

TITLE:	Customer Request to Reconsider Library Programs	POLICY: A-1073
AUTHORITY:	Chief Executive Officer	
<i>Effective:</i>	<i>Reviewed:</i>	<i>Revised:</i>
March 1, 2023		

POLICY STATEMENT

Programs offered at the Library are developed and selected under the guidelines established in the Program Development and Selection Policy.

The Library recognizes that there will occasionally be customer objections about a program offered or promoted by the Library. When a complaint is raised, the Library must ensure that the complaint is handled seriously while also explaining that the Library offers a wide selection of programs inspired by the informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs and interests of the diverse communities it serves. This policy outlines the approach to be followed.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures on how to address challenges to programming, whether the goal is to cancel a specific class or event, remove a speaker, limit access to library programs, or limit the Library’s ability to develop and select its programming.

Review Process

The procedures outlined below must be followed by customers when raising concerns about programs and by EPL staff when reviewing these concerns. Usually, a concern is brought up in conversation, by email, through a written comment, chat, or a phone call. Sometimes, the request is simply a query; at other times, the customer wants the program cancelled. If there are no legal grounds, e.g., libel or sedition, for cancelling the program, such censorship attempts are resisted. Refer to the [Intellectual Freedom Policy](#) and [Intellectual Freedom brochure](#).

The Executive Director, Service Design, considers the recommendation submitted by the relevant Team Chair, makes a decision, and provides a written response to the customer that includes the Intellectual Freedom pamphlet. The response is sent out within one month of receipt of the *Customer Request for Reconsideration of Library Program* form at the service point and is copied to the originating service point manager.

A customer may appeal the decision to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Procedures and Guidelines

The procedure for dealing with customer concerns regarding library programs is as follows:

1. Staff should attempt to handle the initial complaint in an informal and helpful way.
2. Focus on the issue of choice, diversity of views, and protected expressions of knowledge and ideas, explaining the Library's Intellectual Freedom Policy.
3. Explain that censorship is a two-edged sword, i.e. it cuts both ways, and people who object to programming that the complainant may well find satisfactory could argue that once objectionable programs have been removed for one person, other programs based on their objections should logically be removed as well.
4. If the informal approach does not work, then the matter should be referred as quickly as possible to the branch manager or a member of the branch leadership team. If unavailable, proceed to providing the customer with the *Customer Request for Reconsideration of Library Program* form.
 - Please note that the *Customer Request for Reconsideration of Library Program* form formalizes the process and for the average inquiry, it could be considered intimidating and a deterrent for obtaining some simple information and explaining the concept of intellectual freedom. For this reason, staff should ensure that the informal approach is exhausted before providing the *Customer Request for Reconsideration of Library Program* form.
5. If the customer remains unsatisfied with the explanations provided, the branch manager (or staff member in their absence) should request that the customer complete the *Customer Request for Reconsideration of Library Program* form.
6. Explain that the completed form will be used to investigate the matter and as the basis for a response. No promise should be made that programs will be cancelled or restricted. Inform the customer that programs will proceed while the request is being reviewed, with decisions applying to future programs. The customer will receive a written response within one month's time.
7. The branch manager sends a letter (Appendix I) to the customer notifying them in writing that their concerns will be investigated, and that they will receive a written response from the Executive Director, Service Design, within one month.
8. The form is forwarded to the Executive Director, Service Design, who delegates the investigation to the appropriate Team Chair.

9. Within one week of the form being received, the Team Chair gathers documentation regarding the program (e.g., program pilot checklist, speaker credentials, registration numbers).
10. The Team Chair reviews the documentation and prepares a recommendation and rationale within two weeks of the form being received.
11. The Team Chair forwards the documentation, recommendation, and supporting rationale to the Executive Director, Service Design for consideration.

Timelines

1. Within 24 hours of receiving a formal expression of concern via the *Customer Request for Reconsideration of Library Program* form, the Branch Manager will send a letter to the customer to notify them that their request has been received and will be investigated.
2. Within one week of receipt of a formal request, the Team Chair will gather together documentation regarding the item.
3. Within two weeks of receipt of a formal request, the Team Chair will review the documentation and prepare a recommendation and rationale for the Executive Director, Service Design.
4. Within one month of receipt of a formal request, the Executive Director, Service Design will respond in writing to the customer with a decision. This may occur after the class or event has taken place.

Related Policies

[Intellectual Freedom Board Policy \(B-2012\)](#)

[Program Development and Selection Policy \(A-1074\)](#)

[Customer Request for Reconsideration of Library Program Form](#)

Attachments

Letter to Customer (see below)

APPENDIX I

Sample letter below. Letterhead available in Word templates.

DATE

CUSTOMER NAME & ADDRESS

Dear _____,

I have received your comments concerning (title of program). Thank you for taking the time to complete the reconsideration form.

I have forwarded your comments for review to Tania Way, Executive Director, Service Design. You will receive a written response from her within the next month.

Thank you for your interest in the Edmonton Public Library.

Sincerely,

BRANCH MANAGER