



## MANAGEMENT REPORT

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TO: Library Board  
FROM: Carol Nelson, Director, Planning and Communications  
**SUBJECT: Provincial Library Grants Report 2017**

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### **SUMMARY**

This report, created for the B.C. Ministry of Education Libraries Branch, demonstrates how provincial funding supported the Vancouver Public Library to generate positive impact in our communities in 2017.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for information.

### **BACKGROUND**

On an annual basis, the Libraries Branch requests that public libraries report on new or enhanced programs that are enabled by provincial grant funding. This report demonstrates the value of provincial funding, identifies how key programs have delivered on VPL's strategic goals, and highlights outcomes achieved. It also illustrates VPL's alignment with the strategies of the Provincial Strategic Plan – *Inspiring Libraries, Connecting Communities*.

### **DISCUSSION**

This report focuses on eight key initiatives that VPL delivered in 2017. Together, they highlight VPL's commitment to identifying innovative ways to expand our reach and generate measurable impact in the communities we serve.

## INTRODUCTION

For over one hundred years, the Vancouver Public Library (VPL) has championed the vision of an informed, engaged, and connected city by providing free spaces for everyone to discover, create, and share ideas and information.

The Vancouver Public Library serves a population of 631,486 through the Central library and 20 branches across the city. Vancouver is a thriving urban centre known for its ethnically and linguistically diverse neighbourhoods - it is home to a significant Indigenous population, with one in four people of Métis, First Nations or Inuit ancestry residing in the city<sup>1</sup>, and 44% of residents speak a language other than English as their first language.<sup>2</sup> It is also a city with an increasing aging population, with the number of seniors expected to grow by 51% by 2050.<sup>3</sup> The main industries in the city include technology, trade, film, and natural resources. Technology will continue to play a major role in future employment and industry, with Vancouver's technology startups receiving a record of \$3.2 bn of investment in 2017 and 75,000 tech professionals working in the city.<sup>4</sup>

While the City of Vancouver is distinguished for its bold and progressive environmental initiatives and considered one of the fastest-growing major metropolitan economies in Canada, the city faces important challenges. For example, it is home to the largest homeless population in British Columbia, with Indigenous people and seniors being over-represented in this group. In terms of income, Vancouver continues to be one of the more polarized cities in Canada, with the top 10% of the population taking home 34% of adjusted after-tax income,<sup>5</sup> while one in five Vancouverites is forecast to experience poverty.<sup>6</sup> The city's skyrocketing real-estate prices are contributing to the trend of people in their mid-20s leaving Vancouver to start their families elsewhere.

VPL's new 2020 Strategic Plan outlines specific strategies to support our communities with the challenges they face. We are committed to improving and expanding our spaces and ensuring that they welcome everyone who needs them; we have prioritized our role in bridging the digital divide so that residents are ready to compete in the city's growing digital landscape, we will continue to develop programs that focus on career and employment support, as well as continue leading in the early-literacy field by offering a wealth of family-oriented storytimes and events.

Our VPL 2020 Strategic Plan outlines our commitment to continue providing our core services while evolving to meet the changing needs of our community. As the last free, indoor public space, we

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. Retrieved Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-656-x/89-656-x2016011-eng.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada. Retrieved Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMACA&Code1=933&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Vancouver&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All>

<sup>3</sup> City of Vancouver. Strategic Planning & City Building Report. September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Vancouver Economic Commission. Retrieved Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from: <http://www.vancouvereconomic.com/focus/technology/>

<sup>5</sup> City of Vancouver. Strategic Planning & City Building Report. September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> City of Vancouver. Strategic Planning & City Building Report. September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

constantly seek new ways to connect, engage and inspire Vancouverites not only with our vast collections, programs, and spaces, but also with each other through the exchange of ideas and information. We offer professional studios where patrons can create, share, and access music, videos, or podcasts; we hold public events that emphasize community matters through civic dialogue and productive discussion, and we strive to ensure that our spaces are welcoming and inclusive to all. We provide everyone in Vancouver with free access to learning and entertainment resources in both print and digital formats -- in 2017, our patrons borrowed over 9 million items, including books, eBooks, streaming movies, DVDs, eAudiobooks, training courses, and more. We also provide everyone in Vancouver with the tools they need to create, share, and exchange ideas, including WiFi, computers, flexible gathering spaces, digital recording studios, and specialized multimedia software and equipment.

Our programs and services are popular and heavily used by the community. In 2017, VPL recorded over 6 million in-person visits and an additional 6 million visits to [vpl.ca](http://vpl.ca). Patrons borrowed over 9 million digital and physical items, received answers to over 750,000 reference questions, recorded over 12,000 hours of audio, and attended over 9,000 programs for children, teens, and adults. In addition, patrons borrowed from our new 221-piece musical instrument collection nearly 2,000 times.

2017 was the first year of the implementation of our VPL 2020 Strategic Plan, and we made headway towards its achievement. For example, we broke down access barriers with the opening of our newest branch, náca?mat ct Strathcona, serving three of Vancouver's most underserved neighbourhoods; we bridged connections between Vancouver authors and residents with the launch of our Self-Published Indie Authors Program; and we made improvements to our patron experience with the launch of our new, mobile-friendly, redesigned website. Other significant 2017 initiatives are detailed in the body of this report. The progress we made in 2017 places VPL in a prime position to continue delivering on our Strategic Plan's initiatives overarching goal: "By 2020, we are all connected to the ideas and information we need to be inspired and thrive."

More information about the VPL 2020 Strategic Plan can be found at: <http://www.vpl.ca/strategicplan>

The Strategic Plan is translated into a series of initiatives which are documented in an Operating Plan presented to the Library Board each year. More information about VPL's 2020 Operating Plan can be found at: <https://www.vpl.ca/sites/vpl/public/VPL2020OperationalPlan.pdf>

Transparency in reporting is achieved through the following:

- Quarterly reports to the Vancouver Public Library Board, the most recent of which is available to the public at <https://www.vpl.ca/sites/vpl/public/2020QuarterlyProgressReportQ32017.pdf>
- VPL Annual Report, the most recent of which is available to the public at <http://www.vpl.ca/annualreport>

### *PROVINCIAL STRATEGY - Fostering Connected Communities: Advancing Access to Information and Resources*

#### **náč̓aʔmat ct Strathcona Branch**

In April 2017, VPL opened náč̓aʔmat ct Strathcona branch, the first full-service branch to serve Vancouver's oldest communities: Strathcona, Chinatown and Downtown Eastside. VPL's selection of the náč̓aʔmat ct name – which encompasses the idea of 'we are one' in the hə́n̓ q̓ əmí̓n̓ ə́m̓ (Musqueam) language – was inspired by the community suggestion 'Namwayut', the theme of both Reconciliation Canada and the City of Vancouver's Year of Reconciliation activities. This is the city's first major civic building with an official Indigenous name.

The opening of náč̓aʔmat ct Strathcona branch was strategically aligned with two of VPL's goals: Patron-Centred Experience, which focuses on identifying needs and developing services with communities that experience access barriers, and Welcoming Spaces, which ensures our spaces are inclusive and welcoming for Vancouver's diverse communities. From the initial planning stages, VPL sought to expand its presence into its inner-city neighbourhoods, where residents, including families with young children, may have been previously underserved. The new náč̓aʔmat ct Strathcona branch is approximately 11,000 square feet – one of the largest branches in the city's library system - and offers diverse public spaces and services, including community gathering rooms, public internet computers, WiFi access, programming, a diverse collection of books, DVDs, magazines and newspapers in English and other languages. The branch is also home to the Bud Osborn Creation Space, the first creative space of its kind in a Vancouver library branch, which features two recording studios with professional equipment, as well as computers with specialized multimedia software and digitization equipment to support the community's creative economy, including digital storytelling and publishing.

The náč̓aʔmat ct Strathcona branch and YWCA Cause We Care House is a joint initiative that features a branch library, community and family programming, and 21 units of safe, affordable housing for low-income single mothers and their children. The project was made possible through some key partnerships: the City of Vancouver made the largest financial contribution to the project, and the YWCA Metropolitan Vancouver made a substantial commitment to support YWCA Cause We Care House. VPL also partnered with Vancouver artist Lisa g Nielsen, who was commissioned to create a digital artwork for the branch and worked with neighbourhood residents to share stories from the community. As well, award-winning East Vancouver artist Erica Stocking created a public art piece for the branch, with her work commissioned jointly by the Vancouver Public Library and the City of Vancouver public art program. Her cast bronze door now highlights the branch's main entrance, signifying "a desire to find a sense of place in the world."

Within its first 9 months of opening, the náč̓aʔmat ct Strathcona branch welcomed over 180,000 visits and provided over 400 programs for children, teens, and adults. The Bud Osborn Creation Space and the branch's meeting rooms are actively used by local community groups and non-profit organizations that previously did not have access to versatile sharing spaces, and circulation numbers demonstrate the community's quick embrace of the branch's collections. Illustrating the impact that the branch has had on

its community, one patron wrote: “As a new parent who regularly visits the náč̓aʔmat ct Strathcona Branch with a baby to enjoy Storytime and Man on the Moon ... I have to commend the librarians for organizing so many baby events and for keeping an impressive baby book collection and DVD/Blu-ray collection. The náč̓aʔmat ct Strathcona Branch has truly changed our lives for the better.”

## **Story City**

In support of our strategic goal, Platforms for Sharing, the Vancouver Public Library launched Story City, an interactive map that aims to highlight the way that Vancouver residents are connected to their city. Story City allows users to explore over 700 stories recorded by individuals on the unceded land that Vancouver occupies. From young Greek Canadians celebrating at favourite restaurants to Indigenous poets building community in the Downtown Eastside; from people with disabilities coming together for a laugh at a weekly social club, to neighbours standing up for newcomers experiencing racism; every story is a unique insight into Vancouver’s history and the journeys of its individual citizens. Through the interwoven stories, the map builds connection and understanding between community members and encourages dialogue about what it means to be a Vancouverite, celebrating our local history and the capacity of our city to welcome newcomers.

To encourage participation, the project leveraged the excitement around Canada 150+ and built on relationships that library branches had already established with community groups. In doing so, we were successful in gathering stories from a sufficiently broad range of communities and individuals to represent the diversity of Vancouver. As witnessed during the Story City launch event held on October 24<sup>th</sup>, and attended by 62 people, it became clear that the map and its stories serve as a starting point for community dialogue. Moving forward, our aim is to refresh the content on an ongoing basis to ensure the content remains engaging and interesting, and to continue promoting Story City to ensure it reaches a broad audience and remains well-used.

Story City was partially funded through the City of Vancouver by the Canadian Department of Culture and Heritage Canada 150 grant, which provided 50% of the required funding. We also received support from the City of Vancouver’s Cultural Services department, which coordinated the grant application and held visioning sessions with City of Vancouver staff and community members to ensure a successful project. Other partners included the Drum is Calling Festival, which provided the recording space for VPL staff during festival period, and over 55 community groups and societies that not only participated in recruiting participants and promoting the project, but also provided space for VPL staff at street fairs and other community events.

In terms of outcomes, Story City has created connections between the library and the residents it serves, as well as connections between storytellers and their audiences. It has encouraged conversation and understanding of the issues surrounding the city, showcased local history at an individual level and highlighted the diversity of character and experience within Vancouver. All told, the project team shared 700 individual stories, gathered over 150 hours of audio, delivered 36 programs at VPL branches, and attended over 100 community events to recruit and promote the project. The result is an interactive map through which viewers and listeners from around the world can tune in, listen to, and connect with hundreds of stories that make up the city of Vancouver.

## **Digital Literacy Program Redesign**

VPL's strategic goal of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning led us to completely redesign our approach to teaching digital literacy skills to adults. From 2016 to 2017, with support from the provincial literacy grant, staff conducted extensive research on adult learning, instructional design, our city's demographics and the digital skills necessary to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Based on this research, we developed a new evidence-based approach to adult learning programs. We designed a brand new curriculum to address the key learning needs identified in our research, resulting in a series of new classes: Computer Essentials, Internet Essentials, Mobile Device Essentials, Social Media Essentials, Web Design Essentials and Open Data Essentials. The new curriculum launched between April and September of 2017 and was delivered across our network of branches and at the Central Library. By the end of 2017, our new classes had reached over 700 adult learners. We anticipate an even higher uptake in 2018.

We conducted extensive research during the project's initial phases and reviewed many publicly-funded post-secondary frameworks as well as international frameworks, such as MediaSmarts and Mozilla. We surveyed current literature for instructional methods, instructional design, our city's demographics, as well as the digital literacy skills necessary to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Additionally, we developed a relationship with SERENE-RISC, a network created to increase awareness of issues surrounding cyber-security, including its risks and risk mitigation strategies. Researchers from SERENE-RISC attended VPL to train staff on best practices in teaching about cyber security, and provided us with their open source instructional content, which helped inform and bolster the material that we ultimately developed.

The delivery of the new curriculum has benefited not only our patrons, but our staff as well: a cohort of our staff received in-depth training on our new instructional approach, and we developed teaching materials that are easy to use so that staff spend less time preparing for classes and are better able to focus on learning outcomes.

In order to promote and encourage attendance to our digital literacy offerings, our classes include hands-on activities and result in tangible, achievable products such as customized digital resumes, data visualizations, and a certificate when students complete a series. In the spirit of sharing and collaboration, the lesson plans, slide decks and handouts for the 22 classes making up all six series have all been made available on the Library Toolshed for use by other public libraries.

Our patrons have ranked these programs amongst VPL's best adult offerings. 80% of participants surveyed reported that the session was either "Excellent" or "Very Good" and 84% reported that they are "Very Likely" or "Likely" to recommend the session to a friend or family member. One patron in an Open Data Essentials class wrote, "Thanks for assembling all these amazing resources and giving it to us in plain language. Wonderful – good to know that VPL is doing such a great job educating us and preparing us for the digital economy!"

## The Reading Tree

On January 26, 2017, VPL launched *The Reading Tree*, a picture book developed for Vancouver families with young children. In support of our strategic goal of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, this picture book was written and published by VPL. It encompasses an inviting read-aloud story as well as easy-to-read caregivers' information that draws upon evidence-based research for supporting early literacy development using the *Every Child Ready to Read* model. Being the first VPL production of its kind, we had to overcome the initial challenge of establishing the scope of what the storybook was meant to deliver and worked through the development process creatively and iteratively to create a quality book that supports children and caregivers alike. In the 12 months since launch, over 11,000 copies have been shared with families across Vancouver. We would like to thank the Province for the additional \$5,000 in funding to print additional copies to distribute throughout BC and to translate the parent brochures into an additional language, as well as your efforts to coordinate distribution through the Immigrant Services Society.

We collaborated with many local, BC-based organizations to maximize the reach of the book and make its distribution a great success. Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) endorsed *The Reading Tree* as a fun and interactive way for parents to encourage their child's initial exploration in the world of literacy. VPL's children's librarians leveraged relationships with VCH speech language pathologists, public health nurses, and local pediatricians to bring the book to spaces where it may be offered to some of the city's most vulnerable and hard to reach families. This included child health clinics, parent infant drop-in groups, immunization clinics, and parenting groups.

The BC Children's Hospital Resident Continuity Clinic—a general pediatrics clinic for Vancouver families without access to a family doctor—was the first to partner with the library on the book's distribution. The clinic doctors received training on the book and its early literacy messaging, and were provided with 180 copies of *The Reading Tree* to offer to families with young children that they meet at the clinic. This is an ongoing partnership that helps the book reach some of the city's most vulnerable families.

Other organizations supporting distribution efforts included the Vancouver School Board which shared copies through [StrongStart BC Centres](#) and Immigration Services BC which handed out copies at the ISSBC Welcome Centre and made connections with other groups supporting vulnerable families, such as Immigrant Parents as Literacy Supports Program for Syrians and Family Literacy Outreach volunteers.

The reception of *The Reading Tree* has been overwhelmingly positive by parents and children alike. One parent remarked that her family loved the book and that her older child had been reading it to the younger sibling. Another parent from the [FIR Square](#) recovery program for mothers who use substances said: "*I got one of those books when you were here last month. When my daughter was born I started reading it to her. It is her first book.*" At a visit to the Immigrant Services Society Welcome House, a refugee mother shared with the community librarian that she found few free resources in her language but that "*getting to own this book helped to feel settled.*"

Moving forward, we will continue to find ways to maintain production and distribution of *The Reading Tree* so that families can continue to benefit from this product.

### **VPL's Partnership with S.U.C.C.E.S.S.**

VPL is proud to have a long-standing partnership with S.U.C.C.E.S.S., an immigrant services organization active in the Vancouver community. This partnership is aligned with our strategic goal of Platforms for Sharing which supports Vancouver's cultural and community organizations to extend their reach and impact. It allows us to collaborate on a wide variety of initiatives to support immigrants, refugees and newcomers to Vancouver.

VPL's partnership with S.U.C.C.E.S.S. began in the mid-1990s and we have been providing programs and resources that are a vital support to newcomers in Vancouver ever since. In 2017, we offered 17 workshops throughout VPL locations across the city on topics such as work and visitor visas, citizenship applications, finding employment in Canada, housing, and education. These workshops reached over 460 people who may otherwise not have had access to the resources and guidance they need to thrive in Vancouver.

VPL's Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre (generously funded by Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada and Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology, British Columbia) works closely with S.U.C.C.E.S.S. to foster employment opportunities. In 2017, we developed four career networking events which attracted over 220 participants. In addition, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. offered over 150 individual resume and cover letter consultations at the Central Library. VPL provided S.U.C.C.E.S.S. with the necessary space to hand out information in eight of our branches. This enabled one-on-one conversations between community members and integration workers, and acted as an important referral mechanism to connect people with services for their unique situations.

In total, over a thousand people attended programs presented in partnership between S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and VPL in 2017. Most attendees report that they learned about these events through newcomer networks, and more than two thirds of them said they intended to visit the library again. These programs serve as an important conduit for introducing newcomers to the library's services.

VPL is proud to have a sustained and impactful partnership with this important service provider. Together we greatly increase the supports to refugees and immigrants in our community. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. recognized the importance of this partnership by naming VPL their 2017 Community Partner of the Year award recipient, at a ceremony attended by provincial and federal ministers and city councillors.

### **VPL's Partnership with the BC Women's Hospital**

In support of our strategic goals of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning and Patron-Centred Experience, the Vancouver Public Library developed a partnership with the BC Women's Hospital's NeoNatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) to adapt and deliver a series of Babytalk programs in the hospital. The NICU provides medical and surgical care for newborns and babies who need special attention. The Babytalk program communicated to parents the ways in which talking, singing, reading and playing can promote early learning and enable them to soothe, comfort and bond with their babies.



VPL developed and delivered the program content, which was adapted from our regular Babytime program, while the BC Women's Hospital (BCWH) connected parents to the program and identified ways to integrate Babytime into their Parent Education Program. BCWH staff also assisted with distributing VPL materials and promoting early literacy messages to new parents.

This program was delivered 12 times in 2017 at the NeoNatal Intensive Care Unit, and was included as a module in the regular curriculum of the NICU Parent Education Classes, reaching over 51 new parents. Feedback from participants showed that as a result of the program, parents felt comforted and reassured in their knowledge of ways to support early literacy. In the program feedback survey, 100% of respondents reported that they could apply the skills and tools learned after leaving the workshop, and all respondents stated that they would recommend this program to a friend or family member. Participants reported that some of the most valuable learnings from the program included the importance of always talking and communicating with the baby, singing and rhyming tips to support development, and the ways that the library can contribute to early literacy.

The success of this program resulted in important outreach opportunities - for example, VPL was included in other BC Women's Hospital events such as World Prematurity Day and Sweet Pea Tea, an event where NICU alumni and extended families return to celebrate their child's growth and reconnect with each other and with program staff. VPL's early literacy information for parents was also incorporated in NICU's curriculum. In addition, CTV Television Network interviewed a VPL children's librarian attending a BC Women's Hospital event, where she discussed the integral role that reading and singing play in developing early language and literacy skills, highlighting that reading and literacy support begins at birth.

Through this initiative, VPL developed a valuable relationship with the BC Women's Hospital NeoNatal Intensive Care Unit helping to extend the reach of our early literacy programs to special-needs families who may not otherwise benefit from them.

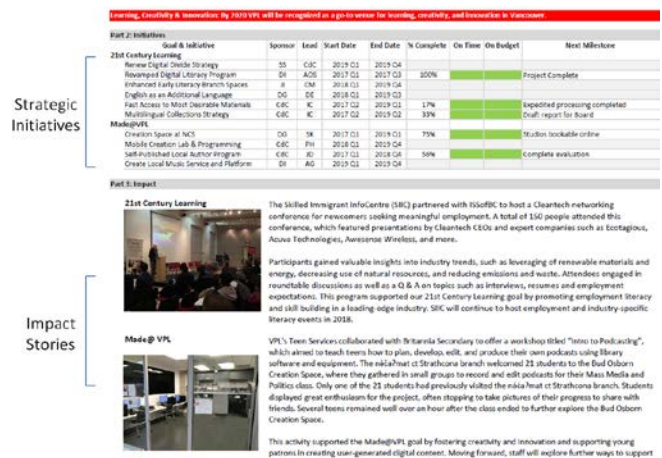
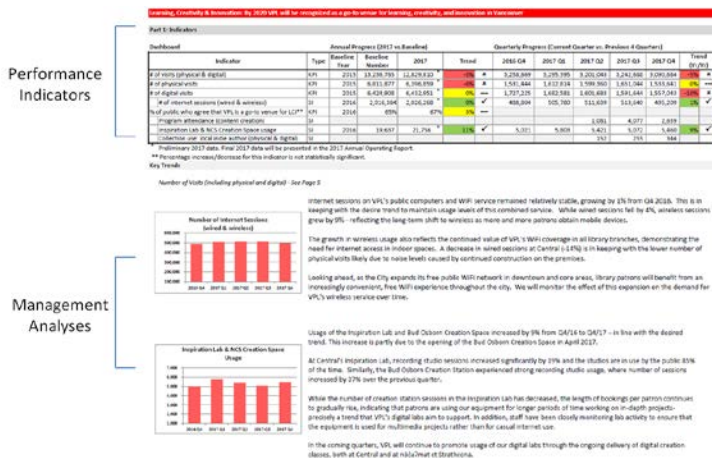
# PROVINCIAL STRATEGY – Sustaining Our Success: Enhancing Governance and Demonstrating Impact

## VPL 2020 Strategic Plan Reporting Framework

The launch of our VPL 2020 strategic plan in January 2017 created an opportunity to reassess the way we report progress toward achieving the strategy to VPL Trustees and to our public. The development of a new strategic plan reporting framework delivered on our goal of Value and Impact – which states that VPL will measure and report on our value and performance so that residents understand the positive contributions of the library to the broader community.

We started with a scan of best practices from other libraries and government organizations and gathered feedback from senior management and VPL's Board of Trustees on a draft reporting template. The final report template enabled effective quarterly progress reporting on each of the plan's four strategic outcomes – Learning, Creativity & Innovation; Access & Equity; Sharing & Collaboration and Organizational Strength – by highlighting the following:

1. Performance Indicators. A dashboard displaying annual and quarterly indicator trends along with a brief management analysis providing specific reasons for trends and future actions to be taken.
2. Strategic Initiatives. A snapshot of key details from each strategic initiative outlining project status and progress achieved.
3. Impact Stories. Several initiatives are described highlighting outcomes accomplished, including the positive impact the initiative has created for members of the community.



The new reporting framework required us to identify a set of supporting indicators that enabled quarterly measurement, complementing the annual Key Performance Indicators already established in the strategic plan. Management worked collaboratively to agree on a set of indicators incorporating both traditional and newly established metrics, which were approved by the Board. The new metrics allow us to measure progress in areas of particular interest with the new strategic plan and include: lapsed active borrowers, which serves as an indicator of potential patron attrition; attendance at dialogue-based programs, one way of measuring our efforts to encourage mutual understanding

amongst diverse groups in Vancouver; and usage of our Inspiration Lab and Bud Osborn Creation Space, an indicator of VPL's success at supporting creativity and innovation in our communities.

The new progress reporting also marked a shift away from activity-based to outcomes-based reporting. We developed a simple step-by-step approach that helped project leads to incorporate outcomes resulting from their initiatives into their regular reporting, re-designed the monthly outcomes report template, and conducted hands-on training with management and project leads providing the opportunity to practice outcomes-based reporting in a safe, fun and engaging environment.

As a result of implementing the new strategic plan reporting, VPL has seen the following:

- Improved understanding amongst management, staff and the Board of our overall performance, including successes and challenges, and the future actions we intend to take to achieve our strategic goals
- More staff are actively engaged in contributing to the report, broadening staff knowledge and accountability for results
- A better understanding of VPL's impact on our communities, with a shift to outcomes-based measurement.

### **Project Outcome**

One of the strategic outcomes outlined in our new VPL 2020 Strategic Plan is achieving Organizational Strength by developing systems that support continuous improvement and innovation, and by measuring and reporting on the impact of our services. In support of these goals, VPL collaborated with three other InterLINK libraries on a pilot project to test Project Outcome - an outcomes-based toolkit developed by the Public Library Association that aims to help libraries capture and disseminate the impact of their programs and services.

The process began in early 2017, when the group of four libraries agreed to work together to investigate the potential for an InterLINK-wide approach to conducting outcome-based evaluations of common programs. We agreed it was in our best interest to leverage an existing tool, and decided to run a pilot project to see if Project Outcome would be a viable solution for measuring the impact that our programs and services have on our communities. We also jointly decided to assess Project Outcome on a Babytime program, given that this program is one that every library offers and would allow for a fulsome evaluation of the tool's features.

The pilot consisted of three phases: planning, implementation and evaluation. In the planning phase, VPL completed a privacy assessment and developed basic procedures and materials to facilitate pilot implementation. The implementation consisted of two surveys deployed to program participants at two different points in time: the first survey was administered immediately after program completion to assess participants' immediate impressions of the program benefits. The second survey, still to be deployed, is a follow up approximately 3 months after the program completion date to focus on the longer-term impact that the program has on participating families.

For the first survey, we used Project Outcome's standard questions on early literacy and added three customized questions of our own. It was distributed to parents and caregivers as a paper survey manually completed at the end of three separate Babytime programs that ended in December. A total of 53 participants out of 71 completed the survey, a 75% response rate, and 48 participants consented to receive the follow-up survey by email.

We were encouraged by the level of participation and by the nature of the survey responses, which spoke to the impact of the program on both babies and caregivers. One parent wrote "I think my little girl (6 months now) developed a love of books and reading ever since we started regularly coming to baby time. Before, she wasn't that interested in books, but now she really loves them and listens attentively when I read to her at home." Another mentioned "I learned that my son loves singing and that it's very important to help the baby's development through songs and play."

We will deploy the follow-up email survey and will complete the pilot evaluation of Project Outcome in the first half of 2018. We look forward to sharing our results and recommendations with the broader InterLINK library community.

## **SUMMARY**

The initiatives presented in this report demonstrate a strong alignment between our VPL 2020 Strategic Plan and the four strategies outlined in the Provincial Strategic Plan. They highlight VPL's commitment to identifying innovative ways to expand our reach and impact to the communities we serve and eliminating barriers to information, resources, skill-building, and engagement opportunities.

As a leading library system, VPL is continually evolving to meet changing user needs and expectations. In order to reach and serve the most users, we've recognized the substantial opportunity to forge and nurture relationships with partner organizations that already have the expertise to provide services to our patrons. Some of the major projects achieved in 2017 were successful precisely because they are the result of joint efforts. For example, the new partnership between our náčá?mat ct Strathcona branch and the YWCA meant that the library could provide focused services to the families living in the building's affordable units through family-oriented collections and programming at the branch. Similarly, the newly established partnership between VPL and the BC Women's Hospital provided a prime opportunity to extend VPL's early literacy services to an important audience in need through the Neo Natal Intensive Care Unit. VPL worked closely with staff at the BC Women's Hospital to ensure that the program was delivered in a practical, helpful, and supportive way.

The challenges associated with these initiatives were largely operational in nature, and had been anticipated. For example, the Story City project required careful coordination of a high volume of information, managing a growing number of volunteer storytellers, and mastering a complex back-end interface. These risks were mitigated by a dedicated project team that aptly managed the relationships, time, and technology required for the project to succeed. Our evolving partnership with S.U.C.C.E.S.S., a multi-branch organization like VPL, highlighted the importance of a centralized planning and coordination function which, over time, has led to more consistency in our program offerings and marketing, a stronger working relationship, and a deeper commitment from both parties.

Looking ahead, we are already seeking solutions to challenges we are likely to face. For instance, the Digital Literacy Program Redesign must remain current and relevant with rapidly evolving technology, so we will need to invest the necessary time and resources to revise and update our material on a regular basis. For *The Reading Tree*, VPL will need to determine how to secure the necessary funds to continue producing and distributing copies so that families can benefit from this valuable resource well into the future. As we progress toward the fulfilment of our Strategic Plan, a significant organizational challenge will be our ability to adequately communicate the breadth and depth of our services particularly as we expand and evolve our offerings beyond traditional library services to deliver on emerging community needs. Promoting our offerings and demonstrating impact are key to delivering on our Value and Impact goal, and we are committed to meet this challenge in the coming years.