tpl: vital to toronto

building success, resilience and well-being for our city

Toronto Public Library
strategic plan 2020-2024

tpl.ca

our vision, mission & values

vision

Toronto Public Library will be recognized as the world's leading library by informing and inspiring Toronto and its communities, making us all more resilient, more knowledgeable, more connected and more successful.

mission

Toronto Public Library provides free and equitable access to services which meet the changing needs of Torontonians. The library preserves and promotes universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment.

values

equity: Accessibility, respect and fairness

diversity: Valuing individual needs, experiences and differences

intellectual freedom: Guaranteeing and facilitating the free exchange of information and ideas in a democratic society, protecting intellectual freedom and respecting individuals' rights to privacy and choice

innovation: Encouraging creativity, experimentation and the generation of ideas

inclusion: Welcoming participation in decision-making and service development by residents and communities

integrity: Open, transparent and honest in all our dealings

accountability: Taking responsibility for our actions and the services we provide

service orientation: Providing excellent, responsive services

welcome to our new strategic plan

We are fortunate to live in one of the most diverse and dynamic cities in the world. As our city has grown and changed, the library has been changing along with it, playing an increasingly important role in providing the vital ingredients Torontonians need to thrive.

Our new Strategic Plan is the next step in our transformation journey. It is a truly collective effort that reflects the input of thousands of Torontonians from every neighbourhood, and community partners and collaborators across many sectors. We heard from Toronto that our city and its residents need better access to inclusive, welcoming spaces, improved digital literacy, support for workforce development, platforms for civic discussion and engagement, and consistently excellent customer experiences.

In response, we have developed five strategic priorities and three supporting enablers that will shape and guide our work over the next five years. They allow us to plan for the long term, and be responsive in the moment to change. You will also see in our new plan that we have put Torontonians at the centre of it, with the ambition of building more **resilience, success** and **well-being** for our city and its residents.

We are looking forward to this exciting next chapter in our story, as we work with our colleagues, our partners and our communities to empower all Torontonians. Together we can build an even stronger, brighter future for this incredible city.

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

Sue Graham-Nutter
TPL Board Chair

TPL board members

Councillor Paul Ainslie
Sarwar Choudhury
Andrea Geddes Poole
Sue Graham-Nutter (Chair)
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how to navigate this document

Toronto Public Library's Commitment to Indigenous People & Communities

We are committed to an ongoing and long-term response to Reconciliation. In 2017, we drafted Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives at Toronto Public Library for consultation with Indigenous peoples and communities as part of our response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) 94 Calls to Action. We have also established a permanent Indigenous Advisory Council at TPL to guide our steps as we move forward. With guidance and support from the Council, we have introduced a number of initiatives, including Land Acknowledgement Statements, an Elders in Residence program, the annual Read Indigenous booklist, and expanded programming offering Indigenous content year-round, reflecting an Indigenous-led approach.

In our new Strategic Plan, we are continuing to build on this important work. Some examples of what you'll see in the next five years and beyond are:

- Engagement with Indigenous communities in ongoing consultation for planning and designing culturally safe and relevant library spaces
- Reaching out to Indigenous communities virtually, to highlight Indigenous content, promote programming and encourage participation
- Building staff capacity to support engagement with Indigenous communities through cultural training and ongoing development

Untitled, by Sam Ash. A gift from the local artist. A part of Toronto Public Library's Special Collections, proudly on display at the Toronto Reference Library.

Land Acknowledgement

Toronto Public Library is situated on land covered by the Dish with One Spoon treaty and the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, Anishnaabe Nations, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Toronto Public Library gratefully acknowledges these Indigenous nations for their guardianship of this land.

This land acknowledgement statement was developed in consultation with the Indigenous Advisory Council at TPL, which is made up of community members representing the diversity of Indigenous communities in Toronto, as well as representatives from Indigenous service providers in the city.

why the library?..

Toronto Public Library has the vital, active ingredients to help Torontonians thrive in our city. This goes beyond our people and programs, our services and resources. We uniquely serve our city and its residents by creating value through experiences that are:

accessible
We are free and local, reaching and serving you where you live, and tailoring our services to your needs.

inclusive
We are supportive and welcoming to all.

expert
Our knowledgeable staff are trusted, credible and neutral, and can help you pursue any interest.

flexible
Our services are personalized so you can use us where, when and how you like.

No other public institution has the mandate and reach, physical and technical infrastructure, talent and community presence to empower Torontonians the way we do.

our plan at a glance

We live in one of the most dynamic cities in the world. With a booming economy, a growing tech industry and an educated workforce, we are Canada's leading economic engine and a global leader in technology, culture and innovation. Our diversity and access to health care, education and social services make Toronto one of the best cities to live in.

But along with these opportunities come a number of challenges. The high cost of living and lack of affordable housing, along with growing income inequality and poverty, are widening divides in our city. There is an increase in extreme weather, less job security, more traffic congestion, and despite living in a hyper-connected world, many Torontonians are feeling more isolated than ever before.

To help our city address many of its greatest challenges and seize its many opportunities, Toronto's library will continue to innovate and modernize so that we can better inform, engage and connect all of us, making Toronto more **successful, resilient and well.**

focus on equity:

Despite living in one of Canada's wealthiest and fastest-growing cities, not all residents have equal access to the economic, educational, health and social opportunities that are so critical to succeed and thrive in our city. Too often, access and opportunities are dependent on where you live, what you do, how much you earn and who you are. This is creating divides in our city and a success gap that impacts us all.

We are committed to helping level the playing field for all Torontonians – with a particular focus on equity-seeking groups and vulnerable populations. We will work to understand and break down barriers to access and increase inclusion to ensure that everyone who wants to use the library feels welcome and represented in our spaces, is able to access our services, and can benefit from the outcomes we're driving. Within each of our priorities you'll see what we're calling a "focus on equity." These are examples of this commitment.

Here is a high-level view of the plan, which will guide our work over the next five years.

focus on equity: Our commitment to understanding and breaking down barriers to access and increasing inclusion

strategic priorities

Where we will focus and invest over the next five years

1 public space

2 digital inclusion & literacy

3 workforce development

4 a democratic society

5 public service excellence

enablers

Foundational and organizational supports that allow us to deliver on our outcomes
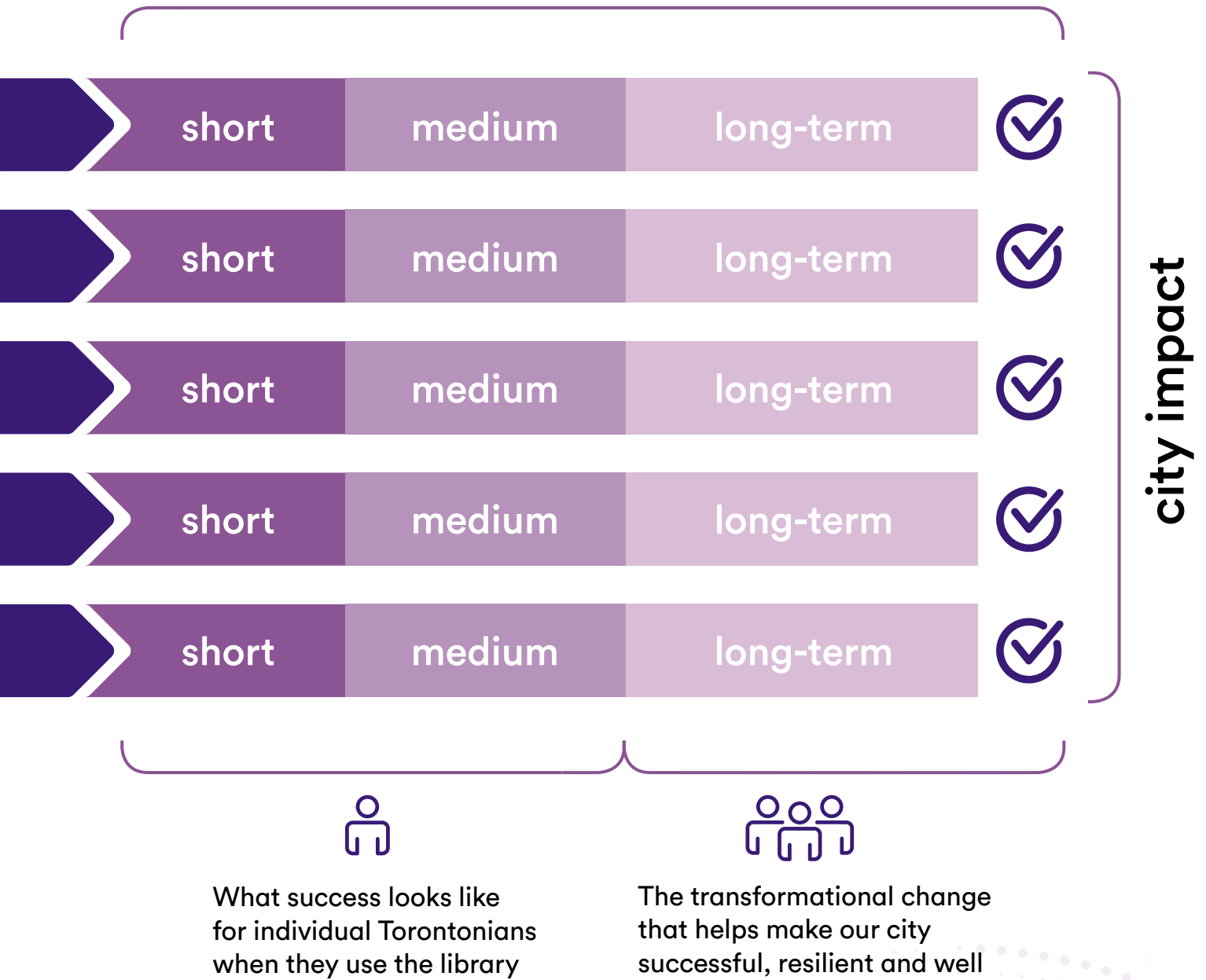
partnerships

modernization

evaluation & accountability

outcomes & impacts

	short	medium	long-term	
▶	short	medium	long-term	✓
▶	short	medium	long-term	✓
▶	short	medium	long-term	✓
▶	short	medium	long-term	✓
▶	short	medium	long-term	✓

city impact

What success looks like for individual Torontonians when they use the library

The transformational change that helps make our city successful, resilient and well

our priorities

1 Opening up our public space

2 Broadening Toronto's digital access and inclusion

3 Building pathways for workforce development

4 Providing the vital ingredients for a democratic society

5 Investing in staff and an innovative service culture

public space

in our city

Toronto's population and urban density are growing. Many don't have easy access to free public spaces that are comfortable and welcoming.[1] At the same time, Torontonians are increasingly using virtual spaces for their daily needs. They rely on both types of spaces to work, learn, relax and come together with their community.

Without access to these spaces, many Torontonians are experiencing a feeling of social isolation and lack of community connection. They feel less empowered to engage in community conversations and decision-making. With social, economic, climate and technological disruptions, Torontonians need physical and virtual public spaces that foster community resilience and act as places of refuge.

- Some groups, such as seniors, are particularly impacted by social isolation and many struggle to use virtual spaces for developing connections.

- Other groups, such as children and youth, need after-school and out-of-school spaces for learning, socializing, growth and well-being.

- Vulnerable populations need a place of refuge during extreme weather situations and in times of housing insecurity.

1 | opening up our public space

We will create and animate **accessible, inclusive** spaces...

We want you to feel welcome and comfortable in your library, whether you're a regular customer or visiting for the first time. Every time you visit us you should be able to easily get what you need when you need it.

that are **flexible and sustainable**...

We're constantly adapting to your changing needs and reimagining our spaces to be practical and multifunctional. We want our spaces, both physical and virtual, to suit a wide variety of uses, and our branches to be a refuge in this changing climate.

to **inspire** Torontonians to be and **grow together.**

Our branches are Toronto's urban living rooms, great places to come together or be alone together. In our spaces you can relax, make community connections, pursue ideas, engage your imagination and develop your interests.

what **success** looks like

short term

Torontonians know about, can conveniently access, and are using our physical and virtual spaces for their personal, education and professional needs.

medium term

Our customers find our spaces accessible, welcoming, inclusive and beautiful.

Our buildings are highly valued as vital physical and social infrastructure and community connectors. They are used as a refuge in extreme weather, and are developed in an environmentally-conscious, sustainable way.

some examples of what you'll see

Increasing branch open hours in neighbourhoods across the city.

Using the latest design and construction technologies to create net-zero buildings that are sustainable and climate resilient.

Investing in technology to expand access to services and improve digital experiences.

"*Libraries and [other] social infrastructure are essential not only for a neighbourhood's vitality but also for buffering all kinds of personal problems – including isolation and loneliness.*"

– *Palaces for the People*, Eric Klinenberg

focus on
equity:

Designing and animating our spaces so everyone feels welcome and has equal opportunity to use and benefit from library space.

long term

Our spaces directly contribute to the resilience, success and connectedness of Torontonians.

one example:

All children benefit from opportunities to play, interact and develop friendships with others. Children with disabilities may experience barriers to inclusion and the consequences of stigma that can lead to negative impacts on their well-being. Caregivers and families may also experience exclusion and a lack of community support and connection.

To support children of all abilities in feeling comfortable, welcomed and represented at our branches, we will develop a social story about our libraries – a learning tool for staff, children, caregivers and families to describe what to expect when they visit the library.
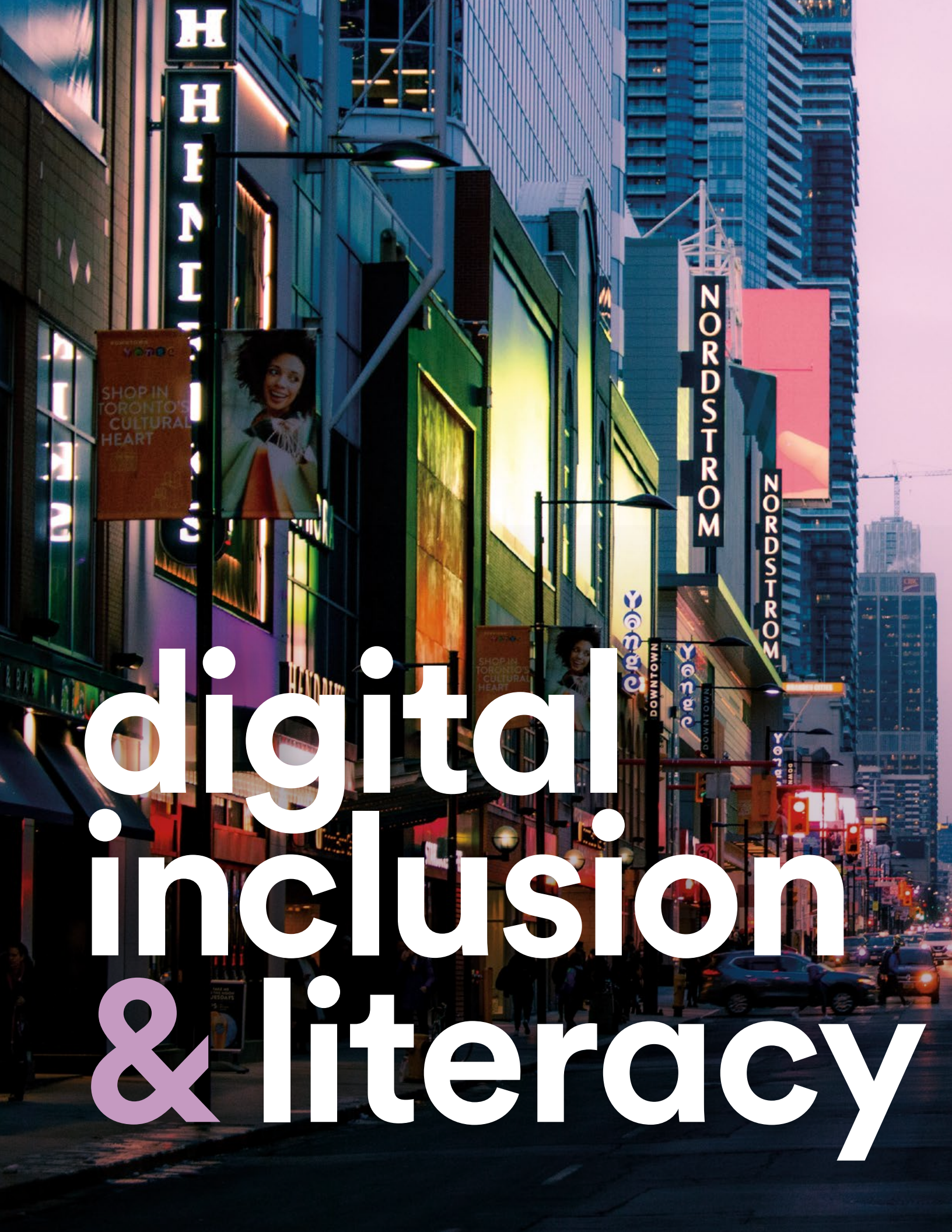
digital
inclusion
& literacy

in our city

In our digital world, access to technology and the skills to navigate and use it are critical for all Torontonians to be successful, connected and well. Today, technology and the internet are available but can be expensive, and ways to understand and use them are not always easy to access.

As a result, there continues to be a digital divide in our city that makes it difficult for many residents to live their day-to-day lives, access opportunities and contribute to Toronto's success.

- Youth, newcomers, seniors, Indigenous peoples and low-income Torontonians are among the most-impacted groups.[2]

- Data plan pricing is a barrier to connectivity for the city's lower-income residents, deepening the digital divide in Toronto.[3]

- Governments are increasingly turning to internet platforms (e.g. websites, social media) as a primary service access point and to communicate and share information.

2 | broadening Toronto's digital access & inclusion

We will expand the **opportunity for everyone**...

No matter your resources or where you live or work, we want to offer access to the technology, connectivity and supports you need.

to **access technology and develop the skills** to use it...

Whether you're searching for information, filling out a government form, sending an email or developing a prototype for your start-up, you need technology and the comfort and ability to use it.

to **thrive in the digital world.**

Today, we all need digital access and digital literacy to be healthy, happy, successful and connected.

what **success** looks like

short term »
Torontonians know about, can conveniently access and use our technology and digital literacy training.

medium term »
Our customers have the digital literacy skills they need to succeed in the digital world.

TPL is recognized as a leader in digital inclusion and digital literacy, bridging the digital divide through equitable access to technology and training.

some examples of what you'll see

Increasing new and emerging technologies in more branches for STEM education and other learning programs.

Expanding digital literacy programs for seniors that fuel curiosity and creativity, and provide social interaction.

Supporting City of Toronto customer service initiatives to improve access to government services for Torontonians.

"Public libraries are already at the forefront of providing access to information and skills to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, on a highly localized scale. They are perfectly positioned to take a leading role in addressing digital inclusion and digital literacy in their communities."

– *Technology Access in Public Libraries* report, Nordicity

focus on equity:

Breaking down barriers for those who face greater challenges in accessing and using our current and emerging technologies.

long term

Torontonians are able to fully participate in the digital world, supporting their prosperity and well-being.

one example:

Older adults need to be comfortable and confident using the internet to access the services and information they need, complete everyday tasks and participate in society. The unique challenges of aging can present barriers. Particularly vulnerable older adults face digital exclusion from online social and community supports due to homelessness, age-related health conditions, mental illness or isolation.[4]

We will support older adults by expanding our targeted digital literacy programs and increasing outreach for vulnerable seniors through our community partners.

workforce
developm

in our city

Toronto's workforce and economy are changing, as is the nature of the way we work, when we work and the jobs we do. Many of us are moving between different roles and industries throughout our careers, and the need for reskilling and upskilling is rising.

With these changes, Torontonians have limited time and resources to devote to exploring and developing their personal and professional growth. Torontonians of all ages need flexible ways to access tools to develop new skills while navigating education, work and life transitions. This access is critical for us to reach our full potential and contribute to the success of our city.

- There is a boom in technological jobs in our city.[5] More and more jobs require digital and technical skills and the ability to work remotely.

- Older workers are staying in the workforce longer and entering second careers, increasing their need for ongoing training.[6]

- Traditional skilled trades work is going unfilled, creating labour shortages.[7]

3 | building pathways for workforce development

We will **empower** Torontonians...

When you use the library, you're in control. Whether you're accessing our online courses or coming into your local branch for resources, you can chart your own learning path at your own pace.

to **succeed**...

With the collections, tools and supports we provide, you can be prepared to navigate life and work transitions and seize any opportunity you choose.

in a **changing workforce and economy.**

We will continue to evolve in order to provide relevant, flexible tools and supports to help you achieve your educational and career goals.

what success looks like

short term

Torontonians know about, can conveniently access, and use our tools and resources to meet their professional development goals.

medium term

Our customers have the skills, develop networks, and benefit from mentoring opportunities to support their personal and professional goals.

TPL is a leading partner for workforce and job skills development, offering equitable and affordable access to services and resources for Torontonians.

some examples of what you'll see

Partnering with industry-leading technology companies to provide training for professional job opportunities.

Hosting regular meetups, networking and mentorship opportunities.

Collaborating with colleges and universities to create innovative and flexible pathways to learning for children and youth.

"Training for working Canadians is scarce, and the people who most need it are the least able to get it ... Canada needs to create effective and inclusive systems of training, which are essential for innovation, growth, employment and good incomes."

– *Skills, Training and Lifelong Learning* report for Public Policy Forum, Daniel Munro

focus on equity:

Closing the gap for those who are least able to access the opportunities provided by the knowledge economy.

long term

Quality of life and the standard of living for Torontonians is improved through the opportunities we offer.

one example:

Youth unemployment rates have been trending upwards in Toronto since the early 2000s.[8] This rate is significantly higher for racialized youth, newcomers, and youth with lower education.[9] Many youth struggle to find work and lack the necessary knowledge, skills, supports and professional connections to be successful.

We will work with strategic partners to provide youth with career coaching programs and networking opportunities. Through these programs, youth will develop career and education paths that will help them enter the workforce.

a democr society

atic

in our city

In Toronto and in our world, we are seeing an increasing divide politically, economically and socially. There is an overwhelming amount of information available to us and, at the same time, not everyone has equal access to it or the ability to critically assess it.

To meaningfully participate in the life of our city, Torontonians need access to a broad range of information and ideas, as well as opportunities for open, uncensored discourse to hear, debate and learn from each others' perspectives.

- People who prefer to get their news through social media are more likely to share propaganda and misinformation.[10]

- Internet algorithms limit exposure to a wide range of ideas and reliable information, increasing the gap between people who are digitally savvy and those lacking awareness or skill.[11]

- High prices and restrictive licensing models for eContent threaten to create a two-tier system of information access.[12]

4 | providing the vital ingredients for a democratic society

We will **facilitate and defend** access to information...

Everyone should have equal and unfettered access to information in all its forms. We will continue to take a leadership role in protecting that access and defending intellectual freedom.

and **information literacy**...

Through our tools and training, we will help you build the skills you need to access, evaluate and effectively use information so that you can make informed decisions.

and **empower everyone** to **engage in civic life.**

We will protect and champion freedom of expression, and provide opportunities and physical and virtual spaces for Torontonians to discover, share and discuss different perspectives and ideas.

what **success** looks like

short term

Torontonians know about and can access a full range of information and ideas in all their forms.

medium term

Torontonians are able to learn from different perspectives in positive ways by engaging in inclusive, respectful civic discourse on local, city, national and global issues.

TPL is recognized as a vital democratic institution that advocates and provides a platform for intellectual freedom and freedom of expression, and space for discussion, debate and civic engagement.

some examples of what you'll see

Providing leadership for a North American eContent advocacy campaign, lobbying publishers for greater access and fair pricing.

Supporting an informed digital citizenry by developing programming around algorithmic literacy and data privacy.

Increasing programming and spaces dedicated to civic engagement and the exchange of ideas.

"About eight in ten adults (78%) feel that public libraries help them find information that is trustworthy and reliable... [and] 56% believe libraries help them get information that aids with decisions they have to make."

– Fact Tank: News in the Numbers article, Pew Research Centre

focus on equity:

Advocating for and actively breaking down barriers to information, information literacy and platforms for expression.

one example:

Publishers are making it increasingly difficult for libraries to keep up with the demand for eBooks and digital audiobooks, with embargoes on newly released eContent, high prices and complicated licensing. This is creating a two-tiered system, where the people who rely on us the most, including those with lower incomes or disabilities, do not have the same access to this content as those who can afford to buy it.

To address this, we will stand up for equitable access and fair pricing for eContent. We are working with the Urban Libraries Council and the Canadian Urban Libraries Council on advocacy efforts that will highlight these issues and advocate for change.

long term

Torontonians are well-informed, engaged and empowered to participate in community decision-making, contributing to a free and just democratic society.

public service excellence

Public service organizations are operating within an increasingly complex and diverse urban environment, with digital disruption, shifting demographics and constant change creating both opportunity and challenges.

This, combined with Toronto's growing economic, digital and social divides, is changing the kinds of services public service organizations offer, how they offer them, and how their staff need to be trained and supported to deliver them.

- Both customers and the government expect public service organizations to deliver responsive, high-quality, personalized services in person and online with constrained resources.

- Toronto receives the highest numbers of newcomers in Canada with more complex needs, such as refugees and asylum claimants.

- With more basic transactions moving to self-service, customer demands of staff are often more complex and time intensive.

5 investing in staff & an innovative service culture

We will **equip staff** with the knowledge and tools they need...

Our staff are core to what we do, so we will provide the right tools, training and supports for them to meet your evolving needs and expectations.

to deliver **exceptional customer experiences**...

Every time you interact with us should be a consistently exceptional experience, whether it's in our branches, with our staff, or online.

in a **complex and changing environment.**

In our rapidly changing city, you need library service that is trusted, collaborative, innovative and responsive to the unique needs of your community.

what **success** looks like

short term >

All of our staff know about and are able to access and use the training, tools, supports and resources they need to deliver exceptional customer experiences.

medium term >

Our customers consistently have exceptional experiences with our staff and service to meet their wants and needs.

We have a collaborative, innovative, high-performing service culture that empowers our staff and customers to achieve their full potential.

some examples of what you'll see

Providing new digital literacy, leadership development and resilience training programs for staff in response to employee engagement survey feedback.

Developing and implementing a comprehensive customer experience strategy.

Updating our physical and digital infrastructure to respond to evolving needs and reflect new models of working for our staff in their delivery of modern library service.

"Technology has given us faster, cheaper, and more personalized services across industries, and citizens are starting to demand the same level of efficiency and convenience from the public sector."

– Optimizing Government, Modernization in the Public Sector report, Canada's Public Policy Forum

focus on
equity:

Fostering diversity among our staff and ensuring that they understand and are responsive to the unique needs of our communities.

long term

Torontonians have opportunities to adapt and thrive in a complex urban environment through exceptional customer experiences.

one example:

Anti-Black racism negatively affects the lives and opportunities of more than 200,000 Torontonians of African descent or origin.[13] To understand and remove these barriers, we must consult and partner with community groups to determine how to make the biggest difference.

We are working with the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism unit to deliver on its action plan. As part of this work, we will introduce mandatory anti-Black racism training for all staff, conduct a new staff diversity survey, review our policies, and increase employment and training opportunities for Black Torontonians at the library with enhanced student placements, outreach, recruitment and hiring, and development and promotion processes.

strategic plan enablers

To help us achieve our outcomes, we have three key foundations – what we're calling enablers – that will support our work.

partnerships

Our network of partnerships across the city helps us increase the quality and impact of our programs and services to reach Torontonians wherever we're needed. By strengthening these partnerships and building a broader spectrum of collaborations and non-traditional partnerships, we will continue to deliver responsive and relevant service to our communities and our city now and in the future.

modernization driven by
brand and customer experience
data & technology

We are continuously improving our capacity and work culture to provide welcoming, personalized, consistent, innovative service for Torontonians. Building on our new brand and customer experience strategy, our focus is providing consistently great services when, where and how you want them. Our digital strategy will provide our staff and customers with the right combination of technologies and supports to meet their evolving needs.

evaluation and accountability

Consistent evaluation and reporting will ensure that we make decisions based on evidence, deliver on the outcomes that we're working towards, and continue to be transparent and accountable to Torontonians. This is an ongoing process and we will adjust our direction where needed.

"Tell Katherine we got an A!"

When I was working at the Spadina Road Branch, a woman came up to me one day and said, "I'm a single mom. I've just finished my GED and enrolled in university. I need to write a paper about Indigenous women in health and I have no idea where to turn." We had just introduced JSTOR at the time, which is a great resource for online article research, so I was really excited to teach her how to use it. You can just type "Indigenous women in health" into the search bar then you can narrow down the results and print out what you want. I also showed her how she could access it from home online with her library card.

She came back a week later when I wasn't in and told my co-worker that she had successfully written her paper, and asked my co-worker to pass along some great news: "Tell Katherine we got an A!" I was so proud of her, and me. I never got an A in university, and it felt like that A was as much mine as it was hers. It was the best.

- Katherine Girard, Senior Library Assistant, Spadina Road Branch

on a **typical day** at TPL, there's a lot going on.

over 100,000 people visit the library
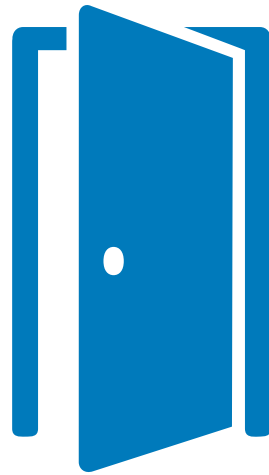
49,282 branch visits

56,919 visits to our website

over 25,000 uses of our technology

13,954 wifi uses
11,393 computer uses

29,113 items delivered to our 100 branches

128 programs
2,818 participants

87,606 items are borrowed

23,072 ebooks and eaudiobooks

10 musical instruments

339 new titles added daily

36,914 searches for books, movies, programs and more

Search

125 visits to a Digital Innovation Hub to 3D print, scan, design and record

over **21,000** questions answered

19,691 general, reference and recommendations

2,112 technology support

10 one-on-one Book a Librarian sessions

10 uses of a sewing machine in our **Fabrication Studio**

why measurement matters

Measurement ensures that we're doing the right things, and that we're doing them well. In addition to measuring our outputs, like the number of people visiting our branches and attending our programs, we are advancing our work in measuring the outcomes and impacts that those activities enable. This will help us ensure that we're on the right path to delivering the value and results we're aiming for.

Measuring our performance means we're able to:

- be accountable to Torontonians and transparent in how we do business
- stay focused on the things that matter most to serve the people of Toronto
- adjust and adapt to the changing service environment
- improve the effectiveness of our programs and services
- make more data-informed decisions now and into the future
- share our data and results to contribute to a better understanding of our city and its communities.

how we measure success

As you've seen throughout the plan, each of our priorities has short-, medium- and long-term outcomes that we're focused on achieving. Together, they help support the overarching goal of our plan: to build more success, resilience and well-being for Torontonians, our city and its communities. To help us identify and prioritize the work that will get us there, we have a set of tools and processes in place to monitor, measure and evaluate our success. Throughout the life of the plan, they will keep us focused, help us make decisions based on data and evidence, and allow us to adjust our direction when needed.

measuring our strategic plan

short- and medium-term outcomes

To measure our short- and medium-term outcomes, we are focused on three target indicators: reach, use, and value.

| 1 | public space | 2 | digital inclusion & literacy | 3 | workforce development | 4 | a democratic society | 5 | public service excellence |

short-term

medium-term

long-term

city impact

+4%
reach
We'll know we're making Toronto successful when more people are using us.

+10%
use
We'll know we're making Toronto successful when people are using us more and for different needs.

maintain high
value
We'll know that we're continuing to deliver value if we maintain this high rating.
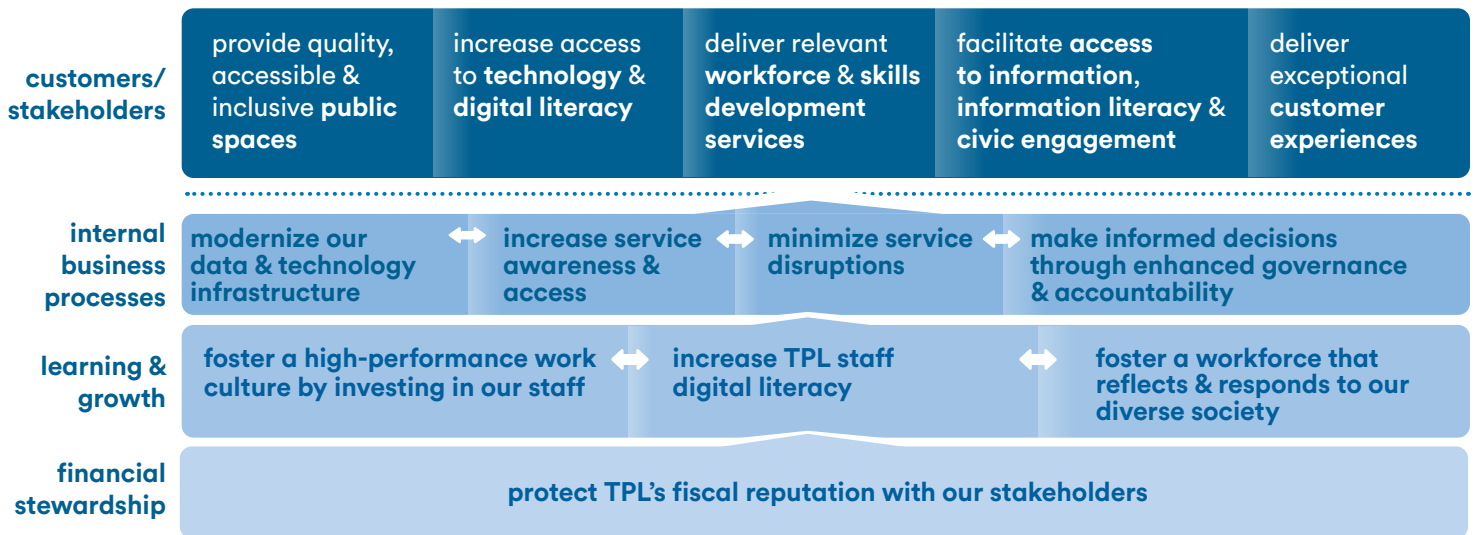
outcomes

how we'll measure these outcomes

Using a strategy map and balanced scorecard as our measurement tools, we can set an annual path to align our resources, build our capacity, focus our efforts, and ultimately advance our outcomes. Here's how they work:

strategy map

customers/ stakeholders	provide quality, accessible & inclusive **public spaces**	increase access to **technology & digital literacy**	deliver relevant **workforce & skills development services**	facilitate **access to information, information literacy & civic engagement**	deliver exceptional **customer experiences**
internal business processes	modernize our data & technology infrastructure	increase service awareness & access	minimize service disruptions	make informed decisions through enhanced governance & accountability	
learning & growth	foster a high-performance work culture by investing in our staff	increase TPL staff digital literacy		foster a workforce that reflects & responds to our diverse society	
financial stewardship	protect TPL's fiscal reputation with our stakeholders				

Above is TPL's 2020 strategy map with our 13 strategic objectives that will help us achieve our outcomes.

Our **strategy map** translates our high-level priorities into yearly objectives viewed across four different operational lenses – customers/stakeholders, internal business processes, learning & growth, financial stewardship – with key indicators that tell us how successful we are in achieving them.

balanced scorecard

customers/ stakeholders

internal business processes

KPIs

targets

initiatives

learning & growth

financial stewardship

Our **balanced scorecard** maps our yearly objectives to key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets, and identifies the initiatives that will help us achieve those targets. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation is also part of the library's strategic and business planning processes, so that we can adapt our course when we need to.

aligning with the city and our partners

With this plan, we've also identified aspirational long-term outcomes to advance transformational change in our city. To make this change happen, the library must work in collaboration with others, over time and in different ways.

For the next five years (and beyond), we will work collaboratively with different sectors – governments, public, private, non-profit, academic – to align with their broader objectives, share data, and establish common measures, so that we can focus our collective efforts and achieve our intended impacts.

Ultimately our goal is to work together to address some of the city's systemic challenges and empower Torontonians to seize its many opportunities so our city and its residents can thrive.

Some of the City of Toronto key strategies we're aligned with:

TPL strategic priorities	public space	digital inclusion & literacy	workforce development	a democratic society	public service excellence
City of Toronto Corporate Strategic Plan	✓		✓		✓
Raising the Village	✓	✓			
Smart CityTO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TOcore	✓				
Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism	✓		✓		✓
Toronto Civic Engagement Strategy	✓			✓	
Toronto Newcomer Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Toronto Resilience Strategy	✓			✓	
Toronto Seniors Strategy	✓	✓			
Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Toronto Youth Equity Strategy	✓	✓	✓		
Toronto's Recovery and Rebuild Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transform TO	✓				

(Row group label: City of Toronto Key Strategies)

city impact: these are some of the long-term impacts that we are helping the city to achieve.

- ✓ Reduce poverty
- ✓ Increase equity
- ✓ Improve community safety
- ✓ Increase democratic participation
- ✓ Contribute to a low-carbon city
- ✓ Grow Toronto's economy

working together for a stronger Toronto

TPL has always been committed to meeting the evolving needs of the communities we serve. On March 13, 2020, we closed all of our 100 branches, as provincially mandated, to support efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. Within days, we partnered with North York Harvest Food Bank, Daily Bread Food Bank and Second Harvest to convert twelve of our locations across the city into food banks. Our processing warehouse was transformed. We moved our books out and started sorting food deliveries. TPL staff and food bank staff worked together packing and distributing hampers for food bank customers. Hampers for families also included brand new children's and teen books, an initiative made possible, in part, through donations made to the Toronto Public Library Foundation. Through this effort, TPL and its partners helped reduce Torontonians' food insecurity made worse by the pandemic.

"Libraries are safe, accessible, welcoming, dignified spaces in every neighbourhood in our city. Lining up to use a food bank is a difficult experience. It's a public admission that you need help. Libraries have been community hubs for many years, and library staff have experience working with vulnerable people and marginalized groups. The partnership we formed with TPL was truly game changing for our clients."

- Ryan Noble, Executive Director of North York Harvest Food Bank

how we got here

Building our Strategic Plan was a collective effort over a year-long process. We've engaged over 4,000 library staff, Torontonians, community partners and stakeholders about what we can do to support them and their communities now and into the future. Consultation formats included questionnaires, focus groups and roundtable discussions to receive input and discuss the priorities, outcomes and actions for our new Strategic Plan.

research

300+
sources consulted

For an overview of some of our key findings, check out pages 46-47.

500+
TPL staff consulted

focus groups participants

200 customers

30 community organizations

online survey
2600+ responses

2019

January

March

May

Phase 1: research + consultations

roundtables

28
industry leaders in technology, innovation and digital disruption

93
- equity and inclusion leaders
- social services providers
- participants with lived experience

telephone and online survey
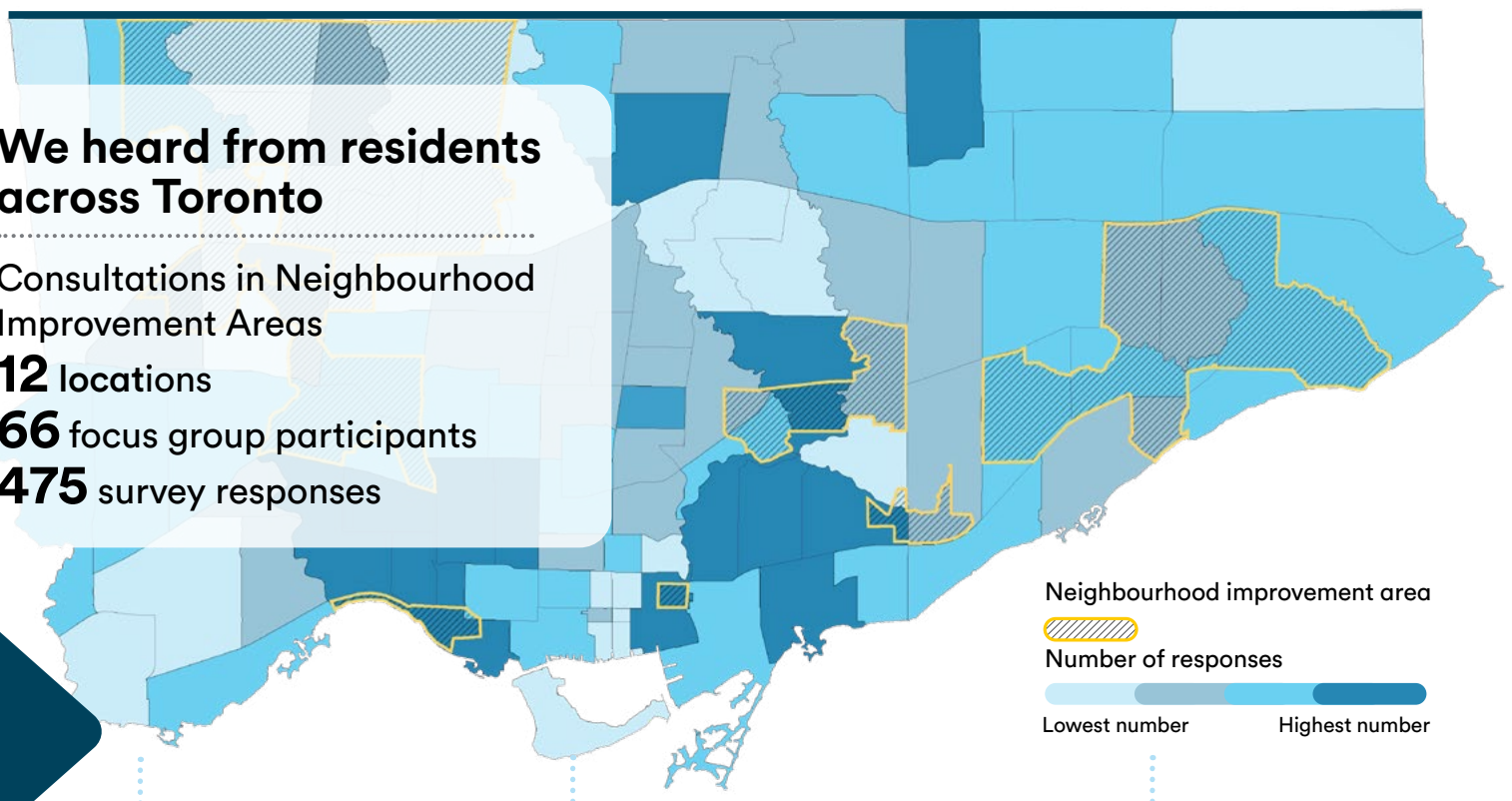of users and non-users about use, perception and value

1260 responses

We heard from residents across Toronto

Consultations in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas

12 locations
66 focus group participants
475 survey responses

Neighbourhood improvement area

Number of responses

Lowest number — Highest number

July   September   November

Phase 2: consultations

context & trends

politics & government

Public support for democracy, democratic institutions and the political system in Canada has evolved over the past decade. Canadians are becoming more interested in politics and continue to express support for and satisfaction with democracy in Canada and the country's political system.[14]

At a local level, civic engagement in Toronto continues to be a critical element in decision-making processes. Recent political issues shaping Toronto neighbourhoods and city include: child care, transit, affordable housing, health care, public safety, education and the environment.

economy & work

Toronto's economy has produced strong results in recent years, but growth has been uneven across the city, contributing to increased inequality and economic disparities. Despite an unprecedented employment boom, temporary, part-time and self-employed jobs are increasing faster in Toronto.[15]

Changes to labour markets, including the rise of disruptive technologies and the gig economy, have contributed to long-term unemployment, especially among vulnerable groups who also face systemic barriers to employment. More seniors are remaining in the workforce but many over age 55 who lose their jobs are struggling to find new employment.

education and training

Technology and digital literacy are increasingly emphasized in education. There is a greater focus on shared learning experiences, interactive skills, and problem solving, with extensive use of multimedia and information technologies.

Rising tuition has led to higher levels of student debt and is compounded by uncertain job prospects, as graduates struggle to find permanent employment. At all levels, students are experiencing increased need for mental health supports.[16]

Toronto is also facing a skills shortage for trades due to the loss of skilled and experienced workers to aging and retirement. Employers are investing less in training and development, yet ongoing reskilling is critical.

environment

Increases in extreme weather such as heat waves, severe rain and flooding, and higher average and maximum temperatures, are all effects of climate change impacting the city.[17] This has led to increasing costs of food and insurance, as well as negative health effects and decreasing species diversity.

Toronto has made great progress at reducing its greenhouse gas emissions, but more work and resources are required to improve air and water quality and to further reduce emissions and waste.

housing

For many residents, it is becoming increasingly unaffordable to live in Toronto. Housing prices are skyrocketing and the number of new rental units has not been keeping pace with population growth.[18]

Torontonians are paying a high and increasing proportion of their income to housing, especially low-income households. The lack of affordable housing is the primary driver of homelessness in the city. Official homelessness counts show a 69% increase in sheltered homeless people in Toronto in just five years.[19]

transportation

Transportation, traffic and transit continue to be an important issue. Toronto has the longest commutes and increasing road congestion of any major city in Canada.[20]

Transit is a necessity for commuters, but due to increasing costs, it remains inaccessible and increasingly unaffordable for low-income families who disproportionately rely on it to get around.[21] Active transportation is growing, with more people cycling and walking to their destinations.[22]

technology

Torontonians' social and economic participation is increasingly dependent on the ability to navigate the digital world. Issues of digital ethics, privacy and security are increasing in importance as new technologies are developed.

Toronto has relatively good access to wired and wireless broadband. However, standard prices for internet across the city are unaffordable for many low-income households, representing over 20% of Toronto's population.[23] As a result, Torontonians still face a digital divide driven by a lack of access to technologies, affordable high-speed internet and low digital/data literacy.

arts & culture

Toronto's culture sector contributes to a strong economy, representing approximately 8% of Toronto's total economic output.[24]

A key focus for new investments by the City and the Toronto Arts Council is to improve access to affordable, sustainable cultural spaces outside the downtown core and ensure greater equity and inclusion in its cultural services.

health & public safety

The makeup of Toronto's population has changed over time, influencing population health status and other social outcomes. Health inequities exist in the city and certain populations fare worse in a number of areas of health.[25] New trends and issues in health include the opioid crisis, declining mental health, increased climate-related health issues and decreasing immunization rates.

After a decade of decreasing crime rates, major crimes have been increasing in Toronto.[26] Crime is not evenly distributed across the city and is disproportionately experienced by those in disadvantaged communities, those with lower income and younger people. The past decade has seen the highest increase in youth crime.[27]

social development

Toronto is experiencing significant population growth, which is expected to continue.

Toronto is facing increasing income inequality and poverty.[28] Recent immigrants, Indigenous peoples, female lone parents, members of racialized groups, and people with disabilities have higher rates of poverty than the general population.[29] There is a need for systemic change to address housing stability, service and food access, transit equity, quality jobs and liveable incomes.[30]

Equity-seeking groups and vulnerable populations continue to face added challenges, including increased social isolation, increased mental health issues, difficulty accessing government services and finding affordable housing, and barriers to employment.

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As a free, public institution, the library has become an essential service, uniquely catering to the specific needs of people from all financial, educational and cultural backgrounds. Its ability to remain relevant to this mission has been largely due to its flexibility. Unlike so many industries that have been disrupted by technological advances and the social changes that soon follow, libraries across North America have shown an uncanny ability to adapt.

"Simply put, libraries are incredible"
by Sadaf Ahsan, National Post
October 18, 2018

toronto
public library