

2023 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

LIBRARY NAME:

Fort St. James Public Library

CHECKLIST

For the PLGR to be considered complete, please ensure you have provided information for each of the following sections. Text boxes will expand as you type. Click on a title in the list below to jump to that section of the document.

- [1. INTRODUCTION](#)
- [2. FEATURED INITIATIVES](#)
- [3. CHALLENGES](#)
- [4. BOARD APPROVAL](#)

1. INTRODUCTION

Library and Community Profile – provide a brief description of your library and the community it serves (e.g., demographics, local economy, governmental relations, historical context, current issues, etc.).

The Fort St. James Public Library's work takes place on the unceded ancestral territories of the Dakelh Peoples. Our library serves approximately 5,000 across the municipality, Nak'azdli Whut'en, Tl'azt'en Nation, Binche Whut'en, Yekooche First Nation, Takla Nation, and rural areas within Electoral Area C of the Regional District Bulkley-Nechako.

Our service area is majority Indigenous and approximately 23% of our population is low-income². We have a declining forestry sector, stable mining sector, and growing tourism sector³. Our building, which is owned by the District of Fort St. James, is in the downtown core near the municipal office, Service BC, restaurants, retail shops, and banks.

The past year was a time for celebration and gratitude in our small library. In addition to the BC Enhancement Grant, we were fortunate to receive Decoda CALP funding, as well as small grants from Mt. Milligan and the FSJ Community Foundation. This combined funding is helping us to modernize our spaces, collections, and programs.

¹ "Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population" Statistics Canada. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Fort%20St%2E%20James&DGUIDlist=2021A00055951013&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>

² Regional District Bulkley Nechako. Fort St. James and Surrounding Area Profile. 2022. file:///C:/Users/libra/Downloads/Fort_St_James_Community_Profile-2.pdf

2023 Year in Review – Highlight activities and accomplishments that the library has focused on this year. Briefly outline how library funding (local, provincial, annual, one-time/targeted) has been used or earmarked for library services and/or special initiatives to meet community needs.

Our 2022 CRR and EPP grants were completed in 2023.

Due to the benefits of the BC Enhancement grant, we were able to dedicate our provincial annual grants solely to collections development and interlibrary loans. We increased our acquisitions budget by 28%, improving the quality and quantity of physical materials – as well as introducing new learning kits, experience vouchers, and digital resources.

BC Enhancement grant funding was used to begin the work of creating and enhancing multi-purpose areas, programs, IT, and accessibility/safety.

The tangible impacts of 2023 funding improvements were impressive. We saw a 7.6% increase in circulations, 63.6% increase in visits to the library, 214% increase in program attendance, and 30.6% increase in web views.

2. FEATURED INITIATIVES

Please describe any significant initiatives the library has undertaken in the past year, focusing particularly on use of the 2022 COVID-19 Relief & Recovery (CRR) and Emergency Planning & Preparedness (EPP) Grants, and plans to use the 2023 Enhancement Grant. To report on multiple initiatives, “copy” the blank table below and insert additional tables as needed using the “paste” function. Use one table per initiative.

Initiative Title	
2022 CRR and EPP Grants	
What is the nature of this initiative? (both may apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> New targeted initiatives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting/enhancing existing operations
Area of Operations (select as many as apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic operations <input type="checkbox"/> Salaries & benefits <input type="checkbox"/> Lease & utilities <input type="checkbox"/> Collections	<input type="checkbox"/> Technology <input type="checkbox"/> In-house patron software/hardware <input type="checkbox"/> Loanable hardware <input type="checkbox"/> Staff software/hardware <input type="checkbox"/> Connectivity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facility upgrades	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Library programming
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic planning and governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff development
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emergency preparedness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community outreach
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	
Social Impact (select as many as apply)	

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accessibility and inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental sustainability, climate action
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental health and wellness	<input type="checkbox"/> Reconciliation and Indigenous relations
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	
What is the status of this initiative?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Planning/research stage	<input type="checkbox"/> Implementation in progress
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complete	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing as part of operations
Is this a multi-year initiative?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Summary – Provide a brief description of the activities undertaken this year. Please include details such as any partnerships or resources leveraged to accomplish this initiative.	
We installed new computer and study carrels to support distancing and privacy, replaced fabric seating with vinyl seating, purchased three air filtration units, created duplicate kits for disinfecting/isolating, and added both interior and exterior Purple Air monitors to share real-time air quality data with surrounding communities. Finally, all staff updated their OFA I certifications.	
Progress Report – If you have reported on this initiative in a previous year's PLGR, what has changed since then? What progress has been made, or what obstacles have you encountered?	
There were no changes to this initiative.	
Shipping costs were significantly higher than originally budgeted for and manufacturing/shipping times were delayed.	
Budgetary Information – please outline whether/how provincial funding (annual or one-time/targeted e.g., CRR, EPP, Enhancement Grants) contributes to the estimated cost of this initiative.	
These initiatives were fully covered by the CRR & EPP Grants.	
Rationale – Why was this initiative prioritized? (e.g. fulfilling commitments under strategic plan, responding to emergent community need, availability of funding, etc.)	
These activities were initiated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to prevent and reduce disease transmission within library spaces.	
What impacts does/will this initiative have on the library and/or the community? Please include any applicable metrics or quantitative data to demonstrate impact.	
In addition to disease prevention and reduction, these initiatives were implemented in ways which complement other initiatives (e.g. multipurpose spaces, modular furniture, accessibility, privacy, programming) to reduce overall expenditures and augment impacts for patrons.	

Initiative Title
Wage Equity
What is the nature of this initiative? (both may apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> New targeted initiatives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting/enhancing existing operations
Area of Operations (select as many as apply)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Basic operations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Salaries & benefits <input type="checkbox"/> Lease & utilities <input type="checkbox"/> Collections	<input type="checkbox"/> Technology <input type="checkbox"/> In-house patron software/hardware <input type="checkbox"/> Loanable hardware <input type="checkbox"/> Staff software/hardware <input type="checkbox"/> Connectivity
<input type="checkbox"/> Facility upgrades	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Library programming
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic planning and governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff development
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency preparedness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community outreach
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Staff recruitment and retention	
Social Impact (select as many as apply)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accessibility and inclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental sustainability, climate action
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental health and wellness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reconciliation and Indigenous relations
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	
What is the status of this initiative?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Planning/research stage	<input type="checkbox"/> Implementation in progress
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing as part of operations
Is this a multi-year initiative?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Summary – Provide a brief description of the activities undertaken this year. Please include details such as any partnerships or resources leveraged to accomplish this initiative.	
<p>In February 2023, the District of Fort St. James increased their grant to the library by 33%, providing wage equity for staff – comparable to similar job contributions within their collective agreement. In March, a second collective agreement between the Fort St. James Public Library Association and the Canadian Union of Public Employees 4951 was signed and will be in effect until March 31, 2026.</p> <p>In June, the Fort St. James Public Library became certified for the first time as a BC Living Wage Employer.</p>	
Progress Report – If you have reported on this initiative in a previous year's PLGR, what has changed since then? What progress has been made, or what obstacles have you encountered?	
N/A	
Budgetary Information – please outline whether/how provincial funding (annual or one-time/targeted e.g., CRR, EPP, Enhancement Grants) contributes to the estimated cost of this initiative.	
N/A	
Rationale – Why was this initiative prioritized? (e.g. fulfilling commitments under strategic plan, responding to emergent community need, availability of funding, etc.)	

Library staff are the foundation and core of all library services. Without staff, nothing else can happen within our library.

Over the last two decades, library sector wages stagnated while the labour market tipped in favour of job seekers. Recruiting and retaining qualified library staff became nearly impossible. We were at the point where our wages were well below those offered by Canada Summer Jobs programs and nearby fast-food restaurants.

The true cost of employee turnover is difficult to estimate – but it isn't merely economic. Staff productivity and morale decline, with subsequent impacts to library patron experiences.

What impacts does/will this initiative have on the library and/or the community? Please include any applicable metrics or quantitative data to demonstrate impact.

As you can imagine, the impacts of wage equity in our library are enormous. There are the immediate impacts to staff morale and job satisfaction, as well as an increase in the number of unsolicited job seekers.

Staff have a more positive view of the library sector generally and their roles specifically. They are eager to invest time and energy in continuing education or micro-credentialing, expressing excitement about their future as library workers.

As staff grow in their positions, patrons benefit from their increased experience and expertise.

On a larger scale, wage equity is an important element of EDIA. Gender pay gaps and institutionalized undervaluation of 'women's work' are particularly relevant to the library sector.

¹ Neigel, C. (2015). LIS Leadership and Leadership Education: A Matter of Gender. *Journal of Library Administration*, 55(7), 521–534. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2015.1076307>

² Koskinen Sandberg, P., Törnroos, M., & Kohvakka, R. (2018). The Institutionalised Undervaluation of Women's Work: The Case of Local Government Sector Collective Agreements. *Work, Employment and Society*, 32(4), 707-725. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017017711100>

Initiative Title	
Multipurpose Spaces	
What is the nature of this initiative? (both may apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> New targeted initiatives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting/enhancing existing operations
Area of Operations (select as many as apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic operations <input type="checkbox"/> Salaries & benefits <input type="checkbox"/> Lease & utilities <input type="checkbox"/> Collections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technology <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-house patron software/hardware <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Loanable hardware <input type="checkbox"/> Staff software/hardware <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Connectivity

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facility upgrades	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Library programming
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic planning and governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff development
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency preparedness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community outreach
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	
Social Impact (select as many as apply)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accessibility and inclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental sustainability, climate action
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental health and wellness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reconciliation and Indigenous relations
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	
What is the status of this initiative?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Planning/research stage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Implementation in progress
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing as part of operations
Is this a multi-year initiative?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Summary – Provide a brief description of the activities undertaken this year. Please include details such as any partnerships or resources leveraged to accomplish this initiative.	
BC Enhancement grant funding was used to begin the work of creating and enhancing multi-purpose areas, programs, IT, and accessibility/safety.	
Our top priorities are utilizing remaining vertical space, carving out study and seating areas, and designing three modular spaces for small, medium, and large group programs.	
Progress Report – If you have reported on this initiative in a previous year's PLGR, what has changed since then? What progress has been made, or what obstacles have you encountered?	
N/A	
Budgetary Information – please outline whether/how provincial funding (annual or one-time/targeted e.g., CRR, EPP, Enhancement Grants) contributes to the estimated cost of this initiative.	
In 2023, \$35,441 of Enhancement Grant funding was used towards slatwall additions, modular furniture, IT, height accessibility features, and in-house resources (e.g. iPads, laptops, games, puzzles, digital display screens).	
Rationale – Why was this initiative prioritized? (e.g. fulfilling commitments under strategic plan, responding to emergent community need, availability of funding, etc.)	
The Fort St. James Public Library is a 3000 square foot, open-concept space, which can create challenges around space use, noise, and confidentiality. Creating distinct, accessible, and comfortable public zones which are adaptable to different user groups will continue to be a priority over the next two years.	

What impacts does/will this initiative have on the library and/or the community? Please include any applicable metrics or quantitative data to demonstrate impact.

The thoughtful design of multi-purpose spaces has allowed us to increase functionality for telecommuters and distributed learners, increase the number and type of library programs, and accommodate two to three user groups simultaneously.

Initiative Title	
Program and Partnerships Development	
What is the nature of this initiative? (both may apply)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New targeted initiatives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting/enhancing existing operations
Area of Operations (select as many as apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic operations <input type="checkbox"/> Salaries & benefits <input type="checkbox"/> Lease & utilities <input type="checkbox"/> Collections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technology <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-house patron software/hardware <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Loanable hardware <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff software/hardware <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Connectivity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facility upgrades	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Library programming
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic planning and governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff development
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency preparedness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community outreach
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	
Social Impact (select as many as apply)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accessibility and inclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental sustainability, climate action
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental health and wellness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reconciliation and Indigenous relations
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	
What is the status of this initiative?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Planning/research stage	<input type="checkbox"/> Implementation in progress
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing as part of operations
Is this a multi-year initiative?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Summary – Provide a brief description of the activities undertaken this year. Please include details such as any partnerships or resources leveraged to accomplish this initiative.	
<p>In 2023, we introduced an array of in-house and partnership programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-D Days (K-7) • After School Club (G4-7) • Teen Night (G8-12) • Project-based Secondary Projects (e.g. logo development, signage, mural) • Game Days • Five Community Adult Literacy Programs (e.g. English Conversation Circle, Tech Tuesdays, Workshop Wednesdays, Form Fridays, 4R Club) 	

- FSJ Farmer’s Market partnership
- Dakelh Syllabics partnership
- Northern Health Mental Health and Social Work partnership
- FSJ National Historic Site voucher program
- Murray Ridge Ski Hill voucher program

Progress Report – If you have reported on this initiative in a previous year's PLGR, what has changed since then? What progress has been made, or what obstacles have you encountered?

N/A

Budgetary Information – please outline whether/how provincial funding (annual or one-time/targeted e.g., CRR, EPP, Enhancement Grants) contributes to the estimated cost of this initiative.

Provincial funding is essential to program development and continuity. Provincial annual grants contribute physical materials and e-resources, but it is the BC Enhancement Grant funding that is truly transforming our library. Where we previously had naked walls and empty space, we now have comfortable, modular furniture and an array of supports for both in-house and partnership programs.

Rationale – Why was this initiative prioritized? (e.g. fulfilling commitments under strategic plan, responding to emergent community need, availability of funding, etc.)

Program development and additions this year align with our 2022-27 Strategic Goals:

- Advancing Truth and Reconciliation
- Promoting Sustainability
- Providing Equitable Access
- Increasing Community Engagement

What impacts does/will this initiative have on the library and/or the community? Please include any applicable metrics or quantitative data to demonstrate impact.

Library visits in 2023 were up by 38.9%, while program attendance increased by 58.1%. Programs which have an economic impact on patrons are most popular. After school, summer and Pro-D programs help families bridge child-care gaps. Experience voucher programs allow lower-income families to enjoy community anchor attractions which would otherwise be beyond their budget. The costs of evolving educational and recreational technology tools can be distributed or eliminated altogether, increasing accessibility and equity.

We have worked closely with community partners to ensure we are leveraging our collective capacities towards shared priorities, while avoiding duplication of effort and expenditures. Our programs will continue to develop in response to community needs and the changing internal capacities of our partners.

3. CHALLENGES

The following topics have been identified as recurrent themes in prior years' PLGRs, along with challenges that have surfaced throughout the current year. Use the 'Other' row at the bottom of the table to include any ongoing or past challenges that are not included in this list. If you have more than one 'Other' item to add, please "copy" the last row and use the "paste" function to insert additional rows as needed.

Please use the check boxes in the 'Rating' column to specify how severely your library has been impacted by each challenge in the past year. If a listed challenge does not affect your library, you may leave that row blank.

Use the 'Response' column to briefly describe how the challenge has affected your library in the past year, and what actions your library has taken to address it, referring to the Featured Initiatives section above where applicable. If no action was taken, explain what the barriers are.


Challenge	Rating	Response
Financial pressure (e.g., rising costs, reduced revenues, forecasting uncertainty, local budget)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High concern <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input type="checkbox"/> Least concern	Despite a very fortunate year, long-term financial sustainability beyond 2025 continues to be a primary concern. Any reduction in funding will have an immediate and direct impact to library services and programs.
Governance (e.g., changes on the library board, relationship/conversations with local government)	<input type="checkbox"/> High concern <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Least concern	
Emergency response (e.g., fires, floods, extreme weather)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High concern <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input type="checkbox"/> Least concern	The library acted as a cooling station during 2023 heat waves. Wildfires impacted air quality to such a degree that staff were off sick, and programs were cancelled.
Staffing (e.g., recruitment and retention, mental health, and wellness)	<input type="checkbox"/> High concern <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Least concern	
Connectivity (e.g., low bandwidth, lack of home internet in the community)	<input type="checkbox"/> High concern <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input type="checkbox"/> Least concern	Our download speed is 12 Mbps, far below Canada's national averages for both

		rural (20.9 Mbps) and urban (74.61 Mbps) areas.
Infrastructure/facilities (e.g., aging/damaged, renovations, new builds/upgrades/expansions)	<input type="checkbox"/> High concern <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input type="checkbox"/> Least concern	<p>Our HVAC is geothermal, taking several days to 'catch up' to outdoor temperatures. We regularly use supplemental heating and cooling devices to keep staff and patrons comfortable.</p> <p>We frequently have vehicle overflow into adjacent parking lots.</p>
Community access to the library (e.g., geographic isolation, lack of local public transit, building accessibility)	<input type="checkbox"/> High concern <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input type="checkbox"/> Least concern	<p>The library is within walking distance of residents in the district municipality and Nak'azdli Whut'en.</p> <p>Tl'azt'en Nation and Binche Whut'en offer round-trip bus services twice weekly.</p> <p>Residents in Yekooche First Nation, Takla Nation, and the regional district rural areas do not have access to public transportation.</p>
Disappearing services in the community (e.g., government, banking, health)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High concern <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input type="checkbox"/> Least concern	<p>Access to in-person, human support continues to decline across all sectors. Library staff help patrons navigate online government, banking, health, education, telecommunication, and retail systems daily. Senior and newcomer populations are most severely impacted.</p>

Public health (e.g., COVID-19, vaccinations, access to Telehealth)	<input type="checkbox"/> High concern <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input type="checkbox"/> Least concern	
Regulatory impacts (e.g., accessibility, privacy, employment standards)	<input type="checkbox"/> High concern <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Least concern	
Vulnerable communities (e.g., people experiencing homelessness, addiction, mental health crisis)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High concern <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input type="checkbox"/> Least concern	<p>In 2023, we had four ambulance calls to revive non-responsive patrons struggling with complex social/medical issues.</p> <p>We also had 52 incident reports related to open container alcohol use, drug residue/paraphernalia, or biohazard waste.</p>
Sociopolitical tensions (e.g. intellectual freedom, protests, global events, racism, homophobia)	<input type="checkbox"/> High concern <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input type="checkbox"/> Least concern	<p>Our library processed two Requests for Reconsideration in the 2023 year; all items were retained in the collection.</p>
Other (please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/> High concern <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern <input type="checkbox"/> Least concern	

4. BOARD APPROVAL

Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.

Library Director Signature: 

Date: 22 FEB 2024

Board Chair Signature: Suzie M Evans - East

Date: Feb 22, 2024.