



Library Services Performance Audit: The Library Needs to Improve its Services to Equitably Meet Diverse Community Needs

February 2021

Report Summary

Why This Audit Is Important

Public libraries have expanded beyond books to services and resources that address many community challenges. Long Beach is diverse in areas like race, ethnicity, language, income and access to resources. As a result, community members experience different needs and challenges. The Long Beach Public Library (Library) offers a variety of materials, services, programs, and resources at its twelve locations to help meet community needs and interests.

Audit Objective

Our audit assessed the equity and effectiveness of Library materials, services, programs and resources compared to the population served, industry standards and best practices.

Acknowledgement

We thank management and staff at the Library for their collaboration, assistance, and cooperation during this audit.

What We Found

We found that community members who speak languages other than English, low income households, people with disabilities, teens and adults have less opportunity to use and benefit from Library services than others in the community. In addition, although the Library currently has valuable offerings, community members identified key areas where the needs of the community are more than what is offered, such as digital and economic inclusion, access to community resources, and educational assistance for adults.

We found that the gaps in who the Library serves and the services they provide have several causes:

- Barriers to use of services, such as limited open hours, limited offerings in languages other than English, and overdue fines
- Not using data to inform what is offered
- Not aligning programs and services with strategic goals
- Reduction in staff and outdated staff responsibilities
- Not maximizing partnerships, and
- Limited outreach and promotion.

What We Recommend

We recommend the Library develop a better understanding of who is in the community and how they interact with the Library, and then use that understanding to define the Library's strategic goals and staffing. In addition, we recommend the Library eliminate barriers that prevent some community members from using and fully benefiting from the Library, and expand its reach through partnerships and promotion. While we understand that the Library must operate within its level of funding and with reduced staffing levels there are steps they can take to implement the audit recommendations with their existing resources.





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