



Public Library Network Policy

May 2022

Statement of Purpose

Public libraries provide citizens with educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities. Libraries have diverse resources and abilities and no single library can provide services as effectively as all libraries in partnership. Public libraries are most effective when they share expertise and capacity and cooperate with each other in a network.

In Alberta the Public Library Network links public libraries and enables sharing. Network components include policies, agreements, technology, and support. The network helps meet Ministry goals related to communities as defined in the Ministry's official plans.

Policy

The Government of Alberta has established and sustains a network known as the Public Library Network that connects Alberta's public libraries to enable access to public library resources and services for Albertans. The network is coordinated and supported by Alberta Municipal Affairs through Public Library Services Branch.

Principles

The network is governed by the following set of principles:

1. The network provides equitable access to public library resources for Albertans.
2. Albertans' user experience of the network will be seamless.
3. Alberta's public library boards are autonomous and remain responsible for local service delivery.
4. Sharing and reciprocity are integral to the success of the Public Library Network.
5. Network Participants support a philosophy of collaboration and sharing.
6. Participation in the Public Library Network is voluntary; only public library boards that are network participants shall receive the benefits of the network.
7. The network will be governed by operational policies, which include directives and guidelines.

Roles

Alberta Municipal Affairs, Public Library Services Branch (PLSB) Provides primary support for the Public Library Network by:

- providing for the necessary provincewide technological infrastructure (e.g., high speed broadband capability);
- establishing operational policies with directives and guidelines for the network in cooperation with network participants;
- facilitating an interlibrary loan service and any other services (e.g., centralized licensing of certain resources) deemed appropriate and necessary for the Public Library Network;
- providing operational funding to library boards that are in compliance with the *Libraries Act* in part to enable resource sharing across the province; and

- designating Public Library Network Operational Partners for specific functions in the Public Library Network.

Public Library Network Operational Partners (Network Operational Partners)

Public Library Network Operational Partners are identified in each network operational policy and their functions are defined therein. All identified Network Operational Partners are Network Participants.

In order to maintain a high level of efficiency in the Public Library Network, a limited number of organizations are designated as Network Operational Partners. It is not the intent of PLSB to expand the number of Network Operational Partners currently in place. It is possible that the total number of Network Operational Partners may decrease.

In general, the role of a Network Operational Partner in any network function is to provide the means by which all Network Participants can gain consistent access to all the resources and services available through the Public Library Network. This role necessitates that a Network Operational Partner will have sufficient and appropriate technological, human capital, financial, technical, and policy capacity to fulfill the designated function and ensure equitability of access across the Public Library Network.

Network Operational Partners are supporting organizations. Input from these organizations is key to the optimal functioning of the Public Library Network. However, decisions about the Public Library Network rest with the Government of Alberta.

Network Participants

A Network Participant is any library board in Alberta that:

- operates a library service point or library system that is identified as a Network Operational Partner under any network operational policy, or;
- is in a jurisdiction that is a member of a library system

Network participants:

- abide by the network operational guidelines established by PLSB, and;
- provide necessary capacity to connect to the network including (but not limited to) trained staff, appropriate technology as specified in the network operational policies.

Network participants are operational partners in public library service delivery. Input from these organizations is key to the optimal functioning of the Public Library Network. However, decisions about the Public Library Network rest with the Government of Alberta.

Definitions

Autonomous: The right and ability for local library boards to control their local operations and fully manage and control their library services, subject only to legislative and policy requirements.

Equitable access: Fair and open access to information regardless of user location.

Interlibrary loan (ILL): the temporary transfer of print and non-print library materials, or a copy of those materials, from one Network Participant to another in response to a specific patron request. This may be done physically or electronically.

Library board(s): Any municipal library board, intermunicipal library board, or library system board established under the *Libraries Act*.

Library System: A provincial library system as defined in the *Libraries Act*.

Local library board: Any municipal, intermunicipal, Metis Settlement, or First Nations Reserve library board.

Reciprocity: The principle that Network Participants contribute to the Public Library Network in order to receive benefits.

Seamless: Policy and technology discrepancies either do not limit users' access to resources and services or are not visible and/or disruptive from the user perspective.