

***KDLA May 2012 Trustee Tip of the Month***  
***What Policies Are Essential for Every Board to Adopt?***

One of the many important duties of public library trustees is that of developing policies that define how the library will operate in fulfilling its mission. Kentucky Revised Statutes charge public library boards with establishing bylaws and creating policies as needed for efficient management and control of the library's assets, personnel, and facilities. [KRS 173.350(2), 173.520(2)(c), 173.745(2)(c)]

Bylaws and policies provide guidance to the board and library staff on the appropriate response to various issues and ensure that library business is conducted in compliance with all laws and regulations. Carefully developed and clearly written policies reduce the need for crisis policymaking, decrease the risk of liability, ensure equal and fair treatment of all library users, and provide guidance for the operation and use of the library.

While all policies address important aspects of library management, policies addressing financial issues assure the efficient and economical use of public funds and the safeguarding of public assets. These policies and the development of essential internal controls guarantee good stewardship and accountability of the library board in the prudent use of public resources used to provide the high quality of library services the community needs and wants. Some essential policies that the library board should adopt to enhance and maintain public confidence in the library board's efforts to conduct business in a transparent manner include:

1. *Board Expense Reimbursement Policy* outlines how reimbursements will be made to a trustee who has incurred expenses while on library business.
2. *Board Orientation & Training Policy* describes the methods and documents that will be used to familiarize a new trustee with the library, staff, board bylaws and policies and how the trustee can continue to develop and grow in his/her knowledge of library issues and best practices.
3. *Code of Ethics* is a statement covering issues of transparency and integrity in governance.
4. *Conflict of Interest Policy* outlines the ethical principles that prevent trustees or their families from entering into a business relationship with the library, and the adoption of anti-nepotism policies on employment of family members.
5. *Fiscal Responsibility Policy* explains the ethical standards used in handling library funds or assets and the segregation of duties and internal controls that will be followed to maintain adequate fiscal oversight and prevent misuse or loss of funds or assets.
6. *Investment Policy* defines how public funds will be managed and invested.
7. *Open Records Policy* outlines the procedure for requesting access to library records that are subject to the Open Records Act and for how the library will respond to the request.
8. *Procurement Policy* establishes the methods the library will use to purchase goods and services in a fair, transparent, and competitive manner.
9. *Sponsorships/Partnerships Policy* clarifies how the library will interact with businesses and organizations that sponsor library events or become partners for a library event.
10. *Whistleblower Policy* details how the staff, trustees, or community members can communicate potential illegal or fraudulent activities in conducting library business, how these reports will be handled, and the protections afforded to any employee who, in good faith, reports his/her concerns.