

CHAPTER 4

SUCCESSION PLANNING, RECRUITING, ONBOARDING, & DEVELOPMENT OF TRUSTEES

Succession planning is one piece to ensure the sustainability of a public library. The board of trustees makes decisions to act in the community’s best interest by leveraging their collective expertise, adhering to the core values of librarianship, and maintaining legal compliance. Succession planning is the responsibility of the board of trustees with support of the library director. A succession plan helps your board recruit effectively, train appropriately, and continually develop based upon reflective practice. It ensures the library board of trustees is thinking strategically.

The following sections are intended for informational purposes and not intended as legal advice. Libraries and trustees should consult their own legal counsel for legal advice.

RELATED COLORADO PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARD:
ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

In this section, we will explore:

Trustee Job Description.....	2
Recruiting	2
Selection.....	3
Trustee Development.....	6
Summary	8
Try This: SOAR Analysis	8

Trustee Job Description

You have job descriptions for each position in your library. Do you have a job description for your trustees? Providing a simple, clear communication tool when speaking with prospective candidates ensures individuals are aware of what it means to be a library trustee. A job description provides this.

There are specific legal requirements for the roles and responsibilities of a public library board of trustees in Colorado Library Law ([C.R.S. §24-90-109](#)). If a governing board, these roles and responsibilities are granted to them. If an advisory board, review establishment documents to determine responsibility or provide recommendations to the governing authority.

Vision, strategic planning, fiduciary responsibility, and employing a library director are the basics to include in the job description. See previous chapter and Colorado Library Law ([C.R.S. §24-90-109](#)) for detailed specifics

A job description should include:

- 1-3 sentence description of the board of trustees' purpose
- roles and responsibilities
- requirements
- qualifications (knowledge, skills, abilities)
- time commitment

Recruiting

Recruiting as part of succession planning is constant. It is not done only when a new trustee is needed. The ongoing process of building relationships, identifying potential candidates, and recruiting community members ensures that there will always be a full board.

The board of trustees must consider the following questions when seeking new trustees:

- What is in the immediate and long-term future of the library? Capital campaign, mill levy, new building project?
- Given the roles and responsibilities of the board, consider the assets on the board.
 - What are the strengths and assets in knowledge, skills, and abilities the board currently has?
 - Is there an opportunity to add a specific knowledge, skill, or ability that would benefit the board?

- When reviewing community demographics, is the board representative of the community it serves?
- Are there pipeline organizations to recruit trustees? Consider teen advisory council, Friends, or Foundation as well as engaging with local young professionals organizations whose members may want to take a more active role in the community.

When recruiting prospective candidates, it is important to seek the right fit for the board. After identifying potential needs of the board and library community as whole, plan on casting a wide net for your marketing plan. The goal of library marketing is helping community members be aware of the library's role in the community and for them to engage, value, and support library offerings. When recruiting candidates for the board, you want to ensure that community members are aware of the benefits of serving their community as a library trustee.

While the library board of trustees does not appoint new trustees, it is important to have individuals at the ready to ensure that candidates who best meet the board's needs and believe in library values are available for appointment.

Selection

As part of your succession plan, selection of new trustees follows the process as detailed by the governing authority. Trustees are always appointed, never elected. How candidates are selected and recommended for appointment varies depending on the agreement or bylaws between the governing authority and the library.

Colorado Library Law's only restrictions are the number of trustees (between five (5) to seven (7) trustees as determined by the governing authority) and appointees must reside within the legal service area of the library ([C.R.S. §24-90-108\(1\)](#)).

PROCESS

For a municipal or county public library, trustees are appointed by the mayor with the consent of the legislative body or by the board of county commissioners. For library districts, Colorado Library Law ([C.R.S. §24-90-108\(2\)](#)) requires a Recommendation Committee make recommendations to the governing authority for the appointment of the initial library board of trustees. After the initial board is created, the law continues to allow two options for recommending trustees - either continue with the

Recommendation Committee structure used for the initial appointments or the governing authority can pass the authority of recommendation to the library board of trustees. This should have been identified in a written agreement created within ninety days of establishing the library ([C.R.S.24-90-107-2\(e\)\(II\)](#)) and should also include a process for renewing appointment of currently appointed trustees.

Review documents between your library and governing authority to confirm process for recommending trustees.

In most cases, the board of trustees acts as the Recommendation Committee. This means the library leads the recruiting process and makes a recommendation of the best candidate to fit their needs and wants.

Yes, trustees are volunteers; however, it is important to know who you are selecting. Interviews provide a means to further get to know a candidate. This can be done either with the full board during a public meeting or with a smaller subcommittee of no more than two trustees (see Open Meeting/Sunshine Law).

Ideally, a candidate should attend at least one board of trustees meeting prior to selection. This allows the candidate to understand:

Post the opening and obtain applicants:

- verify minimum legal requirements are met
 - Reminder, Colorado Library Law requires applicants to live within the service area of the public library
- review the candidates letter of interest and resume

- how the board functions and trustees interact with each other, library director, and public;
- expectations of trustees regarding preparation and engagement;
- what it is like being a local government official.

Goals of the interview:

- verify that the skills, knowledge, and abilities of the candidate are the strengths and assets needed by the board;
- identify community connections;
- consider if past experience meet the needs of the board/community;

- ability to fulfill the time expectations of the board;
- and, finally is the candidate familiar with the library's mission, vision, and values as well as the role of trustee.

While there isn't a specific Colorado law mandating criminal background checks for library board members, it's a good practice for libraries to complete them. The criminal background check should be completed before a candidate is formally recommended by the Recommendation Committee to the governing authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The agreement establishing the Recommendation Committee should detail how it will forward recommendations to the governing authority. Different processes exist with public libraries and governing authority, some examples are:

- letter of recommendation to the governing authority, including cover letter and resume or CV
- interview by the governing authority of the candidate

APPOINT PROCESS AND REAPPOINTMENT

By law, the governing authority has 60 days to appoint or reject the candidate put forth by the Recommendation Committee. If they do not act on the recommendation within 60 days, the candidate is legally considered appointed ([C.R.S. §24-90-108\(c\)](#)). It is important to document when the 60 days starts in order to have evidence if no action by the governing authority occurs.

There are no term limits outlined in the Colorado Revised Statutes for library trustees.

About four to five months in advance of a trustee's term expiration, it is best practice to obtain a written statement from the trustee as to whether the individual does or does not wish to be reappointed.

If the trustee desires reappointment, evaluate the trustee to determine if a recommendation for reappointment is warranted. While it is appreciated that all trustees are volunteers, each trustee contributes to the efficient and effective functioning of the board.

Once an evaluation is completed, a recommendation for or against reappointment should be made to the Recommendation Committee. The reappointment process of the Recommendation Committee should then occur. Often, this is a simpler process than an appointment. The process should be documented in the written agreement between

the library board of trustees and the governing authority, and the reappointment process should be consistent over time.

Trustee Development

As the board considers succession, building in ways to enrich and develop the learning of the board is essential. One of the major roles of a trustee is to act as a steward which is the act of taking responsibility to oversee and manage. Trustees should engage in a constant reflective cycle of development, evaluation, and training in order to efficiently manage community resources that provide high-value library services to all, through the effective stewardship of public funds.

ONBOARDING

The goal of onboarding is to understand the library's history, culture, and mission to be good stewards of the library as well as know the expectations and legalities associated with being a local government official. Ideally, the newly appointed trustee has already attended a board meeting or two, so has some familiarity with how the board operates and board priorities.

Onboarding should include:

- a tour of the library(-ies)
- history of the library
- review of budget and board packet documents to fill fiduciary responsibility role
 - know the financial status of the library
 - act in the best interest of the library
 - identify potential conflicts of interest
- review policies
- review the strategic and other long range plans
- access to library board packets, organizational chart, contact information of the director, and trustees
- expectations and procedures for efficient board meetings
- separation of duties between trustees and the director
 - direct all queries through president
 - director is employee of the board not individual trustees
- Golden Rule - board as one voice

The responsibility of onboarding new trustees is primarily the responsibility of the board of trustees; however, it may be shared with the library director. It is critical to complete onboarding with fidelity.

DEVELOPMENT

The continuing education of the board of trustees ensures that all members stay abreast of the greater library world and are effective board members.

- At least one annual goal for the board's continuing education and performance in alignment with the library's strategic plan should occur each year.
- Integrates annual board continuing education and performance related to the values and ethics of the library profession.
- Participate in the legislative and policy processes at the local, state, and national levels to strengthen the future of libraries discussed further in this book.

Colorado State Library (CSL) and the Colorado Library Consortium (CLiC) provide training for trustees focusing on ethics and governance.

SELF-EVALUATION

An effective board is a reflective board. The board should complete a self-evaluation annually based on the job description. A simple annual survey, answered by each trustee individually, and reviewed by a committee or the board president and library director fits the need. See the previous chapter for Library Trustee Self-Assessment in the Try This section for an example.

The board of trustees should review the survey results and develop goals based on the results. Additionally, the self-evaluation provides guidance for the ongoing development of the board.

Summary

Succession planning is a key element to the sustainability of a public library. It is important for each trustee to know their roles and responsibilities of being a trustee, participate in ongoing training and self-evaluation, as well as consider the future of the board through the recruitment of future trustees and the recommendation of candidates to the governing authority.

Try This: SOAR Analysis

In order to provide guidance on professional development as well as identify potential target markets for selecting candidates for the board of trustees, take the results from the Library Trustee Self-Evaluation from Meetings, Committees, and More chapter and complete the SOAR analysis on the following page.

A SOAR analysis is a planning tool focused on assets to consider strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. Once you have completed the analysis, determine what goals, development, and skill sets the board has and needs to best serve the community.

