



B.C.'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE

2020

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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

Public libraries are an important part of our government's plan to make life better and more affordable for British Columbians of all ages. They improve the services people count on and help provide people with the skills they need to succeed as we work together to build a strong, sustainable economy throughout our province.

As vital community and learning hubs, libraries are valued for embracing diversity and providing trusted information and services. They are places for connecting, sharing and lifelong learning. For many people, libraries remove barriers and help close the gap between poverty and opportunity.

As a life-long library user, I am pleased to present our provincial strategy for public library service. This strategy will focus on making sure that British Columbians experience services that are engaging, accessible and responsive to their needs. We are committed to working with libraries, local governments, and other partners to ensure libraries remain inspiring community destinations where people of any age can learn and grow.

As many of you know, B.C. recently became the first province in Canada to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This is an important step toward true and lasting reconciliation and moves our province into a new era of rights and recognition. Libraries will play an important role in this journey as they bring people together every day, celebrate diversity, encourage dialogue and offer a place for all voices to be heard.

I would like to thank library boards, staff, volunteers, local governments and our many library partners throughout B.C. for their hard work and dedication in bringing these important services to our communities. Together we will deliver the support and access people need to thrive.

Rob Fleming

Minister of Education



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

British Columbia's 71 public libraries play a crucial role in helping government fulfill its commitments to people from every background by providing vital access to information, programs and resources. People in all types of socio-economic circumstances rely on library services and staff to apply for jobs, access government information and develop the literacy skills needed to participate as educated and engaged individuals.

The Ministry of Education is focused on enabling learners of all ages to reach their full potential and acquire the knowledge and skills needed to participate in a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy. This includes working to enhance the capacity of libraries to deliver services people rely on.

This strategic plan and vision framework outline how the ministry will establish priorities and deliver on our

mandate to support the intellectual, human, social and career development of all British Columbians. We are working so that everyone can maximize their potential as engaged and educated individuals who can thrive in a rapidly changing world. This is government's plan to support people through public library services throughout British Columbia.

Our work cannot be done alone. Library services are constantly evolving, and our four strategies are founded on established partnerships and successful collaborations. We will continue to work across government and with the library community, building on our collective accomplishments. We are further guided by government's commitments to inclusion, an economy that works for everyone and to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia.

Over the next few years, we will focus on four key strategies:

- » **Improving access for British Columbians**
Supporting a connected library network that leverages its strengths and structure to deliver user-centred programs and services through the province.
 - » **Building capacity**
Reducing barriers for library staff and board members to access training opportunities so that they can continue to provide quality and future-focused library services.
 - » **Advancing citizen engagement**
Increasing opportunities for people to access the information and resources they need to thrive as engaged individuals, workers and lifelong learners.
 - » **Enhancing governance**
Leading at the provincial level and supporting governance education.
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STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Government is committed to making life more affordable, delivering the services people count on and building a strong, sustainable and innovative economy that works for everyone.

We have a renewed and clear mandate: to encourage every learner to maximize their potential. This work is outlined in the [Policy for Student Success](#) and fuels our passion and vision of having educated British Columbians who thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Our work is also informed by cross-government initiatives including [TogetherBC](#), the Province's first poverty reduction strategy, and [Building a Better BC](#), Government's vision to make the province truly inclusive by 2024.

New legislation establishes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the foundational framework for reconciliation in B.C. as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act recognizes and respects the human rights of Indigenous peoples. It brings Indigenous peoples to the table for the decisions that affect them, their families and their territories. It provides a way forward for reconciliation with a plan that will work for everyone.

Public libraries at the heart of communities

Libraries are the cornerstone of healthy and vibrant communities. People can come together and learn more about what matters to them. Libraries celebrate diversity and help create a sense of belonging through programs and partnerships. They help people by providing digital inclusion and ensuring ongoing access to information in its many forms.

Libraries are committed to free access and to serving their communities. Through libraries, people can share and demonstrate their creativity and culture. They are places of opportunity that reduce physical, social, financial and structural barriers.



Enabling learning and supporting people

In order to achieve our social and economic goals we need well-educated people who can think critically and creatively while adapting to change. As we focus on building our knowledge economy, libraries offer people a place to find information, learn and grow. They support adults and youth preparing to enter into the workforce or academic or career programs. Newcomers use libraries to learn about life in B.C. and find employment. Early years and school-aged educators are vital collaborators with libraries as we work together to promote children's social and emotional development, as well as fostering positive attitudes towards learning. Locally, libraries provide space for civic engagement and critical community conversations, bringing people of all generations together to share experiences and learn.



Libraries' role in reconciliation

B.C. is on a very important journey that starts with honouring the truth of our collective history related to Indigenous peoples in our province and our country. The legacy of residential schools and the generations of trauma are no longer ignored or forgotten in our province. Together, we must provide space for Indigenous voices and to hear the stories of the past before we can move forward on a path towards reconciliation. Libraries create connections and opportunities for those voices to be heard.

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S ROLE

In British Columbia the Library Act outlines how public libraries are established, locally governed and operated. Most libraries are governed by independent library boards and funded by local governments.

The Libraries Branch, within the Ministry of Education supports effective governance and accountability and works to ensure provincial funding helps to extend local services and improve access throughout the province.

OUR MANDATE:

- » Provide the regulatory structure that supports operation and governance.
 - » Support service improvements and extend libraries.
 - » Facilitate access to services in every corner of the province.
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We promote equitable services through the province and contribute to the development of province-wide networks. This includes working across government to better leverage libraries as community hubs and places for learning.

Working together

We are committed to working with the library community to enable equitable access to services and to help create effective library programs and services that make people's lives better. Our role is to strengthen library networks by supporting collaboration, shared services and innovative programs.

The success of our library system is based on cooperation between governments, library boards, professional associations, federations and staff. Furthermore, we could not do this work without our partners, including the BC Library Association, BC Library Trustees Association, Association of BC Public Library Directors and BC Libraries Cooperative.



LIBRARIES TODAY

Libraries are dynamic, flexible gathering places. They contribute to the social, cultural and economic well-being of communities through dialogue and connecting people with government services. They are committed to ensuring equitable access and helping people, regardless of their circumstances, to participate in an increasingly digital world.

Through systemwide collaboration and by leveraging innovative technologies, libraries are expanding beyond their physical walls to offer eBooks, streaming content and online member services. At the same time, libraries remain key to supporting foundational skills including critical thinking, literacy and reading.

As a province, libraries are accessible to 99% of the population. Over 2 million people have library cards and access the services offered through 249 locations in British Columbia.

Libraries provide opportunities including:

- » Assistance in applying for jobs and accessing government services.
 - » Social spaces to meet other people and families through programs.
 - » Access to the latest technology including editing software, digitization and coding workshops.
 - » Partnering with Indigenous peoples and local First Nations to help our communities understand the importance of reconciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.
 - » Hosting community and civic forums on topics including climate change, mental health, homelessness, healthy communities and poverty reduction.
 - » Providing child development activities, including family and parenting programs and supports for early years professionals.
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LIBRARIES TOMORROW

The last decade has seen major economic changes, shifting employment opportunities and an evolution in finding and sharing information. These trends shape how libraries are delivering services, training staff and meeting people's growing expectations.

British Columbians will need different skills, knowledge and services to succeed and thrive. This preparation is critical to building a strong, sustainable, and prosperous economy for all. Through libraries, communities and government are investing in people's intellectual, cultural and economic futures.

Libraries are responding to societal and economic change by providing people with social connection, digital inclusion and engagement opportunities.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Library service is constantly evolving. These strategies are founded on established partnerships and ongoing, successful collaboration. We will continue to work with our partners and build on past accomplishments.

Our Key Objectives:

- » Support library services that are flexible, inclusive and responsive to people's needs.
- » Provide access to intellectual, human, social and career development opportunities through libraries.
- » Enable seamless access to online collections in formats that best suit people's information, learning and recreational needs.
- » Help government better engage its citizens and help people benefit from provincial services.
- » Demonstrate governance excellence and public accountability in library service.



STRATEGY

1

Improving Access for British Columbians

People need access to the internet and digital technologies. As community hubs, libraries are providing vital access and helping people connect and navigate the digital world. We will continue to facilitate resource-sharing and help the development of a reliable and equitable digital infrastructure for library services. This work is critical to ensuring a strong digital future for people in all areas of the province.



ACTIONS

- » Promote opportunities to improve the stability and dependability of high-speed, broadband internet service - particularly for libraries that have the greatest need.
- » Support cooperation on shared services and digital collections so that people through the province have better access to a broad range of library collections, wherever they live.

STRATEGY

2

Building Capacity

To support the delivery of quality programs and services that people depend on, we will work with the library community to guide our investment in training and professional development opportunities.



ACTIONS

- » Develop a learning framework starting with an environmental scan and the creation of an inventory to guide the ministry's strategic involvement in capacity building.
- » Continue to collaborate on the development of ongoing professional learning and training programs.
- » Develop an orientation guide for new library directors that explains how provincial initiatives, services and legislation affects and supports their work.

STRATEGY

3

Advancing Citizen Engagement

Engaging citizens – listening to British Columbians and raising awareness - improves public service and makes people's lives better as they benefit from government programs and resources. Engagement creates social inclusion, greater transparency and helps ensure the perspectives of traditionally marginalized groups are heard. It leads to more inclusive institutions and services. In our communities, libraries provide these vital opportunities and help increase understanding. We will work with libraries and support their important role in engaging citizens.



ACTIONS

- » **Bring the library community together to foster knowledge-sharing, collaboration and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.**
- » **Promote libraries as spaces to engage people in conversations about the provincial programs, policies and services that affect their lives.**
- » **Work to improve people's access to government resources and tools.**

STRATEGY

4

Enhancing Governance

Successful leadership and library service excellence depend on effective governance and accountability. Boards provide strategic direction at the local level and are responsible for ensuring libraries meet their financial, legal and community obligations. We are providing strategic direction at the provincial level and will continue to support governance education.



ACTIONS

- » **Strengthen system governance by supporting board orientation, advising of best practices and by facilitating learning opportunities for sector leaders.**
- » **Improve the Annual Survey to better understand and address today's complex, social challenges.**
- » **Work with library stakeholders to revise the grant system so provincial library funding is more transparent, flexible, sustainable and equitable.**

OUR COMMITMENTS

Our strategic direction will progress over the next three years and is guided by our ongoing commitments to British Columbians. The Ministry of Education, through the Libraries Branch, is responsible for delivering on this plan. To measure our progress, we will use key metrics that were developed in conversation with library stakeholders; these are outlined in Appendix 1.

We will develop an operational plan to deliver on our actions. Our focus in the first year will be on enhancing the annual survey and reviewing the funding framework that determines how public library grants are allocated.

Building on the work that has already been accomplished, we will report on our progress and communicate the strategic importance of library service—their reach and value to British Columbians.



APPENDIX 1: OUTCOMES AND METRICS FRAMEWORK

We will be focused on delivering on the following 5 key outcomes over the next 3 years. A high-level operational plan will provide additional details regarding the associated metrics and reporting.

OUTCOMES	POTENTIAL METRICS	STRATEGY 1 IMPROVING ACCESS	STRATEGY 2 BUILDING CAPACITY	STRATEGY 3 ADVANCING ENGAGEMENT	STRATEGY 4 ENHANCING GOVERNANCE
1 Better access to digital resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of electronic resources used by 10% • Increase users by 20% • Increased connectivity options for library use (qualitative) 	✓	✓		
2 Better availability of library materials in accessible formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number and use of accessible format materials by 20% • Increase the number of users by 10% 	✓		✓	
3 People and communities progress toward reconciliation by having improved access to tools, resources and programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of resources and tools for library staff and boards that support communities in reconciliation work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 resource and workshop offered each year • Increase the number of collections, programs offered and people attending by 15% (qualitative/quantitative) • Increased participant understanding and learning (qualitative) 		✓	✓	
4 Improved access to training and development opportunities for the library community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of library staff and boards accessing and using training opportunities by 15% • Increase available learning resources by 20% 		✓		✓
5 Access to services people want through libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of government services or resources accessed through public libraries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 significant service offering • Increase number of government agencies/partners using libraries for engagement by 10% • Changes to library services (result of strategic planning, evaluation, needs assessments, community planning) (qualitative) 	✓		✓	✓

APPENDIX 2: LIBRARIES BY THE NUMBERS

