



STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2026

Approved by NELF board, November 20, 2023

Since 2007, the North East Library Federation has been a partnership between libraries in the North East region of British Columbia. The public libraries in Chetwynd, Fort Nelson, Fort St. John, Hudson's Hope, Pouce Coupe, Taylor and Tumbler Ridge are members of the Federation.

WHAT IS INFORMING THE 2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Why is the federation still relevant?

- ✓ Collective buying power
- ✓ Adds capacity to libraries
- ✓ We are stronger together
- ✓ Shared knowledge and mentorship in a rapidly changing operating environment
- ✓ The connections we have build trust and confidence and help address the sense of isolation

What external factors impact the plan?

- Regional economy
 - curtailments and mill closures
 - there is not as much money in towns and a decline in population - people are fearing for the longevity of their communities
 - rise in part-time/casual labour, and camp-based itinerant workers
 - the increase in the minimum wage has put pressure on many small and medium sized businesses
 - there is more focus on occupational health and safety matters
- Municipal and regional government 'insertion', or influence on library autonomy
- Covid and enhancement grants, while provincial operating grant funding remains largely static
- More government and community services shifted to libraries
- Reconciliation and Indigenous relations
- Climate change
 - Increased potential for service interruption due to forest fires
 - Need to strengthen emergency preparedness knowledge and planning
 - Demand on libraries for such non-traditional services as cooling centres
- Expanded insurance requirements
- Technology developments, particularly social media and AI
- Mental health and addiction/the opioid crisis and pressure for libraries to provide safe spaces while trying to ensure staff safety
- Service BC and Service Canada don't exist in small centres, banks continue to close - these agencies are directing people to the local public library for online access. Libraries are busier - more use of computers/printing - books are not #1 anymore, but programs are still important
- Increased gap between wages paid by local government and what library workers are paid
- Our population continues to become diverse, and is also aging

Areas of Focus for Our Key Funder:

- Making life more affordable
- Delivering quality programs that people count on
- Increasing opportunities for people to be involved and connected in their communities
- Fostering social inclusion and reducing the impacts of poverty and inequality

What the Board Hopes to See in the Next Plan:

- ✓ Continued support for shared resources and consortium purchasing
- ✓ A focus on professional development support for library trustees and staff
- ✓ Continued support for programming
- ✓ The federation manager continuing to play a key role

OUR MISSION

A collaborative network dedicated to creating opportunities to strengthen our libraries.

OUR VISION:

Strong libraries: Strong Communities

OUR VALUES

- Respect
- Equality
- Community and Collaboration
- Being Accountable

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Share Resources and Strengthen Access
- Build and Sustain Capacity
- Strengthen Relationships
- Governance, Leadership and Accountability

Priority One: Share Resources and Strengthen Access

Goal One: Expand Shared Resources for Member Libraries

a) Strengthen NELF OverDrive Advantage Collection (OAC) with a dedicated budget line and library staff-comprised selection committee.

Responsibility: Director and LDAG; Timeline: 2023

b) Continue to investigate new databases and services

Responsibility: Director, LDAG; Timeline: Ongoing

c) Explore the feasibility of shared professional services in such areas as legal and human resources

Responsibility: Director; Timeline: 2024

Goal Two: Maintain Support for High Priority Consortium Purchases

- a) Continue budget allocation for book club sets and summer touring performers
Responsibility: Director; Timeline: Ongoing
- b) Review 2023 budget priorities survey and draft evaluation of products to retain or eliminate
Responsibility: Director and LDAG; Timeline: 2024

Measures of success:

- ✓ *Expansion of the NELF OAC and reduced hold queues*
- ✓ *Expanded knowledge of available digital products for consideration, and implementation of products that reflect current needs*
- ✓ *A report outlining funding and models for professional services support*
- ✓ *Evaluation report to inform decisions on existing digital products*

Priority Two: Build and Sustain Capacity

Goal One: Plan, Deliver and Evaluate Professional Development Opportunities for Library Staff

- a) Conduct a needs assessment for training and investigate options including partnerships with other federations
Responsibility: Director and LDAG; Timeline: Ongoing

Goal Two: Streamline Operational and Administrative Processes to Maximize Fiscal and Organizational Resources

- a) Conduct an operational review to identify and simplify processes, including the contracting out of bookkeeping
- b) Prepare a report exploring a merger with the North Central Library Federation to reduce administrative duplication
Responsibility: Director, trustees, LDAG; Timeline: 2024-2025

Measures of success:

- ✓ *Library staff expand their knowledge and skills and apply them effectively in their work*
- ✓ *Director increases time to explore new initiatives and higher level activities*
- ✓ *Board decision on merger is informed by a written evaluation*

Priority Three: Strengthen Relationships

Goal: Increase Trustee Interaction

- a) Encourage and support joint board meetings among neighbouring libraries.
Responsibility: Director and trustees; Timeline: Ongoing

Goal: Grow Library Director Interaction

- a) Develop a funded peer-to-peer (P2P) program to support library director learning and sharing
Responsibility: Director and LDAG; Timeline: 2024-2026

Goal: Expand Communication Between Libraries

- a) Create a regular newsletter highlighting regional events, training opportunities, and information of interest to member libraries, that also supports advocacy initiatives
Responsibility: Director and LDAG; Timeline: ongoing

b) Maintain one in-person board/LDAG meeting per year, and shorter, more strategically focused meetings virtually

Responsibility: Director, Trustees and LDAG; Timeline: Ongoing

Goal: Expand Federation Membership

a) Explore extending NELF membership to the Dawson Creek Municipal Public Library, and present report to board.

Responsibility: Director, Trustees; Timeline: Fall 2023

Measures of success:

- ✓ *Trustees strengthen confidence and engagement through shared knowledge and experiences*
- ✓ *Library directors report developing a stronger sense of teamwork, and apply different perspectives and approaches to their work*
- ✓ *Libraries contribute newsletter content and acquire new ideas; public awareness of the federation's role increases*
- ✓ *Board decision on expanding membership is informed by a prepared report*

Priority Four: Governance, Leadership and Accountability

Goal: Strengthen Trustee Knowledge and Engagement

a) Conduct a needs assessment of trustee training, focusing on orientation, recruitment and advocacy; and plan and deliver training

Responsibility: Director; Trustees; Timeline: Ongoing

Goal: Complete a NELF policy review

a) Evaluate existing policies and identify policy gaps

b) Draft revised and new policies as appropriate for board review and approval

Responsibility: Director; Trustees; Timeline: 2024

Measures of Success:

- ✓ *Trustees complete training that supports effective governance, and post-training evaluations demonstrate positive impact.*
- ✓ *Board approves a new policy manual that reflects best governance practices.*

Conclusion:

The North East Library Federation's 2024-2026 Strategic Plan is intended to guide our organizational priorities for professional development, resource sharing and increasing access, strengthening relationships, supporting advocacy and enhancing governance over the next three years. The Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that the intended actions are being completed in a timely manner and to accommodate any shift in priorities. The Plan will be reviewed and renewed near the end of 2026.