

2022 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

LIBRARY NAME

Pender Island Public Library Association

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INTRODUCTION - LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Pender Island Public Library Association (PIPLA) and associated reading centers are situated in the coastal archipelago of the Salish Sea in southwestern BC. Our Southern Gulf Island (SGI) electoral area experienced significant population growth in recent years, with an average 32% increase in population levels since 2016 (Census Canada 2021). The SGI electoral area now has a population of 6,101 distributed over 5 major islands, covering 191 sq. km. of land. Pender Island is the largest with the highest concentration of 2,773 residents, followed by Mayne, Galiano, Saturna and Piers Islands in decreasing population. PIPLA delivers and supports library services on 5 islands, in conjunction with local reading centers operated by registered societies.

The SGI archipelago is located between BC's two major city centers, Vancouver and Victoria, and the local population and activities in our region are greatly influenced by seasonal visitation from these urban centers. Our region is typical of tourism areas, combining a smaller number of full-time residents with a doubling of population numbers during summer months, due to an influx of part-time residents and visitors. For a public library, fluctuating visitation levels presents a challenge of meeting the needs of two main types of patrons, locals and visitors, and adjusting to seasonal periods of high and low library usage. For example, locals expect regular library hours, updated physical and digital collections, recognizable staff, and community-based programming. Visitors often expect access to high speed internet connectivity, public computer workstations, tech support, and borrowing materials with their home library card (BC One Card program).

The demographics of our area encompass an older population of mainly retired and semi-retired people. The median age is 61.6 years (the most popular age), compared to the BC median age of 42 years (Census Canada 2021). Most households (>85%) in our region are one or two-person in size, and this is reflected in a lower number of families with young children: about 470 youth (0-18 yrs. old) live in our electoral area. Our library programs, services, online resources, and facility design generally match the demographics of the local population. Of note, working people in our region earn a lower median annual income, up to 50% less than the provincial median, due to seasonal tourism and service-based employment. The primary language spoken in our region is English, with 10% of

residents also speaking French. Only 2.5% of our residents indicate an Aboriginal identity, and 3% of residents identify themselves as a visible minority. For the past 3 years we have experienced unusually high home sales, with an ave. 30% increase in housing values. Our districts continues though to maintain a high rate of empty homes, with only 60% of homes occupied by permanent residents. With continued population growth expected, PIPLA and associated reading centres are evaluating how to meet growing demands.

2. FEATURED PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

Project/Program Name

PIPLA Centralized IT Support Program 2022

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

The PIPLA Centralized IT Support Program 2022 results from an accumulation of efforts and funding since 2020. During the COVID-19 shutdowns in 2020-2021, PIPLA and four associated reading centres were particularly vulnerable in our IT Support services and associated vital services including free Wi-Fi and public computer workstations for our rural community. Our regular staff were overwhelmed during 2020-2021 with new technical requests from 5 library facilities. PIPLA Library Director and Board of Trustees allocated significant time and resources on identifying our current systems, our needs, and how to achieve our goals of establishing year-round dependable IT support, ensuring a consistently high level of IT services among 5 library facilities located on separate islands. The Program has the main goals of creating a detailed inventory of IT equipment, upgrading and normalizing equipment standards among all facilities, remote monitoring of system functions, a centralized IT troubleshooting helpdesk, implementation/maintenance of secure privacy software on public computer workstations, and technical expertise when upgrading and/or implanting new services. The Program will create a new staff position responsible for IT support, both maintenance and projections, to enable us to be well positioned to meet future technical requirements for library services.

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

This program supports two strategic goals of PIPLA and associate reading centres, namely the support of additional staffing to maintaining and implement library services, and the upgrading and expansion of library services.

PIPLA continues to move towards employing staff to undertake all aspects of library management and delivery of services, with library volunteers engaged in fewer roles. PIPLA is ahead of the trend of declining volunteerism by continuing to create secure employment for local working families. Our Centralized IT Support Program has created employment using funds earmarked by the Capital Regional District for the Southern Gulf Islands Economic Recovery Plan for our electoral area. Library services are improved through this Centralized IT Support Program as key components, such as access to Wi-Fi and public computer workstations, are normalized across all of our facilities. Our goal is to build solid IT Support services and ensure consistent IT capacity among our facilities.

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

Our Centralized IT Support Program is most closely linked to BC's strategic goal of **Improving Access** to the internet and digital technologies. Our Program directly facilitates resource-sharing by using district-wide funding to create a centralized IT Support service for our library facilities. This Program supports cooperation with a shared service, so our residents and visitors have better access to library services that are dependent on robust IT systems and maintenance. Our Program will improve the stability and dependability of high speed internet service delivered by our library facilities on our rural islands, which often have intermittent and costly internet services. This Program supports the development of reliable and equitable digital infrastructure for the delivery of library services among our five library facilities in a rural area of the province.

This Program also supports the strategic goal of Advancing Citizen Engagement through our public libraries, as robust IT services are essential for digital communication. Our Program deliverables will ensure the library space improves people's access to government resources and tools, which are currently accessed digitally through our designated laptop desks with Wi-Fi, and our public computer workstations.

What are the key outcomes of this project/program?

- A centralized IT Support program is delivered to upgrade and maintain both office-use and public-use equipment, including desktop computers, laptop computers, printers, Wi-Fi routers and associated computer equipment, barcode scanners, people counters, etc. These responsibilities will be held by a new staff position, supervised by the Library Director.
- A detailed IT equipment inventory and maintenance plan is created to establish replacement schedules, and to anticipate future upgrades and equipment to manage growing digital requirements.
- Our IT equipment standards are normalized across our 5 facilities to bring all facilities to a consistent level of capacity.

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

Yes, several important grants have supported the basis for this Program over multiple years. Without these generous grants, development of the Program would not have been possible.

- Technology Grant 2020: Using the Technology Grant 2020, PIPL improved the stability and dependability of our internet service through receiving technical advice services from the BC Libraries Cooperative and by purchasing new equipment and upgrades.
- Capital Regional District funding 2021: In 2021, we began reallocating funding from the Capital Regional District to begin establishing a centralized IT Support program. Funding is ongoing, but not sufficient to cover full cost of Program.
- COVID Relief & Recovery Grant 2022: Receiving the COVID Relief & Recovery Grant in 2022 was absolutely essential to launching this new program. PIPLA was able to establish a Centralized IT Support Program to manage the IT equipment and services located in 5 facilities.

3. CHALLENGES

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)	
Financial pressure (e.g., rising costs, reduced revenues)	This challenge is constant, with the Library Director struggling to meet unpredictable rising costs each year. The insurance expense alone doubled in 2022. The steps taken are to constantly revise the operating budget and to restrain from purchasing materials for our collection to ensure basic operating costs can be met.
Staffing (e.g., recruitment and retention, mental health, and wellness)	PIPLA and associated reading centres are faced with hiring new staff and expanding current staff hours, as staff replace volunteers (volunteerism is declining across our community). One step was to successfully lobby for small increase in district funding from 2021-onwards (\$20K/year), which helped in the hiring of several part-time library clerks, although funding for staffing will remain our greatest challenge in the future. The addition of new staff has been essential keeping the library doors open to the public, delegation of daily tasks, and for providing excellent and consistent customer service to many new patrons due to population increases.
Disappearing services in the community (e.g., government, banking, health)	
Connectivity (e.g., low bandwidth, lack of home internet in the community)	Poor connectivity throughout our rural islands has resulted in increased use of our libraries' Wi-Fi and public computer workstations. Local residents are using our libraries as their "home office" as they work remotely. The steps taken include using the Technology Grant 2020 and the COVID Relief & Recovery Grant 2022 to upgrade equipment and invest in stable internet connections. We anticipate more users and an increasing demand on our libraries Wi-Fi networks and internet capacity as the cost of internet subscriptions continues to rise.
Aging/damaged facilities (e.g., need for repairs, renovations, upgrades/expansions)	

Community access to the library (e.g., geographic isolation, lack of local public transit, building accessibility)	
Vulnerable communities (e.g., people experiencing homelessness, addiction, mental health crisis)	
Other (please specify) Housing	Our rural islands have long suffered from the lack of an affordable and available housing market to meet a variety of housing needs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a surge in new buyers, coupled with an average 30% increase in housing values, has pushed our housing issues to a critical level. This directly impacts PIPLA staffing levels due to loss of affordable housing for staff, especially for younger working families and under-employed residents. It also impacts library use as our facility becomes a daily refuge for those with unsecure, transient, or illegal accommodations. The Library Director will continue steps to provide feedback to various levels of government and community groups towards considering new housing initiatives, which will hopefully include changes to community-use plans, to single family dwelling land designations, and the implementation of the BC speculation and vacancy tax for our electoral area.

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

Summary and Overview

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The COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Grant was used in 2022 to meet 3 goals outlined in the Interim Report, namely developing IT Support Services for PIPLA and associated reading centres, researching capital infrastructure grants for upgrading heating/cooling system for the Mayne Island Reading Centre, and delivery of regular information to the local community on emergency preparedness.

	Grant budget	Reallocated budget
COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Grant Amount	\$24,277.72	\$30,000.00
Emergency Planning & Preparedness Grant Amount	\$8,092.59	\$2,370.31
Total Grant Amount	\$32,370.31	\$32,370.31

Project Progress Report

Project/Program/Activity	Centralized IT Support Program
Rationale	A robust system for providing IT support is needed for our 5 library facilities
Area of Need	COVID-19 Relief & Recovery
Action/Output/Deliverable	Engaged a local IT Support contractor. Partially completed an IT Support and Equipment 5-year plan (2022-2026). Ongoing completion of projects unique to each library facility.
Outcome/Impact	IT Support provided to maintain existing equipment. A detailed plan is created for future needs and upgrades. IT equipment is normalized to bring all 5 library facilities to consistent level of capacity.
Metrics	IT Support of ca. 55 hours/year was provided in 2022 for professional advice, regular maintenance, new installations, and troubleshooting issues of IT equipment. We have funding for 2 years to support this position.
Collaborative Links (if applicable)	
Expenditure	\$30,000 over 2 years
Detailed status update since the interim report (e.g., complete, in progress, pending, deferred, etc.).	Very good progress has been made on the IT Support Services program, with an IT Support Technician position created and funded for 2 years, and a staff hired in June 2022. Site visits to facilities have to been completed, a complete inventory of current IT equipment has been recorded, remote monitoring protocols of computer operating systems have been implemented, upgrades to equipment has been completed, and more.
Comments (optional)	Having a consistent IT Support contractor has significantly reduced the workload on other library staff were troubleshooting different IT equipment and systems in each facility.

Project/Program/Activity	Researching capital infrastructure grants for upgrading heating/cooling system for the Mayne Island Reading Centre.
Rationale	Replacement of aging heating system is needed, as well as a new cooling system to meet seasonal temperature records.
Area of Need	Emergency Planning & Preparedness
Action/Output/Deliverable	Have communicated with Mayne Island Parks & Rec Commission (landlord of library facility) to obtain Community Works Funds but unsuccessful in 2022. Current Board members and staff to research other grants.
Outcome/Impact	An updated system will provide cooling capacity, enabling the reading centre to be a designated community cooling centre during extreme heat conditions.
Metrics	A grant is successfully obtained to cover 75%+ of the project costs.
Collaborative Links (if applicable)	
Expenditure	\$1,370.31
Detailed status update since the interim report (e.g., complete, in progress, pending, deferred, etc.).	Researching infrastructure grants for upgrading the heating/cooling system has been ongoing and unfortunately unsuccessful so far. The library may not use annual district funding for capital improvements to this building, owned by the district and managed by the recreation department, and we are in limbo as to possible funding sources. We may have to seek alternative temporary equipment to meet the immediate need of providing a warm and cool library space for staff, volunteers, and patrons.
Comments (optional)	

Project/Program/Activity	Working with local emergency planning organizations to deliver emergency preparedness education
Rationale	The library can support local emergency planning efforts through educational displays and community education.
Area of Need	Emergency Planning & Preparedness
Action/Output/Deliverable	Partnering with local organizations involved in emergency preparedness. Training current staff to develop and promote messaging through traditional and new media.
Outcome/Impact	People in our community are better prepared to in times of emergency.
Metrics	Quarterly emergency preparedness bulletins released through library communications. Two educational displays per year created by staff for in-library presentation.
Collaborative Links (if applicable)	
Expenditure	\$1,000.00

<p>Detailed status update since the interim report (e.g., complete, in progress, pending, deferred, etc.).</p>	<p>Working with local emergency planning organizations to deliver emergency preparedness education has not yet progressed. Our local emergency organizations are staffed mainly by volunteers who are focused on district-wide initiatives. Steps will continue to assist with educational displays in the library space.</p>
<p>Comments (optional)</p>	

5. BOARD APPROVAL

Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.

Library Director Signature: C. Oleskerich Date: March 2, 2023

Board Chair Signature: Laura Vitman Date: March 2, 2023