## 2022 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

### LIBRARY NAME

Nelson 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.

### INTRODUCTION - LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Provide a brief description of the community and library, focusing on what has changed in the past year. If provincial funding is primarily used to support your library's core operations, please include a general describe where it is applied (staffing, utilities, collections, etc.).

The Nelson Public Library (NPL) is located in the Central Kootenay and serves the City of Nelson, as well as three adjacent Regional District Areas (RDCK Areas F, H, & E): Area E does not contribute to library service through taxation. Residents of this area who wish to use the library pay a yearly membership fee. The total population of this region is just over 19,000 and is comprised of a vibrant mix of people ranging from seniors and families and youth. Nelson has a national and international reputation as a cultural artistic community which creates a thriving tourist industry. The economy is based on tourism, a post-secondary College, and provincial government offices. Nelson's technology sector is growing and since the pandemic there has been an influx of remote employees.

NPL's biggest ongoing challenge is providing service to the RDCK Area E that does not pay into the library tax base. This is a significant barrier for many people who cannot afford the membership fee. It creates problems with being able to provide school programming as school staff are reluctant to bring students to a program where everyone cannot participate fully. The Library addressed this to some extent through a grant from the RDCK Area Director that allowed us to issue a library card to every student in the region, however the funding is not stable as each year it is at the discretion of the Area Director. There have been four library service referenda in the last 20 years, one which resulted in Library services to RDCK Areas F & H, but Area E continued to vote no. In August 2022 Area E

residents were once again given the opportunity to contribute to library services through taxation via an Alternative Approval Process, 10% of residents rejected the proposal, resulting in another failed attempt.

As this report illustrates NPL services continued to adapt and adjust responding to the needs of the community as residents cautiously returned to regular activities after two years of pandemic measures. The Library started work on the development of a strategic framework conducting community engagement with a focus on Library values. Over 450 community members responded plus representatives from cultural, business and social service organizations participated in focus groups along with Indigenous community members. Their comments and contributions helped form the value-based goals of the framework.

Similar to local, regional and provincial governments, our Library serves all; young and old from all socio, economic and cultural backgrounds. We serve newcomers, Indigenous people, families, seniors, job seekers, small business owners and the underhoused. The Library is an integral piece of the community's Social Infrastructure: those foundational services that support the quality of life of a community. Our library is one of the few resources that provide public space: a space where everyone is welcome, where you don't need to be a member or spend money to access the services.

Global inflation resulting in higher operational costs provided a considerable challenge for the Library. The City of Nelson and RDCK Area F & H continued to provide an annual increase to the Library's operating budget. Though this increase did not keep up with inflationary costs and along with zero increases in provincial funding, meant that the library reduced collections and programming budgets: resulting in a direct decrease in services to the community.

Support from local and provincial groups (BC Lib.Co-op, ABCPLD, BCLTA, BCLA, KLF), helped stretch the Library's budget to be able to continue providing well-used and valued library services.

## 2. FEATURED PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

Please describe any featured 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. You do not need to report on every project/program, only highlights/notable examples.

| Project/Program Name |
| --- |
| Kootenay Teen News – Black Youth Internship & Mentorship program |
| **Provide a brief description. Please include details such as any partnerships or resources leveraged to accomplish this project/program.** |

Kootenay Teen News (KTN) started in 2021. The project is lead by Nelson Library's Teen Services Coordinator. It is a library-published teen newspaper, aiming to be a community engagement tool and to provide a platform for fostering local youth voices, while building digital media, critical thinking and communication skills. Teens from across the West and East Kootenays are contributing content to the paper. Seven issues were published in 2022 and paper copies distributed to KLF libraries and school districts and local youth centers within the region. All issues can be viewed online: https://klf.bc.libraries.coop/kootenay-programs/kootenay-teen-news/

In 2022, through support from a Columbia Basin Trust grant, Kootenay Teen News introduced a paid internship to Black youth creators/writers/thinkers through a mentorship program. The aim of the program is a way to uncover and honour Black presence in the Kootenays. The project provides interns with a mentor who will walk them through research, exploration, creation process centered on the stories of Black life discovered through the region, past and present. The youth will then have the opportunity to publish their findings in the newspaper.

## How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals?

This project supports the following library strategic priorities and values:

Community needs: supports literacy and life-long learning and fosters community connections by teaching new skills and providing mentorship to underrepresented youth.

Spaces to Connect: builds community with KLF libraries (staff and patrons) and youth both in-person and online.

Library Values: supports innovate services and universal and equitable access by providing a unique opportunity for youth and under representative youth in the region to raise their voices.

## How does this project/program support the B.C.'s strategic goal(s) for public library service from the strategic plan, which include:
1. Improving Access
2. Building Capacity
3. Advancing Citizen Engagement
4. Enhancing Governance

1. **Improving Access:** This project was developed by the NPL Teen Librarian and is a collaborative effort amongst the Kootenay Library Federation, member libraries and teens in the twenty communities the Federation serves. This project would not be successful without the collaboration due to the limited capacity of individual libraries and the small number of teens in many of the communities; their participation is needed in order for it to be successful.
2. **Advancing Citizen Engagement:** this project supports citizen engagement by providing Black youth an internship with support of a mentor to build communication skills and by providing a safe space to learn about local Black history and to share their experiences of being Black in a predominate white region.

**What are the key outcomes of this project/program?**

**Short term outcomes**

- Securing grant funding to provide paid internship for four Black youth in the Kootenay region.
- Identifying youth for the project (through an application process).
- Two, three-month rounds of mentoring with two teens, four teens in total.
- Delivery of six tailored sessions with mentor.
- Interns receive an honorarium of $408 for the hours spent in the workshops, as well as their research and creation of their written work

**Long term outcomes**

- Provide Black youth writers a chance to cultivate their writing skills for public consumption.
- Increase awareness of the presence/absence of Black culture in the Kootenays and encourage community conversations on race.
- Mentorship to teens in how to express their voice and talk about race in a public discourse.
- Training for media skills, eg. How to interview, how to write a column, etc.
- Provide job-readiness experience to put on their resume.
- Foster media and news literacy eg, what is fake news (discussions deepened from the lens of race), importance of sources and journalism ethics.
- Provide a place of connection of peers with similar interests.
- Offer validation from peers and adults in the community.
- Encourage and model civic engagement.

**Did provincial grants enable this project/program? If so, how?**

No

**Project/Program Name**

Elimination of overdue late fines

**Provide a brief description. Please include details such as any partnerships or resources leveraged to accomplish this project/program.**

At the November 2022 NPL Board meeting, the Board approved the elimination of overdue fines as of January 1st 2023. The revenue shortfall was addressed at Library's annual budget presentation to the City of Nelson and the Regional District and an increase in local government funding requested to make up for the short fall. Additionally, the Library Board is pursuing collaborative fundraising efforts with the Friends of the Nelson Library to support the revenue short fall.

NPL joins 14 other KLF libraries and 40 BC public libraries in the elimination of overdue fines. Libraries that adopted this change earlier, shared reports and research demonstrating the impact of overdue fines (both on patrons and the library staff) and the value to the community. Their work laid the foundation for NPL library staff and Board to move this project forward.

| How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals? |
| --- |

This project supports the following library strategic priorities and values:

Community needs: supports literacy and life-long learning and fosters community connections by removing punitive policies that may have reduced opportunities for some of the communities most vulnerable populations including families and seniors.

Spaces to Connect: the elimination of overdue fines strengthens the NPL's commitment to provide a welcoming space to support discovery, creativity and community connections.

Library Values: supports universal and equitable access ensuring those that found fines a financial barrier to accessing information and library services were no longer burdened by overdue fines.

**How does this project/program support the [B.C.'s strategic goal(s) for public library service](#) from the strategic plan, which include:**
1. Improving Access
2. Building Capacity
3. Advancing Citizen Engagement
4. Enhancing Governance

1. **Improving Access:** This project improves access to information and library services to community members.  In November 2023. 10% of NPL patrons accounts were blocked due to unpaid library fines. The new policy will allow these patrons to regain access to library services.  Additionally, research demonstrates that overdue fines disproportionally affect children and other vulnerable populations. 2021 National Census Statistics show that Nelson has a higher than average low-income population in which 12% are 17-years old or younger.

2. **Advancing Citizen Engagement:** the removal of punitive policies will create a more welcoming space and in doing so increase the community's access to information including the accessing of government services and resources. Research demonstrates overdue fines disproportionality affect children and other vulnerable populations. For example:

   - Children have no independent means to pay fines, and, like adults with mobility challenges, they are not able to readily and independently travel to the library to return materials.
   - People experiencing cognitive decline or memory loss can have a hard time managing due dates and may stop borrowing books for fear of incurring fines.
   - People without home Internet access or data plans, or with limited digital literacy, are less able to receive email reminders of upcoming due dates or use online renewal tools.
   - For people experiencing poverty, overdue fines can rapidly become a financial burden, setting up a choice between paying fines or paying for costs of food and housing.
   - People with the means to pay overdue fines are more likely to initiate a conversation about reducing or forgiving fines.

| **What are the key outcomes of this project/program?** |
|---|
| **Short term outcomes**<br><br>• Approx. 500 library patron's' accounts including 125 children's accounts, will be unblocked allowing them full access to library services and programs.<br>• Reduction of staff time spent on administrating overdue fines.<br><br>**Potential Long-term outcomes as demonstrated through research and case studies**<br><br>• Increase in library memberships and circulation statistics.<br>• Potential for an increase in library donations through collaborative fundraising efforts between the Library Board and the Friends of the Library.<br>• Community members feeling more welcomed in the Library.<br>• Increase in library visits by community members.<br>• Patrons reading more often.<br>• Greater community awareness of library programs and services. |
| **Did provincial grants enable this project/program? If so, how?** |
| No |

## 3. 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 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 2022. 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) | |
| Emergency response (e.g., fires, floods, extreme weather) | NPL continued to act as a refuge from extreme weather: smoke and extreme heat in the summer and cold wet weather in the winter. Library response is limited due to insufficient seating space and library hours open to the public. |
| Financial pressure (e.g., rising costs, reduced revenues) | Rising costs in all areas including operating the facility, staff wages, office expenses and collections (books, audio visual and online resources) have put a strain on the NPL budget which has resulted in decreasing collections and program budgets. |
| Staffing (e.g., recruitment and retention, mental health, and wellness) | |
| Disappearing services in the community (e.g., government, banking, health) | With the closure of or reduced social services for vulnerable populations during the pandemic the library is seeing more homeless people in the library. Library staff that are untrained to manage social issues (drug use, behavioural issues, homelessness) are feeling the strain. |
| Connectivity (e.g., low bandwidth, lack of home internet in the community) | We serve rural communities that do not have access to broadband internet. The library is one of the only free public space where those residents can access broadband internet. Because of this public computers and library seating to access the library WiFi are routinely busy and are an extra demand on library staff. |
| Aging/damaged facilities (e.g., need for repairs, renovations, upgrades/expansions) | NPL library building is approximately 20% smaller than industry standards for a community serving a population of 19,000. It was renovated 11 years ago and has not had any updates since. Adding new services or additional seating is not an option without taking something away. |
| Community access to the library (e.g., geographic isolation, lack of local public transit, building accessibility) | The library serves a number of rural communities that have minimum access to public transit: once or twice a day depending on the area. |

| Vulnerable communities (e.g., people experiencing homelessness, addiction, mental health crisis) | See reduction of community services section |
|---|---|
| Other (please specify) | |

**Summary and Overview**

Please provide an executive summary (overview summary) on the library's use of the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Grants. The purpose of this section is not to duplicate the individual projects details, instead provide a short analysis and summary of your overall approach and progress. Please limit to 2 paragraphs and feel free to use bullet points.

| Summary and Overview |
|---|
| To help ensure that citizens have continued access to information in times of emergency and to support community connections the Nelson Public Library plans on using the COVID Relief & Recovery grant to:<br>• Reconfigure the public service area and the children's area creating more flexible spaces that are adaptable to changing needs.<br>• Install a water bottle filling station to provide easily accessible potable water to community members.<br>• Continued staff training, programming and public awareness through collaborations with the City of Nelson Emergency Management team. |

| | Grant budget | Reallocated budget |
|---|---|---|
| **COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Grant Amount** | 31,528.92 | 39,038.56 |
| **Emergency Planning & Preparedness Grant Amount** | 105,09.64 | 3,000 |
| **Total Grant Amount** | 42,038.56 | 42,038.56 |

**Project Progress Report**

Please use this section for:

1. Report progress on projects included interim report **and/ or**
2. New projects developed since interim report (copy and paste tables as needed)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project/Program/Activity** | Reconfigure public service and children's area |
| **Rationale** | See interim report |
| **Area of Need** | See interim report |
| **Action/Output/Deliverable** | See interim report |
| **Outcome/Impact** | See interim report |
| **Metrics** | See interim report |
| **Collaborative Links (if applicable)** | See interim report |
| **Expenditure** | None to date |
| **Detailed status update since the interim report (e.g., complete, in progress, pending, deferred, etc.).** | In progress.<br>To date research on products (desks, countertops, mobile shelving units) and contacts with vendors for the reconfiguration of the public service area, has taken place. Library staff have thoughtfully contributed their wish-lists for the new space and how best to reconfigure the space considering ergonomics and increased interactions with the public. We are working with a vendor to design the layout and plan on having the final design complete by the spring of 2023 and the work underway in the summer.  Replacing stationary shelving units with mobile units in the children's area is also in the planning stage. NPL recently applied for a Columbia Basin Trust funding to expand the project (replacing the majority of shelving units with mobile units), using the COVID 19 Relief and Recovery grant to leverage funding through additional grants. The result of the grant application will be announced in June. The proposed project can be scaled up or down depending on the funding and will take place in August. |
| **Comments (optional)** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project/Program/Activity** | Installation of water bottle filling station |
| **Rationale** | See interim report |
| **Area of Need** | See interim report |
| **Action/Output/Deliverable** | See interim report |
| **Outcome/Impact** | See interim report |
| **Metrics** | See interim report |
| **Collaborative Links (if applicable)** | See interim report |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Expenditure** | None to date |
| **Detailed status update since the interim report (e.g., complete, in progress, pending, deferred, etc.).** | Pending<br>Water bottle filling station project is on hold while looking for grants to support the installation of two stations (rather than just one as identified in interim report); in both the adult and children's area. Library staff have communicated with the City of Nelson's Climate & Energy department to help identify grants. |
| **Comments (optional)** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project/Program/Activity** | Staff training, programming and public awareness through collaborations with the City of Nelson Emergency Management team |
| **Rationale** | See interim report |
| **Area of Need** | See interim report |
| **Action/Output/Deliverable** | See interim report |
| **Outcome/Impact** | See interim report |
| **Metrics** | See interim report |
| **Collaborative Links (if applicable)** | See interim report |
| **Expenditure** | None to date |
| **Detailed status update since the interim report (e.g., complete, in progress, pending, deferred, etc.).** | Pending<br>Emergency Management training was offered to Library staff in the fall of 2022, unfortunately due to sickness library staff were unable to attend. There will be additional training sessions available in 2023 for library staff to attend.<br><br>Public awareness – held discussions with the City of Nelson's Climate & Energy department about the Library hosting public events highlighting City services and activities in regards to climate and emergency preparedness. Actions to be determined by fall 2023. |
| **Comments (optional)** | |

## 5. BOARD APPROVAL

*Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.*

Library Director Signature:                           Date: Feb. 28, 2023

Board Chair Signature:                           Date: Feb. 28, 2023