

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 22, 2024
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VanDocs#: DOC/2024/039814
Meeting Date: February 28, 2024

TO: Library Board
FROM: Kevin Lowe, Chair, Governance Committee
SUBJECT: Board Development and Continuing Education

SUMMARY

This report provides an opportunity for the Governance Committee to discuss development needs of trustees based on the findings of the December 2023 self-evaluation survey.

PURPOSE

This report is for discussion and information.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board receive the report for information.

POLICY

The Board Governance Principles set out VPL trustees' obligations, including those in the Library Act.

INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS

VPL approved an Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation Strategy in November 2022, outlining the strategies that VPL would take to continue to respond to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This includes 2.3 "Provide a culturally safe environment both internally (among VPL staff and trustees) and externally (for partners, patrons and community) in which to address harm and

support the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous communities, including residential school survivors, intergenerational survivors, and Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ communities.” Core training is offered through BCLTA to ensure that trustees are prepared to support this priority, and the Board discusses additional opportunities to further this work.

Ensuring that the Board has sufficient ongoing education and training to advance Indigenous rights and reconciliation has been identified as a priority moving forward. Board discussions will need to take place to decide on specific initiatives to support the Board's development in this area.

BACKGROUND

All trustees are required to attend the BC Library Trustees Association’s core governance training in their first few months, currently offered as virtual workshop, Board Essentials: Roles & Responsibilities for Library Trustees. In addition, trustees often attend other programs delivered by BCLTA, including those on chairing and leading, diversity and inclusion, and Indigenous Awareness. The Board can request customized workshops from BCLTA or others to meet specific needs and priorities.

Budget orientation and obligations under BC FOIPPA are provided annually in Q1, in conjunction with new trustees joining the Board. Other training depends on Board priorities and areas that arise from discussion or as a result of the self-assessment held in November each year, which the Governance Committee considers annually.

In the past two years, learning topics arising from meetings and the self-evaluation survey have included:

- a workshop on digital licensing and copyright, held in March 2022, and repeated with updates for InterLINK member library trustees, including VPL, in October 2023;
- a strategic plan introduction and refresher in March 2023;
- an annual report on audits and evaluations in May 2022 and 2023, and planned for May 2024;
- a report and opportunity for questions about library partner organizations in January 2022 and 2023.

The Library’s business is complex, and learning continues throughout a trustee’s time on the Board. Trustees may wish to refer to the BCLTA Trustee Orientation Checklist: <https://www.bclta.ca/trustee-orientation-checklist/> and the Learning & Development section of the BCLTA website to support discussion of learning needs. In 2022, the Governance Committee concluded that most training should be incorporated into Board meetings through information reports or presentations, due to the many competing demands on trustees’ time. This approach continued through 2023.

DISCUSSION

Ten trustees participated in the self-evaluation survey in December 2023. There were 36 quantitative questions, which asked trustees to respond with strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or not applicable. Among these 36 questions, 22 questions were answered with agree or strongly agree by all trustees.

Board members agreed or strongly agreed that they understand expectations of their governance role based on Board policy, as well as the Library's vision, mission and strategic plan, that they review progress against the Strategic Plan on a regular basis, that Library patrons and other stakeholders' views are considered, and that budgets and expenditures are aligned with the plan and financial reports are reviewed throughout the year.

Trustees agreed that the Board considers Indigenous peoples and is committed to advancing Truth and Reconciliation.

They also agreed or strongly agreed that they are supported in advocacy, that they are familiar with municipal issues affecting the Library, and that they receive reports on issues affecting staff. Trustees agreed that they understand the roles of the VPL Foundation and Friends.

Trustees reported that they experience Board meetings as respectful and open to receiving questions and concerns, and that questions are answered thoroughly and respectfully by staff, including in times of disagreement. They found materials sufficient in preparation for meetings, and know how to get questions answered.

For the following statements, 2-3 respondents disagreed:

- I feel confident speaking up on issues about Indigenous rights and reconciliation at Board and Committee meetings (3)
- I understand how and when to report to the Board about my activities as a liaison to InterLINK, BCLTA, VPL Foundation, Friends of the VPL, or VPL Trust, as applicable. (3)
- I am generally familiar with the role of other Library-related organizations, including the Ministry of Education, InterLINK, Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC), British Columbia Library Association (BCLA) and the Canadian Federation of Library Associations- Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA-FCAB). (2)

There were 11 statements where one respondent disagreed, and these are listed in Appendix A.

The following summarizes comments from the open-ended section of the survey that the committee may wish to discuss:

- A range of suggestions were provided to further support the Library's work in advancing Indigenous rights and reconciliation, including: more training to build common understanding of rights and reconciliation and more time for discussion (for non-

Indigenous trustees); more Indigenous trustees, with compensation; processes that are more culturally appropriate for Indigenous participants; a better understanding of what local Nations and urban Indigenous people want to see from the Library; experiential learning with the Nations; and setting a goal of 20% Indigenous employees at VPL.

- While most indicated that board packages were successful for being prepared for decisions, two respondents identified that on key decision making items, more time or information is needed, and one of these indicated that they felt information was at times being deliberately withheld by staff to guide trustees towards a certain outcome; one additional suggestion was to provide rejected alternatives more often.
- On the carrying out of board meetings, trustees comment they are generally well-run, however, materials could be provided earlier, with a suggested time of a week in advance. They also identified that there could be more opportunity for relationship-building. It was noted that with in-camera at the end of the meeting, the most complex issues are sometimes not handled when people are at their best. It was also noted that senior staff need to work on receptivity to the questions and authority of the board, as well as building a greater understanding of issues affecting IBPOC people.
- Suggestions to speak to one’s own perspective, i.e. not speak on behalf of staff or another’s perspective.
- Suggestion to be mindful of those who do not consume alcohol when planning social gatherings.

Some trustees suggested opportunities for unstructured discussion without staff or the public present. The [Board Procedure Policy](#) s.6(a) states that the Chief Librarian & CEO will be present at all meetings, with the exception of meetings related to their performance, however the Board has the discretion to exclude other staff from in-camera discussions on any topic. The Board has received legal advice on the Board Procedure Policy on more than one occasion.

Trustees also noted that in considering areas for improvement, which is important, it is also important to recognize that VPL is an example of good governance and strategy for public institutions.

BOARD ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Topic	Timing
Obligations under BC FOIPPA*	February
Budget/financial statement orientation*	March
BCLTA Core Governance Workshop *	Next date: February 27, 6-9pm

Topic	Timing
Chairing the Board**	Not currently scheduled by BCLTA
Indigenous Awareness*	Individually scheduled

*required for new trustees (as applicable)

**required for new committee chairs/Board chair

Questions for Discussion:

- Does the preferred approach from 2023 of incorporating learning into regular meetings as much as possible continue to work for the 2024 Board?
- What areas of learning and discussion would the Governance Committee like to plan for 2024, based on the survey findings?

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Board has an annual budget of \$25,500 for meeting expenses, training and continuing education, which includes expenses for individual trustees to attend BC Library Trustees Association conferences and events and for group training costs. This has historically been sufficient for training needs and appropriate meal expenses for Board committee and public meetings. The Chief Librarian & CEO can advise on potential additional sources of funds if required.

APPENDIX A

For the following 11 statements, one of the ten Board members replying disagreed.

1. I have access to all Board policies and am generally familiar with them. (1)
2. I am familiar with the Library's internal financial controls and management controls. The Board ensures that the Library maintains appropriate financial controls and management controls and that major risks are identified and managed appropriately.
3. I am familiar with the annual process for evaluating the Chief Librarian & CEO's performance. (1)
4. The Board assists in setting fundraising priorities for, and is aware of the efforts of, the VPL Foundation and the Friends of VPL. (1)
5. I feel Trustees are actively engaging in the work to advance Indigenous rights and reconciliation at the Library. (1)
6. I met with or communicated with my City Council liaison several times throughout the year about issues affecting the Library, or made efforts to do so. (1)
7. I am familiar with provincial and federal issues affecting libraries generally, and VPL in particular (e.g. copyright, provincial funding). (1)
8. I am familiar with the role and activities of the BC Library Trustees Association (BCLTA). (1)
9. Trustees are given opportunities to develop their skills and understanding of Library issues, such as through participation in Library-related workshops. (1)
10. As a newer Trustee (on the Board for 3 years or less), I feel my needs for support and mentorship are being met. (1)
11. I am encouraged to consider taking up a leadership role on the Board, such as becoming a Committee Chair, Vice Chair or Chair. (1)