Vancouver Public Library

MANAGEMENT REPORT

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TO:	Library Board
FROM:	Kurt Heinrich, Chair, Community Relations, Planning & Development Committee
SUBJECT:	**2020 to 2023 Strategic Plan Goals**

SUMMARY

This report provides an assessment of VPL's 2020 to 2023 Strategic Plan goals, in light of the profound changes that have taken place in the library's environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other significant events of 2020.

PURPOSE

This report is for decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the Library Board approve revision to one Strategic Plan goal in the VPL 2020 to 2023 Strategic Plan.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Committee members commented on the value of receiving the update to the environmental scan and the reconsideration of the original goals, as well as the continued relevance of the priorities that emerged through consultation in 2019. They inquired about the suggested change to goal 4.1 and understood the reasoning, emphasizing the importance of the organization staying strong in its support for staff. They also commented on and discussed implications of changes in the environment on other goals, and how this could change actions.

BACKGROUND

In February 2019, the VPL Board appointed the Community Relations, Planning and Development Committee as the Steering Committee for the 2020 to 2023 Strategic Plan.

Development of VPL's strategic plan took place throughout 2019. The plan was informed by key inputs from stakeholder engagement and a strategic assessment which included a scan of the library's external landscape. In December, the Board approved the VPL 2020 to 2023 Strategic Plan priorities and goals.

The plan itself was close to public release in March 2020 when the global COVID-19 pandemic struck. The pandemic has profoundly impacted the world around VPL, resulting in unprecedented closures of businesses and civic facilities, including public libraries. Society has undergone radical change to the way we live, work, and play which may have long term consequences on individuals and businesses. From March to September 2020, VPL underwent a series of significant changes driven by the pandemic - closing locations, laying off staff, enhancing and developing new service models, and then gradually reopening and recalling staff. During this time, the final work of publishing and communicating the Strategic Plan and finalizing VPL's Operating Plan was temporarily set aside.

DISCUSSION

As VPL began to resume operations in the fall of 2020, staff deemed it important to review the Strategic Plan goals, approved nine months earlier, and to reassess them in light of the radical changes to the library's environment. To support the assessment, staff conducted a review of the library's external landscape focusing on events of 2020, and created an Addendum to the External Landscape Scan 2019 - see **Appendix A**. In summary, key issues arising from the 2020 scan include:

- Massive economic downturn, leading to all-time high levels of unemployment and job losses which are anticipated to continue. Service workers are hardest hit, and levels of economic disparity are increasing.
- Closures of businesses and public spaces as well as physical distancing measures are leading to greater social isolation.
- Financial insecurity, health concerns, and limited social interaction are contributing to an increase in mental health challenges.
- Use of public spaces has changed radically, impacting the way they will need to be designed and operated in the future.
- The shift to online service delivery and remote work has deepened the digital divide, making both access to technology and skills development critical needs.

- Growing concerns about misinformation and mistrust of government decision making and transparency, underscoring the role that public libraries play in providing access to accurate information.
- An explosion in the fight for equity and social justice for racialized (BIPOC) populations has led to a recognition of the importance of addressing racism.

Staff then reviewed each of the 13 Strategic Plan goals, highlighting relevant findings from the recent landscape scan and providing a brief assessment of each goal. The assessment concluded that all of the goals remain relevant to the library's vision, mission and values, and some have become more critically important. The Strategic Plan Goal Assessment is in **Appendix B**.

As a result of the goal assessment, staff are recommending minor wording changes to one of the Strategic Plan goals:

> **4.1** Ensure VPL staff have the support and resources to adapt to a transformed work environment ~~excel in all aspects of their work~~.

FINAL REMARKS

The 2020 to 2023 Strategic Plan provides important direction for VPL in meeting the evolving needs of the Vancouver community. It is critical that VPL's Strategic Plan aligns with, and reflects, the profound changes to the library's environment driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and other important events that have taken place in 2020.

APPENDIX A

Addendum to External Landscape 2019
October 14, 2020

Introduction

VPL's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan was developed based on numerous inputs and an external landscape scan undertaken in 2019 and early 2020. It was days from public release in March 2020 when the global COVID-19 pandemic struck. The pandemic profoundly impacted the world around us, resulting in unprecedented closures of businesses and civic facilities, including public libraries.   Society has undergone radical change to the way we live, work, and play which may have long term consequences on individuals and businesses.

As VPL began to resume operations in Fall 2020, staff deemed it important to reassess the validity of the external landscape scan which informed VPL's Strategic Plan. This addendum was initiated in August and finalized in October 2020, reflecting the most current understanding of the global situation available. It is recognized that the end of the pandemic is not yet within view, and that there are still many unknowns.

As the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan has not been publicly released, this addendum was developed to enable the VPL Board to assess the priorities and goals outlined, and to identify whether they are still relevant in light of the radical changes we are experiencing.

Economy

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the largest global economic downturn since the Second World War. Nearly every country has been affected, with a large share of the world's economies seeing sharp declines in GDP coupled with extensive deficits resulting from unprecedented government spending. Economic forecasts made in fall 2020 project a decrease of 4.5% in global real GDP in 2020, followed by growth of 5% in 2021. These forecasts are based in part on the strong policy response in the developed world, with governments providing many supports to affected individuals and businesses. No government can afford to sustain these indefinitely; the eventual decline of such programs will usher in business closures, particularly amongst small businesses, and longer-term financial pain for employers and employees alike. For much of the developing world, the economic outlook is even worse.

Recent economic commentary has focused on the likelihood of a "K-shaped" recovery, in which certain individuals and sectors are relatively unaffected while others are hard-hit. Workers in professional industries who experienced little to no job disruption are maintaining their incomes and in many cases saving money. On the other hand, workers in sectors such as restaurants, hospitality, travel, and the arts have faced massive job losses and uncertain futures, with many businesses unsure of their survival. The further marginalization of those already vulnerable to financial disruption will lead to unmet basic needs and potentially devastating impacts for those affected, with long term impacts on populations already suffering from widening inequality.

Canada is no exception to these trends. The national unemployment rate soared to a "record-high" rate of 13.7% in May 2020. Throughout spring and summer 2020, the federal government created financial aid programs to support vast numbers of laid-off workers, as well as students, seniors, people with disabilities, businesses, transit systems, and municipalities. September job numbers show unemployment at 9%, while a recent OECD forecast for Canada projects a decline of 5.8% in real GDP in 2020, followed by growth of 4% in 2021. Experience with the global recession in 2009, however, shows that it took nine years for the Canadian unemployment rate to go back to its pre-recession level.

The BC government has engaged in massive spending to support residents and businesses, acknowledging that economic recovery will be an ongoing challenge for the foreseeable future. In September, the BC unemployment rate dropped to 8.4% from a high of 13.4% in May, with 3.7% fewer people working than in February. Metro Vancouver has not fared as well, with 7.9% fewer people employed compared with pre-pandemic figures.

Increases in BC's labour force in September were driven by the information sector as well as arts and culture, including BC's film industry. According to the Conference Board of Canada, BC is well positioned to rebound, with the potential to see an economic boost in "construction, major energy projects and a strong balance sheet at the provincial government level."

At the municipal level, the City of Vancouver along with most cities across Canada has been particularly hard-hit by the loss of revenue from property taxes, parking revenues, and the closures of civic facilities and programs. In Vancouver, property taxes make up 55% of the City's overall budget. While the share of homeowners who intend to pay their full property tax bill has increased since the pandemic began, a balanced 2020 budget will be at the expense of significant salary cost reductions in the form of layoffs and furloughs, as well as borrowing from City reserves.

Some groups of people have been harder hit by the economic consequences of COVID-19 than others. Approximately 36% of Indigenous respondents to a recent Statistics Canada survey reported that the pandemic has "had a strong or moderate impact on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs" compared with 25% of non-Indigenous respondents.

Higher levels of pre-pandemic poverty have also made members of racialized communities vulnerable to economic disruptions. Compared with a 9.6% overall poverty rate among white Canadians, poverty rates among racialized communities were already as high as 32%.

The effects of the pandemic also vary according to age, income, levels of formal education, and gender. 90% of job losses in BC have been in the service sector, where wages were already low compared to other sectors. Women and youth are more likely to work in the service sector; women make up 60% of the job losses, while youth unemployment rates overall have increased to 29%.

Charitable giving during the first half of 2020 has seen a shift in donations toward more pandemic/health related and community service causes. Individual donations have dropped dramatically, while those from foundations and corporations represent a greater share of major gifts.

Economic Growth and Major Industries

Global supply chains have seen disruptions in various sectors, including medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, and food. BC is also seeing the effects of North America-wide lumber shortages, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. These shortages, and the resulting price increases, are affecting activities ranging from home building and renovations to book production.

Sectors seeing the highest levels of growth pre- pandemic were construction, technology, digital entertainment, and the green economy. Construction did not shut down completely in the spring of 2020, though sites had to operate with reduced staff and other COVID-related restrictions.

Technology and digital entertainment are two sectors likely facing the least disruption given the vast majority of this work is already based on computers and the internet. While the increased demand for online content has been a boon for many companies in the sector, smaller companies are facing challenges as they tend to rely on face to face contact at conferences and trade shows to make connections and secure business. Fortunately, some of the factors underpinning Vancouver's strengths as a technology hub are likely to outlast the pandemic.

E-Commerce

E-Commerce, an area already growing quickly prior to the pandemic, has accelerated substantially in the past few months. Companies with an existing online presence have seen increases, while businesses with little or no online presence have scrambled to create or develop their digital infrastructure.

While retail sales overall have dropped 18% thus far during the pandemic, e-commerce has soared, with sales in May 2020 double the total from the previous year. Some of this increase is likely to last beyond the pandemic – some customers who made their first online purchases due to COVID-related restrictions are likely continue to engage in occasional online shopping in the future. Businesses will need to maintain their new or scaled-up digital infrastructure to continue to take advantage of these new avenues for reaching customers.

Gig Economy

Recent estimates suggest that gig workers represent 8-10% of the Canadian labour force. Statistics Canada reports that it is difficult to discern the impact that the pandemic has had on this sector, because the nature of the work means that not all relevant data are captured with traditional employment-related metrics.

In the longer term, it is possible that the pandemic will increase the size of the gig work sector. Statistics Canada notes that the 2008 downturn had the effect of 'pushing' a certain number of people into gig work with the decreased availability of permanent positions, and that this may happen again, particularly in combination with the increase in online shopping and platforms.

Green City and Climate Change

The immediate effects of the pandemic on the global environment occur in two contradictory streams. On the one hand, the temporary reduction in carbon emissions notably led to record-level declines in atmospheric carbon dioxide levels. On the other hand, climate concerns have largely taken a back seat to the priorities of producing personal protective equipment (PPE), and restarting economies by any means available. The boom in online sales and the increased reliance by restaurants on delivery also means more delivery vehicles on the road and more single-use packaging.

The climate-related priorities of the City of Vancouver are unlikely to change substantially as a result of the pandemic. The City has emphasized climate change strategies since its 2011 pledge to become the greenest city and current city Council declared a climate emergency in 2019.

Technology

5G

Many experts predicted that 2020 would see massive rollouts of new 5G technology, but COVID-19 upended these plans. The pandemic has accelerated the importance of 5G as people require faster data speeds and increased network support to work remotely. Increased demand for bandwidth has shone a light on capacity challenges with existing infrastructure and will likely accelerate the rollout of 5G.

Big Data

Although the discussion around surveillance and the central collection and use of data that aids in tools like facial recognition is not new, the COVID-19 pandemic has sparked a proliferation in use of this technology in some cities and countries as they monitor neighbourhood activity during shelter in place orders. Some fear the normalization of this type of surveillance during the pandemic could be leveraged to control and gather data on populations long after the current health crisis has ended.

Personalization and Customization

Given the acute rise in the need for digital engagement due to the reduction or complete closure of many in-person services, businesses have had to evolve the digital experience they present to customers. Trends show customers have a growing desire to be more involved in the customization of their digital experiences with an emphasis on customer agency and a more interactive process.

Artificial Intelligence

The impact AI has on our lives has accelerated in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the consumer world, AI will support improvements in retail and supply chains. Machine learning will help companies personalize their customer experiences by understanding and predicting customers' purchasing patterns and aid customer support through technologies such as chatbots that can respond to customer inquiries 24/7. AI also has the capability to help forecast where and how fast diseases are spreading as well as predict typical patterns of movement around cities that could be linked to pathogen spread.

Robotics

Increased awareness and use of robotics have shown up in different ways in response to the current global health pandemic. In some areas, robots have been used for tasks such as disinfecting surfaces, walking dogs and delivering food to those in quarantine. Contact-less delivery options supported by robots is of great interest to many delivery companies and there has been a notable ramping up of development of these technologies since the onset of COVID-19.

Streaming and Digital Content

The consumption of digital content through streaming sites and apps has been higher than ever during COVID-19, with time spent on the most popular sites such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu and YouTube more than doubling from 2019. Other types of digital and online entertainment have also emerged due to restrictions on in-person interactions with events such as online concerts, virtual tours of museums and other cultural sites of interest. Virtual reality headsets have seen increased use during the pandemic by video game players as well for other forms of online entertainment. Some businesses have even been experimenting with VR to improve the ways in which they engage and connect with their employees virtually – for training, collaborative project work, conferences, and more. We are likely to see more of this use of VR/AR technology as we settle into a 'new normal' following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Print and eBook Market

The impact of the pandemic on books and eBooks has been complex and continues to evolve over time. In response to the public health crisis, publishers and vendors made significant temporary changes to lift restrictions on access and use of digital material. As an example, Macmillan Publishers temporarily lifted the embargo that prevented public libraries from buying newly released eBooks, improving access to digital content for library patrons, and Scholastic lifted copyright restrictions to enable their material to be used in online programming. One report has shown that 33% of Canadian readers are reading more eBooks and 23% are listening to more audiobooks than they previously did.

Transformation of the Arts

Online platforms and the move to more digital consumption of the arts was already underway prior to the onset of quarantine measures around the world but the complete shutdown of in-person events has and will continue to have a major impact on how we experience many forms of art now and into the future. With the allowance of large gatherings likely untenable for some time, live theatre, music, dance and other such events will likely need to take place in very different ways to allow for smaller in-person audiences and likely a virtual attendance option for others.

Connected Learning

Education, of all types and at all levels, is greatly impacted by the necessity to maintain social distancing and reduce contact numbers for students and teachers alike. With temporary closures and reduced capacity at many child care centres, and recommendations by the Provincial Health Officer for parents to care for their children at home if possible, many parents are left to balance the early learning needs of their child while working from home or juggling other responsibilities. Group play and social interaction are known to be important aspects in the early social and emotional development of young children, and this is one gap that cannot be addressed through online learning channels.

As of mid-April, 191 countries had announced or implemented school closures, impacting almost 1.6B students. Many have yet to reinstate in-classroom learning. Some are predicting this will trigger a major technological overhaul for education systems and lead to the 'reimagining' of what it means to be a student. In-class learning for primary and secondary students is deemed a critical support for families as often both parents work and are not available to be caretakers during standard office hours – having students at home limits parents' ability to work full-time and contribute to the economy.

Society and Culture

Mental Health

Although the long-term mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are yet to be known, acute impacts have already been measured. HealthLinkBC notes that the mental health impacts of this pandemic are multilayered as self-isolation distances people from some of the regular supports and activities they lean on for emotional wellbeing. There is anticipated to be an increase in domestic and intimate partner violence during this time.

In a recent Statistics Canada study, over half of the participants report their mental health worsened since the onset of physical distancing – youth are most likely to report these negative impacts and seniors least likely. Those financially impacted by COVID-19 report higher levels of anxiety, with 43% reporting symptoms consistent with moderate to severe anxiety. In another Statistics Canada survey, 60% of participants identifying themselves as Indigenous report their mental health worsened since the onset of physical distancing.

Women have been significantly impacted by the mental health stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic, reporting worse levels of mental health than male respondents across all measures, including symptoms of moderate to severe generalized anxiety disorder at higher rates than male respondents. Gender-diverse participants report poorer outcomes than both female and male participants. The COVID-19 crisis has increased the struggle that parents face balancing their responsibilities for childcare and paid work outside the home, a burden disproportionately carried by women.

Social Justice and Equity

Alongside the global COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an explosion in the attention and energy directed against racism in Canada– sparked by protests in the US but seen and felt around the world. Following the deaths that triggered an acceleration in the BlackLivesMatter movement, Canadians joined demonstrations calling for change. It is being increasingly acknowledged that understanding the intersectional lived experiences of BIPOC communities is a critical piece of all anti-racism work.

In Vancouver, anti-racism protesters demonstrated by blocking traffic on the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts – a location of significance for Vancouver's Black community. The area demolished to build the viaducts in the early 1970s was a thriving Black community known as Hogan's Alley, and there is increased attention to acknowledging the erasure of this neighbourhood and restoring the area as a cultural hub for Black communities in Vancouver.

In late July, following an open letter from over 70 B.C organizations calling for the end of street checks, Vancouver city councillors voted unanimously to ban officers from conducting street checks. Further action is in the hands of the Vancouver Police Board.

Since the onset of COVID-19, Canada has also seen an increase in anti-Asian hate incidents with more than 44% of the over 600 reported incidents taking place within British Columbia, and many reported examples in Vancouver.

Advocates point to the intertwined history of Black and Indigenous communities in Canada, stating a need for the movements for Black racial justice and Indigenous justice and sovereignty to support one

another in the work to end colonialism, as these communities have been the most impacted by historical and ongoing colonial injustices.

The response to the killing of George Floyd and others has sparked conversations and demonstrations that reach far and wide within the realm of racial and social justice. CBC has reported that "although it may seem counterintuitive, the disruption the pandemic has wrought in our lives may actually make it the ideal time to break with our recent past and undertake serious social reforms".

Indigenous Rights

Locally the Urban Indigenous People's Advisory Committee (UIPAC) released a report calling for the Mayor, council and civic departments to take more meaningful action on anti-racism and reconciliation. In an interview with the Tyee, a member of the UIPAC shared that there is frustration within the advisory committee when it comes to working with the current council and there is a feeling that the work is 'tokenistic' at this point. They note that a lot of the work that needs to be done is at the level of the bureaucratic structure of the city and fragmentation of what the committee can do, and not issues with individuals. The UIPAC report describes the systemic and deep-rooted nature of both racism and colonialism and states directly the solidarity the committee has with Black and racialized communities. The report calls out the City of Vancouver for priding itself on its designation as a City of Reconciliation and continually pointing to successes of the past instead of continuing to renew the focus and take a leadership role to move beyond symbolic gestures.

Privacy

With many aspects of life shifting to the digital realm in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada's Privacy Commissioner has identified the need for improved laws on privacy and data use. In B.C., temporary ministerial orders in response to the pandemic allowed for data storage outside of Canada. This loosening of privacy requirements has magnified the need for legislative updates and a longer term evaluation as demand by businesses of all sizes to access turnkey technology solutions which may not readily be available in Canada has grown exponentially.

Online interactions such as exchanges between health professionals and patients or students utilizing e-learning platforms may be at risk of privacy breach.

Another area of discussion on privacy stemming from the pandemic is concerns over data collection by contact tracing apps. The app being supported by the Canadian government appears to meet privacy benchmarks by those who specialize in technology and artificial intelligence.

Disinformation and Fake News

The spread of disinformation and fake news related to COVID-19 continues to grow and the consequences of this rapidly circulating misinformation can be deadly in the midst of a global pandemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) has been working to address the spread of misinformation related to COVID-19 since the onset of the global pandemic and has labelled it an 'infodemic' that is "one of the greatest security threats of our time". Research has shown that Facebook users over the age of 65 share almost seven times as many fake news articles as younger users share, which is particularly alarming given this segment also has the highest risk of dying from COVID-19. A recent poll showed that 56% of respondents reported they had encountered misinformation about COVID-19. In April, the

Canadian government invested in a number of programs and projects that focus on countering misinformation.

The Third Place

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, public spaces saw a dramatic drop in foot traffic that left many of the city's 'third places' eerily empty.

Across the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered the painful loss of many community 'third places' including restaurants, places of worship, bars, gyms, and other spaces that people regularly frequent in their community that are neither work nor home. Research shows the importance of both public spaces and 'third places' in supporting a healthy society. These spaces support interaction within a community and create links between strangers who cross paths.

Urban planning professionals have noted that the COVID-19 pandemic will undoubtedly impact the use and ongoing development of public space in cities. Density is a major factor in how residents can safely use public spaces during the pandemic and historically, pandemics have had an impact on how urban landscapes have developed. In order to maintain required social distancing, the use of spaces, especially within urban environments, will be impacted. Reduced density allowable indoors as well as outdoors will impact public spaces with increased focus on parks and other open spaces that enable physical distancing. Many cities are loosening longstanding public space regulations to allow for more flexibility in use of outdoor space – for example, allowing restaurants to provide patio space on sections of sidewalk.

From Convenience to Necessity

There has been a distinct shift in consumer behaviour with an increase in online delivery and curbside pick-up options and a move away from shopping in physical locations. With improvements to safety as well as convenience, it is anticipated this shift will stick around even after this health crisis subsides – and businesses are urged to consider long-term strategies that support this shift in consumer behaviour.

Unplugging

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, families and individuals have become much more reliant on technology to stay connected and engaged. Research has shown that there is some value to the social engagement and temporary escape from reality provided by social media and other digital entertainment such as video games. It has also been demonstrated that negative impacts on well-being and mental health linked to screen-time may be minimal; rather than focusing on time, parents should focus on the type of content they and their children are consuming, as well as balancing screen time with sleep, physical activity and other activities that feed creativity and imagination.

Digital Divide

Physical distancing measures have accelerated reliance on the internet for everyday transactions. This has shone a light on the vast discrepancy in Internet access in our society – deepening the already prevalent digital divide. Heightened awareness of this divide has led to questions such as 'Is Internet access a human right? Many older adults don't have internet access in their homes, and locations that offer internet services such as libraries and cafes have closed and/or restricted use of their spaces to maintain physical distancing. The digital divide is also seen in the ability to learn and adapt to rapidly

evolving technologies, impacting many older adults as they strive to remain connected in the digital environment. As schools move to offering online learning, often exclusively, students without access to a computer or internet at home are at a significant disadvantage. About one in ten Canadian households have no internet connection and many rural communities, as well as Indigenous communities, struggle with a lack of access to affordable and reliable high-speed connections.

POVERTY

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were already many Canadians who fell below the poverty line. With the dramatic impacts on employment, even with government supports in place, experts are warning that the number of people living in poverty will increase. Preliminary results show that the 2020 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, which took place on March 3rd and 4th, found that 2,095 residents identified themselves as homeless and 547 of these individuals were living on the street. While 4% lower the 2019 count, the count took place very early in the onset of COVID-19 and the specific impact of the pandemic will likely not be measured until the 2021 count. A large homeless camp has grown over the past several months and now includes hundreds of tents in Strathcona Park. In response to this, the City of Vancouver has passed a $30 million COVID-19 housing action plan to buy or lease rooms in order to house homeless Vancouverites during the pandemic.

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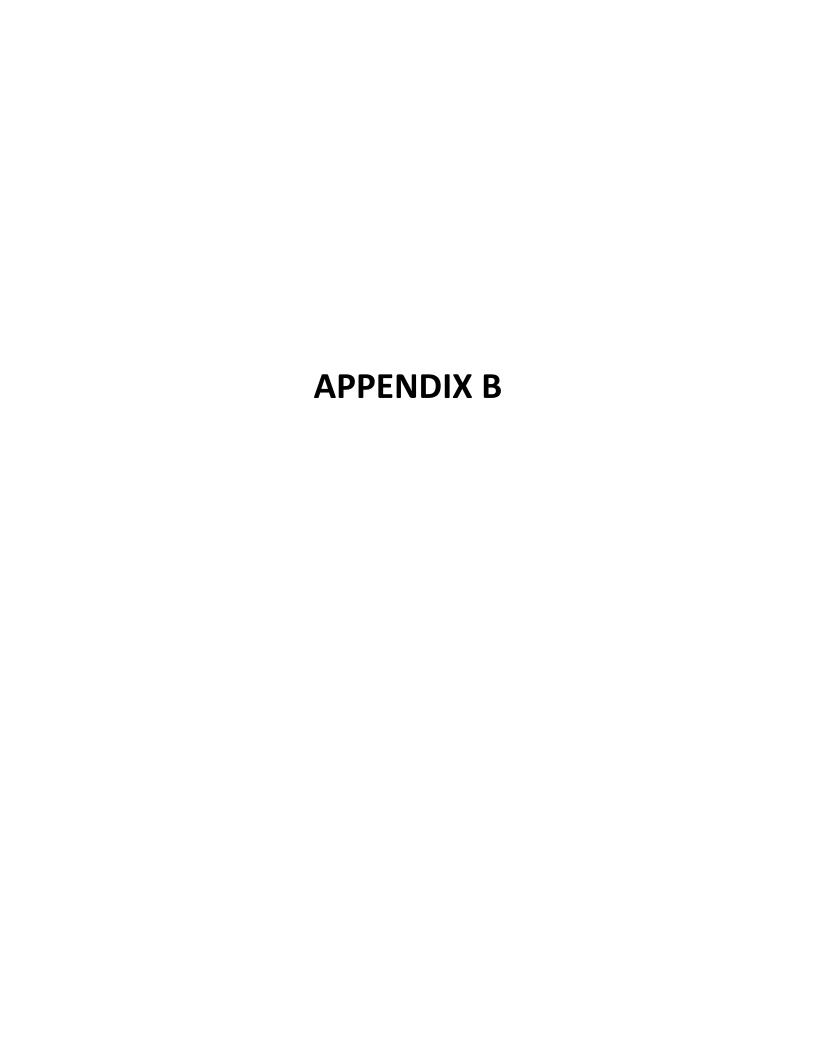
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APPENDIX B

2020 to 2023 STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS – ASSESSMENT IN LIGHT OF COVID-19 & RECENT EVENTS
FOR DISCUSSION – October 19, 2020

Goal	Relevant Findings	Assessment & Implications
LEARNING & CREATIVITY		
1.1 Champion early literacy and opportunities for lifelong learning	Parents are challenged to provide development and enrichment opportunities to early learners while also working from home. Some may face reduced access to daycare and preschool. Seniors have an even greater demand for support as they seek to learn digital technology and to gain access to digital tools and wifi. Technological overhaul of the education system is required, affecting all institutions from primary school to post-secondary; includes a trend towards hybrid learning environments. Social and emotional learning are critical for children in their early years, and at risk during social isolation. For seniors, social interaction is vital for good health.	Goal remains important. VPL's accelerated shift from in-person to digital learning and literacy caused by COVID will be important to continue, as the change is anticipated to be long term. This is a priority for seniors, children and youth. Identifying safe approaches to in-person learning will be key for children in early years and those most impacted by social isolation.
1.2 Bridge the digital divide and support creativity through accessible technology	Access to the internet and basic digital skills is even more important for everyday life transactions. The digital divide is deepening, with an accelerated reliance on the internet and technology-based communication. Those with lower incomes, seniors, and Indigenous communities are particularly hard hit due to both lack of connectivity and/or skills. Production, delivery and consumption of the arts and other creative content is even more dependent on digital tools and online platforms.	Digital divide aspects of this goal have increased in relevance and importance. Supporting creativity is somewhat lower in priority and more challenging given limitations on in-person use of space. A critical role for VPL will be to support basic digital needs, in particular digital literacy skills, of those hardest hit by the pandemic The critical role of VPL in providing access to basic technology and connectivity has been highlighted by recent experience.

1.3 Provide relevant physical and digital collections in diverse formats and languages	Consumption of digital content through streaming sites and apps increased significantly during the pandemic – time spent on the most popular sites more than doubled from 2019. Canadians are reading more eBooks (+33%) and listening to more audiobooks (+23%) than in pre-pandemic times. Consumers of online entertainment have increased their use of virtual reality (gaming) during the pandemic.	Goal remains important. As a core function of the library, making digital content available will continue to grow in importance. This includes access to digital content in formats that are increasingly in demand (e.g. streaming) and addressing constraints of publishers' purchase models. A shift of VPL expenditures towards digital collections is anticipated to continue. As this format is more expensive, VPL will have less buying power with the existing collections budget.
SHARED SPACES & EXPERIENCES		
2.1 Develop welcoming, accessible, and sustainable facilities that meet current and future needs and expectations	Public spaces and many 'third places' have seen a dramatic drop in foot traffic with the pandemic. Research shows the importance of these spaces in supporting a healthy society. The pandemic has triggered the painful loss of many community spaces that people regularly frequent that are neither work nor home. It has also amplified the importance of public spaces in supporting physical and mental health, addressing social isolation and enhancing overall well-being. Use of public spaces will likely be constrained for years, with limitations on gathering sizes and safety measures in place. With lower density allowed in public spaces, there is an increased focus on parks and other outdoor spaces that can promote social distancing.	Goal remains relevant in the long term. In the short term, VPL will need to focus on flexible use of its physical spaces and alternative delivery methods. Timelines for new space developments, including early literacy spaces in branches, will be longer. Investments may be required to allow for continued safe use of library spaces, including opportunities to use VPL's outdoor spaces (for outdoor programming and use of WiFi, for example), and to increase touchless interactions and support distancing. It remains imperative to develop and maintain up-to-date disaster plans for our facilities.

2.2 Provide patron centred experiences and make it easy to use VPL's services	Consumer behaviour has shifted, with increased online ordering, home delivery, and curbside pickup, and a significant decline in shopping in physical locations. Contactless delivery options are booming in many areas of business. While consumers adopted use of these options out of necessity, they have also discovered their convenience. The shift to online and contactless models is expected to remain after the pandemic. Businesses have had to evolve their customers' digital experience. Consumers have a growing desire to be involved in the customization of this experience.	Goal is even more important going forward, with emphasis on digital experiences. Addressing library users' needs for alternative service delivery models, technology, and customized experiences will be key. In these areas, it will be important to continually monitor users' needs and expectations and be responsive to change.
2.3 Reflect and celebrate Indigenous cultures and history	The Urban Indigenous People's Advisory Committee (UIPAC) called on the City of Vancouver to take more meaningful action on anti-racism and reconciliation, pointing out that racism and colonialism are deeply rooted in systemic issues. The City of Vancouver has identified that it remains open and willing to rename its civic spaces through the work of the Civic Asset Naming Committee.	Goal remains critically important, as does the Strategic Plan's overarching prioritization of Truth and Reconciliation. Strengthening relationships with Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and Vancouver's urban Indigenous community and exploring opportunities may be slowed by competing priorities for these groups during COVID recovery.
BELONGING & CONNECTION		
3.1 Reduce social isolation and provide affordable access	Social isolation and loss of community connection is amplified by pandemic measures restricting gatherings. Seniors and people with disabilities already face mobility issues; measures designed to	Goal is more critical than ever; how we will achieve it may change given the shift in the external environment.

	prevent virus spread are disproportionately affecting them.

BC's unemployment rate is at an all-time high. Most impacted are service sector workers (predominantly women and youth), Indigenous communities, and racialized communities already challenged by pre-pandemic poverty.

Financial insecurity and affordability issues are impacting a large segment of the population, increasing economic disparity.
Mental health issues are increasing, particularly among youth and Indigenous communities.

Financial insecurity, health concerns, and restrictions on gathering are all contributing to the increase in mental health challenges. | VPL plays an important role in connecting individuals and creating a sense of community and belonging. We will continue to explore alternatives to in-person service models that deliver on this.

A greater focus on in-person support and service for seniors and people with disabilities facing greater isolation and barriers to access will be key.

Job skills training and employment supports will be in higher demand.

As affordability challenges are on the rise, initiatives designed to reduce financial barriers should be prioritized.

We will consider accelerating activities that connect patrons in need of mental health supports to appropriate services. |
| **3.2** Establish the Library as a forum for civic conversation and understanding | Globally, there are growing concerns about misinformation, and an increased level of distrust in government decision-making and transparency. The World Health Organization claims that the spread of misinformation related to COVID-19 is one of the greatest security threats of our time.

CBC reports that disruption caused by the pandemic may actually make it the ideal time to break with our recent past and undertake serious social reforms. | Goal remains important.

A key priority for VPL is to develop an action plan establishing VPL as a forum for civic conversation and understanding about difficult issues. Immediate issues to be addressed include anti-racism, misinformation and understanding of civic processes. Other important issues are gender identity, equity, social justice and climate change. |

	The BlackLivesMatter movement has led a resurgence of energy directed toward the fight for racial justice. Locally and abroad, there is a heightened awareness of racial issues, growing concerns about systemic racism, and a call for justice for Indigenous, Black and People of Colour. Canada has seen an increase in anti-Asian hate incidents since the onset of the pandemic. 44% of over 600 incidents in Canada have taken place in BC.	
3.3 Enhance understanding and appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing	We have seen an explosion in the attention and energy directed toward the fight for equity and justice for Indigenous, Black and People of Colour, sparked by global protests in response to the death of George Floyd. The Urban Indigenous People's Advisory Committee called on the City of Vancouver to take more meaningful action on anti-racism and reconciliation. The City of Vancouver's Equity Framework has identified that it will apply an Indigenous-centred, race forward and intersectional approach, guiding the City to centre the voices and priorities of communities who identify as Indigenous, Black and other racialized groups. The Equity Framework recognizes our shared histories of colonialism and that its impacts continue to reverberate today among First Nations, urban Indigenous communities, and immigrant communities in Vancouver.	Goal remains important, as does the Strategic Plan's overarching prioritization of Truth and Reconciliation. We will continue to share the importance of Reconciliation and the stories and cultures of Indigenous peoples in Canada through our programming and collections.

3.4 Engage and celebrate the diverse cultures and languages in Vancouver	The ethnic diversity of Vancouver remains one of its defining features. The largest population groups in Vancouver are white, Chinese, South Asian, Filipino and Southeast Asian. Immigrants represented 42% of the City of Vancouver's population in 2016. There is increased awareness and conversation about systemic racism and direct racist acts in the City.	Goal remains relevant. The public library continues to play a critical long term role in creating welcoming and inclusive spaces to people of diverse cultures and languages and providing services to support people learning English. The role of the library as a civic institution that can communicate belonging for diverse groups through its collections and services is heightened.
ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH		
4.1 Ensure VPL staff have the support and resources to adapt to a transformed work environment.	Massive societal disruption caused by the pandemic has had tremendous impact on the mental health of Canadians. Individuals are struggling with the stresses of unemployment, financial uncertainty, and concern for the wellbeing of family and friends. COVID-19 impacts are compounding existing local challenges of the opioid crisis, homelessness and lack of mental health supports. New ways of working for many (digital, from home) are the norm, and likely to continue in longer term. Public (and private) organizations are facing years of deficits and funding uncertainty. Government supports are not likely to be adequate to keep many businesses afloat. The need for digital engagement has risen significantly with the reduction or complete closure of many in-person services. Many businesses have	Goal is even more critical, particularly to help develop staff resiliency. Focus of staff support and resources will need to encompass use of new technologies, mental health supports, and creative ways of working. As patron use patterns continue to shift from in person to online, staff skills and roles will need to evolve, and VPL will need to invest in technology infrastructure and staffing to support staff and meet patron expectations– particularly challenging given the uncertain financial situation. Accelerated business continuity planning will be required. VPL will be affected by civic budget challenges and reduced charitable giving.

	been forced to rapidly transform the way they deliver services, and long term impacts on their staff remain unknown. Training and education, of all types and at all levels, has been greatly impacted by the necessity to maintain social distancing and reduce contact numbers for learners and teachers alike. Charitable giving has declined, especially major gifts from individuals; arts and culture organizations are hardest hit.	
4.2 Increase public awareness and usage of VPL services	The need for digital engagement has risen significantly with the reduction or complete closure of many in-person services. Many businesses have had to radically transform their business models in very short timeframes. Consumers have a growing desire to be involved in the customization of their digital experiences.	Goal is still relevant. Many traditional communication channels are no longer relevant. VPL's approach must continue to evolve, increasing outreach through digital channels and customizing communications.
4.3 Inclusive Workplace that Reflects the Diversity of our Community	The ethnic diversity of Vancouver remains one of its defining features. The largest population groups in Vancouver are white, Chinese, South Asian, Filipino and Southeast Asian. Immigrants represented 42% of the City of Vancouver's population in 2016. Alongside the global COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen an explosion in the attention and energy directed toward the fight for racial justice. The City of Vancouver has put increased emphasis on implementing its Equity Framework which	Goal is even more important now. Addressing racism, enhancing a culture of equity and inclusivity, and expanding the diversity of our workforce is a priority for VPL. VPL will use the City's equity framework and build on their learning to develop our own workplan for increasing equity and diversity and addressing racism.

	includes integrating equity in City processes, and addressing systemic racism and racist acts experienced by City staff.	