

# PLA EVALUATION NETWORK

Public Libraries Australia (PLA) and Culture Counts are inviting libraries to participate in the PLA Evaluation Network, a nation-wide data collection initiative to better understand and illustrate how libraries generate vital outcomes for their communities.

## WHY?

- Libraries are an extremely important asset to local communities, but membership numbers and lending statistics only address a small part of the value of a library to its community.
- Measuring the role of libraries and the value that communities place on them gives libraries the ability to engage more deeply with the public, impact the community more strongly, and provide an evidence-based argument for greater funding.
- Libraries can better understand and articulate their contribution to broad social and economic outcomes, tracking perceptions and performance over time toward achievement of their own objectives. This enables decision-makers to better plan for development and enhancement of library services in a way that is cooperative and measurable, and to identify where support is needed.
- The use of standardised measures means that libraries can learn from direct comparisons with their peers, or from wider sector trends and insights derived from the project-generated big data. All standardised data collected will also contribute to a body of evidence about the value of the sector as a whole.
- Many Australian libraries are already using the Culture Counts system to demonstrate the value their library adds to people's lives.

## WHAT?

- In 2016, a project paper commissioned by ALIA, APLA and NSLA established draft national standards and guidelines to help public libraries better measure and report on their activity. Culture Counts worked with the State Library of South Australia and a selection of national libraries to test these draft outcomes and identify streamlined methods for capturing and analysing feedback from the community.
- The aim of this collaborative project with PLA is to enable the sector to benefit from significant research carried out in Australia and internationally, with the opportunity to further test potential outcome metrics and evaluation methods to ensure appropriateness from an Australian library perspective (including in regional and metropolitan areas).
- The project will involve many opportunities for testing, feedback and learnings to be derived from the experience of participating libraries. It will also generate significant amounts of big data that can be analysed as a whole and filtered to understand differences in impact by region, program/service, demographic background and more categories.
- The Culture Counts Evaluation System comprises sector-developed and academically validated metric frameworks; a set of software tools designed to capture public feedback; and a team of evaluation experts providing support services, analytics and reporting. Existing library subscribers across Australia have generated over 30,000 public responses using Culture Counts over three years, illustrating the ease at which data can be gathered and reported upon.

## HOW?

Each participating library will capture public feedback on library use, perceptions and the achievement of outcomes over a one-year project period, generating a set of data insights for libraries individually and as a group.

Component	Actions
CULTURE COUNTS SUBSCRIPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each library will receive a one-year subscription to the Culture Counts survey platform, including in-built metrics, survey templates and client support</li> <li>▪ Participating libraries will be asked to use the platform to survey public library users at least once annually on outcome measures and usage and provide annual data related to library expenditure, collections, loans and visitation. In addition, each library will have the opportunity to conduct unlimited evaluations through the Culture Counts platform to measure the impact of their own library programs and activities</li> <li>▪ It is recommended that libraries use a mix of methods to collect responses, including a mailout to library members; the option for self-complete on library computers, iPads or WiFi; and intercept interviews by librarians. This will maximise the ability for libraries to reach a diverse mix of library users</li> <li>▪ Subscribers can view survey results and reporting throughout the project period in their own Culture Counts dashboard, with access to raw data, analysed results charts and pdf reports</li> </ul>
STANDARD TEMPLATES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Survey templates with standardised metrics will be used to minimise the time burden on library staff, while maximising the ability for big data analysis and learnings across the project</li> <li>▪ Each library will receive a standard survey template with a set of agreed questions covering overall library use, perceptions and outcomes</li> <li>▪ An NSLA/ALIA statistics survey will also be provided to ensure input/output data (such as loans, stock, turnover and expenditure) is collected in a standardised way</li> <li>▪ Event or program-specific survey templates will also be shared with libraries through the platform, enabling them to evaluate individual events or programs if they choose</li> <li>▪ Libraries will have flexibility within the Culture Counts survey builder to develop and edit their own bespoke surveys, however this may not enable benchmarking</li> </ul>

Component	Actions
EVALUATION GUIDANCE & SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Culture Counts will hold an individual onboarding session with each library where evaluation requirements for the project will be discussed along-side best practice evaluation and survey distribution method</li> <li>▪ A support package will be provided to libraries with clear and concise guidance on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical use of the Culture Counts platform</li> <li>- Purpose and rationale for the measures used</li> <li>- Data collection methods</li> <li>- Interpretation of data</li> <li>- Accessing big data via the dashboard</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Culture Counts will hold quarterly feedback sessions via webinar to enable participating libraries to connect with one another, look at the big data dashboard, and discuss implications and learnings. Webinars will be filmed to enable those not able to participate to watch at a time convenient to them</li> <li>▪ A dedicated Culture Counts Client Relationship Officer will be available to receive support queries</li> </ul>
BIG DATA DASHBOARD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Culture Counts will prepare a big data dashboard containing data that participating libraries choose to share with the project. All participants will be asked to share a minimum number of evaluations in order to contribute to the sector analysis</li> <li>▪ The dashboard will enable the ability to view overall sector trends and the aggregate impact of libraries, as well as filter results by State, region, socio-economic status, user demographics, programs and other custom classifiers</li> <li>▪ Culture Counts will input and update data on a quarterly basis from inception to enable participating libraries and PLA to access and get value from insights and learnings throughout the project</li> </ul>
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Culture Counts will provide a strategic alignment matrix to show how outcome metrics for use in the project align with National Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries, the CDN outcomes framework, project outcome, strategic community plans and other relevant research.</li> <li>▪ This will ensure that all data collected can be clearly reported against the achievement of important sector objectives</li> </ul>
FEEDBACK & COMMUNICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Feedback from participating libraries may be requested on an ongoing basis, with a formal feedback survey delivered at the end of the annual project period</li> <li>▪ PLA will communicate data and learnings generated by the group to the broader library database periodically throughout the project</li> </ul>

## SECURITY INFORMATION

---

Libraries do not need to install any programs or software in order to participate. The Culture Counts platform is cloud based and the databases are cryptographically secure to the standards of industry best-practice.

Culture Counts does not require access to private library data through the SIP2 protocol. A survey will be provided to capture input/output data such as lending statistics for use in big-data analysis.

Where Culture Counts collects or facilitates data collection in the public domain, data is anonymous by default and not linked with people's real identities. The privacy requirements applied to all subscribers of the system are detailed in the Culture Counts Privacy Policy at:

<https://culturecounts.cc/support/docs/policies-and-guidelines/privacy-policy>

## OTHER DETAILS

---

Each participating library will contribute a total of \$2,000 to take part in this year-long nation-wide data collection initiative. This covers all costs, including:

- A Culture Counts subscription, including easy to use survey tools, unlimited evaluations, and real-time results
- Survey templates containing outcome measures developed and tested with the library sector
- Onboarding and evaluation guidance from Culture Counts client managers
- Quarterly webinar sessions to discuss evaluation best practice, share data insights and provide feedback
- Access to individual and nationally benchmarked reporting outputs
- Ability to view sector trends and insights via a big data dashboard

To view an example library perceptions and outcomes survey in the Culture Counts platform, please scan the QR code.



## GET INVOLVED

---

Please express your interest by completing the registration form - <https://culturecounts.cc/s/PLA19>, or send us an email: [contact@culturecounts.cc](mailto:contact@culturecounts.cc) and a Culture Counts team member will contact you to discuss.

Culture Counts will provide a letter of agreement to interested libraries, including full terms and conditions and data sharing requirements.

The project will run for one year from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020. All Culture Counts subscriptions will run for a 12-month period from date of sign-up.

PLA and Culture Counts encourage a diverse mix of libraries from around Australia to take part in this exciting initiative, with the extensive data collected generating broad sector trends and many valuable insights into library impact.

***We look forward to hearing from you!***