2022 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

LIBRARY NAME

> New Westminster 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
- ☐ 2. MAJOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS
- ☐ 3. CHALLENGES
- ☐ 4. COVID-19 RELIEF & RECOVERY – 2022 PROGRESS REPORT
- ☐ 5. BOARD APPROVAL

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.).

New Westminster Public Library is a 2-branch Municipal Library. The main branch is in the busy Uptown commercial district, and the smaller Queensborough Branch is located in the Queensborough Community Centre, within close proximity to an elementary and a middle school. The library also has book return kiosks at City Hall, and at a busy Community Centre. The library has an average of 50 permanent and auxiliary staff, and unionized staff are members of CUPE 387. New Westminster is a community of approximately 80,000 residents, and is located in the heart of Metro Vancouver. A hub for commercial traffic, with easy access to major bridges and highways, New Westminster is a rapidly growing community. Multi-unit developments in the downtown area, and sustained development in the Queensborough neighbourhood have increased density, and added to the diversity of our already multi-cultural community. New Westminster has a thriving arts community, excellent shopping and entertainment, well-regarded public and private schools, and large campuses of Douglas College and the Justice Institute of British Columbia. New Westminster is also home to Royal Columbian Hospital, one of the province's most important critical care centers, and the City's largest employer. Royal Columbian is also in the midst of significant expansion that will see significant growth of services, research and teaching facilities built over the next decade.

In 2022 many of the significant challenges identified in 2021 continue, including the rise in people experiencing homelessness in both the downtown city core, and in the uptown area around the library. More people experiencing mental health episodes is also more prevalent. Like many communities, we continue to evolve library services, community partnerships, and staff training to help us better assist

people who are unhoused as well as those effected by the toxic drug crises, extreme weather events, and the evolving nature of the pandemic.

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
Community-Led Library Services
Provide a brief description. Please include details such as any partnerships or resources leveraged to accomplish this project/program.
New Westminster Public Library has undertaken a philosophical shift that will move from traditional to community-led processes as a key driver in helping to inform and shape the future of library services. The project began with staff consultation, training, and development. Librarians then proceeded to visit various parts of the city, creating an asset map of various commercial, social service, and faith-based organizations and agencies. Through the mapping phase the team connected directly with 75 groups, organizations and agencies throughout New Westminster, logging just over 400 conversations with individuals. The result of this work include the identification of six service organizations working directly with vulnerable populations who staff now visit regularly on a weekly or monthly basis. While the environmental scan of the community will continue and always require updating, the project is now focused on 'community entry' and establishing deeper relationships with individuals served by these organizations, in order to identify barriers to service, with a goal of helping to develop an action plan to address these barriers and help broaden access to services for all.
How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals?
A community-led model of service delivery helps us create inviting spaces where everyone is welcome (Goal #1) by identifying barriers to library services and finding community-informed solutions. Information gathered from this community work will also help staff deliver on Goal #2, to deliver a diverse range of programs and services to engage the community, and Goal #3 to connect the community to a world of imagination, discovery, and literacy.
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

• The community-led project supports B.C.'s Public Libraries Branch strategic goal to improve access. Many of the barriers being identified through the community-led approach are expanding our understanding of the many challenges faced by people with little or no access to digital information or technology. The combination of low literacy and/or low digital literacy skills with no or limited access to internet services creates significant barriers to accessing critical government, health, or employment information and services. One outcome of the community-lead project is library staff becoming active participants on the New Westminster community-based Digital Inclusion Hub. This work provides staff with an opportunity to deliver digital literacy and access services and it helps identify changing needs and service delivery options.
What are the key outcomes of this project/program?
This project is still in its initial stages. Some of the initial outcomes include: • Staff have a greater understanding and appreciation of the benefits of speaking directly with individuals, and developing authentic relationships with people in our community • Staff identifying current digital literacy and access challenges in specific communities • Members of the community are learning how the library can serve as a trusted partner in helping to identify and support both individual and community aspirations. As we enter the second phase of this project, it is hoped that: • Access to digital information and electronic resources at the library will be more widely known and tailored to meet the needs of a larger variety of individuals and groups • Digital literacy programs at the library will more directly reflect the needs of diverse community members and groups. • Use of library spaces and collections will grow through time • Early literacy and children's programs will become more widely known and tailored to meet the needs of diverse individuals and groups
Did provincial grants enable this project/program? If so, how?
The extra funding received in 2022 helped provide equipment for the outreach team.

[Copy and insert additional tables below for each additional project/program as needed]

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)	Recovery from the pandemic is gradual, and many people have yet to return to the library, or are doing so cautiously. We still receive requests for programs to be virtual and our use of electronic materials remains high. Provincial funding is being used to increase the library's collection of Chromebooks to help those who need to contain any possible exposure to the virus.
Emergency response (e.g., fires, floods, extreme weather)	The Library collaborates with the City of New Westminster and is a member of a City-wide Emergency Activation Centre to provide warming or cooling facilities during extreme weather events. As part of this coordinated effort across the City, the Library regularly extends open hours. The City also installed a water fountain and water bottle fill station on the library plaza, and in extreme heat episodes a misting station is positioned outside the library.
Financial pressure (e.g., rising costs, reduced revenues)	1. The Library went fine-free in September (Strategic Goal 1). This loss of revenue to the City is significant at a time when the City is facing rising costs on many fronts. (Inflation and skyrocketing insurance premiums; emergency response to climate events, homelessness, for example) 2. The price of books and electronic resources are increasing. Initial invoices for electronic resources in the first quarter of 2023 have increases between 2% and 7%. The B.C. grant to the BC Libraries Coop will help offset some of the additional database costs for 2023.
Staffing (e.g., recruitment and retention, mental health, and wellness)	The impacts of COVID on staff and staff wellness has included an increase in stress and sick time, greater focus on vulnerable populations and the risk of compassion fatigue, inflation on all supplies and materials costs, and changing attitudes towards work (such as a work-life balance and a need for greater flexibility and accommodation). This is a small organization with currently 7 vacant positions or 29% vacancy in our permanent staff. We habitually lose staff to other libraries in the lower mainland who are larger and have greater stratification and opportunities for advancement. Senior management is reviewing the work of the library and library positions to create more opportunities for enhanced work to go to more staff. Part of this requires a strategy for the budget impact of creating more tiered positions.
Disappearing services in the community (e.g., government, banking, health)	The library is experiencing an increase in residents directed to the library to apply for social/community supports. Library staff are learning and finding new ways to support the public in accessing social, community, or government support that requires technology and internet to apply, and information and digital literacy skills to navigate the online resource.
Connectivity (e.g., low bandwidth, lack of home internet in the community)	We see community members accessing the library's computers and internet on a daily basis to access work, school, learning, and social networks. The pandemic exasperated the digital divide and the need for access to connect with family, friends, work and school. One of the tools the library deployed to help is to broaden the Wi-Fi coverage to allow access from the outside plaza of the library. This provides 24/7 community access to free wifi from outdoor public seating areas.

Aging/damaged facilities (e.g., need for repairs, renovations, upgrades/expansions)	The age of the main library presents ongoing challenges. Cost overruns with a major renovation in 2017-2019 meant that upgrading staff workspaces was removed from the scope of the project. Many of these spaces have built-in desks and shelving dating to 1978 or older. Through additional capital funding from the City we have been able to update the furniture and create additional workstations in 80% of staff offices. Also excluded from the scope of the renovation was improvements to the outside façade of the building. The original building was built in 1958, and an extension built in 1977. During the renovation to the main uptown library significant water ingress was discovered in the basement. Repairs to the building envelope was required, and $250,000 in funding secured by the City for the project. Work on this was completed early in 2022.
Community access to the library (e.g., geographic isolation, lack of local public transit, building accessibility)	The City of New Westminster is located on the slopes of the north bank of the Fraser River. The main library is located in the uptown area, and for many neighborhoods, the steep hill to get to the library is a barrier. There are frequent requests from the community to build a branch in either the downtown area or the Sapperton neighborhood. Both communities are located along the river and at the bottom of steep hills from the library.
Vulnerable communities (e.g., people experiencing homelessness, addiction, mental health crisis)	The New Westminster Public Library is not immune to the challenges many communities are facing. Multiple crises, such as the toxic drug crisis, the growing number of those who are unhoused, and mental health issues are having a greater impact on library staff, services, and facilities. The Library is part of a coordinated City-wide response but also faces it's on unique challenges as a place that is free, open 7 days a week, and offers a refuge for people feeling isolated, alone, or in need of assistance to access basic services. An informed, compassionate response is not enough. A strategic approach is needed that allows the library to provide needed services and referrals while also providing staff with the training, resilience, and professional support they need.
Other (please specify)	

4. COVID-19 RELIEF & RECOVERY GRANT – 2022 PROGRESS REPORT
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

New Westminster Public Library used a two-pronged approach to these funds. Some of the funds were used to assist us with work already in progress but delayed due to budget constraints. Equipping more staff with laptops and phones is an example of this strategy. This equipment helped resource the Community-Lead project and provides staff the ability to take their work and library services out of the building. The second approach was to use the funds for new or expanded services that would have otherwise not be properly resourced. The Story Exploration Kits and Wifi hotspots is an example of this strategy.

In addition to the above, we considered what COVID-recovery could look like. Not everyone has ventured back to pre-pandemic activities, or have become comfortable in their new normal. We wanted to include services that would remind people the library continues to offer a diverse range of services to meet the changing needs of the community. While all the new collections we were able to add with the B.C. grant serve this purpose, the ukulele collection stands out as an example of this approach. We also reviewed what emergency preparedness would include. The pandemic taught us the need to be more versatile in how we work. For example, laptops instead of desktop computers makes staff more flexible in where they work.

	Grant budget	Reallocated budget
COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Grant Amount	59950.15	(5,000)
Emergency Planning & Preparedness Grant Amount	19983.38	5,000
Total Grant Amount	79933.53	

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	Story Exploration Kits
Rationale	There are many different ways of learning, and many different types of learners. The disruption to education in the early stages of the pandemic presented specific challenges to families with children who have unique learning styles. We want to ensure that all learners have a chance to engage with stories in the way that works best for them. A Story Exploration Kit focuses on one story, and offers several different ways to engage with it.
Area of Need	COVID-19 Recovery
Action/Output/Deliverable	• The story exploration kits are available to borrow and take home. • Families and caregivers are borrowing the kits.
Outcome/Impact	• Children find the stories and activities in the kits stimulating. • Children become fond of stories. • Children are motivated to learn to read to gain more access to stories.
Metrics	Number of items circulated
Collaborative Links (if applicable)	
Expenditure	$500
Detailed status update since the interim report (e.g., complete, in progress, pending, deferred, etc.).	The original plan was to purchase science-based kits for families to borrow. Staff identified a greater need for literacy materials for families with low literacy or children with behaviour traits that impede learning through traditional means. The science-based kits was replaced with this project, as well as the Sensory Kits described below.
Comments (optional)	

Project/Program/Activity	Sensory Kits
Rationale	Sensory kits are geared towards children with autism or sensory challenges. The kits include items that provide a calming affect for people with sensory issues. They are designed to help patrons of all abilities have a more enjoyable and meaningful time at the library.
Area of Need	COVID-19 Recovery
Action/Output/Deliverable	- The story exploration kits are available to use in the library. - Families and caregivers use the kits while visiting the library
Outcome/Impact	- Children are more relaxed while visiting the library - Children and their caregivers have a more enjoyable experience in the library - Children with autism or sensory challenges and their caregivers feel more welcomed at the library.
Metrics	Number of times the kits are used.
Collaborative Links (if applicable)	
Expenditure	$500
Detailed status update since the interim report (e.g., complete, in progress, pending, deferred, etc.).	The original plan was to purchase science-based kits for families to borrow. Staff identified a greater need for literacy materials for families with low literacy or children with behaviour traits that impede learning through traditional means. The science-based kits was replaced with this project, as well as Story Exploration Kits
Comments (optional)	

Project/Program/Activity	Carbon Dioxide Monitors
Rationale	CO2 monitors measure indoor air quality and can signal a need to improve ventilation and create a healthier and safer environment
Area of Need	COVID-19 Recovery
Action/Output/Deliverable	The library has CO2 monitors available to borrow
Outcome/Impact	Residents improve the air quality in their homes
Metrics	Number of times the kits are used.
Collaborative Links (if applicable)	
Expenditure	$2,000
Detailed status update since the interim report (e.g., complete, in progress, pending, deferred, etc.).	This project was added to the Emergency Planning and Preparedness program since the first report. Staff are researching the equipment and we expect to have them ready to loan by June, 2023.
Comments (optional)	

5. BOARD APPROVAL

Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.

Library Director Signature: _Jorge Cowlew_   Date: _Feb 27, 2023_

Board Chair Signature: _____   Date: _Feb. 27, 2023_