

General Statement of Policy

The Northwest Regional Library System (NWRLS) makes available public meeting spaces for users of the library in accordance with the following guidelines. The primary use of the Library Meeting Room shall be for Library-sponsored activities. When not required for Library use, public meeting rooms are available to the public for reservation.

The Library will offer the Meeting Room for the use of groups, regardless of their affiliation or beliefs. The Room will be available for groups to conduct programs, meetings, seminars, planning sessions, training programs, and related activities. All such events shall be free and open to members of the public who may wish to attend. The Library shall not discriminate in granting permission for the use of Meeting Rooms on the basis of race, religion, age, gender, national origin, or disability. In allowing a group to use a Meeting Room, the Library does not imply any endorsement of the group's beliefs, policies, practices, or program. All who wish to reserve a room must submit a completed *Meeting Room Application and Rental Agreement*.

Library meeting rooms are available at no charge to government agencies, community groups, not-for-profit, and non-profit organizations for up to four (4) hours of use. Applicants may be required to provide proof of agency or not-for-profit/non-profit status. Businesses pay a fee as outlined in the *Bay County Fee Schedule*. All groups, except government agencies, pay a fee for a reservation period exceeding four (4) hours.

Meeting Room Use

- a) Use of meeting room space requires submittal of a *Meeting Room Application and Rental Agreement* which is available at any NWRLS location or via the Library's website, www.nwrls.com. Applications must be submitted to the Library where the requested meeting room resides. Payment (if applicable) must be made by cash or check at the time of submittal of the application. A meeting room is not considered reserved until the application is received, paid for (if applicable), approved, and confirmed by the Library.
- b) A security deposit (see *Bay County Fee Schedule*) is required if food and/or beverages other than water is served. Alcohol is not permitted.
- c) Meeting rooms may not be used for personal or private financial profit or to solicit customers. Use of any contact information provided prior to or during an event for purposes of solicitation of business is prohibited.
- d) Admission fees, fund solicitation, or direct sales are prohibited. Products or services may not be advertised, solicited, or sold in Library meeting rooms or on Library property; however, exceptions may be made by the Bay County Manager, Library Director, or designee for Library programs or government or charitable sponsored events.
- e) Meeting room activities must be open to the general public, with the exception of certain City, County, State, or Federal Government meetings which are closed by operation of law.
- f) Private celebrations such as birthday parties and bridal showers are not permitted.
- g) Meeting rooms must be used for the purposes described in the meeting room application. Persons who violate these policies may be asked to vacate and leave Library property in order to minimize disruption of other Library patrons and their use of Library facilities.
- h) In order to ensure the Library has access to the meeting room when needed for Library programs, and to make meeting rooms available to as many groups as possible, reservations for meeting room use will not be accepted more than four months in advance and there is a 12 use per year limit per group. Exceptions are made for organizations that are affiliated with or sponsored by the Library and/or Board of County Commissioners, or as approved by the Bay County Manager, Library Director, or designee.

- i) Activities must be contained within the meeting room unless exceptions are approved in advance by the Library Director or designee.
- j) Meeting space occupancy may not exceed that set forth by the Fire Marshall and furniture and equipment may not block aisles and exits.
- k) Library meeting rooms are smoke-free. Smoking, open flames, burning incense, and lit candles are prohibited.
- l) While the Library will at all times protect the First Amendment rights of all persons as provided in the United States Constitution, restraint must be used to ensure that normal Library uses are not disrupted. Noise or activities in the meeting room that disrupt regular library activities are prohibited.
- m) Failure to comply with these policies may lead to immediate termination of the meeting, exclusion of individuals from library premises pursuant to the rules, and/or loss of future meeting room privileges.
- n) The Library reserves the right to refuse use of the meeting room if the anticipated meeting is likely to be unreasonably disruptive to regular Library functions; too large for the applicable room capacity; disorderly; dangerous to persons or property; or is in any other way inconsistent with the terms and conditions of this policy or the *Customer Code of Conduct*.
- o) Persons reserving the facility must be at least 18 years of age. Photo identification is required to reserve the Library meeting room. An adult (18 years or older) must be in the room at all times that the room is occupied.
- p) Damage to Library property will be the responsibility of the client using the room. Any such damage will be assessed and charged to the client named on the agreement and will be due before the client may be granted use of the facilities in the future.
- q) Reservations will be given consideration on a first-come, first-served basis. The library provides meeting rooms for members of the public on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting the meeting room. Use of a meeting room does not imply or suggest Library sponsorship or endorsement of a group's beliefs or activities and any announcement or publicity implying such endorsement is prohibited. Use of the Bay County, Florida, seal on any announcements or publicity is prohibited under Bay County Ordinance § 2-150(b), unless such person or group has first obtained the express permission of the county commission. Groups may not use the Library's name, address or telephone as their official address or contact information. Use of the Library logo on any announcements or publicity is prohibited.
- r) Meeting rooms may be used only during normal operating hours of the Library, except as approved by the Bay County Manager, Library Director, or designee. Any costs incurred as a result of the Library being open beyond normal operating hours is the responsibility of the group requesting use of the meeting room and must be paid in advance.

Meeting Room Setup & Breakdown

- a) The user (client) is responsible for setup of the room and returning furniture to its original position. Damage or loss of any library equipment or property after use of the meeting room will result in a financial liability to the individual and/or group reserving the room and/or loss of future meeting room use privileges.
- b) Some Libraries have projection equipment which may be used by the client. The client is responsible for set up, operation, and breakdown of their own equipment and Library equipment.
- c) Set up and breakdown times for all events must be included in the requested hours.
- d) Materials may not be affixed to the walls, ceilings, doors, windows, or projection screen.
- e) Event equipment must be picked up by the end of the reservation period. The Library will not be responsible for equipment or items left after the event. The Library will not store equipment or materials for groups using the meeting room.

Indemnification

The organization or individual user shall hold harmless, defend and indemnify Bay County, Florida, its officers and employees, from and against any and all claims, losses, causes of action, judgments, damages, and expenses, including, but not limited to, attorneys' fees (sales tax may apply), because of bodily injury, sickness, disease or death or injury to or destruction of property or any other injury or damage resulting from or arising out of (i) failure to comply with these regulations; or (ii) any act, error or omission on the part of the user or its agents, employees, or subcontractors, except where such claims, losses, causes of action, judgments, damages and expenses result solely from the negligent acts or omissions or willful misconduct of the County, its officers, employees or agents. Nothing herein shall be interpreted as a waiver of the rights set forth under § 768.28(9)(a), Fla. Stat., as may be amended.

Adopted May 1, 2007; revised August 19, 2014; revised August 20, 2019; revised November 4, 2025