

Public Library Network Policy

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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 a public library network links 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 shall 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:

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

Public Library Network Nodes (Nodes)

Municipal Affairs has designated the following as Nodes in the Public Library Network:

Chinook Arch Library Board	City of Calgary Library Board
City of Edmonton Library Board	City of Grande Prairie Library Board
City of Lethbridge Library Board	City of Medicine Hat Library Board
City of Red Deer Library Board	City of St. Albert Library Board
Marigold Library Board	Northern Lights Library Board
Parkland Library Board	Peace Library Board
RM of Wood Buffalo Library Board	Shortgrass Library Board
Strathcona County Library Board	Yellowhead Library Board

The Nodes are responsible for:

- a) implementing network operational guidelines in cooperation with the PLSB;
- b) facilitating access to the network by other network participants; and
- c) providing necessary staffing, technology, and expertise to support the network.

Network Participants

Any library board in Alberta that is either a designated Node, a partner of a Node via library system membership, or a partner of a Node under pre-existing arrangements (i.e. Fort Saskatchewan), is considered a network participant.

Network participants are responsible for:

- a) fully participating in the network and abiding by the network operational guidelines established by PLSB;
- b) providing necessary capacity to connect to the network including (but not limited to) trained staff, appropriate technology, and agreement with a suitable Node.

Definitions

Autonomy: 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: the temporary transfer of library materials, or copies of those materials, from one participating library to another in response to a specific patron request.

Reciprocity: The principle that libraries must contribute to the 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.

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

Library System Membership: Participation by a municipality and its library board in a library system as defined in the *Libraries Act*.