



OUR VISION

Vibrant libraries; thriving communities

2022 LIBRARY FEDERATION OPERATING GRANT REPORT

INTRODUCTION:

Building upon historic relationships that go back to as early as the 1930s, the North Central Library Federation (NCLF) was established in 2007 with the goal of helping the libraries in the North Central interior of BC work together to share resources and provide high-quality programs and services. Its purpose, as originally conceived, was to encourage and enable more people living in the region to take advantage of their community libraries. That purpose holds true today.

The federation serves 10 public libraries providing services and programs for the approximately 195,000 residents across three regional districts – Bulkley-Nechako, Cariboo and Fraser-Fort George. These libraries are Burns Lake Public Library, Cariboo Regional District Library (20 branches), Fort St. James Public Library, Fraser Lake Public Library, Granisle Public Library, Mackenzie Public Library, McBride and District Public Library, Prince George Public Library (2 branches), Valemount Public Library and Vanderhoof Public Library.

In the context of emerging from the crisis phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, the region continued to experience economic challenges in the form of mill closures, labour shortages, and rising housing costs. These factors, coupled with the growing opioid crisis and homelessness, continued to exert additional demands on public libraries for both traditional and non-traditional services.

STRATEGIC GOALS: 2020-2022

In 2019, the NCLF Board and members of the Librarians Advisory Group identified the following four priority areas for the Strategic Plan – 2020-2022:

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

The federation believes that its priorities align with the priorities identified in the 2022 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter:

- Improved Regional and Local Shared Services Delivery
- Improved Access to Professional Learning Opportunities for the Library Community
- Service Expansion Beyond Community Borders

In response to rising COVID rates and fuel prices in autumn 2022, the NCLF board rescheduled its in-person strategic planning session from September 2022 to spring 2023. This process will include a review of the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan to identify and develop new priorities amid a time of local and global challenges.

2022: EMERGING FROM PANDEMIC

The federation's workplan for 2022 was to focus on delivering specific actions tied to each of the federation's four strategic priorities in the context of moving out of the emergency phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NCLF Board, the Library Directors' Advisory Group (LDAG), and the NCLF Director remained committed to staying aligned with these priorities as member libraries worked to restore full in-person services.

In addition to the strategic priorities, the NCLF gratefully received a COVID Relief & Recovery Grant from the Public Libraries Branch, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, that led to collaboration with the other federation directors on several significant projects. These initiatives and activities are highlighted in the 2022 COVID Grant Report.

Priority One: Building Capacity (aligning with the Improved Access to Professional Learning Opportunities for the Library Community priority identified in the 2022 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)

By creating opportunities for those involved in member libraries (trustees, library directors and library staff) to get together and share ideas and expertise, we expand capacity, enhance collaboration, and build knowledge networks.

Action: Expanded Roundtable Forums

The NCLF increased the number of roundtable discussions, expanding topics to including children's and teen services, summer reading club, interlibrary loans, technology, and safety/security. The federation also initiated and hosted pan-northern roundtables with Northwest and North East Library Federations on interlibrary loans (15 participants) and the cognitive care kits project (20 libraries). NCLF provided the platform for each session, and increased its cloud storage to be able to record and share sessions with staff, particularly those in smaller libraries who experienced attendance gaps due to immediate workplace demands.

In addition to strengthening information sharing and collective brainstorming, the roundtables supported Priority Three: Strengthening Relationships by fostering the development of peer-to-peer support networks between libraries and regions.

Action: Dementia Training

The NCLF continued its partnership with Northern Health (NH) to coordinate preparation and distribution of cognitive care kits to all libraries in the federation. With kits in many libraries by the start of the year, the focus turned to training needs, resulting in a 5-week, 5-module series in August 2022

that addressed all aspects of dementia awareness including general information, the needs of caregivers, and ways to make libraries more dementia-friendly environments. The NCLF worked with the NH coordinator to ensure the content met the needs of those working in public library settings, and to award micro-credentials to participants.

As with the roundtables, the expanded cloud storage allowed the federation to record and share all training sessions. A follow-up series is expected in 2023 for additional staff.

Action: Provide Legal Resources Training

The NCLF worked with BC Courthouse Libraries to deliver LawMatters, a three-session workshop including an overview of the court system, key online forms and resources, and the services available through the BC's courthouse libraries. The federation worked with the facilitators to develop micro-credentials for participants.

Action: Provide Online Learning Opportunities Paid for by the Federation

The federation renewed its subscription to the *Homeless Training Institute's Librarian's Guide to Homelessness*. This online training tool is designed to help library staff become more familiar with and comfortable handling such social issues as homelessness, dementia, and violence in the workplace. The addition of new staff to the 2022 registration list underscores the ongoing value of the training resource for all levels of staff. The cost of the subscription was subsidized 100% by the federation.

Without such support, many of the smaller libraries in the federation would be unable to afford to provide these kinds of online training opportunities for their staffs and boards.

Priority Two: Sharing Resources (Aligning with the Improved Regional and Local Shared Services Delivery priority identified in the 2022 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)

NCLF member libraries are committed to providing exceptional library experiences no matter where people live.

Action: Continue to Build the OverDrive Advantage Collection

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, NCLF member libraries saw and continue to see a significant increase in demand for loanable, downloadable audiobooks and ebooks. NCLF member libraries were depending on the provincial OverDrive Consortium collection, managed by the BC Libraries Cooperative and supported by public libraries in BC, to provide users with access to these types of resources. Pressure on this collection had been extreme and as a result, patrons could wait months to access a title.

The NCLF OverDrive Advantage collection was established in 2020 to help shorten the wait times for e-books and audiobooks for member libraries' patrons. A 2021 evaluation recommended a follow-up evaluation to assess the value of the collection. This second evaluation was conducted in 2022, and underscored the continuation of this program. Almost \$5000 was invested in the collection in 2022, for a total of 81 high demand titles.

Action: Coordinate a Summer Touring Performer

The NCLF coordinated a summer tour with singer/songwriter Mary Lambert. The federation liaised with the performer, handled all administrative tasks (including the Entandem licencing), and covered the cost of the tour to ensure all NCLF libraries, regardless of size, were able to be on the tour itinerary. Libraries

reported strong positive feedback from their communities, particularly since this was the first in-person program for many locations since the start of the pandemic.

Priority Three: Strengthening Relationships ((Aligning with the Improved Regional and Local Shared Services Delivery and Service Expansion Beyond Community Borders priorities identified in the 2022 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)

Action: Explore Options to Establish an Accessibility Committee Within the NCLF

The NCLF director met with several smaller libraries to explore the feasibility of an NCLF Accessibility Committee to meet the requirements of the *Accessible BC Act*. The director shared information resources from the Public Library Accessibility Working Group, and from the BC Accessibility Hub in preparation for striking a committee in early 2023.

Action: Strengthen Partnerships with Other Federations, the BC Library Trustees Association, and the Association of BC Public Library Directors

The directors of the library federations met regularly throughout 2022 to discuss shared concerns and work on collaborative projects. Much of the work was specifically focused on the COVID Relief & Recovery Grant, and the development of three central initiatives: core skills training, a provincewide virtual program, and projects related to emergency planning and preparedness.

The federation directors also met with ABCPLD to review overall professional development for libraries in BC, and ways to streamline the process and opportunities.

The NCLF director participated in the BC Libraries Coop member engagement session, and met with the BCLTA to explore options for trustee training.

Action: Continued Partnership with Northern Health to Develop and Deliver Cognitive Care Kits

Following on 2021's introduction of cognitive care kits, more kits and resources were distributed to federation libraries in 2022, with ongoing support from Northern Health (NH) in the form of training and such added resources as free supplies of *Dementia Connections* magazines to distribute to the public.

Priority Four: Increasing the Awareness of the Value of Public Libraries to the Communities They Serve (Supporting BC's Strategic Plan for Public Library Service priority identified in the 2022 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)

The federation board believes that it builds the awareness of the value of public libraries to the communities it serves by demonstrating sound governance at both the local and federation levels and by ensuring that public libraries within our region are seen to be working effectively together – leveraging our resources and our expertise for the good of all our communities.

Action: Ongoing Orientation and Knowledge Support to the Federation's Members

The NCLF director continued to provide expertise to federation members in such ways as:

- Provided federation orientation to a new trustee, and two new library directors
- Provide feedback and resources to a trustee on recruiting a new library director
- Compiled resources for a library director on autism in the workplace

- Assisted library directors with information on grant programs and self-checkout machines

Action: Conduct Library Staff Salary Survey

Building on the value of the 2020 Library Director Salary Survey, and the 2021 Library Staff Salary Survey, a new survey was launched in late 2022 to capture both sets of data in one document, with the new goal of updating this information annually.

The survey is included under this priority as it communicates the value that modestly paid library staff continue to deliver high quality services, and during the COVID-19 pandemic have been at the vanguard of community organizations maintaining services even as communities and organizations have had to contend with significant service reductions or shut-downs. Library staff also continue to experience a rise in demand for non-traditional services related to climate change emergencies, homelessness, and the opioid public health emergency.

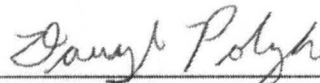
CONCLUSION

By staying true to our strategic priorities during a time of great uncertainty, the North Central Library Federation has continued to work together with its members to strengthen libraries, improve literacy and build stronger communities in the north central region of British Columbia. We remain committed to our belief that vibrant libraries lead to thriving communities. The NCLF expresses its ongoing gratitude to the Public Libraries Branch, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, for its support through funding and professional expertise and guidance. Thanks to this continued commitment, library staff, users and community members across Northern British Columbia have access to the wider range of services and resources to enrich their lives.

Respectfully Submitted,



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