

Tennessee Public Library Trustee Workshop

September 2006



Trustee Tool Kit

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for the

2006 Tennessee Public Library Trustee Workshop
A Training Workshop of the Tennessee State Library and Archives
developed as

A Pilot Program for the Institute of Museum and Library Services



Director Evaluation Process

One of the most important aspects of the trustee's job is to evaluate the performance of the library director regularly. It is one of the most difficult tasks as well. The evaluation of the library director should be an ongoing process, a natural outgrowth of a good relationship between trustees and library director.

A good board expects excellent performance and does everything it can to provide solid support and good working conditions.

A good director shares problems with the board and seeks guidance on problem solving. It is especially important that the director tell the board what is possible to accomplish with the resources available. Boards naturally want the best, but need to understand costs in terms of funding, time, and people. The director must assure that the board receives the information it needs to make knowledgeable decisions.

There are two kinds of evaluation:

First, the director should be given **help with problems and advice on mistakes** in a timely fashion that facilitates quick resolution.

Second, the board of trustees should conduct a **formal annual review** of the library director. There are good reasons for having an annual review, since a review:

1. Provides the director with **formal feedback about job performance** and an opportunity to acknowledge the director's accomplishments.
2. Provides the director with a **clear understanding of the Board's expectations** and its perceptions of how those expectations are being met.
3. Can be a **tool for motivation, encouragement, and direction**.
4. Can be used to **check the progress and to establish the goals and objectives** of the library, as well as of the director.
5. Can be **coordinated with the determination of community needs**, thereby providing an important component of the library's ongoing planning process.
6. Can provide the board with **valuable information about the operations and performance** of the library.
7. Identifies **Board concerns and initiates a procedure for actions** to be taken.
8. Can help to **establish a record of unsatisfactory performance** if there is ever cause to discipline the director or terminate employment.
9. Can give the board and the director a formal opportunity to **evaluate the job description** and adjust it as necessary.
10. Demonstrates **sound management and accountability** to community officials and the public.

Evaluation

Evaluation is both a **verbal** and **written** process. A formal **written evaluation** is conducted at least once a year and at stated points during the probationary period. The evaluation cannot be based on personality traits, but must be **specific to job performance**. Both **positive performance** and **areas requiring improvement** are included in the written documentation which is **reviewed** with and **signed off by the director**.

Evaluation of the director is an important part of a board's duties. Failure to provide regular written evaluations can result in serious **legal problems** if, in the future, it is necessary **to terminate** the director's employment.

Basis for the Annual Review

The performance review should be based on:

1. The director's written job description, each item of which should be valid, realistic benchmarks. The **EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL FORM** (on page 22) can be used to facilitate this process.
2. A list of objectives for the preceding year, jointly written and agreed upon by the director and the board at the beginning of the year.
3. The success of the library in carrying out service programs, as well as the director's contribution to that success.
4. Concrete and measurable activities.

Cautions

1. Do not evaluate personality unless it is written in the job description.
2. Prevent surprises during the annual performance evaluation: work with the director to resolve performance problems *when they occur* and be willing to discuss the issue and offer solutions.
3. Do not do evaluation at the same time wage increases are announced.
4. Praise in public and often, and criticize in private. Acknowledge good work and accomplishments any time.
5. Loyalty will be received for loyalty given - no one can eat loyalty.
6. Don't expect volunteer hours for the paid job, not only is it dumb, it's illegal.

Setting Goals and Objectives with the Director

After the written job description, the best technique of evaluation for a new or long-term director is to set goals and objectives for the director. These should be specific to the library. The library director's goals and objectives should be key elements of the library's overall planning process.

A library board, which is analyzing and planning progress all the time, should know what it wants over the next year, and the director should be able to suggest what is possible to achieve.

Goals and Objectives

Goals are general accomplishments that support the library mission. In general, goals are not time limited and are often not expected to be fully accomplished.

Objectives are specific, measurable, time-limited descriptions of desired results. Achievement of objectives will be the basis for assessment of success in meeting library goals.

There are times when the director is not performing to the board's satisfaction in a certain area. At such times, the board's watchword should be **SPECIFICS**. The director should be given specific tasks to accomplish within a specific period or specific behaviors to change (objectives). Unspecific comments such as "bad attitude" are more likely to result in frustration and anger rather than constructive change. The **PROGRESS REPORT FORM** (on page 21) can be used to facilitate this process.

Handling an "Episode"

Occasionally, the library director becomes involved in an "episode," which the board must handle. All too often, there may be reaction to the incident.

The board should have a policy and procedures on handling personnel complaints by the public, just as it has on handling internal personnel problems. Then any board member approached by an irate member of the public can honestly state that there is a procedure to be followed and that discussion of the problem before thorough investigation would be unfair and unproductive. Following established policy and procedures should minimize reactive results and provide for greater consistency.

What If the Director Just Isn't Working Out?

The time may come, even in the first year of a relationship, when it's evident to one or both sides that a parting of the ways is necessary. Any board decision needs to be fair and impartial, to be decent to the director and to avoid the risk of litigation. Guard against snap judgments, such as decisions made on the basis of a single complaint, or action based on opinion rather than fact. The director, of course, can decide to resign at any time.

As a trustee, it is always necessary to remember that a first responsibility is to the library and the community it serves. The role of employer may be a role to which many trustees are unaccustomed and it can sometimes seem easier to let an uncomfortable situation slide rather than face it head on. This is especially the case in small communities where trustees and library staff may have been friends and neighbors for many years. An unwillingness to deal directly with difficult personnel issues will ultimately damage the library and its ability to provide the best service to the community. If a library director has truly demonstrated a continuing, documented inability to manage the library effectively, the board must look for a new person who can do it, rather than make excuses or run the library themselves.

Termination of a director is often the result of **failure on both the part of the director and the board**. Review **what went wrong** in order to learn **what to look for** when hiring the next director or to **correct a situation** before the new director arrives.

Dismissing the Director

Probably the most painful situation a board of trustees can face is the dismissal of the library director. Boards that hire carefully, communicate well, nurture positive working relationships and evaluate effectively are far less likely to face this unpleasant task. However, when serious problems cannot be resolved, dismissal becomes a last resort.

Library directors are usually dismissed for poor performance, combined with an unwillingness or inability to improve, or for major infractions of policies or library law. Such a situation calls for careful courtesy on the part of the trustees, both for ethical reasons and to prevent possible countercharges.

When considering the termination of the director, the board should review the following questions:

- Has the director received a formal work appraisal?
- Is there a clear paper trail documenting the problems and the actions the director was expected to take to correct them?
- Is there any evidence that personality clashes or unreasonable biases are a factor in the decision?
- Has the board dealt with problems as they arose?
- Has the director been given a full hearing?
- Has the director received written notification of the dismissal with the reasons for it listed explicitly?
- Have the trustees received appropriate legal advice and is the board prepared to justify its actions?
- Are there any library policies that need to be changed as a result of the situation?
- Has it been determined how the dismissal will be presented to the public?

[Adapted from the *Virginia Public Library Trustee Handbook*.]

Resources for Developing Job Descriptions

Prior to an appropriate performance review of any employee, a comprehensive job description should be in place. Here is a list of resources which could be consulted by the library board and staff to develop a job description for each position.

The Neal-Schuman Directory of Public Library Job Descriptions.

Rebecca Brumley. Neal-Schuman, 2005. Book and CD-ROM.
There are more than 270 proven and effective job descriptions in this book.

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTIONS ON THE WEB

Sample Job Descriptions from Connecticut Public Libraries

<http://ct.webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=7390>

Library Job Descriptions from the State Library of Ohio

<http://winslo.state.oh.us/publib/job.html>

Montana State Library Sample Position Descriptions Index

<http://msl.mt.gov/ldd/Samples/PositionDescriptions/librarypds.html>

Samples of Public Library Job Descriptions - North Dakota

<http://ndsl.lib.state.nd.us/Publications/Job%20description%20examples.pdf>

Sample Job Descriptions from Pennsylvania Public Libraries

<http://www.statelibrary.state.pa.us/libraries/cwp/view.asp?A=15&Q=40603>

Sample Job Descriptions from The Municipal Research & Services Center of Washington

<http://www.mrsc.org/JobDesc/JobDescriptions.aspx?jt=L>

SAMPLE PERSONNEL POLICIES ON THE WEB

Personnel Rules and Regulations for a Policy Manual

<http://neilsa.org/consulting/XYZ/rulesregs.htm>

Outline for the Personnel Section of a Library Policy Manual

<http://www.owlsweb.info/141/policies/VII.asp>

JOB DESCRIPTION TEMPLATE

Here is a template for creating employee job descriptions. There is a blank form to complete on page 21.

Job Title	
Position Summary	<p>What is the reason for this job? What must it achieve? How does it contribute to the success of the library?</p> <p><i>Remember:</i> "This position description is not intended to be all-inclusive. The Library Board reserves the right to revise or change position duties as the need arises and reserves the right to change descriptions, duties, or working schedules where appropriate and reasonable, especially to accommodate disabilities. This description does not constitute a written or implied contract of employment."</p>
Position Requirements	<p>What EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE, PREFERRED SKILLS, and PHYSICAL ABILITIES are needed to qualify for this position?</p>
Reports to: (SUPERVISION AND DIRECTION)	<p>To whom is this person accountable? Should be only one individual (or, in the case of the Director, the Library Board).</p>
Supervises:	<p>What individuals does this person supervise?</p>
Working relationships	<p>Whom else does this person work with? What working relationships are necessary with other county/city departments, regional and state agencies?</p>
Key result areas	<p>This job description is based on outcomes rather than inputs. This gives the jobholder greater freedom and greater accountability.</p> <p>Key result areas should be related to the job objective and transferred into the appraisal form.</p> <p>All employees should have a key result area related to their personal and professional development.</p>
Essential Duties (KEY TASKS)	<p>Avoid the temptation to include too-detailed a list of tasks. Only include those that are specifically required to be done e.g. submitting monthly reports, completing staff appraisals. These will mainly be tasks that are required for other people to be effective.</p> <p><i>Remember:</i> "Follows legal, professional, and ethical practices when making decisions and carrying out responsibilities."</p>
Core skills	<p>Many of these will be standard professional skills or generic competences. Focus on those that are specific to this position, and are essential for its success and that differentiate it from other jobs.</p>

JOB DESCRIPTION TEMPLATE

Job Title	
Position Summary	
Position Requirements	EDUCATION: EXPERIENCE: PREFERRED SKILLS: PHYSICAL ABILITIES:
Reports to: (SUPERVISION AND DIRECTION)	
Supervises:	
Working relationships	
Key result areas	
Essential Duties (KEY TASKS)	
Core skills	

Local County Library System

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL FORM

Rate the job performance as listed in numerical order on the job description.

1 Does Not Meet Expectations	2	3 Meets Expectations	4	5 Exceeds Expectations	Unable to Rate
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					
15.					
16.					

Signature of Employee

Signature of Personnel Committee Chair

*Signature signifies only that this report has been read by the employee:
it does not indicate approval or disapproval of report.*

Each employee will receive a copy of this appraisal form when completed
by the Library Board personnel committee.
The original will be filed with library board records at the (Name of) Library.

Local County Library System

PROGRESS REPORT FORM

(for use in case of problem areas needing immediate correction)

FOR PERIOD FROM _____ TO _____ 200__.

Employee's Name: _____

PRIMARY DUTIES OF EMPLOYEE

LIBRARY DIRECTOR STRENGTHS

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

GOALS FOR FOLLOWING YEAR; DEVELOPED WITH PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Signature of Employee

Signature of Personnel Committee Chair

*Signature signifies only that this report has been read by the employee:
it does not indicate approval or disapproval of report.*