

The Westport Library Program Policy

I. Purpose and Scope of the Program Policy

The Westport Library exists to inspire, educate, and connect our community. Through inclusive, engaging, and culturally rich programs, the Library seeks to foster lifelong learning, creativity, civic participation, and a love of reading and discovery. The Library's programs are provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all Westport residents.

Programs are designed to present a wide range of perspectives and ideas, reflecting diverse and divergent viewpoints, as required by state legislation. Participation is always voluntary, and the presence of a program does not imply the Library's endorsement of the views expressed by presenters or participants.

The Library recognizes the importance of programs as resources for voluntary inquiry, the dissemination of information and ideas, to promote free expression and free access to ideas by residents.

The Library Board delegates development, presentation, and oversight of programs to the Library Executive Director, but day-to-day responsibility is shared by Library employees throughout the Library that are professionally trained to curate and develop programs. This policy provides guidelines for the development, management, and oversight of Library programs.

II. Program Development, Coordination and Supervision

Designated Library staff are responsible for the development, coordination, and supervision of Library programs. The Library differentiates between Library programs that are created or curated by librarians or staff members of the Library and those created by members of the public or community. It does so as described in this section II. and in section III. below. Library programs may be proposed by staff, community members, or partners. Co-sponsored programs may be supervised by the partner organization, while Library-sponsored programs are developed by trained staff, sometimes with experts, to ensure quality and relevance. Final decisions on programming rest with the Library.

All Library-Sponsored or Co-Sponsored Programs must abide by this policy regardless of where they are hosted.

Attendees are responsible for complying with the Library's Code of Conduct.

III. Definitions - For the purposes of this policy, the following terms have the following meanings:

Library Program: Any planned event, presentation, activity, or series of activities organized, sponsored, or co-sponsored by the Library that is designed to inform, educate, entertain, or enrich the community. Programs may take place in the Library, at an alternate venue, outside the Library, online (virtually), or in partnership with other organizations, and may include but are not limited to lectures, workshops, discussions, performances, classes, exhibits, and community events.

- i. **Co-Sponsored Programs:** Programs produced by the Library in collaboration with external organizations where the Library shares programming, event, or promotional responsibilities.
- ii. **Library Sponsored Programs:** Programs developed, funded, curated, or otherwise managed by The Westport Library staff or administration.
- iii. **Third-Party Programs:** Programs presented by external organizations using Library facilities are governed by the Library's Meeting Room Policy and not by this policy.

Efforts will be made to clearly distinguish among Library-Sponsored Programs, Co-Sponsored Programs, and Third-Party Programs in any promotional materials.

IV. Library Program Selection Criteria

All Library materials are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in section 46a-64 of the General Statutes, including, but not limited to, discrimination based on race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability. Library programs are developed according to the following principles:

1. Mission Alignment

Programs must support the Library's goals of lifelong learning, equitable access, the free exchange of ideas, open exploration, and responsive community engagement.

2. Intellectual Freedom

Programs are designed to present a wide range of perspectives and ideas. The Library supports the right of all individuals to explore diverse viewpoints and participate in programs that reflect different experiences, opinions, and beliefs.

3. Inclusivity and Equity

Programs represent the diversity of Westport and surrounding communities, including race, age, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, political belief, and ability.

4. Quality and Relevance

Programs are selected for their educational, cultural, civic, or recreational value and their relevance to community needs and interests.

5. Positive Selection

Decisions are based on merit and mission alignment. Program selection focuses on value and contribution rather than avoiding controversy.

6. Commercial and Fundraising

Programs that primarily promote or sell products, services, or business opportunities are not offered at the library. Fundraising programs supporting the Library or its affiliates are permitted. Ancillary program materials—such as books, CDs, or DVDs related to the program—may be offered for sale as a convenience to attendees.

7. Political Neutrality

The Library does not endorse or oppose political candidates or use its resources for partisan purposes. Nonpartisan advocacy, such as public education on library issues, voter participation, and registration, and candidate forums with equal access, are permitted.

8. Religious Neutrality

The Library does not endorse or promote any religion. Religious materials and programs may be offered for educational, cultural, or informational purposes. Holiday celebrations or offerings may be presented inclusively and culturally.

9. Practical Considerations

Program planning considers budget, staffing, available resources, safety, and the logistics of Library spaces.

Library programs are evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure alignment with this policy, statutory requirements, and the evolving needs of the community.

V. Program Cancellation or Rescheduling

The Library may cancel or reschedule programs due to unforeseen circumstances, including inclement weather, presenter unavailability, safety concerns, or insufficient registration. Programs may also be canceled if they violate Library policy. Programs will not be canceled in response to ideological opposition, protest, or perceived offense unless there is a credible safety risk or legal concern.

VI. Intellectual Freedom and Censorship

The Library upholds intellectual freedom, offering programs that reflect diverse — even controversial or unpopular — viewpoints. The Library supports the following foundational documents:

- The Library Bill of Rights (ALA)
- The Freedom to View Statement (ALA)
- The Freedom to Read Statement (ALA)

VII. Program Access

Members of the public are welcome to attend the Library's public programs, subject to any occupancy limits and, where applicable, ticketing requirements. For pre-ticketed events, attendees will be admitted upon the presentation of a valid ticket. From time to time, the Library offers programs designed for specific audiences, such as children, teens, or other defined groups. For children's programs, any stated age restrictions must be strictly observed. The Library makes all reasonable efforts to ensure that programs are accessible in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

VIII. Virtual Program Delivery

Some Library programs may be offered using a Library-approved virtual meeting platform that registered patrons may use to access the virtual program from their own internet-enabled devices. This may include programs that are simultaneously run at the physical Library as well as programs that are offered only virtually. While hosting the virtual program, Library staff, partnering organizations, and program facilitators will follow industry standard best practices for virtual events. Some virtual programs may be pre-recorded and broadcast via the internet or recorded as presented for later viewing. In the event an interactive program is being recorded, attendees will be informed of that fact at the start of the program. Live virtual programs may require advance registration. Registered participants will receive a link via email to log on to the

program and must not share that link with others. Information collected during the registration process will be used only to communicate information about that program or to confirm eligibility to participate in that program. The Library will make all reasonable efforts to ensure the digital security of virtual events; however, attendees must understand that all online activity carries some degree of risk. Patrons are required to provide their own equipment and internet connection to attend virtual programs. The Library will make a good faith effort to utilize platforms that will be compatible with the widest array of hardware and software but makes no guarantee that every patron will be capable of accessing every Library program successfully. While the Library uses the highest quality audio and video broadcast equipment, the Library cannot guarantee the quality of the audio, video, or internet connection of program presenters or attendees.

IX. Program Materials

Books or other ancillary materials related to the content of a program may be offered for sale at a Library program as a convenience to attendees.

X. Program Evaluation

To provide the highest quality and most useful programming, Library staff will gather information about program results to guide future programming decisions. Outputs, such as the number of attendees at a program, will be gathered for a majority of the programs. Outcomes, such as how well the content of a program helped attendees learn about the program's topic, may be gathered to support future decision making and determine impact.

XI. Procedures for Questioning Library Programs

The Library's Material, Program, and Display Review and Reconsideration Policy limits consideration of requests to reconsider material, program, or display, to Westport residents. For details, see the Library's Material, Program, and Display Review and Reconsideration Policy and the Library's Material, Program, and Display Reconsideration Request Form. Both are available on the Library's website. No program, material, or display will be canceled, altered, or removed during the review process unless there is a credible safety or legal concern. Requests and decisions are not confidential patron records. A final decision resulting from a reconsideration request will remain in effect for three years.

XII. Public Availability

In compliance with state legislation, this policy will be made publicly available on The Westport Library's website and will be included in the Library's official policy manual for public review upon request.

Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees on November 19, 2025

The Board of Trustees may revise this policy at any time and will review it at least once every five years.