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2021 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Youth Online Programs and Services

Issue/Background:

- This briefing note responds to Budget Committee's motion, adopted on January 22, 2021, requesting the City Librarian in consultation with the General Manager, Social Development, Finance and Administration to prepare a briefing note on the costs, if any, associated with the Youth Hub Staff providing online/virtual programming for 2021.
- It complements Parks, Forestry and Recreation's (PFR) briefing note in response to the Budget Committee's motion, adopted on January 22, 2021 requesting information about the costs, if any, associated with Enhanced Youth Space staff providing virtual programming in 2021.
- Using existing budgeted staff resources and equipment, Toronto Public Library (TPL) has developed a robust series of online programs and services for teens and younger adults during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- PFR and TPL have developed integrated plans with respect to the expansion of Enhanced Youth Spaces and Youth Hubs respectively and will collaborate on online programming and other services for youth, including cross promotion and effective digital outreach strategies.

Key Points:

- TPL will continue to offer and evaluate online youth engagement initiatives in 2021, using existing resources. No additional resources are being requested as initiatives can be accommodated within 2021 Budget.
- While TPL's 2021 operating budget included savings from a phased reopening strategy based on public health measures and assumptions regarding changes to these measures going forward, there was no reduction to youth hub programming costs included in these budget assumptions. TPL staff will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on library services and the 2021 budget and will make adjustments to program delivery as needed to retain youth engagement throughout the year by offering a varying mix of both online and in branch programming as allowed by public health measures.
- TPL will share experiences with PFR and collaborate on effective approaches to outreach and engagement, exploring opportunities for joint online programming and cross promotion, particularly when initiatives advance the Toronto Youth Equity and Poverty Reduction strategies.

2020 Online Programs and Services for Youth:

- At the outset of the pandemic, TPL increased focus on digital content creation and promotion via [TPL's teen website](#), teen social media channels and teen e-newsletter.
- [TPL's digital collections](#), including [homework help](#), an [online, live-help tutoring service](#), and [book recommendations](#) were available to library card holders. A [Digital Access Card](#) was also introduced to provide access for those 13 years of age or older living in Toronto.
- Access to library computers and branch Wi-Fi continued from re-opening in May through to the November 23rd Grey Lock-down closure. Branch Wi-Fi continues to be accessible outside of library branches 24x7. Many families with school-aged children and teens are participants in TPL's Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending program or have been recipients of TPL's new Internet Connectivity Kits program where a laptop and Wi-Fi hotspot are provided through community agencies to clients with the greatest need for home internet access.
- TPL began offering online programs for [teens](#) and younger adults in May. By year-end, 92 online youth programs had been delivered with 2,122 attendees. Online programs were delivered by TPL staff or external presenters. A wide range of topics were covered, such as research tips, book talks, author readings, digital literacy, trivia, gaming, creative writing, spoken word, personal finance, consent, mindfulness, arts and crafts, and escape rooms. Online programming has been well-attended with positive feedback and will continue beyond the pandemic.
- A new online service, [Career Coaches in Residence](#), was introduced in the fall of 2020. It was targeted at younger adults, career and job search help via online consultations, workshops and seminars were provided. The four coaches provided a total of 220 online one-on-one, 55-minute appointments and 13 online programs for 283 attendees.
- High school outreach librarians provided online visits to both TDSB and TCDSB schools, focusing on homework support and research skills, delivering 113 sessions to 5,849 attendees. Digital literacy workshops were also delivered to 350 high school students in 20 online classrooms.
- [Young Voices](#), TPL's youth-led literary and visual art magazine, proceeded online in 2020 with 521 submissions received. Editorial Youth Advisory Group (EYAG) members (28) participated in online selection sessions with guest editors and the magazine was published in November with an online launch for contributors and family members.
- [Youth Advisory Group \(YAG\)](#) facilitators (37) kept in contact with youth members, sharing relevant opportunities and information. Four YAGs with approximately 40 participants engaged in online meetings.

2020/21 Youth Hub Service:

- TPL prioritized in-branch space and service for teens, reopening the 13 existing [Youth Hubs](#) once the provincial closure order ended May 19th, 2020. With enhanced funding from the City of Toronto and in support of the Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy, TPL launched 10 new Youth Hub locations, bringing the total number of Youth Hubs across the city to 23.
- Youth Hubs support the library's [Youth Services Strategy](#) and are welcoming drop-in spaces for teens after school and in the summer, where helpful staff are always available. The service allows librarians to get to know teens, support their needs and interests, and offer

responsive activities and programs. Librarians connect teens with relevant library and community services, including the online programs and services described above.

- During the pandemic, service has been modified with enhanced safety protocols and reduced capacity to ensure physical distancing. The same focus on dedicated space, staff and support remains. Homework assistance and access and equipment to participate in online programs are service priorities.
- On November 23, Youth Hub service was suspended at all branches in accordance with provincial Grey-Lockdown period requirements.
- When the Grey-Lockdown period ends and Youth Hub service resumes, service hours will temporarily expand, beginning at 1 p.m. rather than 3:30 p.m. for the remainder of the school year, to support students with their online learning. Online programs and services for teens will continue as well.

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