

# LiRN Update

## 2026 Spring Plenary

Vicki Whitmell, LiRN Board Chair  
Theresa Leitch, Managing Director

# Agenda

- 2027 Grant Cycle Updates
- Board of Directors /  
Governance Updates
- LiRN LiNK Project
- Miscellanea
- Town Hall





## 2027 Grant Cycle Updates

# 2027 Grant Requests – Key Information

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Submission deadline: End of day  
June 26, 2026

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Requested increases should be  
in line with inflation

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All required materials submitted  
together as one package

# 2027 Grant Request Package – Required Components

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2027 Grant Request Form

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Supporting budget

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All required business cases

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Forms and details available on LiRN website  
(Financial Information for Associations)

Change:  
Excess  
Fund  
Balance  
(EFB)  
Proposals

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EFB proposals removed from  
annual budget submission process

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Associations with EFBs will be  
invited to submit proposals for  
current-year use

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EFB calculations and deadline for  
proposals to be shared once  
finalized

# Change: Timing of Business Cases

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All required business cases  
submitted with the budget

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Early submission requirement  
discontinued

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New approach reflects practical  
experience from past cycles

# Change: Capital Expenses

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Capital expenses recorded separately in budget template

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Allows clear identification and review

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We are looking into disbursing approved capital funding in Q1 rather than over 4 quarters

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Operating grant funding would continue to be disbursed in equal installments over the funding year

# Change: Submission Process

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LiRN negotiating with vendor for a grant management tool

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Goal: simplify submissions and reduce manual processing

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If implemented in time, training and instructions will be provided

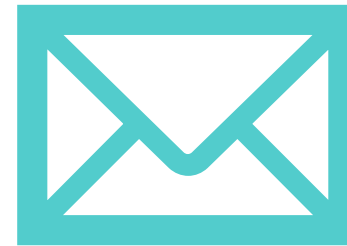
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Associations will be notified promptly

# 2027 Grant and Supporting Budget Submissions: More Information



For more information, please scan the QR code above to visit LiRN's grant request information page online.



For specific questions about your individual association, email [accounting \[at\] lirn.ca](mailto:accounting@lirn.ca)



# Board of Directors and Governance Updates

# Library Operations Policy



# Policy Status

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- The LiRN Board has reviewed a **revised draft** incorporating network feedback
- Work is ongoing on a small number of remaining areas
- We anticipate this work being completed by the end of Q3 / beginning of Q4
- The goal remains a **clearer, more practical policy** that reflects how libraries actually operate
- Today, we will share an update on the portions of the redraft that have been completed to date

# What We Heard

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- Strong support for modernizing and consolidating LiRN policies
- Consistent calls for clearer definitions and more flexibility – particularly around the approach of allowing a certain percentage of time allowed for association work before the association contributes to salary
- Libraries and associations work **hand-in-glove**, not in silos
- Audit provisions needed more specificity and notice provisions

# “Meaningful Portion” Provision

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“Where duties related to Association Activities form part of a staff member’s role, the Law Association will contribute appropriately to that staff member’s salary.

While some Library staff time may reasonably be allocated to Association Activities without requiring a contribution, the Law Association is expected to contribute when such duties represent a **meaningful portion** of the staff member’s responsibilities.”

# “Meaningful Portion” Provision

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- Feedback consistently indicated:
  - Specifying an amount of time that library staff can spend on association duties before the association must contribute to salary does not work
  - Strict categorization between library work and association work was described as arbitrary, burdensome, and harmful to workplace culture. The relationship between library and association work is symbiotic. Attempting to split duties into silos doesn't reflect reality and undermines service.
  - Staff strongly oppose “time policing,” noting it would be demoralizing and unworkable
- Some associations were concerned that the phrase “meaningful portion” was too vague.

# “Meaningful Portion” Provision

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- LiRN appreciates and understands that the work of libraries and associations is deeply interconnected, and that attempts to divide responsibilities into rigid silos do not always reflect how these relationships function on the ground. The “hand and glove” dynamic is real, and this policy aims to acknowledge that by allowing flexibility where the lines naturally blur
- However, because the levy on lawyer licence fees is restricted by the Law Society of Ontario for the sole purpose of funding library operations, LiRN is obligated to distinguish between library and association activities, even when that distinction feels imperfect
- Using “**meaningful portion**” rather than a fixed percentage gives the policy the flexibility needed to account for the wide variation in how association work arises across different libraries — something a rigid threshold cannot accommodate
- This approach ensures that incidental or occasional association tasks do not trigger salary contributions, while still requiring associations to contribute where staff are performing substantive, ongoing association work.
- It preserves accountability and compliance without forcing time-tracking, artificial role separation, or rigid limits that do not fit local realities.

# “Meaningful Portion” Provision

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- “**Meaningful portion**” refers to **association duties that become a substantive and recurring component of a position**, not the everyday overlap that arises in shared library-association environments
- It is not about tracking minutes or setting a fixed percentage but avoiding rigid thresholds or time-tracking requirements while preserving and respecting the restricted nature of the grant funds for library operations
- The focus is on substance, not incidental overlap. A financial contribution to salary is expected only when association duties are ongoing, identifiable, and intentionally assigned, rather than incidental or ad hoc
- Association duties are more likely to be considered “meaningful” where they interfere with, displace, or materially limit the delivery of Core or Additional Library Services
- Operational realities are recognized as minor, occasional, or blended tasks that naturally arise in courthouse libraries do **not** trigger financial contributions to salary
- It would apply where association responsibilities require sustained attention – for example, where governance, administration, or association programming support is a **regular responsibility that must be planned for and resourced**.

# Core Library Services Provision

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- Associations confirmed ability to deliver the listed core services such as reference, borrowing, access to materials, and interlibrary loans.
- Some large or high-volume libraries report strain from interruptions, walk-ins, and rising research demand.
- **Note:** If increased staffing is required to execute library-related work, request an increase in the grant to accommodate hiring additional staff, including a business case presenting statistical support for the increased workload and staffing levels.
- **Result: Core Library Services remain the same in revised version**

# CPD Provisions

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- Many associations argue CPD:
  - Directly relates to lawyer competence.
  - CPD can rely heavily on librarians' research and instructional expertise.
  - Cannot be cleanly separated from library operations. Clear examples of what CPD-related tasks LiRN will fund are requested.
- **Note:** In fund accounting, activities funded with restricted funds return their proceeds to the restricted fund. Categorizing CPD as “library work” and applying this principle too rigidly to CPD activities, however, could place some associations in a difficult financial position.
- **Result: LiRN continues to work on a revised approach that balances accounting integrity with associations' financial realities.**

# Service to the Public: Request for Provision

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- We received some feedback saying that some libraries assist members of the public, but the draft policy failed to acknowledge this reality, making it unclear how such work is to be categorized.
- **Note:** Work performed for members of the public would be categorized similarly to work performed for lawyer users.
- **Result:** We have amended the policy to clarify that the categorization relates to the nature of the work rather than the user.

# Funding Commitments: Request for Provision

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- Associations expressed concerns about:
  - Rising costs for digital resources, databases, and administration.
  - Inefficiencies created by strict separation of library and association budgets.
  - Concern that unclear salary allocation rules could lead to deficits or layoffs.
- Associations requested **longer-term funding commitments** to allow stable planning.
- **Note:** The levy on lawyer licence fees is restricted by the Law Society of Ontario for the sole purpose of funding library operations. We cannot alter these restrictions, nor can we merge or repurpose the grant for broader association activities. Although this policy introduces greater flexibility to reflect the operational realities, the underlying funding rules are not within our power to change.
- **Note:** LiRN is also required to submit an annual grant request to the Law Society and is therefore unable to secure multi-year funding commitments. This framework is set by the regulator, not by LiRN, and we must operate within it.
- **Result: LiRN was unable to make amendments to the policy to reflect this feedback**

# Audit & Compliance Provisions

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- There was widespread support for accountability, but strong calls for:
  - Clear audit triggers,
  - Minimum notice periods,
  - Limits on how far back audits can reach,
  - Access only to library-related records,
  - A cure period before any funding is clawed back,
  - Assurance that funding will not be interrupted during an audit.
- **Note:** LiRN is still revising this section of the policy to adopt major safeguards while preserving limited, essential flexibility for audit integrity

# Audit & Compliance Provisions

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- **Result: The policy is being amended to include:**
  - Clear audit triggers
  - 60-day notice
  - Use of an independent third-party auditor
  - Limiting the audit primarily to library-related records, protecting funding during audits, adding a 90-day cure period, and restricting clawbacks to intentional misuse or issues that persist after the cure period.
- Two suggestions were **partially accepted**.
  - First, the 18-month audit look-back was kept as the default, but may be extended in narrowly defined cases where material irregularities cannot be understood without reviewing slightly earlier records.
  - Second, while access to non-library accounts is generally restricted, auditors may request **targeted supporting documents** from other accounts only when necessary to verify transactions affecting the restricted fund.
- Overall, the redraft adopts major safeguards while preserving limited, essential flexibility for audit integrity.

# Request for Clearer Policy Language

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- Common points in the feedback included:
  - Contradictions around borrowing privileges (required vs. may be restricted).
  - Diluted or ambiguous definitions in the new draft.
  - Missing reference to membership management, despite its tight link to library operations.
- **Notes and Results: Borrowing privileges make more sense as an additional library service as not all libraries offer this; we have amended the policy to reflect this.**
- **Membership management is an association duty and has been added as such to the policy.**

## Other Policy Developments



# Internal HR Policies

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- LiRN's Board adopted the following internal HR policies at its March meeting:
  - Recruitment Policy
  - Probationary Period Policy
  - Employee Code of Conduct
  - Pregnancy/Parental Policy
  - Critical Illness Policy
  - Domestic/Sexual Violence Policy
  - Family Medical Leave Policy
- These policies are available on our website should associations wish to use them as a precedent

# Communications Strategy

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- LiRN's Board adopted the following a Communications Strategy to accompany its Communications Policy at its March meeting.
- The Communications Strategy includes a comprehensive communications framework, including:
  - Standardized network-wide email updates
  - Standardized network-wide live meetings
  - Clear roles (Chair, MD, administrative leads)
  - Town Hall style feedback opportunities
  - Post-engagement follow-up summaries
- The Communications Strategy is available on our website



**LiRN**  
**LiNK**

**New Project Funded by The Law Foundation of Ontario**



## Introducing LiRN LiNK

- **LiRN LiNK** will lead the delivery of centralized, innovative legal information services across Ontario.
- Its goals reflect LiRN's commitment to advancing access to justice through collaboration, technology, and service excellence.
- This project will run from February 2026 to February 2027 with potential for renewal or expansion.



# Introducing LiRN LiNK

- LiRN LiNK includes the following core programs:
  - **Centralized Research and Reference Services** – Delivered through LibChat, this will offer real-time support to legal professionals across the province.
  - **e-LiRN Toolkits** – Practice-specific toolkits that include access to e-LiRN resources, training, and links to additional resources. Remote access is provided where possible; in library access is available for all resources.
  - **Strategic Innovation Projects** – Developing original tools and content in partnership with other organizations to enhance access to legal information. These projects will prioritize open-access solutions, interoperability, and user-centered design to ensure broad and equitable access to legal knowledge.



## LiRN LiNK Progress!

- Our key goals include:
  - **Establish a Centralized, Remotely Accessible Reference and Research Service** – Launch a province-wide virtual reference service, initially staffed by a dedicated LiRN law librarian and later supported by volunteers from the courthouse library network.
  - **e-LiRN Toolkits** – Launch toolkits for Criminal and Family Law.
  - **Strategic Innovation Projects** – Launch 2 – 3 projects.



## LiRN LiNK Staffing

- **We have hired a Law Librarian!** Watch for an introduction coming soon.
  - The Law Librarian will work with the network to design and launch the remote research and reference service, design and launch toolkits for Criminal and Family Law, and work with us on strategic innovation projects.
- **We are currently considering strategic innovation project applications.**



## LiRN LiNK Funding

- **Thank you to the Law Foundation of Ontario for funding this initiative!**



**The Law  
Foundation  
of Ontario**

*Advancing access to justice*



Miscellanea

# LiRN

Legal Information and Resource Network



## We've Expanded Remote Access!

Ontario lawyers in 37 rural counties and districts now have remote access to vLex through e-LiRN!

We know that lawyers working in rural and Northern Ontario can find it difficult and time-consuming to visit a courthouse library, so we've **expanded remote access** to vLex to 37 counties and districts!

# LiRN Newsletter

- **Spotlight on Courthouse Libraries**  
Each edition of our newsletter highlights a different courthouse library, showcasing the valuable resources and services available across the province.
- **Upcoming Education Events**  
We feature a section dedicated to upcoming CPD opportunities. If you're offering any continuing professional development sessions, let us know — we'd be happy to include them!
- **Sharing the Newsletter**  
Please share the newsletter widely!  
**Important:** If you're forwarding the newsletter email directly to your members, they may unsubscribe you!. To avoid this, we recommend attaching the newsletter email to a new message before sending it out — and encouraging them to subscribe in their own name.



# Benefits

- Reminder to send updated benefits advice forms if there has been a change of status for your employees, including salary changes!
- Send directly to Carole Lanthier from Gallagher ([carole\\_lanthier@ajg.com](mailto:carole_lanthier@ajg.com))
- Cc [admin@lirn.ca](mailto:admin@lirn.ca) so we can double-check the benefits invoices



Town Hall

# Questions, Comments, Concerns?



- For the rest of our time, we'd like to open the floor for your questions, comments, and concerns that you'd like to relay to the Board.
  - For the most effective use of this time, we ask that your comments concern network-wide rather than association-specific issues (but please find us later to discuss individual matters).
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