

2021 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

LIBRARY NAME

Cariboo Regional District Library

CHECKLIST

For the PLGR to be considered complete, please ensure you have provided information for each of the following sections. Suggested word counts have been included for each question, but feel free to include more or less text as needed – text boxes will expand as you type. Click on a title in the list below to jump to that section of the document.

- ☐ [1. INTRODUCTION - LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY PROFILE](#)
- ☐ [2. MAJOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS](#)
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1. INTRODUCTION - LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Provide a brief description of the community and library, focusing on what has changed in the past year (up to 500 words).

The Cariboo Regional District Library is an integrated public library system operating as a Service (or department) of the Cariboo Regional District, known as Library Services. It's 15 branch libraries are dispersed throughout the Cariboo-Chilcotin in central B.C. Most of the branches (12) are in small rural communities to both the east and west of 100 Mile House, Williams Lake and Quesnel. These rural branches are open for a limited number of hours each week depending on the size of the community they serve. Full-service branches are located in 100 Mile House, Williams Lake and Quesnel and are open to the public five days per week. Full-service branches also provide support to staff in the smaller, rural branches in their area. In addition, a Support Services team that is centrally located in Williams Lake provides support for the entire system in the areas of cataloguing, acquisitions, inter-library loans and administration.

With the exception of shorter opening hours per week, rural branches offer as many of the same services as the three urban branches as can be accommodated. Often these rural branches offer the only reliable, high-speed internet service for many people in their community.

COVID-19 restrictions continued to play a major role in how library services were delivered to the public in 2021, just as they did in 2020. While the delivery of most library services was changed in 2020 to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions, with books and other library material being delivered to customers via a new Curbside Holds Pickup Service, in-person visits to all branches were restored by 2021 with restrictions including occupancy limits, masking requirements, use of hand sanitizer, and increased cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. In-person public programming was replaced with virtual programming. Most meetings and training sessions that included staff from multiple locations moved to digital platforms such as ZOOM and Microsoft TEAMS. Learning how to use these new tools was an opportunity for staff to develop skills in new areas and engage with customers and other staff in different ways.

Retirements and resignations increased significantly in 2021 leading to temporary staff shortages in some Branches. In addition, recruitment and retention challenges that began in 2020 continued to be an issue throughout 2021.

2. MAJOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

Please describe any new or major ongoing projects/programs the library has delivered in the past year. To report on multiple projects/programs, “copy” the blank table below and insert additional tables as needed using the “paste” function. Use one table per project/program.

Project/Program Name	
Replacement/upgrade of equipment in library branches, specifically aging internet routers.	
Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.	
<p>It was already well known that the internet routers in all 15 library branches were inadequate for current use. The routers were out-dated and originally meant for home, not institutional, use. They were installed at a time when internet and wifi use was much lower than at present. Since that time internet use has become ubiquitous and necessary to participate in many aspects of modern life. More and more library visitors bring their own devices to use both within our branches and outside when they are closed to the public. Businesses and government agencies increasingly require information be submitted via the internet, and only via the internet. In addition, the older routers did not allow staff to gather statistics regarding wifi use. Those statistics are required to support anecdotal reports of increased wifi use.</p> <p>An IT expert assisted in the identification of new hardware that would meet the needs required by library visitors and staff. New equipment was purchased and installed in 15 branch libraries. Staff training in the gathering of statistics from the new equipment is ongoing.</p>	
How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals and/or community?	
<p>The project supports the Cariboo Regional District's goal to meet the diverse needs of the community through relevant library services and collections, and the Cariboo Regional District's goal to offer library services that meet the needs of rural communities. Newer routers will accommodate higher bandwidth from ISP's as it becomes available which will translate into higher internet speeds and stronger signals on devices used by rural residents who need to make use of internet connections at their local library in the absence of such service at their home. Newer routers will allow users to do all of things they expect to be able to do using wifi including accessing the Library's own increasingly diverse digital resources. New routers will accommodate more concurrent users without degradation of the wifi signal.</p>	
How does this project/program support the B.C.'s strategic goal(s) for public library service ? Please provide information for as many goals as applicable.	
<p>1. Improving Access for British Columbians (e.g., connectivity, digital collections, shared services)</p>	<p>This project improves public access to the Internet by increasing the capacity of the Library to offer improved internet connectivity to people who may not have access to high-speed Internet from home, but can use personal devices and free wifi at their local library branch. New routers will accommodate more users and will provide a more reliable connection when accessing important government services using wifi resources.</p>

2. Building Capacity for library staff and directors (e.g., training and professional development)	Where bandwidth is already adequate, new routers will improve the experience of remote library staff when they join other staff in training sessions or meetings on digital platforms such as Zoom or Teams by providing a more reliable signal.
3. Advancing Citizen Engagement (e.g., helping people access government services/resources, fostering community knowledge-sharing, and supporting reconciliation)	The project will result in improved access to online government resources and other important digital resources to rural and urban community members without personal access to internet resources. This has become increasingly important as more government services are available only online and citizen engagement is often limited to those who have internet access.
4. Enhancing Governance of the library system (e.g., board/trustee training, developing best practices, strategic planning)	
What are the key outcomes of this project/program? Please refer to the logic model in the appendix of the 2021 PLGR Guide for examples of how to write short, medium, and long-term outcomes.	

Key outcomes of this project include:

New routers will extend the physical range of wifi so it can be used outside library facilities which will extend the hours of availability of free wifi; which will Increase the ability of people to make use of library wifi when they most need it regardless of what the opening hours of a library branch might be. This is most important in remote rural areas where library branches are open to the public for a limited number of hours each week.

New routers will allow the library's network to handle the growing number of demands that users put on it. They will increase the ability of library users to use library wifi for a broader range of uses and with a broader range of devices. They will provide better security for the library's network, will boost wifi speed to devices in branches where bandwidth is already adequate, and will accommodate more and newer devices that are brought into the library by users.

New routers will Increase the ability of library staff to accurately access wifi use in order to plan future services. New routers will enable library staff to gather statistics on wifi use in each branch, something older routers were unable to provide.

New routers will allow Library visitors to experience higher internet speed and increased reliability when making use of the Library's public computers and wifi connections. This is important because only one or two people can access the Internet at a time in most library branches on the public computers that are installed in each branch. Increasing the speed and reliability of wifi connections means that more people can use the Library's internet connection at the same time using their own devices without experiencing a degradation of internet service.

Did the project/program involve any partnerships? If so, what was the partner's role (e.g., funding, outreach, service delivery)?

The Library partnered with other Cariboo Regional District staff for different aspects of the project. An IT expert on the staff of the Cariboo Regional District was engaged to evaluate existing equipment, recommend replacement equipment, and install new equipment. Existing purchasing agreements between the CRD and technology vendors helped to keep unit costs lower than they otherwise would have been. A portion of a one-time Technology Grant from the Province of BC helped with the cost of new equipment for 15 library branches as well as travel expenses to remote rural communities to remove old equipment and install new equipment.

[Copy and insert additional tables below for each additional project/program as needed]

3. KEY CHALLENGES

The following topics have been identified as recurring themes in previous years' PLGRs. The intent of this section is to collect detailed information in a structured, consistent format.

Please select the most significant challenges that the library has faced in the past year that you wish to comment on. Leave any other listed topics blank.

Use the 'Other' row to include any ongoing or past challenges that are not included in this list. If you have more than one 'Other' item to add, please insert additional rows into the table.

Challenge	Briefly describe how this challenge has impacted the library/community, and what steps the library took to address it in 2021. Please specify if any provincial funding was used, e.g., annual library funding, the technology grant, other non-PLB provincial grants (up to 250 words per topic).
COVID-19 (e.g., safety protocols, proof of vaccination)	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic continued to be the over-riding theme of 2021. Most challenging to library staff was the ever-changing landscape of pandemic restrictions as everyone learned more about the virus and how to deal with it safely. Safety protocols that were in place at the beginning of the pandemic evolved, were added to, or were discarded throughout 2021 as we learned how to better assign risk to various library activities.</p> <p>Staff faced an increased number of confrontations with members of the public who did not think COVID-19 safety protocols applied to them. To help with this, a greater focus was put on training in these areas in 2021. The Library partnered with the North Central Library Federation to access training to help staff deal with difficult customer interactions. Training was available through direct participation in online seminars, and through recorded seminars on the Niche Academy platform. Access to Niche Academy was made possible in 2021 through a one-time technology grant from the Province of B.C.</p> <p>Library staff also took part in a 6-week refresher course on Customer Service which reminded them of the basics of offering great customer service. To help customers who did not yet feel comfortable entering our facilities, staff continued to offer the Curbside Holds Pickup Service and programming such as Pre-School Storytime on digital platforms throughout 2021.</p>

Emergency response (e.g., fires, floods, extreme weather)	Although wildfires and flooding were issues throughout the Region again in 2021, we were lucky that library facilities and library services were not impacted. All library branches remained open throughout the season. Some library parking lots were used as public distribution points for sandbags during localized flooding.
Financial pressure (e.g., rising costs, reduced revenues)	Almost all areas of library service have faced increasing costs over the last few years. However, for many years funding has remained static. In the face of rising costs, Library Services requested an increase in local taxation in order to continue to operate at the same level as previous years. However, developing and adding new programmes and services when they are requested by the public continues to be a challenge, as sustained funding for more staff to do the work is an ongoing obstacle.
Staffing (e.g., recruitment and retention, mental health and wellness)	<p>Recruitment and retention of staff has traditionally been very positive in this Library System. Staff tend to remain with the Library for a very long time, especially in rural communities. However, during these pandemic years, staff turnover, both amongst long-term and recently hired staff, has been unusually high.</p> <p>It was an unprecedented year for retirements and resignations from our library branches. Almost 40 positions were filled in 2021 (some more than once), with recruiting for some positions continuing into 2022.</p> <p>It was almost impossible to recruit post-secondary students for summer jobs at the Library in 2021. Even though funding for three student positions was received from the Government of Canada and the hourly wage was increased significantly from previous years, the number of applications was alarmingly low and we were able to fill only one of three available positions. This has never happened before!</p> <p>One result of this high turnover is that staff who normally would be working on initiatives having to do with services to customers are spending an inordinate amount of time providing onboarding and training to new staff. The positive side of this is that existing staff are becoming more experienced in providing training and as a result are becoming well versed in library processes and protocols.</p>
Disappearing services in the community (e.g., government, banking, health)	
Connectivity (e.g., low bandwidth, lack of home internet in the community)	<p>Connectivity issues in rural areas have always presented challenges to rural library customers. Many library customers who move to rural communities from larger urban centres are surprised and puzzled as to why they don't have access to the same digital services as in their previous homes. Personal access to internet services has improved in the past year in a few areas, but home internet access in rural communities generally remains expensive, slow, and sometimes non-existent. In many rural communities the public library offers the only reliable access to high-speed internet.</p> <p>A similar situation exists in urban centres as well, but due more to affordability than to availability of options. All CRD Library branches offer</p>

	internet-accessible computers and free wifi. In 2021, Technology Grant funding from the Province of BC was used to upgrade routers in all library branches in the Region to provide faster, more reliable digital services to library customers whether they choose to enter the building or access digital services from outside.
Aging/damaged facilities (e.g., need for repairs, renovations, upgrades/expansions)	All facilities eventually require repairs and renovations. Many of the CRD Library's small rural branches are located in rented space inside community halls and elementary schools. The quality of these facilities varies. Some of these facilities definitely require upgrades. However, options for space that is suitable for the operation of a public library branch are often severely limited in small rural communities. Elementary schools might have space available but may not welcome the general public to their facilities when children are present, making the operation of a public library in the same facility quite difficult. Community halls (and some elementary schools) present challenges with heating, cooling, lighting, washroom availability and the occasional necessity of dealing with local wildlife (i.e. mice). However, these are all part of the rural public library experience. We might wish for upgrades to some of the buildings in which we are located, but have little to no control over what happens to the overall facility as we don't own it.
Community access to the library (e.g., geographic isolation, lack of local public transit, building accessibility)	
Vulnerable communities (e.g., people experiencing homelessness, addiction, mental health crisis)	<p>Pandemic restrictions in our public library branches have been difficult for the vulnerable populations in our communities, particularly those experiencing homelessness in our urban areas. All three of our urban branches have noticed that their regular homeless visitors have been largely absent from our branches during the pandemic. This may be partially due to restrictions on the number of people who can be in the branch at one time and our protocol to encourage short visits, the use of hand sanitizer and masks; and possibly even because of physical barriers in use at our branches that control traffic flow and put Plexiglas between staff and customers. It will be interesting to see how long it takes for these library customers to return once COVID-19 restrictions ease.</p> <p>Unfortunately, a lack of facilities elsewhere in the community for those suffering from addiction still leads some individuals to use the bathrooms in our urban branches as injection sites. The number of these incidents has decreased during the pandemic, but not disappeared completely. The decrease may be related to increased staff vigilance related to restrictions in bathroom access during the pandemic. It is expected that drug use in library bathrooms will increase once again as pandemic restrictions ease.</p>

Other (please specify)	
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4. SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL

Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.

Library Director Signature: W. Davis.

Date: March 7, 2022

Board Chair Signature: N/A

Date: _____