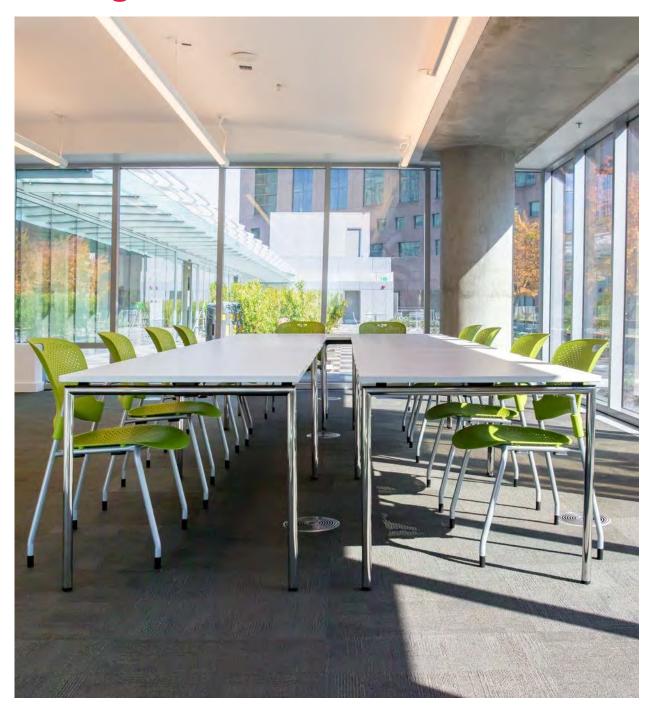# Staffing

Section 1: Index of Key Assumptions

During a pandemic and recovery from it, how can public libraries:

- Support and accommodate staff, including those:
  - who are most vulnerable to COVID-19 once physical services resume?
  - who have child/elder care obligations?
  - who may come to work sick rather than provide medical notes?
  - experiencing mental health issues arising from, or exacerbated by, COVID-19?
- Meet their obligations to provide a safe work environment, including:
  - responding to staff fears and anxiety about safety in the workplace?
  - ensuring a safe workplace and constructively addressing work refusals?
  - determining what PPE or public health measures will be required?
- Manage the recall process for staff who are laid off/on leave?
- Contemplate continued remote work arrangements?
- Build agile workplace cultures to respond quickly and innovate rapidly?
- Promote a change positive culture in times of uncertainty and rapid evolution?
- Motivate employees and increase staff engagement in difficult times?
- Develop competencies
  - to deliver trauma informed approaches to support each other?
  - learn to collaborate, communicate and deliver services and programs virtually?
- Support leaders in identifying and developing the skills and competencies needed in an unprecedented crisis and in a time of ongoing uncertainty for staff?

Section 2: Best & Leading Practices

Note: the information below provides general considerations and some best practices related to staffing during a pandemic and recovery therefrom. In all cases, ensure that your organization is referencing your provincial occupational health and safety (OHS), human rights, and employment standards legislation and resources. Municipalities may have resources and support relevant to their libraries; it may be valuable or necessary to work closely with municipalities on developing policies and procedures.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Accommodations
- Family status, including parent-child relationships, is a protected ground under human rights legislation.
  - Consult provincial human rights legislation and related resources to ensure the duty to accommodate, and any limits that may apply to it, are well understood.
  - Some questions related to family status accommodations are:
    - Is the employee the only caregiver? Can they share responsibility?
    - What level of care is required?
    - Can childcare responsibilities be accommodated through scheduling changes or flexible schedules or work from home options?
    - Can the employee reduce their hours temporarily or make use of paid leave options?

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- Some workers (e.g. older adults, those with pre-existing medical conditions) are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19. Given these heightened risks, additional measure to limits exposure may include:
  - Temporary accommodations to non-public facing roles
  - Continued remote work arrangements
  - Change of duties or schedules to provide less contact with the public
- Requiring medical documentation to support sick leave claims for COVID-19 may be prohibited under current legislation, as it is for instance in Ontario. This is in recognition that requests for medical notes place unnecessary burden on the healthcare system and increase risk of exposure. Where this requirement is part of the library's collective bargaining agreement (CBA), a letter of understanding on the topic could be produced.
- The duty to accommodate bona fide medical issues extends to mental health conditions. Given the heightened anxiety associated with the pandemic, additional support may help staff feeling heightened levels of stress. Such supports may include:
  - access to Employee and Family Assistance Programs
  - additional services (e.g. mental health support workshops) from community-based organizations such as the Canadian Mental Health Association
  - resource lists on stress reduction, resiliency, self-care, and overall wellness
  - additional communication efforts to address concerns
  - staff-led wellness practices (e.g. meditation challenge, walking meetings)

Health & Safety

- Libraries should ensure they have appropriate policies and practices related to employee leaves resulting from illness and/or quarantine. As part of recovery planning, libraries should review HR policies including attendance management programs, short term disability/sick leave policies, and other relevant programs to determine how the workplace consequences of a pandemic will be managed going forward.
- Employers have a duty to ensure a safe working environment and employees have the right to refuse unsafe work. Your organization's Joint Health and Safety team is a great forum for taking a proactive and collective approach to workplace safety. Consult provincial legislation and OHS resources for the most relevant information in your jurisdiction.
- Libraries must carefully review their obligations to provide a safe workplace, for instance by:
  - ensuring appropriate levels of cleaning of the facilities
  - providing approved cleaning supplies and training on the proper use of cleaning supplies and protective equipment
  - implementing practices consistent with direction from public health (e.g. ensuring compliance with physical distancing requirements)
- Check with your local jurisdictions and public health authorities to identify your organization's need for PPE.
  - Begin with a risk assessment of exposure and potential for transmission. Factors assessed would include frequency of contact with others and the existence of physical barriers in the workplace. Currently, PPE is seen as one tool in a broader containment plan that must include physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and cleaning protocol for surfaces.

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- There may be supply chain issues related to PPE.
- Staff must be provided with training on the safe use of any PPE being used, for instance on the proper procedures for donning and doffing masks and gloves.
- The library will need to ensure safe disposal for disposable PPE.
- Staff may be permitted to use self-sourced masks/gloves, in which case the library should still have standards for safe use, disposal, and cleanliness.
- Use of masks is only recommended in combination with excellent hand hygiene, since wearing a mask is demonstrated to increase contact with the face.
- Estimates suggest that there has been a 20-30% increase in domestic violence resulting from the pandemic lockdown. Workers facing abuse and violence may struggle with performing their responsibilities and may be at risk by abusers who may follow them to the workplace. Some provinces specifically cite domestic violence in their OHS legislation. Managers should be able to recognize the signs of abuse and be familiar with the library's policies for intervening in cases of suspected domestic violence and ensure staff have access to related supports.

Staff Recalls

- The pandemic has resulted in work interruptions (e.g. layoffs, emergency leaves) in many library systems.
- In unionized environments, the CBA will typically provide recall language that must be followed for staff who have been laid off. Sometimes, these clauses will provide guidance for bumping procedures, if only parts of the workforce are to be recalled at any given time.
- It is important to keep lines of communication open between unions and management, especially in times of change and uncertainty so that there is a shared understanding for how to move forward. Shared understandings may be expressed in letters of understanding.

Remote Work Policies

- Given the public service and on-site responsibilities of many library employees, working from home will not be possible for all team members. Having said that, there may be times during the course of the pandemic when escalating infection rates and guidance from public health authorities compel or encourage employers to ensure that anyone who can work from home, does so.
- It will be important for libraries to build and implement work from home policies to promote the continuing health and safety of their team members, while ensuring that the needs of the organization are met.
- As employees return to the workplace, consider scheduling practices that reduce the risk of spread of the virus. For instance, employees in one department might be divided into teams that alternate working at home and on site, thus limiting opportunities for infection.

TEAM CULTURE & COMPETENCIES

Agile Culture

- An agile approach to project management may be productively applied to initiatives to redesign Library services in a world impacted by, and recovering from, a pandemic.

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- Agile approaches involve iterations and incremental steps leading to project success. Frequently applied in the software industry, agile approaches allow for rapid deployment of solutions, followed by feedback, course adjustments, and iterations to ensure solutions are advancing and continuously improving as quickly as possible.
- Another key feature of agile approaches is ensuring that cross-functional teams are engaged, so that the right decision makers are involved at every step and empowered to move the project forward. In terms of recovery plans for public libraries, such an approach has considerable benefits, ensuring that different departments including public service, HR, IT and others are informed, involved, and contributing along the way.

Managing Change

- Strong change management is doubly important in times of uncertainty and crisis. Diverse reactions to change from team members from all levels of the organization may be magnified in this time, running the gamut from those who are energized by the opportunity to problem solve and innovate to those who are demotivated by a dynamic environment in which they are feeling a loss or control or voice. It is indispensable to be highly reflective as employees, leaders, and organization about the urgent need for change and the processes being used to advance change during a crisis.
  - Set the stage for change by communicating effectively not only the kinds of changes we will be facing together, but also the guiding principles to be used (principles like *safety first*, *supporting communities*, and *working together*).
  - Keep people informed by communicating early and often, while also giving them an opportunity to contribute their questions and concerns so that team members feel heard and respected. With fewer opportunities to gather in person, use virtual methods of synchronous (e.g. live virtual town halls, teleconferences) and asynchronous (e.g. FAQs, regular email updates) communication.
  - Work across boundaries in your organization, bringing team members from different departments into active and focussed project or action groups. This kind of involvement will help ensure that as many team members as possible are, and feel they are, engaged in the decisions being made and will help ensure that they support, or buy into, new directions which they themselves have influenced.

Motivation & Engagement

- Keeping teams engaged is more important than ever in moments of crisis.
- Promote a shared vision of the role of the Library in the community during and after a pandemic; team members are generally highly motivated to work at public libraries because of the positive difference their work makes in the community, so continuing to focus on those impacts through communication and, where possible and safe, through new programs and initiatives, can be highly motivating.
- Consider staff engagement surveys as a way to gauge the extent to which the team is feeling motivated and involved in their work and the kinds of barriers they are facing or concerns they have. Be sure to respond to survey results by sharing them widely with teams and by acknowledging concerns directly and making concrete changes to address them wherever possible.

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- Recognizing team achievements during crises will assist in maintaining a positive culture in difficult times. Recognition can be as simple as personal emails from management to acknowledge staff who have given exceptional service through virtual programs or departments that have innovated new ways to work remotely or with social distancing.
- While it may seem that there is no time to invest in professional learning at this time, it may also be a unique opportunity for teams to be motivated and energized by learning new skills and exploring new perspectives, especially those relevant to the current crisis (e.g. gaining expertise in facilitating online programs).

Supporting the Development of New Skills

- There has been a shift in public librarianship to developing the skills to deliver trauma informed service models for patrons who are experiencing any number of barriers, including homelessness or mental health issues. The same tools can be used to assist patrons during or after a pandemic, the economic impact of which may well exacerbate already existing struggles being experienced by patrons.
- Related to trauma informed service models, compassion burnout can affect all levels of an organization. Consider developing a checklist that supervisors can use to monitor their teams' well-being. Modelling empathy within your organization sets the trend for your frontline workers to do the same with the public.
- Ensure we are supporting teams in developing the skills required to communicate in new, largely virtual environments, including working from home or remote locations. Video conferencing has become commonplace for remote working. There are many tutorials on using Microsoft Teams, Webex, and Zoom, available on Lynda, Percipio, and YouTube. Video and audio meeting etiquette starts with being prepared, muting your microphone when not speaking, and limiting any background distractions.
- Ensure that teams identify and gain the skills needed to deliver services and programming successfully in online environments. New skills to be developed include how to engage audiences in virtual environments and how to use the advanced features of virtual meeting software to create the best experience for attendees.
- It is important to ensure that teams have a strong understanding of copyright as it relates to the delivery of virtual story times and other related programs

Leadership

- Identifying and developing the skills and competencies of leaders during a pandemic and recovery from it is key. Seek out resources to support leaders in developing skills and expertise in such areas as:
  - leading and supporting virtual and remote teams, including supporting employees in taking care of themselves and avoiding burnout
  - coaching employees in times of change and uncertainty and at a time when the boundaries between personal and professional lives may be blurred
  - identifying what to put in place and how to communicate to ensure teams feel as safe as possible coming back to work
  - inspiring confidence in teams during times of change and disruption and supporting employees in constructively moving past self-doubt
  - understanding the varied risks confronting the organization and how to communicate and address them

STAFFING

- While library leaders may have networks to support them and professional learning options they can rely on individually, organizations may support library leaders in this unique time in a number of different ways:
  - consider a short needs assessment for your teams where they can self identify skills and competencies requiring development
  - tap into existing e-learning platforms through your Library's subscription (Lynda, Gale) and make time each week to develop skills (note: audited, non-certificate Coursera content is usually free, and many vendors are currently offering free training sessions and webinars, such as Vital Smarts)
  - investigate psychological safety and first aid concepts and guidelines, and how those principles can contribute to team and individual resilience
  - approach local colleges and universities to see if they can partner or assist with online leadership support, as they are often well positioned to offer this content

Section 3: Stories from the Field

- In the Okanagan Regional Library system, which covers a large geographical footprint, staffing virtual services with teams from different geographical areas gave team members an opportunity to work with colleagues with whom they would normally never collaborate; creating these relationships helped unify the team as one system.
- Having staff working away from public service points has allowed many library systems to hold all-staff town hall meetings virtually. In many locations, this opportunity for all staff to connect together has been a rarity in the past, but with the acceleration of the implementation of virtual meeting software in libraries across the country may become part of public library corporate culture going forward. Even single-location team meetings, where some employees are at home and some on site at the same time, can bring everyone together for regular updates and conversations.
- One way in which Library leaders continue to learn, particularly in times of crisis, is through collaboration among Canadian library systems. Informal and formal resource, idea, and document sharing across libraries has been an incredibly powerful way to ensure we are developing and advancing solutions as quickly as possible, without reinventing the wheel. CULC/CBUC is just one example of an organization you may be able to participate in to support your ongoing learning in the field. Provincial and regional organizations have rich resources as well.
- Many libraries have created supplemental learning calendars to augment existing training and professional learning, with a focus on emerging priorities. They have encouraged staff to evaluate the learning, share new discoveries, and completed courses may be tracked in employee records. Best practice has been to break up the learning into bite size chunks to encourage staff not to engage in webinar marathons.
- Work disruption is a potential opportunity to pilot new training on smaller staff contingents still working from home or on site. Calgary Public Library, for example, initiated Reconciliation and Diversity and Inclusion training so it could be refined prior to call backs, and new training would be ready for staff upon return.

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Section 4: Resources

HR RESOURCES

- Alberta. Workplace Guidance for Business Owners.
  https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-workplace-guidance-for-business-owners.pdf
- Alberta Health Services. Donning and Doffing.
  https://ahamms01.https.internapcdn.net/ahamms01/Content/AHS_Website/Information_For/if-hp-ipc-donning-and-doffing.mp4
- Alberta Human Rights Commission. COVID-19 and Human Rights.
  https://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/employment/Pages/covid19.aspx
- British Columbia Human Rights Clinic. Top Ten Human Rights for Employers during COVID-19. https://bchrc.net/top-ten-human-rights-tips-for-employers-during-covid-19/
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. Violence in the Workplace: Domestic Violence. https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/violence_domestic.html
- Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail. Questions et réponses – COVID-19. https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/covid-19/Pages/coronavirus.aspx
- Commission des droits de la personne du Nouveau-Brunswick. La Loi sur les droits de la personne du Nouveau Brunswick et la COVID-19.
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- Goldblatt Partners. Accommodating Workers and their Families during the COVID-19 Pandemic. https://goldblattpartners.com/wp-content/uploads/Accommodating-workers-and-families-April-17.pdf
- Ontario Human Rights Commission. COVID-19 and Ontario's Human Rights Code – Questions and Answers. http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/covid-19-and-ontario%E2%80%99s-human-rights-code-%E2%80%93-questions-and-answers-0
- Ontario Human Rights Commission. OHRC Policy Position on Medical Documentation to be provided when a disability-related accommodation request is made.
  http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ohrc-policy-position-medical-documentation-be-provided-when-disability-related-accommodation-request
- Ministry of Health, Ontario. COVID-19 Guidance: Essential Workplaces.
  http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_essential_workplaces_guidance.pdf
- Public Health Ontario. Mask use for Non-Health Workers.
  https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet/2020/05/factsheet-covid-19-masks-not-healthcare.pdf?la=en
- Workplace Safety and Prevention Service. Post-Pandemic Business Playbook.
  https://www.wsps.ca/WSPS/media/Site/Resources/Downloads/post-pandemic-business-playbook.pdf?ext=.pdf

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- Workplace Safety and Prevention Services. Guidance on Health and Safety for Curbside Pickups and Delivery Services during COVID-19. https://www.wsps.ca/WSPS/media/Site/Resources/Downloads/covid-19-delivery-service-health-and-safety-guidance.pdf?ext=.pdf

TEAM CULTURE & COMPETENCIES RESOURCES

- American Library Association ECourse: How to be a great boss during a crisis. https://www.alastore.ala.org/content/be-great-boss-during-crisis-ecourse
- Association for Project Management. What is agile Project Management? https://www.apm.org.uk/resources/find-a-resource/agile-project-management/
- BDO. How to Effectively Host a Virtual Meeting. https://www.bdo.ca/en-ca/insights/advisory/human-resources/how-to-effectively-host-a-virtual-meeting/
- Burton, Paul and Kelly O'Neill. Charting a Crisis: How to Adjust Business Continuity Plans During the COVID-19 crisis. https://www.teksystems.com/en/insights/article/charting-a-crisis
- Calgary Public Library. Psychological First Aid. https://drive.google.com/file/d/13QqqnBozce1yfhrsYwujPNo9-uDSnOwP/view?usp=sharing
- Calgary Public Library. Working from Home. https://drive.google.com/file/d/16uFoJ9SqZ4lLs_R7uAhnd60PqR7ozgiB/view?usp=sharing
- Canada. Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/risk-informed-decision-making-workplaces-businesses-covid-19-pandemic.html
- CFLA-FCAB. Online Storytimes Copyright Guidance for Canadian Libraries. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MwcriSREFUT_7se0LoMxVu4gaT-Hx0lj/view?usp=sharing
- Deloitte. Embedding Trust into COVID-19 Recovery. https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/economy/covid-19/building-trust-during-covid-19-recovery.html
- Headversity. Micro Masterclasses, free 15-minute webinars delivered by Mental Health and Performance experts. https://www.headversity.com/webinars
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- Skillsoft. The Remote Managers Handbook. https://www.skillsoft.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Skillsoft_Remote_Manager_Handbook_2020.pdf
- Standards Research. Workplace Fatigue: Current Landscape and Future Considerations. (May 10, 2020). https://www.csagroup.org/wp-content/uploads/CSA-Group-Research-Workplace-Fatigue-1.pdf
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