

Toronto Public Library Board – Self Evaluation: 2019 Results

Date:	January 27, 2020
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the Toronto Public Library Board's self-evaluation survey conducted between November and December 2019. This is the fourth year the Library Board has conducted the survey beginning in 2016.

The 2019 survey is the first self evaluation conducted in the current term of the Board. Six of ten members completed the survey, noting that two Board members were appointed and attended their first meeting in November 2019. The 2019 survey is a first benchmark for this term and comparison with prior results are not applicable.

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 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 results of the Board's self-evaluation survey summarized in Attachment 1; and
2. directs staff to conduct a survey in 2020, the second 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

The Board received the final self evaluation of the previous term of the Board on January 21, 2019:

<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2019/jan12/13-tplb-self-evaluation-2018-results-combined.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In 2016, the Toronto Public Library Board updated the Toronto Public Library Board Procedural By-Law after consultation with Library Board members. Key changes to the by-law to address feedback from Board members included:

- Addressing the length of meetings through the introduction of a consent agenda to approve multiple items with one vote where it anticipated that debate or discussion will not be required;
- Introducing the Board Education item to provide more information on library services and programs as a context to decision making;
- Providing agenda packages five clear business days in advance of the meeting to provide Board members with opportunity to prepare for participation in Board discussions and support informed decision making;
- Providing staff support to answer procedural questions during Board Meetings.

To support governance and accountability, the Library Board approved a Library Board Member Code of Conduct in 2016, and introduced a Board evaluation as a best practice in Board governance.

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

The results of the 2019 Board self-evaluation survey are included in Attachment 1. Six of ten Board members completed the survey. There were no major issues identified. In summary, comments covered encouraging discussion and participation from all Board members, particularly in strategic issues and advocacy, and encouraging Board members to attend TPL special events.

Next Steps

It is recommended that the Board direct staff to conduct the Board Self Evaluation in 2020 to monitor the Board's effectiveness in the second year of its term.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Board Self-Evaluation Survey Results 2019

2019 TPL Board Evaluation Survey

Status:	Closed	Partial completes:	1 (16.7%)
Start date:	2019-11-19	Screened out:	0 (0%)
End date:	2020-01-01	Reached end:	5 (83.3%)
Live:	44 days	Total responded:	6
Questions:	17		

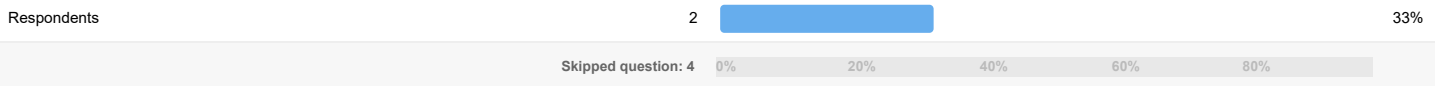
1. Governance role

Sub-questions	Resp.	% of responses	avg	med	SD
8.The Board reviews the annual audited financial statements and takes action where necessary	6	100	5	5	0
6.The Board reviews and approves operating and capital budget submissions ensuring that they are aligned with Library and City priorities	6	100	5	5	0
5.Plans and initiatives approved by the Board demonstrate value for money and a prudent use of public funds	6	100	5	5	0
9. Board members demonstrate clear understanding of the respective roles of the Board and the City Librarian	6	17 83	4.83	5	0.37
3.The Board understands and contributes to the mandate, vision and mission of the Library	6	17 83	4.83	5	0.37
7.The Board ensures that its Financial Control Policy is adhered to	6	17 83	4.83	5	0.37
14.The Board has a good working relationship with the Toronto Public Library Foundation	6	33 67	4.67	5	0.47
13.Board members attend Library special events	6	17 17 67	4.33	5	1.11
12.The Board has an ongoing education program for Board members	6	17 33 50	4.33	4	0.75
10.Board membership provides for diverse representation, expertise and experience	6	17 33 50	4.33	4	0.75
4.The Board is effective at solving problems and leveraging opportunities	6	17 33 50	4.17	4	1.07
2.The legal and regulatory framework governing the Board is well understood by Board members	6	33 17 50	4.17	4	0.9
11.The terms of Board members are well staggered to ensure continuity	6	17 17 67	4	5	1.53
1.Orientation for new Board members is adequate	6	17 17 17 50	4	4	1.15

Average: 4.54 — Median: 5 — Standard Deviation: 0.87

- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Acceptable
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree

2. Comments:



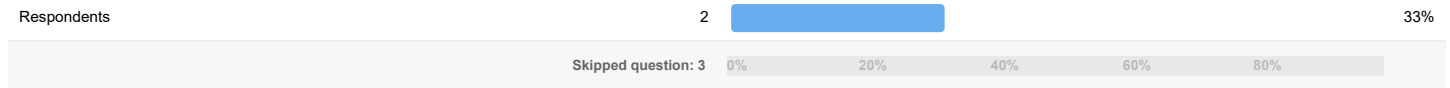
New members should not be asked to vote on items before completing a thorough orientation. Board education sessions should be more interactive and involve discussion of materials provided in advance. The board sometimes does not have opportunity to discuss issues with each other and with staff before making decisions, which limits our effectiveness.

Board meetings are well attended, but Board Members are very infrequent attendees at TPL events outside of Board meetings

3. Integrity, ethics and values

Sub-questions	Resp.	% of responses	avg	med	SD
18.Board members comply with the Board's Code of Conduct	5		5	5	0
19.Board members comply with the Board's Lobbying Disclosure Policy	5		5	5	0
20.Controls are in place to maintain a high level of integrity of the Library and its staff	5		5	5	0
17.Conflict of interests are declared and effectively addressed	5		5	5	0
15.Board discussions are guided by the best interests of the Library and the public it serves	5		4.6	5	0.8
16.Board members participate in discussions in a manner that is reflective of their duty of loyalty and due diligence	5		4.2	4	0.98
Average: 4.80 — Median: 5 — Standard Deviation: 0.60					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1. Strongly Disagree ■ 2. Disagree ■ 3. Acceptable ■ 4. Agree ■ 5. Strongly Agree 					

4. Comments:



Some members do not participate in discussion while others participate a lot.

Board members could be more active in discussions and debates during meetings

5. Strategy development and performance monitoring

Sub-questions	Resp.	% of responses	avg	med	SD
25.Annual performance targets are met	5		4.8	5	0.4
24.The Library's performance measures are realistic and challenging	5		4.6	5	0.8
21.The Board has an approved strategic plan that sets out goals and priorities	5		4.4	4.5	0.8
23.The Board keeps a steady focus on monitoring and adjusting plans to meet goals and strategic vision	5		3.8	3.5	1.17
22.The Board's meeting agenda reflects a strategic vs. an operational focus	5		3.4	3	1.62
Average: 4.20 — Median: 5 — Standard Deviation: 1.17					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1. Strongly Disagree ■ 2. Disagree ■ 3. Acceptable ■ 4. Agree ■ 5. Strongly Agree 					

6. Comments:

Respondents

2

33%

Skipped question: 3 0% 20% 40% 60% 80%

Current Board meeting agenda is more operationally focused.

The agenda for board meetings is set by staff and involves mostly approving operational decisions. There is not a lot of opportunity to discuss strategic issues.

7. Teamwork and collaboration



8. Comments:

Respondents

2

33%

Skipped question: 3 0% 20% 40% 60% 80%

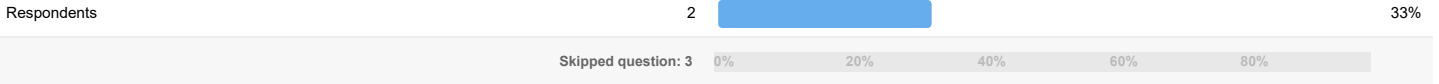
There is a lack of forums outside of the monthly board meetings to discuss special topics (except the strategic planning steering committee).

Sometimes meetings seem rushed without adequate time to discuss and ask questions.

9. Advocacy and communication





10. Comments:



I have not been asked to participate in events or advocacy. I am not sure what kind participation is valuable.

And also works in partnership with the TPL Fdn when necessary!

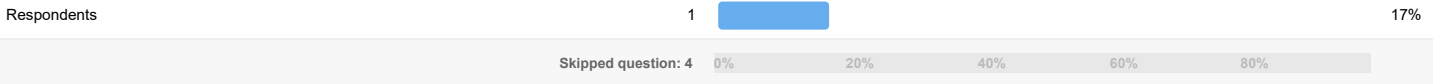
11. Overall rating

Sub-questions	Resp.	% of responses	avg	med	SD
36. The Board adds value to the Library service in Toronto	5		4.8	5	0.4
37. The Board is effective and performs well	5		4	4	0.63

Average: 4.40 — Median: 4 — Standard Deviation: 0.66

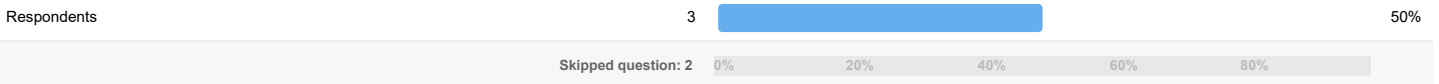
- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Acceptable
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree

12. Comments:



Many board members are still new. We bring a lot of expertise but we are still learning the best way to interact with each other and the TPL.

13. Areas of Board excellence:

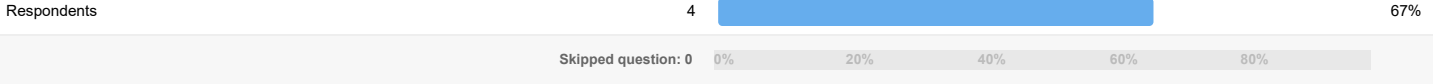


1. keen to understand current issues 2. active participation 3. contributing through different areas of specialities

Diversity of skills and experience. Eagerness and willingness to learn and work hard.

I particularly like the different points of view and the different lived experiences different board members bring to the table

14. Areas where the Board could do better:



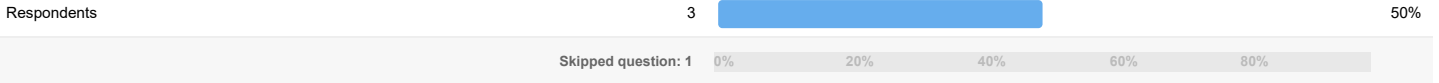
1. leveraging different experiences and expertise from the board members 2. better understanding of the decisions made in the past 3. better understanding the governance framework especially relationship with other city agencies

Having more discussion of important issues. Finding ways to collaborate more. Having a more strategic agenda.

Determining what skills (creating a board skills matrix) are required at the board table and providing the recommendations to the nominating committee at City Hall

As stated earlier. Board members could attend more events outside of Board meetings to represent the Board, and more engaged with stakeholders to determine concerns

15. Suggestions for improvement:

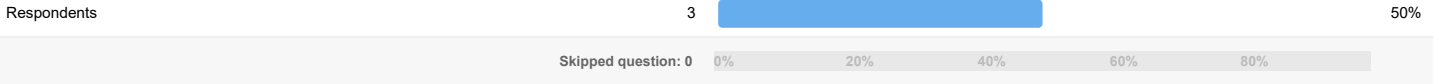


1. form special committees if needed to focus on different areas of the strategies and operations 2. formulate an annual working plan for board which drives the monthly meeting agenda

Involve board members in setting the agenda for each meeting. Give more time for discussion and debate. Create an atmosphere where questions and discussion is encouraged instead of discouraged. Understand the expertise of each member and tap into that.

See previous answer

16. Please identify potential topics for future Board education sessions:

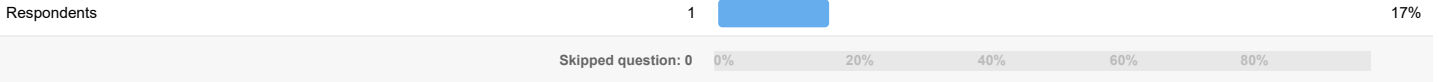


1. board governance / legal responsibilities of the board members 2. key decisions made in the last 5 years that have impact on the current board

Historic board decisions that are still relevant. Best practices in governance. How we can support TPL through advocacy. Detailed discussion of capital budget and plan challenges.

- TPL Marketing Plan

17. Based on your experience as a board member, please provide suggestions on topics for the orientation of the new Board:



How meetings are run. How much discussion is expected. Where to get more information if needed.