



Public Meeting Rooms & Facilities Use Policy

Discussion Draft

May 27, 2019

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

The Library's mission is to be a free place for everyone to discover, create and share ideas and information. Library staff work hard to further our vision of an informed, engaged and connected city by building relationships with our community – including with groups that have and continue to experience discrimination or social exclusion.

- The Library normally approaches controversial content by adding and strengthening voices that have been historically under-represented or excluded. What can we do to strengthen these voices that will help to increase understanding, and build greater diversity and inclusion?
- When the Library rents space to groups whose values do not align with, or are contrary to, the Library's values, what steps should the library take to demonstrate its values and support groups that may feel excluded?
- The Library values intellectual freedom and freedom of expression as fundamental requirements in a democratic society. The Library also values social inclusion, diversity and respect for others as part of an engaged and connected city. In light of these values, what types of activities, if any, should the Library restrict or prohibit on Library premises?
- The Library values being a place that is welcoming and accessible to all, and normally operates on the basis that library users may change their behaviour when they understand expectations for use. Given the role of the library in providing spaces and resources to people who may have nowhere else to go, are there situations when someone should be prohibited from using a Library space?
- The Library wishes to ensure that it is a place where the public and its staff feel welcome and respected. When it comes to the use of meeting rooms and facilities, what steps should the Library take to protect the physical safety, dignity and security of staff and the public?
- The Library belongs to the public and it is a shared resource. What other steps should the Library take in its spaces to ensure that it is welcoming, to provide physical safety and to be accessible to everyone, recognizing that members of our community often have differing views on controversial issues?

1. Objective

To set out the conditions for use of meeting rooms and facilities in the Library and in the Library Square Conference Centre.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the public use of all meeting rooms and facilities controlled by the Vancouver Public Library, including those located in Library Branches, the Central Library, and the Library Square Conference Centre.

3. Background

The Vancouver Public Library believes that it is the responsibility of public institutions, including public libraries, to support a society that respects diversity, fosters social inclusion and is guided by democratic values. The primary purpose of the Library's meeting rooms and facilities is to provide space for Library programs or services that are aligned with our values and goals, delivered by library staff or in partnership with individuals and organizations. A secondary purpose is to provide accessible and affordable meeting spaces for use by the public. The Library views its public spaces as an important part of our vision to create an informed, engaged and connected city.

4. Public Use

When meeting rooms and facilities are not in use for Library programs and services, they may be made available for public use, typically by way of short-term rentals under Event License Agreements.

The Library's values include diversity, respectful spaces, intellectual freedom and access for all. The Library believes that freedom of expression and access to ideas and information are essential to the health and development of a democratic society. We acknowledge that the Library's spaces may be used by those who express ideas that may be contrary to the Library's vision and values. By offering Library spaces for short-term rental by the public, the Library does not endorse or agree with any of the aims, policies or activities of any group or individual using the space, or of any of the ideas, messages or information they express.

There are necessary limits to how Library spaces may be used. The Library is committed to protecting the dignity and safety of its staff and the public, minimizing disruption of Library services, and maintaining the security of Library property. The use of Library spaces must not contravene Canadian laws, including the *Criminal Code* and the British Columbia *Human Rights Code*.

The Library recognizes that individuals and groups may strongly disagree with ideas and views expressed within Library spaces and collections. In some instances they may, on a personal level, view them as offensive. However, in keeping with its core value of intellectual freedom,

the Library will not restrict freedom of expression beyond the limits prescribed by Canadian law.

5. Prohibited Activities

The use of Library meeting rooms and facilities may not include or involve any of the activities listed below:

1. any violation of the *Criminal Code of Canada*, including:
 - a. the communication of statements that incite or willfully promote hatred against an identifiable group; or
 - b. the advocacy or promotion of genocide;
2. any violation of the British Columbia *Human Rights Code*, including:
 - a. the publication, issuing or display of any material that indicates discrimination or an intention to discriminate against a person or group, or is likely to expose a person or group to hatred or contempt, because of their race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or age;
3. any other unlawful activities, or activities that in any way violate applicable Library policies, rules or regulations;
4. gaming, gambling or games of chance, including bingo or lotteries;
5. activities requiring a permit and/or prior Library authorization, such as the service of alcohol, where the relevant permit or authorization has not been obtained;
6. activities that are likely to pose a safety hazard to event attendees, Library staff or the public, or which are likely to cause misuse or damage to Library property;
7. the use of Library space in a way that is intended to establish the space as a permanent location for the user's activities and/or operations; or
8. any other activities that may unreasonably disrupt Library operations or prevent the lawful use of Library space by other people, and that cannot be accommodated in an alternate Library space or by rescheduling.

The Library may deny or cancel a meeting room or facility booking when the Chief Librarian reasonably believes that the proposed use will include any of these prohibited activities. If the Library discovers that the activity is occurring after the event has commenced, the Library may terminate the event.

6. Limitations on Use

In addition, the Library may deny or cancel a meeting room or facility booking, or may terminate any event, in the following circumstances:

1. the user has previously damaged or misused Library property, or failed to pay any required fees for use of Library meeting rooms or facilities;
2. the user has contravened this Policy and/or the Meeting Room & Facilities Regulation in the past and the Library reasonably believes this will occur again; or
3. the user has made a material misrepresentation regarding the user, the proposed use, or any participants or attendees.

7. Protecting Safety, Dignity and Security

The Library may deny or cancel a meeting room or facility booking, or may terminate any event, which is likely to cause a material risk of harm to the safety, dignity or security of Library staff, or to the public.

8. Other Requirements of Use

1. Where the Chief Librarian has reason to believe that the use of a Library meeting room or facility may unreasonably disrupt Library operations or prevent the lawful use of Library space by other people, the Library may:
 - a. require that the event be moved to an alternate Library space where the disruption can be mitigated, and/or
 - b. require that the event start not earlier than sixty minutes after the closing time of the Library.
2. All uses of Library meeting rooms and facilities must be in accordance with the Public Meeting Rooms & Facilities Use Regulation.

Related Policies

- Public Meeting Rooms & Facilities Use Regulation
- Diversity & Inclusion Statement
- Public Space Policy
- Programming at Vancouver Public Library
- Expectations of Behaviour
- Political Use of Library Space Policy