

# Plans of Service in Alberta public libraries

Review and discussion with \_ Library Board

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Ken Feser  
Library Consultant, Public Library Services Branch  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs  
Tel (780) 415-0769

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## Agenda:

- Plans of Service: legal requirements for Alberta public library
- Recommended approach to writing a Plan of Service
- The Alberta situation: training initiatives and available resources
- Local situation: library services and programs, existing library Plan of Service, next steps

## Legal requirements for Alberta public libraries

The Libraries Regulation, AR 141/98:

**13(1)** In managing and controlling a municipal library, a municipal board or intermunicipal library board shall

- a) Within 3 years of being established, develop and file with the Minister a plan of service with a mission statement and goals and objectives based on a needs assessment of the municipality or municipalities served by the board, and
- b) Annually review its plan of service.

**(2)** A municipal board or intermunicipal library board shall file with the Minister a copy of its current plan of service with goals and objectives not less frequently than every 5 years following the date on which the plan was previously filed with the Minister.

### Summary:

You must have a plan of service including goals and objectives, based on a community needs assessment.

### Role of Public Library Services Branch

- PLSB ensures that a current plan of service is on file
- Provincial funding requires current Plan of Service (and other things)
- PLSB wants to see the plan of service become more useful to libraries, more of a true planning / governance document

## Recommended approach to writing a Plan of Service

Based on Strategic Planning for Results (Sandra Nelson, Public Library Association)

- Authoritative
- Community oriented
- “Easy” (well-explained, real-world, step-by-step process)

### The process “in a nutshell”:

- Work with community representatives to define community needs.
- Determine which community needs the library can help to meet.
- Pick library “service responses” which respond to community needs.
- Develop goals and objectives that implement the service responses.
- Allocate resources (staff, budget) to support goals and objectives.



## Planning for Results: Details

### The Planning Committee

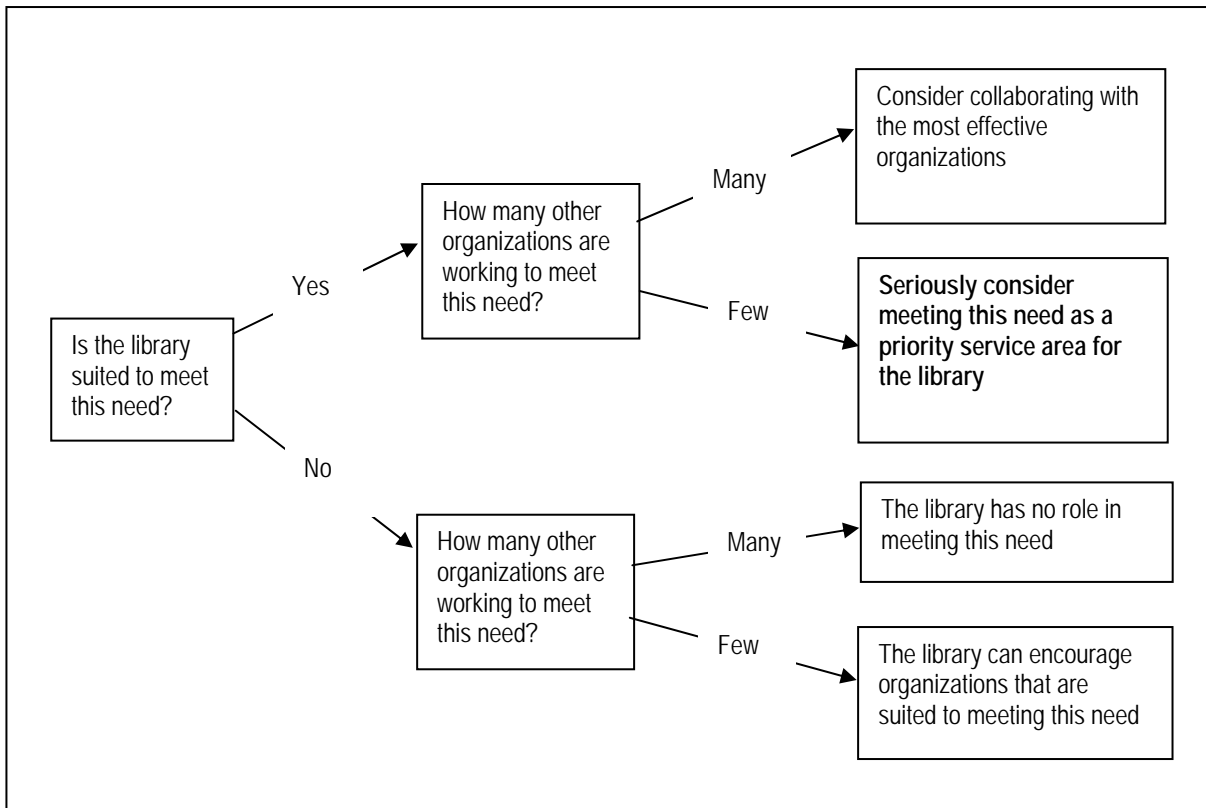
- A group of people (mostly) external to the library
- They review community needs, select the needs that the library can meet, and select library service responses (which are later finalized by the Board)
- They are active at the beginning of the process: 2 full day meetings

### Determining Community Needs

- The planning committee is like a focus group, can themselves define community needs (through visioning exercises, etc.)
- Municipal planning documents and other materials may also include community needs
- Census data, etc. might be useful input for the group determining community needs, but demographic data and other community information are not community needs - a community need is something like “Our town needs better roads” or “The teens in our community need somewhere to go after school that offers them constructive things to do”.

### Selecting Community Needs

- Not all community needs are relevant to the library, e.g. the library probably can't help improve roads
- Needs decision tree:



## Planning for Results: Details (continued)

### Service Responses

- The community committee and the library select Service Responses that respond to community needs
- There are 18 service responses that capture almost everything that a public library would normally do (see attached list)

### Goals and Objectives

- The library develops goals and objectives to put the selected Service Responses into action
- A goal is the benefit a target audience will receive from the library's service, e.g. "Teens will have materials and programs that fit their current interests"
- An objective is the way the library will measure progress towards a goal, e.g. "Each year, at least x teens will attend library programs."

### The planning timeline

The planning process should take about 4 months

Sample calendar:

- Decide to begin a planning process (Jan 12)
- Appoint planning committee (Jan 18-Feb 6)
- Staff orientation (Jan 27-29)
- First planning committee meeting (Feb 25)
- Staff and Board review of committee recommendations (Mar 1-20)
- Second planning committee meeting (Mar 25)
- Board acts on committee recommendations (Apr 13)
- Staff writes goals and objectives (Apr 19-30)
- Action planning and implementation (May on)

## The Alberta situation: training initiatives and available resources

### Training

- About 50 professionals from the Alberta library community have been trained to deliver training in the Planning for Results process. They will be available to deliver this training soon (within weeks).
- Library boards and library staff would be good recipients of training.
- Libraries with plans of service due in 2010 will be a priority for training.

### Available resources

- Public Library Services Branch staff are available to assist libraries with writing Plans of Service. Staff resources are limited so availability is unfortunately limited too.
- Library system staff have been trained in the Planning for Results process and they may also be available to provide assistance with plan writing. This depends on the services offered by the system and availability of staff and must be negotiated directly with the library system.
- Some private consultants have been trained and may also be available.
- Facilitators from Alberta Culture and Community Spirit are available for non-profit community organizations like library. Some facilitators have been trained in Planning for Results and others are able to facilitate meetings such as the planning committee's meetings.
- The Public Library Services Branch will do everything possible to assist libraries in developing quality plans of service.

### Smaller libraries

- The Public Library Services Branch and the regional library systems are working on ways to simplify and customize the Planning for Results process for smaller libraries.
- The PLSB and the library systems recognize that smaller libraries may need assistance with their planning.
- Simplifications are possible (e.g. one community meeting instead of two), but remember:
  - *It is a good idea for an library (large or small) to focus on community needs, and*
  - *The Planning for Results approach to community needs assessment is already quite straightforward.*