2021 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

LIBRARY NAME

RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY

CHECKLIST

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1. INTRODUCTION - LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Richmond is a unique, thriving and ethnically diverse community with a large immigrant population and a high population of seniors. Many people who come to settle in Richmond are interested in starting a local family business, expanding their current business, or exploring development opportunities in Richmond. Transformed from a rural community to an international city, Richmond continues to develop its downtown core and waterfront areas. Even with the rapid changes Richmond has seen, the community continues to place a high priority on protecting the natural environment and preserving its heritage.

To support the unique needs of our community and provide equitable access to its collections, resources and services for all Richmond residents, the library has continuously and successfully shifted through the pandemic and we are now welcoming community members back into our spaces with our focus being on reconnecting community and reducing social isolation. In February 2021, the library permanently removed late fines to ensure library resources remain accessible for everyone in our community throughout their lifetime, regardless of circumstance. As part of the return to pre-pandemic services, all library branches returned to full 7-day operational hours on July 11, 2021. The library welcomed over 4,000,000 customers at our four library branches throughout 2021.

2. MAJOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

Project/Program Name
Building an engaged and informed community
Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.
Throughout 2021, the library prioritized the creation of resources and programs that foster community resiliency and a sense of belonging: supporting mental wellness, promoting inclusion and responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *94 Calls to Action*. A three-part series with industry experts Dr. Deborah MacNamara, Dr. Ashley Miller and Dr. Gabriella Ionita, funded by a Democracy Spark Grant, was designed to help parents and caregivers support their children and teens in responding to depression, anxiety and other mental health issues. The library also hosted a community conversation about the documentary "The World is Bright" to explore the prevalence and challenges of mental illness experienced by new immigrants.

Staff training to expand staff knowledge of equity, diversity and inclusion and to give staff the tools to better support their own mental health and wellness was prioritized. Topics covered included exploring and understanding gender identity, reconciliation and indigenous rights, fundamentals of anti-oppression and anti-racism. The workshops engaged and educated staff through presentations and group-style conversations.

An Indigenous Resources webpage was launched to build awareness and encourage learning and reflection. Partnering with Connections Community Services, the library offered a 10-installment podcast series featuring various Indigenous Storytellers. Donation dollars funded two library programs that took place in fall 2021, to honour National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, connecting local Indigenous artists with children and families. All library staff also completed a three-hour training webinar, *4 Seasons of Reconciliation*, to learn about the history and culture of Indigenous communities in Canada, including the history of residential schools.

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

The library's promotion and support for mental health and wellness programs and resources supports the library's Strategic Goal of building and growing our community by responding to community needs.

Staff training supports the library's Strategic Goal of Developing and leveraging our resources by investing in staff.

The library is committed to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *94 Calls to Action*.

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.

1. **Improving Access** for British Columbians (e.g., connectivity, digital collections, shared services)	The library connected with residents through virtual and in-person programs, delivering valuable information and resources to support community through the challenges of the pandemic. This specialized programming included the three-part series for parents and caregivers. The library introduced an Indigenous Resources web page to provide a single place community could go to access information about local Indigenous culture.
2. **Building Capacity** for library staff and directors (e.g., training and professional development)	The library provided training opportunities to enhance learning and create organizational awareness. There was a specific focus in the areas of equity, diversity and inclusion to ensure staff are better able to support community members of all demographics and economic backgrounds.

3.	**Advancing Citizen Engagement** (e.g., helping people access government services/resources, fostering community knowledge-sharing, and supporting reconciliation)	The library provided valuable knowledge and information to the community so that residents are better connected to resources and equipped to respond to mental health and wellness challenges. The library prioritized staff training in the areas of equity, diversity and inclusion to support staff in responding to community needs. The library is committed to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *94 Calls to Action* and in 2021, this included introducing valuable online resources and offering programs led by local Indigenous artists.
4.	**Enhancing Governance** of the library system (e.g., board/trustee training, developing best practices, strategic planning)	The Board of Trustees participated and engaged in regular workshops, development opportunities and library programs to support their understanding of community need, influence their advocacy efforts and enable the development of relevant policy.

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.

Families and individuals who were impacted with mental health challenges, aggravated by the pandemic, were able to connect with library staff to access valuable resources, and engage with industry experts through a pandemic parenting series and a community conversation about "The World is Bright".

Staff acquired skills related to equity, diversity and inclusion to be applied directly in customer interactions, and learned skills to help them process and understand their own mental health and wellness.

Community members learned about and developed an appreciation for local Indigenous culture and were informed about how to access additional Indigenous resources to support increasing their own awareness, understanding and appreciation.

The library helped to deliver on the provincial strategic goal for libraries to advance citizen engagement.

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

The library collaborated with screening partner Story Money Impact for a series of two expert panel discussions about the film "The World is Bright". The partner provided registration and promotional support as well as expert panelists.

The library partnered with two local indigenous artists who presented hands-on workshops for children and families. The library also partnered with Connections Community Services to offer a 10-installment podcast series that featured various Indigenous Storytellers.

2. MAJOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

Project/Program Name
Supporting a resilient and thriving community

Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.
The library introduced a number of services, collections and programs in 2021 that directly supported the economic recovery of Richmond residents that have been struggling during these challenging times. In February 2021, the library board unanimously agreed to support a budget that would permanently eliminate late fines, furthering the library's mission to create opportunities for everyone in our community to learn, connect and belong. The library introduced a variety of unique, non-traditional and expensive collections to meet community needs. By providing these collections, community members were able to access equipment that is financially out of reach for some. These new collections included fishing and birdwatching ExplorePACKS, STEAM kits for school-aged children and podcasting kits, that were purchased with funding from the Province of BC Multiculturalism Grant. Prior to being made available for the public to borrow, the podcasting kits were used to create a program series for BIPOC youth. The library offered two job fairs in 2021 – one virtual, presented in partnership with WorkBC Employment Services, and one in-person, presented in partnership with WorkBC Richmond and the British Columbia Hotel Association (BCHA) – to strengthen and support economic recovery for Richmond businesses and to support Richmond residents who may have lost jobs or were looking for new employment opportunities.

How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals and/or community?
The elimination of late fines supports the library's Strategic Goal of building and growing our community by responding to community needs and reaching out to vulnerable populations. The introduction of a variety of non-traditional collections supports the library's Strategic Goal of expanding access to programs, services and collections by growing our collections with our community, and, the creation of a podcasting program for BIPOC youth supports the library's Strategic Goal of building and growing our community by reaching out to vulnerable populations. The job fairs support the library's Strategic Goal of building and growing our community by responding to community needs.

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.	
5. **Improving Access** for British Columbians (e.g., connectivity, digital collections, shared services)	By introducing a fine free model, the library welcomed back residents who had stopped using the library. These fines were disproportionately impacting individuals who are vulnerable, experiencing homelessness and those with low or fixed income. The library offers a variety of kits for borrowing to inspire community to try something new, such as birdwatching or fishing, without having to purchase expensive equipment. These kits promote learning and connecting with family while exploring the community in new ways. The podcasting program series gave participants access to the technology they needed to begin podcasting and provided them with the skills needed to start their own podcast. The library offers job fairs to connect community members with valuable employment information as well as prospective employers, helping the community to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.
6. **Building Capacity** for library staff and directors (e.g., training and professional development)	With the elimination of fine conversations, the library has redirected public-facing staff roles to welcoming library customers in new ways at our library branches and providing more personalized and proactive customer service.
7. **Advancing Citizen Engagement** (e.g., helping people access government services/resources, fostering community knowledge-sharing, and supporting reconciliation)	The library has a responsibility to ensure everyone's voice has equal opportunity to be heard. We do that by reducing barriers and providing low or no-cost methods for people to connect with others. The podcasting program and kits supported BIPOC youth in entering the dynamic world of podcasting. Through job fairs and skills-based programs, the library provided opportunities for community to re-enter or to seek out new opportunities in the work force.
8. **Enhancing Governance** of the library system (e.g., board/trustee training, developing best practices, strategic planning)	As part of their fiduciary responsibility, the library board considered a continually declining revenue stream in light of their strategic goal of removing barriers to library access; unanimously deciding to permanently eliminate late fines during a time of great economic uncertainty for many Richmond residents.

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.

By permanently removing late fines, the library ensured that community members who may have stopped using the library got a fresh start and everyone is able to access library resources.

Residents of all ages were able to borrow library kits at no cost; enabling them to try birdwatching or fishing, or explore a wide variety of STEAM materials. Many of the materials in these new collections are expensive and the cost to purchase them may be financially out of reach for some. Further, young adults from the BIPOC community were able to access podcasting equipment at no cost and learn how to create their own podcast using equipment is now available for residents of all ages to use.

Individuals whose employment status was directly impacted by the pandemic were able to access support and local businesses that were looking to rebuild were able to reach prospective employees through the two job fairs hosted by the library.

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 local community organizations, including Birds Canada, and other local birdwatching specialist organizations, as well as the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC, who provided the equipment for the new fishing and birdwatching ExplorePACKS.

The library partnered with Connections Community Services to develop the grant proposal for the BIPOC podcasting program funded with a BC Multiculturalism Grant.

The library partnered with both WorkBC and WorkBC Richmond as well as with the British Columbia Hotel Association (BCHA) to plan, promote and host the two job fairs.

3. KEY CHALLENGES

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)	In response to numerous public health orders issued in 2021, the library has incurred significant costs to ensure we maintain safe and healthy spaces for community and for staff. This has included installing extensive plexiglass shielding and purchasing disposable PPE including masks and gloves, cleaning supplies and signage. The library purchased unique tools to support physical distancing in situations where it has proven difficult, such as laser pointers for customer support in our computer labs and plexiglass window intercom systems at service desks to make communication more effective. The library also invested extensively in staff training, education and support to ensure that staff are prepared to serve customers safely and respond to conflicts and incidents with regards to restrictions mandated by the Provincial Health Office.
Emergency response (e.g., fires, floods, extreme weather)	Above and beyond the pandemic, the library supported the community with safe spaces through the unique weather challenges that presented in 2021. During the heat dome in the summer and extreme cold in the winter of 2021, the library responded by introducing seating for vulnerable customers and by actively promoting its spaces as a safe respite. The library also partnered with local organizations to share vital information about shelter spaces and other accommodations available nearby. Additional funding would support increased staffing resources that would enable the library to extend its open hours during future periods of extreme weather.
Financial pressure (e.g., rising costs, reduced revenues)	The library is experiencing ongoing financial pressures, including the rising cost of updating and expanding collections and resources, increases in the cost of recruiting and retaining staff, and higher costs of IT infrastructure. The $38,538 of one-time funding that the library received from the 2020 Provincial Technology Grant had an immediate impact for our community in the form of dedicated technology for emergency shelter residents, improved Wi-Fi infrastructure, and access to new digital resources. Providing barrier-free and equitable access is a priority for the library but there has been no increase in the Provincial Annual Grant since 2010. Increased sustainable funding in the form of the Per Capita Operating Grant would strengthen core library services that connect our residents to the information and resources they need to succeed. Any new funds received would be put towards resources and services that help our community to rebuild and thrive.

Staffing (e.g., recruitment and retention, mental health and wellness)	Libraries offer a wide variety of services which require staff to have a diverse range of skill sets and education levels. Across BC, libraries are competing for the same human resources, making recruitment and retention a challenge. Library staff have been struggling through the pandemic to provide vital services while also meeting new demands for community mental health and wellness needs. BC libraries have collaborated where possible to provide services and share training and resources, but more resources are needed and this comes at a cost. Creating a strong and successful staff means ensuring they have mental health supports in place. The library offers the longstanding Employee and Family Assistance Program and introduced the Not Myself Today program. These tailored employee assistance programs both offer different degrees of confidential, one-on-one support.
Disappearing services in the community (e.g., government, banking, health)	The library is working to respond to the gaps in in-person services available, caused in part by an increase in vulnerable populations within Richmond, which has led to a lack of sufficient shelter resources, as well as challenges in providing enough access to digital and financial literacy tools for those with no access in a home environment. Library staff are increasingly called upon to provide services well outside of the scope of their training. These services often border on social work or other forms of social support, such as completing complex government forms or applications and providing service supports with regards to unstable housing, food insecurity and access to healthcare. Staff strive to provide these services within the public library's scope – connecting library customers to social supports, such as social workers or community resource workers who are trained to help with these complex tasks.
Connectivity (e.g., low bandwidth, lack of home internet in the community)	Two of the library's most used services are our Wi-Fi network and our computer labs, available at every library branch. Many Richmond residents do not have regular, reliable access to a computer or to Wi-Fi, and even more do not have access to a printer or scanner. These customers rely on the library's modern computer labs and Wi-Fi network to be able to access social connections along with vital government and community resources and services. During the pandemic, the computer labs were among the first services to return to safe operation. To address the financial barriers to home internet access experienced by low-income residents, the library's Wi-Fi service is freely accessible both in-branch and outside the perimeter of each library location. Leveraging the 2020 Provincial Technology Grant, the library upgraded its wireless infrastructure in conjunction with the City of Richmond, to improve connectivity for the community. The improved wireless service yielded benefits in both the reliability and capacity of the library's Wi-Fi service. Keeping this technology and equipment current requires ongoing and significant funding.

Aging/damaged facilities (e.g., need for repairs, renovations, upgrades/expansions)	The library's four branches require continuous improvements to modernize spaces to better serve the changing needs of our growing and aging community. Increasing housing costs mean many are living in smaller spaces, resulting in more people are seeking out library space to connect with others. Each age group that visits has different space needs and the library aims to support them all. For example, Richmond's aging population needs accessible and comfortable seating as well as spaces that reduce noise and shelves that are easily accessible. The library needs to provide better sight lines for wayfinding and ample places to plug in and charge personal devices while visiting the library. There are also additional ongoing IT infrastructure improvements needed, including computer upgrades for staff and public computers. Increased provincial support would have a direct benefit for all library users and would greatly support and facilitate the expansion of core library services including physical spaces.
Community access to the library (e.g., geographic isolation, lack of local public transit, building accessibility)	The library has four branches, located in the four quadrants of the City of Richmond, but there are still areas and neighbourhoods within Richmond where we are not able to meet community's expectations for full library service. Most notably, this includes the Hamilton community, a quickly growing but isolated neighbourhood that is currently serviced only by a library book dispenser located in the Community Centre and by Saturday pop-up service. We also have pockets not well served by transit or library services. To meet community needs and expectations, we would need additional service locations and outreach staff to reach these neighbourhoods. Community members living in these underserved neighbourhoods have regularly expressed the need for greater access to library services and resources.
Vulnerable communities (e.g., people experiencing homelessness, addiction, mental health crisis)	The library is committed to supporting those who are experiencing homelessness, addiction and mental health challenges. The library provides programming and resources to address the fight against the opioid crisis through our partnerships with local community-based organizations. The library offers low or no barriers to access which was challenging when the pandemic forced the library to close temporarily and reduce its in-person services. Our priority was to quickly and safely bring back the library services most needed by our vulnerable residents – computer labs, in-branch seating and home services delivery. The library leveraged the Provincial Technology Grant to partner with the Salvation Army Richmond House Emergency Shelter to provide shelter residents with free and reliable access to computers and computer literacy training. During weekly visits, staff offered basic skills training on Microsoft Word, internet searching, creating emails and using social media. Being able to offer longer library open hours, greater access to technology and more tailored programming would enable the library to provide even more support to vulnerable populations.

4. SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL

Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.

Library Director Signature: _Swatters ._____   Date: March 31, 2022

Board Chair Signature: _____   Date: March 31, 2022