

NLS and OWLS Merger Exploration Overview

Overview

The Nicolet Library System (NLS) and the Outagamie Waupaca Library System (OWLS) have launched a joint exploration process to evaluate a potential merger. Initiated in June 2026, this study examines how a unified system could better serve our member libraries, residents, and county partners.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2026, a joint committee will gather data, develop potential frameworks, and ask for feedback from system members and boards.

At the conclusion of this exploratory phase, the committee will vote on whether to recommend a merger. Their decision will be guided by five strategic principles that a merger should:

- Improve services for member libraries and the people and communities they serve,
- Strengthen staffing depth and succession planning,
- Reduce duplication and administrative overhead,
- Enhance flexibility, expertise, and service sustainability, and
- Simplify communication, onboarding, and operations.

Timeline

- **Current Phase** (June – Fall 2026): Information gathering and exploration committee voting.
- **Next Phase** (Fall 2026 – Summer 2027): If the committee recommends a merger, the project will transition to the formal approval process. This will require official votes and approval from both system boards and each participating county board.

Stay Informed and Engaged

- **Visit the [Webpage](#):** Check our dedicated process page for meeting agendas, materials, and regular updates.
- **Reach Out via Email:** Send your thoughts and questions to the committee at mergerexploration@owlsweb.org.
- **Attend a Committee Meeting:** All meetings are virtual and open to the public. Meetings will be publicly posted on the website and through email.