

2022 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

LIBRARY NAME

Okanagan Regional Library District

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.).

The Okanagan Regional Library (ORL) is one of the largest public libraries in Canada, with 30 branches, 250-300 staff members, an operating budget of approximately \$22 million, and a service population of over 400,000. The ORL's service area extends from Golden in the north to Osoyoos in the south.

The ORL's administrative centre is in Kelowna. The CEO and an exempt management team works with a 24-member board of directors, with elected council representatives from each member community.

2022 saw the recommencement of in-person programming, and the continued relaxation of COVID restrictions. The most significant organizational change in 2022 was the retirement of former CEO Don Nettleton, and the appointment of new CEO Danielle Hubbard. The ORL's Board of Directors also saw a significant turnover, with 15 new faces joining the Board.

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
MakerSpaces
Provide a brief description. Please include details such as any partnerships or resources leveraged to accomplish this project/program.
Shortly before the beginning of COVID-19, the ORL created MakerSpaces at several locations around the system. Locations included West Kelowna, Downtown Kelowna, Rutland, Vernon, Lumby, Golden, and Revelstoke. These spaces had to be closed during the Pandemic, but in 2022 we were able to reopen them to the public.
How does this project/program support the library’s strategic goals?
MakerSpaces support the ORL’s mission of “Connecting Curious Minds.” With MakerSpace technology (eg. 3D printers, Ozobots, and green screens), members of the public can explore the intellectual, creative, and playful corners of their minds, as well as connect with other people who are doing the same. These points directly support the ORL’s top strategic goal that reads as follows: “Our library advances learning, creativity, and imagination.”
How does this project/program support the <u>B.C.’s strategic goal(s) for public library service from the strategic plan, which include:</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Improving Access2. Building Capacity3. Advancing Citizen Engagement4. Enhancing Governance

Improving Access – Many of the technologies available in the ORL’s Makerspaces support alternative forms of literacy. If an individual is not readily able to read a traditional book, for instance, they may find learning, growth, and exploratory merit in our robotics or creation stations.

Building capacity – How people interact with library physical space is evolving. Makerspaces provide an alternative way for people to act and learn in our spaces, thereby building the learning value capacity of public libraries. The ORL now employs Technical Assistants, who are employees with more specialized STEAM abilities.

Advancing citizen engagement – Several community groups, including homeschooling networks and newcomer groups, have begun using our Makerspaces as regular meeting places, drawing on the uniquely diverse additional learning sources provided in these spaces.

What are the key outcomes of this project/program?

Residents of the ORL’s service area now have access to explore interactive technologies they may not have the resources to acquire themselves. People who live in communities whose branches do not have designated Makerspaces are still able to use some of our Makerspace equipment (eg. Ozobots) by requesting them from other branches. Our workforce has become more diverse as a result of our Makerspaces, as we now have employment opportunities for individuals with a specialized combination of technology and program facilitation skills.

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

Provincial grants have supported the ORL for many years. Funding for our Makerspaces came from a combination of our basic operating budget (of which provincial grants constitute one revenue source) and grants from some localized agencies – eg. The Columbia Basin Trust.

Project/Program Name

Staff Customer Service Training

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

Okanagan Regional Library implemented a three-day customer service training program for all ORL staff. The focus of the training was to improve patron interactions and better understand people's expectations of libraries and library services. Internal resources were leveraged to accomplish this project.

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

The customer service training program implemented by the Okanagan Regional Library supports the library's strategic goals in several ways.

Firstly, by improving patron interactions, the library can create a welcoming and inclusive environment that encourages people to use its services and resources. This aligns with the library's goal of increasing community engagement and participation.

The training program helps the library to better understand people's expectations of libraries and library services. By doing so, the library can tailor its services and resources to better meet the needs of its patrons, which aligns with the library's goal of providing high-quality, relevant services.

In addition, the training program helps ensure that all staff are on the same page and working towards providing excellent customer service. This improves efficiency and effectiveness, which supports the library's goal of being a well-run and sustainable organization.

How does this project/program support the B.C.'s strategic goal(s) for public library service from the strategic plan, which include:

5. Improving Access
6. Building Capacity
7. Advancing Citizen Engagement
8. Enhancing Governance

Improving Access – By improving patron interactions, the library can create a more welcoming and inclusive environment that encourages people to use its services and resources. This can be particularly beneficial for individuals who may have previously felt unwelcome or uncomfortable using the library. The library can encourage more people to access its services and resources by creating a more welcoming environment.

Building capacity – By better understanding patrons' expectations and needs, staff can build their capacity to develop and deliver library services and resources that align with community needs and priorities. This can help the library to remain relevant and responsive to changing community needs and build its reputation as a valuable community resource.

Advancing citizen engagement – By creating a welcoming and inclusive environment that encourages people to use the library's services and resources. By improving patron interactions, the library can also build stronger relationships with the community and better understand its needs and priorities.

Enhancing Governance - By providing staff with the necessary customer service skills, the library can ensure that patrons receive high-quality service and support, which can help to build trust and confidence in the library's governance and management.

What are the key outcomes of this project/program?

The key outcomes of the customer service training program implemented by the Okanagan Regional Library include the following:

1. Improved patron interactions: Staff is better equipped to provide high-quality customer service, leading to improved patron experiences and increased usage of the library's services and resources.
2. A better understanding of patron expectations: Staff can better understand the needs and expectations of library patrons, which can inform the development and delivery of library services and resources that are more relevant and responsive to community needs.
3. Increased staff confidence and effectiveness: Staff are more confident and better equipped to provide excellent customer service, increasing staff productivity, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness.
4. Enhanced organizational efficiency: The training program helps ensure that all staff work towards providing excellent customer service and improving organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

Overall, the customer service training program can improve the library's ability to effectively and efficiently serve its community, contributing to increased community engagement, enhanced governance, and a stronger reputation as a valuable community resource.

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

Provincial grants have supported the ORL for many years, including contributing to our Salaries and Training & Development Budgets, the two budgets that supported this initiative.

Project/Program Name

Mission Library Renovation

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

The Okanagan Regional Library recently renovated one of its busiest branches to provide more flexible and effective community space. This renovation included the addition of one large meeting room and one smaller study space. The renovation involved partnerships and collaborations with various stakeholders and resources, including architects, contractors, community organizations, and local businesses. The library gathered feedback and input from the community to ensure the renovation meets the needs of library users. The addition of meeting rooms and study spaces are a valuable resource for the community, and the library can leverage these spaces to offer programming and events in partnership with local organizations and groups.

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

The renovation project at the Mission branch of the ORL supports the library's strategic goals in several ways:

1. By providing flexible space and meeting rooms, the library is better able to meet the community's needs. This aligns with the library's strategic goal of being a responsive and accessible community resource.
2. Enhancing the library experience: Adding meeting rooms and study spaces can improve the library experience for patrons, making it a more attractive and valuable resource. This aligns with the library's strategic goal of providing an exceptional customer experience.
3. Better space utilization: By reorganizing the library to make better use of space, the library can operate more efficiently and provide more resources to the community. This aligns with the library's strategic goal of being a sustainable and cost-effective organization.
4. Community engagement: The library may leverage the new meeting rooms and study spaces to offer programming and events in partnership with local organizations and groups. This aligns with the library's strategic goal of engaging with and supporting the community.

How does this project/program support the B.C.'s strategic goal(s) for public library service from the strategic plan, which include:

9. Improving Access
10. Building Capacity
11. Advancing Citizen Engagement
12. Enhancing Governance

Improving Access – The new spaces are designed to be flexible, which means that they can be used for a variety of purposes. This can increase access to library resources and services by accommodating different needs and preferences of patrons.

Building capacity – The new meeting rooms and study spaces provide additional space for patrons to use, making it easier for more people to access library resources and services.

Advancing citizen engagement – The library may leverage the new meeting rooms and study spaces to offer programming and events in partnership with local organizations and groups, which can help to bring the community together and engage citizens in a variety of activities and discussions.

Enhancing Governance - The addition of meeting rooms and study spaces as part of the Okanagan Regional Library's renovation project can enhance governance by providing a space for citizens to come together and engage in productive, constructive activities that benefit both the individual and the community as a whole. This can include town hall meetings, community forums, and other activities that support civic engagement and help to promote good governance.

What are the key outcomes of this project/program?

The renovation project undertaken by the Okanagan Regional Library has several key outcomes designed to improve library patrons' access and engagement. One of the primary outcomes is the addition of two new meeting rooms, which can be used for various purposes, such as town hall meetings, community forums, and other activities that support civic engagement. Additionally, the new study spaces provide additional space for patrons to use, making it easier for more people to access library resources and services. The reorganization of the library to make better use of space is also an important outcome, as it enables the library to provide a more flexible space that can accommodate the different needs and preferences of patrons. Furthermore, the addition of meeting rooms and study spaces can also foster greater collaboration and coordination among citizens and organizations, which can help to support effective governance and promote community involvement. Overall, the key outcomes of this project/program are to enhance access to resources and services, support citizen engagement, and promote effective governance through collaboration and coordination.

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

Provincial grants have supported the ORL for many years, including contributing to our Facilities Budget, the budget that most notably contributed to the Mission Branch renovation initiative.

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)	At the beginning of 2022, COVID restrictions were still in place, complicating the process of running in-person programs.
Emergency response (e.g., fires, floods, extreme weather)	The Southern part of the ORL's service area, particularly around Princeton, suffered flooding and road closures in early 2022.
Financial pressure (e.g., rising costs, reduced revenues)	
Staffing (e.g., recruitment and retention, mental health, and wellness)	2022 saw an unprecedented amount of staff turnover, both with internal movement and more staff members asking for leaves of absence or work sharing positions.
Disappearing services in the community (e.g., government, banking, health)	
Connectivity (e.g., low bandwidth, lack of home internet in the community)	
Aging/damaged facilities (e.g., need for repairs, renovations, upgrades/expansions)	Many of the ORL's rural branches (eg. Silver Creek, Naramata) are badly in need of renovations.
Community access to the library (e.g., geographic isolation, lack of local public transit, building accessibility)	The populations of all of our service communities are increasing. In many cases, the community is expanding in different geographic directions, with the result that library branches are no longer located in the centre of traffic, commerce, or residents' activities.
Vulnerable communities (e.g., people experiencing homelessness,	Increased challenges with homelessness and addictions, especially in Vernon and Kelowna, with substantially increased incidents in our branches.

addiction, mental health crisis)	
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
<p>The ORL has chosen to use the COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Grant funds and the Emergency Planning & Preparedness Grant funds to improve our online presence, our physical/facility presence, and the wellbeing of our staff. COVID alerted us to the weaknesses in each of these three areas and served as a stark reminder of the possibility of sudden and unexpected emergencies.</p> <p>In terms of online presence, we are in the early stages of developing a new website for the ORL. This project is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2023 and is a joint effort of Management, unionized employees, and an external service provider. In terms of physical/facility presence, we spent the summer of 2022 upgrading to Houle Security at each of our branches. This project is now complete, and was undertaken by Management staff and Houle Security, an external company. In terms of staff wellbeing, we initiated a mental health task group. The start-up of this initiative (where all spending is associated) is complete, though staff work in this area will continue indefinitely. The work was completed mostly by unionized staff, with guidance from management and external learning resources.</p>

	Grant budget	Reallocated budget
COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Grant Amount	129,305.34	
Emergency Planning & Preparedness Grant Amount	43,101.78	
Total Grant Amount	\$172,407.12	

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	Website replacement/redevelopment
Area of Need	Our virtual branch portal and access. Many if not most of our patrons learn about and access our services and resources through our website, which is now looking dated and could be improved in terms of accessibility and ease of navigation.
Output/Deliverable	A new website portal and virtual branch face
Outcome/Impact	An easily adaptable, inviting, and user-friendly site that is also more accessible
Action	A website Committee, consisting of Management and Unionized staff, has been formed. Input will be solicited from staff and public. The website will be built by an external firm, based on staff and public input.
Metrics	Usage of website should increase
Collaborative Links (if applicable)	
Timeframe	To be completed by the end of 2023
Expenditure	\$70,000
Strategic Links (optional)	One of the ORL's strategic goals is to for the library to be "focused on customer service." Having a more accessible and navigable website will support this goal.
Comments (optional)	Access virtually is increasingly critical and needs to be well resource, up to date, and inviting

Project/Program/Activity	Replacement of branch security systems for all branches
Area of Need	Physical security and access to our buildings
Output/Deliverable	All systems will be current, and controllable centrally
Outcome/Impact	Changes to users able to be updated immediately and security issues addressed. Buildings will be kept secure
Action	All branches have now been equipped with Houle Security, and all staff have been trained on arming and disarming.
Metrics	
Collaborative Links (if applicable)	
Timeframe	Completed in the summer of 2022
Expenditure	\$98,407.12

Strategic Links (optional)	The ORL's strategic plan states that "Our library branches are innovative, inviting, and reflect their communities." Operating safe and secure spaces contributes to their invitingness.
Comments (optional)	Although not front facing, it is key for our physical operations and security

Project/Program/Activity	Support for Mental Health of employees
Area of Need	Particularly during the pandemic, but continuing during the future, mental health and stress challenges are becoming as significant as physical health. We have initiated a mental health task group and this committee needs some resources to initiate actions and develop training and resources to assist staff going forward
Output/Deliverable	Forming, storming, and norming of staff working groups to support each other in mental health challenges.
Outcome/Impact	Initiating and compiling resources and setting up some training resources. What were initially conceived of as mental health support groups have now morphed into general support/networking groups for staff members from disparate reaches of the ORL service area to connect and assist each other.
Action	To be designed by the mental health task group
Metrics	
Collaborative Links (if applicable)	
Timeframe	Over the fall of 2022 and into early 2023
Expenditure	\$4,000 of seed money
Strategic Links (optional)	The ORL aspires to be "an integral part of life in our diverse communities." Front-line staff are better able to perform this role if they are healthy, happy, and equipped with a support network.
Comments (optional)	This is seed money for the committee to start to expand resources and support for staff who are experiencing higher levels of mental stress and challenges due to the pandemic and significant changes that they are having to deal with.

5. BOARD APPROVAL

Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.

Library Director Signature:



Date:

2023-02-23

Board Chair Signature:



Date:

2023-02-23

