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**Review of the
Public Library Grant
and First 5 Forever
Methodologies**

Consultation Paper November 2020

PURPOSE

State Library of Queensland (State Library) has a strong partnership with local government for the delivery of library services across the state. Funding is provided by the State Government to support collections, services and programs delivered by Queensland public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres through the Public Library Grant and First 5 Forever funding.

State Library seeks feedback on the methodology for the distribution of the Public Library Grant and First 5 Forever funding. This paper provides background on the funding and considers the use of new data sets to calculate and distribute funding equitably across the state.

There are three types of public libraries in Queensland that receive Public Library Grant and First 5 Forever funding: Independent libraries, Rural Libraries Queensland libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres.

One response from each council is requested by Friday 5 February 2021. Following a statewide consultation process, State Library will finalise the preferred components of the methodology, considering the feedback received. Further details about the consultation process is at page 12.

Children's collections at North Lakes Library, Moreton Bay Regional Council, 2020. Image by John Nguyen.



BACKGROUND

Library services in Queensland

State Library advocates for public libraries and partners with local government to enable a thriving statewide network of more than 320 vibrant library facilities.

The funding and operation of library services in Queensland is the responsibility of local government. The partnership with the State Government includes the provision of the annual Public Library Grant and First 5 Forever funding. In 2020-21, the allocation totals \$30.84 million, comprising Public Library Grant funding of \$25.84 million and First 5 Forever funding of \$5 million.

Since 1975, the State Government, through the Library Board of Queensland (Library Board), has provided funding to local governments in recognition of the vital role of public libraries to Queensland communities. Although the funding model continues to evolve, funding contributes to the cost of library collections and other initiatives supporting the Library Board's legislated role under the [Libraries Act 1988](#), i.e. to contribute to the cultural, social and intellectual development of all Queenslanders.

First 5 Forever began in 2015 as a four-year \$20 million initiative delivered through public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) in partnership with local government. In 2018, the Queensland Government announced ongoing annual funding of \$5million to support the delivery of First 5 Forever and continue the valued role that public libraries and IKCs play in supporting early literacy development through free programs and services.

The [Australian Early Development Census](#) data indicates that a significant number of Queensland children start school weak in the language and cognitive domain. Through First 5 Forever, public libraries and IKCs work with community partners to directly reach and impact on early literacy outcomes for children aged 0-5 years and their families via inclusive, informal education programs. Parents and caregivers exposed to the program gain a higher appreciation for the importance of early childhood literacy and the value of using this as a tool to connect with their child.

The Library Board has agreements in place with the 75 local governments that provide library services and First 5 Forever programs, administering annual funding to support deeply local library services guided by [Realising our potential: A vision for Queensland public libraries](#), a shared and aspirational vision for Queensland library services.

Funding is administered through two Service Level Agreements (SLAs), the Public Library Grant and First 5 Forever Family Literacy Initiative, outlining the obligations of each party and administering the State Government's financial investment.

Providing [Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines](#) to encourage the continued development of public library services in Queensland is a Library Board obligation in the SLAs. In turn, local governments are obligated to have management and operational practices which strive to meet or exceed the standards. The latest edition, published on 1 July 2020, features four standards, with service delivery targets for Operations, Collections, Facilities and Usage.

Key issues impacting Queensland communities

Public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres contribute to [Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities](#) both now and into the future by giving all our children a great start, supporting education, training and work, and keeping Queenslanders engaged in safe and healthy communities. They also directly support local responses to [Unite & Recover, Queensland's Economic Recovery Plan](#), by:

- building community resilience
- increasing skills and capability
- bridging the digital divide
- enabling digital learning and skills
- creating pathways for young people.

Funding to public libraries supports the achievement of the [Queensland Plan](#), a shared and aspirational vision that sets out a road map for the state's long-term growth and prosperity, including improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in alignment with [Closing the Gap](#).

Queensland is an expansive state with a highly diverse range of climates and geographical features. With a population exceeding 5.1 million people, our communities are varied and diverse with rich histories and cultural heritages.

Urban, regional and remote communities make up the fabric of our state with a range of issues impacting the growth and development of our towns and cities, big and small, including:

- services for an ageing population
- health and wellbeing

- developing our regions
- digital connectivity and digital inclusion
- access to education and life-long learning
- supporting early childhood development
- demonstrating and encouraging diversity and social cohesion
- inclusive participation and Indigenous opportunity
- building resilient and sustainable communities
- environmental and disaster management
- innovation, jobs and economic development.

The impact of COVID-19 on Queensland communities is unprecedented and the recovery is a long-term challenge that requires a long-term response. Priorities for Queensland's economic recovery from COVID-19 include:

- safeguarding our health and jobs
- helping small business, the backbone of our economy, thrive in a changing environment
- growing manufacturing across traditional and new industries, making new products in new ways and creating new jobs
- driving investment in the infrastructure that supports our recovery, resilience and future prosperity
- helping Queensland's regions grow by attracting people, talent and investment, and driving sustainable economic prosperity
- ensuring Queenslanders have the skills they need to find meaningful jobs and set up pathways for the future.

Key issues impacting public library services

The [Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines](#) are an important tool for the advancement and effective operation of public libraries in Queensland with service delivery targets in four key areas – Operations, Collections, Facilities and Usage.

Library services strive to deliver:

- free membership to all members of the community
- a skilled and innovative workforce delivering agile library services
- library facilities designed for efficiency, sustainability, accessibility, functionality, flexibility and visual appeal
- services extended beyond physical library facilities and staffed opening hours
- high-quality library resources in physical and electronic formats including local resources collecting culture and history
- high-quality digital platforms delivering programs and services, showcasing collections and enabling social connection
- free access to technology and the internet supported by digital skills training
- programs that deliver real and significant benefits to individuals and communities including literacy, lifelong learning, social connection, skill building and job readiness
- inclusive and culturally safe spaces for staff and the community where diversity is showcased and celebrated.

Public libraries are also well placed to support the achievement of global frameworks, such as the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) to create inclusive, equitable and safe communities.

Review of the methodologies

The Public Library Grant and First 5 Forever Methodologies (the methodologies) determine how funding provided by the State Government is allocated to local government including the formula used to determine direct allocations, competitive grants, and the broader mix of centralised support provided to the network and managed by State Library.

The Public Library Grant methodology was last reviewed in 2017. First 5 Forever commenced as an annually funded project in 2015, moving to ongoing State Government funding in July 2018. This is the first time that local government has been consulted on the First 5 Forever methodology through a formal process.

This review provides an opportunity for local government to consider the methodologies in the context of their planning and the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

It also provides an opportunity to consider how the methodologies can address key issues and opportunities for achievement of the [Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines](#).



Languages Other Than English collections at Cairns City Library, Cairns Regional Council, 2019. Image by Sarah Scragg.

ISSUES FOR CONSULTATION

1. Impact of COVID-19 on library service operations

Public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres have been swift to respond to the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has highlighted how people depend on libraries as one of the few free, safe and inclusive public spaces in their communities fighting social isolation and digital exclusion.



Mackay Regional Council Libraries recording virtual programming during COVID-19, 2020. Image by Mackay Regional Council.

The large-scale adoption of extended loan limits, home delivery, click and collect services, online reference services and virtual programming, along with the high level of engagement on expanded communication channels, demonstrate the depth of need the community has for library services.

The preliminary results from the [Queensland Public Libraries Statistical Bulletin 2019-20](#) and the [Queensland public libraries COVID-19 survey report](#) indicate that digital memberships and the use of electronic collections have shown a strong increase as communities have sought resources for leisure, work, study and children learning at home during isolation.

Library services will continue to play an essential role in Queensland's economic, social and cultural recovery from COVID-19, meeting the training, education, digital inclusion, social and cultural participation needs of individuals and communities.

State Library recognises the impact of COVID-19 on local government budgets and is seeking feedback on implications for future service delivery.

Discussion Questions

- 1.1 What is the impact of COVID-19 on funding available to support your library service?
- 1.2 What is the impact of COVID-19 on meeting the four standards within the Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines (Operations, Collections, Facilities and Usage)?
- 1.3 What opportunities do you see for library services to assist in community and economic recovery?



Deadly Digital Communities program on Mabuag Island, Torres Strait Island Regional Council, 2017. Image by Josh Kitchens.



Technology support at Oakey Library, Toowoomba Regional Council, 2019. Image by Leif Ekstrom.

2. Digital inclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of digital inclusion in Queensland. The digital economy, including telehealth, online learning, working from home and ecommerce, have accelerated rapidly at a time when some members of the community still face real barriers to online participation. The gap between digitally included and excluded Queenslanders is substantial and widening for some groups. Addressing barriers to digital inclusion, particularly where geographic isolation and socio-economic disadvantage pose distinct challenges, is essential for ensuring equality of access for all.

The [Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2020](#) indicates significant differences in access, affordability and digital ability for geographical regions across Queensland. For some members of the community, their local public library or Indigenous Knowledge Centre is the only place where they can access the internet and technology and be supported with digital skills training.

Discussion Questions

- 2.1 What are the challenges in addressing digital inclusion in your community?
- 2.2 What are the barriers to meeting the Standard for Operations – Public Internet Access target within the Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines?

3. Public Library Grant methodology

In 2020-21, of the total of \$25.84 million, approximately \$21.72 million or 84% of the Public Library Grant is provided directly to local governments. This includes direct grants to Independent libraries, equipment grants to Rural Libraries Queensland (RLQ) libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs), and a contribution to IKC Coordinator salaries.

\$21.224 million is allocated to local governments operating Independent library services. They receive a direct grant allocated for the purchase of collections; however, up to 50% may be spent on a Library Priority Project to facilitate wider library service improvement if approved following application to State Library.

In addition to direct grants, approximately \$2.312 million is allocated towards collections managed and distributed by State Library on behalf of the network including:

- \$1.14 million for statewide collections containing resources and specialist materials (e.g. Languages Other Than English collections, technology kits, book club kits) accessed by all Queensland public libraries and IKCs
- \$0.82 million towards an RLQ/IKC collection. In lieu of a direct grant, local governments operating RLQ or IKC services receive a notional allocation which, when pooled together, funds a centralised collection of physical and electronic resources that is shared across the RLQ and IKC network and accessible from a shared library catalogue.

The remaining \$1.525 million is allocated to centralised services for the benefit of the network, including competitive grants, professional development, research, strategic initiatives and the labour costs for positions directly supporting the delivery of services to RLQs and IKCs. See Appendix 1 on page 13 for more information on centralised services.

Allocations to local governments operating library services are calculated according to a population-based formula. The current formula uses basic population figures published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on 31 March of each calendar year, as follows:

- 66% of available grant distributed as an equal per capita component
- 30% of available grant distributed on weightings reflecting population growth rate, proportion of people aged 55 years and over and proportion of people aged 0-14 years
- 4% of available grant distributed relative to proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

This total is then weighted based on a location index (derived from the Queensland Government Grants Commission) and a dispersion index derived from the number of separate library services (including mobile services) and the population density.

In 2020-21, using the formula:

- direct allocations to the 33 councils operating Independent libraries totals approximately \$21.224 million, indexed annually
- notional allocations for the 42 councils operating RLQ and IKC libraries totals \$0.82 million. These allocations are calculated according to 2017-18 ABS population data and are fixed to offset any potential reduction in the grant due to population movements away from rural and remote communities
- three Queensland councils are without a library service and receive no funding.

The current formula has been in place since 2011.

Some of the issues with the formula include:

- it doesn't consider councils with more financial need, which may be due to higher costs to deliver services, a more uncertain and fluctuating revenue base, or complex community needs and disadvantage
- it doesn't consider Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities, people with English as a second language, or indicators for lower socio-economic populations
- the demographic component of the calculation favours the 0-14 and 55+ age groups as they are considered to use the service more, which focuses on current library users, rather than non-users, or people who may have difficulty accessing the service
- some of the existing data elements do not align with the intent of the methodology, e.g. using the 5-14 age group data as a component of the First 5 Forever program which is focused on the 0-5 age group.

Discussion Questions

- 3.1 What are the benefits and limitations of the current population-based formula for calculating direct allocations to councils?
- 3.2 What other services, including professional development programs, can State Library provide to support achievement of the four standards within the Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines (Operations, Collections, Facilities and Usage)? See Appendix 1 on page 13 for more information on centralised services.
- 3.3 State Library undertakes a variety of advocacy initiatives each year on behalf of the public library network. Can you identify any statewide advocacy activities that would benefit your library service (e.g. a statewide marketing campaign promoting the benefits of libraries)?
- 3.4 Both the Public Library Grant and First 5 Forever methodologies include annual competitive grant pools. What are the benefits and limitations of this model? Would you support another model such as grants alternated year on year (e.g. Strategic Priorities one year and First 5 Forever Innovation the following year, providing you with more time to implement and acquit projects)?
- 3.5 Do you support the ability to use some funding tied to collections for other priority areas that assist you to meet the standards for Operations, Facilities and Usage, such as is currently available to Independent Libraries for Priority Projects?
If so, what aspects of your library service require additional support?

4. First 5 Forever methodology

Direct allocations to local government to fund First 5 Forever programming is calculated using the same formula as the Public Library Grant and is fixed per annum with additional weightings for the proportion of the target demographic 0-4 and 5-14 years of age, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics data.

Funding provides strong early literacy foundations for all Queensland children aged 0-5 years regardless of their location and socio-economic position. First 5 Forever connects families to the information, resources and support they need to build the best foundation for their child's future language and literacy development prior to school.

The [First 5 Forever funding guidelines](#) outline how the funding can be used for items and services that support early literacy development. Currently, the guidelines focus on the delivery of early literacy experiences in the library and at home.

Under the current methodology, funding is administered by State Library, with approximately \$3.4 million or 68% of the grant provided directly to local governments.

The balance is allocated to centralised services, including the delivery of professional development for public library and Indigenous Knowledge Centre staff, the First 5 Forever website for use by libraries, parents and carers, advocacy and external partnerships, statewide marketing and collateral, resources kits, research, strategic programs, and the labour costs for positions that support the delivery of services.

For more detail, see Appendix 2 on page 15.



Exploring a picture book display in The Corner, State Library of Queensland, 2019. Image by Joe Ruckii.

Discussion Questions

- 4.1 What are the benefits and limitations of the current population-based formula for calculating direct allocations to councils for First 5 Forever funding?
- 4.2 What challenges, if any, have you faced in terms of meeting the eligibility requirements of the First 5 Forever funding guidelines?
- 4.3 Public library delivery of First 5 Forever programs has matured since its inception in 2015. Can you suggest any changes to the current methodology to increase innovation or deeply local program delivery, either through changes to direct funding or centralised support?
- 4.4 Does State Library's current offer of centralised early literacy services, including the website, professional development, statewide research, marketing collateral and play based resources, meet your needs? See Appendix 2 on page 15 for more information on centralised services.

5. Formula for calculating direct allocations to councils

The current formula to calculate direct Public Library Grant allocations to councils has been in place since 2011 and First 5 Forever since 2015. See page 7 for a breakdown of the Public Library Grant formula.

Since that time, the Queensland community and library services have changed, including:

- continued strong growth in digital information, including electronic collections and government services moving online. This has increased accessibility of information for many Queenslanders, but also resulted in the digital divide, with many unable to access information and services
- the need for more multifunctional spaces in libraries and a workforce with a broader range of skills for onsite and online programming delivery.

While each Australian state and territory is unique in the way it funds public libraries, most other jurisdictions are now using more than population, location and demographic data to calculate allocations for the respective state government funding of public libraries.

The most common dataset included in grant formulae is [Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas \(SEIFA\)](#), a product developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. The indexes are based on information from the five-yearly Australian Census of Population and Housing.

Some common uses of SEIFA include determining areas that require funding and services, identifying new business opportunities, and for research into the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and various health and educational outcomes.

Library members using public access computers at Gordonvale Library, Cairns Regional Council, 2019. Image by Sarah Scragg.



A formula that incorporates [Remoteness Areas](#) and SEIFA scores, then applies population size would:

- cater for differences in communities by locality rather than being driven primarily by population
- consider socio-economic disadvantage – regions with lower SEIFA scores will receive higher levels of funding per capita than those with higher scores
- better account for the diversity of Queensland communities, including Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and ageing populations, without the need to add complexity to the calculations and inputs required each year
- provide a consistent way to account for regional differences in need and funding
- considers how funding to public libraries can support social and economic inclusion in line with global objectives such as the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).



Indigenous Knowledge Centre Coordinator Mavis Bani, Ngulaig Meta, Torres Shire Council, 2019. Image by Keiran James.



Yungaburra Library, Tablelands Regional Council, 2019. Image by Sarah Scragg.

Discussion Questions

- 5.1 What are the benefits and limitations of a model that considers regional remoteness and socio-economic disadvantage, as well as population size?
- 5.2 Are there any other factors that should be considered in the grant formula?
- 5.3 Please provide any further comments on critical issues for public library funding to your council not covered elsewhere in this paper.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

The consultation process for the review of the methodologies includes communication and consultation with:

- all Queensland councils
- Local Government Association Queensland; Local Government Managers Australia, Queensland; Queensland Public Libraries Association; Australian Library and Information Association; and, the Australian Public Library Alliance
- relevant State Government departments.

Consultation will conclude on 5 February 2021. Following the consultation period, State Library will finalise the methodologies, taking into consideration the feedback received during consultation.

The new methodologies will be submitted for the approval of the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts.

The new Public Library Grant and First 5 Forever methodologies will commence from 1 July 2022.

*Thank you for your participation in this review.
Your feedback is invaluable.*

**One response from each council is requested by Friday 5 February 2021.
Submissions will be collected using SurveyMonkey.**

Please visit:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/methodology-review

to complete your submission or contact State Library at: lqc@slq.qld.gov.au

More information is available at: www.plconnect.slq.qld.gov.au/methodology-review. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the paper in further detail, please contact: Louise Denoon, Executive Director, Public Libraries and Engagement, State Library of Queensland at Louise.Denoon@slq.qld.gov.au or phone 07 3842 9156.

Information considered confidential should be clearly identified. Please note that the content of submissions may be accessed under the *Right to Information Act 2009*.

PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT METHODOLOGY 2018-21

(with 2020-21 figures, some expenditure areas are indexed each year)

Allocations	Budget per annum	Funding type	Breakdown	Budget per expenditure area	Notes
1. Independent Councils	\$21.224 million	Direct funding	Independent Libraries Allocation	Approximately \$21.224 million <i>indexed annually</i>	As per the current population-based formula which uses ABS data. This funding is allocated for the purchase of collections, however up to 50% may be spent on a Library Priority Project if approved following application to State Library.
2. Rural Libraries Queensland Resource/ Equipment Grant	\$43,000	Direct funding	Resource/ Equipment Grant to Rural Libraries Queensland Councils	\$43,000 fixed <i>per annum</i>	Branches which operate for six hours or more per week receive a cash grant to purchase local resources or equipment. In 2020-21, the cash grant is \$693 per branch.
3. Collections	\$2.312 million	Centralised services	Statewide Collections	\$1.14 million <i>indexed annually</i>	This centrally managed collection contains eresources and specialist material (e.g. LOTE collections, technology kits, book club kits) accessed by all Queensland public libraries and IKCs.
			Rural Libraries Queensland (RLQ) and Indigenous Knowledge Centre (IKC) Collection & Resources	\$820,000 <i>fixed per annum</i>	As per the established population-based formula which uses ABS data. Fixed for the triennium to offset population movement away from rural and remote communities. Funding managed by State Library to develop a collection to share across the RLQ and IKC network.
			Freight	\$350,000 <i>fixed per annum</i>	Costs associated with the movement of collection resources between libraries and IKCs around the state.
4. Strategic Priorities	\$740,000	Centralised services	Public Library Strategic Priorities Grant	\$400,000 <i>fixed per annum</i>	Annual competitive grants are open to all local governments that operate library services.
			Strategic Learning Program	\$100,000 <i>fixed per annum</i>	Managed by State Library to support professional development opportunities for library staff and council community and cultural service leaders across the state.
			Implementation of the Strategic Vision	\$240,000 <i>fixed per annum</i>	Managed by State Library to provide research, or the development of statewide strategic initiatives in line with the Realising our Potential vision.

Allocations	Budget per annum	Funding type	Breakdown	Budget per expenditure area	Notes
5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Support	\$735,000	Direct funding	IKC Coordinator support and Resource Equipment Grant	\$425,000 <i>fixed per annum</i>	Contribution towards the annual salary of 24 IKC Coordinators (\$17,000 per IKC) plus a cash grant to purchase local resources or equipment. The cash grant is \$1,500 per branch, \$3,000 for up to 5 branches, and \$6,000 for up to 10 branches.
		Centralised services	New IKC fit-out or refurbishment	\$60,000 <i>fixed per annum</i>	Contribution to the costs of establishing one new IKC or refurbish existing IKCs.
			Support to IKCs	\$250,000 <i>fixed per annum</i>	Support provided directly to IKCs including travel, accommodation, supplies and services, and professional development costs.
6. Direct Labour	\$790,000	Centralised services	Direct Labour costs	\$790,000 <i>indexed annually</i>	Funds State Library positions that directly support the delivery of services and resources to Queensland public libraries and IKCs including Indigenous library services program officers; collection dispatch officers and professional support for RLQ services. Staff support the management and distribution of statewide collections, the delivery of rural and remote library and IKC services, and the development of library and IKC staff.
TOTAL	\$25.842 million			\$25.842 million	

FIRST 5 FOREVER METHODOLOGY 2019-2021

Allocations	1 January – 30 June 2019	2019-20	2020-21	Notes
Direct funding to councils	\$1.8 million	\$3.4 million	\$3.4 million	Calculation includes a minimum funding guarantee of \$1,000 to councils with low populations of 0-5 year olds.
Centralised Services				
Innovation grants	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	Annual competitive grants and community literacy projects, such as play-based resources, seek to achieve innovation in early literacy programming for Queensland public libraries and IKCs.
Community literacy programs	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	
Resource kits for libraries	\$500,000			First 5 Forever resource kits are available for loan to all Independent, RLQ and IKC library services to enable program delivery.
Centralised support	\$700,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	Includes the delivery of professional development for public library and IKC staff, First 5 Forever website for use by libraries, parents and carers, statewide marketing and collateral, research, strategic programs, and the labour costs for positions that directly support the delivery of services.
TOTAL	\$3.2 million	\$5 million	\$5 million	

