

Become a Library Trustee

A Quick Start Guide for Prospective Board Members



What does a library board do?

- Learns about the community and the library. Uses that information to provide feedback to the library director and staff when discussing policy, library services, or the future.
- Works with the director to set priorities and plan for the future of the library.
- Sets policy for the library which guides library staff and patrons on use of the library and its services.
- Adopts a budget and reviews the financial reports for the library.
- Speaks up on behalf of the library when talking to members of the public, community leaders, or local government officials.
- If necessary, hires a new library director. Ongoing – oversees the director and delegates staff management to the director. Sets salary for the director and all staff.

What's expected of a library board member?

- Prepare for meetings by reviewing materials before the meeting.
- Show up for board meetings – both monthly and special board meetings.
- Listen and learn about the community, the library, and the role of the library board.
- Speak up on behalf of the community and library when the board is discussing library budget, policy, services, and the future of the library.
- Understand enough of the law to stay out of trouble.

What's challenging about being a board member?

- Time commitment. It takes time to prepare for meetings, attend meetings, and learn about the work.
- Working in the public arena – boards must comply with the open meeting law which means discussions and decisions take place in open meetings and any work done for the library is subject to public records' requests.
- Managing various stakeholder requests which often conflict with one another.

What's rewarding about being a board member?

- You are part of supporting and building community by helping one of the few remaining public spaces where neighbors can come together. The library fosters connections and reduces loneliness and isolation.
- You are part of helping children discover a love of reading and develop their reading skills which can help them throughout their life.
- You are a part of something that brings joy to people's lives. Spend a moment watching the laughter and enjoyment that children, teenagers, and adults share during programs or when talking about something they read recently.
- You are making a difference for your community. Public service allows you to give back and be a part of something bigger than you. That can be surprisingly rewarding.
- Learning about your community, local government, and how volunteers help build better communities can also be rewarding.

Contact Your Local Library Director to find out how you can get involved.