

Collaborative Library Policy

Government of Alberta ministries will collaborate to support programs and services that enable Albertans to have equitable and standardized access to publicly-funded library resources.

The Government of Alberta will collaborate with library stakeholders to:

- Support efficient and effective library service delivery.
- Improve capacity of publicly-funded library service.

A Supportive Vision

The collaborative library policy benefits Albertans by enabling and encouraging the growth and development of library services to help sustain and enhance communities. Libraries provide the physical and virtual meeting spaces for Albertans to gather, find information, discuss and debate, and to be active intellectual citizens engaged in life-long learning.

The collaborative library policy enhances publicly-funded libraries' ability to work with government towards seamless access to library resources for all Albertans. Seamless access means Alberta's library users, regardless of the physical or virtual library they use, can access a core set of physical and electronic resources.

- Access will happen through shared library catalogues, e-databases, interlibrary loan, and use of emerging technologies.
- Resource-sharing between publicly-funded libraries will be encouraged by each ministry and supported when appropriate.
 - e.g. Municipal Affairs is working with public library stakeholders to implement "Alberta-wide borrowing" where an Alberta library user can use their local municipal public library card at any municipal public library in the Alberta provincial library network.
- The Alberta Library (TAL) consortium will be a mechanism for cross-sectoral collaboration and resource-sharing amongst different types of libraries.

The collaborative library policy supports efforts to minimize barriers that prevent Albertans' access to library services and/or resources. These barriers include:

- varying technological infrastructures that cause uneven virtual access to library resources; and
- varying conditions of membership for Albertans using, and not able to use, public libraries – including those Albertans living on reserves or in communities with co-located school housed public libraries.

The collaborative library policy guides the Government of Alberta's cross-ministry library work and guides and supports external relations with library stakeholders.

- The policy respects the diverse roles and services that local public, school, and post-secondary libraries occupy in Alberta's diverse communities; while enabling stakeholders and government to work towards more efficient and effective library service delivery.

- The policy supports highlighting work already going on between ministries and libraries, such as the prominent role public libraries play in hosting and helping deliver initiatives such as “Alberta Culture Days”, which help promote the library as a community hub for engaged citizens.
- The collaboration between publicly-funded libraries and government will involve shared planning of relevant initiatives. This could include consideration of publicly-funded libraries as a possible delivery mechanism for Government of Alberta initiatives related to library service (such as improving literacy amongst publicly-funded library users).

The collaborative library policy ensures strategic policy alignment within government that will increase Albertans’ access to library services. Strategic alignment within government will also enable continuation of, and improvement to, initiatives that promote professionalization of library staff (especially to ensure effective use of new technologies).

Achieving the Vision – Key Outcomes

Policy Outcome 1: Improved access to publicly-funded library resources.

In support of this outcome, the Government of Alberta commits to:

- enhance access to publicly-funded library resources by helping remove barriers to access;
- enable libraries to meet the diverse needs of students and the public by providing resources and expertise to support inclusive education and lifelong learning;
- improve library service for under-served, inequitably served, under-represented or disadvantaged Albertans;
- implement and maintain a province-wide public library technology plan (that could extend to other library sectors over time); and
- work with partners and stakeholders, such as the multi-library sector organization, TAL, to capitalize on new and emerging technologies in library service and resource-sharing.

Policy Outcome 2: Efficient and effective library service delivery.

In support of this outcome, the Government of Alberta commits to:

- encourage collaborations and partnerships that improve efficiencies in resource acquisition, distribution, and information dissemination between and among publicly-funded libraries and between libraries and their communities (geographic communities and communities of interest);
- ensure strategic policy alignment in support of library programs by government departments; and
- consider revised and potentially new structured mechanisms for library service collaboration:
 - between publicly-funded library sectors;
 - between the province and municipalities;
 - between government departments through the cross-ministry work of the Assistant Deputy Minister Library Services Committee;
 - between government and publicly-funded libraries and library systems;

- between government and autonomous library organizations that administer or govern library services such as TAL, Alberta Public Library Electronic Network (APLEN), Alberta Library Trustees Association (ALTA), and the Library Association of Alberta (LAA); and
- between government and educational institutions.

Policy Outcome 3: Increased capacity for quality library service.

In support of this outcome, the Government of Alberta commits to:

- support organizational capacity strategies with library service providers;
- enable increased capacities to train and employ professional librarians across library sectors; and
- provide leadership and coordination in library service issues that have a provincial perspective to:
 - improve library services for all Aboriginal Albertans;
 - support new Canadians;
 - support Albertans requiring assistive technology (e.g. digital, print, large print and Braille formats) to access library services that are inclusive; and
 - align with other Government of Alberta policies that have a provincial perspective, such as the 'Living Literacy' framework and Alberta's rural development strategy.

The Collaborative Library Policy contributes to building stronger Alberta communities.