



North East Library Federation

OUR VISION

Strong libraries; strong communities

2019 ANNUAL OPERATING GRANT REPORT

INTRODUCTION:

The North East Library Federation was established in 2007 with the goal of helping libraries in the north east region of the province to work together to share resources and provide high quality programs and services. Its purpose, as originally conceived, was to promote and encourage the development, operation, and improvement of public library services in the North East of British Columbia. That purpose holds true today.

The federation serves seven public libraries providing services and programs for the approximately 50,000 residents across two regional districts – Northern Rockies and Peace River. Member libraries are Chetwynd Public Library, Fort Nelson Public Library, Fort St. John Public Library, Hudson's Hope Public Library, Taylor Public Library and Tumbler Ridge Public Library.

In 2019, the NELF Board and members of the Library Directors Advisory Group met on two occasions to develop and adopt a new strategic plan for the federation. They identified the following as important changes in the regional environment that needed to be considered when developing a strategic plan for 2020 – 2022:

- The economy in the region
 - curtailments and mill closures,
 - the Cariboo Recovery Program will impact resource-based industries in our region as well as tourism,
 - there is not as much money in towns and a decline in population – people are fearing for the longevity of their communities,
 - more work is part-time and casual and at the same time we are also seeing an increase in itinerant workers working out of camps,
 - the increase in the minimum wage has put pressure on many small and medium sized businesses,
 - there is more focus on Occupational Health and Safety matters
- More people want to have a say

- Mental health and addiction/the opioid crisis and pressure for libraries to provide safe spaces
- Service BC and Service Canada don't exist in small centres, banks continue to close – these agencies are directing people to the local public library for online access. Libraries are busier - more use of computers/printing – books are not #1 anymore, but programs are still important
- Increased gap between wages paid by local government and what library workers are paid
- Our population continues to become more diverse and is also aging

The NELF Board and LDAG identified why the federation is still relevant for member libraries.

- ✓ Buying power
- ✓ More voice
- ✓ We are stronger together
- ✓ We learn from each other / mentorship
- ✓ The connections we have build trust and confidence and help address the sense of isolation – this comment resonated with everyone, “We come from independent communities and serve on independent library boards. We share values and network regionally. We know each other and that helps address the sense of isolation we sometimes feel.”

They also spoke about what they wanted to see in the next strategic plan.

- ✓ A focus on professional development support for library trustees and staff
- ✓ Continued support for shared resources and consortium purchasing
- ✓ Continued support for programming
- ✓ The federation manager continuing to play a key role

Member libraries identified five key priority areas for the new Strategic Plan:

- ✓ Building Capacity
- ✓ Sharing Resources and Increasing Access
- ✓ Strengthening Relationships
- ✓ Increasing the Awareness of the Value of Public Libraries to the Communities They Serve
- ✓ Governance

They believe that these priorities match the areas of focus for the federation's key funder – the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education, Libraries Branch:

- ✓ Making life more affordable
- ✓ Delivering quality programs that people count on
- ✓ Increasing opportunities for people to be involved and connected in their communities
- ✓ Fostering social inclusion, including a commitment to true and lasting reconciliation with First Nations in British Columbia, and reducing the impacts of poverty and inequality

The federation also believes that its priorities align with the strategies identified in the 2019 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter:

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

Federation member libraries feel confident that by placing more emphasis on professional development support for library trustees and staff and continuing to support consortium purchasing, resource sharing and federation wide programming, the Strategic Plan for 2020 – 2022 will result in meaningful steps forward for public libraries in the north east region of British Columbia. Developing the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan influenced the work completed in 2019.

Priority One: Building Capacity (aligning with the Improving Access and Developing Skills strategies identified in the 2019 Provincial Grant Award letter)

In 2019 the federation set aside \$7,500 to assist federation members in providing online training for their staffs and a further \$10,000 to help them send staff and board members to attend library conferences, such as the 2019 *Beyond Hope Conference* and the annual BCLA and BCLTA conferences. This \$18,000 represents 22% of NELF's total budget for initiatives. Without this support, many of the smaller libraries in the federation would not be able to afford to provide these kinds of online and in-person training opportunities for their staffs and boards.

In addition, the NELF continued to be the key leader in and financial steward for the Library Staff Online Training Project, offered in partnership with Royal Roads University (RRU), the North Central Library Federation and the Kootenay Library Federation. It is important to acknowledge the Ministry of Education, Libraries Branch and the substantial support that the partners have received from the Ministry for this project over the past several years – without this funding support, the project would not have come to fruition. The *Building Futures: Strategic Skills for Library Management* project was completed in 2019 and met its intended outcomes. It has:

- Delivered high quality, relevant and engaging online courses aligned to the skills necessary to meet the evolving expectations for library services at an affordable price;
- Increased access to courses for library staff not located in urban centres as demonstrated by the breakdown of participants by federation; and

The NELF continues to maintain the BC Libraries Staff Competencies Training Matrix, now known as bcliblearn.libraries.coop, an online tool designed to facilitate access to, and use of the Competency Index for the library field and to assist employees and supervisors in identifying training opportunities, inside and outside of libraries, targeting specific competencies.

Priority Two: Sharing Resources and Increasing Access (Aligning with Improving Access and Collaborating on Shared Goals strategies identified in the 2019 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)

The NELF provides a total of \$7,500 per year (nearly 10% of its total budget for initiatives) to member libraries to support their purchasing of online databases. NELF member libraries can also participate in licensing agreements negotiated by the NCLF for products such as Gale Courses, an online resource providing instructor led and highly interactive courses covering a variety of topics, many career related. In 2019, NELF member libraries used the funds to defray the costs of products such as Ancestry - Library Addition, the Canadian Subsidy Directory, Gale Courses, and OverDrive. In total, the NELF facilitated over \$10,000 in consortium purchasing.

The NELF also funds annually a performer tour of federation member libraries in support of Summer Reading Club (representing nearly 8% of the total dollars available) – in 2019 in collaboration with the North Central Library Federation. Magician Leif David toured NCLF and NELF libraries and his Imagine the Possibilities Show was a perfect fit for the 2019 SRC theme. This kind of quality programming would not be possible for the smaller libraries in the region to offer on their own. Feedback from member libraries says it all.

- ✓ “The place was bursting at the seams with excited, delighted kids and adults!”
- ✓ “had the kids engaged from start to finish. Fun for the whole family!”

In 2019 the North East Library Federation again coordinated the purchase of Books for BC Babies materials on behalf of libraries in the province. Thirty-five libraries across the province purchased over \$60,000 in Books for BC Babies materials – 5,810 board books, 5,162 CDs with download cards and 2550 bags. The large volume of orders meant deep discounts from vendors. The board book, for example, retailed for over \$11.00 on Amazon, while libraries paid \$3.98 per copy.

The NELF continues to support the sharing of resources across federations. Those member libraries using the SITKA ILS continued to participate in the highly successful province wide InterLibrary Connect program. In addition, in 2019, libraries in the Kootenay Library Federation, the North East Library Federation, the North Central Library Federation, and the North West Library again collaborated on the purchase of book club sets of popular titles. Sets can be borrowed by libraries across federations on behalf of their patrons – providing more variety without the need for individual libraries to maintain and house huge collections. The federation acknowledges the work of NELF member library Hudson's Hope Public Library which manages this program on behalf of all participating libraries.

Priority Three: Strengthening Relationships (Aligning with Increasing Opportunities for People to be Involved and Connect in Their Communities Government of British Columbia area of focus)

Federation member libraries share a belief that the connections that they have built over time are foundational to the trust and confidence that exists among federation members. In 2019

the federation dedicated 4% of the total dollars it had available to initiatives designed to strengthening relationships.

The federation remains committed to holding face-to-face Board and Library Directors Advisory Group meetings at least once a year and using video conferencing for additional meetings. The federation Manager continues to update the orientation package designed to help member library representatives share with their home boards information about NELF's vision, mission and strategic priorities and federation services, its annual budgeting and governance structure.

Working with the NCLF and ABCPLD on the New Library Director Boot Camp and Future Focussed Library Leaders initiatives are examples of how the NELF is striving to be seen as a supportive partner in improving board governance and deepening staff competencies.

Priority Four: Increasing the Awareness of the Value of Public Libraries to the Communities They Serve (Aligning with the Collaborating on Shared Goals strategy identified in the 2019 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)

The federation board believes that we build the awareness of the value of public libraries to the communities we serve by demonstrating effective governance at both the local and federations levels and by ensuring that public libraries in our region are working together.

The work the federation Board put into the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan in 2019 speaks to the commitment of this board to leveraging our resources and our expertise for the good of all our communities.

Priority Five: Enhancing Governance (Aligning with the Enhancing Governance strategy identified in the 2019 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)

In 2019, the federation board continued its focus on the updated Federation agreement, working to ensure that the federation was in full compliance with the Library Act and provincial government policy.

CONCLUSION:

The libraries of the North East Library Federation continue to work together to build a collaborative network dedicated to creating opportunities to strengthen federation member libraries. The NELF believes that strong libraries build strong communities. We thank the Ministry of Education for its continuing support as we work to achieve our vision.

Respectfully Submitted,

M. Edel Toner-Rogala, Manager