

## 2021 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

### LIBRARY NAME

Vancouver Public 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).**

Situated on the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, the Vancouver Public Library (VPL) is one of Vancouver's oldest public institutions. For over one hundred years, VPL has championed the vision of an informed, engaged, and connected city by providing free spaces for everyone to discover, create, and share ideas and information.

The Vancouver Public Library serves a population of 662,248<sup>1</sup> through the Central library and 20 branches across the city. Vancouver is a thriving urban centre known for its ethnically and linguistically diverse neighbourhoods - it is home to a significant Indigenous population, and 44% of residents speak a language other than English as their first language.<sup>2</sup> It is also a city with an increasing aging population, with the absolute number of seniors growing at twice the rate of growth in the overall population over the past 20 years.<sup>3</sup> Vancouver also continues to see increased population density and is the densest city in Metro Vancouver.<sup>4</sup> Population density, and the resulting decrease in private residential space, adds significant pressure to the demand for indoor public space provided by VPL.

<sup>1</sup> "Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population" Statistics Canada. Retrieved February 17<sup>th</sup> 2022 from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&GENDERlist=1&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0&DGUIDlist=2021A00055915022&SearchText=vancouver>

<sup>2</sup> "Census Profile, 2016 Census" Statistics Canada. Retrieved February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021 from: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMACA&Code1=933&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Vancouver&SearchType=Begin&SearchPR=01&B1=All>

<sup>3</sup> City of Vancouver. Vancouver City Social Indicators Profile 2020. October 2, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> City of Vancouver. Vancouver City Social Indicators Profile 2020. October 2, 2020.

While the City of Vancouver is one of the fastest-growing major metropolitan economies in Canada, the city faces key challenges in terms of housing and affordability. The 2020 Metro Vancouver homeless count found that in Vancouver 2,095 residents identified as homeless.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of income, Vancouver continues to be one of the more polarized cities in Canada, with disproportionate representation at both ends of the income scale: 14% of Vancouverites are in the top decile of Canadian earners while 15% are in the bottom decile.<sup>6</sup>

VPL's programs and services are popular and heavily used by the community. This proved to be true even in the face of unprecedented challenges driven by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. At the onset of COVID-19, VPL closed all physical locations for 4 months, and gradually re-opened through 2020. In 2021, VPL branches gradually returned to full hours of operation while maintaining necessary health and safety measures, and VPL continued to focus on growing its digital service offering.

In 2021, VPL saw continuing recovery of library usage, recording nearly 2.8 million in-person visits and over 5.7 million digital visits. Patrons borrowed nearly 9 million digital and physical items and received answers to over 350,000 reference questions. By continuing to offer virtual programs and slowly reintroducing in-person programs for young children, VPL was able to record total program participation of over 91,000.

Our 2020-2023 Strategic Plan is based on wide-ranging feedback where we heard that VPL must continue to find ways to meet the needs of seniors, newcomers, children, youth, low-income and Indigenous communities. Our Board identified four strategic priorities grounded in VPL's mission, vision and values: Learning & Creativity; Shared Spaces & Experiences; Belonging & Connection; and Organizational Strength.

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<sup>5</sup> Homelessness & Supportive Housing Strategy. City of Vancouver. Retrieved February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20201007/documents/pspc1presentation.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> City of Vancouver. Vancouver City Social Indicators Profile 2020. October 2, 2020. (income data from "Census Profile, 2016 Census" Statistics Canada)

## 2. MAJOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

Project/Program Name
Fine Forgiveness Event
Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.
<p>In 2021, VPL held a Fine Forgiveness event as part of a broader strategic initiative to expand fine free services. While budget was not available in 2021 to go fully fine free, VPL was able to offer a one-time fine forgiveness event to address some of the inequities resulting from overdue fines. The objectives of the campaign were two-fold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to educate and increase public awareness about the impact of fines and the benefits of a fine free model; and</li> <li>• to generate participation in a two-week fine forgiveness event.</li> </ul> <p>A public survey was conducted in early 2021 to determine public perceptions and levels of awareness/support for fine free services prior to undertaking a fine forgiveness campaign. The key research findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost two-thirds of respondents were very or somewhat supportive of VPL eliminating overdue fines.</li> <li>• Support for eliminating fines was higher among younger age groups and those residing in east side neighbourhoods of Vancouver.</li> <li>• The most common reason cited by those in favour of retaining overdue fines was the belief that fines encourage people to return materials on time. Among those who supported eliminating fines, most believed that fines penalize people who can least afford them.</li> </ul> <p>For two weeks in June, VPL held a Fine Forgiveness Event inviting patrons to contact the library by phone, online or in-person and request that their accounts be cleared of outstanding library debt. In the months leading up to the event, a staff working group developed internal resources for processing requests and responding to patron queries, and to coordinate outreach activities to promote the event. Digital resources were also created to enable online requests to have fines waived.</p> <p>Pre-event analysis of borrowers with library debt was conducted to inform targeted promotion and identify neighbourhoods with large numbers of blocked library cards for outdoor poster and direct mail postcard drops. All VPL cardholders with an email address on file (over 190,000) received an email invitation to participate by clicking on a simple link. The response was immediate - over 4,000 requests for debt forgiveness were received in response to the email on the first day.</p> <p>A total of 21,800 patrons participated, with over 15,000 requests received online. Over 100 patron stories of the impact of fines were shared online and many more comments and stories of appreciation for the Fine Forgiveness event were received by staff directly. Over the two week period, over \$500,000</p>

in outstanding charges was waived. These results are even more noteworthy considering the event took place during the COVID-19 pandemic when health restrictions were in place and library visits were significantly lower than normal.

**How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals and/or community?**

This initiative supports VPL's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan Goal to "Reduce social isolation and provide affordable access". This goal aims to address financial and systemic barriers to accessing library services, and to increase equity and build social connectedness. COVID-19 has exacerbated existing issues of affordability and social isolation. As many in Vancouver struggle with these challenges, finding ways to remove and reduce barriers to access has become ever more important.

The purpose of eliminating overdue fines is to re-engage patrons who perceive fines as a barrier, are fearful of accruing fines, or have outstanding charges that prevent them from using VPL services – so that everyone in Vancouver can access library services.

Overdue fines create negative experiences for our community and discourage people from using the library. They can result in the library being viewed as a punitive institution – presenting barriers to many who rely on library services for learning and entertainment while struggling with affordability and isolation. Blocked cardholders tend to live in Vancouver's lowest income neighbourhoods, meaning that those who are most likely to need library access are also most likely to be unable to use the library due to fines.

**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><b>1. Improving Access</b> for British Columbians (e.g., connectivity, digital collections, shared services)</p>	<p>Through VPL's fine forgiveness event, VPL removed a significant barrier to access for many patrons and welcomed them back to the library. Once access is restored for these patrons, they are able to take advantage of VPL's vast digital collections, computer access in library branches and many of our other services that support connectivity and aim to bridge the digital divide.</p>
<p><b>2. Building Capacity</b> for library staff and directors (e.g., training and professional development)</p>	
<p><b>3. Advancing Citizen Engagement</b> (e.g., helping people access government services/resources, fostering community knowledge-sharing,</p>	<p>As the trend toward access to government services and resources continues to move more exclusively to online platforms, the role of public libraries as key access points becomes ever more important for those who don't have reliable online access at home. By removing the barrier of fines to access VPL's materials, we are supporting those in our community who need access to view the library as a key resource rather</p>

and supporting reconciliation)	than a punitive institution. This in turn provides them with a means to connect to critical social services.
4. <b>Enhancing Governance</b> of the library system (e.g., board/trustee training, developing best practices, strategic planning)	Research and public feedback were central to the planning stage of VPL's fine forgiveness campaign. Through this process VPL gained valuable insight into the research and awareness building process. Best practices identified during this campaign will inform a framework for strategic planning of subsequent service developments.
<b>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.</b>	
<p>The overarching goal of offering fine free service is to remove barriers to library use and to provide affordable access to everyone regardless of their financial means. Removing the source of stigma and shame associated with fines helps to create a more welcoming library experience.</p> <p>The fine forgiveness event successfully increased awareness of the impact of fines, and enabled thousands who were blocked from using the library due to outstanding charges to return to using the library.</p> <p>Event participation far exceeded expectations, and feedback from both patrons and staff was overwhelmingly positive.</p> <p>Key short term outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In total, 21,830 patrons participated, representing 15% of all VPL borrowers with debt<sup>7</sup> - remarkable for a two-week event.</li> <li>• The library cleared, more than three times the original targeted amount of debt.</li> <li>• A total of 7,683 previously blocked patrons had their library access restored – representing 35% of all event participants.</li> </ul> <p>Stories from VPL patrons and staff demonstrate key outcomes of moving to fine free service delivery and the profound impact that access to libraries and fine forgiveness can have on individuals' lives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "During a chaotic time in my life (getting married, moving house) I racked up over \$100 in fines and ended up keeping the books for several years because I couldn't afford the fines. I felt bad about it, but I felt so ashamed about owing the money that I couldn't imagine stepping foot in</li> </ul>	

<sup>7</sup> "All VPL borrowers with debt" is defined as physical borrowers owing any amount of debt whose most recent physical checkout took place in the last 7 years.

the library. I eventually returned the books, and it is such a relief to have the fines forgiven as well!" – patron feedback

- "I had fines on my card since the time I became a new mom. I had no knowledge passed onto me from elders or others so I borrowed books to learn. Parenting for the first time was extremely overwhelming and challenging. I had so many new emotions swirling each day, then within 9 months I found out I was pregnant again! This is when I really lost track of things such as submitting receipts on time for reimbursements and returning library books. Once I had a library fine I realized that I couldn't keep up with the borrowing schedule. I had too much on my plate, therefore decided not to borrow books anymore as I was exhausted and didn't want a borrowing schedule or fine over my head. With fines being waived this week I feel as if my name has been cleared of a negative record. Thank you." – patron feedback
- "A patron walked into Central Library and looked around in amazement. He looked at me and said "Wow, I haven't been to the library in over 20 years". I welcomed him back and asked how I could help him. He heard about our Fine Forgiveness Event and wanted to clear his fines and get a new library card. I directed him to the Service Desk for assistance. As he was leaving the library he flashed his Library Card at me. Even though he was wearing a mask I could tell he was smiling." – staff account

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

The event was primarily developed and delivered by VPL staff. Outreach to potential participants was supported by VPL's community partners, particularly in low income neighbourhoods.

**Project/Program Name**

Equity and Diversity in the Workplace

**Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.**

In 2021, VPL launched a multi-year initiative to improve equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Actions within this include assessing the current state of diversity and inclusion and barriers to equity within the organization, identifying priority areas for change, and creating a 3 to 5 year plan to address these.

The scope of the initiative, which is internally focused, encompasses VPL's vision, organizational structure, leadership, policies, and processes - including practices related to staff attraction and retention, learning, assessment and internal communications. The project recognizes that in order to offer public service that provides a sense of belonging and inclusion for everyone in Vancouver, we must begin with staff that reflect our community and feel a sense of belonging themselves.

This work will take a comprehensive approach to examine VPL holistically, identifying challenges of race and inequity as systemic issues. It will build on the City of Vancouver's Equity Framework and utilize the Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion.

In 2021, VPL undertook three activities to launch this multi-year initiative:

1. **Project Formation.** To establish the initiative as an organizational priority, VPL's Chief Librarian and CEO took on the role of project sponsor and appointed the Manager, Policy and Planning as project lead. More than 80 supervisory and management staff in the organization participated in anti-oppression and anti-racism training delivered by an external trainer to build foundational understanding of why work on equity is necessary. The project team was convened, as well as a staff advisory group. The project team set out to enhance their own knowledge in the area of equity, diversity and inclusion, developed a high level project plan, and completed their own team inquiry through an Organizational Readiness review.
2. **Employee Benchmark Survey.** This was the first staff survey conducted in VPL's history to gather information about the organization's diversity and staff's experiences of engagement and inclusion. All 800 VPL staff were invited to take the survey, and it received a strong participation rate of 68%. Key findings included:
  - 69% of staff are women, compared to 51% in the population of Vancouver
  - 38% of staff are visible minorities vs. 52% in Vancouver
  - 32% of staff are immigrants vs. 43% in Vancouver
  - 19% of staff are persons with a disability vs. 21% in Vancouver
  - 18% of staff identify as LGBTQ2S+ vs. 4% in Canada

The survey provided important insights on the employee experience, highlighting organizational strengths and areas for improvement. The next step is to deepen our learnings from this internal assessment through further analysis into the quantitative results of the survey, and by undertaking qualitative research to better understand areas of greatest concern and gather potential ideas for improving the experience of underrepresented and equity-deserving groups within VPL's staff.

3. **Request for Proposal (RFP).** The project team developed and issued a request for proposal for an external consultant to provide critical guidance and support to VPL. The RFP lays out key stages of work over a one-year timeframe, resulting in the development of an action plan to be implemented over the following 3 to 5 years. The RFP was issued publicly in early 2022.

#### **How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals and/or community?**

This initiative supports VPL's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan priority area of Organizational Strength, specifically the goal to "Foster an inclusive workplace that reflects the diversity of the community." This is an internally focused goal that acknowledges that our organizational strength is enhanced when our staff reflect the diversity of the city, and that our staff, systems, and policies need to be strong, resilient and responsive to our community.

In addition to supporting the internal goal of a diverse and inclusive workplace, this initiative also provides support to the strategic plan goals "Engage and celebrate the diverse cultures and languages of Vancouver" and "Establish the library as a forum for civic conversation and understanding," both of which are public-facing goals that aim to improve our service to, and engagement with, Vancouver's communities. When equity, diversity and inclusion are improved internally, VPL will have a greater

capacity to increase understanding and reduce discrimination against racialized and equity-deserving communities, reflect the contributions of different heritages and cultures, respond to emerging community interests, and serve community members in their own languages.	
<b>How does this project/program support <a href="#">B.C.'s strategic goal(s) for public library service</a>? Please provide information for as many goals as applicable.</b>	
1. <b>Improving Access</b> for British Columbians (e.g., connectivity, digital collections, shared services)	
2. <b>Building Capacity</b> for library staff and directors (e.g., training and professional development)	<p>The purpose of this initiative is to build internal capacity among all staff so there is an organization-wide understanding of what it means to be an equitable, diverse and inclusive workplace. This will be achieved by creating awareness, deepening understanding and motivating the desire for individual and organizational change.</p> <p>Capacity-building activities include formal and informal training, internal communications, opportunities to share and learn from one another, and ongoing learning opportunities. Internal capacity building will be led by senior leadership, with participation from all levels of the library including management, supervisory and non-supervisory.</p>
3. <b>Advancing Citizen Engagement</b> (e.g., helping people access government services/resources, fostering community knowledge-sharing, and supporting reconciliation)	<p>When equity, diversity and inclusion are improved internally, VPL will have a greater ability to engage with members of Vancouver's diverse communities. We will be better able to understand the unique needs and wants of library patrons, serve and interact with all members of the public, and customize library programs and services that respond to different needs.</p> <p>VPL's work on increasing equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace also supports our continued learning of the historic and ongoing impact of colonization and the importance of movement toward Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.</p>
4. <b>Enhancing Governance</b> of the library system (e.g., board/trustee training, developing best practices, strategic planning)	<p>The Employee Benchmark Survey, launched at the start of this initiative, establishes a baseline for VPL's current state of diversity and inclusion. A similar survey will be run periodically over the timeframe of the workplan and potentially beyond. This is a best practice that enables change to be measured objectively over time.</p> <p>In leveraging the standards and analytical framework of the Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB), VPL is deploying another best practice. VPL intends to use this tool as a means to</p>



	objectively assess and measure our progress in implementing the workplan.
<b>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.</b>	
<p>The mid to long-term outcomes are as follows:</p> <p>The VPL workforce is more diverse: it better reflects the diversity of the Vancouver community in terms of race and other measures. Diversity has improved at all levels of the organization including senior leadership.</p> <p>VPL treats its workforce in a more just and equitable manner. Policies, practices and structures are improved to acknowledge differences between individuals and are more flexible in meeting the unique needs of a diverse workforce. This includes processes used for the attraction and retention of staff.</p> <p>There is a greater sense of belonging and inclusion amongst VPL staff. Employee experience has improved in key areas, as identified in the Employee Benchmark Survey, particularly for staff in underrepresented and equity-deserving groups.</p>	
<b>Did the project/program involve any partnerships? If so, what was the partner's role (e.g., funding, outreach, service delivery)?</b>	

<b>Project/Program Name</b>
Hybrid Programming Model
<b>Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.</b>
<p>Prior to the pandemic, VPL was beginning to explore ways to offer a combination of virtual and in person programming. This was primarily being undertaken in adult programs. In 2020, when library locations were closed, VPL rapidly shifted our focus to delivering programs through a 'digital-first' approach for adults, children, and teens. This entailed quickly adopting a range of digital platforms to offer live streaming events, recorded programs, and online interactive programming, all designed to provide much needed learning and connection to patrons during the pandemic.</p> <p>As we moved through 2021, continuing to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting public health restrictions, VPL's programming teams utilized a combination of delivery models. Even with our physical locations reopened and in person programming restarted, the demand for a hybrid approach is anticipated to be permanent. VPL will need to consider the resource impact of offering both streams of programming and will seek a mix that meets the future needs of patrons of all ages.</p> <p>In 2021, adult programming maintained a virtual approach, offering a slate of online events ranging from author talks and 'how to' digital literacy sessions to ESL conversation circles. Virtual program delivery enabled VPL to connect with authors and artists from beyond Vancouver, and also to reach a</p>

much larger audience than would be typical for an individual program. An example of this was a free reading series program presented in partnership with the Vancouver Writers Fest “Incite: The Healing Art of Memoir” which saw over 350 attendees for the live virtual reading.

Virtual programs drew audiences in the hundreds for key events, such as author talks celebrating the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Black History Month, and Lunar New Year. VPL also hosted three four month creative residencies in 2021 where all associated programs were delivered virtually: Indigenous Storyteller in Residence Kung Jaadee, Writer in Residence Lindsay Wong, and Writer in Residence Chris Humphries.

ESL Conversation circles delivered virtually achieved maximum capacity and many English language learners expressed that this was their only contact to practice the language.

Programs for Children and Teens included a robust complement of digital offerings throughout the pandemic. Families of young children rely on library programs for social connection and community building, as well as early literacy modeling and parenting support. As such, restarting early learning programs was prioritized as we re-introduced in person programs.

In Q4 2021, some in-person programming was restored at all branches. This included storytimes for babies and preschoolers, school outreach and reading buddies programs for school aged children, and creative connection programs for teens.

To ensure safety of all attendees, in-person programs were delivered in small groups, with pre-registration required. These were very well attended, with many having substantial waitlists. Parents expressed relief at being able to attend programs again, and expressed a strong preference for returning to the more flexible drop in model that accommodates their individual schedules and needs. Post pandemic, VPL plans that Early Years programs will be primarily in person due to the developmental and community needs of young children, though parenting and programs for early childhood educators will remain online to make access easier.

Teen programs benefited tremendously from online delivery, with many participants saying how they felt more comfortable joining in a virtual environment. This cohort is historically challenging to reach, so we will continue to offer a combination of virtual and in-person options for this age group.

Going forward, VPL will build on the knowledge we have gained as we have pivoted repeatedly through 2020 and 2021 to serve our patrons through programs in a variety of formats and across many different platforms. We will continue to refine the hybrid programming model based on patron feedback and outcomes measurement in order to find the best balance of in-person and virtual programming.

#### **How does this project/program support the library’s strategic goals and/or community?**

This initiative supports a number of VPL’s 2020-2023 Strategic Plan Goals including “Champion early literacy and opportunities for lifelong learning”, “Bridge the digital divide and support creativity through accessible technology”, “Reduce social isolation and provide affordable access, and “Provide patron-centred experiences and make it easy to use VPL’s services”.

While navigating the challenges presented by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, VPL has continued to find ways to support the early literacy of children and youth and foster a love of reading at all ages by connecting people with free, high-quality opportunities to explore their interests and advance their creative aspirations. To support our continued focus on lifelong learning, we will offer a combination of in-person and digital programming.

We also aim to provide technology access to people struggling with affordability, connecting them with critical services and supporting their search for employment; help those with low digital literacy skills learn to conduct everyday activities online; and support people to manage the impact of technology on their lives. The shift to digital during COVID-19 presented an opportunity for VPL to accelerate digital investments and strategically balance resources between virtual and in-person service delivery.

**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><b>1. Improving Access</b> for British Columbians (e.g., connectivity, digital collections, shared services)</p>	<p>VPL's hybrid programs improve access for British Columbians by enabling patrons to access programs through the channel that is most convenient and accessible to them. The content of our programs also helps to bridge the digital divide by providing digital literacy education at various levels. Examples include basic Zoom skills, Internet Essentials, introducing concepts about online safety and privacy, and introduction to Google Suite. Helping patrons learn about these digital platforms enhances their ability to connect with others and access critical social services.</p>
<p><b>2. Building Capacity</b> for library staff and directors (e.g., training and professional development)</p>	<p>The need to rapidly develop and deliver virtual programs accelerated learning for staff. New cross functional teams were established to assess the requirements of virtual programs and to create entirely new streams of programs. Children's Librarians with expertise in presenting in person programs gained new skills in delivering storytimes online, and adult program facilitators also strengthened their abilities in front of a camera. Those behind the camera developed storyboards and became more skilled in filming and producing both live and recorded events.</p> <p>As a member of InterLINK Youth Services Committee, VPL shared expertise and best practices through an initiative to provide virtual program coaching for InterLINK member libraries. The focus was on building knowledge and capacity, identifying training and information sources for future program development, and sharing best practices widely. Leveraging the resources developed while supporting InterLINK's coaching initiative, VPL assigned a Digital Training lead to provide training for many VPL staff on tech skills required for delivery of virtual programming.</p>

<p>3. <b>Advancing Citizen Engagement</b> (e.g., helping people access government services/resources, fostering community knowledge-sharing, and supporting reconciliation)</p>	<p>With Truth and Reconciliation as an overarching priority at VPL, we are committed to being a place to learn about the history and cultures of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. VPL's hybrid programming prioritized program delivery for National Day of Reconciliation as well as hosting the Indigenous Storyteller in Residence digitally and curating an online event that brought together and celebrated the works of past Indigenous Storytellers in Residence which drew attendees from across Canada.</p>
<p>4. <b>Enhancing Governance</b> of the library system (e.g., board/trustee training, developing best practices, strategic planning)</p>	<p>Through hybrid programming, VPL developed operational best practices in program delivery by investing significant resources in researching, testing, and iterating program formats throughout 2020 and 2021. We also responded to user feedback around preferences for formats as in-person programming became possible in 2021, rebalancing our offerings across virtual and in-person platforms, in alignment with our strategic plan.</p>
<p><b>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.</b></p>	
<p>The overarching goal of offering a hybrid programming model is to meet a broader range of patron needs and remove barriers some patrons may have to participation in either digital or in-person programming alone.</p> <p>Feedback from patrons demonstrates the impact that VPL's digital and in-person programs have had for patrons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Thank you so much! I really appreciate what you are doing, we are relatively new in this country and all that craziness around the pandemic has made things more difficult for me as a mom. It's difficult to raise my daughter without more children and moms around. Things will change soon for us, I hope, but in the meantime, thanks for that little window of love and support. -Patron feedback from Zoom Storytime</li> <li>- "My daughter did an introductory web designing course from Coursera and designed her blog site. I was surprised to see how she used the survey monkey tools for her Literacy Matters post in September. She's also learning photo/graphic designing in Canva for her blogs. She has been encouraging her friends to start their blog sites. My point is - engaging in thinking and writing results in reduced social media distractions and motivation to learn new skills, which is very important, especially for tween/teenage. Thank you for all the good works you guys are doing. – Caregiver feedback from Write Now program</li> <li>- "I can't thank the VPL enough for helping us get through the past number of months... My son is 2.5 years old with health concerns, so we have to stay inside and story time brightens our day. My son really loves the storytime librarian, and when she says hello to him (or the story train) his whole face lights up. Thank you!"- Patron feedback from Zoom Storytime</li> </ul>	

- “A mother who regularly came to Britannia’s storytimes in the past told me that her four year-old daughter has started reading on her own. She wanted to thank everyone at the library for their support. She attended storytime and babytime every week with her two kids and she found it to be such a great help. She felt that she has set her daughter onto the right path with her reading and the library’s support was crucial in that.” – Staff account of patron feedback
- “As a result of attending this Zoom Skills program, I’m going to feel more comfortable hosting meeting. I did not realize how detailed the program is. There were things that I learned that I was not expecting.” – Patron feedback from Zoom Skills
- Following the in-person restart of VPL’s Sensory Storytime, a program for kids who need a quieter, more repetitive storytime for a variety of reasons, we received a number comments from parents noting the importance of the in-person connection for both children and parents in attendance. Parents noted they had been feeling so alone and it was an extremely positive emotional experience to be able to participate in the program while being physically together with other parents and children again.

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

While the development of VPL’s hybrid programming model was undertaken internally, we rely on a variety of partners to deliver the programs. These range from individual authors and subject experts to organizations as varied as Vancouver Writer’s Festival and Canada Learning Code.

### 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)	VPL followed the guidance of the Provincial Health Officer and WorkSafeBC as restrictions changed following the waves and troughs of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional restrictions were put in place during the March 31-May 24 “Circuit Breaker”, and were lifted in phases based on levels of risk in the

	<p>community, following the phases of BC's restart plan and moving into Phase 3 on July 1. Additional restrictions were reintroduced in response to the Omicron wave in December.</p> <p>VPL drafted a Phased COVID Recovery Plan for Programs and Rentals to help guide gradual restoration of public programs &amp; facilities rentals. VPL also helped patrons to register for their BC Vaccine Card and print and laminate a physical copy if needed.</p> <p>Restrictions on Events &amp; Gatherings impacted the re-start of in-person programming and rentals. This necessitated finding new and flexible ways to connect people. Examples included teen events on the rooftop garden, micro-weddings, and hybrid events. Key to our success was being flexible and adaptable, developing plans for a variety of service delivery models.</p> <p>Understanding the importance of VPL's programs and spaces to families with young children, VPL found new ways to deliver services while maintaining important public health and safety measures. These included opening Early Literacy spaces for single family access during times of heightened COVID risk, and providing learning materials for individual families/households to interact with while visiting the library. In Q4 2022, VPL restored limited in person programming for young children within safety guidelines, and saw programs quickly fill to capacity.</p>
Emergency response (e.g., fires, floods, extreme weather)	<p>VPL has participated in the City of Vancouver's heat preparedness and heat activations for over a decade. This initiative, and other ones like it (cold weather preparedness for example), have expanded through the years as Vancouver has continued to experience more extreme weather. In the summer of 2020 BC experienced record breaking heat and the 'heat dome' in June of 2021 prompted the modification and expansion of extreme heat response protocols previously in place.</p> <p>In response to Heat Warnings and Extreme Heat Alerts, VPL participated in three Cooling Centre Activations in 2021. Response measures included: cooling centre signage, opening branches on regularly scheduled closed days and statutory holidays, or for longer hours, providing access to drinking water (through fountains or bottled water where needed), removing COVID-19 related occupancy limits, and providing additional seating where space allowed.</p> <p>Challenges in responding to this emergency related to the short lead time and small gaps in service related to building issues (HVAC, etc.).</p>
Financial pressure (e.g., rising costs, reduced revenues)	<p>Over the past decade, VPL has consistently delivered greater services with limited resources. This has been possible in part because of improved efficiencies and reduced expenses, refocusing staff to highest areas of</p>

	<p>priority. However, VPL is now at a tipping point where further efficiencies, are not possible without substantial negative impacts, such as reducing service hours, staff, and programs that support citizens. This has also impacted VPL's ability to recruit and retain staff in areas such as IT and Finance.</p> <p>Public libraries are playing an increasingly important role in helping the Province achieve its goals, and need the financial support required to continue given increased demands on municipal funding.</p>
Staffing (e.g., recruitment and retention, mental health and wellness)	<p>In 2021, VPL introduced the Not Myself Today workplace mental health initiative for staff to help build greater awareness, reduce stigma, and foster safe and supportive cultures.</p> <p>Not Myself Today is an evidence based workplace mental health initiative from the Canadian Mental Health Association, designed to change the way we talk about mental health in the workplace and transform our workplace culture to be more open and supportive. VPL staff are supported to engage in short, weekly activities both individually and in a group, to be completed on work time.</p> <p>Topics covered in the Not Myself Today program include: learning the basics of mental health, working with emotions, addressing stress, building culture, and talking openly.</p> <p>Following a pilot launch with a small number of departments, VPL's implementation team developed resources to support initiative 'ambassadors' to facilitate the delivery across all departments. The initiative is designed to be accessible and easy to integrate into regular staff meetings.</p> <p>Through the tools and resources, the goal of this initiative is to break down barriers and make mental health information engaging and accessible to all employees.</p>
Disappearing services in the community (e.g., government, banking, health)	<p>As community and government services continue to shift away from in-person provision to online, VPL has helped to fill the gaps by reallocating staff resources to support patrons in accessing services, finding credible information online and connecting to the applicable online systems.</p>
Connectivity (e.g., low bandwidth, lack of home internet in the community)	

Aging/damaged facilities (e.g., need for repairs, renovations, upgrades/expansions)	
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>VPL supports vulnerable communities across Vancouver by providing access to washrooms, computers, and welcoming indoor spaces.</p> <p>In response to a growing need for crisis support, we partnered with Crisis Centre BC to provide phones in a number of locations at our Central library which provide immediate connection to the Crisis Centre support line.</p> <p>VPL supports vulnerable communities through virtual and in-person outreach visits conducted by community librarians. These visits were necessarily suspended for a time in response to COVID-19 health measures but VPL was able to restart in-person outreach visits in 2021. Visits focused on sharing that the library had reopened, and that our locations were once again available for people to visit and to borrow materials.</p> <p>VPL librarians also support patrons to gain access to services and information to support their basic needs (e.g. food security, shelter). In addition to providing computers for patrons to access critical information, library staff further support them by assisting in finding the information, and in filling out the required forms that allow them to access services and government programs.</p>
Other (please specify)	

#### 4. SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL

*Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.*

Library Director Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: March 17, 2022

Board Chair Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: March 17, 2022