2021 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

LIBRARY NAME

ELKFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

CHECKLIST

For the PLGR to be considered complete, please ensure you have provided information for each of the following sections. Suggested word counts have been included for each question, but feel free to include more or less text as needed – text boxes will expand as you type. Click on a title in the list below to jump to that section of the document.

1. INTRODUCTION - LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Provide a brief description of the community and library, focusing on what has changed in the past year (up to 500 words).

Elkford, B.C. was founded in 1971 as a home for miners working at Fording Coal operations (now Teck Coal). Elkford is located near the Alberta/B.C. boundary in the East Kootenay. Elkford's population is approximately 2500 permanent residents. Over 50% of employment in the Elkford community is in resource-based industry, with Teck Coal as the leading employer.

The Elkford Public Library is located in downtown Elkford and shares building space with our local swimming pool. In addition to basic library service, the Elkford Public Library offers many services that are otherwise unavailable in the District. Some of our services include printing, faxing, scanning, copying, and laminating, public computers, loanable technology, free wireless high-speed internet, as well as workshops, programs, and activities of local interest. We also offer access to government resources, access to legal information, help for jobseekers, and one-on-one technology help. Our local monthly community newspaper, the Elkford Focus, is edited by library employees and published out of the library.

Our library is nearing the end of its current five-year strategic plan, which was implemented in 2018 and terminates at the end of 2022. Our strategic plan consists of four objectives, which are closely tied to the province of British Columbia's strategic objectives for public library service. Our strategic objectives are *fostering connected communities, building capacity, working together*, and *sustaining our success*. The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing orders and guidance have brought about ongoing changes and challenges to individuals and to our library, and in response we have changed how we meet some of our strategic objectives. In 2021, for example, we offered new activities and programs specifically tailored to the COVID-19 environment, expanded our technology lending program, enhanced our digital collections and services, and provided a substantial amount of one-on-one assistance to patrons accessing provincial and federal documents pertaining to COVID-19.

2. MAJOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

Please describe any new or major ongoing projects/programs the library has delivered in the past year. To report on multiple projects/programs, "copy" the blank table below and insert additional tables as needed using the "paste" function. Use one table per project/program.

Project/Program Name
Books for Youth

Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.
The objective of this project was to develop a book collection to be housed in the SYS.tem Youth Space in Elkford. The SYS.tem Youth Space is managed by the Elkford SYS.tem Youth Network, and is a safe space for youth (kids and teens) in Elkford to gather and socialize. Many youth spend time at the Space after school. At the time of writing, the SYS.tem Space features a Foosball table, an air hockey table, board games, video games, and the book collection discussed in this report.   Development of this collection involved procuring funding, surveying teens in the community to determine their needs, purchasing requested books and materials, processing and delivering the books to the SYS.tem Space, collecting feedback and usage statistics for the collection, and using that information to guide future lending and purchases to/for the Space.

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

This project supports two of our library's strategic objectives: *building capacity* and *working together*. It is the library's priority to offer our patrons relevant, high-quality services and be responsive to community needs. It is also our priority to increase community engagement with and awareness of our programs, services, and other resources.
   The partnership between the Elkford SYS.tem Youth Network and the Elkford Public Library on the Books for Youth project promotes communication between the two organizations and gives the Elkford Public Library a direct avenue through which to connect with youth. Through this partnership we are better able to engage with and meet the needs of youth in Elkford.
   This project directly benefits youth in our community by reducing barriers to book borrowing and providing convenience for those who are interested in borrowing books. SYS.tem Space users do not need to visit the library or provide their personal information to check out books. Note also that the book collection in the Space was curated specifically for SYS.tem Space users based on suggestions and feedback. Having a readily available book collection in a location that youth are frequenting is one method by which the Elkford Public Library is engaging youth in reading, promoting literacy, helping build skills, and promoting lifelong learning.
   Finally, this partnership and project may also engage SYS.tem Space users and the public with the library and its services in general by increasing public awareness of programs and services at the library.

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.	
Advancing Citizen Engagement (e.g., helping people access government services/resources, fostering community knowledge-sharing, and supporting reconciliation)	The Books for Youth project supports B.C.'s strategic goal *Advancing Citizen Engagement* in several ways: by fostering communication between Elkford youth and the Elkford Public Library, by giving the library an opportunity to meet the needs of youth in our community, and by engaging youth in reading and providing reading materials to kids and teens that may not otherwise visit the library. It also expands the face of the library into a frequented public space in our community, providing more opportunities to engage with the public and raise awareness with respect to library programs and services in general.

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.

Outputs

   The library purchased a total of 65 titles in mid-2021. These titles arrived between spring 2021 and the present. Unfortunately, supply chain issues due to COVID-19 have affected book reprint, shipping, and delivery dates, and obtaining books for the collection has been a slow process. Books were catalogued by library employees and were delivered to the Space throughout the year as they arrived. Youth using the Space have expressed that they are eager to engage with the collection and have offered suggestions for future purchases. Additional books that were procured through donation were also added to the SYS.tem Space collection last year.

Immediate Outcomes

   Youth residing in Elkford who use the SYS.tem Space now have access to a book collection in a convenient location, whose contents are determined by the needs of the users of the Space. Access to the Space is free, and users now have a new avenue through which to read or borrow books from the library or to request books of interest. The SYS.tem Space book collection has had a total of 41 circulations at the time of writing. As the first volumes of popular series are just starting to arrive now, we expect circulation of books in this collection to increase significantly this year.

Intermediate Outcomes

   Based on feedback from youth participating in this project, we have begun exploring other ways to deliver materials to youth in Elkford. This year, we are expanding the Books for Youth project to include temporary loans of materials from the library's main collection; books on loan from the library will be housed in the Space for one to two months to give youth a chance to explore our collection without the burden of traveling to the library. Communication between the Elkford Public Library and the Elkford SYS.tem Youth Network has improved, and we are exploring ideas for future collaborative projects.

Ultimate Outcomes/Impact

This project increases the engagement of youth in Elkford with our library and supports youth in our community. Through this project we are helping to deliver the provincial strategic goal for public 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?

   This project is a partnership between the Elkford Public Library and the Elkford SYS.tem Youth Network. The Elkford SYS.tem Youth Network is housing the books in their Youth Space as well as collecting usage statistics for the books. This project was funded by a grant from the Elkford Community Fund/Community Foundation of the Kootenay Rockies (CFKR).

Project/Program Name
Technology Lending, Digital Collection, and Wi-Fi Improvements
Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.

Several upgrades and additions to our technology lending collection, our digital book collection, our eLearning platforms, and our wireless internet services were carried out in 2021.

Upgrading our wireless internet required an assessment of our network infrastructure by an IT professional, procurement of funding, and installation of the new devices. New additions to our digital collection were made after assessment of local demand for electronic books and audiobooks. Devices were added to our technology lending program based on feedback from our community.

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

This project supports the Elkford Public Library's strategic goals *fostering connected communities* and *building capacity*. The library is committed to promoting access to all types of information and tools as the information landscape evolves and as new technologies emerge. We also prioritize being able to offer high quality services and collections, as well as offering professional development opportunities to staff and patrons of the library.

Our technology lending program and electronic collection, as well as our free high-speed wireless internet, provide means by which patrons can stay connected to their communities and to library services even if they do not own computers or devices, do not have internet, or cannot make it into the library to browse and borrow physical materials. Particularly during the ongoing pandemic, it is critical that the library offer options to stay connected. Temporary residents also have access to free high-speed internet and electronic devices through the library; this is especially important for those new to Elkford and looking for employment. Furthermore, access to eLearning platforms such as LinkedIn Learning provide professional development opportunities for both patrons and staff.

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.

Improving Access for British Columbians (e.g., connectivity, digital collections, shared services)	Improving our wireless internet service as well as offering an up-to-date collection of technology for borrowing helps to lower barriers to digital inclusion for patrons who may not have access to internet and/or devices. Our technology lending collection supports digital literacy, and provides opportunities for patrons who would like to learn and familiarize themselves with new devices to try new technology without the financial burden of purchasing. As patrons come in to access our devices and internet, they also have the support of library staff to help them navigate the internet and learn how to use the devices. With respect to the additions to our electronic collection of books and audiobooks, a robust electronic collection with new material readily available to patrons provides an alternative to those who may not be able to physically visit the library to borrow books, or for those who choose to visit less frequently due to safety concerns with respect to COVID-19. As most of our electronic collection is shared with tens of other libraries in British Columbia, it can often be difficult for our patrons to access titles in a timely manner. Our OverDrive Advantage collection improves patrons' access to electronic books and audiobooks by having new and popular titles available exclusively to Elkford Public Library.
Building Capacity for library staff and directors (e.g., training and professional development)	A wide selection of professional development courses and tutorials are available through LinkedIn Learning to library employees and patrons. Our employees have used this eLearning platform to, e.g., develop critical digital literacy skills that we use to assist patrons in the library.

Advancing Citizen Engagement (e.g., helping people access government services/resources, fostering community knowledge-sharing, and supporting reconciliation)	The availability of modern devices and high-speed internet at the library allows patrons to easily access government services and resources. Library staff are also available to assist patrons.

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.

Outputs

Laptop computers and a Victor Reader talking book reader were added to our technology lending collection in 2021. Our indoor Wi-Fi signal strength was improved by upgrading our existing indoor Wi-Fi access point and installing a second indoor Wi-Fi access point in the library. Over 140 electronic books and audiobooks were added to Elkford Public Library's digital collection through OverDrive Advantage. The eLearning platform LinkedIn Learning was also added to our library's website, which is free to use for patrons with an Elkford Public Library card.

Immediate Outcomes

Patrons now have access to a wider range of technology that can be borrowed from the library. The Victor Reader talking book player is suitable for patrons who have a print disability, and can play books in DAISY format, allowing access to audiobooks from the NNELS catalogue.

Patrons also have access to more reliable Wi-Fi with a greater signal strength at all locations inside the library and in the building lobby. Improving our indoor Wi-Fi has removed some constraints for patrons accessing our Wi-Fi out-of-hours, as patrons access our Wi-Fi via the building lobby when the library is closed and the weather makes using our outdoor Wi-Fi access point less feasible.

With respect to digital collection additions, Elkford Public Library patrons can now borrow from a greater range of new and popular titles through our OverDrive Advantage collection. Note that many OverDrive Advantage titles are available only in Metered Access format, and several of the title licenses purchased in 2020 have now expired. Regularly updating our OverDrive Advantage collection is therefore necessary to ensure Elkford Public Library patrons continue to have access to titles. In contrast with our shared collection managed by the B.C. Libraries Cooperative, patrons have faster access (shorter waiting times) to titles through OverDrive Advantage as it is a local collection available exclusively to Elkford Public Library patrons.

Finally, patrons may access free courses on many different professional development topics through our new eLearning platform, LinkedIn Learning. LinkedIn Learning can be accessed at the library or from home. Offering free, easy-to-use professional development courses lowers barriers patrons may experience when seeking professional training.

Intermediate Outcomes

The borrowing of electronic titles through OverDrive has undergone a 23% increase from 2020 to 2021, with a total of 2452 volumes borrowed in 2021. OverDrive Advantage titles have made up anywhere from 5 to 30% of monthly electronic checkouts at our library, the higher values corresponding to months where new OverDrive Advantage titles are purchased. Note that Advantage copies make up less than two percent of total electronic copies available to Elkford Public Library

patrons through OverDrive. As patrons learn more about OverDrive and borrowing online, requests for electronic titles at our library have increased.

   Since its inception in 2020, our technology lending program has grown in breadth, and demand for devices has increased. In 2021, devices in our technology lending program, which include laptops, tablets, e-readers, and a talking book player, had a total of 48 circulations. With feedback from patrons, our technology lending program continues to expand to include different types of devices.

   With respect to indoor Wi-Fi access, we anticipate that as COVID-19 restrictions are gradually reduced and we are able to provide more seating in the library, more patrons will use our Wi-Fi indoors during library hours. In general, Wi-Fi usage at the library has increased year over year, with a total of 10,893 clients accessing our Wi-Fi in 2021 and a total of 791 GB of data transferred over the year. This is compared with our 2020 totals of 4351 clients and 435 GB of transferred data.

Ultimate Outcomes/Impact
Through improvements to our network infrastructure and additions to our electronic collection and our technology lending program, the Elkford Public Library is helping to meet several of the province of British Columbia's strategic goals for public library service, including *Improving Access* for British Columbians, *Building Capacity*, and *Advancing Citizen Engagement*.

Did the project/program involve any partnerships? If so, what was the partner's role (e.g., funding, outreach, service delivery?
Upgrades to our indoor Wi-Fi access point were funded through the B.C. Libraries Cooperative's Strategic Network Hardware Fund. Laptop computers and a Victor Reader were purchased with funding from the 2020 Library Technology Grant. Electronic books and audiobooks were purchased in part with funding from the 2020 Library Technology Grant and in part with regular annual funding. LinkedIn Learning was provided by the B.C. Libraries Cooperative.

Project/Program Name
Employee Professional Development & Volunteer Program

Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.
Elkford Public Library staff undergo annual professional development including courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences.   In 2021, our library's volunteer program was expanded to include several adult volunteers. This required recruiting for and training new volunteers. These volunteers are assisting Elkford Public Library employees with regular library duties such as checking in and shelving books, fulfilling interlibrary loans, and assisting with programs and activities, as well as longer-term projects such as maintaining our newspaper archive.

How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals and/or community?
Employee professional development supports the library's strategic objectives *building capacity* and *enhancing governance*. The library director and library employees undergo training and attend courses which are directly applicable to their duties at the library. Employees can better serve patrons and the community with the knowledge and skills they obtain via professional development. Knowledge gained through consulting with professionals results in more effective governance and a better-defined Board/director relationship.   Expanding our volunteer program meets the objective *building capacity* by ensuring the library has a robust pool of qualified personnel to assist with library operations and programs. Having the support of trained volunteers also means that we can offer more programs activities to our community in the long term; in the short term, it means we can compensate for the increased workload brought on by

the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to offer our regular services to patrons, as well as offer alternate services and programs when COVID-19 restrictions prevent us from carrying out our regular program(s).

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.	
Building Capacity for library staff and directors (e.g., training and professional development)	Professional development for Elkford Public Library employees is in direct support of the province of B.C.'s strategic goals for public library service. Knowledge and skills gained through professional development and training improve the delivery of services and programs to our community.
Enhancing Governance of the library system (e.g., board/trustee training, developing best practices, strategic planning)	Governance at the Elkford Public Library is improved via the library director and Board members engaging in governance- and leadership-related professional development.

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.

Outputs

   In 2021, Elkford Public Library employees collectively attended courses on cataloguing, web development, library operations, technology in libraries, readers' advisory, and occupational first aid. Employees also attended webinars and other short-term training series on a variety of topics including legal reference, governance, and Sitka's Evergreen. This year, our director attended the BC Library Conference and the Association of B.C. Public Library Directors' new library director orientation.
   With respect to our volunteer program, in 2021, we recruited for and trained five new library volunteers. These volunteers assisted employees in the library three to four days per week for an average of 21 hours per month (April through December).

Immediate Outcomes

   Employees are now equipped with a broader wealth of knowledge and skills which they can apply at or when representing the library. Employees use their knowledge to, e.g., improve programs at the library or offer new programs to our community. For example, in 2021 we offered a new stop-motion workshop to youth in our community, and we improved our readers' advisory service. Employees also used the skills they developed to better maintain our website, improve accessibility with respect to digital documents, troubleshoot technology, and provide better records for our library's catalogue.
   With respect to volunteers, through the addition of more adult volunteers to the library team, the Elkford Public Library was able to continue to offer high-quality service five days per week to our community despite continuing strain brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteers maintained the library's capacity to offer service as well as assisted with delivering programs such as our Tales for Tots story time.

Intermediate Outcomes
In addition to helping maintain service at the Elkford Public Library, having a robust network of volunteers was extremely useful with respect to recruiting for new employees (see *Staffing* in the *Key Challenges* section below), as in 2021 we were able to recruit from our group of volunteers. Recruiting a trained individual who shares a passion for providing library service expedited the onboarding process and ensured a successful transition between former and new employees. Ultimate Outcomes/Impact An ongoing focus on professional development at the Elkford Public Library ensures that we can help fulfill the province of British Columbia's strategic objectives for public library service *Building Capacity* and *Enhancing Governance*. Through professional development we can improve leadership, support our staff and patrons, and improve services at the library.
Did the project/program involve any partnerships? If so, what was the partner's role (e.g., funding, outreach, service delivery?
Professional development for Elkford Public Library employees is provided through our regular annual funding.

3. KEY CHALLENGES

The following topics have been identified as recurring themes in previous years' PLGRs. The intent of this section is to collect detailed information in a structured, consistent format.

Please select the most significant challenges that the library has faced in the past year that you wish to comment on. Leave any other listed topics blank.

Use the 'Other' row to include any ongoing or past challenges that are not included in this list. If you have more than one 'Other' item to add, please insert additional rows into the table.

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)	Library hours in 2021 are reduced compared to pre-COVID-19 to accommodate COVID-19 protocol such as cleaning and disinfecting. Indoor seating and public computer workstation availability has increased in 2021 compared with 2020, but available seating in the library is still low compared to before the pandemic. Several annual programs were altered or cancelled in 2021 to accommodate COVID-19 regulations, and program attendance has been low versus pre-COVID-19 years. Virtual programs have not been popular at our library, however, we continue to offer shared virtual programs such as Kootenay Teen Book Club and Read Local Book Club which are organized by the Kootenay Library Federation. This year we offered outdoor story walks as well as "take 'n' make" craft kits. These were very popular, with over 82 kids attending story walks and 224 craft kits distributed. Story walks and craft kits were partially funded by Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy,

	Association Francophone des Rocheuses du Sud, and Elkford Early Years, and partially funded by our regular annual funding.
	As patrons' needs have changed throughout the pandemic, our library has strived to provide congruent services. In 2021, for example, Elkford Public Library employees have accessed, printed, and laminated over 200 Proof of Vaccination documents.
	Employees' workloads have increased on average versus pre-pandemic duties due to COVID-19-related protocol as well as an increase in demand for one-on-one help, particularly with respect to computer use. Demand for one-on-one technology help increased by more than a factor of two in 2021 compared to 2020. Our employees are relying more on adult volunteers to complete some of the regular duties associated with their roles as well as with programs and events (see *Employee Professional Development & Volunteer Program* above). The library has requested and received a 2% increase in our annual operational grant from the District of Elkford for 2022.
Staffing (e.g., recruitment and retention, mental health and wellness)	The Elkford Public Library has a relatively small employee team; we currently have three permanent employees including the director, and two casual employees. In 2021 we saw the resignation of an experienced employee and the hiring of two new employees. Recruitment for library positions in Elkford is difficult for several reasons. We are drawing from a relatively small local population in a rural area. We offer part-time and casual positions, which alone cannot support someone living in the area; potential recruits are typically those interested in earning supplemental income. Finally, though our employee wages are comparable to other small rural libraries in the Kootenays, our wages are not competitive with other employers in the Elkford area, most of whom are funded by mining activities. In 2021 we had few applicants when positions at the library were advertised.
	With respect to staffing, in part due to the above, our employee team lacks diversity across multiple demographics. This impacts our ability to offer well-rounded library service to our community. Our Board is currently in the process of reviewing our wage policy to help to address these issues.
Disappearing services in the community (e.g., government, banking, health)	As a rural library in a small community, patrons turn to us to help fill in gaps with respect to local services. For example, the closest Legal Aid BC office is 120 km away and there is no local lawyer in Elkford. Therefore, our employees must be able to help patrons seek legal information. This year, through the LawMatters Grant, we added 25 new legal titles to our collection. Many of these were practical texts aimed specifically at British Columbia residents. Employees also underwent legal reference training in 2021 to better be able to assist patrons who are looking for legal information. Jobseekers consistently rely on the library for assistance with job searches, resume writing, job applications, and accessing employment-related training and professional development. We host Kootenay Employment Services once per month at the library in addition to the assistance we provide for patrons one-on-one during regular hours. We are also the only indoor location in town where patrons may rest without pressure to purchase items or pay for a service. This is particularly important for patrons who commute into town using public transport and are waiting to commute home.

	With respect to COVID-19, as new documentation and access to government services are needed, we frequently assist community members who are accessing these services.
Connectivity (e.g., low bandwidth, lack of home internet in the community)	Many of our patrons do not have access to computers and internet at home. In general, the internet connection speed (both bandwidth and latency) in our community is poor compared to that which one has access to in an urban area. To try to mitigate some of these issues, we offer devices for patrons to borrow and take home through our Technology Lending program, and we offer free high-speed internet, public computers, and one-on-one assistance for patrons using technology in the library. See *Technology Lending, Digital Collection, and Wi-Fi Improvements* above for more information about additions to these services in 2021. Our Technology Lending program was instigated in 2020 and added to in 2021 using funds from the 2020 Library Technology Grant. Improvements to our Wi-Fi were carried out in 2020 and 2021 using funds from the 2020 Library Technology Grant and the Strategic Network Hardware Fund.
Community access to the library (e.g., geographic isolation, lack of local public transit, building accessibility)	Our library serves a rural area, and many members of our service population may not be able to commute to the library, particularly when the weather and/or road conditions are poor. We have sparse public transit available in our area, and that which does exist is focused on moving people from less populated communities to more populated towns and cities nearby. It is very difficult to commute into Elkford using public transit, and public transit is unavailable on the weekends. We offer several services over the phone to try to mitigate this, including readers advisory, library card registration, material renewals, and holds. We have also eliminated overdue fines on materials for the duration of 2021, allowing patrons to take less frequent trips to the library without fear of accumulating overdue fines. With respect to digital materials and services, the Elkford Public Library provides both a shared and local electronic collection to patrons through OverDrive, and several other online services and eLearning platforms such as LinkedIn Learning, Gale Courses, and TumbleBooks. We also have links to important information such as legal resources from our website home page. The 2020 Library Technology Grant as well as our regular annual funding was used to supplement our local electronic book and audiobook collection in 2021.
Vulnerable communities (e.g., people experiencing homelessness, addiction, mental health crisis)	Elkford Public Library employees have attended Ryan Dowd's *Librarian's Guide to Homelessness* training series, and we continue to attend relevant training webinars offered through said program. In 2021 the library also worked with the BC Association of Community Response Networks to offer Elkford residents two training webinars, "It's Not Right," and the Gatekeeper program. These programs are geared towards everyday citizens and essential workers who have regular contact with the public, respectively, and aim to educate community members about how to support vulnerable adults experiencing abuse or neglect.

4. SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL

Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.

Library Director Signature: _____   Date: MARCH 1 2022

Board Chair Signature: _C Murphy_____   Date: March 3 2022