

Reading Public Library

Program Policy

Reviewed and Approved 11/20/2023

Reading Public Library (RPL) offers programs intended to meet the informational, educational, and recreational needs of a diverse community. Its programming reflects equitable outreach and promotes a culture of inclusion. RPL will solicit community suggestions and feedback to create community responsive library programs.

RPL provides programs to support each individual's journey and does not place a value on one customer's needs or preferences over another's. RPL upholds principles of intellectual freedom and supports the rights of individuals to read, speak, view, access information, and exchange points of view, even though the content may be controversial, unorthodox, or unacceptable to others. Approval of a program does not constitute an endorsement of the program content or the views expressed by presenters or participants.

Program Selection and Design

The responsibility for programming at RPL rests with the Director, who administers programming under the authority of the Board of Trustees. The Director, in turn, delegates the authority for program development and management to appropriate departmental staff.

Library staff select program presenters from local, regional, and national resources. Community volunteers with skills and experiences who are interested in presenting or leading a program are welcome. Program presenters working alone with children must provide copies of their PA Criminal History and PA Child Abuse Clearances.

Criteria for program selection and design include (but are by no means limited to):

- How a program advances RPL's mission, vision, and values
- How a program corresponds with RPL's service area demographics
- How a program values and supports a culturally diverse community
- How a program can strengthen community connections, community programs, exhibitions or events
- Appropriateness of program content for group presentation to the intended audience
- Relevancy / Demand / Interest of content
- Accuracy and timeliness of program information and content
- Presenter background/qualifications in content area
- Cost considerations, staffing resources, and availability of program space

Types of Library programs include, but are not limited to:

- Book discussions
- Storytimes/storytelling
- Family literacy programs
- Author visits/readings
- Artistic and music performances
- Film showings
- Demonstrations and workshops
- Instructional classes/training sessions
- Lectures and presentations
- Exhibits and associated programs
- Community forums
- Library tours and orientations

Book Clubs and Author Visitation

RPL may schedule author presentations or hold book clubs to facilitate the public discussion of an author's work. Books clubs and author presentations may be organized based on reading level, age, or themes. RPL may decline selecting books with titles or covers that are not appropriate for a public library serving all age groups. If selected, marketing of that program may be designed to be viewable by all ages.

Local authors, authors whose works are relevant to the established collection, and those who will likely prove of reasonable interest to the patron base will be considered. Visiting authors should work within RPL's established collection development policies to have one copy of their work available in the collection before their event.

Program Guidelines

RPL supports free and open access to information and ideas as stated in the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to View Statement of the American Library Association.

- Library programs are free and open to the public, including non-residents and non-cardholders.
- RPL presents programs for various age groups, cultures, backgrounds, and interest groups. Programs may target a general audience or be tailored and/or limited to an age-specific audience.
- RPL reserves the right not to schedule a program and/or to cancel a program that does not meet programming objectives, due to weather, low registration, absence of the presenter, or for any other reason. Cancelled programs may or may not be rescheduled.
- RPL may co-sponsor programs with entities whose mission and goals are compatible.
- Marketing for RPL programs must be approved by RPL's staff before distribution.
- RPL will use the same criteria in all program selection whether the idea come from staff or the public.
- Sale of books/CDs/artwork by authors/performers/artists is permitted as part of a Library program when arranged and approved in advance by the Director. Presenters are encouraged to donate 10% of the proceeds to benefit the Reading Public Library Foundation. Programs may not used for commercial, religious, or partisan purposes or the solicitation of business. Presenters are responsible for promoting and marketing their work and handling the monetary transactions involved.
- Library staff who present programs do so as part of their regular job and not as outside contractors.
- RPL will make every attempt to accommodate all who wish to attend a program. However, in some instances RPL may require signed waivers, limit attendance, or utilize advanced registration.
- Patrons attending programs, whether virtual or in person, are expected to adhere to all RPL policies, and failure to do so may result in the patron's immediate removal from the program and/or the Library.

Requests for Reconsideration

The Library Board considers all materials selected under this policy to be protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. If a patron claims that a particular item is not constitutionally protected, the burden of proof rests with the patron.

The Board of Trustees recognizes the right of individuals to question library programming. Whenever a patron objects to the presence or absence of any library program, the complaint will be given consideration. The patron will be able to obtain a "Request for Reconsideration " form at any library location. Reasons for exclusion or removal must be clearly outlined on this form. This completed form will be reviewed by a committee comprised of the Executive Director, two staff members, and two Board of Trustee members. After reviewing the Request for Reconsideration and reviewing the item in question the committee will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees will vote to determine the actions, if any that are to be taken. This decision is final. A decision will be made regarding the program within a reasonable amount of time. A written response with reasons for the decision will be given to the patron. Programs subject to question shall not be canceled until final action on the complaint.