

## **PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)**

### **OPTIONAL TEMPLATE**

**The Provincial Public Library Grants Report (PLGR) provides an opportunity for libraries to showcase their achievements and use of provincial funding. This report must include specific information demonstrating the value, impact and outcomes of your library's programs and services and how they help meet the current Provincial strategic plan, Inspiring Libraries, Connecting Communities (2016) and other key government initiatives.**

**For more information on reporting requirements, please review the PLGR instructions available through the Libraries Branch website**

**Please submit your 2019 PLGR by March 2, 2020.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Houston is small community primarily driven by the logging industry. We are located in Northern British Columbia within Area G of the Regional District of Bulkley Nechako. Houston's library was incorporated under the Library Act on January 28, 1965. Prior to that, the library had been operated by volunteers since the 1920s. Funding continues to be a challenge. Every year books, audio, DVDs, and databases grow in cost but library funding remains the same. This has an impact on our purchasing power. A significant issue with the stagnant funding is our inability to pay wages above the provincial minimum for lower level employees. This makes it hard to fill part time positions that offer few hours per week.

Strategic Plan: Our current Strategic Plan was developed on March 25, 2019. We will be meeting in March of this year to evaluate where we are in regards to completing our goals.

(2019-2022):

#### **Goal 1: Enhance our space**

In 2017 we were successful in obtaining grant funding to replace the carpet throughout the building with vinyl planks. The work was completed in 2018 a few months after the District of Houston had the entire interior of the building painted. Building on that, we would like to improve other areas of the library. The courtyard is in need of major repairs. The bricks are shifting and weeds grow through creating an unsightly mess. We would also like to improve "quiet spaces" throughout the building.

#### **Goal 2: Increase community engagement and expand user base**

One of the ways we plan to increase community engagement is with a needs assessment survey. We also will commit to attending at least 3 community outreach events per year. We would also like to increase our presence on Facebook and Instagram.

#### **Goal 3: Be intentional in maintaining library environment**

Being in such a small building, it can be hard to maintain the line between a place where people can come to read/study and a place where children can play, learn and discover. We plan to update our behavioral policy and use it to ensure patrons are respecting the space and the space of others.

## **PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES**

**The Province focused on the following priorities in 2019:**

- **Improving access**
- **Developing skills**
- **Collaborating on shared goals**
- **Enhancing governance**

**In the following sections, tell us how your library used the grants you received to help fulfill each of these priorities.**

### **PRIORITY 1 - IMPROVING ACCESS**

**Indicate which of your library's goals, programs, services and/or partnerships support this priority and describe their outcomes.**

Library Goal: Increase community engagement and enhance user base

In 2019 the major initiative we took to improve access was to go fine free on all items. We found that many of our patrons who had fines were unable to pay them. In many cases we opted to void the fines for the patron so they could continue to check out items. By going fine free, we remove the barrier that fines create for patrons who do not have the capacity to pay.

We also attend a few community events a year. This allows us to reach people in the community who may not know who we are and what we do. We find that a good number of people who have never been in the library are surprised we have eBooks and audiobooks available for check out. Attending these events increases awareness of the Houston Public Library throughout the community.

In 2019 we were able to secure grant funding from the Dungate Community Forest to purchase a 75" television and new laptop for our meeting room. The previous TV we had was only 41" and not ideal for groups using the room for training or presentations. The new TV allows bigger groups to see the screen from everywhere in the room making it more ideal for conferences and training.

In 2019 we were able to hire a Program Coordinator. Prior to that we were limited in what we were able to offer. Having the Programmer has allowed us to expand programming for all ages. We did not charge a fee for any program or event. Total attendance for the year was:

Adults:

- Sessions: 70
- Attendance: 1735

Children

- Sessions: 58
- Attendance: 1576

In 2019 we offered the following regular programs:

- Teen Craft Night
- Adult Craft Night
- After School Games
- Lego Club
- Storytime
- Summer Reading Club
- Book Club

Events we were able to offer include:

- Heart Hunt
- Crime Solvers
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Spring Break: Mario Kart Challenge
- Spring Break: Crafts
- Teddy Bear Picnic in partnership with the Houston Link to Learning
- Magician Leif David in partnership with the Northwest Library Federation
- Making moon lander in partnership with the HR MacMillan Space Centre
- Author Ivan Coyote in partnership with the Northwest Library Federation
- Halloween Activities
- Pumpkin Hunt
- Serendipity

We also had our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual 12 Days of Christmas events. These go on during the month of December and offer a variety of events/contests for all ages. We had a total of 519 people attend/interact during the event. They include:

- Hot Chocolate Bar
- Popcorn and Colouring Contest
- Pick a Chocolate
- Snowflake Craft
- Cake and Crafts
- Lego Challenge
- Stories with Santa in partnership with the Houston Link to Learning
- Candy Cane Hunt
- 2 Facebook Challenges
- Clove Orange Craft
- Our first annual Great Gingerbread Contest

## **PRIORITY 2 - DEVELOPING SKILLS**

**Indicate which of your library's goals, programs, services and/or partnerships support this priority and describe their outcomes.**

The Houston Public Library Board encourages staff to sign up for various training sessions and attend conferences. All staff have the opportunity to get paid an additional 20 hours per year for approved training plans. Whenever possible, all staff attend the Beyond Hope Library Conference in Prince George every second year as well as the Northwest Library Federation Conference. The library will close for 1 or 2 days to allow all staff to attend. It is important that staff get the opportunity for continued education. Attending conferences helps to maintain a sense of team work.

In 2019 staff were invited to attend training sessions with a local partner, Houston Link to Learning. The training sessions were specifically designed for children ages 0-5. We were able to incorporate some of this training into our monthly Story Time program.

After the closure of the North West Community College here in Houston we were the only facility that was able to offer exam invigilation. In 2019 we supervised a total of 33 exams for students. As long as tests were written during designated testing hours, there was no charge to the student. This allows people to stay in the community to complete their education. If we were not able to offer this service, students would have to travel at least 45 minutes to the next town for invigilation services. That would make it more difficult for students to advance their education.

By default, our public access computers allow users up to 2 hours in 30 minute increments. However, this is waived for patrons who do any sort of school/course work or those working on resumes or job applications. This allows people who need a computer to advance their education or secure employment take all the time needed to complete their work.

### **PRIORITY 3 - COLLABORATING ON SHARED GOALS**

**Indicate which of your library's goals, programs, services and/or partnerships support this priority and describe their outcomes.**

The library did the following to support this goal:

- Work with local organizations and businesses to provide additional programming
- Promote services, programs and events with the local schools
- Partnered with a local elementary school for an event

In 2019 we worked with our local literacy organization, Houston Link to Learning, to offer additional events for the community. The first one was the Teddy Bear Picnic. This is done alongside the Kindergarten Roundup event. The idea is that children who are going to get their vaccinations can come over to the library afterwards for fun games, crafts and lunch. The event is open to children 0-6 and their parents. Working alongside the Kindergarten Roundup is a great way to reach parents who have never been to the library before. After their vaccinations they are told we have fun games, crafts and lunch next door. We had a total of 81 people attend this event.

Another event done in partnership with the Houston Link to Learning is Stories with Santa. This event is open for children of all ages and their parents but is meant for children that still hold their belief of Santa. During the event we have both Santa and Mrs. Claus read stories to the children. There are crafts, games, and snacks. Stories with Santa brought new patrons into the library. We were able to show them what we have to offer and sign them up for cards. This event broke records in 2019. We had a total of 199 people attend the event over the 2 hour period. Below is a picture of the entryway with all the shoes and boots.



The local schools allow us to use their location to promote services, programs, and events. Throughout the year we take posters and handouts to each school for them to display or hand out to students/parents. We are also able to use report cards to advertise Summer Reading Club. Every year we create a slip about Summer Reading Club and other summer events which are then put into the

report card envelopes by the school. This is another great way for us to bring awareness to parents who may not know what we have to offer.

In 2019 we partnered with Silverthorne Elementary School to host Magician Leif David. This event was also in partnership with the Northwest Library Federation. Leif's show was specifically designed around the 2019 Summer Reading Club theme "Imagine the Possibilities!" Since Leif performance had to be during the school day, we asked the elementary school if they would be interested in having the show there. The show got very positive reviews. One of the teachers said it was the best school performance to date.

#### **PRIORITY 4 - ENHANCING GOVERNANCE**

**Indicate which of your library's goals, programs, services and/or partnerships support this priority and describe the outcomes.**

Throughout 2019 we reviewed our entire policy manual during regular meetings. We updated or removed several policies that were no longer relevant.

In March we developed a new strategic plan. The public was invited to submit ideas about what they want to see happen with the library in the future. All staff and most Board Members were able to attend the planning session. Everyone was given the opportunity to submit ideas and suggestions. From there we were able to develop new goals for the Houston Public Library over the next few years. We will meet again in March of 2020 to review the plan and see where we are.

#### **SUMMARY**

In Conclusion, 2019 was a busy year for the Houston Public Library. Having a Program Coordinator allowed us to expand programming for all ages. We opted to go fine free, increasing access for patrons who previously had limited access due to fines. We continued to partner with other local organizations to increase programs, events, and library awareness. As always, funding continues to be the biggest challenge we face. Funding remains the same while the cost to operate continues to rise. Of course, nothing we do would be possible without the funding we do receive from the Province and we are extremely grateful for what we do get.