

BCLTA Governance Workbook

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British Columbia
Library Trustees
Association

Welcome to the BCLTA Governance Workbook

Whether you are using this workbook as an individual trustee or as the whole board working with the board chair and library director on governance team-development we commend you for your commitment to building public library governance excellence in your community and across the province.

This workbook and the facilitated British Columbia Library Trustees Association (BCLTA) Governance Workshop have been developed with input and oversight from the BC public library community. Board chairs, trustees, Libraries Branch staff, library-federation managers, workshop facilitators, and library directors are all stakeholders in strong public library governance and have contributed to this workbook.

BCLTA, as the professional association for BC public library trustees, is committed to supporting your governance work. We offer this workbook as just one component to your trustee and board development.

Connect with us and be part of a larger community exploring an abundance of online resources, community connections, and other development opportunities to fit your unique governance needs.

We are here for you!

BCLTA Board of Directors and staff

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABCPLD	Association of BC Public Library Directors
BCLA	BC Library Association
BCLC	BC Libraries Cooperative
BCLTA	BC Library Trustees Association
CFLA	Canadian Federation of Library Associations
Libraries Branch	Refers to the department, in the Ministry of Education, that is responsible for the oversight and implementation of the Library Act
Partners	Refers to the BC Public Library Partners. The ABCPLD, BCLA, BCLC, and BCLTA work together as the Partners to advocate for funding and resources for BC public libraries.
SOFI	Statement of Financial Information

Introduction

About BCLTA

The [British Columbia Library Trustees Association](#) (BCLTA), founded in 1977, is the professional association of the trustees governing public libraries across British Columbia.

BCLTA is committed to supporting trustees and boards with common issues of common concern and to representing the shared provincial interests of public library boards.

BCLTA executes its mandate through

- Supporting trustees to engage with board development. We support effective public library governance. We do this by expanding the reach of trustee-orientation and board-development resources, by convening provincial discussions and meetings, and by connecting trustees with trustees for peer networking.
- Representing trustees. We amplify the voices of trustees and bring public library board needs to provincial, strategic, and BC Public Library Partners' initiatives. We ensure that the governance of public libraries (all types from across the province) is integral to all discussions for advancing the development of public libraries across the province.
- Connecting with all trustees. We are the recognized representatives of public library trustees to the provincial government, to other provincial organizations, to library associations across the country, and to the BC Public Library Partners. We want to know the trustees we represent.

About the BCLTA Governance Workshop

The BCLTA Governance Workshop is an overview of the roles and responsibilities of public library trustees in British Columbia and effective governance team practices. The program is delivered by volunteer facilitators who have experience with public library governance.

As you will see in the next section, there are different types of public libraries in BC and this makes a difference to how trustees come to be on a board and to the funding relationship with the local, regional, and provincial government. Additionally, public library boards may

have differing priorities across the province depending on local demographics, economies, and community needs. As with all BCLTA work, the workshop will focus on areas of common concern and issues while acknowledging these differences. The facilitators will encourage workshop discussions informed by and rooted in local needs and situations.

The information covered in a workshop, based on participant goals and needs, may include

- role and responsibilities of the board
- role of the chair and the library director¹
- strategic planning
- policy development
- assessment
- financial responsibilities
- board development
- succession planning
- relationship building and advocacy
- funding and fundraising
- effective meetings

By the end of the day participants should understand the role of BC public library boards, the role of the individual trustee, and the ways in which trustees and the board, working as a team with the library director, make a difference to the public library and the diverse communities they serve.

The Workbook

The workbook is reviewed and updated annually and is meant to be dynamic and flexible for your learning needs. There are items in this workbook that address common board practices, but not all are mandatory. For example, some public library boards are involved in fund development but this is not a requirement in the Library Act for public library boards.

If you are using this workbook for a BCLTA facilitated workshop, your facilitator may decide to use different exercises or to spend more time on a certain section based on knowing in advance the needs of the group.

If you are using this workbook on your own or as part of a governance team exercise, we encourage you to use this as a guide for the discussions and subsequent actions that your

¹ The Library Act refers to "Chief Librarian". This workbook uses "library director", which is the common term used in the BC public library community and is used by the [Association of BC Public Library Directors](#).

board needs and to also consult with your library director and the resources available through the BCLTA website.

The ongoing improvements to the workshop and the workbook will benefit from your input. Please share your experience, feedback, and any business-case scenarios or activities with BCLTA so that we may include your input in the workbook updates.

The Responsibility for Trustee Orientation

Trustee orientation and ongoing learning and development is a shared responsibility between the trustee, the board chair, and the library director.

While the [Library Act](#) establishes provincial expectations for public library governance roles and responsibilities, each public library board is as unique as the community it serves, the library it governs, and the trustees themselves.

BCLTA, working with trustees and library directors from across the province, along with the Libraries Branch, developed the Trustee Orientation Checklist that can be tailored to support the unique needs of individual trustee-onboarding experiences, regardless of the location, size, or type of their public library.

The checklist can be found on [the BCLTA website](#).

The Governance Workshop has been designed with the assumption that participants have already received an orientation from their board chair and library director, which would include the following about their board, library, and community:

- organizational structure
- library tour and high-level overview of services
- trustee and board responsibilities
- accountability to the Library Act and grant reporting to the Libraries Branch
- strategic plan
 - assessment tools, reports, and indicators of success
- role of the board chair
- role of the library director
- current policies and policy development
- role of the board in the community and at the library
- role of the library staff in the community
- library partnerships and agreements
- community demographics, goals, Official Community Plan
- relationship with local government

- relationship with other key stakeholders
- funding sources and fund development
- budget development and oversight
- human resources
 - staffing overview
 - library-director contract, evaluation, and support
 - collective agreement

Public Libraries in Context

Background: BC Public Libraries

BC first established legislation for public libraries in 1891, acknowledging that public libraries are an important community asset that make a difference to the social and economic development of the province. Today there are 71 public libraries and 6 library federations.

The history of BC public libraries is vibrant, diverse, and reflective of community expectations for equitable access to the tools and resources for learning, leisure, and participation in the benefits of social and technological change.

The Library Book: A History of Service to British Columbia (2011) by Dave Obee is a good overview, with fascinating photos, of the rich history of BC public libraries. As well, your library may have its own history page on the library's website or an archive of photos, annual reports, and board meeting minutes for you to review.

Public libraries are established and governed by the Library Act and its regulations. Library boards are separate corporate entities from local government. Boards have powers and duties granted by the Act (except for integrated library systems). Local governments typically provide the majority of public library funding and are key stakeholders in each library and in the provincial public library system.

The Province of British Columbia, through the Libraries Branch in the Ministry of Education, administers the Act, supports province-wide services, and allocates funding for the improvement and extension of local services.

Public libraries, staff, and trustees are further supported by service partners and professional associations. These include the British Columbia Library Association, the BC Libraries Cooperative, and the Association of BC Public Library Directors.

The Libraries Branch - Province of British Columbia

The Libraries Branch recognizes the valuable contribution of community members who serve on library boards. Board members play an important oversight and strategic role in ensuring strong community-centred public services.

The Libraries Branch in the Ministry of Education is responsible for:

- Administering the Library Act
- Encouraging the extension and use of public library service through British Columbia
- Supporting improvements in the public library system
- Allocating funding and managing related reporting

The Branch strengthens and supports the public library system by providing strategic leadership, professional advice, funding, and coordinating province-wide programs and shared services. It is guided by its strategic plan, *Inspiring Libraries, Connected Communities* (2016), available through the Ministry of Education's website. This plan was created with input from BCLTA, the BCLA, the ABCPLD, and the BCCLC.

The Branch plays a supportive role in helping boards understand their governance responsibilities (as they relate to the Library Act and other provincial government legislation). For example, boards are responsible for ensuring that libraries account for the use of provincial funding through an annual reporting process known as the Accountability Framework. The Branch may also provide guidance to administrators, all levels of government, and other stakeholders on governance, legislative compliance and the Accountability Framework.

The Branch liaises with other ministries on library-related issues and works with provincial and national organizations on emerging trends and issues in library services.

Tools and resources for library administrators, trustees and library directors are available through the Branch's website.

Provincial programs are made possible through collaboration and partnerships; some examples of well-used, provincially-supported programs in your communities include interlibrary loan, the National Network for Equitable Library Service (accessible library materials for the print disabled) and the BC OneCard program.

Annually, each public library provides detailed reports to the provincial government, through the Libraries Branch, on finances, facilities, hours, staffing levels, and use of library collections, services, etc. Ask your board chair or library director to provide you with a high-level review of your public library's statistics.

Through an internet-based survey, the Branch collects annual statistics from each library system. This data is published annually online through the BC Data Catalogue. A statistical and financial information resource, detailed public library statistics are available from 2002 to present. These statistics indicate the use, collections, services, programs, financials and facilities of each public library in the province from 2002 to present. Trustees may be interested in receiving reports to learn more about service trends and comparisons with other library systems.

See the Libraries Branch online to learn more about how it supports provincial programs such as the Summer Reading Club and Resource Sharing.

Library Act

The Library Act and its regulations provide for the establishment and operation of public libraries in British Columbia.

There are four types of public libraries in BC: municipal libraries, regional library districts, public library associations, and integrated public library systems. The powers and duties of each type of library board vary slightly depending on the type of library. Library federations are established to support regional sharing and services.

The act outlines how a public library is established, how its board is appointed, the term of office for library board members, the minimum structures of a library board, the minimum number of required meetings, the library board's financial accountability requirements, and the general powers and duties of the library board.

The act also outlines the powers and duties of the chief librarian and mandates that borrowing materials must be free of charge to residents of a library service area.

Under the act, the Minister responsible for public libraries must appoint a librarian as director as part of the public service. The director is responsible, under the direction of the Minister, for administering this act, promoting the improvement and extension of public library service throughout British Columbia, and for apportioning funds to library boards and other public bodies approved by the Legislature (Library Act s.51(1-3)).

The Act recognizes the important governance and financial role of library trustees in supporting the operations of libraries on behalf of communities.

As a trustee you may wish to also become familiar with other related legislation and policies: Financial Information Act, Freedom of Information and Privacy Act, Local Government Act, Community Charter, employment standards, workplace safety and human rights code.

Types of Public Libraries in BC

Municipal Libraries

Municipal libraries are established under Part 2 of the Library Act. They are established following the passage of a municipal bylaw and are supported primarily by municipal revenues, as well as provincial grants. The board of a municipal library is made up of five to 13 members appointed by the mayor and council. The mayor or a delegated councillor serves a one-year, renewable term and other non-council members serve renewable, two-year terms for a maximum of eight years.

Regional Library Districts

Regional libraries are established under Part 3 of the Library Act and may be formed following a written agreement or plebiscite. Regional library districts are supported by tax-revenues from each member local government based on a formula outlined in section 24 of the Library Act. The board of a regional library district is made up of one elected official from each constituent municipality council and/or regional district electoral area. There are currently three regional library systems: Fraser Valley Regional Library, Okanagan Regional Library, and Vancouver Island Regional Library.

Public Library Associations

Public library associations are governed by Part 4 of the Library Act. The Library Act stipulates that no new public library associations will be established. Membership in a public library association is open to all residents of the locality served by the library. The board is made up of five to nine members of the association elected by the members to serve a one- or two-year term to a maximum of eight consecutive years. Municipal councils and/or regional district boards providing an operating grant may also appoint a representative to the board.

Integrated Public Library Systems

Integrated public library systems are governed by Part 6 of the Library Act, which also dictates that no new libraries of this form will be established. An integrated public library system is an organization of regional districts, or a regional district that provides and maintains a library system. The Cariboo Regional District Library and the Thompson-Nicola Regional District Library system are the only two integrated systems in BC.

Library Federations

Library federations are established under Part 5 of the Library Act. They are organizations of neighbouring libraries that work together to provide common services and to share resources. Each library federation is governed by a board consisting of representatives from the participating library boards.

- IslandLink Library Federation is the newest federation and was established in 2008. It has four member libraries.
- Kootenay Library Federation was established in 2006. It has 20 member libraries.
- Northwest Library Federation was established in 2006. It has seven member libraries and works closely with the Coast Mountain College Library.
- North Central Library Federation was established in 2007. It has 10 member libraries.
- North East Library Federation was established in 2007. It has seven member libraries.
- Public Library InterLINK was established in 1994 (in 1975 as the Greater Vancouver Library Federation). InterLINK has 18 member libraries.

Other Libraries in BC

Other types of libraries in BC include academic libraries (college and university), school libraries (K-12), and special libraries (government and corporate). While these libraries are not governed by the Library Act, they influence and inform public libraries through shared association work, resources, advocacy, and professional development.



Activity: Public Library Structure and Connections

The facilitator may provide a breakout exercise where participants will build a typical library organizational chart that includes

- community
- board
- library director
- other staff

The chart may include further additions to provide context:

- Friends of the Library
- library foundation
- local government
- Libraries Branch
- union
- key partners or other funders

This activity is meant to be exploratory and to generate thinking about organizational structure, relationship building, and roles and responsibilities.

Core Values

Many public libraries include value statements, along with vision and mission statements, in their strategic-planning documents. Some of these statements will include language regarding intellectual freedom, privacy, inclusivity, diversity, access, and equity. Many will have statements that are reflective of that specific library system or community.

Core values refer to those that are commonly held to be of long-lasting importance to Canadian libraries. These core values are shared by library associations, discussed at library conferences, and are foundational to library education.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations' "Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries" below is an often cited as an example of how the library community expresses a core value

The [Canadian Federation of Library Associations](#) recognizes and values the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the guarantor of the fundamental freedoms in Canada of conscience and religion; of thought, belief, opinion, and expression; of peaceful assembly; and of association.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations supports and promotes the universal principles of intellectual freedom as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which include the interlocking freedoms to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

In accordance with these principles, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms that all persons in Canada have a fundamental right, subject only to the Constitution and the law, to have access to the full range of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, and to express their thoughts publicly. Only the courts may abridge free expression rights in Canada.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms further that libraries have a core responsibility to support, defend and promote the universal principles of intellectual freedom and privacy.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations holds that libraries are a key institution in Canada for rendering expressive content accessible and affordable to all. Libraries are essential gateways for all persons living in Canada to advance themselves through literacy, lifelong learning, social engagement, and cultural enrichment.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and facilitate access to constitutionally protected expressions of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, including those

which some individuals and groups consider unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, in accordance with their mandates and professional values and standards, libraries provide, defend and promote equitable access to the widest possible variety of expressive content and resist calls for censorship and the adoption of systems that deny or restrict access to resources.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and foster free expression and the right to safe and welcoming places and conditions. To this end, libraries make available their public spaces and services to individuals and groups without discrimination.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and defend privacy in the individual's pursuit of expressive content. To this end, libraries protect the identities and activities of library users except when required by the courts to cede them.

Furthermore, in accordance with established library policies, procedures and due process, libraries resist efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups.

Library employees, volunteers and employers as well as library governing entities have a core responsibility to uphold the principles of intellectual freedom in the performance of their respective library roles.

Examples of value statements include:

BC Library Association's [*BCLA Values Statement*](#)

BCLTA's [*Resolution on the Rights of Transgender, Gender Variant, and Two-Spirited People*](#)

Canadian Federation of Library Associations' [*Position Statement on Diversity and Inclusion*](#)

Canadian Federation of Library Associations' [*Position Statement—Indigenous Knowledge in Canada's Copyright Act*](#)

Canadian Federation of Library Associations' [*Open Access for Canadian Libraries Position Statement*](#)



Activity: Core Values in Action

The following scenario discussions are meant to be exploratory and to generate thinking about core values. The discussions are not meant to resolve the scenario, as this would require more information, more time, and more specific scenario circumstances.

The following are sample scenarios but your group may wish to discuss a different scenario:

1. A controversial speaker has booked a meeting room, and the board has the following information:
 - a. While event bookings are operational, the library director was concerned that this booking had extraordinary risks and let the board know of the booking in advance.
 - b. Municipal staff are concerned about potential risk to public property and any other costs (cleanup, policing).
 - c. Library staff and the union have expressed safety concerns.
 - d. There has been both negative and positive commentary in the local news and on social media.
 - e. An influential municipal councillor has phoned the library director and the board chair to express concern.
 - f. Policy about room rentals is ambiguous and does not address criteria for denying a room-rental request or for cancelling an event.

2. A parenting group has requested the removal of a popular young-adult novel series.
 - a. The group filed a formal request for the removal from the collection.
 - b. The group will be attending the public portion of this week's board meeting and, as per board policy, will be given time to speak to the request.
 - c. There is no policy regarding the process or criteria for removal of items from the collection.
 - d. There is no known record of this type of request coming before the board before.
 - e. Practice has been that the library director addresses and resolves collection concerns.
 - f. The board chair and the library director have called the board together to discuss the application, risks, and benefits of the Statement on Intellectual Freedom on this situation.

Public Library Discussions

The following is a brief overview of recent and emerging trends in public library discussions.

Funding

Funding for public libraries is discussed as an issue at both the local and provincial level. Each BC public library system receives a portion of their operating budget from local government—for example, from municipal or regional-district bodies—and from the provincial government through grants distributed by the Libraries Branch.

Ask your board chair and library director to review your library's revenue and expenses at the appropriate level of detail for your board work. This review should include

- the provincial statistics found through the Libraries Branch, so that you understand where your library's funding and operating budget is compared to similar library systems
- your library's most recent **Statement of Financial Information (SOFI)**
- the most recent library financial report to the board

Additional revenue streams for public libraries include

- non-governmental grants
- extraordinary or non-recurring governmental grants, such as for capital projects or specific government-funded programs
- sponsorships
- donations and legacy bequests
- fundraising, such as through a campaign or event, a library foundation, or a Friends of the Library group
- operationally generated revenue, such as through room rentals and library fines (this varies per individual library procedures and policy)
- service agreements (this varies per individual library procedures and policy)

Access and Connectivity

Access to the digital world is critical to participating in and benefitting from the resources and information available online, such as distance learning, government information, and employment opportunities. Increasingly, some resources and information are only available in digital format. Connectivity is critical in the digital age, yet adequate broadband is in short supply and/or cost-prohibitive, particularly in rural or remote locations. Most libraries

are faced with both rising costs and rising demand. ***Public libraries have been significant in bridging the digital divide and can continue to do so with government commitment to improving connectivity for public libraries and the communities they serve.***

Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity

BC public libraries are unique spaces. They are often the only public space and service in the community that is free for everyone. Many public libraries are reaching out to underserved and underrepresented populations to better understand how to provide equitable access to the library and to better support, work with, and truly include the diversity found in the community. This is an important issue for public libraries as staff and trustees navigate policy, space use, costs such as programs and collections, and the strategic priorities of the library, the community, and the province.

Reconciliation

Many public libraries across BC are supporting the reconciliation efforts of their community. The BCLTA website highlights resources and information for board reconciliation discussions and actions. It is important for trustees to be aware of the significance of reconciliation to local First Nation communities, to Indigenous peoples, and to the government.

In regards to government priorities please note:

- The [Union of BC Municipalities](#) offers [*Reconciliation Opportunities for Local Governments*](#), an online resource.
- The provincial government has reconciliation as a top priority and has included reconciliation in the mandate letters of the cabinet ministers. In October 2019, the provincial government released a [*New Path Forward*](#).

In 2017 the Canadian Federation of Library Associations, of which BCLTA is a member, published the [*Truth and Reconciliation Report and Recommendations*](#) as a call to action for libraries and archives across the country. The report can be found on the federation's website along [with other resources](#).

Space Use and Facility Planning

Increasing demand is being put on the use of public library space across the province. The public library is a welcoming community space and is used as

- a place for sharing and learning
- a centre of technology and creativity

- a refuge
- a door into the community for newcomers
- an event venue for local authors, artists, and business people
- a gathering place where accurate information, privacy, intellectual freedom, and curiosity is valued

This is to be celebrated. *As well, it means that public library boards need to have vision, policy, and financial plans for providing oversight of the space and for ensuring that the space continues to meet the evolving needs of the community.*

Community Engagement

Public library staff and trustees proactively engaging with the community they serve and represent is not a new trend or issue in Canada. Throughout the history of Canadian public libraries there are stellar examples of boards and staff reaching out to better understand how to meet the needs of the community. For BC public library trustees, knowing the Official Community Plan of your community and establishing a future-focused relationship with your local government officials will help align your library's community efforts with that of your local government.

The national [Working Together Project](#) (2004–2008) shifted expectations as to how community engagement—or, more specifically, community development—could be more inclusive of people traditionally underserved by the public library and how services could be improved by working with community and forming collaborative outcome-focused community partnerships.

Increasingly, public library boards are looking at their strategic planning, policy development, and assessment through a community-engagement or a community-development lens. This, along with staff initiatives—such as working with community partners and underserved populations to develop services, programs, collections and space—is strengthening the role and relevance of public libraries to their communities.



Activity: Your Thoughts on Recent and Emerging Trends in Public Library Discussions

You may want to form small groups of two to three participants to discuss a public library trend or issue. Each group may be asked to present a summary of their discussion back out to the larger group.

These discussions are meant to be exploratory and to generate thinking about trends in public library discussions. Participants are encouraged to take these discussions back to their library board for further information, learning, and possible board action.

The following are sample questions. Your facilitator may provide additional or different questions.

Identify a trend or issue in your community and discuss the following questions:

1. What does this trend or issue mean to you as an individual trustee?
2. What have you learned about this trend or issue from the media, your board orientation, or other parts of your life?
3. What interests you about this trend or issue? Is it a motivating factor for you in your trustee work?
4. Is this trend or issue a priority for your board?
5. How is this trend or issue impacting your board's strategic priorities, policies, work with local government, or establishment of community partnerships?

The Public Library Board

As noted in the previous section, there are different types of public libraries in BC and this makes a difference to how trustees come to be on a board and to the funding relationship with the local, regional, and provincial government. Additionally, public library boards may have differing priorities across the province depending on local demographics, economies, and community needs. As with all BCLTA work, the Governance Workshop will focus on areas of common concern and common issues while acknowledging differences. The facilitators will encourage workshop discussions informed by and rooted in local needs and situations.

Roles and Responsibilities

The board is the legal authority in the library and is accountable for the organization's resources and activities. Trustees are guardians of a public trust (hence "trustees") to ensure that the library provides relevant, comprehensive, and effective service to the community it serves.

The public library board represents the community in the governance and oversight of the public library. As such, the board

- establishes the strategic direction, budget, and policies of the library
- employs a library director to implement the strategic direction, budget, and policies
- monitors and evaluates the outcomes

The library director

- is the sole direct employee of the board
- is responsible for the execution and management of the organization's operations
- acts as secretary and expert advisor to the board

Governance

An effective board must have a clear understanding of the differences between its role (governance) and the role of its library director (operational management). ***When the board or individual trustees become involved in the operational management of the library they undermine role clarity and lines of authority, which will result in a dysfunctional public library.*** The board's role is to provide direction and oversight, not to manage operations.

Successful boards grant appropriate authority and power to the library director and provide support for the execution and management of the organization's

- mandate (the provision of public library service in accordance with the Library Act and other aspects of the legislative framework that public libraries operate in)
- strategic direction (what needs to be accomplished to meet the board's mission, goals, and objectives)
- policies (the why, who, and how of the work of the library)

Successful boards also recognize the role of the library director in effective governance. The following are found in highly functional library board–library director relationships:

- The library director, as part of the governance team, has an active role in board work and shared leadership with the board chair.
- The library director provides the board with professional advisement, accurate reporting, and shares with the board chair the responsibility for board orientation and development.
- The library director keeps the board in the loop with the information necessary for governance, strategic planning, oversight, and assessment.

Below are some examples of what the board is responsible for (governance) and what the library director is responsible for (execution and management).

Governance	Management
Establishing policies for managing risk and crisis	Troubleshooting a project crisis or representing the library on a municipal crisis-management task force (e.g., forest fires, opioid crisis, anti-poverty)
Establishing a strategic direction and assessment criteria for developing community partnerships so that staff can proceed with authority and support	Developing and working with a partnership agreement

Governance	Management
Ensuring there are protocols for dealing with stakeholder communication and complaints	Mediating a patron or staff situation
Reviewing and assessing regular reports that compare money spent to budget, results achieved to strategic targets, and compliance with financial controls and spending policies	Reviewing an itemized accounting report of project spending



Activity: Role Clarity and Governance

This activity is for prompting discussion about effective practices for establishing and sustaining role clarity and good governance.

For some of the below, depending on the public library, there are overlapping board-trustee and library-director responsibilities, such as participating in community engagement, partnership development, and strategic planning. Discuss the importance of role clarity and what role clarity may look like for overlapping responsibilities.

What	Who
Set high-level strategic directions	
Participate in gathering community feedback	
Meet with key stakeholders, such as the chair of the school board	
Build partnerships for strengthening library services, such as with local government management or other operational leaders of community-based organizations	
Provide expert advisement on library trends for strategic planning	
Develop and manage the process for achieving strategic outcomes	
Set foundational policies, such as a code of conduct	

What	Who
Review policies	
Provide appropriate level of informational background (trends and issues, statistics, proposed budget, financial reports, legislation, correspondence, etc.)	
Manage staff, including recruitment, hiring, and staff development required for meeting strategic direction	
Establish operational policies or procedures	
Support and participate in strategic planning	
Manage the budget	
Manage operations, such as facility needs, space design and use, collections, programming, and information and reader's advisory services	
Evaluate outcomes	

Board Work

The following are the key areas of work that BC public library boards engage with:

- board and trustee development
- effective board meetings
- appointing and supporting the library director
- establishing the strategic direction of the organization, which may include
 - a vision statement
 - the mission or purpose of the public library
 - a strategic plan that describes the goals and objectives of the organization
 - assessment methods
- establishing policies
- oversight and assessment of programs and services
- leading financial oversight, which might include
 - budget development
 - presenting the budget to funders, such as local government
- fund development
- assessing and managing risk to, and the success of, the organization
- advocating on behalf of the library

Board and Trustee Development

Board and trustee development is a circular and ongoing process of succession planning, recruitment, learning, and assessment.

Succession and Recruitment

An effective board is made up of visionary, big-picture-thinking individuals who can contribute skills, experience, and time to the library. For many boards, whether they be public sector, non-profit, or corporate, a succession plan that includes recruitment strategies, criteria, and a rigorous application process is foundational to board development.

As established by the Library Act, municipal-library boards, public-library-association boards, and regional-library boards all have different mechanisms for board recruitment and appointment.

Municipal-library-board trustees are recruited through the public library or the city-clerk office (applications are normally managed by the city-clerk) and are appointed by a motion in council.

Some municipal public library boards participate in the process at various points depending on established practice. The Surrey Libraries and West Vancouver Memorial Library have prospective-trustee information packages on their websites that are a recruitment tool, an explanation of the municipal board appointment process, and a head start on trustee orientation and development.

- Surrey Libraries, [*Information Package for Prospective Library Trustees*](#)
- West Vancouver Memorial Library, “[**WVML Library Board**](#)” *Information Package and Application Form*.

A public library association board trustee is elected to their terms of office at the annual general meeting. The public library association will have rules for the application process and the Library Act defines who is an eligible candidate. As well, the association board may have appointed representatives from a local government that provides assistance, such as funding, to the association. The Fort St. John Public Library Association annual general meeting [**agendas and minutes**](#), as well as their [*Policies and Procedures Manual*](#), provide a good overview of the process involved in electing trustees to the board.

A regional-library board consists of an appointed representative, who is an elected official, from each municipality and regional district that is a member of the regional library. A review of the Vancouver Island Regional Library’s [**board page**](#) provides insight to the board composition, structure, process, and responsibilities.

Recruitment Trends and Issues

Challenges to board recruitment and appointments across BC may include

- the recruitment and appointment process being removed from current board or public library needs
- community demographics and pressures such as too few available people for community and volunteer work
- historical and systemic barriers for developing a board reflective of the community
- library supporters, who could be prospective trustees, not knowing about public library governance or the application process

All three types of boards across BC can mitigate these challenges by planning for board composition and board development and how it impacts

- board integrity in regards to representing the diversity and needs of the community it services
- board effectiveness for achieving its strategic plan and being mission focused

- organizational sustainability in an environment of social, economic, and technology change

Trends and issues for board recruitment and development include equity, diversity, and inclusion, reconciliation, cultural competency, community development and community engagement, transparency, and access.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Board-level strategies and operational actions are required for ensuring that the often underrepresented have equitable access to being represented to and reflected on the board. This requires purposeful policy, language, and strategic direction that recognizes historical oppression and current discrimination of groups of people whether that be due to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, sexual identities, physical and cognitive abilities, or other outcomes of systemic discrimination and marginalization within our society and organizations.

Reconciliation

Organizations worldwide are embracing policy, programs, and governance structures of reconciliation as they address historical legacies, such as those of civil war or colonial policies, as well as recent problematic practices in policing, health care, and social work. In Canada, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations, of which BCLTA is a member, has published the *Truth and Reconciliation Report and Recommendations*, which provides a framework for how libraries, archives, and institutions of memory should respond to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*.

Cultural Competency

This refers to a board's shared set of attitudes, behaviours, policies, and actions that affect board engagement, staff morale, recruitment, and organizational outcomes. When cultural competency is congruent with the values of embracing diversity and inclusivity, the organization can work more effectively with diverse individuals and groups.

Community Development and Community Engagement

Together, community development and community engagement encompass a variety of approaches and practices from marketing and consultation through to community-led programming and strategic planning. These practices can be a key support to evidence-based decision making, strategic planning, and the overall development of the public library.

Transparency and Access

Increasingly institutions are being purposeful about having policy and practices for access to organizational information and decision making. *This includes posting board agendas, minutes, planning documents, and the process for attending public portions of board meetings to the library website.* As well, it is expected for publicly funded institutions, such as public libraries, to post to their website trustee names and contact information, such as an email address that is boardchair@library.

Learning and Assessment

The BCLTA has, with input from boards and library directors, developed the [Trustee Orientation Checklist](#). This checklist may also serve as a board-development tool to ensure shared understandings of the vision, mission, strategic plan, and ongoing commitment to and engagement with the roles and responsibilities of the board. This checklist can also form the beginnings of a board-assessment tool.

A board-assessment tool should query the level to which the board

- has an accurate and demonstrated understanding of its roles and responsibilities as established by the Library Act
- has an accurate and demonstrated understanding of its roles and responsibilities within the regulatory framework and compliance hierarchy that it operates in as an employer
- is meeting its fiduciary, legal, and financial roles and responsibilities
- has open communications and a collaborative working relationship with the library director through the board chair
- is establishing clear direction through a strategic-planning process
- is providing oversight of the execution of their strategic direction
- is championing the library through relationship building and advocacy
- is being transparent and abiding by effective board process and procedures

All trustees are responsible for working with the board chair for a positive and ongoing board development environment, which may look like any of the following:

- a board development committee
- a portion of every board meeting set aside for discussing issues of importance, such as reconciliation, governance knowledge, or board financial literacy
- attendance at library federation regional conferences, the BC Library Conference, BCLTA forums, or other conferences, workshops, and webinars that are of interest for public library governance

- an annual board retreat that includes strategic planning (or review) and presentations and/or discussions relevant to board needs
- ongoing and annual assessment of board development and board needs

The following are indicators of effective board performance in board and trustee development:

- The board has a sufficient range of expertise and experience to make it an effective governing body.
- The board has an effective process to evaluate its work and to identify what may need to be strengthened in the composition of the board.
- The board communicates to those involved in the process of nominating, appointing, or electing the trustees what characteristics or skills are needed to strengthen board composition.
- The board provides new board members with a thorough orientation.
- The board has a plan or practice for ongoing trustee and board development.



Activity: Your Thoughts on Trustee and Board Development

You may want to form small groups of two to three participants to discuss trustee and board development. Each group may present a summary of their discussion back out to the larger group for further discussion.

These discussions are meant to be exploratory and to generate thinking about what you need to be a successful trustee. Participants are encouraged to take these discussions back to their library board for further information, learning, and possible board action.

The following are sample questions. Your group may have additional or different questions.

1. Is there an issue or change emerging in your community that might inform a learning or development priority for your board?
2. How might your board go about having this learning or development priority addressed?
3. How might your board's learning and development inform your board's strategic priorities, policies, work with local government, or establishment of community partnerships?

Effective Board Meetings

Boards carry out much of their work in meetings. *Effective board meetings happen in the context of the public library's mission, vision, and values.* The meeting agenda reflects the roles and responsibilities of the board, particularly the board's oversight of the strategic plan's implementation.

Importantly, the role of the library director is recognized and respected as an expert advisor to the board for their meeting work. The board chair works in partnership with the library director to ensure that the agenda and supporting materials meet the governance needs of the board.

In-depth discussion and analysis of key issues is not always possible at full board meetings, and so boards often work through committees. Committees have many benefits, such as

- the opportunity for a trustee, who is not the board chair, to chair
- being able to focus on one strategic area, such as developing a plan for stronger board governance, recruiting a new library director, drafting the budget, or developing new policies
- engaging trustees with work that has immediate results or outputs
- developing trustee skills through working closely with subject experts, such as outside consultants or staff
- bringing evidence-based, mission-focused recommendations to the full board for a decision

All committee and board meetings are more effective when

- trustees are familiar with and understand the board policies, by-laws, procedures, and committee terms of references
- meeting material is provided and reviewed in advance
- meeting material is reviewed
- the chair presides and facilitates healthy discussion and decision making
- everyone participates respectfully, listens to understand, and asks questions or comments for clarification and developing shared understanding
- the expert advisement and support from the library director is acknowledged and respected.

The following are indicators of effective board meetings:

- Trustees are familiar with and use the board policies, by-laws, procedures, and committee terms of references for positive meeting outcomes.

- Trustees receive clear and succinct agendas and supporting material sufficiently prior to board and committee meetings.
- A consent agenda is appropriately used (see Use of a Consent Agenda below).
- Trustees demonstrate that they have reviewed the agenda and supporting materials.
- Committee assignments reflect the interests, experience, and skills of the trustees.
- Board and committee meetings are well-organized, productive, and make good use of board members' time.
- In-camera meetings are only used to discuss land, labour, and law.
- The library director provides accurate, timely, and appropriate reports for board oversight, direction, and decision.

Use of a Consent Agenda

The following explanation of a consent agenda is from [BoardEffect \(What is a Consent Agenda for a Board Meeting, 2016\)](#).

A consent agenda is a board meeting practice that groups routine business and reports into one agenda item. The consent agenda can be approved in one action, rather than filing motions on each item separately. Using a consent agenda can save boards anywhere from a few minutes to a half hour. A consent agenda moves routine items along quickly so that the board has time for discussing more important issues.

These items are frequently found in a consent agenda:

- minutes for approval
- financial reports where no strategic direction or decision is required
- program or committee updates where no strategic direction or decision is required
- human resources updates, such as routine staff appointments
- correspondence that is included for information only

Any item can be pulled out of the consent agenda by request.

It is recommended that guidelines for the use of the consent agenda be included in board policy, procedures, or by-laws.



Activity: Effective Board Meetings

This activity is for prompting discussion about effective board meetings.

Review this checklist and then in pairs or as a group discuss these questions.

1. What you would like to see more of, or different, in your public library board meetings?
2. What are ways that you as a trustee can contribute to strengthening your board's meetings?

Checklist for Effective Meetings

- The chair (in some cases the board executive) and the library director work together on the agenda.
- Additions to the agenda can be made at the meeting with the agreement of the board.
- A consent agenda is used.
- Board meetings are appropriate in length to the work that needs to be done.
- The library director is the secretary of the board unless this role is seconded to another individual.
- Board members are responsible for being prepared for the meeting.
- Meeting packages are sent ahead of time to allow sufficient time to review and consider (a minimum of four days).
- Meeting packages only contain material pertinent to the agenda.
- Meeting materials are accurate, appropriate, and timely.
- Meeting materials provide sufficient information for trustees to discuss and make informed decisions.
- Minutes summarize issues and agreed actions clearly and accurately.
- Meetings start and end on time and agendas are adhered to.
- Discussions are concise and focused.
- Trustees are encouraged to participate and the chair seeks equitable input.
- Agendas include issues that are appropriate and important.
- Conflict is dealt with constructively and respectfully.

- Decisions are made with clear reference to the vision, mission, values, and strategic goals.
- Fiduciary responsibility and financial acumen are apparent in board discussions and decisions.
- Action items and responsibilities are clearly understood and recorded in the minutes.
- The board refrains from discussion of operations.

Appointing and Supporting the Library Director

Appointing

Perhaps the most significant decision a board makes is who to appoint as their operational leader.

In doing this work an effective board will

- be prepared by having already discussed and set direction for organizational development and succession planning
- be aware of labour regulations and practices
- do an environmental scan
 - recent BC library-director hiring
 - local public sector hiring (process and compensation packages)
 - library-director job descriptions
- develop a recruitment and hiring plan
 - who to work with (trustee roles, outside expert, local government assistance)
 - job description and compensation package
 - expectations
 - timelines
 - assessment guidelines or metrics
- seek advisement
 - human resources professional
 - other BC public boards who have recently hired a library director
 - an executive search firm

Supporting

An effective board supports the professional development and work of the library director. Clear expectations, a shared vision, and respectful and regular communications—particularly between the board chair and the library director—have all been noted by board chairs and library directors as indicators of an effective board-and-library-director relationship.

Clear expectations may be different from the job description. Job descriptions outline the role and responsibilities of the library director and may look very similar from one public library to another and will include

- operational execution and oversight of the board's strategic plan

- hiring and management of staff
- budget development and management
- day-to-day management of services, facilities, and resources

Expectations may be in the job posting with the job description and are about how the board expects the library director to do their work and achieve the strategic direction of the board. Expectations may include language that describes desired behaviours, such as collaborative relationship building, inspiring and leading staff, and being proactive.

Expectations should be measurable. It should be possible for the board chair and the library director to discuss and describe what is needed to meet expectations, the timelines, and what would demonstrate success.

A shared vision or purpose for the organization fuels the working relationship among the board, the board chair, and the library director. Successful boards hire and support a library director who understands their vision and is able, with their proven skills and abilities, to develop and deliver operations that are focused on that vision. ***The board then respects the distinct roles and responsibilities of the library director to execute and manage operations.***

If the organization is undergoing a vision or strategic review with a current library director, then they are partners in the process, and it is the board's responsibility to ensure that the current library director is supported to align operations with the new vision or strategic direction.

Respectful and regular communications support the professional development and work of the library director and include

- regularly scheduled board chair-library director communications
- respectful and professional intent and language
- constructive feedback
- recognition of accomplishments and success
- establishment of a resourced professional development plan
- an annual performance review that is a culmination of the ongoing constructive feedback and includes predetermined fair criteria and process



Activity: Appointing and Supporting the Library Director

This activity is for prompting discussion about supporting the work of the library director.

You may want to form small groups of two to three participants or may choose to have the discussion as a group.

The discussion is meant to be exploratory and to generate thinking about how a board, working with the board chair, can be an exemplary employer.

- What does your library director need from the board to be successful?
- What do you think would be an ideal working environment and organizational culture be ideal working conditions and organizational culture for a library director?
- How do you know this?
- How do you want the library director and staff to describe the working conditions and organizational culture of your public library?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the library director to ensure or bring about those working conditions and that organizational culture?
- What can trustees do, working with the board chair, to ensure or bring about those working conditions and that organizational culture for the library director?

Establishing Strategic Direction

Establishing the strategic direction of the organization may include

- vision, mission, and values statements
- a strategic plan that describes the goals and objectives of the organization
- assessment methods

Vision, Mission, and Values

A vision statement is the big “why”. It may be similar to vision statements of other organizations that are not public libraries. Strong vision statements are about the community and often imply or speak directly to quality of life.

Improving the quality of life for our communities through knowledge, ideas and experiences.

— [Fraser Valley Regional Library](#)

To empower and inspire a creative and literate community.

— [Chetwynd Public Library](#)

A mission statement is the big “what”. It is about the unique role of the public library in your community and guides the board and staff in their work.

Your place in the community to explore, create, and share information and ideas.

— [Castlegar & District Public Library](#)

We offer the resources, expertise and inspiration to connect our community to the world of culture, knowledge and ideas.

— [Gibsons & District Public Library](#)

Every public library has values, stated or not, that inform the work of the organization from strategic planning through to day-to-day operations. Many public libraries are articulating the values of the organization as a public commitment to the “how” of the board and staff’s work.

We value:

- diversity
- access for all
- intellectual freedom
- learning and curiosity
- patron-centred services

- community-led planning
- community partnerships
- innovation and creativity
- respectful spaces and communication
- staff development and collaboration
- effective use of resources
- sustainability

— **Vancouver Public Library**

Service Excellence: Providing quality service by anticipating and acting on changing community needs.

Volunteerism: Training and supporting people who give freely of their time and skills is key to our future.

Community: Addressing expressed needs and committing to inclusiveness makes all welcome.

Collaboration: Working with individuals, groups and organizations to make a difference in the community.

Innovation: Embracing change and technology supports those seeking new ways to achieve their goals.

Communication: Improving connections can improve the sharing of learning and information.

— **Salt Spring Island Public Library**

The vision, mission, and values of the public library are the “why”, “what”, and “how” of the organization and are the fundamental responsibility of the board to establish. Ideally these statements are concise, focused, and relevant. These statements require periodic review for

- Relevancy. Do these statements still resonate with the community and the role of the organization?
- Authority. Do these statements still hold true when checked by evidence of community needs and aspirations?
- Currency. Do these statements in their language and tone reflect social change and progress?

In general, the vision statement tends to endure through a series of strategic plans due to it being at such a high level (the big “why”).

Values also tend to endure. Once articulated they become “sticky”, or internalized into the culture of an organization. Some public libraries have purposefully supported this “stickiness”

by assessing the “how” of their work against their stated values, such as equitable access, intellectual freedom, or integrity.

The mission statement is slightly different. Often you will hear people talk about successful organizations being “mission focused”. This means that all the work of the organization, from governance through to execution and assessment, is aligned with the mission statement. In these organizations trustees, staff, and even community members know the “what” of the public library.

When boards enter strategic planning, particularly one where the desire is for change, the mission or “what” of the public library may need to be updated.

An effective mission statement is

- relevant
- current and appropriate for achieving the work of the strategic plan
- memorable
- concise
- clear (no jargon or technical language)
- about the business of the public library
- understood by the community, elected representatives, funders, and staff
- understood and championed by the board

A successful board aligns their work with an effective mission statement. This is what is called being “mission focused” and is demonstrated by

- board members being familiar with and championing the mission
- board direction, policy, and oversight reflecting and aligning with the mission
- board support of and governance work with the library director results in the day-to-day operational management of the library reflecting and aligning with the mission

Strategic Planning

The board has the responsibility to consider the evolving and future role of the public library and to work with the library director to establish a strategic direction for the work of the organization.

Increasingly, public library boards are moving to strategic frameworks that provide general direction for annual planning without committing the organization to a detailed multi-year business plan that risks irrelevancy or stagnation before the end of the planning cycle.

The board's strategic planning should be focused on outcomes for the public library and the community.

Strategic planning, whether it is expressed as a plan with a specific duration and set of goals or as a future-focused framework, varies in length of time covered, depth of change desired, and level of detail, depending on the needs of the public library and the community, resources available, and the culture of the organization.

The library director develops the operational plan to achieve the outcomes of the board's strategic framework or plan.

A standard approach to operational planning is for the library director to establish a set of goals that are

- Specific (simple, sensible, significant)
- Measurable (meaningful, motivating)
- Achievable (agreed, attainable)
- Relevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results based)
- Time bound (time based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive)²

The library director provides timely, accurate reports with an appropriate level of detail for governance oversight on what the library is doing to achieve the board's strategic direction.

The following, from experienced BC public library trustees and library directors, are indicators of effective board performance in strategic planning and oversight:

- a process inclusive of community and stakeholder input
- a board focus on big picture social and economic issues with long-term impact, such as reconciliation, demographic trends, the digital divide, or homelessness
- a shared understanding with the library director of how the organization should evolve over the near and far future
- a process and time frame for strategic planning
- a library board–library director working partnership based on role clarity and defined responsibilities and expectations

Process

1. Plan to Plan

One of the most important considerations for planning is to identify who will be participating in the process and their roles and responsibilities. There should be a process plan that

² From Mind Tools, "SMART Goals: How to Make Your Goals Achievable", <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smarts-goals.htm>

includes details about roles and responsibilities, timelines, and the expected deliverable. Key to the success of the process is to ensure that there is complete board understanding, support and commitment for their work in strategic planning.

2. Conduct an Environmental Scan

An environmental scan is important for providing the context for strategic planning. For planning context the board needs accurate and current information about the public library and the community it serves. This information might come from local government (the Official Community Plan), library reports, trade journals, census data, surveys, focus groups, or other community-based research.

The environmental scan will also help identify key stakeholder groups that the board will want to consider for participating in the planning process. In this process staff, board members, and volunteers are also stakeholders in the public library.

3. Develop a Focus

The focus for strategic planning will come from the public library's vision ("why"), mission ("what"), and values ("how").

With these in mind and with what has been learned from your environmental scan the board should focus on three to five high-level goals. These goals will provide direction to staff on what to prioritize to be mission focused and successful.

The following are examples of high-level goals from the Greater Victoria Public Library's [**"Strategic Plan, 2016–2020"**](#):

1. DEVELOP local, community-inspired branch plans to increase the accessibility and impact of library services in Greater Victoria.
2. CULTIVATE the development of 21st century skills to bridge the digital divide in Greater Victoria.
3. OFFER new tools and learning opportunities that support the creativity and self-expression of individuals in our community.
4. CONTINUE investing in programs, services and collections for early learning and family literacy.
5. INVEST in new ways to extend the reach of the library beyond existing facilities and traditional venues.

The North Vancouver City Library has four concise priorities in their [Strategic Plan 2018-2021](#). The are

inspire learning, discovery and creation

create vibrant spaces

honour indigenous perspectives

enhance access and inclusion

4. Draft the Plan or Framework

Some boards will have a board committee draft the plan or framework, or the board will work with an outside consultant for their strategic-planning process. Another common practice in public libraries is for the board to give direction to the library director to bring the board a draft plan or framework that reflects their desired format and outcomes, and is based on the collected data, trends, community input, and other strategic-planning information and evidence.

5. Approve the Plan or Framework

The board approves the strategic plan or framework when the final iteration meets their intention for strategic direction.

Strategic plans and frameworks can become marketing and communication tools. Most public libraries post a public planning document to their website as an act of accountability and transparency, and some public libraries have purpose-designed or multimedia strategic plans. All public library boards should be prepared to champion their strategic plan to the community, local government and other elected officials, and funders.

6. Provide Strategic Oversight and Assessment

It is the board's responsibility to receive progress reports from the library director. It is the library director's responsibility to manage the operational implementation of the plan and to regularly provide the board with accurate and timely progress reports.

The board needs to know what is working and what may be a risk to their high-level strategic goals. The criteria or what the board requires for reporting are often referred to as key performance indicators (KPIs). It is up to the board to decide on an assessment method or tool, but whatever they choose should:

- Be about the high-level goals of the strategic direction and outcomes and not the operational day-to-day of staff activities. Staff activities, such as a successful storytime or a resumé workshop, are useful to include in reports to support the board's understanding of what their strategic direction and priorities look like in the library or the community. The library director manages and evaluates individual staff activities.
- Be regular. Most goals are best assessed quarterly or annually, not monthly.
- Be accurate and comparable from report to report. The board should be able to measure the progress that is being made to achieve their desired strategic outcomes.
- Be evidence based and outcomes focused. The board should know what it expects to see if their goals are being met; this includes statistics, social or economic impact, and community success indicators.
- Be aligned with vision, mission, and values of the organization. Assess what matters to the work of the board and the future of the public library.
- Use the assessment results to keep the strategic goals and direction updated, to ensure that expectations aligned with resources and capacity, and to form recommendations for the next phase of strategic planning.

7. Review Annually

It is important that the board annually review their strategic plan or framework to affirm the aspirations for each strategic priority and to identify significant emerging political, social, economic, and environmental factors that have implications for the library's vision, mission, values, and strategic directions.



Activity: Strategic Planning

This activity is for prompting discussion about the purpose of strategic planning. The discussion is meant to be exploratory, to generate thinking, and to be ongoing with your public library board.

1. Watch the video and discuss the “why” of your public library:

- [“How Great Leaders Inspire Action”, a TED Talk by Simon Sinek \(full 18-minute version\)](#)
- [“Simon Sinek - Start with Why - TED Talk Short Edited” by Chico Lima \(edited five-minute version\)](#)

2. As a group discuss the library’s vision, mission, and values.

- How do the vision, mission and values guide board work? Discuss with concrete examples.
- What is memorable about the library’s vision, mission, and values? Why is this memorable?

Establishing Policy

A policy is a formal expression of opinion that clarifies the board's expectations of what is to be done and identifies the future outcomes the board hopes to achieve. Ideally, policy builds continuity, enduring values, fairness, and equity into the governance of the public library beyond the term of any board or individual trustee.

Practice and precedent may inform policy, but they are not policy. ***Policy guides the work of the organization.*** Policy may on occasion be subject to interpretation. Board-approved policies are intended to guide future discretionary actions of the board, the library director, and the staff in a consistent manner.

Policies are for

- guiding the board in its roles and responsibilities
- guiding the library director in the implementation of board direction
- providing direction and consistency in providing services, resources, and space to the community
- informing decision making in response to problem situations
- protecting the rights of patrons and staff

Common areas of board policy are

- governance (role of board chair, board orientation and development, committees and roles, code of ethics, trustee roles and expectations, policy review and development)
- human resources (collective agreement, roles, procedures, salaries, wages, benefits, volunteers)
- financial and infrastructure management (approval thresholds, budget development, reserves, capital planning, audits, sponsorships, fundraising, reporting)
- collection and resource management (purpose of collection, intellectual freedom, internet use)
- programs and services (patron experience, patron code of conduct, service expectations, borrowing policies, facility use, partnering, community engagement or development)
- relationships (service agreements, Friends of the Library, foundations, schools, resource sharing, local First Nation communities)

Policy Development

For much of the public library's policy needs professional staff are best positioned to draft successful policy. Professional staff, with their areas of expertise and familiarity with the operations of the public library, can draft policy that is in alignment with board direction and priorities and is practical for implementation.



Activity: Establishing Policy

This activity is to prompt a greater awareness of the complexity of establishing policy. This activity may be done in small groups, followed by a larger group discussion.

In small groups review an issue that is commonly addressed by board policy and brainstorm the various complexities and factors that would need to be known and discussed prior to establishing a policy.

Common complex policy issues include

- corporate sponsorship
- space/meeting-room usage
- gender-neutral washrooms

Programs and Services: Oversight and Assessment

A library carries out its mission by offering specific programs and services. The board provides strategic direction to the library director on outcomes to be achieved. *The library director then manages the resources and staff needed for developing, providing, evaluating, and improving programs and services.* The library director regularly provides accurate and timely reports to the board on programs and services. These reports support the board's role in providing oversight and assessment of the public library and in ensuring that the work of the library is mission focused and achieving the strategic direction.

Predetermined assessment methods will make the board responsibility of oversight and assessment much easier. Assessment methods for programs and services include

- program and service numbers
- impact stories
- board participation (hosting, volunteering, attending a program, using the library)
- patron program and service evaluations

The following are indicators of effective board performance in this area:

- The board receives timely and accurate reports of information necessary for board governance and oversight.
- The board has the information needed to be confident that the organization's operations are aligned with the vision, mission, and values of the organization and will achieve the board's desired outcomes.
- The board can identify potential strategic, reputational, and financial risk to the organization.



Activity: Oversight and Assessment

The purpose of this activity is to prompt a discussion about the board's role in oversight and assessment. Role clarity is critical to this discussion as it is board work to focus on strategic direction and outcomes and staff work to focus on execution and operational management.

Name a service or program at your public library.

1. What is the purpose of this service or program?
2. Who uses it? Why? What difference does it make in their lives or to the broader community?
3. How is it aligned with your public library's vision, mission, and values?
4. What do you need to know for providing oversight and assessment of services and programs?

Financial Oversight

Public library trustees are responsible for ensuring that the finances of the public library are managed in accordance with public sector accountability and with the highest level of accuracy and transparency. This board responsibility is the one most often discussed in terms of fiduciary duty and duty of care.

Fiduciary duty is owed by trustees in all aspects of their board work. *Fiduciary duty requires that all trustees be loyal and act honestly, in good faith, and in the best interests of the library.* Fiduciary duty is often associated with financial oversight as it requires that trustees avoid conflicts of interest, be forthright regarding potential pecuniary interests, and maintain confidentiality (as with all legal, land, and labour board discussions).

Duty of care requires that trustees are thorough and accurate in their work. Again, this is most often associated with financial oversight, but is required for all trustee work. Duty of care requires that trustees apply a level of care and attention to their work that any reasonable person would do in the same circumstances. This includes reading reports, being prepared, attending meetings and participating with relevant questions and discussion.

Public library trustees are responsible, as specified per board type in the Library Act, for ensuring appropriate practices in securing, overseeing, and if required the auditing, of the organization's finances. It is the responsibility of the board, in consultation with the library director, to set the priorities for the expenditure of funds, approve an annual operating budget, and monitor the operating revenue and expenses. The public library director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the budget.

Securing the Finances

The board approves the annual operating budget for the public library and the process by which the funding for the budget is requested, received, and accounted for. The level at which the board is involved in the process, from delegating to the library director to proposing the budget to funders (such as mayor and council), varies across public library types and sizes.

The stronger the relationship between the board and funders (particularly with local elected officials), the stronger the viability of the organization. It is considered best practice for the board chair, with support from the library director, to present the budget to local government funders.

Overseeing the Finances

The board is responsible for requiring regular and accurate financial reports. Each trustee—not just the treasurer or the finance committee—is responsible for reviewing, understanding, and seeking clarification on the reports through their established governance process, such as through the finance committee and/or at the board meeting.

The library director is responsible for the operational management of the finances to achieve the board's strategic priorities and the sustained operations of the public library. Many public-library-board financial reports are “rolled up”. This means that all budget lines in a category—such as all staff salaries, rather than each staff salary—are compressed to a level that makes sense for board oversight and to align with what the board is monitoring in their strategic priorities. For example, the board might see a rolled-up line item for library programming or children’s library programming, rather than each expenditure for delivering such programs.

What is most important for overseeing the finances is regular and accurate reporting that alerts the board to successes and potential risks for achieving their strategic priorities and to potential risks to the viability of the organization.

Auditing the Finances

The board is responsible for ensuring that an audit, by an independent and certified accountant, is done annually and made accessible to the public. As well, the board is responsible for ensuring that the organization’s Statement of Financial Information is filed accurately and on time.

Regardless of public library type or size, the financial responsibilities of the board are to

- have knowledge of the organization’s base revenue, expenses, and funders
- be aware of supplementary sources of revenue, such as through grants and service agreements
- understand the financial needs of the organization’s operations, particularly what is needed for achieving strategic priorities while maintaining core services, hours, and staffing levels
- acquire—through direct asks, partnership development, and advocacy—funds needed for organizational sustained growth and strategic expansion
- establish the annual budget
- present the budget to funding authorities
- understand the legal regulations and reporting requirements for funding

- delegate budget management to the library director and set thresholds for authorized expenditures
- ensure a financial oversight process is established and followed with appropriate thresholds, checks, and risk-mitigation practices
- ensure an annual audit and the filing of the organization's Statement of Financial Information

Provincial Reporting and Accountabilities

To ensure public accountability and financial transparency, public libraries that receive provincial grants or funding must submit three reports to the provincial government as part of the public library accountability framework. Each year library board receive letters outlining the purposes of each grant, expectations on use of those funds and reporting deadlines. The board, through the library director, is responsible for submitting financial, written and statistical reports.

The three reports are:

- Annual Survey of B.C.'s Public Libraries
- Provincial Public Library Grant Report (PLGR)—The PLGR provides an opportunity for libraries to showcase their achievements throughout the year and demonstrate how they support both local and provincial priorities.
- Statement of Financial Information (SOFI)—All British Columbia public libraries and library federations that receive provincial grants (and independent entities from local government) are required to submit an annual SOFI, as per section 2 of the Financial Information Act (FIA).

Detailed information about these reports, including deadlines, is available through the Libraries Branch website in the Reporting and Accountability section.

Library Boards are responsible for ensuring each of these reports are submitted accurately each year. In the case of the SOFI, the board chair is required to sign the report as part of the official report.

You may wish to ask your board chair or library director about your board's process to review these submissions.

Indicators of Effective Board Performance

The following are indicators of effective board performance in financial oversight:

- The board discusses thoroughly, at a high and strategic level, the annual operating budget of the library before approving it.
- The board seeks advisement from the library director during the budget process in considering the most effective allocation of resources.
- The board receives financial reports on a regular basis that are understandable, accurate, and timely.
- The board ensures an annual audit and considers all recommendations made in the independent auditor's report and management letter.
- The board focuses on policy development and implementation for financial compliance and oversight, not day-to-day or month-to-month budget control and review.



Activity: Financial Oversight

This activity is for prompting discussion about best practices in board financial oversight.

For some of the below, depending on the public library, there are overlapping board-trustee and library-director responsibilities, such as in developing the annual budget. Discuss the importance of role clarity and what role clarity may look like for overlapping responsibilities.

What	Who
Secures adequate funds to carry out the library's programs and services	
Approves the budget and presents budget to council for grant funding	
Approves the funds for new facilities or technology	
Prepares regular financial reports	
Establishes financial policy	
Maintains an audit trail with accurate record keeping and reporting	
Ensures an annual financial audit and public report	
Develops procedures for facility and technology expenditures	

What	Who
Implements board policy	
Manages the operational budget	

Fund Development

Some boards take the lead in fund development for their public library. Ideally, their strategy and activities are developed in consultation with the library director. If there is a library foundation or Friends of the Library group, it is advised that the board liaise with these groups so that they are sharing information and supporting each other's efforts to raise funds for the public library.

Board fund-development activities may include

- making personal contributions
- asking friends and colleagues to consider a contribution
- recommending sources of funding—such as individuals, corporations, and foundations—to the library director
- ensuring that the board's fund-development policy is current
- developing a fundraising strategy

The following are indicators of board effectiveness in fund development:

- The board has an up-to-date fund-development policy and a sponsorship policy.
- The board has a fund-development strategy that is mission focused and aligned with their other strategic priorities and goals.
- The board has fund-development goals and they regularly assess their activities and results.
- Board members leverage their networks for fund development.

Friends and Foundation: What Is the Difference?

Friends of the Library is an association that, while connected through their support to the public library, is not governed by the public library board. The association is comprised of community members who value the public library and demonstrate support through their membership dues, volunteering, and fundraising. A common Friends of the Library activity is the public library's book sale.

Descriptions of Friends of the Library activities and responsibilities can be found on many public library websites, such as the [Vancouver Public Library](#), [Vancouver Regional Island Library](#), [Smithers Public Library](#), and [Sechelt Library](#).

A library foundation is a non-profit organization with the purpose of raising funds for the long-term development and financial security of the public library. Library foundations are less common in BC libraries than Friends of the Library groups. In general, library foundations

pursue large grants and individual donations through public campaigns and planned giving or major gifts or in-kind donations from foundations, government agencies, and corporate sponsors.

Descriptions of library-foundation roles and activities can be found on public library websites, such as [West Vancouver Memorial Library](#) and [Gibsons & District Public Library](#).

Managing Risk

It is the responsibility of the board to manage organizational risk.

The most effective way for a board to reduce risk to the public library is to hire a library director who has the skills and knowledge required for managing the operations of the organization and for executing the board's strategic direction. The board then needs to support the library director with their continuing professional development and role satisfaction.

The board also has a responsibility to ensure their own professional development for governance practices, strategic planning and oversight, and fiduciary responsibility. This professional development will result in a board that understands the role of its public library in the community and can lead the public library to a future of sustained growth, relevance, and secure funding.

The board is responsible for identifying potential strategic, reputational, and financial risk. It is the library director's responsibility to manage all three of these areas of risk, as well as to identify and manage operational risk.

The following are indicators of effective risk management:

- The board, working with the library director, has done a risk audit and has ensured that its policies, such as human resources and finance, are current for mitigating and addressing risk.
- The board has contingency plans for emergencies, such as how to operate in the absence of a library director or during a natural disaster.
- The board has a plan for how to operate in the absence of the board chair.

The board has ensured that all insurance policies carried by the organization provide adequate coverage at a competitive price.

Advocacy

Public library trustees are expected to be advocates of public libraries. Advocacy is commonly defined as a planned, deliberate, sustained effort to develop understanding and support incrementally over time. Every public library board, regardless of library type or size, should have stated expectations of how trustees may advocate for the public library to local elected officials, as part of province-wide advocacy initiatives, and as part of championing community support.

The public library trustee relationship with local elected officials is of critical importance. This is true for even regional library boards, as those trustees also need to advocate for the ongoing funding and development of the regional library to their municipal or district colleagues. Local government is a substantial funder of BC public libraries. ***Trustees are uniquely placed to champion the public library as a key community asset***, as trustees are not employees of the public library, but they have knowledge and credibility for sharing the stories, the impact, and the value of the public library.

The BCLTA has developed a trustee advocacy and influence framework, **Advocacy and Influence in Your Community: A Framework for Building and Maintaining Relationships**, to provide trustees with ideas, approaches, and proven practices that, along with the knowledge of their communities, trustees can use for successful advocacy. It is important that boards work with their library directors, so that their advocacy work

- tells an accurate and up-to-date story about the public library
- is supported with high-level statistics, impact stories, and needs assessments
- is supported with library-staff-generated marketing and communications material, such as annual reports, social media campaigns, website updates, and press releases
- aligns with messaging across the organization; staff and trustees may be talking with different people, but the message should be the same
- is focused on the people and institutions that make a difference to the organization
- is meaningful and measurable

The BCLTA, the **BC Library Association**, the Association of BC Library Directors, and the **BC Libraries Cooperative** have come together as the BC Public Library Partners for a unified and strong public library voice to the provincial government. The partners have shared priorities and messages that the government is recognizing and understanding due to consistent use.

The following are indicators of effective board performance in advocacy:

- The board has approved and abides by the organization's advocacy or community-engagement plan that includes an analysis or a list of key stakeholders, influencers, and decision makers.
- The board has approved and abides by the organization's marketing and communications strategy. The strategy might be to hire an outside consultant, or it might be for staff to leverage the website, social media, and the local radio and news outlets.
- The board has a policy about who serves as the official spokesperson and when this role is delegated to the library director.
- The board trustees have established relationships with key stakeholders, influencers, and decision makers and maintain those relationships to further the understanding of the valuable role of the public library and the needs of the public library.
- When appropriate, the board makes presentations to local government.
- The trustees and their board work are accessible to the public on the library's website, including
 - Names and possibly photos of board members.
 - Board contact information, such as an email for the board chair (e.g., boardchair@publiclibrary.ca).
 - Board meeting dates, agendas, and minutes.



Activity: Advocacy

These activities are for prompting discussion about public library trustee advocacy.

Activity A: Role-play

In small groups of two or three imagine that you are at a community event and one of the following scenarios happen:

1. You are seated next to the local Member of the Legislative Assembly who is attending your public library's Summer Reading Club launch.
2. The mayor, who has just delivered a welcoming address that included remarks about the importance of community centres and schools for child and family development, is being introduced to you.
3. While in the buffet line, a prominent local-media personality turns to you and asks, "What do you do?" You have 90 seconds before they start filling their plate.

In your groups use role play to develop talking points that would work for one of these situations.

Select one person from your group to share your scenario and talking points.



Activity B: Elevator Speech submitted by Jim Jenkinson, Trustee, Invermere Public Library

An “elevator pitch” is a useful tool designed to create a lasting impression within a brief 30 – 90 seconds time-frame. It is a short description that trustees may utilize to connect with whomever we are speaking with in a way that any listener can easily understand our objective. However, crafting an elevator pitch requires thoughtful planning.

Here are some of the components to consider while you draft your elevator pitch:

- Grab the person’s attention right away (e.g. “I am glad that you were elected because you advocated for...”)
- Tell them about your mission (e.g. “I volunteered to become a trustee because I wanted to ensure that our library has adequate funding to deliver services to...”)
- Support your statement with data (e.g. “This year, library visits are up 12% as a direct result of extending the hours that our library is open to the public by an additional 8 hours each week.”)
- Ask the person to assist with the objective (e.g. “With only a slight increase in funding our library could...”)
- Finish with a positive comment to preserve the relationship (e.g. “Our library depends on stable, predictable funding and we appreciate what you have done to...”)
- Then, end the conversation with a smile and move on so that the influencer can meet with others attending the same event.

Resource List

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Canadian Federation of Library Associations. Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries. Accessed December 6, 2018. <http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/guidelines-and-position-papers/statement-on-intellectual-freedom-and-libraries/>.

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