



City of Long Beach
Working Together to Serve



Councilmember
ROBERTO URANGA
Long Beach, Seventh District

Date: March 2, 2021

R-17

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilwoman Suzie Price, Third District
Councilmember Roberto Uranga, Seventh District
Councilwoman Suely Saro, Sixth District
Councilmember Al Austin, Eighth District

Subject: Addressing Barriers to Equity in the Long Beach Public Library System

RECOMMENDATION:

The City Council directs the City Manager to identify within 90 days the additional resources needed to implement changes from the Long Beach City Auditor's *Library Services Performance Audit of 2020 Operations* to meet the access and equity flaws identified. The resources under review should not be limited and should include structural and budgetary recommendations to improve Library operations and services.

BACKGROUND:

Over the last several years, Library Services has responded well to changes in library use and the reduction of library staffing given the difficult budgets the City of Long Beach has experienced. They have continued to adapt to the needs of the community, despite significant resource challenges. For that, they should be commended.

Recently, City Auditor Laura Doud completed an audit of the Library Services Department of the City of Long Beach. The audit yielded several findings and resulted in a number of recommendations that are critical to the continued service objectives of our library services such as adapting to changes of use and continuing to change its staffing models to meet the needs of today's library user. The audit states, "Computer access and help to use electronic devices have become some of the primary reasons people visit libraries. These changes have refined library customer service and require updated staffing roles and structures." This is just one of the areas where libraries have seen a shift in user needs.

The Library Services audit findings of current operations are that it is not delivering services in the most efficient and needed manner. Specifically, there are access, language, and other barriers that have resulted in inequities in Library services to the communities it serves.

The audit made the following findings to be addressed both in short-term and long-term strategic planning, with a focus on staffing and budgeting. The City Manager is, therefore, directed to work with the Library Services Department to address the following critical issues:

1. Making Library materials and programs readily available in languages other than English. The audit found that 95% of the materials at our libraries are in English and when it comes to programming, over 97% of the programs available are in English.
2. Adjusting Library hours to align with community needs for access. Monday closures, for example, provide limited access to students and for working families, traditional hours of operation (9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.) also are barriers as are Sunday hours.
3. Limiting fines and other sanctions to increase access. Many public libraries across the U.S. have limited fines and fees for overdue materials to remove barriers to access. Long Beach should do the same and become a “fine-free” library.
4. Having adaptive technology available at all 12 libraries. Currently, only 2 of the 12 library branches have adaptive technology available for persons with disabilities.
5. Creating a data collection system to track program use and feedback through citizen satisfaction/user satisfaction surveys on an annual basis.
6. Utilizing, increasing and improving promotional tools (multi-lingual) to increase community awareness of the various library services and programs.

The audit findings exposed many of the challenges the City of Long Beach Library system faces in delivering services and access to its residents and in turn, offers opportunities for improving and increasing services to them as well.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Due to the urgency of this item a fiscal impact assessment has not yet been completed.