



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: April 23, 2014
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RTS No.: 10558
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-01/2013-01
Meeting Date: June 24, 2014

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Chief Librarian in consultation with the Chief Digital Officer
SUBJECT: Vancouver Public Library Digital Media Lab (Inspiration Lab)

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve a contribution of \$200,000 for the Vancouver Public Library Digital Media lab ("Inspiration Lab") with the source of funds to be the Innovation Fund.

REPORT SUMMARY

The report recommends the approval of \$200,000 in matching funds from the City's Innovation Fund to support the creation of Vancouver Public Library Digital Media lab ("Inspiration Lab").

The funding will be used to help construct and furnish with furniture and technology the Inspiration Lab at the Central Library. The City's investment of \$200,000 leverages funds being raised by the Vancouver Public Library Foundation.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On February 29, 2012, as part of the 2012 Operating Budget Report, Vancouver City Council moved and passed the following recommendation:

"AND FURTHER THAT, as part of the 2012 operating budget, Council request the City Manager to report back with a range of options for the creation of an Innovation Fund that would be used to leverage additional monies from external sources. (e.g. other orders of government, not for profit organizations, private sector, universities and foundations). The use of the Innovation Fund is to advance City policy while attaining an enhanced value for the City's investment."

In a memo to Council on March 1, 2012, staff outlined options for the fund. Subsequently, as part of the 2012, 2013 and 2014 Operating budgets, Council has approved the Innovation Fund, at a level of \$2 million per year.

Further information about the City of Vancouver Innovation Fund, including the criteria and guidelines for accessing this funding, is contained in the Appendix A.

On April 10, 2013, Vancouver City Council moved and passed the following recommendations with regards to the proposed City of Vancouver Digital Strategy:

- A. THAT Council approve the Digital Strategy as a framework to guide strategic decisions regarding the City's digital services and infrastructure as outlined in Appendix A of the Administrative Report dated April 2, 2013, entitled "Digital Strategy", to enhance the City's services and access for residents and strengthen Vancouver's economic competitive advantage.
- B. THAT Council endorse the nine priority initiatives in principle, and instruct staff to proceed with the development of detailed project plans and associated funding strategies for all projects not yet implemented to align with future Annual Budget and Capital Planning Processes.
- C. THAT the Digital Strategy Working Group consider the extension of fibre infrastructure to priority locations.

The Digital Strategy noted the City's commitment to digital inclusion and addressing the ongoing digital divide through its ongoing investment in public technology provision and training services at the Vancouver Public Library.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City and the Library have a history of working cooperatively on various projects. The Chief Librarian headed the steering committee on the development of the City of Vancouver Digital Strategy. This project which leverages the Innovation Fund with matching funds from the Vancouver Public Library Foundation and the Library will ensure that the citizens of Vancouver have access to diverse technology, supporting their creativity and capacity development within the digital sphere.

The City Manager and the Chief Librarian recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

The Vancouver Public Library (VPL) has played a role in introducing Vancouver residents to technology and bridging the digital divide since the early 1990s when it first introduced public Internet and software computer workstations to allow residents without technology access to the web as well as training and support in navigate the web and creating and sharing content. Over the subsequent 20 years, VPL has continued to evolve its public technology services,

introducing new services as information technology has evolved (e.g., free public wi-fi, eReader lending) and evolving public technology training to address emerging digital literacy needs.

VPL has 22 locations across the city, providing more than 400 computers with Internet connectivity and open source office software and more than 100 additional computers that connect to our catalogue, paid subscription e-resources, and government information. In 2012, more than 68,000 Vancouver residents used computers at a library location. Community members used 15,000 hours per week of computer time, or 2,200 hours per day, at library workstations across the city, recording 1.4 million Internet sessions. 43,400 Vancouver residents and a further 16,000 visitors to Vancouver used the public library's computers in 2013.

With the explosion of smartphone and tablet use, the demand for VPL wireless has jumped dramatically. Users who cannot afford costly data plans rely on free wireless, which VPL offers across all its branches with a library card. Wireless sessions increased from close to 178,000 in 2009 to more than 590,000 in 2012, more than tripling over the four-year period. In 2013, wireless use nearly doubled again, rising to 1,075,020 sessions.

In terms of public training, VPL offers a range of public training on computer use, Internet use, and digital participation. The range of programming includes computer basics, to how to use twitter and other social media tools, to online privacy protection and personal archiving.

In 2013, VPL provided 541 free computer and digital literacy programs, which were attended by 3,348 people. These courses ranged from scheduled computer training, basic to advanced, to general technology help drop-ins and social media and other digital society instruction sessions, as well as training on eBook readers and advanced Internet research. Session formats include large group drop-ins and scheduled lessons, small group instruction, as well as one-on-one training.

VPL Public Consultation: Free-for-all (2012)

In 2012, VPL undertook 10 months of community consultation to inform the development of the library's *2013-2015 Strategic Plan*. Over 5,000 responses were received throughout this process and they covered a wide range of topics, including collections, programming and training, open hours, and technology services.

In the area of access to technology, requests for improvements to WiFi were most prevalent among participants in Free-for-all. Participants suggested adding wireless printing, increasing the number of computers, and lending laptops, iPads and eBook readers, for both in-library use and to borrow and take home.

Library patrons did not express an expectation that the public library would provide cutting edge technology for borrowing (e.g., laptops); however, many expressed interest in exploring technology within the library as it enters the mainstream. They suggested stations for preparing documents, stations for converting formats to digital (e.g. VHS to DVD) and the ability to create their own content with multimedia software suites. Film production support was suggested as a desired new service, including filming facilities. Access to a greater range of software was a recurring theme in consultation across the programming and public space surveys during Free-for-All.

Evolution of the Library as a Creative Space: Inspiration Lab

Arising from Free-for-all and with the intent of continuing to update the library's technology services in keeping with advances in digital culture and learning, VPL began to envision a new space that evolves the longstanding concept of a public library as shared community creative and learning infrastructure. This new space was envisioned as offering the public access to creative digital technologies - for those who could not afford it themselves or for those who require facilitation to engage with it - to ensure all Vancouver residents have opportunities to participate in broader digital culture.

The proposed Digital Media Lab ("Inspiration Lab") is planned as an area of approximately 3,000 square feet with a focus on digital creation. It is intended to serve as a lively, interactive space that includes:

- Sound recording and sound mixing
- Video recording and video editing
- Self-publishing support for creating photo books and eBooks
- Digitization equipment for converting photos, documents and videos into digital format

The audience for the space will be:

- New and aspiring professionals who need access to tools to build portfolios that demonstrate their expertise or spaces for virtual private meetings
- Families digitizing photos, creating videos or recording oral histories to preserve and share their history and significant life events
- Teens who want to exercise their creativity
- Community organizations creating and preserving stories to share their history and culture.

Key activities supported in the Inspiration Lab will include:

- Individuals working on personal projects using computers, equipment and software
- Small groups collaborating in enclosed meeting spaces or around workstations
- Lectures and coaching from community experts at designated times
- Building and supporting informal learning networks among community members
- Viewing projects (completed and in-progress) to inspire future creation
- Scheduled screenings and public programming

The Inspiration Lab area will include 20 workstations, flexible seating, and 5 bookable computer-supported flexible spaces that will support a variety of different activities, from creation to collaboration.

The VPL Foundation's Inspiration Lab Advisory Committee, comprised of members of the local high tech and creative digital sectors, has met a number of times to discuss technology and programming priorities for the space from their perspectives, increasing the Library's understanding of the need for flexible and collaborative workspaces and ways we can support

entrepreneurial patrons who have more advanced technology skills as well as those who are approaching the library as newer or less confident technology users.

Strategic Analysis

Digital Divide

Although 84% of the population of Vancouver has a computer with Internet access at home, 16% do not.¹ Through VPL, the City of Vancouver ensures access to technology and the Internet for this group, helping to address the digital divide. Statistics Canada described the digital divide as “the gap between Information and Communications Technology (ICT) ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, [using it] as an umbrella term for many issues, including infrastructure and access to ICTs, use and impediments to use, and the crucial role of ICT literacy and skills to function in an information society.” (Sciadas, G. *Digital Divide in Canada*. Statistics Canada, 2001).

According to Statistics Canada's 2010 Canadian Internet Use Survey, only 54% of households with incomes of \$30,000 or less have home Internet access. In Greater Vancouver, 42.8% of the population is low income according to Statistics Canada. In households with incomes over \$87,000, 97% have home Internet access. As noted above, Environics market research firm reports that, in Vancouver, 16% of homes do not have Internet access and 5% of homes that do have Internet are using low-speed dial-up access, limiting their ability to participate in the high speed digital world, which is filled with multimedia streaming content for news, entertainment, education and community engagement.

While Canadians continue to rank among the world's top Internet users, as noted by research firm ComScore, joining and participating in the online world is not easy for everyone. Digital skills and ability vary dramatically by age and income and so opportunities to benefit from training and support are critical to safe and effective engagement. The City of Vancouver's Digital Strategy identifies the Vancouver Public Library as a key investment in addressing the digital divide through opportunities for digital inclusion, ensuring all Vancouver residents regardless of their age, income, and confidence level have the opportunity to participate in diverse aspects of digital society.

Financial

The total budget for this project is \$760,000. The Vancouver Public Library Foundation is raising funds for this project. At the March 26, 2014 Library Board meeting, up to \$200,000 from the Library's reserve for gifts and grants was approved to assist with funding for the Digital Media Lab (Inspiration Lab) project. The Board also requested that Management prepare this report seeking matching funding from the Innovation Fund.

The City's Innovation funding support of \$200,000 will be matched by external funding and/or Library reserves for Gifts and Grants. This investment leverages funding from external sources and demonstrates Council's commitment towards bridging the digital divide and supporting the creativity of Vancouver residents. As outlined in Appendix B, this project aligns fully with the guidelines for the Innovation Fund.

¹ Vancouver's homeless population is not included in these estimates. In 2013, the City of Vancouver count identified 1,600 individuals without homes. Of these, 1,327 were staying in shelters and 273 were unsheltered.

As part of the 2012, 2013 and 2014 Operating budgets, Council has approved an Innovation Fund, at a level of \$2 million per year. Information about the City of Vancouver Innovation Fund, including the criteria and guidelines for accessing this funding, is contained in Appendix B.

CONCLUSION

The Inspiration Lab will offer opportunities for VPL to support patrons' exploration of digital creation and to enhance public programming related to technology, increasing digital literacy and engagement.

This report requests that Council approve funding of \$200,000 from the City's Innovation Fund in support of the Library's Inspiration Lab project.

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City of Vancouver Innovation Fund:

Increasingly, more opportunities exist to work with other parties to leverage expertise, funding, and access to various in kind resources in order to focus on strategic areas important to the city. This form of leverage allows the City to continue to advance its policy priorities at a lower cost to taxpayers.

The Innovation Fund is expected to build on the City's experience in leveraging funding and expertise with outside agencies, other levels of government, private sector, universities and not-for-profits to advance key City priorities through aggressive leveraging of external partners.

Some examples of these types of unique opportunities would include: Enhancing the success of our urban aboriginal residents; enhancing our local economy with an emphasis on social enterprise particularly in the green sector; innovative child care programs for children at risk; cultural programs which enhance the community and create local jobs for artists; enhancing the involvement of our seniors in community; enhancing our sport strategy through partnerships of significant sporting initiatives; sport for youth at risk; and others.

Guidelines for accessing City of Vancouver Innovation Fund:

With the establishment of an Innovation Fund, one time innovative projects can be funded to advance key agendas in the city. Accessing the City of Vancouver Innovation is at Council discretion; however, the following guidelines have been established to optimize the use of the fund:

- Aligns with Council Agenda (Housing, Public Safety, Economy, Environment)
- Demonstrates clear outcomes
- Matching requirements - target leverage of 3:1 (minimum 1:1) 3rd party investment (cash and in-kind) to City funding
- Size of CoV contribution should enable a broad range of programs to be supported by fund (Guideline - maximum project size of \$250,000 recommended).
- Projects which are one-time innovative opportunities; maximum commitment for expenditure of funds - up to 2 years
- Supports transformation and innovation in meeting City goals; shines a spotlight on Vancouver

To date, Council has approved the following uses of the innovation fund:

1. In March 2012, Council approved a contribution of \$148,800 toward the Vancouver Rent Bank, which leveraged resources from the Vancouver Foundation and Streethome Foundation. The Vancouver Rent Bank aims to increase housing stability by preventing evictions or loss of essential utilities. (RTS #9484)
2. In March 2013, Council earmarked \$1,000,000 of the fund for an addition of \$1 million dollars to the Community Social Services and related grant funds to help meet the existing and emerging funding gaps. (RTS # 9991)

3. In May 2013, Council approved two grants from the Innovation Fund over a two year period (2013 & 2014) totalling \$380,000. This was comprised of a grant of \$300,000 to the Vancity Community Foundation's Social Enterprise Portfolio Program to support social enterprises with business and management development, marketing and small capital costs, and a grant of \$80,000 to Potluck Café Society's Recipes for Success Program, to provide resources and support to social enterprises and small businesses in the DTES, and to hire and retain residents who have encountered barriers to employment. (RTS #10053)
4. In May 2013, Council approved a contribution of \$200,000 towards the 125th anniversary celebrations of Stanley Park. The Vancouver Park Board requested the City's matching funds to undertake the 125th anniversary celebrations for the citizens of Vancouver and visitors to the City. The City's contribution of \$200,000 will be used to pay for artistic fees, infrastructure costs, and production staff. (RTS #10120)
5. In July 2013, Council approved funding support of \$535,000 towards initiatives of Truth and Reconciliation Canada (TRC) and Reconciliation Canada (RC) during *Reconciliation Week* leveraging \$2.95M from external partners (5.5:1 leverage) demonstrating Council's commitment towards Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian Public. (RTS #10216)
6. In December 2013, Council approved a contribution of \$200,000 towards the Special Purpose Reserves as a funding source for the Centennial Pole (Mungro Martin) restoration capital project to begin in 2014 and spanning multiple years. (RTS #10267)
7. In June 2014, Council approved a grant from the Innovation Fund over a three year period totaling \$300,000 for BC Artscape.

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Alignment to Innovation Fund:

Innovation Fund Guidelines	Project Alignment
Aligns with City Priorities	Aligns with City's Digital Strategy, and is represented by the Corporate Business plan goal 9E: VPL Digital Lab:
Leverages minimum 1:1 3 rd party investment	\$200K City investment leverages \$560K from external sources and Library funds
One-time opportunity (2 year maximum)	City's investment in the Vancouver Public Library Digital Media Lab (Inspiration Lab) will leverage this opportunity to provide a lively interactive space at the Central Library.
Demonstrates clear outcome and transformation towards CoV goals	The Digital Strategy noted the City's commitment to digital inclusion and addressing the digital divide through its ongoing investment in public technology provision and training services at the Vancouver Public Library. The Vancouver Public Library Digital Media lab (Inspiration Lab) aligns with this commitment.