

# 10.1

**Report to / Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Public Library Board  
Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa**

**February 11, 2025 / 11 février 2025**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

**Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian and Chief Executive Officer / Bibliothécaire en chef et Directrice générale**

*Contact Person / Personne ressource:*

*Anna Basile, Deputy CEO and Division Manager, Corporate Services / Directrice adjointe et Directrice, Services organisationnels*

*Choose an item.(613) 580-2424 x32335, Anna.Basile@BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca*

**File Number/Numéro du dossier: OPLB-2025-0211-10.1**

**SUBJECT: Brand Strategy - Phase 2 Strategy and Development**

**OBJET: Stratégie de marque, phase 2 – Stratégie et élaboration**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board:**

- 1. Approve the Brand Strategy (Document 1), as further described in this report; and,**
- 2. Direct staff to proceed to Phase 3 – Design and Visual Identity and report back to the Board in Q3 2025.**

## **RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa :**

- 1. Approuve la stratégie de marque (document 1), tel que décrit dans le présent rapport; et,**

**2. Dirige le personnel de procéder à la phase 3 – Conception et identité visuelle, et de faire rapport au C.A. au troisième trimestre de 2025.**

**BACKGROUND**

In keeping with the *Public Libraries Act, RSO 1990, c.P.44* (“the Act”), other relevant statutes, laws, and good governance practices, the Ottawa Public Library (“OPL”) Board (“OPLB” or “the Board”) holds accountability for the full range of decisions affecting the organization. The Board approaches its role using a policy or strategy model of governance that focuses on setting strategic directions and objectives, making decisions on major projects, and monitoring performance. The Board’s attention focuses primarily on the long-term needs and goals of the organization, rather than the administrative or operational details.

As per Board Policy 001 – Roles and Responsibilities of the Board and Trustees, trustees are responsible for defining OPL’s purpose and direction; reviewing and approving major strategies, plans, and decisions; and advocating on behalf of OPL. In alignment with approval of significant strategic initiatives, Board Policy 002 –Delegation of Authority, Item #28, states that the Board retains authority to “Approve OPL corporate brand and visual identity” specifically the OPL logo and colour scheme.

The 2020 - 2023 Strategic Plan (OPLB-2019- 0601), approved by the Board in June 2019, included the direction to “Promote the Value of OPL” with an aligned priority to “Develop and implement a brand strategy.” In September 2022, OPL engaged the services of an external consultant, Intent, a communications and design firm that has extensive experience working with non-profits, the public sector, and charities (including several Ontario public libraries) to develop a creative and forward-thinking new brand and visual identity, completed through three distinct phases of work:

1. Research and Discovery
2. Strategy and Development
3. Design and Visual Identity

In February 2023, an Ad hoc Committee of the Board was established to provide staff with guidance regarding the development of a distinct and compelling brand identity, including advice on engagement components in Phase 1, on the strategy / approach components of Phase 2, and on design and visual identity components in Phase 3.

Trustees Crawford and Smith, along with Chair Luloff as ex-officio, were appointed to the Ad hoc Committee.

When the Strategic Plan for 2023 -2028 was approved by the Board in October 2023, the strategic priority to develop and implement a brand strategy remained under the updated strategic direction: "Demonstrate the Value of OPL" (OPLB-2023-1010-10.2). To note, other priorities included in the plan are supported by a strong brand strategy, including enhancing fund development; strengthening community relationships and advocacy; and integrating an ongoing commitment to intellectual freedom into all OPL activities.

In April 2024, staff presented to the Board the results of the Brand Strategy Phase 1 – Research and Discovery (OPLB-2024-0409-11.2) and were directed to proceed to Phase 2 – Strategy and Development.

The purpose of this report is to seek Board approval of the brand strategy, and to seek direction to proceed to Phase 3 – Design and Visual Identity.

## **DISCUSSION**

OPL provides valuable benefits to individuals, families, and communities, and OPL's brand needs to reflect its value to encourage more residents to use its services. Doing so requires a comprehensive and meaningful brand strategy founded on OPL's vision, mission, and values, and informed by data about residents' perceptions, awareness, and sentiments about the Library.

A brand strategy outlines the strategic direction and foundational elements that will guide the brand. The goal is to develop and create an integrated, marketing-focused brand strategy and strong brand identity to demonstrate and promote the value of OPL, and which is used to build, maintain, and reinforce the organization's reputation.

Staff worked with Intent on Phase 2 - Brand Strategy Development, to create an authentic brand strategy informed by the research findings presented from Phase 1.

Additional consultation was undertaken in Phase 2 consisting of focus groups with three key audiences (newcomers, seniors, and teens) to better understand the needs and interests of these groups and to close gaps in information received during Phase 1. The key findings were as follows:

- Audience segmentation is key to promote the library and what OPL offers (e.g., many participants in the newcomers focus group discussed coming from countries where libraries were not public, open to all, and free; Most participants did not know they could access the library and use services for free. Teens discussed the importance of peer-to-peer marketing.)
- OPL's breadth of services is not well known, even to current clients.
- Direct marketing and promotion to current clients was identified as lacking.
- OPL must leverage community partners to promote and market the Library.

Using data from Phase 1, the supplementary data from the focus groups, an assessment of comparable library and community service brands, and an audit of OPL's existing brand, three distinct directions were developed, each relating to the overarching conceptual approach. The directions were expressed in a brand statement and were used to guide the development of the strategy. OPL and the consultant engaged a Community Input Group (CIG), comprised of individuals who participated in the Phase 1 survey and who indicated a desire to be involved in other capacities related to this project. The CIG provided input and feedback on the three directions and the various brand elements. The Branding Ad hoc Committee was consulted throughout the process and provided input into the direction on which the recommended brand strategy is based.

The result is a recommended Brand Strategy (Document 1) rooted in the organization's Vision, Mission, and Values, as approved by the Board in July 2014 (OPLB-2014-0065) and June 2019 (OPLB-2019-0601) respectively.

- Vision: To build community and transform lives
- Mission: To inspire learning, spark curiosity, and connect people
- Values: Community, Inclusion, Integrity, Intellectual Freedom, Literacy

The proposed Brand Strategy includes five key elements, each designed to shape client perception of, increase awareness of, and influence positive sentiment towards OPL:

- Brand Promise: A commitment made by OPL to clients outlining the unique value and consistent experience they can expect every time they interact with OPL;
- Brand Attributes: Fundamental principles for which the OPL brand stands, influencing how staff interact with clients;
- Brand Story: An emotional narrative that communicates OPL's vision, mission, and core brand attributes in a compelling manner;

- **Brand Proposition:** A value proposition that encapsulates the full mix of benefits which OPL promises to deliver to current and future clients. It helps to differentiate the brand and fully position it in the marketplace. A value proposition can apply to an entire organization (or parts thereof) and includes a proposition for both general (e.g. current clients and public) and target audiences. Based on research in Phase 1, target audiences for OPL are: Newcomer, Teen, Senior, People with Lower Income, and Former Clients; and,
- **Brand Voice:** A consistent language and communication style that will be used across all platforms and touchpoints.

The OPL brand strategy is designed to encourage clients to think, feel, and do the following in relation to OPL:

- **Think:** I start at the Library. No matter what I'm searching for, OPL can help me find it. Whether it's a new title from my favourite author, support with research, or a new skill using OPL's collection of instruments, telescopes, and more, OPL supports me in finding what I want to discover.
- **Feel:** Whatever I am interested in, OPL is there to help me find it. I come as I am, and the staff make me feel welcome. I am free to be myself at OPL.
- **Do:** At OPL, I use the library services and engage with my community. OPL supports me, and I tell everyone that OPL is a place where you can learn, think, explore, connect, and belong.

With the brand strategy finalized, there remain two additional components to develop to support the brand:

- **Brand Equity:** Measurements to assess the brand value and impact.
- **Brand Implementation:** Plans for implementation and roll-out of the brand strategy across OPL's touchpoints.

If approved, staff will return to the Board in Q3 2025 with Phase 3 – Design and Visual Identity, which will include a proposed logo and slogan/tagline along with additional details about these two components.

## CONSULTATION

The development of this report required internal consultation with staff with expertise in communications and client experience, as well as with members of the OPL Board Branding Ad hoc Committee (Trustees Crawford and Smith, and Chair Luloff).

Externally, focus groups were held with members of three target audiences: newcomers, teens, and seniors. In total four (4) in-person sessions were held with more than 57 participants.

A community Input Group (CIG) of OPL clients provided feedback and validation of the brand elements. Ten clients were randomly selected from those who expressed interest in Phase 1, representing diverse age, cultural, gender, and socio-economic groups. The CIG met on three occasions between May 2024 and October 2024.

### **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

Ottawa Public Library complies with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (2005)* in its operations. There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

### **BOARD PRIORITIES**

This report aligns with the Board-approved Strategic Plan, Direction #3 - Demonstrate the Value of OPL.

### **BUSINESS ANALYSIS IMPLICATIONS**

There are no business analysis implications associated with this report. Brand equity measurements will be included in the final report closing out Phase 3.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The risk management implications associated with this report pertain specifically to organizational reputation. To mitigate the risk, the strategy is based on research and extensive public input.

### **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no technology implications associated with this report.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 Ottawa Public Library Brand Strategy

**DISPOSITION**

If approved, staff will develop Brand Strategy Phase 3 – Design and Visual Identity, to be presented to the Board in Q3 2025.