CHAPTER 8
THE BOARD AS AN EMPLOYER

The library director translates the board of trustee's vision into daily operations. Because the board is responsible for hiring and overseeing the director, they must manage the job description, conduct regular performance reviews, and determine compensation.

When hiring a library director, boards must follow specific government statutes. To ensure the process is legally sound, always consult with legal counsel.

Relationship is key to effective library leadership. Trust and open communication between the board and the director are critical. Boards can maintain a respectful relationship by establishing clear expectations through detailed job descriptions, formal board meetings, and the review process. Additionally, it is important to take note that library staff report to the library director who reports to the board. Maintaining these simple practices will keep the focus on the forward momentum of the library.

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 & GOVERNANCE
LIBRARY STAFF

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HIRING A LIBRARY DIRECTOR

One of the most important decisions a public library board of trustees makes is the hiring of a library director. This individual is responsible for taking the vision of the board and putting it into practice. The library director is an employee of the board in a library district. In municipal and county libraries, the library director is typically an employee of the city or county government.

LEGALITIES OF HIRING A LIBRARY DIRECTOR

As this position is a chief executive-level position, hiring is different from other library staff. Colorado Open Meeting Laws and Public Records Act come into play. Consult with legal counsel regarding questions on any part of this process.

1. A search committee shall establish job search goals, including the writing of the job description, deadlines for applications, requirements for applicants, selection procedures, and the timeframe for appointing or employing a library director. (C.R.S. §24-6-402(3.5)). Boards have put this into writing as a Resolution for the director search.

2. Fourteen days prior to appointing, employing, or offering the position to a finalist, the list of all finalists must be made public. The state or local body shall name one or more candidates as finalists for the position of chief executive officer. When there are three or fewer candidates, they are automatically defined as "finalists." No appointment or employment in the position can occur until the fourteen days have passed. C.R.S. §24-6-402(3.5)

3. The Board must select the top candidate and make an offer of employment in the open session of a public meeting, not in an executive session.

4. Specific contract negotiations about pay, benefits, etc., may occur in an executive session pursuant to C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(e), but the Board must approve the contract in a public meeting.

5. Records of finalists are generally public records, except for these documents pursuant to C.R.S. §24-72-204(3)(a)(XI)(A):
   Records of applicants who are not finalists;
   The following parts of records of finalists:
      Letters of reference
      Medical, psychological, or sociological data
      Financial records (e.g., credit checks)

Colorado Library Consortium (CLiC) has excellent resources for recruiting & hiring a rural public library director including a timeframe template, potential interview questions, and an offer letter template.

Library Jobline is an online platform for postings specifically for libraries and information services job opportunities. It is hosted through the Colorado State Library and requires employers to disclose compensation in job posts based on Colorado's Equal Pay for Work Act.

DIRECTOR JOB DESCRIPTION

The position "Library Director" is to bring the vision of the library board of trustees into operation. The role and responsibility of a Colorado public library director are addressed in Colorado Library Law (C.R.S. 24-90-109(c)(i-iii)) under the trustee's role to employ a director:

> "The duties of the director shall include, but not limited to:
>
> I. Implementing the policies adopted by the board of trustees pursuant to paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of this section;
>
> II. Recommending individuals for employment by the board of trustees; and
>
> III. Performing all other acts necessary for the orderly and efficient management and control of the library."

Like the relationship of the governing authority to the advisory board, the board of trustees can pass on certain roles to the library director; however, the board of trustees is still responsible for work being done. An example, the completion of the public library annual report.

It is the board's responsibility that the Public Library Annual Report is submitted to the Colorado State Library. The library director does this. The library director must then make sure to inform the board of the data submitted in the report so that the board is aware and familiar.

Typically, a library director's job description includes these essential functions from the Colorado Public Library Standards (2024-2030):

- Liaise between the governing authority and library staff, including communicating priorities to staff and sharing significant staff concerns that may inform governing decisions as well as issues that impact the library locally and globally
- Prepare and present the budget, regular reports, budget updates, and policy recommendations to the library's board of trustees/governing authority
- Hires and supervises library staff members
- Upholds written policies and procedures for the library, including supervision, operations, fiscal matters, and services
- Writes and oversees procedures that align with policies and library professional ethics
- Maintain written emergency procedures, risk management plans, and other guidance for continuity of library operations
- Is a member of local organizations
- Develop innovative processes and services, sharing freely with others to lead all public libraries into the future
- Administer the library in accordance with federal, state, and local codes and laws
- Meets with elected officials, community leaders, and other stakeholders to share library impact stories and needs and gain information on other local organizations and community priorities
- Develop a strategic plan for the future of the library

When reviewing the job description, consider the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by the public library and community for the library director to complete the work. Consider what education or experience is needed to do the job. Does the organization need someone with a heavy library background, organizational background, or community background?

Depending on the staff size and community of the public library, answers to those questions may vary. Prioritize what can be learned against what is needed immediately when determining the requirements for the position.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR ONBOARDING

The purpose of onboarding is to communicate the library's mission, vision, culture, as well as policies and procedures. The Library Factbook is an excellent resource that provides basic & essential information for managing the transition from one director to the next.

Onboarding should include:

- tour of the library(-ies)
- meeting with the board president and trustee responsible for director review, individual members of the leadership team, and other staff
- review of budget and board packet documents to fill administrative responsibility role
- review policies and the strategic plan
- access to library board packets, organizational chart, contact information of the director, and trustees
- expectations and procedures for efficient board meetings and operation of the library
- separation of duties between trustees and the director

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

LIBRARY DIRECTOR REVIEW

It is critical that the Library Director is reviewed and provided with coaching. Each year an annual evaluation should be conducted by the board based upon the position's job description, skills, and goals. It should be presented by the board during an executive session (unless the library director chooses it to be held in an open meeting).

A designated member or committee of the board is responsible for putting together the review. If the board is an advisory board rather than a governing board, and the library director is an employee of the governing authority, the board should establish expectations with the governing authority regarding the library director review process.

Why perform an annual review, especially if the director has been the library director for many years? An annual formal review acts to clearly state and review expectations. It clears the air and strengthens the relationship of the board of trustees and director. Completing the review reaffirms the board's role in overseeing the work of the director and communicates to the director the board's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with performance. Times change. Communities change. Boards change. It is important that the library director continue to be the right fit for the position.



The board of trustees should determine who contributes towards the review process of the library director. Is it just the board? Is a survey sought by the Leadership Team, staff, or Friends/Foundation? The determination should be consistent year-to-year and not alter just because the director has been on staff for multiple cycles of review.

Goals should be identified annually based upon the review, implementation of the strategic priorities, and skills needed to lead the library as identified in the job description.

To ensure coaching occurs throughout the year, establish a timeframe in which a designated trustee or committee of the board meets with the library director 2-3 times a year to review goals and the working relationship between the board and the director. Documentation summarizing the discussion and further action should be added to the library director's HR folder.

Libraries are bastions of learning in which the review process is reflective and positive. All individuals involved with the library should be committed to growth, especially the library director.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR COMPENSATION

The Colorado State Library has tools available to compare library director compensation based upon data provided in the Public Library Annual Report. Library Research Services can help the board of trustees determine comparable libraries, identify longitudinal data on salary, and find the cost of living in the community.

Considerations for library director compensation include:

- salaries in comparable libraries
- similar positions and compensation provided in the local community;
- expectations of the position on time and desire of the library to have the director in financial need of a second position;
- requirements of education and experience for the position; and additional components of compensation the director receives (housing, retirement, paid time off, educational opportunities) that contribute to the overall compensation.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE (FAMLI)

In 2020, Colorado voters approved Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI). This is a paid leave program for all workers in Colorado. Employers and employees contribute premiums to the program.

Local government boards can choose three paths of participation unlike private businesses:

- Participate in FAMLI
    - Employee & employer contribute
- Decline all participation
    - Employer does not manage employee contribution nor provide employer contribution
        - Employee may self-elect to participate and manage their contribution
    - If this path is chosen, every eight (8) years, the governing body must vote again on its path
- Decline employer participation
    - Employer manages employee contribution through payroll deduction, but employer does not provide the employer portion of the contribution

No matter what path is voted on, all local governments must register with the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program under the Department of Labor and Employment. Depending upon the vote, a different course of action must occur through the portal.

LIBRARY STAFF

The role of the trustee is to hire and supervise a highly effective director, provide clear policies to follow, develop a strategic plan for staff to implement, and ensure funds are budgeted to execute the strategic plan and pay staff appropriately including professional development.

All communication with library staff should go through the library director. Concerns should follow written problem-solving procedures in the employee handbook.

The employee handbook is a comprehensive guide outlining policies, procedures, and expectations for staff and staff relations. Typically, the board of trustees has an oversight role in developing an employee handbook, ensuring it aligns with the organization's mission, values, and legal requirements. The library director and HR department typically handle the drafting and implementation; the board is responsible for reviewing and approving the final document.

There are many legal requirements surrounding employment in Colorado including wages, working hours, employee benefits, discrimination, and safety. The Department of Labor and Employment is a good resource for Colorado labor statutes. Keep in mind that public library staff are public employees, and there are exceptions to certain labor laws. One of the key matters keeping library directors up at night is HR issues. Many public libraries are members of organizations that provide legal training and HR resources for employers. Encouraging the library to be a member of one of these organizations provides a library director with HR support that many do not have in their backgrounds.

SUMMARY

As the library director brings to operation the library board's vision, trust, respect, open communication, and mutual support are critical. Being up front and honest about the expectations for the position throughout the job description, hiring process, and reflective cycle of review, ensure a strong working relationship between the board and the trustees.

The library director is an employee of the board in a library district. In municipal and county libraries, the library director is typically an employee of the city or county government. The process is outlined in Colorado Law *C.R.S. §24-6-402*.

The annual review for a Library Director should be based on their job description, skills, and goals. It is a critical opportunity for the board to provide coaching and clarify expectations.

- **Who conducts the review?** A designated board member or committee is responsible for putting the review together.
- **Who contributes?** The board should consistently determine who provides input, such as the leadership team, staff, or Friends/Foundation groups.
- **What about the meeting?** The review should be presented during an executive session unless the director requests that it be held in an open meeting.
- **Ongoing Process:** A designated trustee should meet with the director throughout the year (2-3 times) to check in on goals and the working relationship.

TRY THIS: DIRECTOR'S REVIEW

To fulfill their oversight role effectively, the Board of Trustees must be thoroughly familiar with the Director's review process.

TO UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS AND OVERSIGHT

- ☐ Become familiar with the process for the library director's review.
- ☐ Identify who oversees the procedures for the review (e.g., Board President, designated committee, or full Board).
- ☐ Identify a clear timeline for coaching, goal setting, and the formal evaluation.

OBTAIN AND REVIEW KEY DOCUMENTS

- ☐ Obtain a copy of the library director's job description.
- ☐ Obtain a copy of the procedures for the review.
- ☐ Obtain a copy of the tools used for evaluation (e.g., performance metrics, self-assessment forms).

PERFORM A CRITICAL ALIGNMENT CHECK

Compare the job description to the evaluation tool.

- ☐ Are there areas in the job description that are not addressed in the evaluation tool? (This indicates a gap in accountability.)
- ☐ Are the correct people being asked for feedback for the evaluation?
- ☐ Are there areas being evaluated that are not included in the job description? (This indicates a potential mismatch between expectations and formal duties.)