



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Digital Experience Platform – Award of Contract

Date: June 24, 2024

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Toronto Public Library Board approval for an award of contract for Digital Experience Platform (DXP) services to BiblioCommons, the successful proponent for Toronto Public Library's (TPL) Digital Experience Platform Request for Proposal (RFP).

The DXP Program is part of TPL's 2020-2024 Digital Strategy roadmap and modernization goals. The purpose of the DXP project is to replace TPL's current search and web discovery solution with an improved digital experience platform that provides customers with an enhanced, uniform search experience and a seamless transition between the discovery layer (library catalogue) and the library web site. The project will also provide the opportunity to introduce new functionality, and to create operational efficiencies.

Based in Toronto, BiblioCommons is a North American leading online library customer engagement and discovery layer provider used by over 500 public libraries, many of which are large urban library systems. The BiblioCommons DXP suite of products are purpose-built for libraries and will provide TPL opportunities to offer a consistent, modern and seamless customer experience

while optimizing business processes and improving content management and service delivery and promotion capabilities. Additionally, its cloud-hosted service model will address challenges related to the risk of aging infrastructure, high maintenance expense and the cost of operating multiple platforms. A migration to a BiblioCommons-hosted service will also result in a reduction in annual operating costs.

The award is for a three-year period, to commence on execution of the agreement, with the option for two one-year renewals, subject to satisfactory performances and at the sole discretion of the City Librarian, for a total estimated value of up to \$2.842 million, excluding Harmonized Sales Tax (HST).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves an award of contract for digital experience platform services to BiblioCommons, the successful proponent for the Request for Proposal (RFP), for an estimated value of \$2.842 million, excluding Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) - based on the terms and conditions set out in the RFP, comprised of:
 - a. A three-year period for a total estimated value of \$1.751 million, which includes one-time implementation costs, and
 - b. two one-year renewals with BiblioCommons, subject to satisfactory performance and at the sole discretion of the City Librarian under the same terms and conditions, with approximate pricing as follows:
 - i. \$0.534 million for the first option year; and
 - ii. \$0.557 million for the second option year.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The award of contract to BiblioCommons is for a three-year period, with the option for two one-year renewals, for a total estimated value of \$2.842 million as summarized below. The exact start date of the contract will correspond to the execution of an agreement between TPL and BiblioCommons.

| Service Period (exact start date to be determined) | Contract (\$ millions) |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Years 1-3 (including one-time implementation costs) | 1.751 |
| Option Years (Years 4-5) | 1.091 |
| Total Award | 2.842 |

The costs for the first three years, including one-time costs related to the initial implementation and activation of the digital experience platform, are \$1.751 million. Funding for the implementation costs and the first year of service are included in the Digital Experiences (DXP) capital project in the approved 2024-2033 Capital Budget. Funding for subsequent years of service are included in the approved Operating Budget, as ongoing operating costs of TPL's website and discovery layer are part of its base operating budget.

The software and hardware maintenance costs for TPL's current digital experience platform are greater than the costs associated with the proposed contract with BiblioCommons and would no longer be required once the new service is implemented. Therefore, there is no additional Operating Budget funding required with the award of this new contract, and there is an anticipated net budget reduction of approximately \$0.3 million.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The project aligns with TPL's strategic priorities: Opening Up our Public Space by creating accessible and inclusive virtual spaces that cater to the needs of a wide range of users; and Investing in Staff and an Innovative Service Culture by providing staff with the necessary tools to deliver exceptional customer experiences online. The project also aligns with the strategic plan enabler of Modernization driven by customer experience and technology by meeting the following TPL Digital Strategy goals: to have a vibrant digital presence that provides dynamic online services and a secure, integrated, scalable technology environment that can enable the Library's current and future priorities.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

A new digital experience platform broadens access and drives inclusion for all by providing effective digital access online and via a mobile app, and by increasing online access to library materials, programs and services, and information about the Library. In particular, the new platform will help TPL meet or exceed AODA standards for its website and mobile app as well as provide navigation and improved presentation options in multiple languages.

DECISION HISTORY

At its January 25, 2021 meeting, the Library Board approved the [2020-2024 Digital Strategy](#).

At its May 24 2022 meeting, the Library Board reviewed the [2022 Digital Strategy Action Plan and the Digital Strategy Scorecard](#).

At its May 23, 2023 meeting, the Library Board reviewed the [2020-2024 Digital Strategy Update](#).

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The DXP Program is part of TPL's 2020-2024 Digital Strategy roadmap and modernization goals. The Digital Strategy is focused on delivering exceptional digital experiences, providing staff and customers with the right combinations of technology and creating a modern, connected and sustainable technology environment that is transformation-ready. The purpose of the DXP project is to replace TPL's current search and web discovery solution with an improved digital experience platform that provides customers with an enhanced, uniform search experience and a seamless transition between the discovery layer (library catalogue) and the library web site. The project will also introduce new functionality and create operational efficiencies, including reduced operating costs through lower ongoing software licensing and maintenance fees.

A digital experience platform is an integrated set of core technologies that support the composition, management, delivery and optimization of online experiences for customers. Within the library context, providing seamless access to the materials within the catalogue and other electronic sources is an

integral function of the digital experience platform. The process of enabling a Google-like search functionality is commonly known as the Discovery Layer. The Discovery Layer enables customers to search the vast array of resources available from TPL's catalogue through integration with its library management system.

In 2009, TPL implemented a modular discovery layer called Endeca for a streamlined search experience for customers to access TPL collections and online resources and information. This discovery layer is coupled with additional products to enable TPL customers to manage their loans and library accounts. This custom solution is the foundation of TPL's web presence and has served TPL's customers well for many years. However, the current architecture is lacking features available in modern library digital experience platforms and will be challenging to develop and implement. It has been almost five years since a new release of Endeca, and no further development or enhancements are expected. Therefore, with the current technology reaching end-of-life, it is necessary to replace TPL's current solution.

Also, because the Library employs several technologies to deliver its current DXP – many which are also outdated or end-of-life – the operation and management of TPL's online presence has led to high maintenance and support costs, increased cyber risk, gaps in automation, disjointed workflows, and challenges with the effective improvement of the customer experience.

The replacement of TPL's DXP offers the Library the opportunity to introduce new functionality, which many of its customers have come to expect as part of their online experiences. These include more personalized interactions, intuitive navigation, and mobile access to collections, services and programming.

COMMENTS

On February 15, 2024 the Library issued a public RFP for a Digital Experience Platform. Two proposals received by the closing date of March 22, 2024 were evaluated and scored by an evaluation committee of subject matter experts on the basis of rated criteria as outlined in the RFP, including technical requirements, experience and pricing. BiblioCommons was the successful proponent.

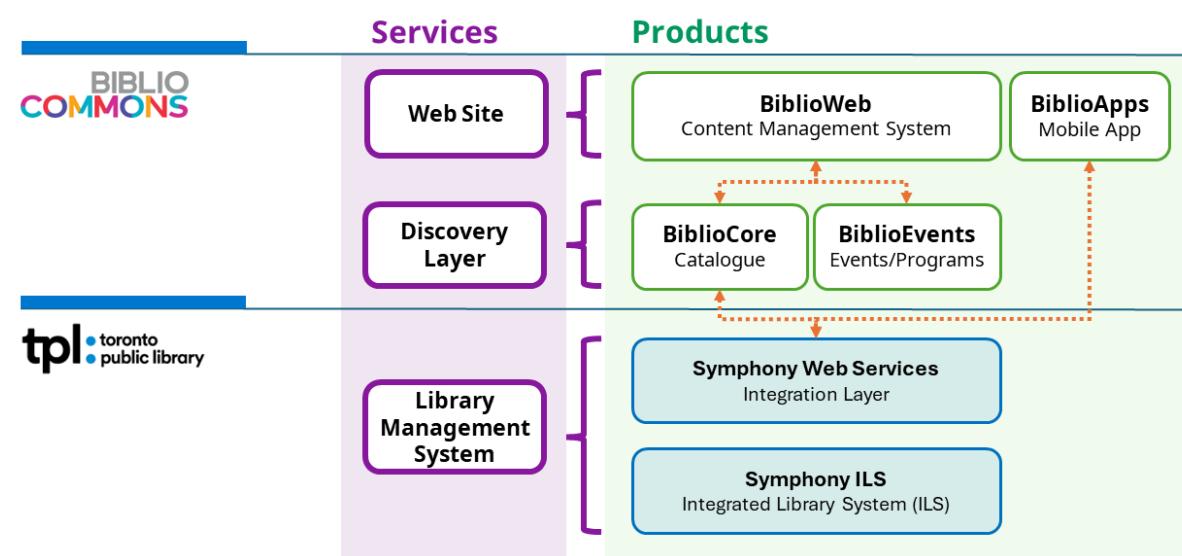
Based in Toronto, BiblioCommons is a North American leading online library customer engagement and discovery layer provider used by over 500 public libraries, many of which are large urban library systems.

The BiblioCommons DXP suite of products are purpose-built for libraries and will provide TPL opportunities to offer a consistent, modern and seamless customer experience while optimizing business processes and improving content management and service delivery and promotion capabilities.

Examples of the anticipated enhancements to the online customer experience include improved search results from the catalogue, one click check out of digital resources hosted with Overdrive, and integrated event registration.

BiblioCommons' cloud-hosted service model will address challenges related to the risk of aging infrastructure, high maintenance expense and the cost of operating multiple platforms. A migration to a BiblioCommons hosted service will also result in a reduction in annual operating costs.

In addition to migration of TPL's website and associated online services, the successful bid includes adoption of a mobile app as a net new service offering for TPL customers. The Android and Apple iOS mobile app will provide customers with a direct connection to TPL's catalogue, account information, events, and other services. The chart below shows the way in which BiblioCommons would integrate with TPL's services and products:



CONCLUSION

Services offered by BiblioCommons align with TPL's strategic plan and Digital Strategy by enhancing the Library's digital library services, improving customer engagement, and streamlining manual operations. By leveraging BiblioCommons' intuitive platform and expertise, TPL can ensure that its resources for loan and program registration are accessible online and via an app for the community as expected and on a reliable stable platform.

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SIGNATURE

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