

SHARED LIBRARY SERVICES PARTNERSHIP 2024 EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS



Public Health Ontario (PHO) initiated the Shared Library Services Partnership (SLSP) in 2012 to improve Ontario public health units' access to scientific resources and evidence, and to strengthen relationships and knowledge exchange among public health units.

In this partnership, four health unit libraries act as “hubs,” providing library services and supports to client health units without in-house libraries. PHO provides funding, coordination and oversight of the partnership.

This evaluation examined the performance, outcomes, and impact of the SLSP since the previous evaluation was done in 2016, including service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic response. During this time, 22 client health units were receiving services from SLSP hubs.

SLSP members were engaged in the design of the evaluation, which is based on service and resource usage data and surveys of hub and client health units. Evaluation results will be used to inform SLSP planning and decision making.

HUB LIBRARY SERVICES

54,937 Number of Services Delivered (2016–23)



22,732

Searches executed



29,578

Documents delivered



1,195

Reference questions



1,260

Training sessions

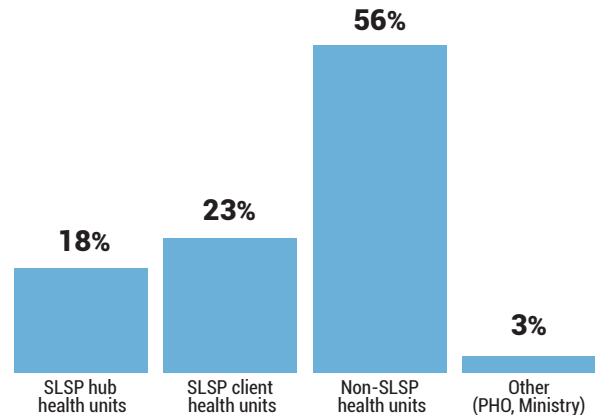
“ The partnership has benefited both the home health units as well as the clients served. Many clients respond thanking for the work that has been done.”

– SLSP Member

VIRTUAL LIBRARY

PHO provides all Ontario public health units with full access to the Virtual Library (a suite of bibliographic databases and complementary full text content), at no cost.

Use of the Virtual Library



43,240

Number of articles downloaded from Virtual Library (2016–23)

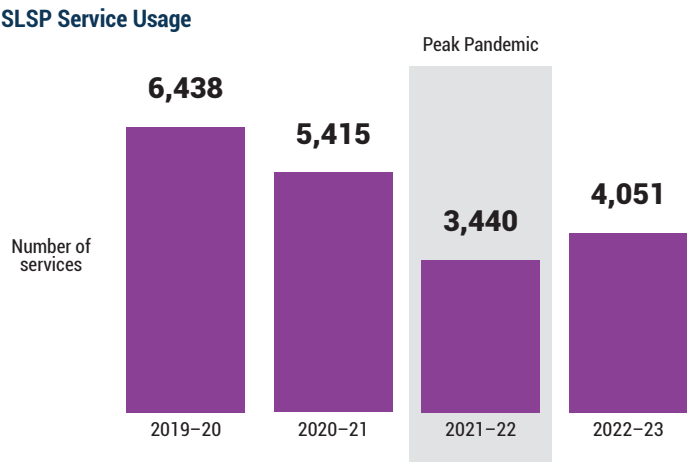
“ I believe the SLSP model does an excellent job of sharing resources, maximizing cost savings through consortium purchasing, and promoting shared expertise and skills.”

– SLSP Member

IMPACT OF COVID-19 RESPONSE

Use of SLSP services and the Virtual Library decreased during the COVID-19 response due to staff redeployments, pausing of non-pandemic programs and research projects, and increased use of free preprints and PHO and Ministry guidance documents.

However, frequency of SLSP usage increased after the peak pandemic period, returning to pre-pandemic request volumes.



MAIN FINDINGS



Why Clients Use SLSP Library Services

- 83% to access articles/resources that were not available through free sources.
- 80% to gather and review information to help plan a program/service at my health unit.
- 52% to access support in developing or conducting a research project.

Quality of SLSP Services

- 90% I was able to apply the information/resources at work.
- 92% overall, I was satisfied with the hub library services.
- 92% overall, the hub library services were useful.

“The support of the SLSP has been extremely beneficial to our work.”
– SLSP Client

Benefits to Clients

- 94% saved time in obtaining resources.
- 81% increased my health units' capacity for evidence informed decision-making.
- 75% improved the quality of my work.

Strengths of the Partnership

- 91% enhances hubs' ability to fulfill client requests.
- 82% supports the development of evidence-informed programs and practices in health units.
- 82% increases utilization of hub's resources.

“The SLSP supports and enhances collaboration between health units – reducing duplication of effort and research waste.”
– SLSP Member

KEY LEARNINGS AND NEXT STEPS

Effective Shared Service Delivery Model

The SLSP has continued to provide equitable, cost-effective, and comprehensive access to library services and supports for client health units.

Enhanced Evidence-Informed Public Health Practice

Hub library services are adding value to clients' work and increasing their health unit's capacity to make evidence-informed decisions and use up-to-date information and scientific resources.

The SLSP partnership provides collaboration and peer learning opportunities to build knowledge and skills among SLSP library personnel and also increases the efficiency and impact of their work.

Challenges and Innovations

The COVID-19 pandemic affected SLSP capacity and client library needs as a large proportion of staff were redeployed to help support response activities.

The SLSP adapted its services by increasing collaboration among librarians, redistributing increased workloads, expediting searches, and providing live updates on the evolving pandemic situation via the SLSP website. These changes could signal opportunities to expand the role of SLSP in health unit operations and increase the reach of library services as health unit governance structures evolve.

Evaluation findings also noted concerns about the sustainability of the current SLSP model as a result of flat funding and inflation, and emphasized the importance of the continued operation of the SLSP.

RECOMMENDATIONS



- 1. Sustain and enhance SLSP to facilitate and improve health unit access to scientific resources and evidence.
- 2. Increase communication between PHO and hubs to strengthen relationships, increase knowledge exchange, and improve SLSP implementation.
- 3. Increase hub outreach to client health units to engage service users and increase awareness of SLSP.
- 4. Clarify and support the client liaison's role in facilitating hub-client communications.
- 5. Continue to build the SLSP website to raise awareness of SLSP and deliver training and resources.
- 6. Explore alternatives to in-person training (such as webinars and online learning) to deliver training to clients and tailor educational strategies to the needs of clients who work remotely.
- 7. Develop targeted communications and training for high-use SLSP clients.
- 8. Conduct evaluation during and after library service requests to monitor and improve quality of services.
- 9. Continue tracking the volume of services delivered by hubs to identify changes in service use and manage workload impacts.
- 10. Continue to monitor the cost of services and resources to identify cost efficiencies.

“The SLSP is a unique and effective model for equalization in access to research across the province of Ontario. Centralization of service, standardization of practice, and collection and dissemination of knowledge have aided in the delivery of evidence-informed decision making on a timely and economical basis.”

– SLSP Member