

TRUSTEE TIPS

Issue 1

August 2019



What's inside...

Deputy CEO Column:

Now that you've been appointed a Trustee, what's next? Marigold Deputy CEO Laura Taylor welcomes new board members with her introductory column in our first issue.

Advocacy:

As a Trustee, advocating for your cause is fundamental. How do you build better boards and what is your role as a Trustee? Flip the page and find out.

Finance:

Finance? Math? You love books! Aren't there people on your board to deal with the finances? Here's what you need to know in order to make good decisions and stay informed of your organization's financial health.



What you need to know...

- Upon appointment, a board member is a **Trustee**, governing the delivery of public library service, making decisions that are in the best interest of the public and providing quality service.
- Trustees are subject to Common Law principles and must act accordingly.
- An employee of the board cannot be appointed to the board.
- All appointments to the board shall be for a term of up to three years.
- The board is a governing board and not an operational board.
- The board is created under the Alberta Libraries Act.
- The board employs the Library Director or CEO—depending on whether it's a library board or library system board.

You've been appointed a Trustee, now what?



Laura Taylor

Marigold Deputy CEO

Welcome to the inaugural *Trustee Tips* publication that will be produced quarterly by Marigold Library System. *Trustee Tips* will provide information, facts and important dates to assist you as a Trustee during your term on the Library Board.

What is a trustee?

"A Trustee is a person to whom property is legally committed in trust. A library Trustee's commitment is to both the physical property and resources of the library and to the services it provides. The library board has the final responsibility to see that its library provides the best possible service to its community."

-Mid-Hudson Library System

For many years, I have had the pleasure of meeting with Library Boards throughout Marigold Library System to provide a basic orientation. The purpose is to enable Trustees to have the confidence and skills to be an effective Trustee.

You, as a Trustee, have a very important role in your community and it can be a bit overwhelming to learn of your legal and moral obligations and responsibilities as a Trustee. Many commonalities and misconceptions frequently arise during Board presentations including Board and Staff relationships, applicable legislation and advocacy.

I hope that you find this new publication helpful. I encourage you to reach out for feedback, suggestions for future topics or questions that you may have.

Please contact me at Laura@marigold.ab.ca If you would like to book a Board Orientation or to attend a Board meeting.

Working better together

Establishing a board is no easy task. It takes time and commitment to recruit, develop and retain the right people with a diverse skillset. Yet, building a successful board requires more effort than simply finding the appropriate people. An effective board is committed to a purpose and skilled in planning and resource development. The board understands that regardless of a new member's experience, providing them with the mission and purpose of the organization allows new Trustees to get involved in important issues and activities as soon as possible.

Board members join the organization for a myriad of reasons. By identifying common benefits, such as the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of the community or networking possibilities, the board may find greater success in recruiting.

Once a good team has been established, it may be helpful to consider the following: Do members make an effort to learn about issues and are they fully prepared for meetings? Do they have the courage to ask tough and unpopular questions? Are members open to learn from other perspectives? Are committees established with clear mandates and schedules and are they being held accountable? Are there mechanisms in place to prevent, detect and resolve disputes? And is the team sufficiently represented—not too small to lack diversity and succession planning, but not too large to prevent meaningful decision making? Whether your board has been in existence for a long time or it is brand new, there are always opportunities to govern more efficiently and effectively. A number of beneficial resources are listed on the back.

**With information from the Alberta Library Trustees' Association and Board Effectiveness Consultant Eli Mina.*

Understanding your Role: PLSB's Guide to Responsibilities

The Public Library Services Branch's *Library Board Basics* workbook is a useful tool for library Trustees and managers. The resource identifies the roles and responsibilities of board members and staff. While the board is expected to focus on governance and advocacy, the library manager is responsible for operations and staff supervision. The chart below, as well as other helpful information can be found in the workbook on the Alberta Municipal Affairs website.

Board	Library Manager	Other Staff & Volunteers
Accountable and legally responsible for the library	Manages day-to-day operation of the library	Carry out daily procedures
Assesses community's needs	Helps boards clarify patron needs; develops programs and services	Provide patron service; suggest and help develop new programs
Set policies	Assist with policy development; implements policies	Identify policy gaps and implementation issues
Sets budget and ensures sufficient funds to achieve it	Prepares budget in consultation with board; manages expenditures	Identify needs; account for expenditures
Hires, instructs, monitors, and evaluates senior	Hires, supervises, and evaluates staff and volunteers	Work as members of a professional team
Develops plan of service	Assists board in plan development; implements plan	Provide information for planning process; helps implement plan
Monitors and evaluates library's operation	Evaluates operations; reports to the board	Maintain required records and reports; provide feedback on programs and services
Advocates for value of libraries; builds community relationships	Promotes library activities; seeks community support	Provide service; represent the library to the community
Establish board committees, officers, other board structure	Supports board function; usually attends board and committee meetings	Provide information and assistance to board as needed via library manager

Making Sense of Finance

Whether you are new to the board or you have been a trustee for a long time, each member is responsible for understanding their organization's financial statements so they can ask relevant questions and make informed decisions. Since all board members must agree with—and understand—what they are approving, they need to be able to read and interpret financial statements and all financial policies established by the organization.

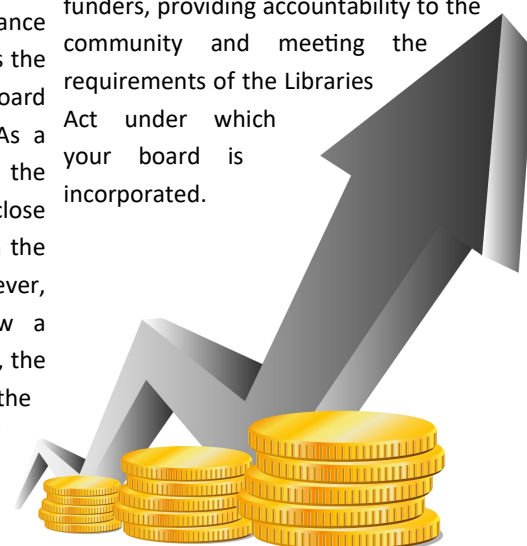
By attending and participating in board and committee meetings, reviewing and approving financial statements as well as approving financial policies and the budget, board members are ensuring that the board's objectives and the organization's spending align.

Financial statements identify various

revenues, expenditures, assets and liabilities, but also assist in determining whether the organization is staying on track to meeting its financial and strategic plans—plans that should be identified in the annual budget.

The annual budget is prepared in advance of the operational year, and represents the goals and expectations of what the board hopes to attain the following year. As a board member, if the bottom line of the budget and the actual results are in close alignment, you can have confidence in the operations of your organization. However, if the results for the period show a considerable variance from the budget, the board should be asking why and when the variance occurred and what is being done to correct the situation. A proactive board needs to have

practices and processes in place to protect the overall health of the organization. While it may be daunting, having a good grasp on your organization's financial situation is important, because financial statements are crucial for reporting to funders, providing accountability to the community and meeting the requirements of the Libraries Act under which your board is incorporated.



**With information from the Alberta Library Trustees' Association*



Helpful Resources

Marigold ensures Marigold board members have access to reliable and pertinent information by making them available on our website. You can find the following information at marigold.ab.ca:

- Meeting Dates & Minutes
- Board Policy Manual
- Board Committees
- Board Development Training
- Roles and Responsibilities

*For information on the Libraries Act and Regulations, Public Library Network Policy, Resource Sharing Operational Policy for Public Libraries, and much more, check out our *Trustee Resources* tab on our website.

Don't miss this:

Did you know that the Public Library Services Branch (PLSB) offers Library Board Basic Workshops to all library trustees, library managers and library system staff? The workshops are specifically designed to help participants understand the structure of public library service in our province, and how to support the delivery of effective public library service in Alberta communities and regions.

Upcoming Library Board Basics Workshops:

- September 7—Whitecourt
- September 21—Spruce Grove
- October 19—Fairview
- October 26—Medicine Hat
- November 2—Strathmore

*Registration open approximately one month prior to workshop date

There is no fee for the workshops. Participants will receive a workbook and other support materials, snacks, and lunch. Other meals, travel, and any required accommodation will be the participant's responsibility.

For more information and to register visit: www.alberta.ca/library-board-basics-workshops

Other applicable resources:

ALTA Trustee Training: www.librarytrustees.ab.ca

PLSB Board Development: www.alberta.ca/public-library-board-development

Marigold Recommends:

