



# VALUING THE BLUE MOUNTAINS PUBLIC LIBRARY





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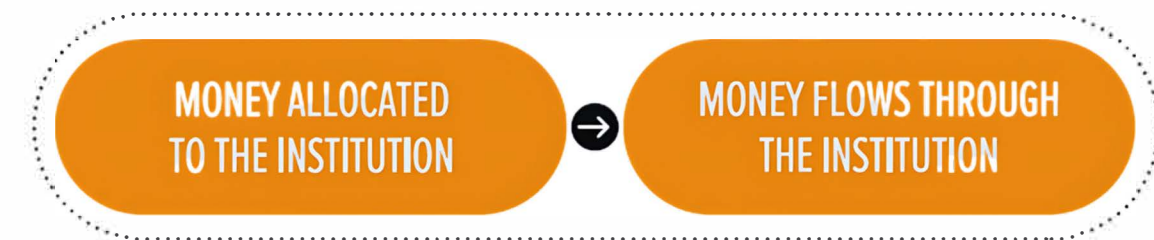


# UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

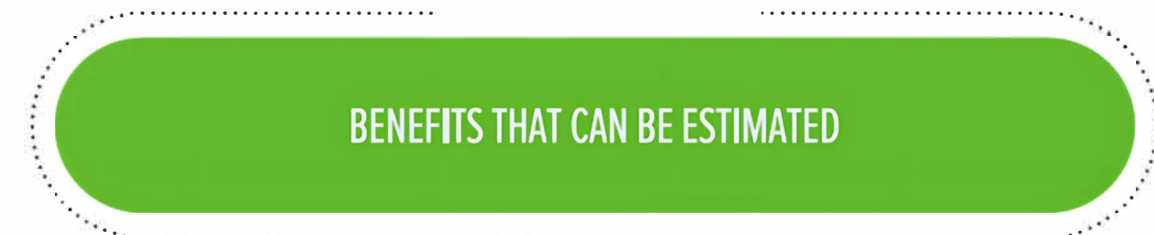
Social Return on Investment (SROI) calculations take something offered at no cost and apply a dollar value to it.

SROI can be used to demonstrate the value of not-for-profit organizations, like public libraries, whose success cannot be measured by how much revenue or profit it earns.

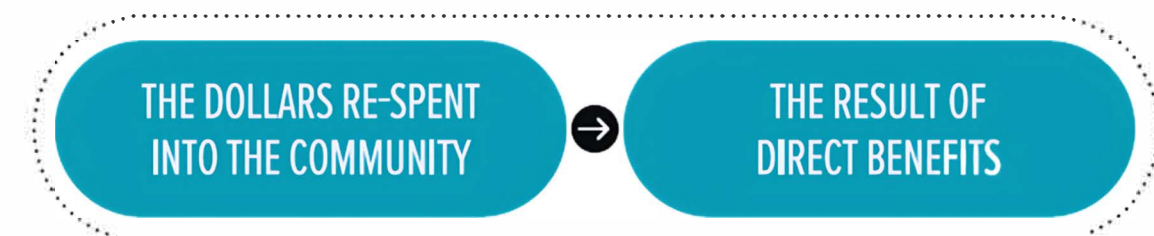
## DIRECT SPENDING



## DIRECT BENEFITS



## INDIRECT BENEFITS



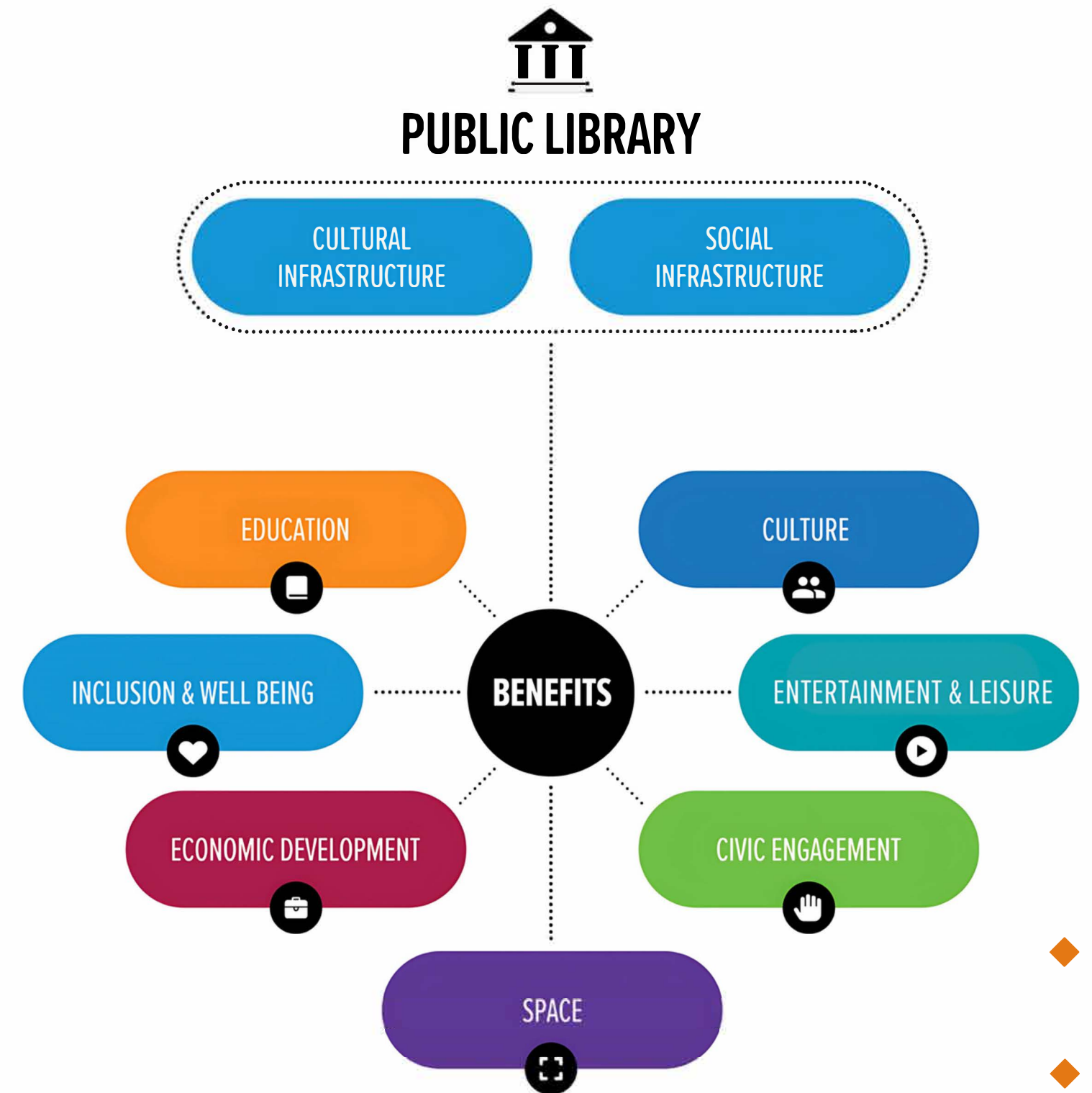
# VALUING ONTARIO LIBRARIES TOOLKIT (VOLT)

## Development

- Fall of 2024, Ontario Library Service (OLS) launched the VOLT to help Ontario public libraries measure and demonstrate their value and impact within the community.
- Toolkit was developed by the NORDIK Institute, an innovative community-based research hub with Algoma University, dedicated to building healthy, resilient communities.

## Framework

- Builds on a toolkit created for Northern Ontario libraries to demonstrate their social return on investment.
- Was developed with public Library CEOs, First Nations Public Libraries, and Francophone-majority communities.
- The Blue Mountains Public Library's CEO was a member of the VOLT Steering Committee.





# OUR RESULTS

In 2023, BMPL calculated its overall economic benefit to the community as **\$4,221,353**.

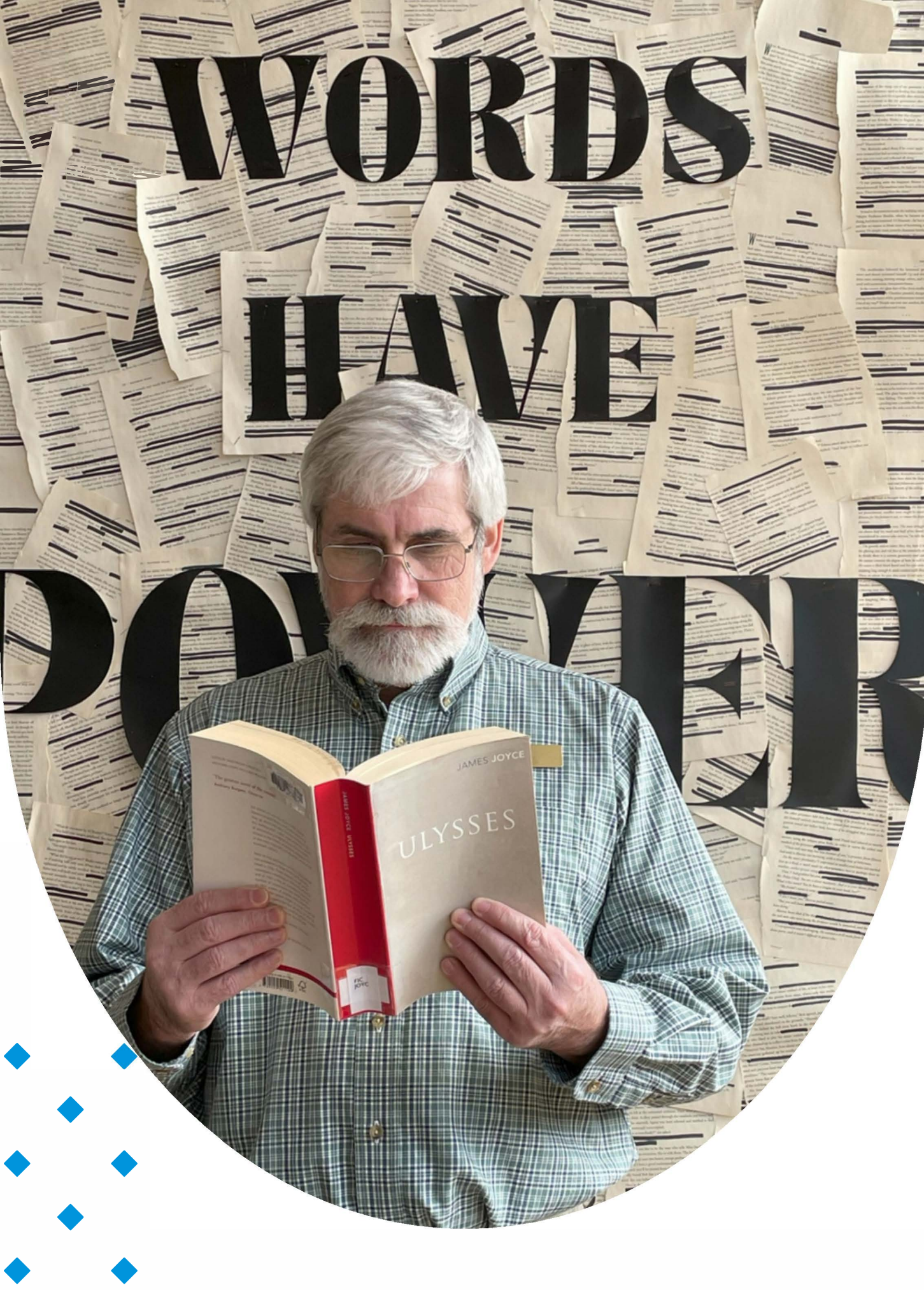
This works out to **\$450** per permanent resident and **\$970** per household.

For every hour open, your BMPL generates **\$390** of value.

For every \$1 invested into Gallery, Library, Archive, and Museum services (GLAM), BMPL generates **\$2.50** of value or a value return of **250%**.







# EDUCATION

In 2023, the benefit of education services provided by BMPL is valued at **\$413,219**.

**A further breakdown indicates:**

**\$159,850**

Economic benefit of non-fiction books, DVDs, magazines, and databases like Consumer Health Complete.

**\$3,245**

Economic benefit of inter-library loan requests.

**\$48,020**

Economic benefit of in-library requests (i.e. standard reference questions, info/tech support, readers' advisory).



# CULTURE

In 2023, the benefit of culture services your BMPL provides was valued at **\$229,858**.

## A further breakdown indicates:

**\$106,824**

of benefit from access to special collections and other materials related to the culture and history of our community, such as board games, nordic walking poles, and language resources.

**\$27,405**

of benefit from the promotion of local cultural events, programs, and information services about our local area.

**\$106,303**

of benefit from events of cultural significance that we organize and host, such as monthly art exhibits, author talks, and the Arts Walk.







# INCLUSION & WELLBEING

In 2023, the benefit of inclusion and wellbeing services provided by your BMPL is valued at **\$133,073.**

**A further breakdown indicates:**

**\$36,110**

of benefit from our accessible collections, such as large print books, DAISY books, talking books, and assistive technology.

**\$18,950**

of benefit from free, public internet access.

**\$78,015**

of benefit from our social and health-related programs and workshops, from vaccination clinics to digital literacy support.



# ENTERTAINMENT & LEISURE

In 2023, the benefit of entertainment and leisure services provided by your BMPL is valued at **\$2,177,870**.

**A further breakdown indicates:**

**\$496,040**

of benefit from access recreational reading, viewing, and listening.

**\$59,380**

of benefit from our adult and seniors' programs or workshops such as knit and knatters, book clubs, author readings, art classes, and adult trivia night.

**\$1,622,450**

of benefit from library memberships.







# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2023, the benefit of economic development services provided by your BMPL is valued at **\$1,205,395.**

**A further breakdown indicates:**

**\$1,122,091**

of benefit to the local economy from staff salaries, benefits, and training.

**\$2,430**

of benefit from career or upskilling support and access to resources like LinkedIn learning.

**\$80,875**

of benefit in self-generated revenue or outside funding brought into our community.



# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In 2023, the benefit of civic engagement services provided by your BMPL is valued at **\$30,833**.

## A further breakdown indicates:

**\$18,478**

of benefit generated by local volunteers, including the BMPL Board.

**\$3,921**

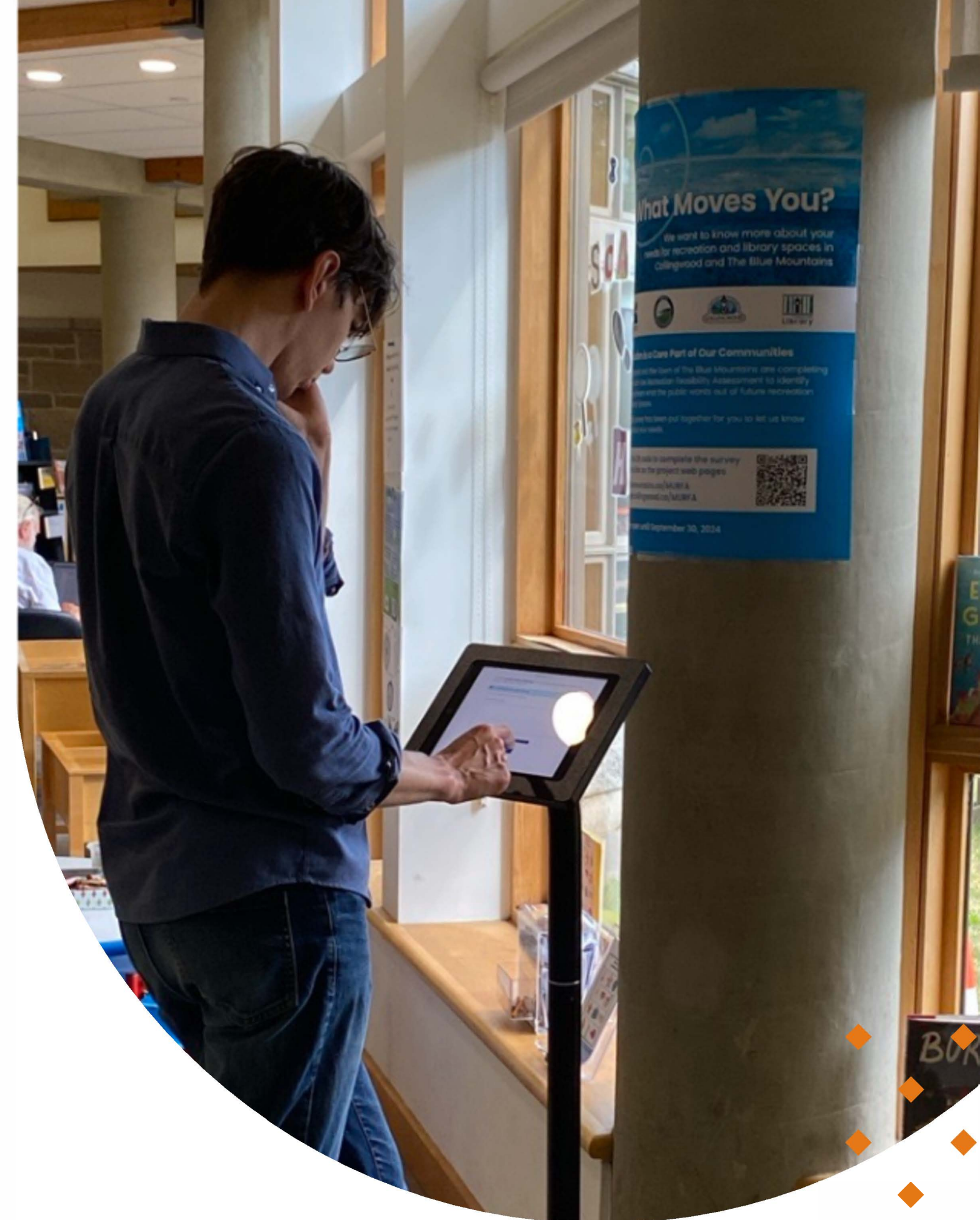
of benefit from our community development programs and workshops.

**\$4,551**

of benefit from formal partnerships with other organizations and civic groups.

**\$3,883**

from serving as an access point for government.







# SPACE

In 2023, the benefit of public space provided by your BMPL is valued at **\$31,106**.

**A further breakdown indicates:**

**\$9,620**

of benefit generated by our publicly accessible meeting spaces.

**\$6,889**

of benefit from the use of our common spaces, including

**\$5,941**

of benefit from BMPL visits.

**\$948**

of benefit from public seating.

**\$14,597**

of benefit from visits to special purpose spaces, such as The Gallery at L.E. Shore.



# APPLYING THE RESULTS

## What we know:

1. BMPL is a worthwhile investment for residents and taxpayers.
2. BMPL is a key partner and resource for community organizations, businesses, and the municipality.
3. BMPL provides a diversity of benefits to the community, beyond books.
4. The social return on investment for gallery, library, archive, and museum services depends on maintaining service levels and responding to feedback and projected growth.
5. There is an opportunity to increase the SROI by addressing space needs. Public space is required for community activities and connections, both open and special purpose areas.





# NEXT STEPS

- Review MURFA results.
- Review 2024 L.E Shore Accessibility Site Assessment.
- Apply results with updated usage statistics to determine the next best steps for expansion.
- Revisit expansion with Council.







# QUESTION PERIOD





## Board Meeting

**Report To:** The Blue Mountains Public Library Board  
**Report Name:** ADM.24.20 Valuing the Blue Mountains Public Library  
**Date:** June 20, 2024  
**Prepared by:** Jennifer Murley, CEO

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### A. Recommendations

That this Board receive as information ADM.24.20 entitled “Valuing the Blue Mountains Public Library”.

### B. Background

In the Fall of 2023, the Ontario Library Service released the first version of the Valuing Ontario Libraries Toolkit (VOLT) to help Ontario public libraries measure and demonstrate their value and impact on the communities they serve. This method of measuring value is known as measuring an organization’s ‘Social Return on Investment’ (SROI).

The Toolkit was developed with the support of the NORDIK Institute<sup>1</sup> and a volunteer steering committee from public libraries across the province, including the former BMPL CEO, Dr. Sabrina Saunders. It includes an excel spreadsheet embedded with SROI calculations, info graphics, and templates to assist with presenting the information once completed.

### C. Understanding Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Social Return on Investment (SROI) calculations take something offered at no charge and applies a dollar value to it. It is an approach to representing the value of an organization or initiative that provides monetary estimates (i.e. dollar values) to the benefits that are created by the goods, programs, or services that do not typically have monetary value. The most accurate way to do this is by assigning a comparable dollar value that would be charged by the private sector for the same or comparable service.

**The SROI tool is comprised of the following components:**

- A community profile that combines general background information about the public library and the community it serves. This includes contextual information such as population served (total population, number of households in the service area), number of annual hours of operation, annual operating expenses, and annual operating expenses relating to staffing, benefits, and training.
- 7 Domains of Impact:
  - **Education:** Measures the value of access to information that public libraries provide the populations they serve (i.e. collections and databases, Inter-Library Loan services, class instruction at a library or school, early literacy programming).

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<sup>1</sup> [The NORDIK Institute](#) is an innovative community-based research hub affiliated with Algoma University dedicated to building healthy, resilient communities.



- **Culture:** Measures the value of the wide range of elements that shape local ways of living (i.e. Library of Things, Cultural programs, and events).
- **Inclusion and Wellbeing:** Measures the economic benefits of library services that increase feelings of belonging and social inclusion (i.e. accessible collections, access to free Internet, and social and health-based programming).
- **Entertainment and Leisure:** Measures the value of reading for pleasure, facilitated by the library (i.e. circulation of collections, related programming, number of cardholders).
- **Economic Development:** Measures the economic benefits that are the result of public library services (i.e. annual staffing, benefits, and training costs, programs related to business and economic development, self-generated revenue).
- **Civic Engagement:** Measures the economic benefit of opportunities for community connection (i.e. volunteerism, partnerships, community development programming).
- **Space:** Measures the value of ‘public space’ (i.e. room rentals, annual # of library visits, # of seats in general use areas, # of people using special purpose spaces such as art galleries and makerspaces).

Each domain’s value is assigned a unique formula, with rationale, and consideration of ‘deadweight’. Deadweight values are subtracted from value calculations when relevant to produce the most accurate calculation possible. The [full toolkit and calculations are publicly available](#) on the Ontario Library Service website.

## D. Methodology

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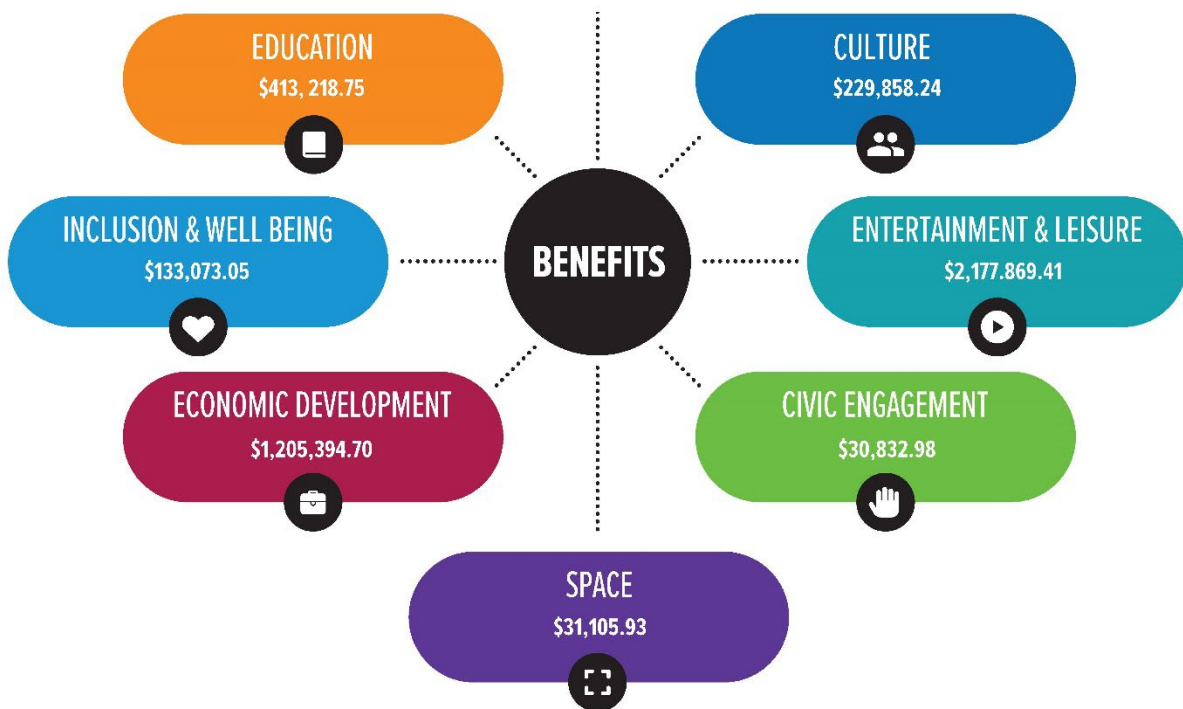
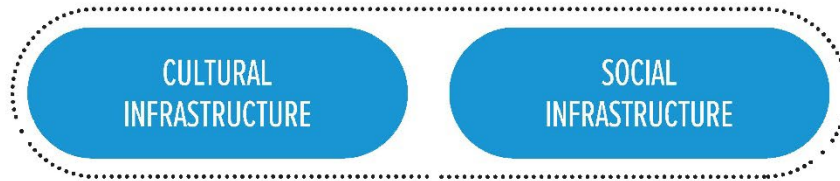
Data for the community profile was collected from [Statistics Canada’s Community Profile for the Town of the Blue Mountains](#), the [Town of The Blue Mountains’ Community Profile](#), and the data submitted in the 2023 Annual Survey to the Province. Data required for each SROI calculation was collected from the 2023 Annual Survey (i.e. usage statistics, program statistics, operating financials, volunteer logs), invoices (i.e. annual subscription costs).

## E. Results

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The results indicated that the overall economic benefit of the Blue Mountains Public Library to the community is \$4,221,353. This works out to \$449.56 per permanent resident or \$970.43 per household. An info graphic below displays the total economic benefit under the 7 domains of impact: Education (\$413,218.75), Culture (\$229,858.24), Inclusion & Well Being (\$133,073.05), Entertainment & Leisure (\$2,177,869.41), Economic Development (\$1,205,394.70), Civic Engagement (\$30,832.98), and Space (\$31,105.93).





In addition to this data, for every one hour open to the public, the BMPL generates \$388.39 of economic benefit, and for every \$1 invested into the Library, the BMPL generates \$2.54, or a return of 254%.



## F. Analysis

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The value of public libraries extends beyond financial metrics and the results of this study speak to the critical importance of BMPL programs, services, and spaces. In a business setting, research indicates that a good return on investment is between 10 and 15% pending on the sector. Using the same calculation, the BMPL's SROI in 2023 was 254%. It is anticipated that this number will continue to grow in 2024 as staff vacancies are filled and programming and outreach efforts are expanded.

Provided the BMPL's unique GLAM structure, commitment to career development, and status as an employer of choice, it is no surprise that the BMPL's high-impact areas are within the domains of Economic Development, Entertainment, and Leisure. Likewise, it is no surprise that the benefits of the space ranked lower, as the BMPL is has limited seating, limited space for special purposes, and limited meeting space for rentals. Further, it is no surprise that the benefits of civic engagement ranked lower as sectors across the Globe have witnessed a decline in volunteerism because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Limited space and staff vacancies also fit into this category as the number of active partnerships were included in this calculation.

## G. Next Steps

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The SROI findings of the VOLT will be shared with the Town of The Blue Mountains Council, who approve funding for the BMPL each year. It is anticipated that the formula will be modified and updated, and the calculation will be repeated to reflect changes. Additionally, the formula will be integrated into relevant reports and presentations.

## H. Strategic Alignment

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The Board's 2024 Action Plan identifies communication of the VOLT results to Council and the public as an organizational goal. The exercise is consistent with the following overarching Strategic Priorities in the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan:

1. Organizational Excellence: Grow the BMPL as a key partner and community resource.  
Goal: Demonstrate stewardship through transparency and accountability.  
Goal: Increase BMPL financial opportunities.

Respectfully Submitted,

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# Valuing Ontario Libraries Toolkit



# Executive Summary

**VALUING ONTARIO LIBRARIES TOOLKIT**



# Executive Summary



**The toolkit is a step-by-step guide for taking information that you already regularly collect and organizing it into these two components to create a report or information sheets that can be used to share the public library's impact with a wider audience.**

## The Valuing Ontario Libraries Toolkit (VOLT) is designed to help you measure and demonstrate the value made by your local public library.

The purpose is ultimately to help you share these contributions with your community's councils, decisionmakers, and stakeholders, reflecting the unique realities of the areas you serve. In doing so, you may use it to advocate for more (or sustained) investment in, or commitment to, the work of the public library in your community.

The *Library Value Report* that you can create with this toolkit is made up of two main components: A community profile and the Social Return on Investment (SROI) value calculations.

1. **The community profile:** This section has two parts: a) an overview of the community providing the background and context in which the library is located, and b) a narrative based on the public's stories of their experience with the public library and the integral role it plays in the community. The community profile here is intended to provide an overview of your library's impact in the community.
2. **The SROI value calculations:** SROI is a way to calculate the impact of an organization in dollar figures. It reflects the dollar value of benefit that is created for each dollar that is invested in the public library by local councils. The calculations have eight parts (including an introduction tab) that you can use to calculate the SROI for all public library services or for identifying the benefits produced in an individual area, such as the benefits produced by library spaces.

The toolkit is a step-by-step guide for taking information that you already regularly collect and organizing it into these two components to create a report or information sheets that can be used to share the public library's impact with a wider audience.

In the toolkit, you will also find additional instructions on how best to gather more data if you wish to add more detail to your Library Value Report, however you already have access to all the information you need to complete the toolkit.

### A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR VALUING ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The framework for this toolkit builds on previous work that created a toolkit for Northern Ontario libraries to demonstrate their Social Return on Investment. Building on the success of this toolkit and demand for a provincially applicable tool, this new framework was developed with the direction of the Ontario Library Service and a volunteer steering committee whose members were selected from a diverse range of public libraries across the province. Consultations were also coordinated by the OLS with public library CEOs and staff in September 2022, including seven focus groups based on the size of communities served, one dedicated to First Nation Public Libraries, and one dedicated to public libraries serving Francophone-majority communities.



Based on a review of recent research developments and these two layers of stakeholder input, the framework presented here represents public libraries as cultural and social infrastructure that create individual, organizational, and community benefit in seven key domains: Education, Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing, Entertainment and Leisure, Economic Development, Civic Engagement, and Space. Each of these domains has a unique part and tab in the SROI value calculations spreadsheet.

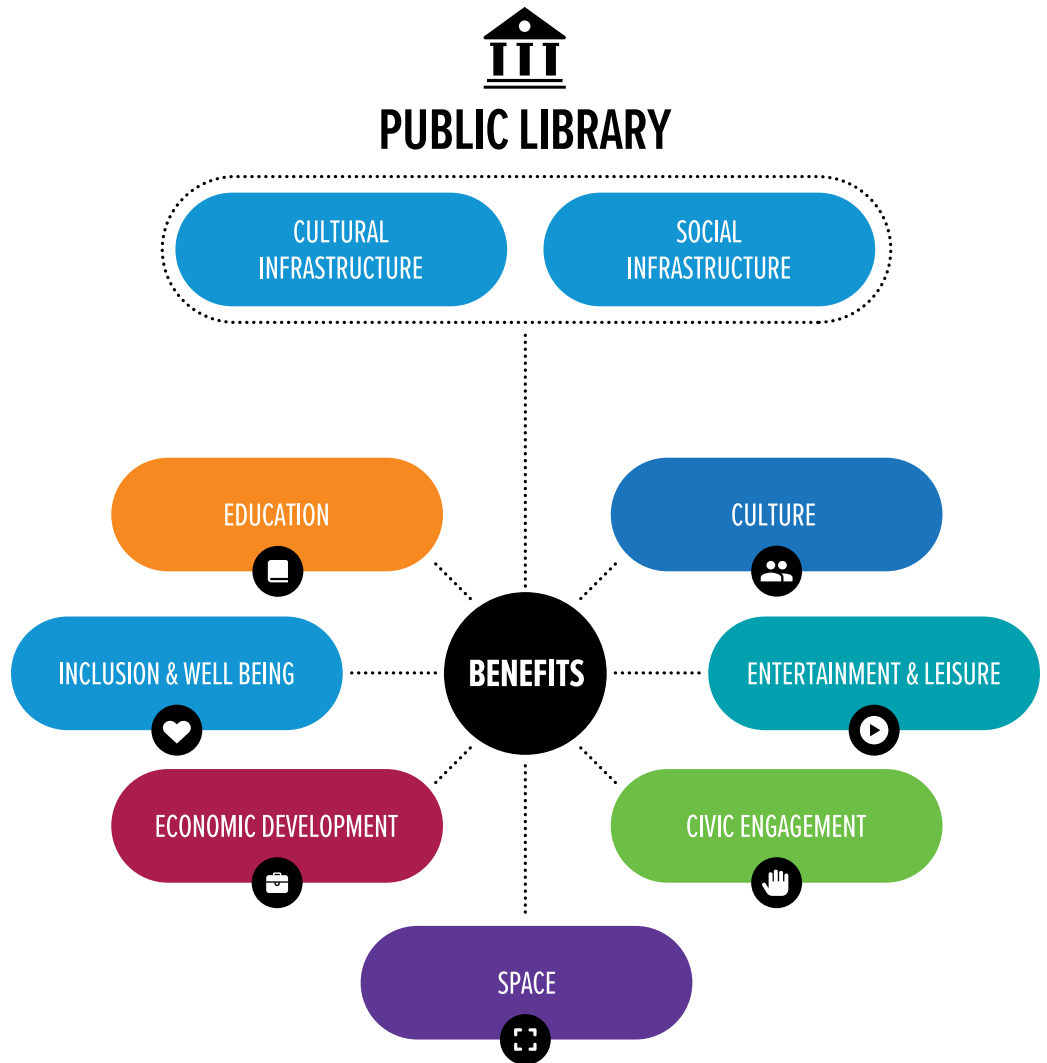


Figure 1.1



# Introduction

## This toolkit provides several ways for you to take the information that you regularly collect for your library and use it to demonstrate the impact it has in your community.

To provide a holistic reflection of the public library's impact that is rooted in data, the toolkit highlights seven different areas of impact, called "domains," that reflect the diverse influences public libraries have in their communities. These are: Education, Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing, Entertainment and Leisure, Economic Development, Civic Engagement, and Space.

The toolkit draws on an approach called Social Return on Investment (SROI), which is a way to calculate the value in dollars of goods and services that are typically offered free of charge. It reflects the dollar value of benefit that is created for each dollar that is invested in the public library by local councils. Each of the domains listed above has 3 indicators that use your existing data to generate a dollar value for the unique impacts the public library performs in each domain.

### The toolkit allows you to create:

- A *Library Value Report* specific to your public library that provides a community profile highlighting the stories of patrons about how the library has impacted their lives, and a calculation of your library's Social Return on Investment.
  - You also have the option of creating the community profile or the SROI value calculations independent from the *Library Value Report*.
- Printable *Information Sheets* that allow you to single out the benefit that your library creates in a specific domain, such as education, or economic development.

These tools offer different ways of speaking to a wide range of stakeholders about the value created by the public library, whether they be board members, councillors, First Nation or municipal administrators, or different segments of the public.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries are critical cultural and social infrastructure for the cities, towns, First Nations, and regions they serve. They are integral for building personal, entrepreneurial, and social capacity through access to information, programming, and the opportunities they offer for community engagement. Their physical locations serve as gathering places for people of all ages to engage in lifelong learning, access local and global resources, experience and explore new horizons, meet other people and renew old friendships. Public libraries are places that spark change, increase understanding, and strengthen resolve. Interaction with others, in-person or virtually, fosters networks of informed engagement to better inform peoples' decision-making. They provide a 'level playing field' by providing equitable access to resources and encouraging interaction across all social groups. Where other spaces force us into defined roles of consumer, client, employee, or student, public



**The toolkit draws on an approach called Social Return on Investment (SROI), which is a way to calculate the value in dollars of goods and services that are typically offered free of charge.**





libraries are a space for unqualified humanity, where nothing is expected of us other than our respect for one another. In serving this holistic role, public libraries are the backbone of our communities. The purpose of this toolkit is to address the challenge of how to tangibly value an inherently intangible, human-based service, and to help you share and represent this value to your community's councils, decisionmakers, and stakeholders.

### **Background Context**

In 2016 the **Ontario Library Service - North** contracted NORDIK Institute to develop a similar toolkit to illustrate the value of public libraries in Northern Ontario, a vast geographic and culturally and linguistically diverse region of Ontario. Since its publication, the **Ontario Library Service** has consolidated into a province-wide organization and in 2021 requested NORDIK Institute undertake the development of a new toolkit to support public libraries across Ontario in communicating their value and measuring their individual Social Return on Investment. The new toolkit will continue to be updated in each of the next two years (2024-2025), responding to changes in our local realities and offering Ontario's public libraries the opportunity to shape future iterations of the toolkit.

### **Acknowledgments**

The Valuing Ontario Libraries Toolkit study is a project of the Ontario Library Service (OLS).

### **Steering Committee members**

Public Library CEO representatives: Karla Buckborough, Cavan Monaghan Public Library; Feather Maracle, Six Nations First Nation Public Library; Brooke McLean, Bruce County Public Library; Tracy Munusami, Newmarket Public Library; Sabrina Redwing Saunders, The Blue Mountains Public Library; Darren Solomon, Richmond Hill Public Library; and, Ravil Veli, North Bay Public Library.

### **Ontario Library Service (OLS) staff**

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# Using the Toolkit

**VALUING ONTARIO LIBRARIES TOOLKIT**

# Using the Toolkit

## COMPLETING THE SROI VALUE CALCULATIONS

**Each indicator in the Social Return on Investment (SROI) value calculations spreadsheet provides direction for calculating the “economic benefit,” which is the dollar value of each program or service associated with each domain.**

Data from the most recently completed Annual Survey of Public Libraries (ASPL) and the Typical Week Survey and other ILS data are used to calculate each indicator. The relevant data location within the Annual Survey of Public Libraries is specified for each indicator (e.g. F3.1.1 - Number of requests made to other libraries). Enter the data for each indicator into the Excel spreadsheet template available on the OLS website, <https://resources.olservice.ca/ValuingOntarioLibrariesToolkit>

Some information that is necessary to complete the calculations is not included in the ASPL or Typical Week but is still readily accessible. For instance, the number of days or weeks that the library and its branches are open annually. The accompanying spreadsheet will also have additional instructions for how some of the general costs that are built into the spreadsheet can be modified to reflect more local costs, but this is entirely optional. The general amounts have been developed to save libraries time in completing the toolkit while still basing the calculations in real-world comparisons.





## COMPLETING THE COMMUNITY PROFILE

**The community profile in the Library Value Report combines general background information about the public library and the community it serves with the real-world examples of peoples' experiences that illustrate the impact that the public library has in their lives.**

If you have already conducted recent community surveys or other kinds of outreach activities for other purposes, (such as in developing a Strategic Plan) you can use what you have learned from those activities in the community profile. Reports of activities from previous years and your knowledge of activities and anecdotes of how your library has impacted members' lives are also useful here.

Demographic information, such as the community population, (permanent and/or seasonal) languages most commonly spoken, Indigenous communities, and immigrant populations, can be useful to include in the community profile. If you do not already have this information on hand, it can be collected from [Statistics Canada's 2021 Census Community Profiles](#), or if the public library serves a First Nation community that does not participate in the census, population or membership numbers can be requested from the local First Nation administration office. Ultimately what kind of background information you include is entirely up to you.

If you don't already have stories from patrons about how the library has impacted their lives, or if you want to collect more, you can do so either through a community survey or by holding a focus group (which is essentially an organized group conversation). Either approach will get you the information you need to describe with concrete examples the difference that the public library is making in the community. Surveys have the benefit of being able to reach a relatively large number of people quickly with easily comparable results. Focus groups have the benefit of allowing participants to hear each others' contributions, which might jog their memories or make them think about the questions in new ways. Surveys take a bit of time to organize how you will distribute and collect the results, but they save time by allowing patrons to respond on their own schedules. While focus groups require more time to organize to recruit enough people to participate and require staff to be present to guide the conversation, they have the benefit of having a clearly defined end point. Whichever option you choose is valid, as both are efficient ways to collect community stories that demonstrate the impact and contributions that libraries make locally and beyond.

Though community surveys and focus groups require some time and effort, they don't necessarily have to be organized each year. Much of the content of the Community Profile will be consistent, and depending on time and resources, community surveys or focus groups could be organized every one to three years. Even without running a new community survey or focus group, you can update your community profile with any new services that are offered or new experiences that stand out from the previous year.

*\*Note: If you need assistance setting up the framework for your community survey or focus group delivery, please reach out to the OLS Consulting Team for support.*



**Surveys have the benefit of being able to reach a relatively large number of people quickly with easily comparable results.**



## COMMUNITY SURVEYS

### **Community surveys are an ideal method for gathering community input and the opinions of the people the public library serves.**

If there is a recent set of survey results already available (such as through a recent strategic planning exercise) those can be helpful here as well in adding unique context and testimonials directly from the community itself. If a community survey has not been completed in the last one to three years, or if more impact focused responses are needed, consider drafting a fresh survey to inform the *Library Value Report*. Though this may help in advocacy efforts, the creation of a new community survey is not necessary to complete the Community Profile portion of the toolkit.

If it is decided that a new survey is needed, here are some draft questions to help collect stories and experiences about the ways in which the public library makes a difference in peoples' lives:

1. **How has the [insert the name of your public library] impacted your life or the lives of others in your household?**
2. **What specific programs or services have been the most useful to you or others in your household?**
3. **Is there anything you (or others in your household) have been able to access that you would not otherwise have been able to access thanks to the library?**
4. **What are your strongest memories of the library?**
5. **What words come to your mind when you think of the [insert the name of your public library]?**
6. **How would you describe the value of the library's physical space?**

Consider how a survey will be distributed and the timeframe for responses. Surveys can be printed on paper and distributed directly to patrons from the service desk, or you can make them available online with a free service such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms (or both). Just be sure to provide a date when any hard copies of the surveys should be returned, and a place for them to be securely (and anonymously) dropped off, such as a box near the entrance. Be sure to set aside time to reflect on any responses to these questions and determine how best to incorporate them into the *Library Value Report*. The OLS Consulting Team can be contacted for support and feedback as needed.

**Surveys can be printed on paper and distributed directly to patrons from the service desk, or you can make them available online with a free service such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms (or both)**



## FOCUS GROUPS

**A focus group is a guided conversation about a particular topic, generally with only a few questions for group discussion.**

A focus group about the impact of the public library should ideally include 6-12 people, in addition to the staff person who will facilitate the focus group. If you have the time and resources, you may want to conduct several focus groups to capture a diverse range of the community. Each focus group will take about 1.5 to 2 hours to complete.

### What you will need for an in-person focus-group:

- Facilitator (generally a staff person)
- 7 pieces of flip chart paper each labeled with a heading of one of the 7 domains of impact identified in the introduction
- Several post-it notes for each participant
- Fine-tipped markers

### What you will need for an online focus-group:

- Facilitator (generally a staff person)
- Access to video-conferencing software that can accommodate 6-12 people, such as WebEx, Zoom or Google Meet
- A method for capturing and sharing ideas live during the session, such as via breakout rooms, polls, a shared document, etc





The following suggested steps outline how to run the focus group.

1. **Background Information:** The facilitator provides background about the *Valuing Ontario Libraries Toolkit and the Library Value Report* and why participants' perspectives are important in assessing the value of public libraries, and the framework assessment that will be used.
2. **Distribute tools (in person) or explain the process (online):** If you are conducting an in-person focus group, hand out post-it notes and markers to each focus group participant and explain that these will be used for answering questions later. For online focus groups, explain how participants will be able to respond to the questions that are to come. Remember to play around with the preferred software ahead of time so that you can get familiar with how it works and so you are prepared to help participants understand how to use it.
3. **Ask the questions:** Each person should be asked to list ALL the ways that they feel the public library contributes to their lives and community experience under any or all of the headings on the flip chart papers. If in-person, ask participants to put ONLY ONE thought per post-it note. Allow 10-15 minutes for this individual activity until everyone has completed writing.
4. **Share strengths:** Ask participants to share their ideas, one at a time, by placing their post-it notes under the relevant heading on the wall (if in person) or adding each item to the virtual list (if online) and ask participants to speak to each item as they do so.
5. **Review strengths:** Once all the initial thoughts are collected and discussed, ask the participants if they have any other comments to add.
6. **Conclude Focus Group:** Once all input has been obtained, thank them for their participation, and advise them of next steps in the process, i.e., when the toolkit calculations and Library Value Report may be completed and available for access.



**ORGANIZING INFORMATION FOR THE COMMUNITY PROFILE**

**Once the community survey or focus group(s) have been completed, the results can be organized around the seven domains of impact, like in [figure 1.2].**

Once organized, write the community profile while drawing on the examples from the community survey and/or focus group(s). This will be a major component of the final Library Value Report.

**SAMPLE OF HOW TO ORGANIZE DATA**

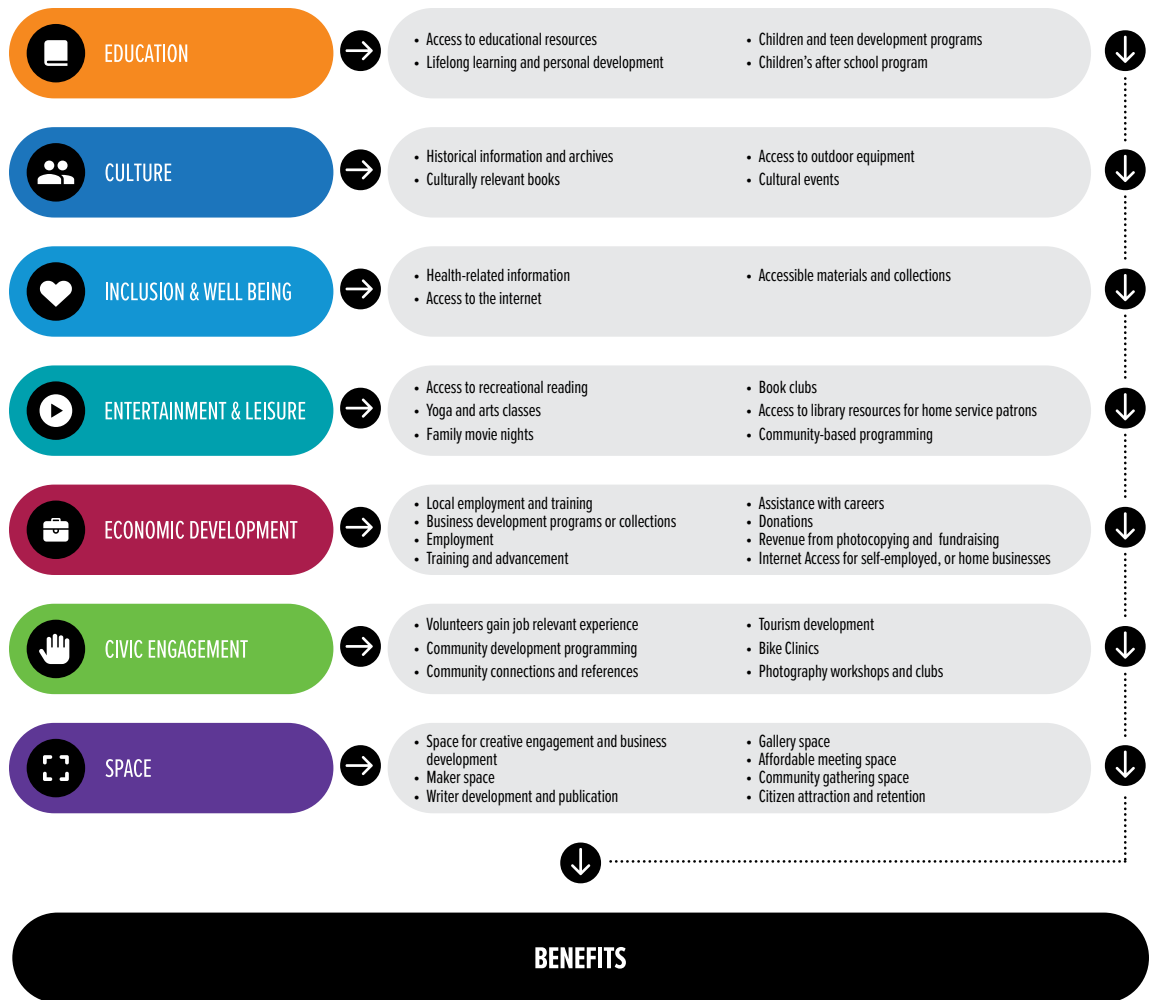


Figure 1.2

## LIBRARY VALUE REPORT

### The Library Value Report is a report on the Social Return on Investment of the public library.

It represents both the dollar-based measures of the public library's impact, as well as the real stories of how it has impacted the lives of people in the community. For this reason, it has two primary components: the community profile and the Social Return on Investment (SROI) value calculations spreadsheets.

The community profile provides an overview of the community that the public library serves and can include information about the public library's history. It also highlights the public's stories of their experience with the public library and the integral role it plays in the community. The community profile here is intended to provide a narrative overview of your library's impact in the community.

The SROI value calculations are divided into eight parts in a spreadsheet, one for each domain of impact including all its corresponding indicators, plus an introductory tab that includes a summary of calculations completed in the other seven tabs. There are additional reference tabs, but these are not editable and are for information purposes only. You can complete a calculation of the SROI for all public library services or for an individual area, such as calculating the value created by library spaces. The choice is up to you, and based on the needs of your library at any given time.


The community profile and the SROI value calculations require different kinds of data, but much of it is already easily accessible to you internally and via the Annual Survey of Public Libraries and/or the Typical Week Survey.

## ASSEMBLING THE LIBRARY VALUE REPORT

### Once you have completed the community profile and SROI value calculations, you can insert this information into a report.

We recommend that the final Library Value Report contain the following sections (Note: Appendix 1 contains background information that you can easily adapt to your own library and use in completing your own Library Value Report):

1. **Name of the Report** *Valuing the [insert your library name here]*
2. **Executive Summary** This is a 1-2 page summary of the entire report, including a very brief overview of the background and context for the report (i.e. why this information is important at this time); the findings, including the overall SROI value calculations; and, any recommendations or next steps that may be proposed, if there are any. Because this summarizes the whole report, it is best to write this section last.
3. **Methodology:** This section outlines how the study was conducted and the information sources used to collect data (such as the Annual Survey, community surveys, focus groups, or ILS reports). Draft customizable text for this section can be found in Appendix 1.
4. **Community Profile:** The background and context of the public library and the community in which it operates and the narrative based on patrons experiences with the public library and the integral role it plays in the community.

 The SROI value calculations are divided into eight parts in a spreadsheet, one for each domain of impact including all its corresponding indicators, plus an introductory tab that includes a summary of calculations completed in the other seven tabs.



5. **SROI Value Calculations:** This section contains three parts:
  - i) Indicators for the seven domains with the results for the total economic impact of each indicator;
  - ii) Totals for each indicators;
  - iii) Calculation of the total SROI
6. **Conclusions:** This section provides an overview of the key take-aways within the context of building local (individual, organizational and community) capacity and support for the public library.
7. **Recommendations (Optional):** You may also wish to add any recommendations or proposed action to advance the work of the public library and its support for community wellbeing and vitality.
8. **Glossary** You can reproduce the glossary provided in this toolkit for easy reference to some of the specific or technical terminology.
9. **References**
10. **Appendix 1:** Detailed Indicator Spreadsheets (Include the spreadsheet that you filled out to complete the SROI value calculations in the community report).



# Domains of Evaluation Details

VALUING ONTARIO LIBRARIES TOOLKIT



# Calculating Collection Values

There are four indicators that require you to calculate an average cost per item:

- **Economic benefit of non-fiction circulation (indicator 1Ai)**
- **Economic benefit of special collections and other materials related to the culture and history of the area (indicator 2A)**
- **Economic benefit of accessible collections (i.e. Braille, large print books, Talking Books on CD, etc.) (indicator 3A)**
- **Economic benefit of fiction circulation (indicator 4A)**

Each indicator has a number of categories of different items to include in the calculations (e.g. non-fiction print, music downloads, puzzles, etc.). Once you have an average cost per category, you can add it to the “Average collection costs” tab in spreadsheet, which will automatically update the values in the calculation of the four indicators.

There are two different options for how to calculate these figures outlined below. If older items are used for the calculation and the replacement costs are therefore out of date, Option 2 should be used to ensure greatest accuracy.

**Option 1:** Use your ILS to calculate the total replacement cost of items circulated by your library in the sample period (e.g., previous calendar year). The ILS may generate a report with the actual replacement cost of every circulated item in the time period specified (month, year, etc.). Identify the collection categories to be included in the indicator (e.g., Non-fiction circulation for indicator 1Ai) and total the actual replacement costs. If your library is a JASI member and you require support in building reports, please contact the JASI Support Team at [jasisupport@olservice.ca](mailto:jasisupport@olservice.ca).

**Option 2:** To estimate the replacement costs:

- If the cost of items is included in your cataloguing process and is tracked in your ILS you may be able to run a report that generates data for average collection values specific to your collection, or;
- Use Amazon’s Canadian website (<https://www.amazon.ca>) to estimate the average cost of 10 items for each of the specific categories within your collection.

The spreadsheet will automatically calculate a midpoint value for each category that you complete. A midpoint value is a discount applied to the regular retail replacement cost of circulation items (in this case, it is a discount of 40%). For more information on why we use this discount and how it’s calculated, see Section 3.

*Note: If there are any categories for which your library doesn’t have any specific items, simply ignore the categories as they will be automatically set at zero.*



**There are four indicators that require you to calculate an average cost per item**

# Calculating Collection Values

## Domains of Evaluation Details

The toolkit framework identifies seven domains where public libraries contribute to individual, organizational, and community level benefits.

### 1. Education

Public library services play a critical role in providing access to information, education, and cognitive development; filling gaps left by schools and the formal education system or supporting adult learners pursuing formal or informal education. Public libraries support education in a variety of ways, from helping parents and guardians facilitate the intellectual and social growth of their children, to facilitating universal access to multiple and varying forms of literacy and educational opportunities.

*Indicators:*

- a) Economic benefit of access to information.
- b) Economic benefit of children and teens programming.
- c) Economic benefit of class instruction at a library or a school.





## 2. Culture

Public libraries contribute to increasing cultural vitality through connecting (or reconnecting) us to the unique ways of life of diverse peoples, as well as the cultivation of a sense of local identity and place. Public libraries symbolize local autonomy through the maintenance of local history and special collections, advertising events that characterize place, and hosting cultural events. Many provide unique access points to a myriad of cultural practices, from Indigenous language collections to environmental interventions, such as seed libraries.

*Indicators:*

- a) Economic benefit of special collections and other materials related to the culture and the history of the area.
- b) Economic benefit of the promotion of local cultural and historical events, programs, advertising space and information services about the local area.
- c) Economic benefit of cultural events.

## 3. Inclusion and Wellbeing

Public libraries foster social inclusion and wellbeing by providing services with equitable access to critical resources, technology, and information. They provide opportunities for self-care, information to support healthy living, and connections to resources that foster a sense of belonging and security. They also assist in leveling the economic playing field, providing people of all incomes with access to costly resources.

*Indicators:*

- a) Economic benefit of accessible collections (i.e. Braille, large print books, Talking Books on CD, etc.).
- b) Economic benefit of internet access.
- c) Economic benefit of social and health-related programming delivered at the public library.

## 4. Entertainment and Leisure

Entertainment can provide significant cognitive and mental health benefits. Public libraries contribute to increasing opportunities for recreational reading and expanding horizons and social connections through programming and services that bring people together to learn and share experiences.

*Indicators:*

- a) Economic benefit of reading, viewing and listening for pleasure.
- b) Economic benefit of Adult and Senior related programming and services (incl. yoga, knitting, cooking, etc.).
- c) Economic benefit of a public library membership.

## 5. Economic Development

Local economic growth is advanced by many of the impacts of the public library, including employment and its multiplier effect, capital spending, and grants from provincial, national, or international funders and foundations that are pulled into the community by the library. Public library programs, resources, and 1:1 support also greatly contribute to helping residents obtain jobs, develop small businesses, and create local employment opportunities.



*Indicators:*

- a) Economic benefit of employment, training, and development.
- b) Economic benefit of business and economic development collections and programs.
- c) Economic benefit of self generated revenues (incl. contracts, grants, employment funding, donations, fees, room rental).

## 6. Civic Engagement

Public libraries strengthen community bonds by building social capital, and fostering relationships between individuals, families, and other groups. As community spaces, they bring together diverse stakeholders and partners for public engagement and offer patrons a window into the services available and initiatives taking place locally.

*Indicators:*

- a) Economic benefit of annual volunteer hours (incl. board members, student coops and community hours, adults).
- b) Economic benefit of community development programs.
- c) Economic benefit of community connections and partnerships.

## 7. Space

Public libraries provide a variety of spaces for community activities and connections. Space for individuals to gather and organizations to meet enriches lives, builds networks, and helps to craft a sense of belonging. Special purpose spaces offer people opportunities that few have access to privately, whether it be for entertainment and recreation or professional development.

*Indicators:*

- a) Economic benefit of meeting space.
- b) Economic benefits of library visits.
- c) Economic benefits of visits to special purpose space.



# Formulae for calculating indicators

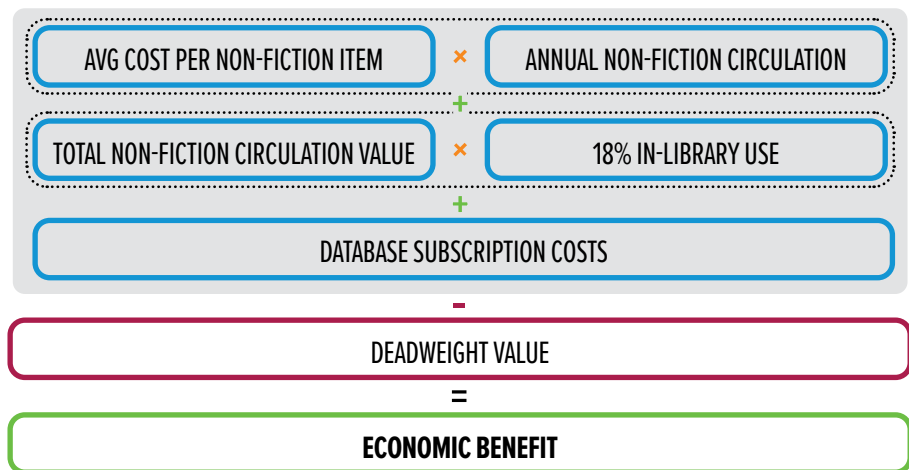
## 1. EDUCATION

### A. Economic benefit of access to information

There are three parts to this indicator. Each one has a specific formula because they are derived from different sources of data, but they combine to give a picture of patrons' access to the library's non-fiction resources.

#### i) Economic benefit of non-fiction circulation

Formula:



**How to find the values in the formula:**

To determine the collection value for non-fiction books, DVDs, etc. follow the directions outlined on page 17 – Collecting Indicators of *Library Value*.

For databases: Determine the annual subscription cost.

For other resources: Determine the average cost of items x Number of items.

Circulation data can be taken directly from the Annual Survey.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

Annual Report sections:

F1.0 Total Annual Circulation (Actual Annual Circulation of Physical Material) (Non-Fiction);

F1.1 Total Annual eBook Downloads / Borrows (Actual Annual Direct Circulation) (Non-Fiction);

F1.2 Total Annual E-Audio Book Downloads / Borrows (Actual Annual Direct Circulation) (Non-Fiction);

F1.4 Total Annual Video Downloads / Borrows (Actual Annual Direct Circulation) (Non-Fiction);

F1.5 Total Annual E-Magazine Downloads / Borrows (Actual Annual Direct Circulation) (Non-Fiction)

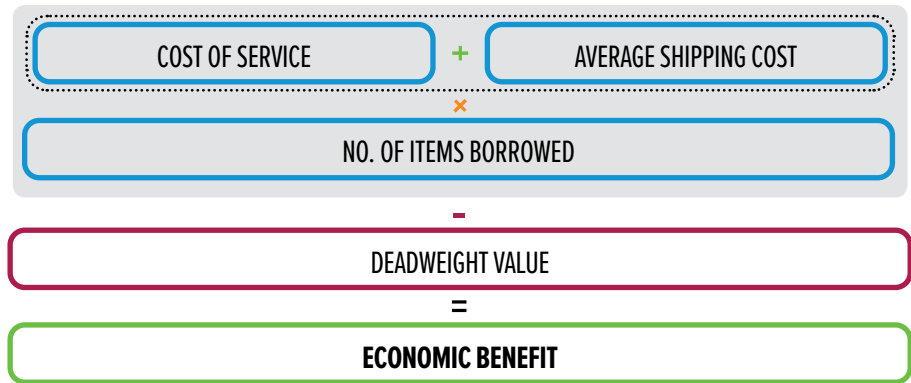
**Optional:** If you have used surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the materials checked out by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more accurate local figure.

**Rationale:**

The benefit of non-fiction circulation is based on the cost of the items that are being borrowed and by how many people. This is based on a discounted version of the replacement cost (see page 52) because the items being borrowed are used and shared. The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for the fact that without the library, patrons may have accessed the resource by some other means, such as by borrowing it from a friend or buying it from a retailer. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library increasing “learning and literacy.” This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on income and proximity to alternatives, so the generic deadweight value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres and lower income rates.

ii) **Economic benefit of inter-library loans**

**Formula:**



**How to find the values in the formula:**

Cost of service and average shipping costs are provided in the accompanying spreadsheet. The remaining data can be taken directly from the Annual Survey.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

Annual Survey section:

F.3.1- No. of requests made to other libraries

*Optional: If you have used focus groups to determine how much of the inter-library loan materials checked out by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more accurate local figure.*

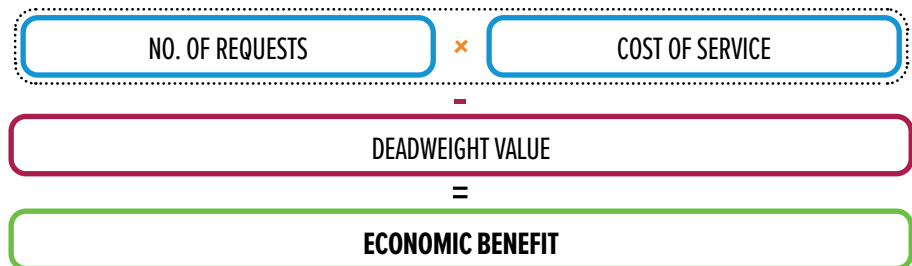


**Rationale:**

The benefit of inter-library loans is based on the cost of the items that are being borrowed and by how many people. The average library rate shipping costs (return) for various package dimensions are provided for costing the service and based on March 2023 rates (Postal rates increase by approx. 5% each year annually in September). The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for the fact that without the library, patrons may have accessed the resource by some other means, such as by borrowing it from a friend or buying it from a retailer. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library increasing “learning and literacy.” This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on income and proximity to alternatives, so the generic deadweight value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres and lower income rates.

iii) **Economic benefit of in-library information requests**

**Formula:**



**How to find the values in the formula:**

Cost of service is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet based on average Ontario library staff salaries from the ASPL. The remaining data can be taken from the Typical Week data reported in the Annual Survey, multiplied by the number of weeks that the public library is open.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

Annual Survey sections:

- G1.4.1 - Number of standard reference transactions (x # open weeks);
- G1.4.2 - Number of electronic reference transactions (x # open weeks);
- G1.4.3 - Number of Reader’s Advisory transactions (x # open weeks);
- G1.4.4 - Number of Information Communication Technology, software and social media support requests (x # open weeks).

**Optional:** *If your own cost of providing this service is substantially different from the standardized amount provided, you can replace this figure with one that reflects local pay scales.*

*If you have used focus groups to determine what proportion of information requests by patrons would be answered by other sources if the public library weren’t available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.*

**Rationale:**

The benefit of in-library requests is based on the number of information requests multiplied by the average expense of staff time that goes into responding to the requests. The cost of service is based on average Ontario Library salaries from the Annual Survey of Public Libraries with the assumption that the average request takes 15 minutes to complete. Average salary ranges are provided based on whether the library serves a First Nation, or depending on the size of the community served to account for variations in costs of providing services. Deadweight, attribution, and displacement calculations are not necessary as there are no equivalent services, given the unique nature of reference requests.

**B. Economic benefit of Children and Teen Programming****Formula:**

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{TOTAL ATTENDANCE} \times \text{COST OF PROGRAM} \\
 - \\
 \text{DEADWEIGHT VALUE} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

**How to find the values in the formula:**

A surrogate cost of the program is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet based on average costs for before- and after-school programming. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

Annual Survey sections:

F2.3 - Early literacy and Early learning;

F2.3 - Other Children's programming;

F2.3 - Summer Reading;

F2.3 - Homework help;

F2.3 - Teen programming.

**Optional:** *If you have used community surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the programming accessed by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.*



**Rationale:**

The benefit of children and teen programming is based on the comparative market value of paid children and teens programs (based on an average of a sample from 18 different markets in Ontario) multiplied by the total attendance. You may have some children's or teen programming that you don't necessarily feel is educational in nature, but we have included all of this programming under the Education domain for two reasons: 1) Simplicity, so you don't have to consider every single program individually, and 2) because even programs or activities that do not have explicit educational intentions often still have important impacts on cognitive development, especially for children.

The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for the children, teen, or parents potentially finding other sources of programming if the library were not present. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library increasing "learning and literacy." This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on income and proximity to alternatives, so the generic deadweight value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres and lower income rates. We have consciously not adjusted the deadweight value further to account for access to school-based programming, as schooling is already mandatory in one form or another across Ontario, and thus library programs are accessed above what is already made available by schools.

**C. Economic benefit of class instruction at a library or a school****Formula:**

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{TOTAL ATTENDANCE} \times \text{COST OF PROGRAM} \\
 - \\
 \text{DEADWEIGHT VALUE} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

**How to find the values in the formula:**

A surrogate cost of the program is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet based on an average of honoraria for professional services. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

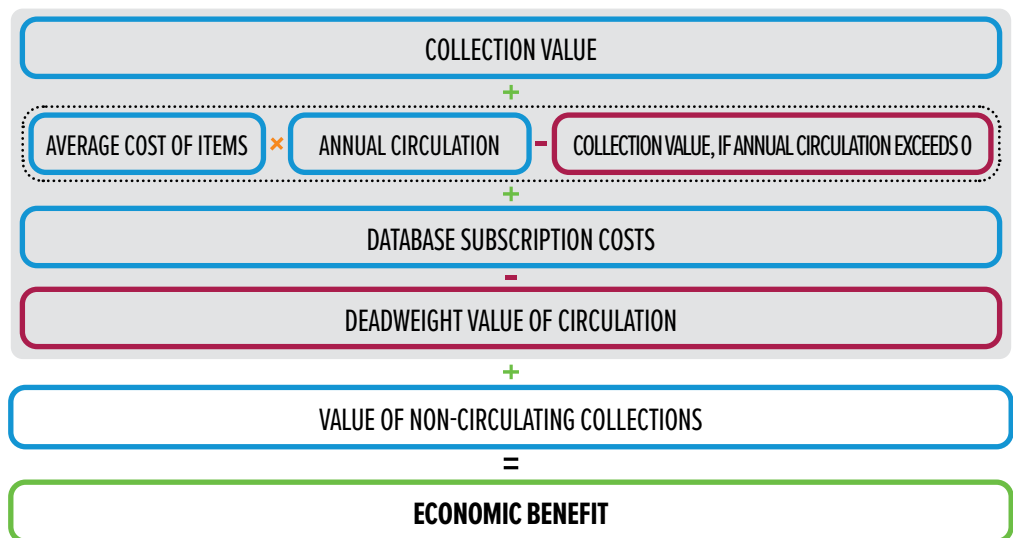
Annual Survey section:

F2.2- Class instruction at a library or school

**Optional:** If you have used community surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the programming accessed by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.

**Rationale:**

The benefit of class instruction is based on the cost of delivering the program multiplied by the total attendance. The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for the instruction that may be accessed if the library were not present. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library increasing “learning and literacy.” This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on income and proximity to alternatives, so the generic deadweight value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres and lower income rates.

**2. CULTURE****A. Economic benefit of special collections and other materials related to the culture and the history of the area (incl. snowshoes, fishing rods, GPS, Indigenous/French/non-official languages)****Formula:****How to find the values in the formula:**

To determine the collection value for non-English books, DVDs, etc. follow the directions outlined on page 17 – Collecting Indicators of Library Value.

For databases: Determine the annual subscription cost.

For other resources: Determine the average cost of items x Number of items.

The remaining information can be taken from the Annual Survey.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

Annual Survey sections:

C6: Non-traditional collections;

C0.4 Special Collections - Original Format;

C0.5 Special Collections - Digital Format



**Rationale:**

We use a broad definition of the term “culture” to reflect not only the usual associations with things like visual art, music, and language, but also the wide range of elements that shape local ways of living. If you have a “non-traditional” item in your collection, chances are it was responding to a local need. It may not be directly connected to a population’s ethnic heritage, but it is undeniably connected to the way we live. Though it might feel counterintuitive to include items like a tool lending library or a seed library in this category, this is where they belong in the framework.

The benefit for circulating items in the special collections is based on the collection value plus the value of the circulation adjusted to avoid double-counting the collecting value. The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for the fact that without the Library, patrons may have accessed the resource by some other means, such as by borrowing it from a friend or buying it from a retailer. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the Library increasing “awareness for local culture and history and developed love for” the community. This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on income and proximity to alternatives, so the generic deadweight value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres and lower income rates. The benefit of non-circulating items is more limited, as these are typically items of an archival nature. They may have been acquired several decades ago without any documented acquisition value, and they may be one-of-a-kind, or irreplaceable. Generally this value will not be able to be captured in reliable dollar figures unless the Library has had the item appraised. Consequently it is very important to emphasize this value in the Community Profile portion of the Library Value Report. In the event that a Library has had some of these items appraised, the total of these appraised values can be added. Because these items are rare or irreplaceable, they cannot be substituted, so there is no deadweight, displacement, or attribution cost that needs to be applied in this indicator.

**B. Economic benefit of the promotion of local cultural and historical events, programs, advertising space and information services about the local area**

**Formula:**

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{COST OF A 2-WEEK RADIO CAMPAIGN} \times \text{4 EVENTS OR THE ACTUAL NO. OF CULTURAL EVENTS} \\
 - \\
 \text{ATTRIBUTION VALUE} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

**How to find the values in the formula:**

A surrogate cost of a non-profit organization running a 2-week radio campaign is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet, along with a generic attribution value accounting for other sources of information that may have influenced attendance. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey. You also have the option of changing the cost of service to something that reflects local values, or you can leave the generic value that has been supplied.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

Annual Survey Report sections:

F.2.2 Annual Program attendance: Genealogy, local history, Doors Open; Culture Days, poetry and story readings, art shows; First Nations Public Library Week; First Nation Communities Reads; Indigenous language training and retention; Ontario Public Library Week / Canadian Library Month; Other.

**Rationale:**

The benefit of advertising provided by the public library is based on the surrogate value of running a 2-week radio advertising campaign multiplied by the number of events advertised. This value was determined by an average between three markets of different sizes in Ontario. The attribution value that is subtracted reflects that attendees at a given event could have heard about the event from many different sources, not only the public library. This is based on the attribution value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library increasing “awareness for local culture and history and developed love for the” community. This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on proximity to alternative sources of information, so the generic attribution value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres.

**C. Economic benefit of cultural events**

**Formula:**

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{\text{TOTAL ATTENDANCE}} \times \boxed{\text{COST OF PROGRAM}} \\
 = \\
 \boxed{\text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}}
 \end{array}$$

**How to find the values in the formula:**

A surrogate cost of the program is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet based on an average of fees for similar cultural programming. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

Annual Survey sections:

F.2.2 Annual Program attendance: Genealogy, local history, Doors Open; Culture Days, poetry and story readings, art shows; First Nations Public Library Week; First Nation Communities Reads; Indigenous language training and retention; Ontario Public Library Week / Canadian Library Month; Other.

**Rationale:**

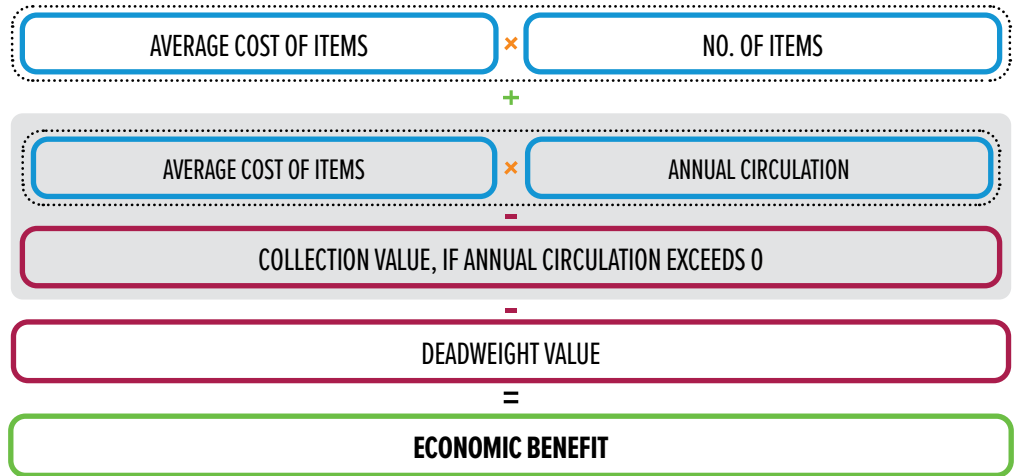
The benefit of the events hosted by the public library is based on the cost of delivering the program multiplied by the total attendance. No deadweight, attribution, or displacement values are subtracted because the events are unique to the public library.



### 3. INCLUSION AND WELLBEING

#### A. Economic benefit of accessible collections (i.e. Braille, large print books, Talking Books on CD, etc.)

Formula:



**How to find the values in the formula:**

To determine the collection value: Follow the directions outlined on page 17 – Collecting Indicators of Library Value.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

Annual Survey section:

H1.1.3.1- Accessibility-specific equipment (such as Daisy readers) that your public library provides

**Rationale:**

The benefit of accessible collections is based on the number of accessible items in the collection multiplied by their cost. This is based on a discounted version of the average replacement cost (see page 52) because the items being borrowed are used and shared. The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for the fact that without the library, patrons may have accessed the resource by some other means. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library increasing feelings of belonging and social inclusion. This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on proximity to alternative sources of information, so the generic attribution value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres.

## B. Economic benefit of internet access

### Formula:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{COST OF SERVICE} \times \text{NO. OF USERS} \\
 - \\
 \text{DEADWEIGHT VALUE} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

### How to find the values in the formula:

A comparative value for internet service costs is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

### Where to find the values in the formula:

Annual Survey section:

G1.3.1 - Number of people using workstations (x # open weeks);

G1.3.3. - Number of people using public library wireless connection (x # open weeks).

**Optional:** *If you have used community surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the services accessed by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.*

### Rationale:

The cost of internet service is based on the minimum replacement cost, or in other words, approximately what it would cost a patron to justify taking up space in a private establishment in order to access wifi services. In this case it is calculated at \$2, or roughly the cost of a cup of coffee. The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for the fact that without the library, patrons may have accessed the resource by some other means. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library increasing feelings of belonging and social inclusion. This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on proximity to alternative sources of information, so the generic attribution value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres.

### C. Economic benefit of social and health-related programming delivered at the public library

#### Formula:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{COST OF PROGRAM} \times \text{TOTAL ATTENDANCE} \\
 - \\
 \text{DEADWEIGHT VALUE} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

#### How to find the values in the formula:

A surrogate cost of the program is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet based on an average of fees for similar programming. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

#### Where to find the values in the formula:

Annual Survey section:

F2. Annual Programs: Newcomer focus; Technology, social media and computer literacy; as well as, other programs your public library may provide

**Optional:** If you have used community surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the programming accessed by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.

#### Rationale:

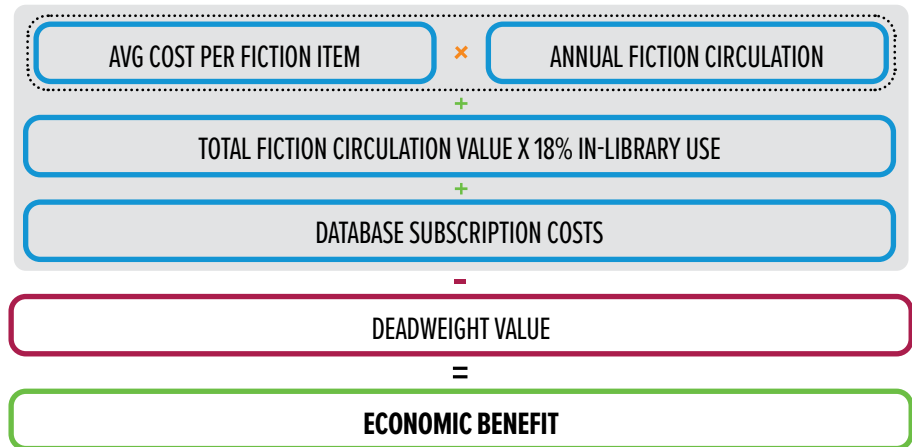
The benefit of social and health-related programming is based on the cost of delivering the program multiplied by the total attendance. The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for the fact that without the library, patrons may have accessed the resource by some other means. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library increasing feelings of belonging and social inclusion. This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on proximity to alternative sources of information, so the generic attribution value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres.



## 4. ENTERTAINMENT AND LEISURE

### A. Economic benefit of recreational reading, viewing and listening

Formula:



#### How to find the values in the formula:

To determine the collection value: Follow the directions outlined on page 17 – Collecting Indicators of Library Value.

For other resources: Determine the average cost of items x Number of items.

Circulation data can be taken directly from the Annual Survey.

#### Where to find the values in the formula:

- F1.0 Total Annual Circulation (Actual Annual Circulation of Physical Material);
- F1.1 Total Annual EBook Downloads / Borrows (Actual Annual Direct Circulation);
- F1.2 Total Annual E-Audio Book Downloads / Borrows (Actual Annual Direct Circulation);
- F1.3 Total Annual Music Downloads / Borrows (Actual Annual Direct Circulation);
- F1.4 Total Annual Video Downloads / Borrows (Actual Annual Direct Circulation);
- F1.5 Total Annual E-Magazine Downloads / Borrows (Actual Annual Direct Circulation)

#### Rationale:

This indicator is designed to reflect the value of reading for pleasure that libraries facilitated to the populations they serve. Because this is not directly monetizable, we use the proxy of the economic benefit of fiction circulation. The benefit of fiction circulation is based on the average cost of the items that are being borrowed and by how many people. This is based on a discounted version of the average replacement cost (see page 52) because the items being borrowed are used and shared. The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for the fact that without the library, patrons may have accessed the resource by some other means, such as by borrowing it from a friend or buying it from a retailer. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library increasing feelings of being “entertained and relaxed.” This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on proximity to alternative sources of information, so the generic attribution value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres.

## B. Economic benefit of Adult and Seniors programming and services (incl. cooking, knitting, yoga, etc.)

### Formula:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{COST OF PROGRAM} \times \text{TOTAL ATTENDANCE} \\
 - \\
 \text{DEADWEIGHT VALUE} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

### How to find the values in the formula:

A surrogate cost of the program is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet based on an average of fees for similar programming. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

### Where to find the values in the formula:

Annual Survey sections:

F2.2 Annual program attendance:

Adult learning (not covered elsewhere);

Seniors programming;

Book Clubs

F2.4- Service visits provided to residence-bound residents and people-at-risk; plus other adult and seniors programming your public library may provide.

**Optional:** If you have used community surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the programming accessed by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.

### Rationale:

The benefit of adult and seniors programming is based on the cost of delivering the program multiplied by the total attendance. You may have some adult or senior programming that you don't necessarily feel is entertainment-focused in nature, but we have included all of this programming under the Entertainment and Leisure domain for two reasons: 1) Simplicity, so you don't have to consider every single program individually, and 2) because much of the other specific programming has already been segregated into their more relevant domains. The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for patrons potentially finding other sources of programming if the library were not present. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library increasing feelings of being "entertained and relaxed." This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on proximity to alternative sources of information, so the generic attribution value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres.

### C. Economic benefit of a public library membership

#### Formula:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{NO. OF LIBRARY MEMBERS} \times \text{AVERAGE COST OF AN ANNUAL RECREATION MEMBERSHIP} \\
 - \\
 \text{DEADWEIGHT VALUE} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

#### How to find the values in the formula:

A surrogate cost of recreation centre membership is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet based on an average of fees for such facilities. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

#### Where to find the values in the formula:

Annual Survey section:

A1.14 – No. of active library cardholders

**Optional:** If you have used community surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the programming accessed by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.

#### Rationale:

The benefit of a library membership reflects the diverse opportunities that opened up to individuals by becoming members. While library membership has historically been free to local residents, a surrogate value is used for recreation facilities, which more commonly charge fees, but are similar in the wide range of opportunities that they provide members, from access to resources to social interaction. An average annual membership fee was determined based on a sample of facilities in eighteen different communities across Ontario. The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for patrons potentially finding other sources of programming if the library were not present. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library increasing feelings of being “entertained and relaxed.” This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on proximity to alternative sources of information, so the generic attribution value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres.



## 5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### A. Economic benefit of Employment, Training and Development

#### Formula:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{\text{TOTAL SALARIES + BENEFITS}} \times \boxed{\text{MULTIPLIER EFFECT}} \\
 + \\
 \boxed{\text{TRAINING + DEVELOPMENT COSTS}} \\
 = \\
 \boxed{\text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}}
 \end{array}$$

#### How to find the values in the formula:

All of the data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

#### Where to find the values in the formula:

Annual Survey sections:

B4.2.1 - Staffing (Total funds); B4.2.2 Employee Benefits;

B4.3 - Staff training and development (total funds spent on staff training).

#### Rationale:

The benefit of employment, training and development reflects the economic benefits that circulate within the community through the staff that are compensated for their labour.

Multipliers are used by economists to estimate the impact of investment or job creation on the economy of a community or region. They are developed from complex mathematical models which identify the relationship between spending or job creation in one sector (e.g., an industrial employer) and in another (e.g., household). (University of Nevada, Reno, 2004). In this case, we use the income or value-added multiplier that corresponds to the impact of investment in the information and cultural industries (of which public libraries are a part).

You may have staff that choose to live outside of the service area of your public library, but this should not be subtracted from the benefit reflected in this section because 1) working in a community often has the consequence of us spending a lot of time and money in that location, even if it is not where we reside. 2) you wouldn't keep track of the money your resident employees spend outside the community and subtract that either, so there is no point in removing employees who live outside your service area.

## B. Economic benefit of business and economic development workshops

### Formula:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{COST OF PROGRAM} \times \text{TOTAL ATTENDANCE} \\
 + \\
 \text{DATABASE SUBSCRIPTION COSTS} \\
 - \\
 \text{DEADWEIGHT VALUE} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

### How to find the values in the formula:

A surrogate cost of the program is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet based on an average of fees for similar programming. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

### Where to find the values in the formula:

Annual Survey section:

F2.2 Annual program attendance:

Careers, Job Help/ Skills;

Business Development

**Optional:** If you have used community surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the programming accessed by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.

### Rationale:

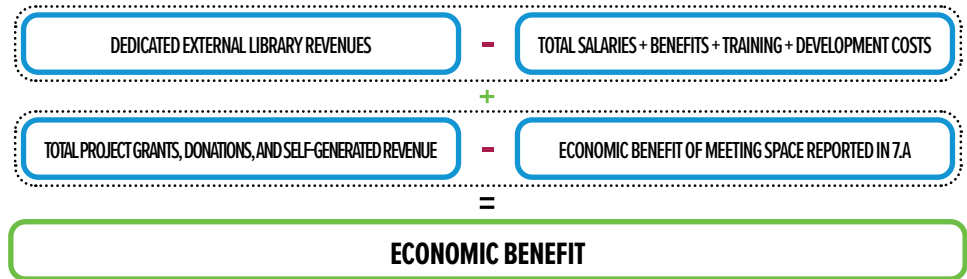
The benefit of business and economic development programming is based on the comparable market cost of delivering the program (calculated as the average hourly wage for a business or economic development professional based on wages in 2023 job advertisements) multiplied by the total attendance.

The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for patrons potentially finding other sources of programming if the library were not present. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library helping “with work, career, studies/increased productivity.” This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on income and proximity to alternatives, so the generic deadweight value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres and lower income rates.

**C. Economic benefit of self-generated revenue (incl. contracts, donations, employment funding, fees, grants, room rental). Project funding available only through application.**

There are two parts to this indicator. Each one has a specific formula because they are derived from different sources of data, but they combine to give a picture of the library’s revenue from sources other than the First Nation or municipality.

**Formula:**



**How to find the values in the formula:**

All of the data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

Annual Survey Report sections:

*Dedicated external library revenues:*

- B2.1.1 Public Library Operating Grant (PLOG);
- B2.1.2 Pay Equity Grant;
- B2.1.3 First Nation Salary Supplement Grant;
- B2.1.4 Total Provincial Operating Funding;
- B2.3 Contract Revenue;

*Total salaries, benefits, training and development costs:*

- B4.2.1 - Staffing (Total funds); B4.2.2 Employee Benefits;
- B4.3 - Staff training and development (total funds spent on staff training).

*Project grants, donations, and self-generated revenue:*

- B2.4.1 Total Project Grants;
- B2.5 Donations (Friends revenue, community foundations, private donations);
- B2.6: Self-generated revenue (café revenue, fees, fines, fundraising sales, room rental , etc.);
- B2.7: Debt Services and Reserve Fund Revenues
- B2.8: Other



**Rationale:**

The benefit of self generated revenue in this indicator includes the benefit of funds brought into the library from external sources, including provincial or federal levels of government. Significant portions of provincial public library-specific funding exist to cover staff salaries, benefits, training, and development costs, which are subtracted from the total to avoid ‘double-counting.’ Additionally, as the economic benefit of meeting spaces is calculated under “Space,” this amount is subtracted from own-source revenue.

**6. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

**A. Economic benefit of volunteer hours (incl. adults, board members, community hours and student coops)**

**Formula:**

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{\text{TOTAL NO. OF ANNUAL VOLUNTEER HOURS}} \times \boxed{\text{MINIMUM WAGE + BENEFITS}} \\
 \hline
 \boxed{\text{DISPLACEMENT VALUE}} \\
 \hline
 \boxed{\text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}}
 \end{array}$$

**How to find the values in the formula:**

The minimum wage and benefits have been supplied in the accompanying spreadsheet. All of the remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

- Annual Survey section:  
 D1.1 - Volunteers (full time)  
 D1.2 – Volunteers (part time)

*Optional: If you have used community surveys or focus groups to ask volunteers to ask them what proportion of them would volunteer elsewhere if the public library weren’t available, you can replace the generic displacement value with your more local figure.*

**Rationale:**

The benefit of volunteer hours is calculated based on if they were paid a minimum wage for their time. Volunteers fulfill a wide variety of tasks at public libraries, including some that are basic as well as some that are highly skilled and specialized. Though it would be ideal to assign a wage that corresponds to an equivalent pay scale for the tasks being done, a low wage has been selected for greater simplicity and to protect public libraries from claims that they

are overstating their value. The generic displacement value that is subtracted accounts for volunteers who are likely to volunteer the same amount somewhere else if the public library was not available. This helps us distinguish between value generated by the public library versus value that would be generated anyway. The displacement value is heavily dependent on proximity to alternatives, so its value decreases based on distance from large urban centres.

## B. Economic benefit of community development workshops

### Formula:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{COST OF PROGRAM} \times \text{TOTAL ATTENDANCE} \\
 - \\
 \text{DEADWEIGHT VALUE} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

### How to find the values in the formula:

A surrogate cost of the program is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet based on an average of fees for similar programming. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

### Where to find the values in the formula:

Annual Survey sections:

F2.2 Community Development Workshops

\* From the ASPL Manual: Community Development: this can include programming that addresses community capacity building, community empowerment or organizing, municipal planning or municipal cultural planning, forums for public input and participatory planning, community-based planning and group work, or that brings together representatives from a number of sectors for development and planning purposes.

**Optional:** If you use community surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the programming accessed by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.

### Rationale:

The benefit of community development programming is based on the comparable market cost of delivering the program (calculated as the average hourly wage for a community development professional based on wages in 2023 job advertisements) multiplied by the total attendance.

The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for patrons potentially finding other sources of programming if the library were not present. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the

library increasing “awareness about safety and community engagement/volunteerism.” This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on income and proximity to alternatives, so the generic deadweight value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres and lower income rates.

**C. Economic Benefit of community connections**

There are two parts to this indicator. Each one has a specific formula.

i) **Economic Benefit of partnerships**

**Formula:**

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{\text{TOTAL NO. OF CONNECTIONS}} \times \boxed{\text{VALUE OF ONE PARTNERSHIP}} \\
 = \\
 \boxed{\text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}}
 \end{array}$$

**How to find the values in the formula:**

A generic value for partnerships is provided in the accompanying spreadsheets. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

Annual Survey sections:

H1.2 Friends of the Library and Foundations;

H1.4 Cultural Partnerships and activities;

H1.5 Education Sector Partnerships; and other partnerships such as Human or Social Services; Business or Economic Development Agencies or Services; Community Development Agencies or Services; and other partnerships not included elsewhere

***Optional:** If you used community surveys or focus groups to determine what benefit your partners have ascribed to your collaborations, you can replace the generic value with your more local figure.*

**Rationale:**

Though each partnership is unique, the value it offers to each partner depends on the benefits they receive from the partnership. The value of partnerships is determined based on the assumption that partnerships contribute to greater efficiency in achieving common goals, and thus a conservative estimate is based on the partnership saving the financial equivalent of two hours of work based on library salary averages. This is likely a significant underestimation and can be replaced by figures generated from local community surveys or focus groups. No comparable deadweight, displacement or attribution values are necessary because partnerships are not finite: having a partnership does not prevent the partner from having another partnership with someone else.



ii) **Economic benefit of delivering municipal or other public services**

For public libraries that deliver municipal services

**Formula:**

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{AVERAGE ANNUAL TIME REQUIRED TO DELIVER VARIOUS NON-LIBRARY SERVICES} \\ \times \\ \text{MINIMUM WAGE + BENEFITS} \\ \times \\ \text{FREQUENCY} \end{array}$$

**How and where to find the values in the formula:**

The value of average time required to deliver these services and the wage and benefits figures are provided in the accompanying spreadsheet. If you provide non-library services on behalf of your First Nation, municipality, or another public agency (e.g. distribution of park passes or garbage tags, or collection of tax deposits, etc.) you can tabulate how frequently you are providing these services and include this figure in the calculation.

**Rationale:**

A growing number of public libraries report becoming customer service centres for a variety of local government programs or services, particularly as local governments increasingly try to streamline the services they offer while reaching as broad a swath of the public as possible. This indicator helps to capture the benefit created through a minimum replacement value for what the government or agency would otherwise have to pay a dedicated individual to do at a minimum wage. There is no deadweight, displacement, or attribution cost that needs to be factored into the equation.

## 7. SPACE

### A. Economic benefit meeting space

#### Formula:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{\text{TOTAL NO. OF RENTALS}} \times \boxed{\text{COST OF MEETING SPACE}} \\
 - \\
 \boxed{\text{DEADWEIGHT VALUE}} \\
 = \\
 \boxed{\text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}}
 \end{array}$$

#### How to find the values in the formula:

All of the data can be taken from the Annual Survey or internal sources.

#### Where to find the values in the formula:

Annual Survey section:

E4.1- If your public library rents or books meeting rooms or other parts of your facility or facilities to outside organizations, please state the number of times it did so in the survey year. For discounted groups, calculate the cost at a single regular rate (generally the highest rate charged)

**Optional:** If you have used community surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the meeting space accessed by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.

#### Rationale:

The benefit of meeting space is based on the highest cost charged for the space multiplied by the total number of rentals. Even if you have discounted rates for different groups, it is important to use the highest amount that is charged in this calculation because it reflects the overall benefit that is created, not the revenue.

The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for patrons who would rent meeting space elsewhere if the library were not present. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library helping “with work, career, studies/increased productivity.” This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on income and proximity to alternatives, so the generic deadweight value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres and lower income rates.

**B. Economic benefit of general use of public library space**

There are two parts to this indicator. Each one has a specific formula.

i) **Economic benefit of library visits**

**Formula:**

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{TOTAL NO. OF VISITS TO THE LIBRARY IN PERSON} \\
 - \\
 \text{TOTAL NO. OF PEOPLE USING SPECIAL PURPOSE SPACES REPORTED IN 7.C.1} \\
 \times \\
 \text{COST OF OPERATING SPACE} \\
 - \\
 \text{DEADWEIGHT VALUE} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

**How to find the values in the formula:**

All of the data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

**Where to find the values in the formula:**

Annual Survey sections:

G1.5.1 No. of visits to the library in person (x # open weeks);

G1.3.4 Total No. of people using Maker Spaces, Digital Media labs, Self-Publishing Centres (x # open weeks)

**Optional:** *If you have used community surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the programming accessed by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.*

**Rationale:**

The benefit of a library visit is based on the cost of operating space multiplied by the total number of visits (minus the visits that are counted elsewhere, in 7C). The cost of operating space is based on the average facilities, utilities, and other operating costs of all Ontario libraries for a minimal period of 15 minutes. This indicator reflects the benefit of the general use of space in the public library, including the impact of being in a space dedicated to knowledge, culture, and community among other uses, and the stimulation that comes from crossing paths with others in such spaces.



The generic deadweight value applied to library visits that is subtracted accounts for patrons potentially finding other similar environments if the library were not present. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library helping with “work, career, studies/increased productivity.” This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on income and proximity to alternatives, so the generic deadweight value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres and lower income rates.

ii) **Economic benefit of seating**

**Formula:**

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{TOTAL NO. OF SEATS IN GENERAL USE AREAS OF THE LIBRARY} \times \$2 \\
 \times \\
 \text{\# OF OPEN DAYS} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

**How and where to find the values in the formula:**

You will have to count the number of general public seats in your library, excluding those seats that are in meeting rooms or for dedicated purposes (e.g. computer kiosks).

**Rationale:**

The benefit of seating is based on the number of seats available for general use multiplied by a menial value of \$2 and by the number of annual open days, which assumes each seat would be filled at least once per day. The menial value is based on a replacement value for the minimal cost a person would incur to have to sit in a private establishment (roughly the cost of a cup of coffee). In contrast to the library visits indicator which reflects active use of space, this indicator reflects a passive use, capturing the value of a welcoming atmosphere that allows patrons to sit and exist without the expectation of any activity or transaction. Whether it be to warm up, cool down, get dry, or to have a rest, accessing seating at the public library also provides free access to washroom facilities, as well as the safety afforded by the presence of caring professionals. There is no deadweight, displacement, or attribution value that needs to be subtracted.

C. Economic benefit of visits to special purpose spaces

Formula:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{TOTAL NO. OF PEOPLE USING SPECIAL PURPOSE SPACES} \times \text{AVERAGE HOURLY COST OF SERVICE} \\
 - \\
 \text{DEADWEIGHT VALUE} \\
 = \\
 \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT}
 \end{array}$$

How to find the values in the formula:

A surrogate cost of the service is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet based on an average of fees for similar services. The remaining data can be taken from the Annual Survey.

Where to find the values in the formula:

Annual Survey section:

G1.3.4 No. of people using Maker Spaces, Digital Media labs, Self-Publishing Centres (x # open weeks)

**Optional:** If you have additional special purpose spaces (e.g. galleries, business incubators, etc.) and you track the number of visits to these spaces, you can include them in this indicator.

If you have used community surveys or focus groups to determine how much of the space accessed by patrons would be accessed by other sources if the public library weren't available, you can replace the generic deadweight value with your more local figure.

Rationale:

The benefit of visits to special purpose space is based on the number of people accessing the space multiplied by the comparative market value of accessing makers spaces and art galleries (this is calculated on the basis of an average of all makers spaces with paid class registrations and paid-admission art galleries in Ontario). This use of space has been separated out from general use of library space because of the higher costs associated with the provision of many of these dedicated uses and the higher costs that patrons would have to incur if they sought the same services privately.

The generic deadweight value that is subtracted accounts for those who would access the same services elsewhere if the library were not present. This is based on the deadweight value calculated by DeLeon (2021) for the impact of the library helping “with work, career, studies/increased productivity.” This is heavily variable from community to community and dependent on income and proximity to alternatives, so the generic deadweight value is adjusted to decrease based on distance from large urban centres and lower income rates.

# Why is the Community Profile important to the SROI?

VALUING ONTARIO LIBRARIES TOOLKIT



# Why is the Community Profile important to the SROI?



**The community profile is where unique stories about your public library can be showcased as well as where you can give the community a direct voice in this process.**

## **SROI combines both quantitative valuations and qualitative data to provide context for those valuations, as well as to emphasize those things that still escape quantification.**

In addition to the SROI calculations, the Library Value Report will contain a community profile that serves two broad purposes. First, it provides background and context of the community in which each public library operates, including defining the communities that are served, population (including if there is a seasonal population), and aspects of local demographics and culture that are important to highlight. Aspects of the library's history in the community may also be included in this section, the degree of detail covered is up to each individual library using the toolkit.

The second component of the community profile is to tell the story of your public library's impact in the community. To do this, you will need to collect stories from your patrons about how the public library has impacted their lives and include quotes from them in a narrative description of your library's impact. This is also an important section for describing the many impacts that you know your public library makes, but that are not captured by standard data collection, such as through the Annual Survey of Public Libraries. Each public library has built a unique mix of resources – collections, programming, services, etc. – in response to community needs, enabling diverse people to participate in the community in meaningful ways. In many instances, public libraries have demonstrated leadership by providing services that are otherwise non-existent, underdeveloped or under serviced. The community profile is where unique stories about your public library can be showcased as well as where you can give the community a direct voice in this process. If your library has recently completed a Community Survey, this is an ideal source of data in the narrative.

## **GATHERING DATA FOR DEADWEIGHT, DISPLACEMENT AND ATTRIBUTION VALUES (OPTIONAL)**

There is an option for collecting additional information that will make the SROI calculation more local in its comparisons. The toolkit provides generic numbers that you can use to calculate the deadweight, displacement, or attribution values, but libraries can choose to replace these values with information that can be generated from a local survey. This information captures a local sense of what community members would do or access regardless of whether the public library provided the service, versus what they can only access by virtue of the public library.

Below are some sample questions that can be put in surveys to local patrons and partners. To make things easier for participants, we suggest giving a range of percentages rather than asking for a precise estimate. The surveys can be distributed directly to partners and stakeholders, or it can be made available online with a free service such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms, or can be available to the general public and distributed at the public library service desk (or all of the above). Just be sure to provide a date when any hard-copies of the surveys should be returned, and a place for them to be securely (and anonymously) dropped off, such as a box near the entrance.

### Questions for general public / library users:

1. **What percentage of the items you borrow or use would you otherwise buy from other (retail) sources, if those items weren't available to borrow or use through the public library?**  
 [survey responses on a scale of 0-25% / 25-50% / 50-75% / 75-100% / NA] or  
 [survey responses on a dollar scale of \$0-25 / \$25-50 / \$50-75 / \$75-100 / \$100+ / NA]
2. **What percentage of the programs or activities that you access at the public library (such as storytime, book clubs, crafting) would you realistically find an alternative for if the public library did not offer the program or activity?**  
 [survey responses on a scale of 0-25% / 25-50% / 50-75% / 75-100% / NA] or  
 [survey responses on a dollar scale of \$0-25 / \$25-50 / \$50-75 / \$75-100 / \$100+ / NA]
3. **If you were unable to access internet services (computers or wifi) through the public library, would you have another source for free or affordable access?**  
 [survey responses: yes/no]
4. **If public library space was unavailable for use or rental, would you have used or rented space somewhere else?**  
 [survey responses: yes/no]
5. **What level of annual financial savings have you or your organization received by renting space through the public library as opposed to another location?**  
 [survey responses on a scale of \$0-100 / \$100-500 / \$500-1000 / \$1000+ / NA]
6. **In an average year, how much money have you spent on books, magazines, or other media, programs, or services as a result of learning about it through your public library?**

### Questions specific for library volunteers:

7. **If you didn't volunteer at the public library, would you spend your volunteer time at another organization? If so, would you dedicate the same amount of volunteer time to another organization as you do to the public library?**  
 [survey responses: yes/no/N/A with a comment box for follow up question response]

### Questions specific to partners or groups that use the public library to promote events:

8. **Does promoting events and services through the public library provide a good return on that investment for your organization?**  
 [survey responses: yes/no] If you had to provide a monetary value (an amount in dollars) what would it be?

These questions could also be used in a focus group format and collected at the same time as running the focus group for the Community Profile. Discussing these questions, however, will take extra time, so plan accordingly. The same process described above for running the focus group can be used, but with the simple adjustment of changing the questions being discussed. Additional prompts can also be used, such as asking about specific programs, services, or circulation items, if participants are having a hard time understanding or relating to the questions.

# Understanding Social Return on Investment

VALUING ONTARIO LIBRARIES TOOLKIT

**ONTARIO** LIBRARY  
SERVICE  
Stronger libraries. Stronger communities.

Ontario 

Algoma  
UNIVERSITY

Northwest Ontario Research, Development, Innovation and Knowledge  
NORDIK  
INSTITUTE 



# What is Social Return on Investment (SROI)?

The Social Return on Investment assesses three main areas: direct spending, direct benefits, and indirect benefits.

As Olsen and Lingane (2004) explain, Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a term

*“...originating from return on investment (ROI), as used by traditional investors. It describes the social impact of a business or non-profit’s operations in dollar terms, relative to the investment required to create that impact and exclusive of its financial return to investors”*

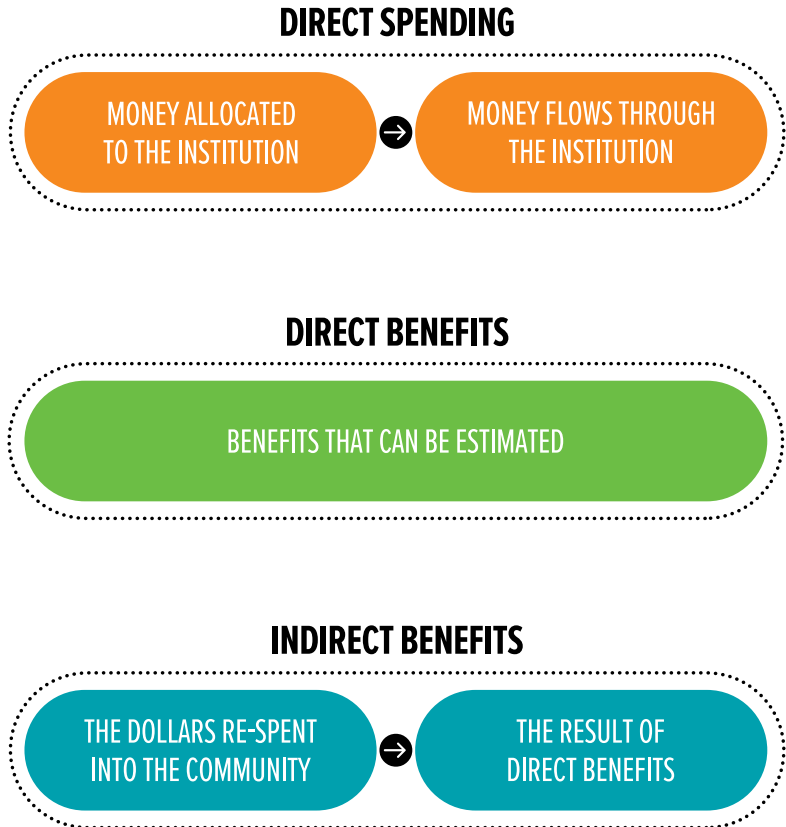


Figure 1.3

SROI is an approach to representing the value of an organization or initiative that provides monetary estimates (i.e. dollar values) to the benefits that are created by goods, programs, or services that don’t typically have a monetary value. This addresses one of the key challenges that public libraries face in communicating the contribution they make to their communities: How do we demonstrate the value of a service that is offered at little to no charge? Where the success of a business is typically measured by how much revenue or profit it earns, the impact of public libraries, like other services and not-for-profit institutions, is not always so easily measured. In the words of one librarian who participated in the development of this toolkit, “Public libraries exist to save people money, not to make people money.”



### SO HOW DOES SROI WORK?

SROI typically begins by reaching out to stakeholders, determining the impacts made by the organization, and identifying indicators that will help demonstrate those impacts. This preliminary work was undertaken by the OLS and the Valuing Libraries Toolkit Steering Committee in collaboration with the NORDIK Institute. Through this toolkit library specific data is used to complete the **valuation** process, which compiles the final SROI calculation unique to the individual public library and community they serve.

At its most basic form, SROI calculations take something that is offered at no charge and applies a dollar value to it. The most direct way to do this is by applying a **comparative market value**. In other words, the dollar value reflects what would be charged for the same service in the private sector. Often the exact same goods, programs, or services are not available, however, so a **surrogate value** is used instead. A surrogate value is the cost of “some item or phenomenon that is logically expected to involve approximately the same utility as the item in which we are interested” (Estes, 1976 qtd. In Quarter, Mook, and Armstrong, 2009, p. 305). In other words, it is a comparison to something that is generally equivalent. For example, if we are trying to assign a value to our computer literacy program and there is a local business or teacher who offers the same service but for a fee, we can use the fee they charge as the basis for how we assign a value to our program. If there isn’t an equivalent, though, we look for a surrogate. We could take the cost of a similar course at a private provider, college, or another provider even if the content isn’t the same. We will try to select one that is as similar as possible to what it is that we are offering. Comparative and surrogate values for many services have been identified and are built into the toolkit. As you will see in the sections that follow, we also give you the option of adjusting some of these values to better reflect what is available locally. Throughout this section we also provide explanations for how we arrived at the formula and what benefit it is supposed to represent.

For all the good that an SROI report can provide, it’s important to understand that the dollar values produced by an SROI calculation *do not* necessarily represent dollars in any person or government’s pockets. Rather, they are dollar-based estimates of the value of the benefit that is created.

The SROI offers a way of representing the benefits that are created by public libraries that can help policymakers reflect on what costs or losses might occur in the absence of public library services. The dollar values, however, are only one part of the picture and the SROI process. The stories that are collected from patrons about their experiences with the public library are every bit as important to the Library Value Report. Whether you are presenting the report to your Board, Council, Band Council, or other stakeholders, some will be motivated by numbers or quantitative data, while others will be motivated by the real-world, qualitative experiences of the community members touched by what the public library has to offer.

At its most basic form, SROI calculations take something that is offered at no charge and applies a dollar value to it.

# Calculating Midpoint Values for Circulating Materials

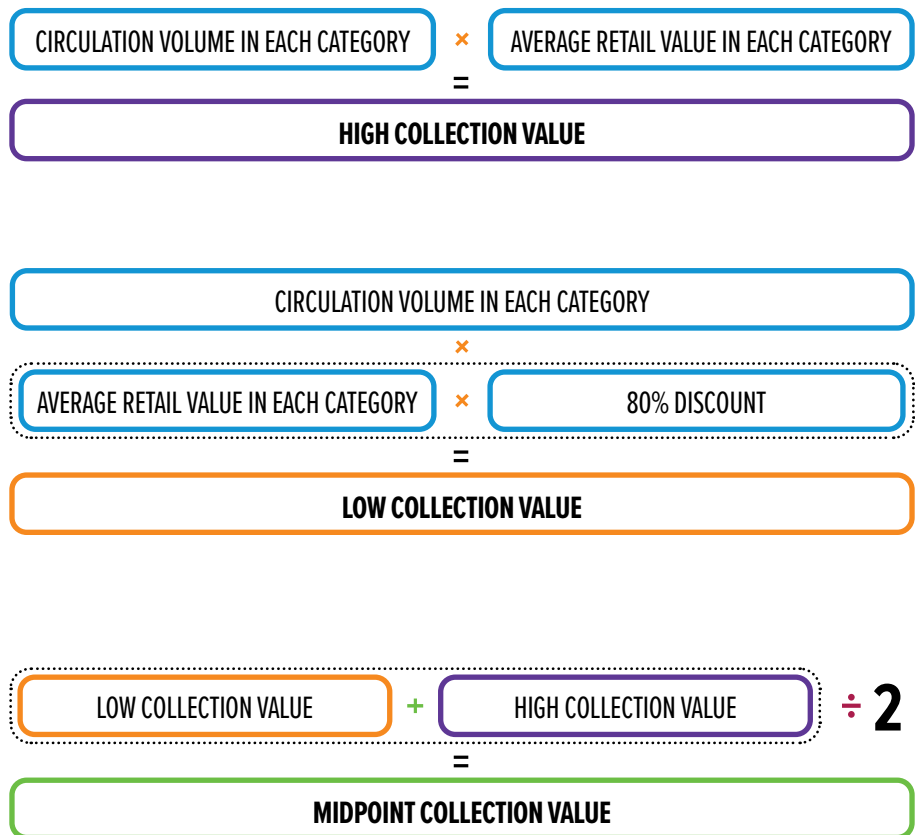
There are three indicators that require the calculation of an average cost per item:

- **Economic benefit of non-fiction circulation**
- **Economic benefit of special collections and other materials related to the culture and history of the area**
- **Economic benefit of recreational reading**

The average cost per item, however, is based on a midpoint average value, rather than a straightforward average of the items.

The value of a collection is not based simply on the dollar value of an item when it was purchased for a collection. Because these items are shared and used numerous times by different public library patrons, accessing them can't be said to have the same value as acquiring the item brand-new and for their exclusive use. Patrons are loaned items for specific periods of time with the expectation that they be returned in functional condition. To reflect this different experience, a "midpoint value" is estimated that balances the "high" actual retail replacement cost with a "low" heavily discounted cost. The "low value" is obtained by discounting the value by 80%. The midpoint value is estimated by adding the high value and low value and dividing by two. The midpoint value is then used to determine the SROI (Martin Prosperity Institute, 2013).

## Formula for Calculating the Midpoint Values





**Formula for Calculating the Economic Benefit of Each Collection Category:**

$$\frac{\text{CIRCULATION VOLUME IN EACH CATEGORY} \times \text{MIDPOINT COLLECTION VALUE}}{= \text{ECONOMIC BENEFIT OF CIRCULATION IN EACH CATEGORY}}$$

The toolkit contains a dedicated tab titled “Average Collections Costs” to assist in calculating the midpoint cost. Once you insert either the Average Replacement Cost (provided by your ILS) or the Average Retail Value that you calculate yourself using the options discussed in Section 2, the remaining tabs of the spreadsheet that require this information will be automatically populated.

If you are wondering why we wouldn’t just discount the retail value by 40%, you are absolutely right that this would achieve the exact same result as calculating a low value and then averaging the high replacement value and the low value. We use the longer formula only to be transparent about how we arrived at the 40% discount value.



# Deadweight, Displacement and Attribution Values

**To be as accurate as possible, we also must consider other factors that influence the benefits that we are attributing to public libraries' activities.**

Economists have special terms to define measures that adjust claims so that they consider other factors shaping the impact or outcome we are trying to quantify. In this toolkit, we deal with three of these measures.

The **deadweight** reflects the proportion of the benefit that would have happened anyway, even if the public library had not been involved (New Economics Foundation 2009, p. 56). For example, if someone wanted to buy a book, but they borrowed it from the public library first before ordering it, this is a reflection of deadweight. You can rightly claim that we saved that person money, but you can't honestly claim that you increased their access to information because they would have bought the book anyway. If someone checks out a book that they never would have bought on their own, however, that is a true reflection of the benefit of access to information.

The **displacement** reflects the proportion of the benefit that might have been taken away from another service provider (New Economics Foundation 2009, p. 57). For example, we assign a benefit to volunteer hours, but some volunteers might have invested their time at a different service or agency if the public library had not been an option. In this sense, the benefit of those hours at the public library are displaced from another group. However, if someone is volunteering (or volunteers more hours than they otherwise would) because they are inspired to do so by the public library, specifically this reflects the unique benefit created by the public library.

The **attribution** reflects the proportion of a benefit that is generated by other entities (New Economics Foundation 2009, p. 59). For example, while we assign a value to the promotion that public libraries do for local events, unless the public library is the only location where an event was advertised, it's likely that many different organizations or marketing efforts contributed to the total attendance. To avoid claiming the benefit produced by others, we reduce the public library's claim to a smaller share, striving for a claim that is as proportional as possible to the actual impact.

Throughout the accompanying spreadsheet where you will calculate the SROI, you will notice that for most indicators, there is either a deadweight, displacement, or attribution value that is subtracted from the subtotal. There are some exceptions, though, such as the value of partnerships, where none of these are subtracted because the benefit is unique to the public library, wouldn't have otherwise happened, and doesn't take anything away from any other organization.

A generic deadweight, displacement, or attribution value has been provided for each indicator that requires one, based on the assumption that a maximum of 20% of the benefit measured by an indicator would occur whether the public library existed or not, but this depends on whether similar goods, programs, or services are available, as well as if the population of each community would have the expendable income to purchase them instead.



Throughout the accompanying spreadsheet where you will calculate the SROI, you will notice that for most indicators, there is either a deadweight, displacement, or attribution value that is subtracted from the subtotal. There are some exceptions...



To reflect that many similar goods, programs, or services simply aren't available in many communities, the deadweight, displacement, or attribution values are adjusted for each library based on a measure of rurality. This is a standard calculation previously used by the Government of Ontario to account for rural versus urban areas in relation to public library funding. It determines that a public library located further from an urban centre (with a regular population over 100,000) is considered more rural than a public library located closer to an urban centre. The rationale for this is that larger communities will have a wider array of alternative sources or options for whatever goods, programs or services are being measured.

To reflect different income levels, the values for each library are also adjusted based on the proportion of the population served by the public library that is living at or below the Low Income Measure-After Tax (LIM-AT) as identified by the 2021 Census of Canada.

These adjustments are applied depending on whether access, alternatives or income are factors in a patron's ability to find a substitute for the goods, services, or programs offered by the public library. As a result, some of these values may be adjusted by one or both factors.

The most accurate information is always local information. In the Community Profile section, you will find information on how to collect local data that you can use to set your own deadweight, displacement, or attribution values.

While we have focused in this section on how we avoid over-emphasizing the impact of the public library by considering all the other groups, institutions, and businesses that contribute to similar impact, the public library also has many potential positive impacts on these players as well. These impacts are what we call **positive externalities**, which include things like additional sales, traffic, or participation that has been generated indirectly by the public library from other programs or services that it offers. For example, a family that finds itself checking out the same book repeatedly may end up purchasing that book from a store. Had it not been for the library they may never have known about the book, and thus the sale would not have been made. We have opted for the time being not to include a calculation of positive externalities of public libraries, as this will require deeper research into the habits of patrons. However, if a library wishes to calculate its positive externalities, they can survey their patrons and ask how much money they spend on books or other goods and services because of becoming aware of them from the library. The total value reported by all patrons will be the total dollar figure of positive externalities produced by the public library.



# Glossary and References

VALUING ONTARIO LIBRARIES TOOLKIT

# Glossary

## Annual Survey Reporting

The Annual Survey of Public Libraries submitted to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport based on individual public library data collected through the Typical Week Survey or other data collection tools. The reporting section number (e.g. F2.3 - Programs genealogy, local history, Doors Open, refers to where the data are located in the Annual Survey Report.)

## Avoidance Cost

The dollar value that is saved by preventing or avoiding a situation or need.

## Attribution

A measure of the proportion of an impact or benefit that can be attributed to one or more other sources (e.g. where more than one group, institution, or location is promoting a local event).

## Children

0 - 12 years of age.

## Community Development

Public libraries may provide a variety of programming that addresses community capacity building, community empowerment or organizing, municipal planning or municipal cultural planning, forums for public input and participatory planning, community-based planning and group work, or that brings together representatives from a number of sectors for development and planning purposes.

## Comparative Market Value

The typical amount that would be charged for a good or service if it were being provided by a private business for a fee.

## Deadweight

A measure of what impact or benefit would have occurred anyway, even if our own services or intervention was not available (e.g. accessing the same program from a different, non-library source).

## Displacement

A measure of what proportion of a benefit may have been taken away from another service provider or institution (e.g. volunteer hours that would have otherwise gone to another local community group).

## Economic Multiplier

Multipliers are used by economists to estimate the impact of investment or job creation on the economy of a community or region. They are developed from complex mathematical models which identify the interrelationship between spending or job creation in one sector (e.g. an industrial employer) and in another (e.g. household) (University of Nevada, Reno, 2004. The Importance of Economic Multipliers, Fact Sheet-04-29).

### Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a term “originating from return on investment (ROI), as used by traditional investors. It describes the social impact of a business or non-profit’s operations in dollar terms, relative to the investment required to create that impact and exclusive of its financial return to investors” (Lingane, 2004). The Social Return on Investment assesses three main areas: direct spending, direct tangible benefits, and indirect tangible benefits.

### Surrogate Value

A surrogate value is the cost of “some item or phenomenon that is logically expected to involve approximately the same utility as the item in which we are interested” (Estes, 1976 qtd. In Quarter, Mook, and Armstrong, 2009)

### Valuation

The process of assigning a monetary value to something that does not typically have a price or cost (or at least not one that is readily known to the user or beneficiary of that thing).

### Teen

13 - 17 years of age.

## References

- Martin Prosperity Institute (2013) *So much more: The economic impact of the Toronto Public Library on the City of Toronto*. Retrieved from <https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/service-plans-strategies-frameworks/So.Much.More.Economic.Impact.Study.pdf>
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- Olsen, S. and Lingane, A. (2004) Guidelines for social return on investment. *California Review of Management*. 46(3), pp. 116-35. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2307/41166224>
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- University of Nevada, Reno (2004). The importance of economic multipliers, Fact Sheet-04-29.



# Appendices

**VALUING ONTARIO LIBRARIES TOOLKIT**

# APPENDIX 1: Text Templates for Methodology Section of the Library Value Report

*Below is text that can be used in the methodology section of your Library Value Report. You may wish to modify it to reflect some of the specific actions you took to collect information to inform the report.*

In 2016 the **Ontario Library Service - North** contracted NORDIK Institute to create a measurement tool to illustrate the value of public libraries in Northern Ontario, a vast geographic and culturally and linguistically diverse region of Ontario. Since its publication, the **Ontario Library Service** has consolidated into a province-wide organization and in 2021 requested NORDIK Institute undertake the development of a new toolkit to support public libraries across Ontario in communicating their value and measuring their individual Social Return on Investment.

At its most basic form, Social Return on Investment (SROI) calculations take something that is offered for free and applies a dollar value to it. The most direct way to do this is by applying a **comparative market value**. In other words, the dollar value reflects what would be charged for the same service in the private sector. Often the exact same goods, programs, or services are not available, however, so a **surrogate value** is used instead. A surrogate value is the cost of “some item or phenomenon that is logically expected to involve approximately the same utility as the item in which we are interested” (Estes, 1976 qtd. In Quarter, Mook, & Armstrong, 2009, p. 305). In other words, it is a comparison to something that is generally equivalent. For example, if we are trying to assign a value to our computer literacy program and there is a local business or teacher who offers the same service but for a fee, we can use the fee they charge as the basis for how we assign a value to our program. If there isn’t an equivalent, though, we look for a surrogate. We could take the cost of a similar course at a private provider, college, or another provider even if the content isn’t exactly the same, but we will try to select one that is as similar as possible to what it is that we are offering. We have already gone through the process of identifying comparative and surrogate values for many services, and these are built into the toolkit. As you will see in Section 4, though, we also give you the option of adjusting some of these values to better reflect what is available locally. Throughout Section 4 we also provide explanations for how we arrived at the formula and what benefit it is supposed to represent.

NORDIK Institute, with the review and support of Ontario Library Service and an advisory committee consisting of representatives from seven public libraries across Ontario, identified comparative and surrogate values for each of the services, programs, or circulation items that are offered by public libraries and measured in the SROI framework.

Deadweight, displacement, or attribution values (see Glossary) were also calculated to subtract from the value calculations (where relevant) to most accurately represent the benefits that are uniquely attributable to the public library.

## **If you are using the generic values, include this text:**

*“deadweight, displacement, or attribution values for indicators based on the assumption that a maximum of 20% of the benefit measured by an indicator would occur whether the public library existed or not, but that this is dependent on the availability of other similar goods, programs, or services, as well as income to purchase this value in the market. To stand in for the availability of other goods and services, we adjust the deadweight, displacement, or attribution values based on a measure of rurality that has previously been used by the Ontario Government to determine the distribution of funds dedicated to rural public libraries, which is the distance from the nearest community with a regular population of 100,000 or more people. The rationale for this is that larger communities will have larger markets and thus a wider array of alternative sources or outlets for whatever is being measured. To reflect different access to incomes, the values are adjusted based on the proportion of the population served by the public library that is living at or below the Low Income Measure-After Tax (LIM-AT) as identified by the 2021 Census of Canada. These adjustments are applied depending on whether access or income are factors, and so some of these values may be adjusted by one or both.”*

**If you used surveys or focus groups to determine local deadweight, displacement, or attribution values, include this text instead:**

*Staff at [insert library name] conducted a [indicate whether you used a focus group, survey, or both] to identify deadweight, displacement, or attribution values based on local data and integrated these into the calculations of the Social Return on Investment]*

Staff from [insert library name] then input statistics from its Annual Survey [if additional tracking was included, indicate so here] to arrive at the overall economic benefit and SROI value calculations.

For all the good that an SROI report can provide, it's important to understand that the dollar values produced by an SROI calculation do not necessarily represent dollars in any person or government's pockets. Rather, they are dollar-based estimates of the value of the benefit that is created. The dollar values, however, are only one part of the picture and the SROI process. The stories that are collected from patrons about their experiences with the public library illustrate the human impact of public library services in [insert community name].

This information was collected by library staff through a [add "series of" if more than one] focus group with [specify the relationship of participants: board members, volunteers, patrons, the general public, policy makers, etc.] consisting of [insert #] people. Participants were asked to reflect on and describe the impact of the public library on their lives and the community, from their experience. Contributions were transcribed and then organized into a narrative about this impact, which can be seen in the *Community Profile* in Section 3.

# APPENDIX 2: Library Services

Following is a general list of public library services and the indicator associated with each.

Service	Indicator (2022 ASPL form covering 2021 Library Activity)
<b>Collections</b>	
Non-fiction: (all ages) including print books; e-books not included in the consortia; audio books: DVDs and hard-copy; video downloads; e-magazines; any other non-fiction non-print	1Ai
Fiction: (all ages) including print books, audio books, e-books not included in the consortia; graphic novels, DVS's, Playaway; paperbacks; periodicals (all titles)	4A
Music CDs	4A
Newspapers, reference collections	2A
Used books, used DVDs, etc.	5C
<b>Special Collections</b>	
Art exhibitions	2C
Cake pans, fishing rods, puppets, seeds, tools, musical instruments, etc.	2A
Genealogy and local history collections	2A
Large print, braille, books on tape, talking books, daisy CDs, daisy readers, CELA	3A
Material in other languages	2A
Photographs, maps, microfilm/microfiche	2A
<b>Digital Collections</b>	
Audio books: Fiction	4A
Audio books: Non-fiction	1Ai
E-books not included in the consortia: Fiction	4A
E-books not included in the consortia: Non-fiction	1Ai
E-books: Fiction	4A
Adult and Seniors: Fiction	4A
Adult and Seniors: Non-fiction	1Ai
Children and Teen: Fiction	4A
Children and Teen: Non-fiction	1Ai
Health and wellness: Non-fiction	1Ai
Video downloads: Non-fiction	1Ai



<b>Databases</b>	
Adult	1Ai
Health and wellness	4A
Languages and culture-related, e.g. Ancestry, Mango Languages	2A
<b>Programs</b>	
Adult and Seniors book clubs, yoga, sewing classes, art classes, knitting, etc.	4B
Children and Teen, book clubs, reading programs, preschool programs, story times, literacy programs, homework help	1B
Children and Teen, Citizen Science programs	1B
Class visits	1C
Health-related programming	3C
Maker Spaces, Digital Media labs, Self-Publishing (all ages)	7C
<b>Technology</b>	
Camera, E-readers, iPads, mobile hotspot devices, notepads, tablets, wireless sticks, etc.	1Ai
Equipment rental, e.g. Computers, laptops, Greenscreen	5C
3D printer (user fees)	5C
Technology, social media, computer literacy training	3C
Internet access: wireless, wifi, hotspots	3B
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
Interlibrary loans: Fiction	4Aii
Interlibrary loans: Non-Fiction	1Aii
Genealogy assistance	2B
Meeting space (user fees)	7A
Office equipment: scanner, photocopier, fax machine, printer (user fees)	5C
Reference requests: electronic and standard, readers' advisory	1Aiii
Shut-in and homebound services	4B