



To support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries

TO: The BCLTA Board

FROM: Babs Kelly, Executive Director

DATE: February 26, 2020

SUBJECT: 2020 Board Directors' Survey and Spring Orientation

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to support board discussion regarding their February 2020 Board Director Survey and their April 19th Board Orientation and Retreat.

This document package includes:

- ED comments on 2020 Board of Directors' Survey Responses
- 2020 Board of Directors' Survey Responses Transcription
- Proposed outline for April 19th Board Orientation and Retreat

ED Comments on 2020 BCLTA Board of Directors' Survey Responses

This is the first 100% response rate for a board survey in my four years at BCLTA. In general, the responses indicate a high level of engagement, understanding, and commitment to BCLTA. The proposed outline for the April 19th orientation and retreat will contain ideas for board development and structure informed by the survey responses. Specifically, I have noted the following from your responses:

1. Director appreciation for the Public Library Partners.
 - That the directors have this appreciation reflects the board's understanding that BCLTA's work with the Partners has increased our capacity to be able to represent, and represent well, our members to the provincial government. This is critical and needs to be hard-wired into BCLTA's organizational culture.

2. Director appreciation for each other and for rigorous informed discussion.
 - I cannot stress enough how important this is for keeping the board engaged and ensuring that BCLTA does not slip into a “rubber stamp” board. As with the above this needs to be hard-wired into BCLTA’s organizational culture.

3. Director concern for not being able to do more. Overall my experience is that this board is finding a healthy balance of interest in and commitment to supporting the work of BCLTA with providing an appropriate level of oversight and direction. The board is developing a healthy and highly functional culture that is sustainable.
 - It is important for the effective functioning of a society volunteer board that we have expectations set high enough to provide engagement with setting vision and strategic priorities and to provide oversight to the highest duty of care.
 - It is also important that those expectations are sustainable, not just for the current board, but also for recruiting new board members.
 - It should be expected that in addition to board meetings that a BCLTA director will commit on average per month at least 4 hours to fulfill strategic oversight (board package review and meeting prep); another 2 hours a month to be able to participate in email or phone discussions or take on responsibilities such as a fund development or governance development committee: and over the year additional hours to participate in board retreats and advocacy initiatives.
 - This level of commitment and hours is outlined on the BCLTA website (<https://www.bclta.ca/bclta-agm-2020/>) and sent to potential board candidates.

4. Board meetings and structure.
 - The directors are finding their groove with the Zoom meetings and we will be able to make more use of Zoom functions such as video and chat as the directors may find useful.
 - In the past 3 years, there has been a significant shift in the understanding of the role of the chair from one as the ruler of the meeting to one as the guide and facilitator of the meeting. The survey comments indicate that this board (and the association) is reaping the benefits of that shift.
 - Some survey responses indicate that directors would like the next board culture shift to be one of greater support for the role of the chair including consistent director attendance, arriving 5 minutes earlier to meetings for prompt starts, and a speaker’s list (use of Zoom functions such as “hand raising” may help with this).

2020 BCLTA Board of Directors' Survey Responses Transcription

1. Describe your engagement as a BCLTA director.

- Sometimes I feel I am disengaged. When I am able to participate, I feel grateful for the opportunity and excited by the goings-ons of the organization.
- As a BCLTA director I see my role as a support to our association in helping trustees be informed about their role, prepared to fulfill their responsibilities and be recognized by our province for the key role they play in allowing libraries do what they do.
- Not as high as the role deserves! That's due to work commitments.
- In-person meeting at AGM and involved in \$20 million campaign. Responded by email to Executive Director regarding specific issues, and attended UBCM to support our efforts.
- Actively participated in all board meetings and retreat; Prepared a monthly report on BCLTA activities to the library board meeting; Advocated the "\$20 million for 2020" campaign by sending the campaign post cards to library board members for signature and support; Raised the awareness of the new campaign that tracks the trustees' volunteer hours this year.
- I feel very engaged. I just wish I had more time for BCLTA board work.
- Very engaged.

2. What inspires you to be engaged?

- Seeing the progress and continued changes within the BCLTA that make it a better organization with more value to members and the partners.
- I am excited to be a part of a team that is making positive headway in giving all the library board trustees in BC the tools to do their best and encouraging the provincial government to recognize the contribution of those trustees to betterment of our province.
- The vision and experience of the ED; the role the BCLTA plays in supporting volunteer civic governance and their capacity to represent their communities as effectively as possible; my passion for libraries and the equitable access they provide to dignity, information, community, public space, tools and information; the potential of staff-led efforts to substantively strengthen the role of board trustees across the province and our collective capacity to respond to the challenges of our time
- I look forward to dealing with substantial issues in meetings and discussing with other Directors,
- A board that is open to diverse perspectives. All board members feel safe and encouraged to speak their thoughts and ideas. A board chair that is the "guide on the side" - leaving room for others and creating opportunities for collective exploration.

- I like to fix problems, improve processes. It is gratifying to see positive outcomes when I've worked on implementing changes. The association is in the middle of these types of changes, so this is good.
- Inspired by working with committed, engaged BCLTA Directors and an ED and the possibility of impacting other trustees province wide. As trustees, we share in the hefty task of governing public libraries. I can really see the impact BCLTA is having at present with this work and will continue to have going forward. That's inspiring!

3. What is working, what needs to be kept, and what needs to be changed?

- Library partners participation appears to be working very well. Having Babs advocating and working with various groups/gov't is proving very successful. Saving money or finding new sources to ensure financial stability is going to continue to be a challenge to the board. Not sure how to change this...
- The last few years have seen some significant, very positive changes to our association. In particular, the part we have played in our partnership with other library associations. The changing role of the E.D. and the creation of the new role intended to focus on trustee support efforts is incredibly insightful. The main improvement that could be addressed is making sure that the Directors of the BCLTA know how important their consistent participation is to the success of our endeavours.
- I need a time management coach and/or a time machine /pause button. I think you're doing what you can. I will reach out with direct asks and offers of support.
- I am in a busy, elected position for 43 services in local government and I serve the public on various Boards and Commissions. I am also the recently-elected Chair of the Vancouver Island Regional Library Board—comprised of 38 communities with a Board of 38 Trustees, plus Staff. What does not work for me is too much online stuff. It is very hard to participate with other Board members through online formats. I would much prefer a rotation of quarterly or semi-annual meetings of the Board in rotating locations on the Mainland and on Vancouver Island. I think that the BCLTA Executive would benefit by learning more about each of our library locations/systems.
- What is working: very good meeting structure and rich contents in the report package. Most meetings were engaging and inspiring. What needs to be kept: continue to have two in-person retreats (spring and fall) to stay connected with other board members across the province. What needs to be changed: conduct a board skill assessment soon to identify what skill sets are missing/weak in the current board prior to the election at the April AGM. If a closed meeting has a heavy agenda, consider a different date/time for the closed meeting. It is challenging to stay engaged throughout a 3-hour discussion late at night and for board members who have to get up early next day for work/travel.
- The association is on the right path as long as a new ED is hired and works out. The engagement with the Ministry is great and I hope this continues to grow. The convictions

document is working for us. Looking forward to having all directors share the load (most are!).

- I think the new format for the meetings will be working once we get all the hiccups out of the way. If directors can show up at the meeting at least 5 minutes beforehand so we can make it regular practice to start on time. Also if we can use a speakers list for input in meetings. Except for a couple of directors who have not attended many meetings this term, the current BCLTA board is very engaged. Directors seem prepared for board meetings which is important to engagement. Excited about the restructuring of the ED. Looking forward to new bookkeeping process and reports with the new ED.

Proposed outline for April 19th Board Orientation and Retreat

Logistics

- The Richmond Public Library (Brighthouse Branch) Boardroom has been reserved for April 19th, 10:30am to 2:30pm
- Light lunch and refreshments will be provided
- All directors are expected to attend.
- Plan for group photo for 2020 annual report
- The meeting has been included on the AGM page of the website and board nominees will be notified that if they are elected to the board they are expected to attend this meeting or to discuss their inability to attend with the Board Chair.

The proposed outline is for the board to review and then direct the ED as to what they need from the orientation and retreat for the following results and outcomes.

Results:

- New board directors will feel that they understand the roles and responsibilities of the board and of the contract staff, will feel connected with other board directors, and will quickly integrate into the board
- The new ED will gain a familiarity with the board and will feel confident in their new role
- A renewed full board commitment to the BCLTA Convictions and the work of the board
- A board that is engaged by having setting 2020/21 board priorities (for example fund development and governance development)

Outcomes:

- BCLTA work will be aligned with our Convictions and Strategic Plan
- Increased value and benefits for the membership from the association's work on organizational capacity and sustainability
- An enduring BCLTA board culture that reflects and supports the work of the contracted staff through board engagement and strong governance

Outline for April 19th

Please note that the ED will send a detailed email to each new director regarding the logistics of board meetings, the role of staff, and details such as passwords, board packages, and Zoom meetings. These are administrative details and should not take time away from when the board meets in person for generative and strategic discussions.

The following orientation and retreat will be facilitated by Babs Kelly to support the board in having their direction for the meeting fulfilled.

Time	Item	Rationale
10:30	Welcome and Territorial Acknowledgments	Brings us together and sets the tone of why and how we work together.
10:40	Introductions / Roundtable	While many of us may believe we know each other, time spent on this is important and stems from the principle that we start slow to move fast. The introductions will be less about people's work and educational backgrounds, and more about what is important to us about our communities, who we claim and who claims us, and why we want to work together.
11:00	Outline of the day / rules of engagement / brilliant ideas	Some process check, as while this isn't a board meeting, an orientation and retreat still needs an agreement of how everyone will participate and contribute to the results and outcomes.
11:10	BCLTA: fast	Babs will present BCLTA in 5 minutes
11:15	BCLTA: embracing the experience	Returning directors will briefly (3 minutes, and Babs will be timing!) state what they have embraced about BCLTA using positive language – what was great and what you look forward to contributing to for strengthening sustainability and capacity.
11:45	BCLTA: knowing why	Each director will briefly (2 minutes) state why they want to be on the BCLTA board.
Noon	Lunch	10 minute break and then we proceed while eating.
12:10	Board and staff structure	Mike will talk about his role and board meetings; Babs and new ED will talk about their work (including bookkeeper work). Rhonda will talk about the role of treasurer. Open discussion on board work (Babs will bring discussion prompts).

12:45	BCLTA and Advocacy	Mike will talk about his experience with the Partners and recent meeting with the Minister. Babs and ED will provide brief summary of ED work.
12:55	2020/21 operations	Babs and ED will brief the board on where we are with fulfilling board strategic direction (hint: very busy and successful) and upcoming work plans. This will be brief as ED reports provide regular updates. Babs will bring most recent agenda, ED report and Bookkeeper report for new directors.
1:00	2020/21 board goals	Babs will facilitate an exercise on board governance goals. Including policy development, and board committees (fund development and governance), and board culture (how you do your work).
2:10		Babs and ED will summarize the discussions and next steps.
2:15	Appreciations and Commitment	Roundtable of appreciations and commitment to an action stemming from the day's discussions.