

A Quick Guide to B. C.'s Provincial Public Library Funding

The Ministry of Education, through the Libraries Branch, distributes grants to public libraries, federations, provincial associations, and service providers. This funding is in addition to support from local governments, who provide the majority of funding to library boards. Provincial funds also go towards strategic priorities including: equitable access to information; programs and services; shared services; collections; and library technical infrastructure.

Funding Framework

The grant structure, called the funding framework, has been in place since 2009/2010 and is \$14 million annually. Approximately \$12 million is awarded directly to libraries, and roughly \$2 million is awarded to library federations and partner organizations in the public library sector. Funding recipients receive grant award letters stating expectations for fund use and reporting requirements. There are 8 annual grants in this structure, 4 of which are allocated directly to public library boards. In April 2020, the Province provided an additional one-time grant of \$3 million to support digital initiatives in public libraries. Libraries directly received \$1.2 million in technology grants to support connectivity, technology upgrades and digital literacy, and the remaining \$1.8 million was awarded to the BC Libraries Cooperative. The [Public Libraries Provincial Grants Allocations document](#) details how grants are calculated.

Eligibility

Local governments, regional districts and municipalities provide most of the funding to public libraries. Established under the [Library Act](#), B.C.'s 71 public libraries and 6 library federations are eligible for provincial funding. While public libraries and federations do not need to apply for these grants, they must report on how they use provincial funds. Reporting information is available on the Libraries Branch [website](#).

How are funds allocated?

The Act provides the mandate on how the Ministry (supported by the Director of the Libraries Branch) allocates funds to help library boards and other organizations promote and improve library services. The Ministry is responsible for managing the funds allocated by the Legislature and must remain within its budget (\$14 million for 2020). The Ministry also managed the allocation of the one-time, \$3 million technology and digital initiatives grant.

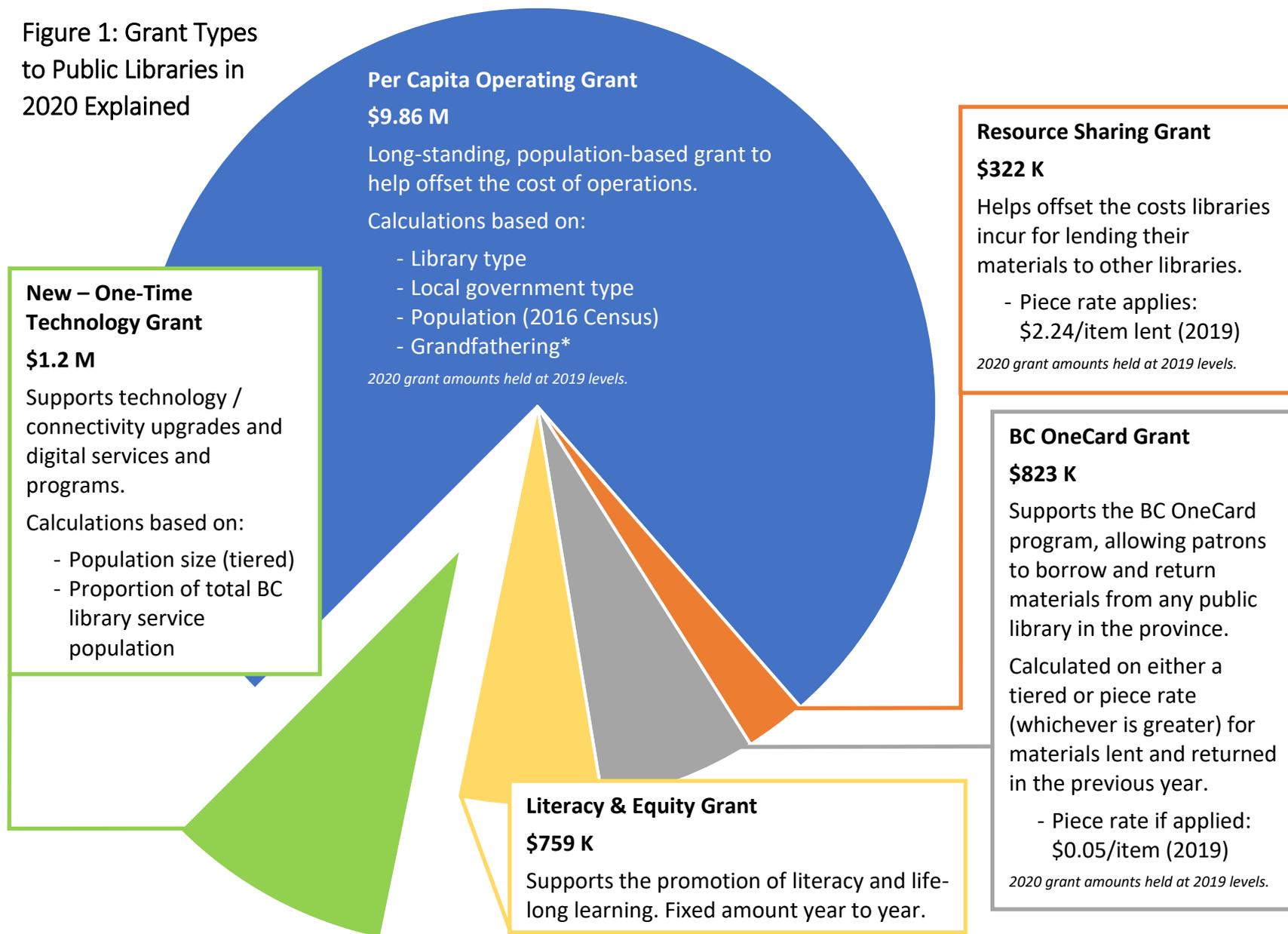
Timing of the Grants

Funding is allocated based on the province's fiscal year from April 1 to March 31. The Ministry's fiscal plan provides funding details for public libraries over a 3-year period: March 2019; March 2020; and June 2021.

Grant Types to Public Libraries Explained

As B.C. experiences growth in population and library activity, changes may be made to the per person/item rate to ensure that funding does not exceed the budget. In 2020, 4 direct-to-library grants were held at 2019 levels. As a result, no library system experienced a reduction in 2020. See Figure 1 below for a breakdown of each grant type's purpose and funding structure.

Figure 1: Grant Types to Public Libraries in 2020 Explained



*Note about Grandfathering and Per Capita Operating Grant: Libraries with populations under 100,000 may receive a Per Capita Operating Grant based on population numbers that are higher than the most recent census. This “grandfathered” amount is discretionary and ensures that funding for some libraries does not decrease due to population decline. Grandfathering no longer applies to municipal libraries with populations over 100,000.

Provincial Initiatives and Priorities

To deliver on the provincial mandate for public library service, the Ministry annually invests in province-wide shared services and programs. Approximately \$2 million per year enables equitable access to library resources and services and supports a province-wide network. These services help libraries manage their collections (Sitka Consortia), purchase electronic resources (consortia licensing) and learn effective governance practices (governance workshops). They are delivered in partnership by BC Libraries Cooperative, BC Electronic Library Network (ELN), BC Library Association and the BC Library Trustees Association.

Federation Grants

These grants support B.C.’s 6 library federations and their staff, who extend library service while achieving the Ministry’s strategic goals and priorities. Federations improve regional and local shared services delivery, reduce or share costs and increase access to professional learning opportunities.

For more information, please visit the [Libraries Branch website](#) and download the latest copy of the [Public Libraries Provincial Grants Allocations document](#). It details the annual funding for each library system, federation and service partner.

To contact the Libraries Branch team please email LLB@gov.bc.ca or call 1-800-663-7051.