



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

15.

Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation

Date:	October 24, 2016
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

This report responds to a request from the Toronto Public Library Board that staff present options for a self-evaluation process for the Library Board. This report presents a recommendation to use an online survey tool to evaluate the Library Board's effectiveness as part of strong, transparent Board governance. To develop the recommendation, staff conducted an environmental scan covering a range of approaches. An e-mail was sent to Board members offering an opportunity to participate in consultation on the options.

It is proposed that the Toronto Public Library Board conduct a pilot self-evaluation during the month of November 2016 with the results being presented to the Board in January 2017 for consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the self-evaluation tool as outlined in Attachment 1 to be conducted using an online survey tool; and
2. conducts a pilot self-evaluation during the month of November 2016 and discusses the results of the evaluation at the January 2017 meeting.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact arising from the information in this report.

The Director, Finance and Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and is in agreement with it.

DECISION HISTORY

On April 25, 2016, the Library Board resolved “to undertake a self-evaluation as a pilot in November 2016 and directed staff to consult with Board members on options for the self-evaluation and present options and recommendations to the Board in October 2016.”

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2016/apr25/13-tplb-self-evaluation.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The current Board was appointed in February 2015 by the City for a period of four (4) years. The role of the Board is mandated in the *Public Libraries Act R.S.O. 1990, Chapter P.44*. The City of Toronto, through its Public Appointments Process, has identified the following responsibilities of the Library Board:

- directing and approving the Library's strategic plans, goals, and policies based on community needs, and ensuring they are efficiently and effectively implemented;
- approving the annual operating and capital budgets for recommendation to City Council;
- acting as an advocate for library services; representing the Library before City Council and in the community; and protecting the public's right to read materials of their choice;
- hiring and evaluating the City Librarian, who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Library and its staff; and
- is legally accountable for the Library's activities and for ensuring that it complies with all applicable legislation.

To date, the current Board has approved the following processes, procedures and policies that advance their governance responsibilities:

- held an orientation for new Board members;
- revised the Board Procedural By-law;
- approved a Code of Conduct and an Ethical Framework for the Board;
- introduced a consent agenda to facilitate meeting efficiency and a strategic focus;
- held education sessions for the Board (orientation on the revised Toronto Public Library Board Procedural By-law, Artists in the Library etc.); and
- approved a Strategic Plan for the Library 2016-2019.

The decision by the Board to implement a self-evaluation exercise is a further step in supporting good Board governance.

Self-evaluation gives the Board an opportunity to step back from its everyday business and address its governance role. It is considered an essential tool in maximizing Board effectiveness. Self-evaluations can help identify areas of strength and areas for improvement, performance issues and facilitate the development of approaches to addressing these.

The purpose of self-evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the Board as a whole. A principle of corporate governance is that directors are ‘stewards’ of the corporation, and act as a unit – individual directors do not have the authority to conduct business alone, but act

through the Board (i.e. through a resolution of the Board). As a result, the proposed self-evaluation addresses the Board as a whole.

Goals of Board self-evaluation include:

- determining the degree of alignment and agreement by Board members on Library mandate, mission and vision and strategic direction (Strategic Plan);
- identification of gaps in knowledge and expertise to be addressed through Board education;
- identifying improvements that promote effective board preparation, meeting management and communications;
- ensuring effective governance and informed decision-making by supporting strong Board dynamics.

COMMENTS

Environmental Scan

As part of the environmental scan, staff looked at board self-evaluation practices at the City of Toronto, Government of Ontario and in public libraries across Canada. In addition, guidelines provided by library associations and best practices in the not-for-profit sector were also reviewed.

Among City boards only Public Health conducts a board self-evaluation that is legislatively mandated. The Ontario Ministry of Government and Consumer Services has developed a board evaluation survey that government agencies are encouraged to use. The evaluation tool was developed drawing from best practices across the public service and the private sector. Both the Ontario Library Association and the American Library Association have developed some guidelines for board self-evaluation. Public libraries across Canada vary in their approach to and use of self-evaluation for their boards.

Board Consultation

An e-mail was circulated to Board members offering an opportunity for Board members to provide input into the self-evaluation options provided by staff. The results of the environmental scan and a draft survey were circulated to Board members who requested consultation. Comments received included:

- encouraging Board members to provide comments especially if ratings are very high or low (a comments and suggestions section has been added after each section of the survey);
- consider evaluating specific roles on the Board (the focus of the Board evaluation is on the Board as a whole);
- is the Board focusing enough on governance and not operations (Question 22 addresses this);
- what should be added or dropped from agendas (Question 22 addresses this);
- how can the Board make the best of its term (an open comment section at the end of the survey asking for identification of areas where the Board could do better and suggestions for improvement is included);

- using criteria relevant to library boards (the Government of Ontario survey has been slightly modified to address issues pertinent to library boards).

Implementation

About the survey

The self-evaluation survey developed by the Ontario Ministry of Government and Consumer Services for provincial agencies is recommended for use by the Toronto Public Library Board as included in Attachment 1. Although not a provincial agency, the Toronto Public Library is mandated through provincial legislation.

The survey comprises two parts:

Part one: explores eight areas: stewardship, impact/influence, teamwork/collaboration, integrity, ethics and values, professional awareness, governance, strategic leadership, and managing for results.

Part two: provision of examples and suggestions in three areas: areas of Board excellence, areas where the Board could do better, and suggestions for improvements.

Participation

All Board members are encouraged to participate in the evaluation. The self-evaluation survey will be conducted using an online survey tool. A link to the survey will be sent to each Board member. Responses are anonymous and IP addresses will not be tracked.

Discussion of results

A report will be created using the online survey tools available and will be submitted to the Board for discussion. This discussion will occur in a public meeting in order to advance transparency and not conflict with legislative requirements for open meetings (*Public Libraries Act* and the Board's Procedural By-law).

It is proposed that a pilot be launched in November 2016 and the results discussed at a Board meeting in January 2017.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Toronto Public Library Board Self-Evaluation Survey