



PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT – OPTIONAL TEMPLATE

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The Provincial Public Library Grants Report (PLGR) is an opportunity to demonstrate how provincial funding supports library services in your community and [Provincial Strategic Plan for Public Library Service](#) and government's commitments to British Columbians.

For more information on reporting requirements, please review the PLGR instructions available [online](#).

Please submit your 2020 PLGR by March 1, 2021.

INTRODUCTION

Houston is a small logging community in Northern BC located within Area G of the Regional District of Bulkley Nechako. Opened sometime in the 1920s, Houston's library was maintained by volunteers until January 28, 1965 when it officially became incorporated under the Library Act. As a small community we continue to face housing issues. New community members are having troubles finding rentals. As a rural community, we also have difficulties attracting doctors to the area. We also have difficulties filling vacant positions in the library and other businesses. Of course, the biggest challenge for the community in 2020 was the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid required us to change the way we provide services and access to the library.

Strategic Plan: Our current plan was developed on March 25, 2019. The plan was reviewed in November 2020 to make adjustments and note changes due to Covid-19.

Goal 1: Enhance our space: Our outdoor courtyard is in need of repair. The bricks are shifting and weeds are growing through. We would like to have some tables and chairs for that space as well. We hope to have this project completed this summer.

Goal 2: Increase community engagement and expand user base: One of the ways we planned to increase community engagement is by attending at least 3 community outreach events per year. As well as increasing our social media presence.

Goal 3: Be intentional in maintaining library environment: As we are in a small building, it is often hard to maintain a place where children can play and learn but also a space for people to study.

PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES

The Province focused on the following priorities in 2020:

- Improving access for British Columbians
- Building Capacity
- Advancing Citizen Engagement

- 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 FOR BRITISH COLUMBIANS

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

For 2020, our main goal was to improve access during Covid-19 restrictions. We achieved this goal in the following ways:

During our closure, we offered curbside pickup for our patrons. Patrons were able to place holds through their account, call, or email with their requests. Some patrons requested surprise bags to be done by staff.

As Interlibrary loans were closed, we committed \$1000 of our acquisition budget to purchase items requested by patrons. Of course we were not able to purchase everything but if the item was newer and would fit into our collection we purchased it to reduce wait times for patrons.

With the technology grant we were able to purchase a printer with wireless capabilities so patrons could print from outside the building. They were also able to email their documents to us for printing.

With the technology grant we were able to purchase an additional Wi-Fi hotspot to increase the internet signal in the parking lot. This allowed more people to access the internet from outside the building without having to park right beside it.

PRIORITY 2 – BUILDING CAPACITY

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

With the technology grant we were able to update our network switches to allow for a faster internet connection. We are now able to get up to 275 GBPS through our internet provider. Prior to this, the internet would get quite slow if there were a lot of people using the service.

As part of this priority, we had planned to recruit and train more volunteers to help with everyday tasks such as shelving. However, due to Covid-19, we decided not to accept volunteers until the pandemic is over.

PRIORITY 3 – ENHANCING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

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:

We began offering craft kits shortly after we closed to the public. Our Program Coordinator created the kits for people to pick up outside the building. There were kits for adults and children. People could send us a picture of their completed project and they would be entered into a draw to win a prize. We gave out a total of 372 kits throughout 2020.

We offered a few Facebook contests in 2020. We would ask some sort of question and every person that answered would be entered into a draw for some sort of prize. This helped us reach new followers on Facebook which in turn resulted in new memberships being issued.

PRIORITY 4 - ENHANCING GOVERNANCE

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

Due to Covid-19, there were things we were not able to do to work towards completing our Strategic Plan goals. Instead, we edited our plan to reflect the changes we made towards improving the library during our closure and limited use. We talked to patrons personally as they came in to see if there were ways we could improve service while still maintaining a healthy, safe environment.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING FOR 2020

TECHNOLOGY GRANT – FINAL REPORT

1. New network switches: The library is able to offer faster download speed for patrons and staff. This immediately reduced wait times and frustration for both staff and patrons. This allowed us to improve access for the community.
2. New colour printer with wireless capabilities: Having this printer allows patrons to print documents from their own devices. This decreases wait times for public computers and allows patrons to print as soon as they arrive. This allowed us to improve access for the community.
3. New loanable laptops: This allows patrons to have access to a device outside of library hours. People without their own devices can complete school work or work from home while having to isolate due to Covid-19 symptoms or exposure. This allows us to improve access for the community.
4. Wireless Hotspot: Allowed us to increase the internet signal in the parking lot. This allows patrons to access the internet from outside. This is particularly helpful if we are at our maximum capacity due to Covid-19. People can access the internet from their vehicles without waiting to come inside. This allowed us to improve access for the community.
5. New Public Access Computers: New computers were needed to improve speed and decrease wait times for patrons. This allowed us to improve access for the community.

The Houston Public Library closed to the public on March 18, 2020. All programs and events were immediately cancelled. We opted to keep our book drop open and we began curbside service on March 24. Patrons could place hold through their online accounts, via email, or over the phone and pick them up an arranged time. We also created surprise bags for patrons when requested. We also started creating craft kits that patrons could pick up outside the building. Patrons who participated were entered into a draw to win some sort of prize at the end of every week.

Curbside only continued until we opened to the public on July 2, 2020. In preparation for opening we created signs, put away extra furniture, installed Plexiglas, marked the floor for lineups, and had a greeter at the door to explain new rules. We opted to have computers available by appointment and for a limited time as they needed to be cleaned between each use. These new rules, while inconvenient for staff and patrons, were necessary to keep the library open. Most comments we received were positive. Patrons were happy to have their library back even though things had changed and browsing time was limited.

Summer Reading Club started in July. We prepared weekly themed craft kits for patrons to pick up.

We started doing small in-person craft programs in September during closing hours. We were able to set up tables and keep everyone 6 feet apart. Unfortunately, when restrictions increased in November, we had to cancel in-person programming and go back to take home craft kits.

The biggest challenge for us is having to limit the amount of time people spend in the library. Being a small library, we have to maintain that time limit to make sure everyone gets a chance to come inside. This is particularly hard to enforce with certain vulnerable patrons who, prior to Covid, would spend hours in the library just to be around people. During cold winter months, we often have people stop in to warm up on their way to or from the store. Having to refuse people entry while we are at our limit, even if it is only for a short time, is particularly hard for staff.

SUMMARY

Despite the difficulties of Covid-19, 2020 was a successful year for the Houston Public Library. We figured out ways to connect with patrons while remaining safe and healthy. Of course we miss the gatherings, programs, events, and parties, but we look forward to seeing more and more faces as the Covid-19 situation improves. Nothing we do would be possible without the generous funding we receive from the Province and we are grateful for every dime.

Houston Public Library Interim Technology Grant report

The Houston Public Library is focusing on a few different areas with this valuable funding. This money has and will allow us to improve access to patrons in many different ways.

First, we decided to upgrade server hardware to allow for a faster internet connection. Our old network switches only allowed us to get a maximum of 100 mbps. Half of that is allocated to the staff server to run our software and programs. The other half is designated to the public. When we had multiple people using the public Wi-Fi, it would get very slow and patrons would have to wait for pages to load or files to download. Improving the hardware allowed us to increase our speed to 275mbps and allocate more to the public server. Multiple people can now access the internet without experiencing slowdowns.

Next we decided to get a new, faster colour printer that supports wireless printing capabilities. This allows patrons to print from their own devices with reduces wait times and frees up public access computers. The faster Xerox printer reduces wait times for patrons printing a significant amount.

We have also decided to purchase refurbished laptops to lend to the public. This idea behind this is so children who are home sick from school can access the internet and do school work. Some of the software the school uses is not compatible with phones or tablets so some children without access to actual computers at home are falling behind.

Due to Covid-19 we have to limit the number of people in the building at one time. Unfortunately, this restricts access to those who wish to sit and use the Wi-Fi. We decided to add another wireless hotspot to improve connectivity in the parking lot and around the building. This will allow more people to use the internet at once and helps us from turning people away completely when we are at capacity.

We are also going to purchase 4 new public access computers. 4 of our PACs are several years old and are beginning to slow down more with each software update. New computers will allow for faster loading times and decrease wait times.

2020 LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORTING FORM: [HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY]

Total Technology Grant Amount: [\$9100]

Area of Need	Outcome	Metrics	Strategic Links	Actions	Collaborative Links	Timeframe	Project Budget	In-Kind/Leveraged funds	Comments
Connectivity (internet speed, connection capacity, etc.) New network switches to handle faster download speeds. Increase internet speed to 256 mbps	Faster internet will more people to access the web without experiencing slowdown due to heavy traffic.	Increase the amount of people that can use the internet without experiencing slowdowns from 5 to 20+.	Increasing internet speed supports the provincial priority to improve access.	Have new network switches installed so the server can handle faster download speeds. Increase internet speed with service provider.		July 2020	\$900	\$100 in labour charges from our IT company.	
Patron hardware upgrades (public computers, printers, etc.) New colour printer	Having patrons print from their own devices will decrease wait times for public computers.	Allow people to print from their own devices. Faster printer means less wait times.	Technology with wireless capability supports the provincial priority to improve access.	Purchase a new Xerox colour printer with wireless capabilities.		July 2020	\$1900	\$100 in labour charges from our IT company.	
Patron loanable devices New laptops to lend to patrons	Loanable laptops will help families of children who are sick to complete school work online.	10 loanable laptops will improve access to student who are required to stay home from school while sick.	Loanable laptops support the provincial priority to improve access.	Purchase refurbished laptops to lend to the public.		November 2020	\$2000	TBD	
Patron hardware upgrades (public computers, printers, etc.) Wireless hot spot	Improved Wi-Fi signal outside the building will provide much needed access to patrons as space is limited inside due to Covid-19	Allow multiple users to access the internet from outside the building when we are at capacity due to Covid-19	Increased internet access supports the provincial priority to improve access.	Purchase a wireless hot spot and have it installed in a way that will increase wireless access from the parking lot.	TBD	November 2020	\$300	TBD	
Patron hardware upgrades (public computers, printers, etc.) New public access computers	Updated computers will improve speed and software compatibility.	4 new public access computers will increase loading times for webpages and improve patron experience.	New, faster Public access computers supports the provincial priority to improve access.	Purchase, format, and install software on 4 new public access computers.	TBD	November 2020	\$4000	TBD	

