PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANTS REPORT (PLGR) 2020

CRESTON VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

INTRODUCTION

Creston Valley Public Library serves a population of just over 13,000 people within the Town of Creston and Regional District of Central Kootenay Areas A, B, and C. A few defining characteristics:

- Creston Valley Public Library operates on the unceded homelands of the Yaqan Nukiy people of the Ktunaxa Nation.
- Approximately 92% of the population identifies as Caucasian, 6% as Indigenous, and less than 2% as other visible minorities.
- Creston has an older population, with a median age of 57.6, compared to the provincial median of 43.
- The median total income of households in 2017 was $46,421, compared to the provincial median of $84,850.

The biggest challenge facing Creston Valley Public Library is the continued increase of operational costs without a similar increase in provincial funding. The Regional District of Central Kootenay continues to increase our annual operating grant as per the relevant CPI (Consumer Price Index) despite collecting lower-than-average tax rates. However, the provincial grants have remained relatively the same over the past 10 years. This year's technology grant provided a much needed boost to our digital infrastructure and collections. However, without annual, reliable increases in operating funds, we cannot pay our staff the wages required to improve and expand our services. And it can be a challenge to advocate for the importance of public libraries in our community when the province is signaling the opposite. Nevertheless, our outcomes are comparable to larger and much better funded libraries, thanks in part to talented and long-term staff, a volunteer workforce, and the tremendous goodwill of our patrons.

This year our library's services were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we were still able to provide the following services:

- Hosted 25,303 in-person visits
- Provided service during 1,085 open hours
- Circulated 88,703 items, both digital and physical
- Provided access to a record 31,510 e-books and digital resources (a 21% increase over previous years)
- Registered 256 new patrons
- Facilitated programs for 1,297 in-person participants and generated 9,339 online views

- Provided access to 3,457 public internet sessions through our computer workstations and boosted our outdoor wi-fi capacities

We have finished the final year of our Strategic Plan that was developed for the years 2016-2020 and are currently in the process of developing a new one. The Library Board has established our new mission, vision and values which will be used throughout the report in lieu of "goals" as our new operating goals have not yet been set.

PRIORITY 1: IMPROVING ACCESS FOR BRITISH COLUMBIANS

Our values:

Lifelong learning

Literacy

Patron-centred services

Respect and inclusivity

Universal access

The library undertook the following activities to support these values:

- Eliminated late fees on all library materials to remove financial barriers to library services.
- Added an outdoor wi-fi hub to boost public access to our internet connection during the pandemic
- Provided at-home delivery and curbside pickup of library materials during the pandemic
- Facilitated online and outdoor storytime programs
- Successfully ran a "Getting to Know Your iPad" workshop series for 15 seniors, pre-pandemic
- Utilized the Provincial Technology Grant to purchase additional copies of OverDrive Advantage e-book titles for Creston Library users
- Purchased 3 new KOBO readers for our patrons to borrow and use

- Loaned iPads for families to use during the Summer Reading Club

The outcome of these activities is that the Creston community recognizes the library is a place for everyone. Removing late fees has signaled to our community that library services are for all members of our community, not just those who can afford it. Our regional district stepped up to cover the cost of lost revenue (1% of our annual budget) and our community, the local media, and the CBC covered the initiative, which has received tremendous goodwill from our community. In addition, our curbside pickup services and home delivery also allowed non-tech savvy patrons the ability to use their local library during the early months of the pandemic.

Addressing the digital divide has been a top priority for the Creston Valley Public Library, which has been only highlighted during the COVID pandemic. As mentioned in the introduction, Creston has both an older and a lower-income population compared to the provincial average. The resources funded by the Provincial Technology Grant been crucial for the library to purchase equipment and subscriptions of digital content to continue to support the increased digital needs of its patrons. However, we will continue to look for ways to expand our operating revenue to support staff training and wages to address the digital divide in our community.

PRIORITY 2: BUILDING CAPACITY

Our values:

Environmental stewardship

Well-trained and professional staff

The library undertook the following activities to support these values:

- Partnered with Kootenay Employment Services to host a practicum student for 7 weeks
- Created a part-time position for a community member with developmental disabilities
- Trained 2 staff to use Facebook Live for online storytimes
- Trained 3 staff on LibraryAware graphic design and marketing software
- Chief Librarian joined the Board of the Creston Chamber of Commerce
- Increased our online connection to KLF (Kootenay Library Federation), ABCPLD (Association of BC Public Library Directors), and BCLTA (British Columbia Library Trustees Association) through regular online meetings and workshops
- Chief Librarian attending financial management training through the Columbia Basin Trust
- Successfully installed LED lighting in the library, funded by the Columbia Basin Trust, to address rising electricity costs
- Moved the library website to the BC Libraries Coop platform to reduce the responsibility of backend support on our part-time IT staff and to create a more sustainable tech support model moving forward

The outcome of these activities is that the library was able to quickly digitally adapt its services while continuing to support our community and plan for the future. Regular online library director meetings provided by the KLF and ABCPLD provided shared discussion, planning, and resources to support the library as we adapted our services during the pandemic. Staff and trustees were also able to access affordable training and professional support opportunities through the BCLTA, KLF and ABCPLD. In

addition, financial management training, the LED lighting project and our website move all support the sustainability of our library from a financial, environmental and technological perspective. Despite the challenges of the year, the Creston Library has continued to maintain its capacity to serve our community by taking advantage of these training and funding opportunities. The online ability for our library partners to support us—a rural library—during the pandemic was a positive outcome during a difficult time and we hope that the online collaboration and professional support from them continues even after the pandemic is over.

PRIORITY 3: ENHANCING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Our values:

Community collaboration

Lifelong Learning

Respect and inclusivity

Understanding and empathy

Reconciliation

The library undertook the following activities to support these values:

- Hosted viewing sessions of the Alzheimer's Society of BC training webinars and documentaries for patrons
- Adapted the Summer Reading Club to COVID-safe programming for 63 weekly participants and 84 program attendees, including outdoor and take-home options
- Began pilot of Reading Buddies program, which pairs teens with young children to help improve literacy skills for emerging readers
- Facilitated a weekly maker club for local teens
- Adopted a land acknowledgment to recognize the local Yaqan Nukiy First Nations community
- Published a newspaper column recognizing systemic racism in libraries
- Provided social-distanced outdoor meeting space in the library garden for our community
- Teamed up with the Creston Museum to provide a digital walking tour of all the past and current library's locations to celebrate our Centennial Year. All installments are posted on our YouTube Channel
- Facilitated monthly storytime programs at our local daycare facility

The outcome of these activities is that both community members and community service providers see the library as an important partner and resource in the Creston community. This year, due to the COVID pandemic, we had to pull back from much of our in-person community engagement. In addition, our community's digital skills challenges has meant that we haven't had success adapting all our programming and engagement to online platforms. However, our library garden, excellent community partners and dedicated staff have allowed us to keep maintain a connection with our patrons and provide them with decreased, yet continued, access to library services.

We look forward to continuing to make our community partnerships, engagement and service a top priority in a post-pandemic world.

PRIORITY 4: ENHANCING GOVERNANCE

Our values:

Community collaboration

Financial sustainability

The library undertook the following activities to support these values:

- Provided monthly statistical, financial and operational reports to the regional district to foster a positive working relationship and greater understanding of the library and its services
- Successfully acquired regional district funding to cover lost revenue from library fines
- Collected and shared both qualitative and quantitative data with our staff, volunteers, board, funders, and members of the public in the form of annual infographic reports
- Formed a Strategic Planning Committee and began the new strategic planning process
- Developed and adopted a new vision, mission and values for the library
- Focused on board development and training, including enrolling trustees in workshops and providing in-house professional development through our board "Reading Club"

The outcome of these activities is that the library has developed strong professional capacity within the board and created strong professional relationships with our stakeholders. The Regional District of the Central Community has a greater awareness and understanding of the library's services, operations, and financial needs. The board is experiencing greater cohesion and has put in a great amount of work to begin developing a new strategic plan through difficult times. In 2021 we will begin the community consultation part of our strategic planning process and look forward to having a developed strategic plan in place for 2022.

TECHNOLOGY GRANT FINAL REPORT

The Creston Library has utilized the Provincial Technology Grant in the following ways:

In 2020 the library was able to use the Provincial Technology Grant to add a wi-fi hub on the outside of the library building to boost our signal for patrons accessing wi-fi outdoors. Previous to the added hub, patrons reported a loss of signal in a variety of areas around the library building. We also subscribed to OverDrive Advantage and have been slowly adding Creston-only copies of popular e-book titles to our collection in order to address the increased demand (21%) on our digital resources. We purchased 3 new KOBO e-readers to also support e-books borrowing. Finally, we purchased tech-tools to supply and support our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) learning Tech-Kits for families to borrow. These kits provided STEM learning opportunities to our community while in-house library programming is unavailable. The kits were launched at the beginning of 2021 and have all been checked out with

waitlists accumulating. Just over $5000 remained from the Technology Grant at the end of 2020. In 2021, we continue to purchase materials for the tech-kits, we've subscribed to Kanopy (an online video streaming service) and we've continued to make payments on our increased wi-fi hub.

COVID-19 AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

It's been impossible to write about our library's operations this year without touching on the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout this report we have indicated services that were canceled, adapted, or created during this difficult year. However, here are some of the highlights:

- 3,233 items were circulated through curbside pickup and home delivery services
- Successfully reopened the library to the public with only a 1hr reduction of operating hours per day
- Ensured the safety of our staff, volunteers, and patrons when reopening
- 31,510 digital items were accessed, a 21% over previous years
- Online programs were viewed 9,339 times
- We experienced 16,153 visits to our website
- We adapted our Summer Reading Club to outdoor, online and activity pickup services
- Summer Reading Club and storytimes were facilitated outside during the warm seasons

SUMMARY

Despite the challenge of the pandemic, the Creston Valley Library has continued to provide exceptional support and service to our community. The loss of many of our services—particularly in-person programming and public meeting room space—has been difficult for our patrons, but we are proud that our doors have been open—safely—since July and our patrons have expressed their gratitude for our service on many occasions.

The greatest challenge still facing Creston Valley Public Library is securing ongoing operational funding. The global pandemic has emphasized our need, for not only well-funded digital resources but, for well-trained staff to support those services—particularly for children and seniors. Although Creston is considered a large library in our Kootenay area, we don't have a full-time or even part-time Children's and Teen Librarian to provide programming for our community. We have used grants and some funding for programming hours to make-do until the pandemic made this impossible. Without an increase in operating funds, we simply don't have the resources available to fund the staffing needed for the programming and services our community would like to see, especially when it comes to digital skills. However, the library continues to focus its efforts on advocacy and as we develop our new strategic plan, it will certainly be a priority.

Creston Valley Public Library supports the Libraries Branch's efforts to promote and facilitate collaboration among BC public libraries. We understand the need to work together to ensure equitable access to library service across the province and we hope that we can contribute to building a more equitable and sustainable provincial infrastructure through which all libraries can prosper.

CRESTON VALLEY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

October 15, 2020

RE: 2020 Library Technology Grant Interim Planning Report

Hello,

Thank you for the one-time funding amount of $13909.00 for technology initiatives at Creston Valley Public Library.

In 2019, Creston Library received funds from a Columbia Basin Trust Technology Grant. With those funds we were able to purchase 10 laptops, 10 ipads, a 2 year subscription to the Lynda.com database, and additional tech-related items to provide in-house tech programming to our community. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become clear that our tech plans need to be adjusted to also support technology needs remotely.

As such, we are utilizing the Provincial Technology Grant to support the following initiatives:

- A collection of Creston-Library-only ebooks for loaning, specifically popular titles with long wait lists on Library2Go, to better support our growing e-books loaning service
- 2 new Kobo e-readers for patrons to borrow to try out borrowing e-books and familiarize themselves with e-readers and OverDrive at home
- Loanable technology kits to support child & family learning at home. Kits include a variety of circuit building tools, robots, drones, raspberry pi, and coding tools
- An outdoor wi-fi access point to boost the wi-fi signal to our outdoor seating and parking lot. Our community members who rely on the library for internet access will be able to access our wifi from our outdoor picnic tables or, when the weather cools, in their cars in the parking lot without the “dead zones” that we currently have
- 1 year subscription to Kanopy. This has been an item requested by members of our community and will provide streaming movie content for patrons who can’t afford streaming services and it will also allow our documentary series adult program to resume online

Thank you again for your continued support of public library services in our province. These funds will go a long way to fulfill the digital needs of the Creston Valley community.

Sincerely,

Saara Itkonen (she/her)
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Creston Valley Public Library
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2020 LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORTING FORM: CRESTON VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Total Technology Grant Amount: $13,909

Area of Need	Outcome	Metrics	Strategic Links	Actions	Collaborative Links	Timeframe	Project Budget	In-Kind/Leveraged funds	Comments
Patron loanable devices: e-readers **New e-readers to support readers of ebooks**	Loanable devices help reduce barriers to digital inclusion and equity for patrons who rely on the library for access to computers and the internet	Increased use of new ereaders evidenced by checkouts of readers and ebooks.	Accessible, loanable devices support the provincial strategic priority to Improve Access for British Columbians	Purchased 2 e-readers for public access to replace old models	None	Purchased August 2020	$318.04	None.	
Digital programming **Loanable Tech Kits for family access to digital programming at home**	Loanable tech kits for kids and families to learning digital skills at home.	Success measured by checkouts of kits and increased learning for patrons (measured anecdotally or by evaluation surveys included in kits).	Loanable tech kits that promote science/technology skills support the strategic priority of Improving Access and Building Capacity.	Assembled tech kits using existing in-house library tech tools supplemented by new purchased items.	None	Items assembled and ready to loan by Nov-Dec 2020	$ 1500	Robots, circuits, some carrying totes, iPads, some software used in-kind from library.	New items purchased include carrying totes, drones, raspberry pi, replacement parts, extra supplies for kits.
Electronic collections (licensing) **OverDrive Advantage ebooks collection**	Increased local ebooks collection will reduce wait times for popular ebook items and improve access.	Success will be measured by checkouts of specific purchased items.	Improving local access to ebooks supports the strategic priority of Improving Access to items that normally have several weeks/months of waitlists.	Purchasing credit through OverDrive Advantage to purchases popular items with long waitlists on Library 2 Go.	None.	Credit secured and some items already purchased. All purchases should be completed by March 2021	$7259.02	None.	
Connectivity (internet speed, connection capacity, etc.) **Upgrade outdoor wifi access**	By boosting our wifi signal outside of the library's doors, we are reducing barriers to internet access for our community when lingering indoors is not safe during COVID-19.	Increased wifi logins measured by our wifi tracking system.	A new outdoor wifi access point supports the strategic priority of Improving Access to internet connectivity for those who rely on the library for internet access.	Install outoor wifi access point to boost wifi signal outdoors.	None.	Installed by Nov 2020.	An additional $85 on our internet bill each month = $1020 per year on 3 year contract = $3060.	Existing internet contract and wifi service with Shaw provided a discount for this service.	

Electronic collections (licensing) **1 Year pilot of Kanopy**	By increasing our online film collection, we are reducing barriers for patrons unable to afford streaming content online and supplementing our small physical film collection.	Use is tracked through database insights.	A Kanopy subscription supports the strategic priority of Improving Access by offering patrons free online access to streaming movies, as well as supporting the online revival of our documentary series for adult programming.	Purchase a 1 year subscription to Kanopy and promote the service in our community.	Take advantage of BC Libraries Coop pricing if available.	Free trail requested in Oct 2020. The 1 year trial will continue to Nov 2021.	Kanopy is pay-per-use. The remaining provincial grant will cover $1772.	The library is committed to covering any costs exceeding those covered by the provincial grant, during the 1 year pilot.	