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ONTARIO

QUEBEC

## Lending Libraries Across Ontario!

Lending libraries are a growing phenomenon across North America. In this section we highlight some interesting examples of lending libraries in Ontario and Quebec.

### 4 Ease into Leisure Kits LONDON, ON

The London Public Library and Age-Friendly London collaborated to create the Ease into Leisure kits: activity kits that are specifically designed for people with physical limitations. Kits include ergonomically designed gardening sets, large print games, and arts and crafts activity sets. The activity sets can be used at the library or can be reserved and delivered to those who are interested. All kits are housed at the central

library and are distributed to local libraries for easy pick-up or delivery. The kits have been used by people of all ages who may have accessibility challenges and specifically allow older adults to continue old hobbies or start new ones ([Wallace, 2019](#)).



### 5 Outdoor Gear Library OTTAWA, ON

The Ottawa Outdoor Gear Library is a community initiative passionate about health equality, outdoor leisure time, and safe access to a clean environment. Launched in 2021, they have grown to over 800 members and counting. The Gear Library hopes to overcome barriers experienced by low-income, marginalized communities when accessing nature-based experiences and recreation, while also promoting the mental and physical benefits of the outdoors. Thus, they have sports equipment available and provide a list of desired items for donation that have been identified as needed by the community. Gear drives are held to promote donations and individuals can also donate items in person ([“Ottawa Outdoor Gear Library \(OOGLE\)”, n.d.](#)).





# Findings & Recommendations

The following section includes findings and recommendations from the Lending Library Project and is meant to inform future projects that are geared towards making seniors recreation more accessible, mobile and autonomous.

1

## 1. Identifying the existing knowledge and ability levels of the target population before deciding which exercise equipment and programs to include in the lending libraries will promote more active participation, as people will feel like the program is designed with them in mind.

Lending libraries should provide items that can be used by people of different abilities and strength levels. Workshops that introduce and teach good practices of lending library equipment give seniors the confidence and knowledge of how to use materials effectively and encourage equipment usage ([Cress et al, 2006](#)).

**TIP:** Identifying the existing knowledge and ability levels of the target population before deciding which exercise equipment and programs to include in the lending libraries will promote more active participation, as people will feel like the program is designed with them in mind.

It is helpful to have take-home resources to walk users through exactly how to use the library items. Many of the WoodGreen seniors suggested that the library should provide hard-copy resources like pamphlets or brochures that have information on how to use the item and some sample exercises to remind people how to use them.

## What we heard:

*“We need hard copies of written material for information purposes and use”*

*“[My ideal vision for the lending library is to have] items for all different ability levels, like how we learned seated exercises with the balls and bands”*

*“I like that there are different bands for what you’re doing, the different colours are different difficulties”*

*“I would like to see something to take home (an exercise booklet) things to do that you can do at home, added to the Lending Library”*





## 2

# Embed social opportunities in lending libraries



By stocking the library with dumbbells, resistance bands and more, the Lending Library Project sought to connect seniors experiencing isolation as a result of the pandemic with opportunities for physical activity, social connection and mental health improvements. The Lending Library embraced a holistic perspective health by focusing on creating opportunities for emotional and mental health that are tailored to the individual.

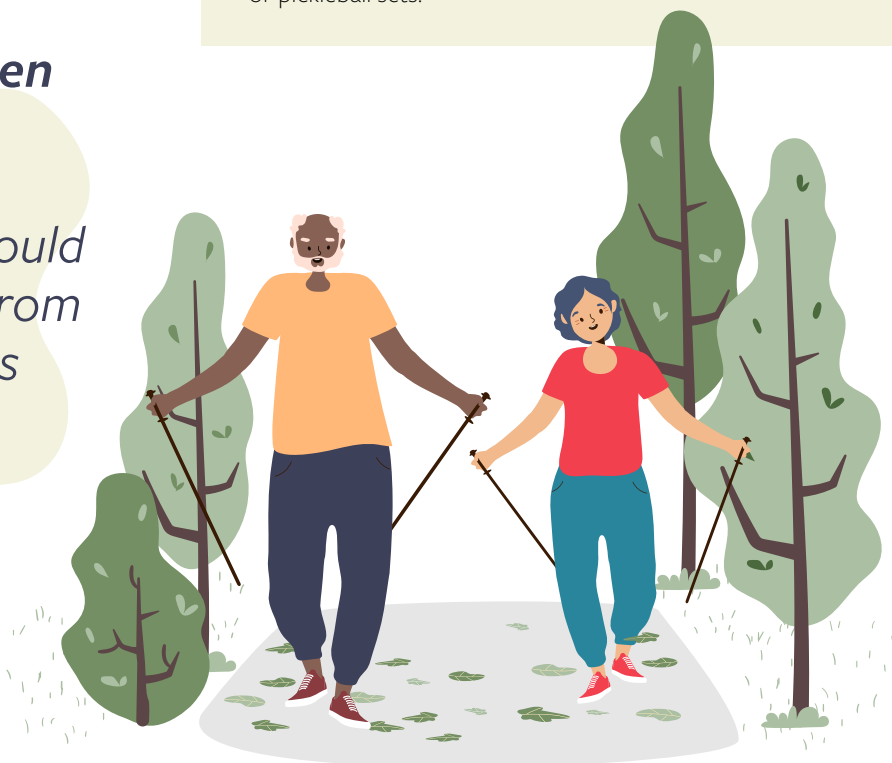
For individuals who are self-isolating or house bound, WoodGreen's Senior Active Living Coordinators would connect with them to offer a personal delivery of materials from the Lending Library. The ability to use the library's materials on their own schedule allowed many seniors to connect with each other outside of WoodGreen's regular scheduled activity times.

Many seniors who used the Lending Library reported that their favorite part of the program was being involved in Nordic pole walks or joining the weekly Ball and Band workshops; many even requested for there to be more in-person and online workshops.

It is helpful to have take-home resources to walk users through exactly how to use the library items. Many of the WoodGreen seniors suggested that the library should provide hard-copy resources like pamphlets or brochures that have information on how to use the item and some sample exercises to remind people how to use them.

**TIP:** Lending Libraries should provide opportunities for users to use the equipment together in classes, social groups, and/or events. Lending Libraries should also consider providing multi-player games or activities for people to borrow and use together like badminton sets, lawn bowling, nature exploration kits or pickleball sets.

**55%** of WoodGreen senior participants who were surveyed reported that they would continue to borrow from the Lending Library as an opportunity to be more social.



3

## Provide translated materials and accommodate for diverse needs



One of the main ways seniors learned about the Lending Library was through direct outreach from their Senior Active Living Coordinator who provided a personalized invite to the Balls & Bands workshop.

The WoodGreen Lending Library was designed to minimize any barriers to access by creating long lending periods of 3 months and having minimal paperwork (1-page) for users to complete. All materials provided were translated to their spoken language with support of a local translation service.

A barrier many seniors experience is simply in knowing the Lending Library's existence.

**TIP:** Future lending library programs should organize workshops with direct promotional outreach to share information on new services and equipment.

**22%** of seniors who participated in one of the Lending Library workshops said they had not used the program yet because they were previously unaware of it.



## Making Use of Technology

During the pandemic, many people became more comfortable using technology and attending programs virtually. Many of WoodGreen's seniors expressed that they would like to have more opportunities to participate in programs or exercise from home using materials from the Lending Library.

36% of surveyed seniors said that they would borrow equipment from the Lending Library to attend virtual exercise classes at home.

**TIP:** Future Lending Libraries should acknowledge the benefits of virtual programs by allowing users to participate in workshops online and providing online resources, like exercise videos users can watch on their own time. Technology devices may also be useful additions to lending libraries.

**36%** of surveyed seniors said that they would borrow equipment from the Lending Library to attend *virtual exercise classes at home.*



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