

KDLA September 2011 Trustee Tip of the Month How Does the Library Board Recruit New Trustees?

Quick Tips

- ◆ Trustee term limits require the library board to continually recruit new trustees to serve on the board.
- ◆ The process of recruiting new trustees should begin at least 6 months in advance of the term expiration date to ensure that the two required names are submitted approximately 65 days in advance of an expiring term.
- ◆ Adopting a recruitment procedure will make this process easier and quicker.
- ◆ A good beginning point is a board evaluation to identify skills, abilities, and experience to look for in potential trustees.
- ◆ Make cultivating and recruiting potential future board members a year-round process.

It has often been said that the most important decision that a library board makes is selecting the library director. The second most important decision the board may make is the choice of who will serve on the library board. A well-rounded board working in partnership with the director is essential to the smooth operation of the library and the future of library facilities and services to the community.

Since library trustees may legally serve for only two consecutive terms of four years each [[KRS 173.340\(2\)](#); [KRS 173.490\(1\)](#); [KRS 173.730\(1\)](#)] and must wait at least a year before being eligible for reappointment, library boards need to have a method for replacing trustees whose terms have expired or for a member who may resign before her term expires. For each vacancy on the board, 2 candidates must be nominated. As the County Judge/Executive has the option of choosing either candidate, both candidates must possess the qualifications needed for service on the board. It is important that both names submitted to the County Judge/Executive be of individuals who are willing and able to begin serving on the library board immediately.

Having a board policy that outlines the method(s) by which new trustees will be chosen is key to the effective recruitment of new trustees. Library boards may use different procedures for choosing new trustees. The main goal in this process is to ensure that you have a balanced board of diverse members who can successfully work together to provide the community with the highest quality library facilities and services.

A well-rounded board should include not only people from different areas of the county, but also members of different age-groups, race, gender, and backgrounds. A balanced board will also include people with diverse skills and/or community influence.

There are some steps that can be used to help create a well-rounded board:

- ◆ Use an evaluation tool to create a profile of the current board to identify gaps and characteristics to look for in a new trustee – ask your Regional Librarian for an example of a profile worksheet or a skills assessment matrix;



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- ◆ Study the strategic plan and the library’s rating on the *KY Public Library Standards* to assess what skills and areas of expertise might help in reaching future goals;
- ◆ Create a trustee job description or brochure outlining the library’s mission, goals, trustee duties and desired characteristics for library board trustees;
- ◆ Begin marketing the open trustee position—the board can use different strategies for this: post the position on the library’s website and bulletin board, advertise the position in the newspaper, talk to friends and acquaintances about serving on the board, gather names of people who might fit the current needs that have been identified.
 - Check your board bylaws and policies and follow the recruiting method as outlined in them.

Use the recruitment process as an opportunity to reach out to a wider group of potential new trustees. Bringing new members to the board can provide a fresh perspective, new ideas and energy to the board’s important job of providing the best library service possible to the community.

Whatever method is used to find potential trustees, it is helpful to have them submit an application outlining their experience, skills, and reason(s) for wanting to serve on the library board. The board may appoint a committee to review the applications or they may be reviewed by the entire board.

If desired, your Regional Librarian can provide you with information to present to potential trustees an overview of what will be expected of them as a trustee and what they may expect in serving on the library board.

It is also a good idea to have the potential trustee attend a board meeting to get an idea of what to expect and a sense of the other board members with whom they would be serving.

An interview may also be part of the recruitment process. This gives the person an opportunity to learn more about the “job” of the library trustee and also gives the interviewers an opportunity to get to know a little more about the potential trustee. The interview may include (but is not limited to):

- ◆ General information about the library—its mission, goals, future plans and current services;
- ◆ Discussion of what the board does, how it operates, and the time and energy required to serve on the board;
- ◆ The challenges and opportunities that the board faces in doing its job;
- ◆ Asking questions that will provide more detailed information about their skills, experience, and interests;
- ◆ An explanation of the trustee recruitment and appointment process;
- ◆ Letting the applicant know how they will be notified of the appointment outcome.

The recruitment process does not need to take place ONLY when there is an expiring term. It is a good idea to cultivate and recruit interested individuals on a year-round basis. If there is an unexpected resignation, there will be a pool of names from which the board can refer and contact for a quick turn-around in filling the position of the unexpired term. This prevents the board from having to deal with the process at an inopportune time when there are other pressing issues on which the board is focused. It also helps the board to fulfill its legal duty in providing the names for new trustees in an efficient manner.

Putting this task on the *Twelve Month Agenda* and spending some time on it annually will help the board have a current list of interested individuals to which they can refer at any time. If you need an example of a *Twelve Month Agenda*, ask your Regional Librarian for this.

KY statute [[KRS 65.008\(1\)](#)] requires that the library board provide notice to the appointing authority of an expiring term at least 60 days in advance of the term expiration. To assist library boards in observing this legal requirement, the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives will be notifying the library director four (4) months in advance of an expiring term. This will give the board time to select two candidates to replace the retiring trustee. The two selected names need to be received by KDLA approximately 65 days before the term expiration date.

To be prepared to send the required names in advance of the expiration, it is suggested that library boards put new trustee appointments on the meeting agenda six months before a member's term expires. This will allow time for a recruiting process before the submission deadline. The board may want to keep a list of names of potential trustees who would like to serve on the library board to expedite the process and make it easier to comply with the legal requirements for trustee appointments.

Recruiting and developing talented and committed individuals to serve on the library board can be a time-consuming task. Investing time and energy in the recruitment process will lead to a strong, diverse, and collegial board whose work and decisions create the best possible library for the community.

This is not legal advice and I am not an attorney. If you feel you need legal advice you should consult an attorney.

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