

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 key initiatives.

For more information on reporting requirements, please review the [PLGR instructions available through the Libraries Branch website](#).

INTRODUCTION

The McBride & District Public Library serves 1650 people in the Robson Valley, a region nestled between the Rocky and Cariboo mountain ranges in North-Central British Columbia. Most residents are involved in forestry, farming, public service, and the service industry. Outdoor recreation opportunities are abundant and developing, and our arts community is vibrant.

We continue to face a number of challenges common for rural areas, including:

- a small population and the resulting impact on business, school class size, and volunteer services;
- distance from essential services, coupled with a lack of public transportation;
- lack of seniors' long-term care and seniors' affordable housing;
- challenges for rural education based on the current funding model;
- a decline in the tourist industry last two summers due to a very rainy weather and COVID-19;
- lack of tourism infrastructure and services; and
- lack of reliable, affordable Internet access.

Despite our challenges, new residents continue to settle in the Valley because of its affordable family housing and the rural lifestyle. In 2020, a number of positive initiatives took place with the help of volunteers and our community partners including:

- Canadian Children's Literature Week grab bags with free books and activities for children in the community.
- A summer outdoor Yoga week-long camp.
- Weekly "Fun Fridays" programming outdoors for children over the summer break.
- Hallowe'en kids' crafting (making bats, pumpkins and cobweb decorations)
- Hosting the Hospital Auxiliary's Memorial Angel Tree, an important fundraiser for the Hospital Auxiliary.
- Santa's COVID-19-compliant visit, where 30 children chatted to Santa through the library meeting room window.

2020 was a year of upheaval and adaptation. Our former Library Director left in February 2020, and our Assistant Librarian stepped up as interim Library Director until May. In the middle of this period of transition, the COVID-19 pandemic began, and we saw the closure of the library to the public in mid-March. Since then, we worked to restore services safely to our patrons, beginning with library “takeout”, and computer lab access, before opening the doors fully in July (with COVID-19 protocols in place).

Our strategic plan was revised in 2019; our mission remains “to be the heart of community connections” and our vision is “a community where everyone enriches the world in their own way”. Considering community input, our goals are as follows:

1. **Be responsive to technology;** we continue to offer Gale online courses which we market as “back to school” for all ages (and also will soon offer Lynda courses). The computer lab has remained busy since we reopened, although due to the limited occupancy, we have had to prioritise usage by adults (completing government forms, job searching, etc). Our staff computer tech sits on the McBride Village committee seeking to improve Internet services to the area. Thanks to the one-time tech grant (more on this below), we have been able to significantly improve our internet speed and purchase equipment to ensure more users can use the library internet. We also purchased a 3D printer this year, with funding from a New Horizons for Seniors grant, and have rolled out community training.
2. **Be a community hub for diverse ages and interests, responding to changing community needs;** again, this year has had its challenges! We offered all our usual in-person programs at the start of the year, including Mother Goose, Soup and Bun, Tuesday night Music Jam, guest speaker/movie series (co-hosted with the Museum), Book Club, Teen Dungeons and Dragons, Scrabble Days, and children’s craft sessions. When outdoor programming was still possible, we offered Fun Fridays



Fun Fridays participants

activities for children over the summer weeks, with BC Summer Reading Club for additional activities, and we celebrated Children’s Book Week with grab bags. We also worked with RVCS on a week-long Yoga/Mindfulness Camp. In the Fall, we offered Hallowe’en crafting sessions with small groups of children. With the postponement of in-person programming towards the end of the year, we have offered online children’s story times, craft and book grab bags, online writing group meet-ups, and a COVID-19-compliant visit from Santa! We have also run takeout Soup and Bun, offered one-to-one 3D printing training (including making assistance devices for seniors), an online Tax Advice session, Free Legal Advice, Seniors’ Tech training, Writing Group and Fibre Artists’ knitting group, via Zoom. Like many libraries, we are not just a community hub, but also a catch-all for those in the community that need us; whether it is a senior with dementia who visits us for hot soup, a chat and

a place to rest, or a child who has nowhere else to go after school until their parent finishes work, and sits quietly reading. Our library is a safe, inclusive and welcoming space for all.

3. **Be a conduit for community resources;** in 2020 we again worked together with RVCS and the Community Literacy Task Group to host a Soup and Bun program as a takeout from one of our library doors. People pay by donation, or not at all, for some it is the only hot meal of the day. We continue to disseminate information from our community partners, regional and national bodies. We work with local partners such as the schools, Northern Health and municipal government to ensure people have access to essential information, forms and surveys. We have offered training on identifying false news stories; on cyber security and on social media safety. We have facilitated Zoom meetings for groups and organisations unable to host their own, including Zoom medical appointments.
4. **Build the capacity of staff, board and volunteers to meet the above goals;** we have been lucky in past years to have a solid volunteer base for the library (and a very supportive and active library trustee who moved our volunteer system online, streamlining it significantly), but with COVID-19, we are not currently using in-person volunteers (many of whom are elderly or immune-compromised), other than for 3D printing, since this does not bring them into contact with others. Volunteers able to assist with online programs have
5. continued to help – for example, with online story time. We look forward to welcoming our regular volunteers back, and meeting new ones, when possible.

The current lack of in-person programming and group activities has meant staff have more time for all the additional cleaning/COVID-19 measures, and – after shortening our hours for a few months – we are now back to our regular number of open hours. Staff have

been encouraged to take advantage of online training in mental wellness and mindfulness in order to build resilience, and hence capacity. This year, all educational opportunities have of course been afforded us through online courses and webinars. We are a small team, and communicate well and support each other.



Online story time

LIBRARY PRIORITY 1 – IMPROVING ACCESS FOR BRITISH COLUMBIANS

In 2020 we continued to improve access to library services in several ways, including the following:

- Since we now occupy a fully accessible building, we continue to see library users who did not previously use the old library building. Circulation of children's material has continued to increase now that all materials are at an accessible height, and more easily discovered by its intended audience. We have loaned tablet devices to patrons who need them. We have offered the

meeting room, laptops and IT help for Zoom medical appointments and for free legal advice. We have also offered several Zoom/Senior tech training sessions, and continue to support our community with their variety of tech needs.

- Our proximity to Main Street also means more frequent access from our seniors living at the nearby BC Housing facility, and tourists coming off the highway on their way through town (even in 2020!).
- We registered 41 new members in 2020, and now have 770 active patrons (46% of our population) for an increase of 2% over 2019. This number does not fully reflect our library's usage, however, as others borrow on a family card, attend our online programs or use our internet. Not requiring a card to use the computers or join a program has meant that some of our more vulnerable community members may use our facilities for those purposes.
- The one-time tech grant (outlined below) has enabled us to offer a higher download speed to more users, lend out laptops and improve online access and security with new servers, meaning more people can access online resources and information (as well as download movies, chat to friends and family online, etc.).

LIBRARY PRIORITY 2 - BUILDING CAPACITY

Working in what is often a busy library with limited staffing, we are all proficient in multi-tasking, working together and prioritizing, but - as mentioned already, 2020 has been challenging in this respect, with the loss of our regular library volunteer program due to COVID-19. We have been able to devise and implement a more streamlined holds/takeout process this year, and we have all had training in using the 3D printer, so we can share volunteer training responsibilities. Staff have also been offered online training on such topics as the psychological impact of COVID-19, stress management, mindfulness and time management. When we are able to invite our regular volunteers back into the building, we have programs ready to roll out, and plans and procedures in place. We will continue to look, and apply, for a variety of grants in order to supplement our funding and grow our capacity.

LIBRARY PRIORITY 3 – ADVANCING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

This year, with New Horizons for Seniors funding, we were able to purchase a 3D printer, and offer one-to-one training for seniors and others in the community. This initiative led to us training community volunteers to print assistance devices for those in need of bottle or jar openers, pen grips, book holders, etc.

In 2020, we worked with our partners to offer 20 different programs, some in-person, some online. We are honoured to work with many enthusiastic volunteers and dedicated community partners in diverse

ways. Through our relationship with the RVCS, for example, in 2020 we served soup at the local Senior's residence; then later as takeout from the library; we held an outdoor summer Yoga camp for 10 kids, and we sang songs at Mother Goose (in-person and via Zoom).

Indeed, everything that we do in our small community we do with others. Without sharing resources, expertise, and volunteer labour, we are too small to make things work. Working together ensures that our programs and services make sense for our community, and it expands our connections as we reach a broader audience.



LIBRARY PRIORITY 4 – ENHANCING GOVERNANCE

A volunteer mastering the 3D printer

Early in 2019 board and staff worked together to develop our current strategic plan: we sought expert help from local consultants to coordinate our efforts. We have reviewed and revised all our board policies this past year, and our library and board continue to take advantage of training offered by the BCLTA, NCLF and ABCPLD. This year, for example, two of us attended online library governance training offered by the BCLTA. We have an experienced and supportive library board, who function as a team in order to help guide our library forward.

TECHNOLOGY GRANT – FINAL REPORT

We are very grateful for the one-time technology grant: it enabled us to purchase several loanable laptops for library patrons, and for them also to be used in other areas of the library when the computer lab is full (normally, it holds 9 users – right now, we can only accommodate 3). These laptops are in use almost daily, and have given patrons connectivity and privacy, e.g. in meeting with doctors via Zoom in our meeting room, and have also enabled them to connect widely professionally and personally. We also replaced our old, failing servers, with new ones to consolidate data storage and improve security and monitoring functions in order to facilitate greater connectivity. We also used a portion of the funds to upgrade our internet download speed from 25mbps to 75mbps, which has made a significant improvement in connectivity for our patrons. There are no significant changes from the plans outlined in our interim technology report.

COVID-19 AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

At the start of 2020, our library was bustling and well used, with different programs, groups and users; people hanging out to complete homework, read a paper, eat lunch with friends or play along at Music Jam. We had programs for babies running alongside organized board games for seniors; pot lucks, soup and bun, guest speakers and teen movie nights. By mid-March, we found ourselves closing the doors to

our patrons – an unprecedented move in our library’s 51-year history. While we were closed to patrons, our team continued working: distanced in the building, or from home, responding to the new climate. We read stories to children over Zoom and facebook live; we held writing groups online, and kept adapting and changing – trying new things, and learning as we went along.

By mid-May we had joined the first clutch of libraries offering takeout to patrons, and were inundated with requests for books, DVDs, puzzles, CDs, etc. Soon after, we reopened our computer lab to limited adult users (we have the only public computers in the area), and helped users complete their CERB forms, search for work, and communicate with loved ones they could not visit. In July we opened the doors again to library patrons, with plexiglass screens, an occupancy limit, what we hope is a lifetime of hand sanitizer, quarantining of items and lots and lots of surface cleaning! This month also saw a mudslide in our village that left many families either evacuated from their homes (some of which were destroyed), or trapped on the far side of the slide. Library staff met the river ferry boat arranged to ferry supplies to the trapped individuals with parcels of books, DVDs and other items for entertainment or education. In the summer, when groups were permitted outside, we moved our regular summer children’s programming outdoors, and children enjoyed distanced nature walks, treasure hunts and outdoor story times and crafts. Those that could join us online have done so for both old or new programs, and we have offered additional technology help with patron devices, Zoom and Skype, as well as purchased more loanable devices to help patrons connect.

Fall 2020 was our busiest Fall yet; in the absence of other things to do, we have seen an increase in library memberships and in items circulating. It feels great to be busy again! As mentioned already, local children always looked forward to a visit with Santa in the library; this year we adapted by placing Santa in our meeting room (which we decorated like his grotto!) and giving families a 15-minute timeslot in which to visit. When they arrived, library staff elves with masks greeted them and Santa called them on the phone! They could see and speak to Santa, and it brought some much-needed cheer to our community.



Our biggest challenges here in McBride and region are, firstly, the vast number of community members without access to internet or – in some cases – even phones. We continue to try to offer options for those people to participate – sometimes set up with a library laptop on their own in the meeting room, and keep brainstorming ways to keep our community safe, informed, educated, supported and entertained. The second challenge is one common to libraries across the province, which is trying to offer as much as we can to our community on a very modest budget. COVID-specific funding from NCLF meant we could equip our library with plexiglass screen, hand sanitizer and other necessities for reopening, but we also rely on the kindness of our volunteers, our patrons and donors. In a northern BC community still reeling from the downturn of the forestry industry, with high unemployment rates and families living in poverty, COVID-19 has exacerbated these issues, with further job losses and impact on local businesses. We continue to be creative and resourceful. We share with, and learn from, other libraries and appreciate all the support from the NCLF and ABCPLD as well as from the Libraries' Branch.

SUMMARY

Despite the immense challenges of 2020, we have worked with our partners to meet the evolving needs of our community, and continue to learn as we go. Our staff and board are stretching to meet new challenges. In spite of the uncertainty of this year, more than 15,200 physical items have circulated, and 2,436 e-books, and we have been busier than ever in the Fall, with almost 7,600 items circulating from September-December. These were further increases over the increases of 2018 and 2019. We look forward to facing these challenges together with a team of staff and trustees who are caring, committed and passionate about both our library and our community, and who are supported by a strong network of regional and provincial partners that make a big impact in our small library.

Thank you to Libraries Branch for your support of our community. Our annual grants are an integral part of providing both traditional and evolving library services, and our work – guided by your strategic direction – would not be possible without your support.



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16 October 2020

2020 Library Technology Grant Cover Page

To whom it may concern,

Please find outlined the projects and rationale for McBride and District Public Library's planned spending of the 2020 Library Technology Grant. We are very grateful for this one-time library technology grant, and would like to extend our thanks for making these connectivity improvements possible.

Projects/Digital Initiatives

With the Library Technology Grant McBride and District Public Library is purchasing a number of loanable laptops for patrons to be able to work both inside the library and at home. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, our public computer lab now only has 3 accessible public computers (down from 9); laptops can be used at single-occupancy desks in the library and at home, enabling more people to work and connect. Server and internet download improvements provide crucial support for this new technology, including security of data handling, so funding is also being spent on the supporting server hardware.

The library's previous internet download speed was 25mbps; users frequently complained at the slow speed, but the library lacked the budget to remedy this issue until the technology grant was awarded: the library now has a download speed of 75mbps, which ensures the public a better internet experience whether using the provided library computers or personal computing devices/phones within or outside the library.

Rationale

The rationale for these improvements stems from the local lack of computing facilities and internet access. McBride and District Public Library supports communities from Dunster and Croydon (to the East) and Crescent Spur and Dome Creek (to the West), a region sporting a low number of inhabitants with home computing/internet access. The library is the only location in the area offering free public computer usage, and only one of two locations offering free wifi. Improving connectivity for the public directly aligns with the provincial strategic priority to improve access for British Columbians.

I trust this cover page has provided sufficient context for our planned spending of the library technology grant, but should you require additional clarification, please feel free to contact me (details provided above).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'AWard', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Abigail Ward
Library Director
McBride & District Public Library

2020 LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORTING FORM: **MCBRIDE & DISTRICT PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Total Technology Grant Amount: \$7703

Area of Need	Outcome	Metrics	Strategic Links	Actions	Collaborative Links	Timeframe	Project Budget	In-Kind/Leveraged funds	Comments
Patron hardware upgrades (public computers, printers, etc.) New server to support newly purchased patron devices.	Replace aging storage appliance and consolidate data storage, backup, and security/monitoring functions in order to facilitate greater user connectivity.	Improve library public computing access by 60% and security by approximately 150%.	Reliable public connectivity supports the provincial strategic priority to improve access for British Columbians.	Purchase new server.	More people can participate in shared online programs (e.g. Free Legal advice, a collaboration with Robson Valley Community Services, or Art Classes, a collaboration with the Whistlestop Gallery).	July 2020 ordered item. August 2020: set up and now supporting public connectivity.	\$2000	\$200 in-kind funds from library IT support to set up new devices.	
Patron hardware upgrades (public computers, printers, etc.) Patron loanable devices for use both in the library and at home.	Loanable devices help reduce barriers to digital inclusion and equity for patrons who rely on the library for access to computers and the internet.	Increase public computing in the library by 60%. Increase the type of devices by 500%.	Accessible, loanable devices support the provincial strategic priority to improve access for British Columbians.	Purchase laptops for public access to replace old models, and to increase number of laptops available to the public.	More people can participate in shared programs (e.g. Free Legal advice, a collaboration with Robson Valley Community Services, or Art Classes, a collaboration with the Whistlestop Gallery).	July 2020 ordered items. September 2020-Jan 2021: items set up and in use by members of the public.	\$4900	\$ 577 in-kind funds from library IT support to set up new devices.	
Connectivity (internet speed, connection capacity, etc.) Increase in internet speed from 25mbps to 75mbps	Improved connectivity helps reduce barriers to digital inclusion and equity for those patrons who rely on the library for internet access.	3 times faster internet download speeds to improve patrons' connectivity.	Reliable public connectivity supports the provincial strategic priority to improve access for British Columbians.	Purchase internet upgrades.	More people can participate in shared programs (e.g. Free Legal advice, a collaboration with Robson Valley Community Services, or Art Classes, a collaboration with the Whistlestop Gallery).	July 2020 contacted Telus and internet speed improved.	\$800	\$224 in-kind staff time in working with Telus/IT time in setting up new connections.	