

February 2013 Trustee Tip of the Month

Evaluating the Library Director

One important duty of public library boards of trustees is the annual evaluation of the library director. As library boards work to be accountable and transparent in governing the library, completing this task is an essential feature of responsible library oversight. An annual evaluation also: provides an opportunity to assess progress on the library's strategic plan; allows the board to acknowledge the director's accomplishments and provides him/her with feedback on job performance; ensures that the director and the board share the same vision and goals; identifies any concerns that the director or the trustees may have so that actions are planned to initiate needed changes; and, allows the board to ensure that the director is being fairly compensated.

While there is not one perfect evaluation process, there are various evaluation methods and a combination of these may provide the best result. Some of the most common types of evaluations include those based on the director's behavioral traits, on the job description, or on organizational performance.

DO

- Review the library director's job description as part of the process;
- Use an evaluation process and format that have been agreed upon by the board and the director. The director and board both need to have, in advance, a clear and common understanding regarding the evaluation;
- Choosing a method that provides a review of the director's job description, the library's strategic plan, goals and objectives, and a report submitted by the director that documents the accomplishments of the library will give the director and the trustees the best overview on which to base the director's performance;
- Provide as much narrative on what the evaluator sees that the director has done well and areas where improvements can be made. Don't assume that giving the director a high score is adequate. Give reasons for whatever score is given;
- Provide the evaluation verbally and in writing. As a reminder, the board cannot go into executive session to discuss the director's evaluation unless there is a possibility of disciplinary action or dismissal. A general statement regarding the evaluation may be made during a board meeting when the evaluation is provided to the Director. The Board President can be given the responsibility of discussing the evaluation in greater detail with the Director outside of the meeting;
- Use this as an opportunity to see what is working well and where improvements can be made to benefit the library and the community;
- Use all of the information and tools used in the evaluation process to set up goals and objectives and agree on expectations for the next year.

DON'T

- Use the evaluation process to address an issue that has been festering;
- Use the evaluation process to resolve a crisis;
- Assume the director already knows how he/she is doing;
- Fail to conduct an evaluation on an annual basis even when things are working perfectly.

Records of the director's evaluation should be kept on file at the library until five (5) years after the director has terminated employment.

If you need sample evaluation forms or assistance with the evaluation process, contact your KDLA Regional Librarian.