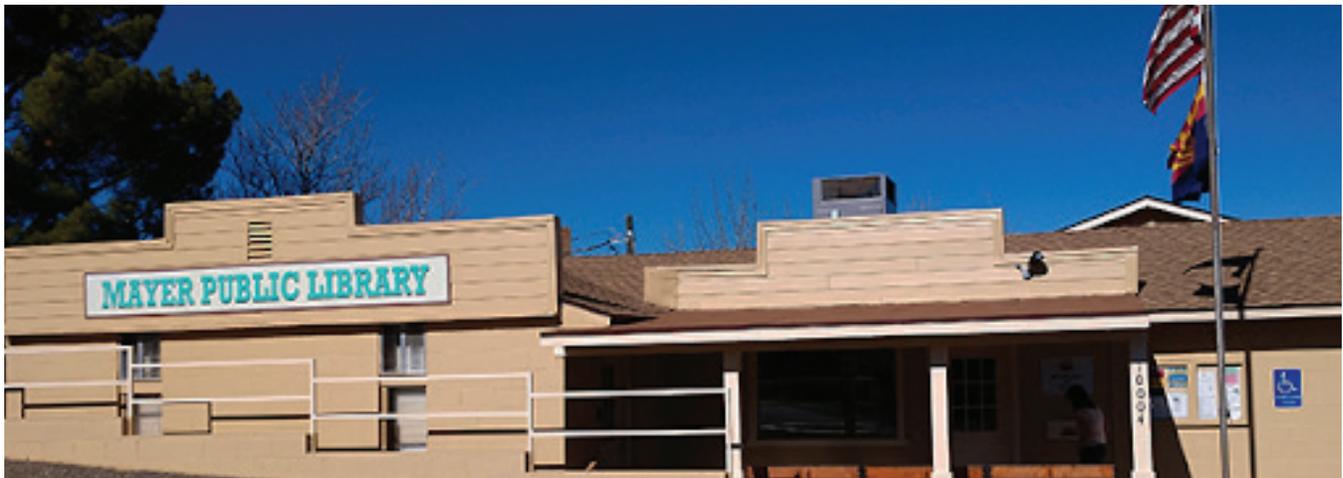INSTITUTE *of*
**Museum** and **Library**
SERVICES

Library Profile
# YAVAPAI COUNTY
# FREE LIBRARY DISTRICT

YAVAPAI COUNTY, ARIZONA

# Library Profile: Yavapai County Free Library District



## YAVAPAI COUNTY, ARIZONA

The Yavapai County Free Library District (the District) serves Yavapai County, Arizona. The District consists of 15 branches throughout the county and has an annual budget of $1,220,236 (2018–2019). From 2018–2019, the District hosted 148,408 in-person visits across locations, including 32,822 computer sessions and 2,584 programs. Annual circulation included 229,502 physical materials.

The District's mission is "to provide library materials and services to meet the informational, cultural, and recreational needs of all residents of Yavapai County through our branch libraries, affiliates, and the Yavapai Library Network." The District is noted for its ability to facilitate partnerships, programming, and resource sharing across a vast geographical terrain. Its organizational values are grounded in "service, leadership, responsibility, and professionalism."
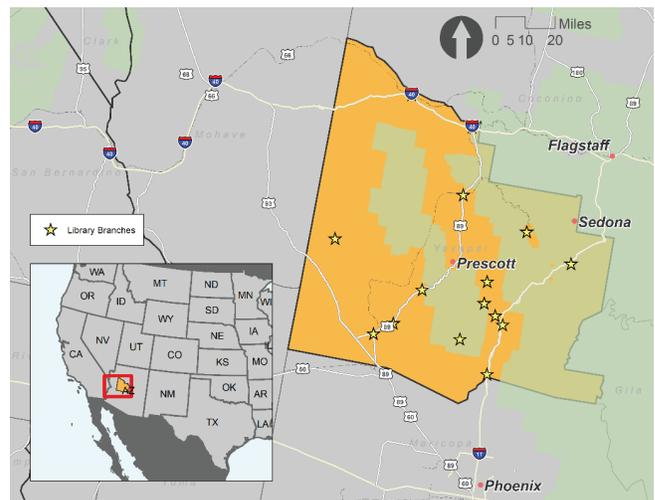
# YAVAPAI COUNTY

Yavapai County is located in central Arizona, with an estimated population of approximately 218,586 and an area of 8,125 square miles (roughly the size of New Jersey). Yavapai County has experienced rapid growth in the 21st century. Parts of the county are undergoing rapid suburban style development, while vast areas of the county are wilderness and unincorporated and isolated communities. The median household income is about $46,638 a year, and the poverty rate is 9.7 percent, as compared to the national poverty rate of 11 percent. The county population is 81.2 percent White and 14.1 percent Hispanic, with a 0.5 percent Black population.

| | Population | % Change in Population (2000–2016) | % White | % Black | % Hispanic | % Asian | % Other | Median Household Income | % Families in Poverty |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| United States | 318,558,162 | 13.2 | 62.0 | 12.3 | 17.3 | 5.2 | 3.3 | $55,322 | 11.0 |
| Yavapai County | 218,586 | 30.5 | 81.2 | 0.5 | 14.1 | 0.8 | 3.5 | $46,638 | 9.7 |

Compared to other suburban and rural counties across the country, Yavapai County students experience extremely high needs, reflected in students' performance across a range of publicly available measures of success. Yavapai County fell in the bottom quartile of the School Effectiveness Index.[1] Health Care & Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Accommodation & Food Service, and Education Services represent the largest employment sectors in Yavapai county, employing more than half of all working adults.

| | Total Labor Force | % Health Care & Social Assistance | % Retail Trade | % Accommodation & Food Service | % Education Services |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| United States* | 131,362,978 | 14.5 | 10.9 | 8.9 | 9.2 |
| Yavapai County | 55,343 | 18.0 | 13.0 | 13.0 | 10.0 |

*Data Sources: 2012–16 American Community Survey five-year estimates; U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), 2017.*

*\*Continental figures for total labor force include the 48 lower states and Washington, DC.*

1    Data elements included in the School Effectiveness Index, along with measures for Yavapai County, can be found at the beginning of Appendix II.

## SITE VISIT PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

In January 2020, the study team conducted interviews with seven current District staff and seven representatives from partner organizations—five school superintendents and two members of local government. Site visit interviews conducted with District staff and partners focused on understanding the programming and partnerships that support formal and informal learning in Yavapai County as well as the District's institutional approaches to assessment and sustainability.

In addition, the following data were used to create the network map included in this profile:

- 2016 Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Public Libraries Survey for the District

- Yavapai Library Network Financial Statements

- Lists of program offerings and program partners

- Interview notes and related materials collected by the case study team

This site profile includes the following:

- A summary of select District programming and partnerships that support library customers' access to formal and informal education and the overall educational capacity of the broader community

- A descriptive network map that illustrates the scope and variety of connections the District maintains with local partners throughout the county and beyond

## THE DISTRICT REPRESENTS A UNIQUE APPROACH TO SUPPORTING FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION ACROSS VAST AREAS WITH LIMITED RESOURCES

The District spearheaded the creation of the Yavapai Library Network (the Network) and serves as the administrative leader for the Network. The Network was initially created as an innovative approach to sharing resources across a wide geographical area. Throughout the county, there is limited public infrastructure and few public dollars for small towns or unincorporated parts of the county. Local residents and public officials are highly attuned to their limited public dollars being spent in a fiscally responsible way. The Network was seen as a solution to share services across vast physical distances and to reduce the fiscal burdens on individual towns and school districts across the county.

The Network consists of 42 different entities and institutions—District libraries, municipal libraries, academic libraries, K–12 school libraries, and libraries located in museums— that agree to share resources, including books, e-books, online databases, and academic journals. Each institution pays fees to the Network depending on its capacity. Some entities that are part of the Network have very little space, or share space with a school, and rely on ordering books from other partners. The Network pools its collective resources in a single-platform catalog so that books, entertainment, and educational and digital materials are available to any member of the Network, anywhere in the county, no matter how remote.

All Network members are eligible for cataloging services from the District, and the District also manages transit of resources from place to place. To participate, each institution signs a Library Support Agreement with the consent of its respective legal counsel and governing boards. Participating institutions have their own rules and regulations, but there are Network rules that everyone must follow. The format leverages each institution's resources to benefit all the people in the county. Consolidating resources also reduces the fiscal burden for taxpayers, providing additional services at a reduced cost.

Maintaining the Network is an iterative process—there are challenges in coordinating disparate independent entities, sometimes across large physical distances. However, there is strong communication between partners and the District to ensure all participants understand their roles and responsibilities. The Network has a steering committee and, within that body, an executive committee and subcommittees who oversee circulation, youth services, cataloging, and public services. District staff also travel to different locations throughout the county to provide professional development and training to partner staff as needed, explaining how to access and use the available resources within the Network.

## THE DISTRICT PROVIDES ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOLS

Throughout the county, there are limited educational resources, and many students in public schools face considerable academic and out-of-school challenges. The District provides an array of supports directly to schools throughout the county. In some remote areas, the District's facility serves as the school library, as many public-school libraries have been casualties of reduced school funding in parts of the county.

One school district superintendent noted that in these places, communities would not have a library without this partnership. In one rural location, a small library space was created in the existing one-room schoolhouse. In another remote area, the county government collocated a library on school property for both students and the wider community. And in yet another example, the school district and a local community college worked together to retrofit an obsolete building into a high school library; the District oversees staffing and services there. These joint-use facilities demonstrate the importance of community partnerships and collaboration in addressing the need for resources in the county. As a school district superintendent noted:

*"We're working together to blur the lines of where the library ends and school begins. Community goals and literacy are not just one group's goal, it's working together and finding ways to work together as a community."*

The District also offers professional development training for teachers on how to use resources and promote access to the wider Network. However, uptake of these additional supports varies considerably from school district to school district across the county. In some places, teachers are responsible for multiple grade levels and struggle with capacity. Collaboration between library staff and teachers is most common in joint-use spaces, where these shared spaces create opportunities to engage teachers and augment the classroom curriculum in more intentional ways.

In different parts of the county, residents and families also experience elevated levels of concentrated poverty, homelessness and displacement, and substance abuse. Children in these areas often bring challenges associated with these out-of-school situations with them to school and to the libraries. School librarians play

an important role in engaging students, building personal relationships, and encouraging both formal and informal education. One school librarian spoke of the importance of individual connection and building trust with students:

> *"There are a few readers or gamers, and when they ask you to buy something to put in the collection and you do, they're so appreciative. Their own personal reading, activity, learning—you're there to support that. And they realize that often learning doesn't just happen in the classroom, but outside the classroom . . . you give people a voice and listen."*

One superintendent added that in these places, they take an "each one, reach one approach"—every connection with a student is critical, and the school library is one important vehicle to support its children.

School libraries also serve as an after-school resource in remote areas. At the collocated school/library, the library offers after-school programming in partnership with the school; the District provides funding for an after-school teacher to supervise students, who also get a snack (the school is also a food bank), complete their homework, and have computer and internet access. As in other rural areas, many parts of the county have limited internet access and connectivity, and school libraries serve as a resource for students to access free, reliable Wi-Fi and computers.

## PUBLIC LIBRARIES ARE CRITICAL FOR OTHER PUBLIC SECTOR COMMUNICATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

The District's operation of small locations that reach out into rural areas makes it a particularly valuable partner. Partners in Yavapai County described the libraries as vital access points to reach locals and provide information and services beyond "traditional" library services in rural areas. Many times, these partnerships are with public sector departments. Library branches become a conduit for public services: Library staff promote other public sector programs and services, which provide another opportunity for residents to pass through their facilities.

For example, the Yavapai County Development Services office operates a rotating schedule of traveling workshops that bring information on building permits and technical advice to remote places. The Yavapai County Flood Control District does mitigation, education, and outreach around flood control and invites residents to attend workshops at the library to understand how their properties may be impacted by changing floodplains. From a public health perspective, the District also works with Yavapai County

Community Health Services (YCCHS). The county offers flu shots; wellness and health screenings; mobile Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics; opioid and overdose prevention sessions; and chronic disease management programs at branch locations. YCCHS also trains library staff to help people navigate insurance access and enrollment.

In remote areas, branch libraries also function as a site for mail/package collection and notary services; for the latter, people previously had to travel long distances to get something notarized. Many residents choose to live in these extremely remote locations, and when they need something, or in emergencies (e.g., floods, fires), the library is a point of refuge and support. For instance, after a devastating series of wildfires in the area, the Yavapai County Flood Control District and Yavapai County Development Services were able to quickly set up stations in the branches for people to get information about filing claims and rebuilding their homes.

In some of these remote places, the library is the only place where Wi-Fi is available. Like many rural areas across the country, many parts of the county have limited internet access. The District's branch libraries serve as a resource for rural and low-income residents to access free, reliable Wi-Fi and computers, whether it be for job seeking, homework, social media, or any other informational needs. Patrons can also use the internet to follow up on information gained from public service workshops, like insurance enrollment or claim filing.

## INFORMAL NETWORKS PROMOTE SOCIAL WELLBEING IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

One school district superintendent observed that, "Here, it's about one relationship at a time. Without relationships nothing happens." The Network leverages formal connections to provide services in rural communities. However, informal connections are also extremely important to the District. Informal social networks and volunteers activate branch locations in small towns and rural and unincorporated areas. There is usually one full-time library coordinator per branch; many live in the same community that they work in, and this allows them to understand, find out about, and respond quickly to local needs and opportunities.

For instance, a conversation between an elementary school principal and a library branch staff member, who is also a parent at the school, led to the establishment of an after-school coding program. Some staff members at small branches will call people personally to get them in the door for partner programming. These informal relationships are testament to a broader tendency to solve problems collectively, leverage personal relationships, and collaborate on issues where there are very few public resources or solutions. One library partner related that it

needed a summer reading program in its rural area—the library was the site; the local Rotary organization funded a bus that transported young people from across the area to the program; and community members involved in Kiwanis and the local community association worked together to make it happen.

As one of few central spaces accessible to the public, libraries are a popular place to host events like community and public meetings. The community widely perceives branches as a place to meet and socialize—a safe and neutral environment where everyone is welcome. People go to the library simply to talk and connect with others, which is important in rural areas where there is little social infrastructure and limited opportunities for making connections. One library partner noted that adult mental health struggles are an issue in the county, with social isolation being one factor. In response, the District recently launched a countywide community calendar with events both in and outside of the library as part of a broader push to build programs around volunteerism and connecting people.

# USING DATA AND ASSESSMENT TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

Most of the District's funding comes from public support through property taxes, and the County Board of Supervisors appropriates it directly. Maintaining positive relationships between District leadership, board members, local elected officials, and other stakeholders in the broader community is important for ensuring sustainability. It is also just as important that these various stakeholders understand the value the District provides for the residents of the county.

The District takes a robust approach to tracking outputs to ensure that the County Board of Supervisors can clearly understand the impact that libraries have on their communities. The District primarily relies on data that demonstrate the financial value of its services to taxpayers. This approach demonstrates the importance of using assessment to drive budget-making priorities and to advocate for an institution's value. The District tracks outputs, like circulation trends and specific programs that are driving attendance. It also tracks new patrons, library visits, volunteer hours, number of items in transit, and computer sessions.

In 2014, BERK Consulting from Seattle, Washington, conducted a study on the cost-effectiveness and return on investment of the Network. The report quantified the value of access to databases, online tutors, and resources and concluded that for every $1 of taxpayer funds, Network libraries received nearly $8 in services.[2] The District also regularly estimates cost per square foot for all branch libraries and compares those costs to services provided to show how it is effectively leveraging taxpayer dollars.

Efforts to understand the impact of the District's programming efforts tend to be measured anecdotally, through library staff members' relationships with their communities. Through personal relationships with patrons and partners offering programs at the libraries, library staff can identify what community members want in terms of programming, books, and resources and note attendance rates. They also can form strong connections with individual library users.

One library partner, the Arizona Children's Association (ACA), used a more rigorous approach to assessing the series of parent education workshops that it delivers in District branches. To measure the impact of its work, ACA used a survey specifically designed to track changes in participants' knowledge, confidence, and behavior as a result of the program. For example, after one workshop on parenting, participants used a scale to rate if their level of confidence and competence in parenting had increased, along with their knowledge of community resources. The survey also asked respondents to describe something new or different they had done at home because of the program and how it would help their family. This type of assessment tool can capture difficult-to-quantify changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and behavior. But it is noteworthy that these efforts are led directly by ACA, which is a large statewide institution with considerable resources and capacity to develop assessment tools, deploy them, and then analyze the results.

The District also places emphasis on strong leadership and professional development as key to its organizational sustainability. The District's director has made concerted efforts to organize professional development and training for District staff across four key areas: service, leadership, responsibility, and professionalism. Three times a year, the District closes its libraries and brings together all branch staff to exchange ideas and to engage in professional development training. To support these trainings, the District invites other parties, like outside experts, nonprofits, and the state library. The aim is to provide in-depth training so that each branch has a consistent set of policies and procedures based on the overarching library system's vision.

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2   Appendix III includes a summary of the economic activity associated with the circulation of District spending throughout the county. The BERK study included the entire Library Network and quantified estimates of the value associated with access to the resources at Network member institutions, which is a different type of analysis than those conducted for this study.

It also fosters connections between library staff, who often work individually in remote locations, helping them to feel part of the broader system despite their geographic isolation.

Time and again, District staff and partners in the community cited the importance of the District in making connections between people, organizations, and other institutions to meet their diverse needs across vast areas. The 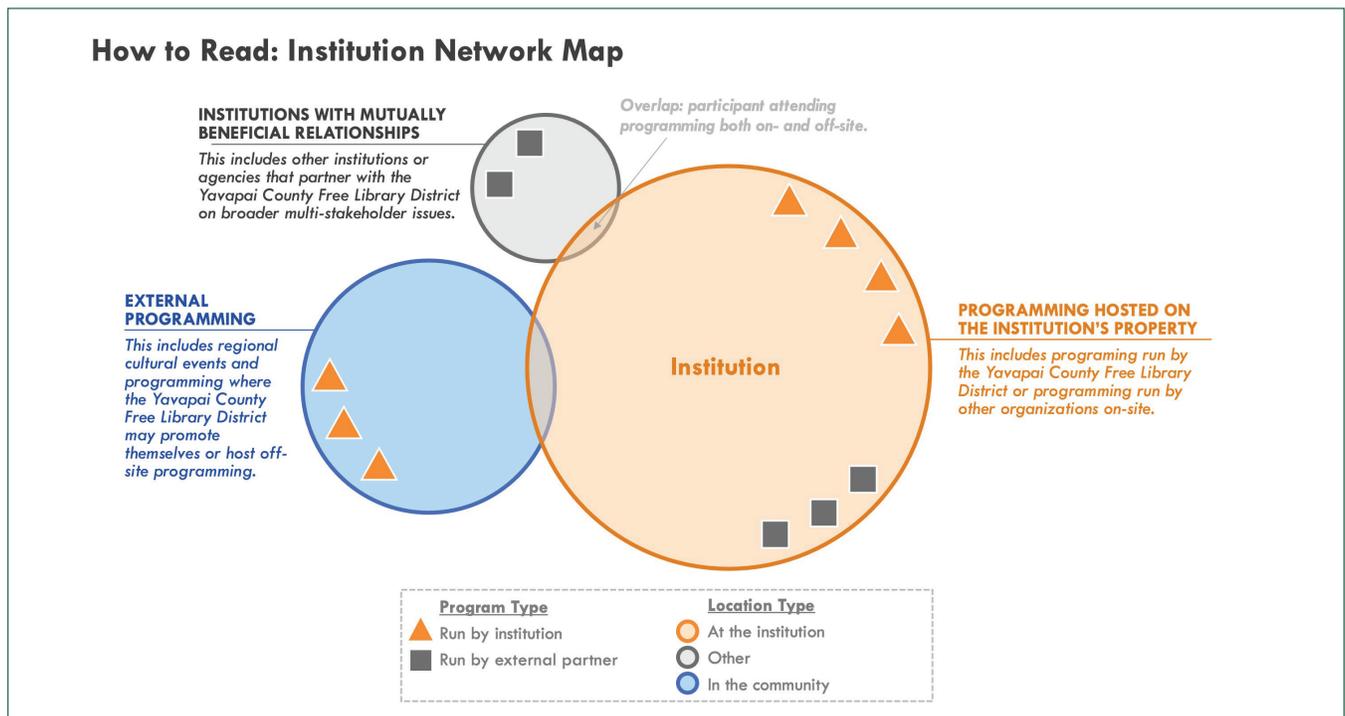District's positions within these networks, and the connections that they facilitate, are the means through which the District supports social wellbeing and promotes quality of life in its community. Whether it be improving access to resources, enhancing educational opportunities, or making critical services available in remote areas, the District and the Network are key drivers of social wellbeing. Their work makes it possible for so many residents to live the lives they want to live in Yavapai County.
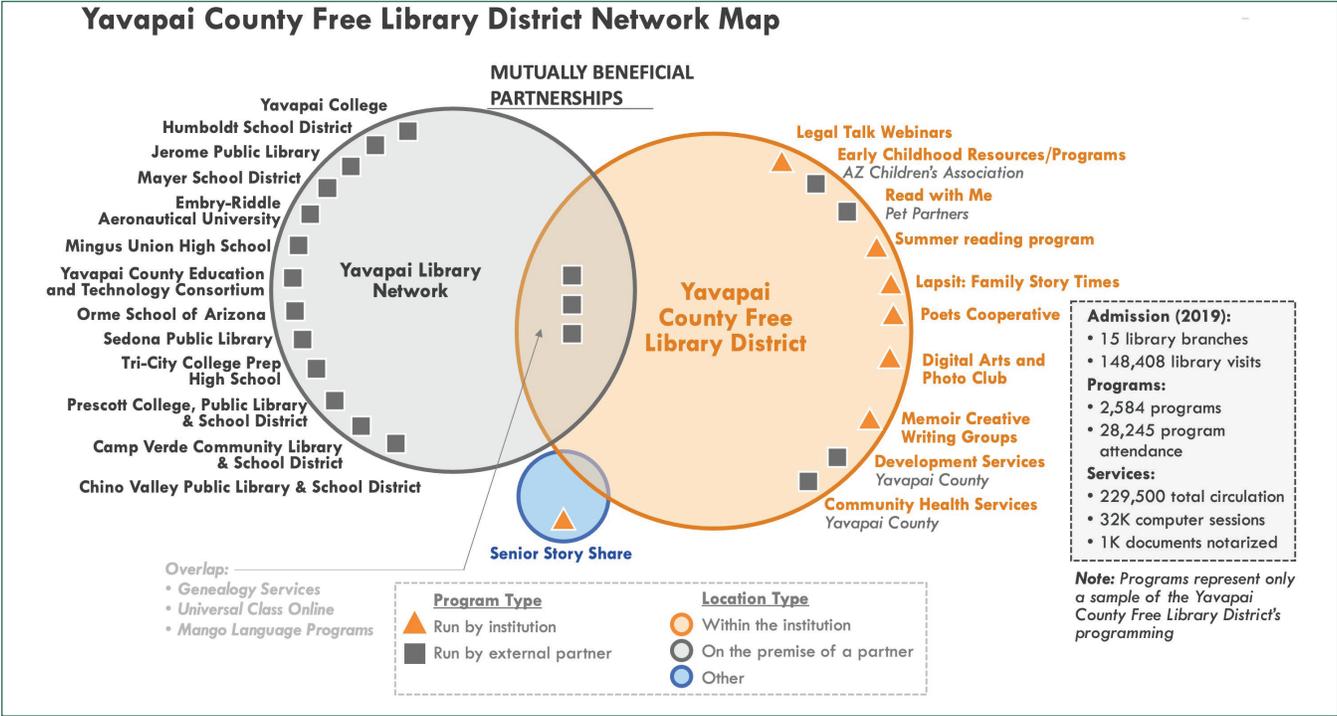
## YAVAPAI COUNTY FREE LIBRARY DISTRICT NETWORK MAP

Using data provided by the District, the study team developed a descriptive network map to highlight the different types of connections the District maintains with other institutions in the local community. The map illustrates the relationships between the District and those entities that offer programming at the library branches and those that support cross-marketing efforts or have reciprocal relationships with the library, and it includes examples of off-site, District-led programming. The map does not provide an exhaustive list of the library's programs but attempts to illustrate a subset of the relationships that the library maintains.

*NOTE: The network map is purely descriptive. The connections represented on the map do not necessarily, and are not intended to, provide estimates of the duration, durability, intensity, or broader economic impact of the relationships between the District and any single entity, or the broader network itself. The goal of the network map is to represent the range and diversity of different types of institutions that connect to the District in different ways.*



### How to Read: Institution Network Map

**INSTITUTIONS WITH MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIPS**
*This includes other institutions or agencies that partner with the Yavapai County Free Library District on broader multi-stakeholder issues.*

*Overlap: participant attending programming both on- and off-site.*

**EXTERNAL PROGRAMMING**
*This includes regional cultural events and programming where the Yavapai County Free Library District may promote themselves or host off-site programming.*

Institution

**PROGRAMMING HOSTED ON THE INSTITUTION'S PROPERTY**
*This includes programing run by the Yavapai County Free Library District or programming run by other organizations on-site.*

**Program Type**
▲ Run by institution
■ Run by external partner

**Location Type**
○ At the institution
○ Other
○ In the community

**Yavapai County Free Library District Network Map**

MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIPS

Yavapai College
Humboldt School District
Jerome Public Library
Mayer School District
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Mingus Union High School
Yavapai County Education and Technology Consortium
Orme School of Arizona
Sedona Public Library
Tri-City College Prep High School
Prescott College, Public Library & School District
Camp Verde Community Library & School District
Chino Valley Public Library & School District

Yavapai Library Network

Yavapai County Free Library District

Legal Talk Webinars
Early Childhood Resources/Programs
*AZ Children's Association*
Read with Me
*Pet Partners*
Summer reading program
Lapsit: Family Story Times
Poets Cooperative
Digital Arts and Photo Club
Memoir Creative Writing Groups
Development Services
*Yavapai County*
Community Health Services
*Yavapai County*

Senior Story Share

Overlap:
• *Genealogy Services*
• *Universal Class Online*
• *Mango Language Programs*

**Program Type**
▲ Run by institution
■ Run by external partner

**Location Type**
○ Within the institution
○ On the premise of a partner
○ Other

**Admission (2019):**
• 15 library branches
• 148,408 library visits
**Programs:**
• 2,584 programs
• 28,245 program attendance
**Services:**
• 229,500 total circulation
• 32K computer sessions
• 1K documents notarized

*Note: Programs represent only a sample of the Yavapai County Free Library District's programming*

The figure illustrates a *sample* of the connections of the 2,584 programs offered across the District's 15 locations. Within the orange circle is a small sample of programs conducted on the physical property of the institution—both programs produced by the institution and those produced by others. These are organized in terms of key program areas identified by the District. Within the blue circle is a sample of programs produced by the District and offered off-site in the community. The gray circle represents a sample of connections that have reciprocal relationships with the District.