

Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2020 Results

Date:	March 22, 2021
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the updated results of the Toronto Public Library Board Self-Evaluation 2020 to the Library Board for approval. The report was on the agenda for the Library Board's January 25, 2021 meeting. At that time, six of nine Board members had completed the survey. The Board passed a *Motion to Defer - Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2020 Results until the survey has been reopened and a higher survey response rate has been achieved*. The survey was reopened and nine Board members have now completed the survey. The updated results are in Attachment One.

This is the fifth year the Library Board has conducted the survey, beginning in 2016. The survey asks Board members to evaluate the Board's Governance Role, Integrity and Ethics, Strategy Development, Teamwork, Advocacy and Communication, and to rate the Board's overall value and efficacy.

Overall, respondents unanimously agreed the Board adds value and is operating efficiently. No major issues were identified requiring immediate action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. receives the updated results of the Board's self-evaluation survey summarized in Attachment 1; and
2. directs staff to conduct a survey in 2021, the third year of the Board's term.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Recommendations have no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

DECISION HISTORY

At its January 25, 2021 meeting, the Board reviewed the report Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2020 Results

<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2021/jan25/17-toronto-public-library-board-self-evaluation-2020-results-combined.pdf> and approved the following motion 21-017-1 *Motion to Defer – Toronto Public Library Board – Self-evaluation: 2020 Results until the Board Evaluation Survey has been reopened and a higher survey response rate has been achieved.*

At its January 27, 2020 meeting, the Board received the first self-evaluation for the current term of the Board <https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2020/jan27/14-tplb-self-evaluation-2019-results-combined.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In 2020, the Library Board updated Toronto Public Library Board's Procedural By-Law (By-Law) twice:

- in April to address the COVID-19 emergency to allow meetings via tele/video conference participation at meetings; and to reflect changes to the Public Libraries Act which reduced the number of regular library board meetings from ten to seven; and
- in September to allow at the discretion of the Chair of the Library Board to hold a regular or special meeting or committee meeting where some or all Board Members participate by tele/video conference. This change gives the Library Board the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances in the City during and after the COVID-19 emergency.

Implementing these changes quickly allowed the Library Board to fulfill its governance requirements as outlined in the Public Libraries Act during the COVID-19 emergency. The changes reflect the principles of accessibility, responsibility, and accountability.

Goals of the Board self evaluation are to:

- determine the degree of alignment and agreement by Board members on the Library's mandate, mission, vision and strategic directions;
- identify gaps in knowledge and expertise to be addressed through Board education and orientation;
- identify improvements that promote effective board preparation, meeting and communications; and
- ensure effective governance and informed decision-making by supporting strong Board dynamics.

COMMENTS

At its January 25, 2021 meeting, the Library Board deferred the report, Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2020 Results *until the survey was reopened and a higher response rate has been achieved*. The survey was reopened and nine Board members have now completed the survey. The updated results are in Attachment One.

Respondents unanimously agreed the Board adds value and is operating efficiently. No major issues were identified. In summary, comments included how effectively the Library pivoted during a challenging year by advocating and being responsive to community needs through support for foodbanks. Going forward comments included providing more opportunities for Board members to engage and participate in programs and community events, and supporting more diversity of experience, and discussion among Board members.

Next Steps

It is recommended that the Board direct staff to conduct a Board self-evaluation in 2021 to monitor the Board's effectiveness in the third year of its term.

CONTACT

Elizabeth Glass; Director, Policy, Planning & Performance Management
Tel: 416-395-5602; Email: eglass@tpl.ca

SIGNATURE

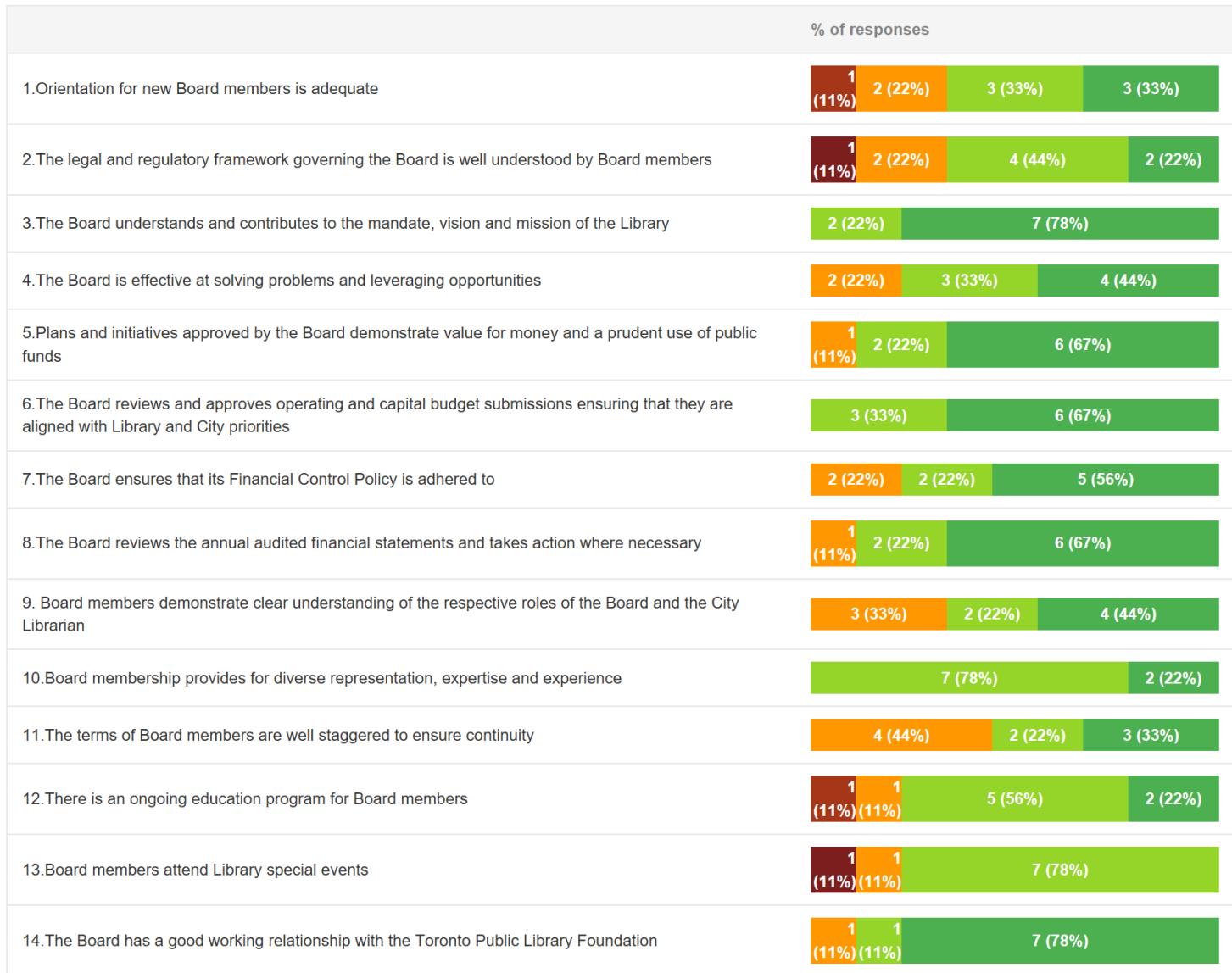
Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Board Self-Evaluation Survey Results 2020: Updated March 2021

TPL Board Self-Evaluation Survey Results 2020: Updated March 2021

Governance role



Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Acceptable

Agree

Strongly Agree

N 9

Comments:

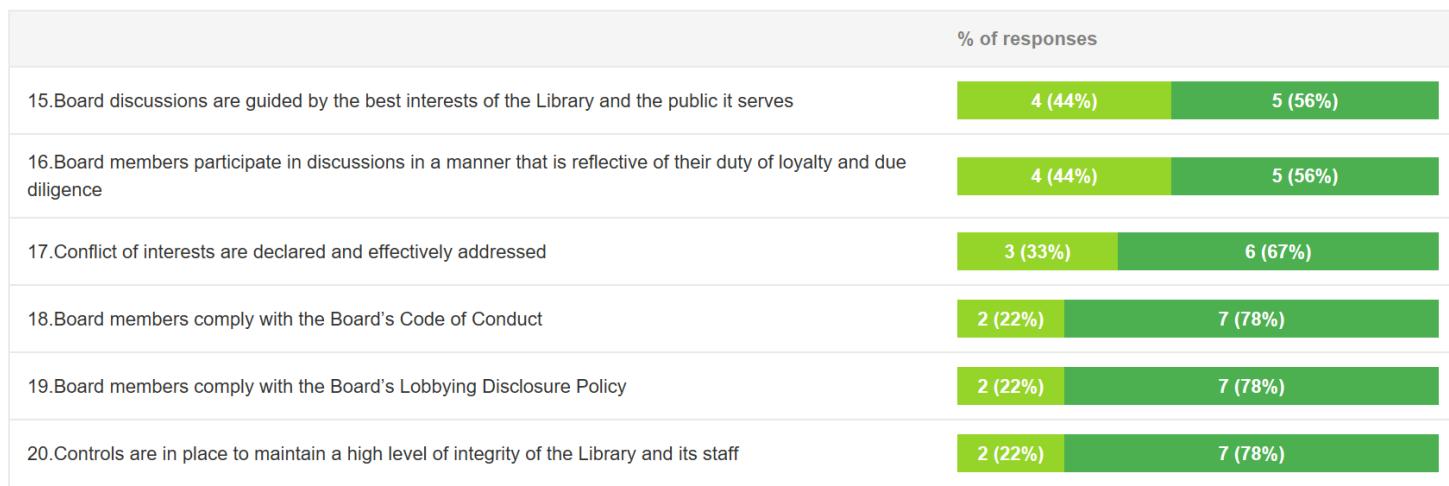
Most board members are highly focused on the strategic plans and topics but less interested in the financial prudence and controls and provide effective challenge.

Still feel like there are events happening (even online) that I would have liked to be part of that I only find out about after the fact. I understand covid has hindered board members doing openings and other events, but it is a shame as that was one thing we were going to work on last year to have all board members involved in events.

The only area for concern I have is the staggering of board terms. This, however, is not an area TPL staff can address, only the Public Appointments Committee.

N 3

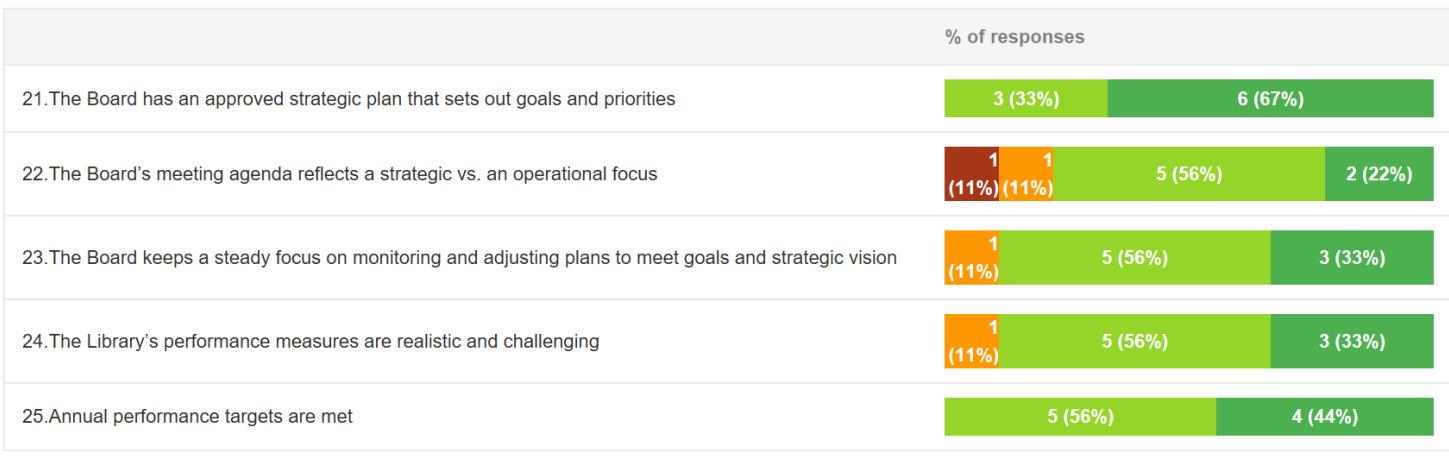
Integrity, ethics and values



 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Acceptable  Agree  Strongly Agree

N 9

Strategy development and performance monitoring



■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Acceptable ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

N 9

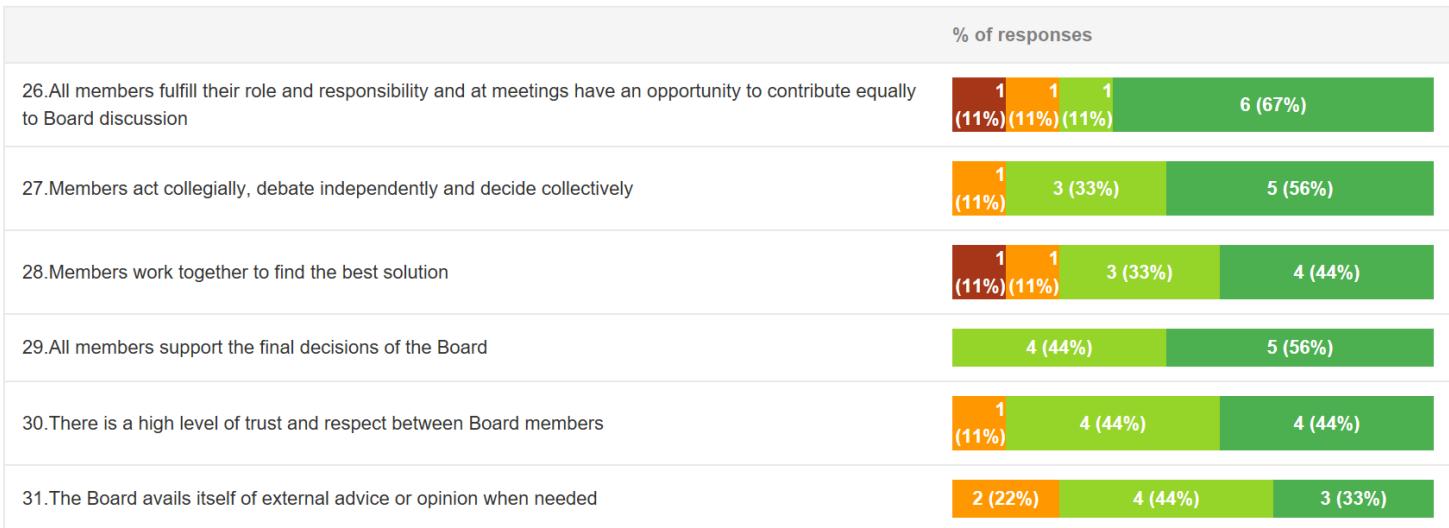
Comments:

The agenda is usually so full that there is not enough time for discussion especially those matters that have financial and legal implications.

The TPL staff have pivoted extremely well in a very challenging year. I have been impressed by the staff's ability to continue providing metrics for goals by which the board can review despite a constantly shifting environment.

N 2

Teamwork and collaboration



■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Acceptable ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

N 9

Comments:

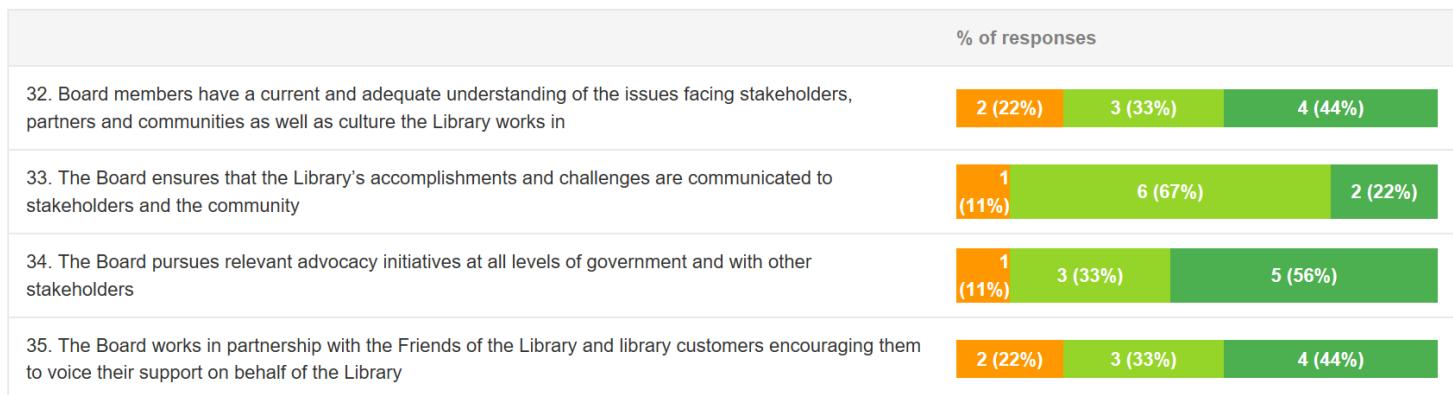
There is a lack of communication among board members and between the Chair and the members. Other than meeting once a month at the board meeting, there is no opportunity to meet or talk to other board members especially since Covid.

Not enough time is left for allowing someone to raise a question before it's moved to a vote. Especially online when it can take a second to unmute.

I find Board members contribute very well and the respective skills and knowledge emerge to assist in the dialogue and deliberation.

N 3

Advocacy and communication



■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Acceptable ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

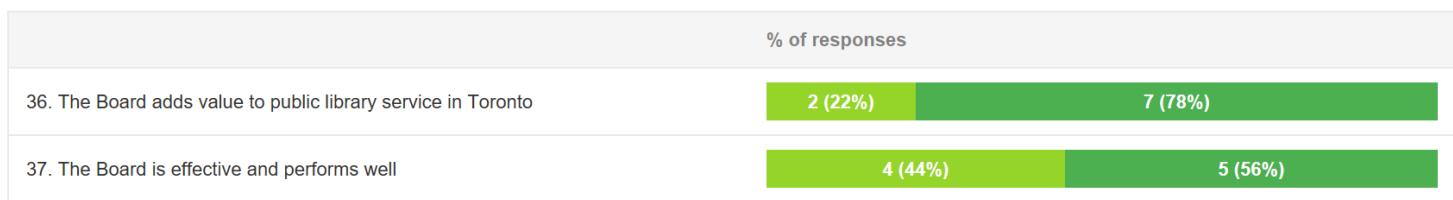
N 9

Comments:

The TPL has been very effective in its advocacy initiatives and also is highly responsive to community advocacy efforts where the TPL goals align--ie the Food Banks this year.

N 1

Overall rating



■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Acceptable ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

N 9

Areas of Board excellence:

The work of the Board members with staff in developing the new Strategic Plan was notable. I also think the Board works well together--very collegial, no grandstanding whatsoever.

Adhering to the agenda, asking for follow up on things to see how situations unfold/initiatives work. Strong leadership in Sue.

Stewardship of the library, working hand-in-hand with City Librarian, diversity, and openness to public

The Board is diverse in both skills and knowledge and in background which contributes to a broad ranging deliberation. The Board has pivoted very well during this year. I believe the TPL staff have found the Board to be supportive and understanding of a very dynamic situation. I am very proud of the contribution of the TPL Board.

N 4

Areas where the Board could do better:

More communications among the board members. Actively reach out to new board members.

Oddly enough, I wouldn't mind if we could collectively engage in a SWOT to gain better insight into exactly this sort of question

More opportunities for debate when we are not all in agreement, rather than just someone voting no and saying why.

Communication between meetings. Setting the board's own agenda beyond what the library staff need us to approve. Hearing more input from public stakeholders.

Board members could be involved more in public programs, so that our diverse group can connect more with the communities we serve

I think the Board has performed very well. Meetings by video are not the best as nuances are missed. The opportunity for discussion amongst board members is very limited. I look forward to a time when we can re-convene in person.

- More diversity on the board as we move forward. Though not a bad thing, the board is primarily made up of ex and current management consultants from the big professional service firms. Eventually, there should be a broader array of talents. - Confidence in asking questions. I think there's an inherent desire to 'look smart' at all costs, and that's to the determinant of our own knowledge, but also to the population we represent. It's okay to ask questions and we should do a better job at encouraging psychological safety.

N 7

Suggestions for improvement:

More education for board members on how to be a board member, for example, how to file a motion. Better leverage board members' diverse experience and skills. Have actions to follow up the results and feedbacks from the survey, otherwise the survey is just a formality and not worth everyone's time.

Hard to articulate in these covid times, but I have always thought field trips on our own time out to branches are very informative

More opportunities for board members to participate in things at local libraries, speak with staff, give out awards etc.

Allow for more public facing opportunities, and engaging of more youth

None at this time.

Continue to ensure conversations are strategic v operational

Ways to get involved. This is tricky, but if the board has more opportunities to show active engagement with the community, that would be preferred.

N 7

Please identify potential topics for future Board education sessions:

1. how to file a motion 2. what are the legal responsibility and obligation of board members 3. what is the governance structure of the board 4. how to engage external council as needed

Advocacy

Understanding IT infrastructure, purchasing amount allocations in collections, hearing from librarians of their in branch challenges

TPL technology strategy

session with board alumni to hear their advice looking back on things, and events with organizations/individuals who work in board recruitment and growth

Any areas where staff believe there is a fundamental shift underway as a result of the pandemic where TPL could/should play a leadership role.

Advocacy with the City

Labour negotiations, and anything related to the human capital structures set up.

N 8