

AskAway Actions & Achievements 2024

Key Numbers from 2024

- A mid-sized institution saved \$80,000 by participating in AskAway instead of offering a comparable service alone. Overall, the post-secondary sector avoided \$2.2 million.
- AskAway is open 7 days a week, including most evenings until 9pm Pacific. Each week, students, instructors, and researchers have access to 235 staff hours of live, online help.
- Students and other users initiated 30,671 chat sessions.
- 75% of students (23,013 chats) who used AskAway were helped by a service provider from another library when their home librarians were not available.
- More than half of AskAway users chose the service because they were at home or off-campus.
- 94% of users said they are likely to visit the service again.
- In July 2024, 45 service providers attended a lunch and learn from the UBC Digital Tattoo Team to learn about supporting students using GenAI in their research.

The value of AskAway

- Expanded access to research help.
- Convenient, low-barrier, online.
- Skilled and connected community.
- Local and provincial cost-savings.

Learn more about AskAway's value, vision, and priorities:

<https://bceln.ca/services/learning-support/askaway/action-planning>

Quotes from AskAway users

- “What a great service! I needed help on a Sunday night, and I’m so impressed this was available.” Camosun College faculty / staff

- “I like that the service is anonymous for both the librarian and the user. It helps avoid anxiety barriers that might come up when seeking help. Thank you!” Okanagan College student
- “Great experience for my first interaction online with the library!” BCIT student

2024 Accomplishments

Established the Commitment Models Review Working Group to address service sustainability. The representative working group used a variety of methods – including surveys, consultation with participating libraries, and analysis of service data – to gather information about how AskAway members experience the commitment models and to learn about possible alternatives from similar consortial services. They will present recommendations to the AskAway Advisory Committee in early 2025.

Administered Year One of Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS) removing barriers funding to hire service providers to staff AskAway and provide administrative support to members. The funding ensured that AskAway maintained service levels in response to ongoing high demand from students.

Collaborated and consulted with local coordinators to implement service enhancements and improve AskAway for students and service providers. These include new guidelines for service providers to respond to patron-reported medical emergencies, promoting AskAway implementation in the new EBSCO User Interface, and improved usage statistics reporting.

On the horizon in 2025...

Addressing service sustainability: The AskAway Advisory Committee will build on the work of the Commitment Models Review Working Group and develop an action plan to address AskAway’s long-term financial, staffing, and support needs.

Implementing PSFS removing barriers funding: Funding will be used to increase service staffing, support sustainability work, and investigate ways to reduce barriers to participation for BC ELN partner libraries and Indigenous-led post-secondary institutions.

Exploring emerging technology: A subcommittee of the Advisory Committee will investigate and make recommendations for emerging technologies to enhance the service.

2024-25 Financials (Projected)

The AskAway budget is approved by the Advisory Committee.

AskAway's 3 revenue streams:

1. Participating libraries service support fees and flexible contributions: \$97,249
2. PSFS Year 1 Removing Barriers Funding: \$15,000
3. BC ELN Contribution: \$12,000

Note: Start of year balance: \$2,980

AskAway's 4 categories of expenditures:

1. Staffing and coordination: \$98,932
2. Software and technology infrastructure: \$15,637
3. Extenuating circumstances: \$1,000
4. Admin, communications, governance: \$845

Note: End of year balance (projected): \$10,815

About and Contact

Learn more about AskAway collaborative chat reference:

<https://bceln.ca/services/learning-support/askaway>

Contact: askaway@bceln.ca