

## Research Participation Policy

<b>Date:</b>	January 24, 2022
<b>To:</b>	Toronto Public Library Board
<b>From:</b>	City Librarian

### SUMMARY

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The purpose of this report is to request Library Board approval of a new Research Participation Policy (Policy) for the Toronto Public Library (TPL) as included in Attachment 1. The Policy outlines the criteria TPL will use to prioritize and accept or decline unsolicited research requests from external organizations and individuals where TPL is neither a sponsor nor co-sponsor of the research, ensuring that the approval process is consistent, transparent, accountable, and efficient.

The Policy was developed in accordance with TPL's policy development process. TPL staff conducted rigorous jurisdictional and environmental scan, and consultation with internal and external stakeholders while drafting the Policy. Further, the draft Policy and the Research Participation Agreement (Agreement) that will be a required part of the Policy's implementation and compliance monitoring was reviewed by the City's legal department.

The Research Participation Policy allows TPL to drive innovation and excellence in public library service by advancing evidence informed decisions while mitigating the risk to TPL and the experience of its customers and staff. The Policy prioritizes requests from the City of Toronto, the public library sector, community agencies, or academic research institutions that advance shared outcomes for TPL and City of Toronto. Further, it promotes equitable innovation by requiring researchers to make their research reports and publications freely available to TPL and the public.

The Policy safeguards the customer experience and personal information of customers by requiring the researcher to provide a data protection protocol along with their research proposal. The Policy further protects TPL customers by requiring researchers to provide a satisfactory ethics clearance from their institution's Research Ethics Board. The above conditions are ensured by the Research Participation Agreement that must

be signed between the researcher and TPL. The Agreement provides for TPL to withdraw its participation in the research project should the researcher violate the Research Participation Policy, or any other relevant Library policy.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:**

1. approves the Research Participation Policy in Attachment One.

### **Implementation Points**

To implement the Research Participation Policy, a new webpage will be developed as part of the communications plan and will be added to TPL's public website. The webpage will provide a summary of TPL's research priorities as determined by the current strategic plan and emergent issues. It also includes links to information and data that are already publicly available through TPL's open data portal: [opendata.tpl.ca](http://opendata.tpl.ca).

Researchers and students are encouraged to first review the existing public information and data. Students can submit requests for interviews with staff where it is necessary for their course assignments. Interview requests will be accommodated based on staff availability. Researchers can review TPL's research priorities and research intake process outlined on TPL's website and where appropriate submit a research request.

In implementing the Research Participation Policy, TPL will review the research requests and where a request qualifies, verify the research proposal to ensure it includes an ethics review, consent form, and data protection protocol. Research requests will be approved where there is optimal alignment with TPL's priorities, needs, and resource capacity, and there are sufficient data protection and risk mitigation mechanisms in place. Where a request is approved, a Research Participation Agreement will be signed between TPL and the researcher prior to commencing the research, and TPL will monitor the researcher's compliance with the Agreement.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The recommendation has no additional financial impact beyond what is included in the City staff recommended 2022 operating and capital budgets for Toronto Public Library.

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

## ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The Research Participation Policy helps to demonstrate the outcomes of TPL's strategic plan and advance equity through an evidence-based approach. The Policy will facilitate understanding of the needs of Torontonians, and potentially augment TPL's efforts to measure the impact of its programs and services.

## EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Research Participation Policy is founded on principles that promote equity by:

- Supporting initiatives that foster equity and inclusion by preventing or eliminating social, economic, and environmental outcomes that have negative impacts on equity-deserving groups;
- Valuing diversity and respecting the traditions, culture, and knowledge of Indigenous peoples and minority communities;
- Promoting an accessibility-by-design approach in which accessibility elements are incorporated into all stages of the research process to accommodate persons with disabilities; and
- Requiring the researcher to abide by the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 \(2018, or later\)](#).

## COMMENTS

The Research Participation Policy recognizes that TPL's priority is to advance excellence in public library service, including the following outcomes:

- Understanding of changing community needs consistent with TPL's mission and vision;
- Achievement of TPL's strategic, service, and operational priorities; and
- Demonstration of the value and impact of public library services for everyone, including equity-deserving groups.

Research activities must not be intrusive or in conflict with TPL's welcoming and supportive environment, and TPL must have the resource capacity to efficiently support the research project. The researcher must also adhere to applicable legislative requirements and all relevant TPL policies.

The Research Participation Policy drives innovation and excellent, transparent, and accountable public library service by clarifying for the public TPL's priorities, including how and when it will engage in research. By communicating TPL's priorities, the Policy will enhance TPL's capacity for evidence-based policy and program development, and improve library service and operations. The Policy builds to the future and TPL's vision of being a leading library by providing for participation in research that advances excellence in public library service in Toronto and across the public library sector and, by making research that results from the Policy freely available to TPL, and the public.

The Policy implementation and compliance monitoring safeguard the customer experience and mitigate risks through steps which include a mandatory ethics review and privacy protection requirements specified in the Research Participation Agreement signed by the Library and the researcher. TPL will verify that data collection will be limited to the purposes of the research. TPL will also review the data protection protocol to verify that it includes sufficient mechanisms to protect personal data and respond to any data breach. The researcher must obtain the informed and express consent of research participants, either directly or through a guardian where applicable. TPL will request the researcher demonstrate how they will engage and inform potential research participants about their participation in the research prior to obtaining their consent.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Vickery Bowles  
City Librarian

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Research Participation Policy

Policy Title: Research Participation Policy - DRAFT  
Policy Classification: Board Policy

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## **Research Participation Policy**

### **POLICY CLASSIFICATION: BOARD POLICY**

**MOTION# and APPROVAL DATE:** (Include the Motion # and date the policy was approved by the Board)

**MOTION# and LAST REVISION DATE:** (If applicable, include the motion # and date when last revisions were approved):

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### **Effective Date**

#### **Purpose**

Toronto Public Library (the Library) is often approached by organizations and individuals with requests for the Library's support or participation in Research. The Library welcomes and supports Research that enhances the Library's capacity to understand resident and community needs, measure outcomes and impacts and, where applicable, to strengthen the achievement of the Library's strategic, service, and operational priorities while advancing equity.

The Research Participation Policy (the Policy) outlines the criteria the Library will use to determine whether it will accept a request to support or participate in Research for which the Library is not an owner, a sponsor, or a co-sponsor. The objectives of the Policy are to:

- Facilitate engagement in Research where the findings are of benefit to the Library and Torontonians;
- Mitigate risks associated with Research involving Library Customers; and
- Provide a review and approval process for Research proposals that is consistent, transparent, accountable, and efficient.

The Policy outlines and communicates how the Library will prioritize Research requests from organizations and individuals, including:

- The City of Toronto (the City) and its agencies;
- Libraries and library associations;
- Advocacy groups and community agencies; and
- Academic or Research institutions, and students.

(Note that for the purposes of this Policy, all of the groups referenced above that are within scope of the Policy will be referred to as the "Researcher." A full definition can be found in the Definition of Terms section at the end of this document.)

## **Scope**

The Policy applies to requests where the design, methodology, implementation, or publication of the Research is primarily the responsibility of the applicant or organization and the conditions of the Library's participation are outlined in a Research Participation Agreement (the Agreement) signed between the Researcher and the Library. It applies to external parties who request the Library's support or participation in Research in which the Researcher is seeking to do one or a combination of the following:

- Use the Library space, including a Library branch or other facility, as a Research site;
- Use or access data owned or stored by the Library;
- Engage with Library Customers, staff, contractors, or the public in general, as Research Participants (the Participants); or
- Use the Library space to solicit for Research Participants.

The following are out of the scope of this Policy, and will be considered through other Library processes as applicable:

- Requests to use the Library's collections, information services, and other resources, including access to open data;
- Information requests in compliance with certain legislation, e.g., Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), and Statistics Canada Act;
- Research undertaken on the Library's initiative as part of service development and evaluation, or in partnership with a community organisation;
- Ongoing library and government surveys, and benchmarking initiatives, which may include initiatives with the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), Public Library Data Services (PLDS), or Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC).
- Internships, student placements, and student requests to learn about the Library, including requests to interview Library staff as part of a course assignment; and
- General information requests or questions from other libraries, library associations, community organizations, or the general public about the Library's services.

## **Underlying Principles**

Toronto Public Library's Research Participation Policy is founded on the following underlying principles:

- The Library supports Research that aligns with the Library's vision, mission, and service values, including equity, inclusion, innovation, and service orientation;
- The Research proposal must align with the Library's brand and be in compliance with all applicable legislation and Library policies;

- The Library supports relationships and collaborations that advance best practices in delivery of public services to achieve shared outcomes, and that promote the public library as a vital democratic institution;
- The Library supports initiatives that foster equity and inclusion by preventing or eliminating social, economic, and environmental outcomes that have negative impacts on equity-deserving groups;
- The Library endorses the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 \(2018\)](#), including the principles of respect for human dignity, respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice;
- The Library values diversity and respects the traditions, culture, and knowledge of Indigenous peoples and minority communities;
- The Library upholds an accessibility-by-design approach in which accessibility elements are incorporated into all stages of the Research process to accommodate persons with disabilities; and
- The Library endorses the [Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications](#), including free public availability of Research reports.

## **Policy Statement**

In keeping with its vision to be a world leading library, the Library applies an evidence-informed approach to deliver excellent, comprehensive, and efficient public library service that reflects the needs of Toronto's diverse communities and residents.

The Library also recognizes the importance of data and information sharing to the improvement of public services. In accordance with its Open Data Policy, the Library proactively provides access to non-identifiable data through its web portal, [Toronto Public Library Open Data](#).

The Library encourages and welcomes Research requests from Researchers from various sectors and perspectives; however, the Library's support of a Research undertaking does not imply an endorsement of the Researcher, including their associates, sponsors, or co-sponsors.

## **1. General**

- 1.1. The Library's priority is to support Research that contributes to development, enhancement and evaluation of its facilities, programs and services.
- 1.2. The Library does not support, and will withdraw from, a Research undertaking where the Library's support or participation would undermine the Library's vision, mission, or values.
- 1.3. The Library's priority is to advance excellence in public library service, including the following outcomes:
  - Understanding of changing community needs consistent with the Library's vision and mission;
  - Achievement of the Library's strategic, service, and operational priorities; and
  - Demonstration of the value and impact of public library services for everyone, including equity-deserving groups.
- 1.4. The Library will not support or participate in Research:
  - Undertaken by a commercial entity or intended for commercial purposes;
  - Whose primary purpose is to gain access to Library Customers as part of a Research sample, without consideration for its potential value to public library service, Torontonians, or equity-deserving groups.
  - That is out of scope of the Library's jurisdiction, or otherwise in conflict with the Library's priorities, vision, mission, and values.
- 1.5. Research activities must not be intrusive or in conflict with the Library's welcoming and supportive environment, including an environment which is conducive to study and enjoyable use of the Library space.
- 1.6. All Researchers or their associates, as well as Research Participants, are subject to all applicable Library policies, including the Rules of Conduct,

Employee Code of Conduct, and the Human Rights and Anti-Harassment/Discrimination Policy.

## **2. Prioritization and Review**

2.1. The Library will prioritize requests from the City or service partners that support delivery of Library services, and public services that contribute to a shared outcome, including Research that:

- Focuses on library services in Toronto while contributing to the Research efforts of the broader public library sector;
- Complements internal Research by the Library;
- Contributes to an understanding of the needs and barriers associated with accessing library services for all residents, including equity-deserving groups;
- Evaluates the outcomes and impact of the Library's strategic, service or operational priorities, i.e., effectiveness of programs and services in addressing resident and community needs;
- Aims to demonstrate how library services support realization of the City's strategies, goals and objectives;
- Supports the City's agencies and partners in demonstrating and achieving shared outcomes;
- Engages the broader public library sector in measuring the outcomes and impacts of library services;
- Advances best practices in collaboration and co-development, and
- Advances the library profession and development of library staff.

2.2. All Research requests must include a completed Research Request Form (the Request Form) submitted to the Library, including all required information and supporting materials.

### **3. Conflict of Interest**

- 3.1. The Library will not support or participate in a Research initiative where there is a real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest between the Library or its affiliates, including the Toronto Public Library Foundation (the Foundation) and the Researcher, their associate, sponsor, or co-sponsor.
- 3.2. Where there is a potential or perceived conflict of interest, the Researcher must proactively provide a disclosure statement to that effect, including mitigation measures satisfactory to the Library, otherwise the Library will not accept the request.

### **4. Information Privacy**

- 4.1. The Library recommends and upholds a privacy-by-design approach to handling of personal data and information.
- 4.2. The Researcher must comply with all applicable privacy legislation, including the principles of the MFIPPA as elaborated below.
- 4.3. Prior to approving a request, the Library will assess the Research methodology and instruments to ensure that data collection will be limited to the purposes of the Research.
- 4.4. The Researcher must include with their Research request, the purpose for collecting the Research Participant's data, for how long the data will be kept, and in what manner it will be stored.
- 4.5. The Researcher must seek and receive the Research Participant's express consent prior to collecting their data or information. Consent must be received from a parent or guardian where vulnerable persons are involved, including minor children and adults under guardianship.
- 4.6. The Consent Form must include a clear statement requesting the Research Participant's express consent to provide their personal data and information to the Researcher, and the Participant's right to withdraw their consent.

4.7. The Researcher must provide the following information to the Research Participant in the Consent Form or in addition to it:

- The specific purpose for collecting the data or information, and;
- The contact information of a designated individual who can answer questions about the collection of data or information.

4.8. Considerations must be made to protect against the misuse of the Research Participants' personal data and information, or their expressed views, especially where the Participants are vulnerable individuals such as seniors, individuals experiencing homelessness, or any individuals with a compromised capacity for self determination.

4.9. The Researcher must include with their Research Request Form, a data protection protocol that is satisfactory to the Library, including the Researcher's procedures for handling data breaches.

4.10. The Library reserves the right to cancel the Research Participation Agreement where the Researcher is in violation of the privacy requirements outlined above.

## 5. Ethics and Equity

5.1. The Library recognizes the individual rights of all Library Customers to determine if they wish to participate in a Library-approved Research, and the conditions under which they will participate.

5.2. Because the Library is a shared space, and some individuals may not wish to participate in the Research, the Library will not permit the Researcher to employ observational Research methodology.

5.3. The Library is committed to advancing its values of equity and inclusion, and will not approve a Research proposal that, upon the Library's assessment, imposes unmitigated burdens on equity-deserving groups.

5.4. The Library reserves the right to refuse a Research request, or cancel a Research Participation Agreement, where and whenever it determines that the Research does not align with its values.

- 5.5. As part of the Research Participation Agreement, the Researcher will be required to comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018, or later).
- 5.6. The Library will take precautionary measures to ensure ethical conduct of Researchers by monitoring for ethics violations related to Research conducted at the Library. Library Customers, including Research Participants, will have the right to withdraw from the Research, raise a complaint, or have their data and information destroyed.

## **6. Access to Research Reports and Publications**

- 6.1. The Library expects Research conducted with the aid of its facilities or data to add to its civic value. Researchers must be willing, able, and ready to provide free public access to their Research reports or publications.
- 6.2. As part of the Research Participation Agreement, the Library will require the Researcher to comply with the Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications.

## **7. Room Booking Under the Community and Event Space Rental Policy**

- 7.1. This section applies to room booking under the Library's [Community and Event Space Rental Policy](#), whereby a room is booked for the purpose of conducting Research or consultation, but the Library has no involvement in the Research or consultation, and is not a direct beneficiary of the Research.
- 7.2. The Library will not allow a room booking, or otherwise permit the use of the Library space, for the purpose of soliciting Research Participants without a signed Research Participation Agreement.
- 7.3. Library spaces may be booked to conduct Research or consultation where the sponsoring parties have invited their own Participants and only require the space to conduct their meetings.
- 7.4. Where the Library space is booked under the Community and Event Space Rental Policy, the Researcher and Research Participants must observe all applicable Library policies, including the Rules of Conduct. Library

employees, in their capacity as Researchers, must abide by the Employee Code of Conduct.

## **8. Exclusions and Other Considerations**

- 8.1. The Library will review Research requests for their potential value and impact, considering the benefit to the broader library community and the risk to Participants.
- 8.2. Research requests will not be processed, and will subsequently be denied where the submission does not include all required information and materials specified in the Research Request Form.
- 8.3. Requests will be denied, or the Research Participation Agreement cancelled, where the Research disrupts Library services, or otherwise interferes with the enjoyment of the Library space.
- 8.4. Requests will be denied where the Library lacks the resource capacity, including human resources, to support or participate in the Research, or where the proposed timelines are in conflict with other Library priorities.

## **9. Cancellation**

- 9.1. The Library reserves the right to cancel the Research Participation Agreement in the event that the Researcher violates any of the Library's policies, including this Policy.

## **10. Denial of Request and Cancellation of Research Participation Agreement**

- 10.1. The Library reserves the right to deny a Research request or cancel the Research Participation Agreement. A request may be denied or an Agreement cancelled as provided for in this Policy and the Agreement.
- 10.2. Where a request is denied or an Agreement is cancelled, the Researcher may, upon request, have the decision reviewed by the City Librarian, whose decision shall be final.

## **Special Directives**

The Library is obligated to ensure that implementation of this Policy complies with the Library's values and all other relevant policies, including the Human Rights and Anti-Harassment/Discrimination Policy, and the Employee Code of Ethics.

A transparent, equitable, and inclusive process will be enforced to ensure fairness in the Library's support for or participation in Research. Library employees who submit Research requests in their capacity as Researcher will be required to sign the Research Participation Agreement and to abide by all applicable Library policies, including the Employee Code of Conduct.

## **Accountability**

The Director of Policy, Planning and Performance Management is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of this Policy in collaboration with other divisions, acting as subject matter experts.

## **Related Legislation**

- Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.31

## **Related Library Policies**

- Display and Distribution of Information for the Public Policy
- Advocacy Policy
- Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Policy
- Open Data Policy
- Community and Event Space Rental Policy

## Definition of Terms

**Consent Form** means a standard written agreement through which the Researcher seeks and receives consent from the Research Participant or, where the Participant lacks capacity, the Participant's legal guardian, allowing the Researcher to gather data or information from the Participant for the purposes of the Research.

**Equity-deserving groups** means "Communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society because of institutional and societal barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination. These groups are due social justice and reparation" (Internal Glossary of Equity and Inclusion Terms, City of Toronto 2021)

**Library Customer** refers to a person who is registered with the Library or uses its services and is provided access to a full range of in-person and digital library services, including spaces, collections, programs, staff and technology; it also refers a person who is not registered with the Library and who uses select library services and programs.

**Research** means "Investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery or interpretation of knowledge, the systematic collection or revision of knowledge in light of new facts or theories, the development and application of methodologies to increase knowledge and the practical application of knowledge to specific problems or circumstances" (University of Toronto Governing Council 2013). "It is an undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry and/or systematic investigation" (Government of Canada 2018).

**Researcher** means an individual or organization who enters into a Research Participation Agreement with the Library and who is either a principal owner, sponsor, or identified as the Research author.

**Research Participant (the Participant)** means an individual who becomes the subject of the Research and who agrees to provide the Researcher with certain data or information as defined in the Consent Form.

**Research Participation Agreement ( the Agreement)** means an agreement entered into or proposed to be entered into between the Library and the party seeking to undertake a Research initiative at the Library or involving Library customers or staff. It clarifies and confirms mutual expectations and commitments between the Researcher and the Library.

**Research Request Form ( the Request Form)** means an intake form developed by the Library, and in which the Researcher provides mandatory information in expression of their interest to conduct Research at the Library.

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