

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: September 21, 2023
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TO: Library Board
FROM: Tim Bottomer, Chair, SFHR Committee
SUBJECT: Provincial Enhancement Grant 2023

SUMMARY

This report provides information about planned allocation of funding provided through the Provincial Enhancement grant in 2023. The 2023 Enhancement Grant is \$1,714,161.96, to be spent over three years, which is in addition to the operating grant and Literacy and Resource Sharing grants that have been received annually for many years.

PURPOSE

This report is for decision.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board approve the following allocation of funds from the Provincial Enhancement Grant:

- Addressing urgent community needs: approx. \$500-\$650K
- Addressing shifting demands on staff: \$500-\$650K
- Planning & Evaluation: \$350-450K
- Inclusive Public Space: \$150-200K

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Committee members supported the allocation of funding for the Provincial Enhancement Grant, and discussed balancing the need for establishing an ongoing training budget with appropriately using one-time funds.

POLICY

The Library Financial Reserves policy establishes that the Library will transfer unspent grants and donations received in the year to reserves. The unspent funds from the Provincial Enhancement Grant will be transferred to reserves as specified in the policy, as a designated grant under the terms described below. The policy also provides that management is authorized to expend designated reserves for the purpose they were accumulated without Board approval, and that staff will provide the Board with an annual summary of disbursements from reserves.

INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS

The allocation of the Provincial Enhancement Grant identified by management includes supporting assessment of VPL's Indigenous Rights and Relations goals specified in the Strategic Plan, which includes reflecting and celebrating Indigenous cultures and history through branch improvements, enhancing understanding and appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing through library programs and services, and building relationships with Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and urban Indigenous organizations.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

In considering the areas for investment designated by the grant, staff have also considered the goals in the VPL Strategic Plan and the Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation Strategy to establish priorities.

BACKGROUND

In March 2023, the BC government announced one-time grants totalling \$45 million for BC public libraries in addition to their annual operating funding to enable 'modernized technology, enhanced programs and services, and better access to information'. A significant amount went directly to agencies that support library collaboration, such as federations (e.g. InterLINK) and the BC Libraries Cooperative. The remainder was distributed among 71 BC public libraries.

VPL received two payments totalling \$1,714,161.96, to be spent over three years from 2023-2025. In March 2023, \$738,897.15 was received, and on June 30, 2023, VPL received an additional Enhancement Grant of \$975,264.81. In addition to these grants, VPL has received \$150,000 designated for exploring inclusive governance practices with the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, for work to begin in September 2023, and the regular operating grant of \$1,181,731.32 for 2023-24.

VPL also received the designated Literacy & Equity Grant of \$50,800 to support access to lifelong learning and literacy experiences through the expansion of library collections, programs, and services.

Two regular grants will be allocated to Collections & Technical Services budget as usual:

- Resource Sharing Grant - \$19,705 - to support libraries in materials sharing by alleviating the costs involved in running and managing their interlibrary loan service.
- BC OneCard Grant 2023: \$40,207 – to enable active patrons of any public library in B.C. to use their library card to borrow from other libraries throughout the province.

DISCUSSION

The total amount of the Enhancement grant from the Provincial Government is \$1,714,161.96, to be used over three years (2023-2025). The allocation letter states “It may be used over three years (2023-2025) to support local library service enhancements, including helping address shifting demands on services, collections, programs, and spaces. This grant may also be used to respond to local service priorities, making services more accessible and inclusive, and/or increasing climate readiness and resilience when facing future challenges.

Conversations among the BC Library Partners have suggested that the application of funding should consider both addressing urgent needs, and demonstrating impact and outcomes that will support requests for increased ongoing operating funding for future years.

The VPL Foundation recently approved funding for a number of areas of urgent need that staff were previously considering for the Provincial Grant, including Indigenous art, STEAM programming, public research/campaigns in 2023, and anti-racism/equity public programming.

Library management have considered the goals defined in the VPL Strategic Plan, priorities for investment previously discussed by the VPL Board, and urgent community needs. The following are the broad categories identified by management for funding from the Provincial Enhancement grant over the 2023-2025 period. Staff will report on spending for the Provincial Grant as part of the annual Provincial Grant Report process. This report is provided to the Board for approval in Q1 annually.

1. Addressing urgent community needs: \$500-\$650K

This includes a pilot program of 1-2 part-time community access workers based in the branches with the greatest community need (n̓c̓aʔmat ct Strathcona and Britannia); a pilot of additional security staffing at n̓c̓aʔmat ct Strathcona in Q3-Q4 2023; public service support at branches to enable community librarians to provide more service at community-based locations; and a pilot equity printing program.

2. Addressing shifting demands on staff: \$500-\$650K

This includes the development of improved onboarding training for new staff; additional staff training related to leadership, public service and resilience; support to coordinate the action plan for the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion project under Goal 4.2 of the Strategic Plan, and funding to support Indigenous hiring.

3. Planning & Evaluation: \$350-450K

This includes engaging consultants for outcome-based evaluation of Indigenous relations goals in the Strategic Plan and for renewing the Facilities Master Plan in 2024-2025, and resources for implementing the action plan for the Accessible BC legislation.

4. Inclusive Public Space: \$150-200K

This includes additional support for implementing branch space enhancements to create a more welcoming, accessible and inclusive environment that is ready to support the public through future challenges.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The additional Provincial support of \$1,714,161.96, representing approximately \$571K annually, will enable VPL to address a number of urgent community needs over the next three years, continuing our community's and our staff's recovery from COVID-19, and improving our planning and readiness for future challenges. While it enables VPL to pilot new staffing approaches, due to the temporary nature of the funding, it does not support hiring ongoing staff. As a result, while increasing open hours is always a priority, management has not identified an increase in operating hours on a temporary basis as an appropriate use for these funds. VPL will continue to need to seek funding through the City of Vancouver in order to increase service hours.