

Summer Reading Program

Why A Summer Reading Program?

For many public libraries, the annual summer reading program (SRP) is the high-water mark for library events and community engagement. Libraries frequently offer a higher volume of children's programming and events during the summer months, when kids are out of school and able to more regularly participate.

The overall aim of the summer reading program is to ensure that kids continue to develop and maintain solid literacy habits during summer vacation, when they do not engage in the regular structure of school. It aims to promote reading as a fun, valuable activity and the library as an exciting, engaging place to visit -- not just during the summer months, but all year long.

What is a Summer Reading Program?

SRPs can take many forms. Many libraries choose to create summer reading games, with special game boards or progress trackers for participants to play each time they visit the library. This could be a Monopoly, Candyland or Snakes and Ladders-based game board, a bingo card, or even a scavenger hunt. These can be reused annually or newly created every year, depending on a library's goals. A participant might be invited to play the game each time they visit the library, or each time they track new reading time. Games often appeal to a broad audience of school aged kids, generally from kindergarten to grade 6, but this will depend on the individual library and the community served. Great examples of library summer reading games can be found on resource sites including Pinterest, LibraryToolshed.ca, or ProgrammingLibrarian.org. You can also ask your colleagues at other Shortgrass member libraries for tips and advice!

Many libraries also choose to run additional library programming in the summer, including storytimes, crafts, and other programs. Libraries may choose to create their own programs based on the SRP theme or participants' ages and interests. Again, resources including Pinterest, LibraryToolshed.ca, and ProgrammingLibrarian.org are all excellent resources for finding program ideas and guides. Shortgrass also has a variety of programming kits available to member libraries to support excellent library programming year-round, including during the SRP. If you would like more information on these kits, please see the "Programming Kits" section of this manual or contact the Client Services Librarian.

If a library is unable or does not wish to create their own summer reading program for any reason, but still would like to run one, TD Bank sponsors a free program for Canadian public libraries. The company provides all the promotional materials, workbooks, and recording sheets free of cost to participating libraries; other items, like prizes, staff/volunteer t-shirts, or tote bags,

may be purchased for a small fee. The theme changes annually (in 2019, it is “The Natural World”) and is generally vague enough that it can be used as-is or fit into your own programming plans and themes. While there are guidelines you are required to follow if you use the TDSRC, they are generally fairly flexible and easy to follow. Please note that if you opt to participate in this program, you must follow the branding and sponsorship acknowledgement related guidelines outlined by TD.

Preparing for the Summer Reading Program

Preparations for the SRP generally begin several months in advance of the program’s start. Libraries need to determine whether they wish to participate in the annual TD-sponsored summer reading program (more on that shortly) or if they wish to develop their own version of the program. Early in the year, you will also need to determine whether you are able (and want to) hire a summer student to assist you with running your SRP. Funding to help pay for summer students is available through a variety of programs, including the provincial STEP program and a variety of federal programs, such as Young Canada Works.

A sample timeline for summer reading program preparations might look like this:

- January: Determine whether you would like to hire a summer student to help you run the program and apply for Young Canada Works and/or STEP funding. As of 2019, applications must be completed online. You may need to consult your board on this. While grant funding for summer students is available, it covers only part of the expenses related to employing a summer student.
- January: You will be asked to choose a preferred date for the Shortgrass-sponsored summer reading concert.
- February or March: the Client Services Librarian will contact you with information regarding optional participation in the TD-sponsored Summer Reading Club (TDSRC). If participating, you will order your free promotional materials for the program at this time. Even if you are not participating in the TDSRC, you will probably begin planning your own summer reading activities at this time.
- April: You will be told the amount of funding Shortgrass will provide you for summer reading program supplies and prizes. At this time, you will also have the opportunity to order prizes and TDSRC-branded items (if participating in TDSRC).
- May-June: Preparation for SRP programming and events
- July-August: Summer Reading Program!
- September/October: Submit your summer reading program statistics to the Client Services Librarian. You’re finally free!

Shortgrass Support of Summer Reading Programs

As previously mentioned, to help you succeed, Shortgrass supports library summer reading programs in a variety of ways, including organizing a summer concert tour of member libraries

by a children's performer, providing assistance with running your programs, and providing some funding towards the purchase of program materials and supplies.

Allotment of Funds for Summer Reading

Shortgrass is pleased to be able to provide funding for the purchase of summer reading program materials and supplies. Each year, all member libraries receive a set dollar amount that can be used to support your summer reading program. This amount is based on our allotment formula, whereby funds are distributed proportionally based on the percentage of population served by each member library. (For further information on allotments and how they are determined, please see the "Materials Levy & Allotments" section of this manual.)

How a library spends this money is determined by the library manager and board, so long as it is used to support the summer reading program. A library may wish to purchase prizes, programming supplies (such as craft materials), or snacks for their programs. Prizes may be ordered through a Shortgrass vendor (libraries will be sent an order form in March or April) or purchased elsewhere. If purchased elsewhere, receipts should be submitted to Shortgrass for reimbursement.

Libraries may choose to spend more than their allotment if the funds are available, but will not be reimbursed for this by Shortgrass.

Summer Concert Tour

Every year, Shortgrass arranges for and sponsors a children's performer to tour the library system as part of our libraries' summer reading programming. The summer performer is a free event provided to Shortgrass members to help you provide fun, quality programs to your patrons. Shortgrass will also provide a certain amount of refreshments (usually juice and/or water) for the children in the audience. All we ask is that you do your best to promote the performance at your library and in your community.

The event will usually take place in the library building itself. Other than ensuring there is enough space for the performance to take place (including a "stage" and audience area), your own preparations will be minimal. Performers are generally comfortable setting up and taking down their own equipment.

The tour will generally occur in July or August, depending on performer availability and libraries' preference for dates and times. Library Managers will always be asked to choose a time that works best for your library; Shortgrass will never force a time on you. Please note that libraries can opt out of hosting the summer performer if it does not fit with the library's schedule or plans. No compensation in lieu of a performance will be offered to libraries who opt out of hosting the performance.

Programming Assistance

To help libraries deliver high-quality programming during the summer months, Shortgrass is pleased to be able to offer a summer programming visit from one of our trained staff members (generally the Client Services Librarian or a summer student). If there is a program you would like us to help you run -- or a kit you would like to see added to the collection -- please get in touch with the Client Services Librarian to make the necessary arrangements!