

Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2021 Results

Date:	January 24, 2022
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 Self-Evaluation 2021 to the Library Board for approval. This is the sixth year that the Board has conducted the survey as a best practice in Board governance. Nine of ten Board members completed the survey in 2021. 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 generally agreed that the Board adds value and is operating efficiently. No major issues were identified requiring action. Most significantly, for 2021 there was strong and unanimous agreement with the statement that *the Library provided responsive public services during COVID-19 through a switch to digital services, new services options and opening library services with safety protocols in place.*

Comments in the survey included suggestions for the appointment of the Library Board for the new term beginning in 2022, encouraging more discussion at meetings and future Board education topics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. Receive the results of the Board self-evaluation survey in Attachment 1.

2. Directs staff to conduct a survey in 2022, the final year of the Board's term.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommendations have no additional financial impacts beyond what is included in the City staff recommended 2022 operating budget for Toronto Public Library.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its March 22, 2021 the Board approved the report *Toronto Public Library Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2020 Results* <https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2021/mar22/12-tplb-self-evaluation-survey-results-2020-combined.pdf> and directed staff to conduct a survey in 2021, the third year of the Board's term.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In keeping with Toronto Public Library Board's Procedural By-Law and requirements of the Public Libraries Act, the Library Board held nine open meetings by tele/video conference in 2021 fulfilling its governance role during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Goals of the Board self-evaluation are to:

- determine the degree of alignment and agreement by Board members on the Toronto Public Library's (TPL) 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

Nine out of ten Board members completed the Board self-evaluation the survey in 2021. Respondents generally agreed the Board adds value and is operating efficiently; that the Board received *ongoing and relevant updates about TPL's response to COVID-19*

(a new question added in 2021) and there was unanimous and strong agreement with the statement that *the library provided responsive public services during COVID-19 through a switch to digital services, new service options and opening library services with safety protocols in place*. Communications to Board members about programs and community events were changed in 2021 in response to a request in the 2020 survey and in 2021, all Board members *agreed they are given the opportunity to attend library events*.

Next Steps

The City Librarian will communicate the feedback regarding the appointment of the 2022 Library Board *including continuity between new second term Board members and appointment members with diverse skills including a mix of corporate, public sector and not for profit skills as well as finance and technology* to the Public Appointment Secretariat, City of Toronto for their consideration. In response to comments about Board education sessions information about library partnerships, the Facilities Master Plan and staffing and recruitment strategies or Board education sessions communications or reports.

It is recommended that the Board direct staff to conduct a Board self-evaluation in 2022 to monitor the Board's effectiveness in the fourth year of its term.

CONTACT

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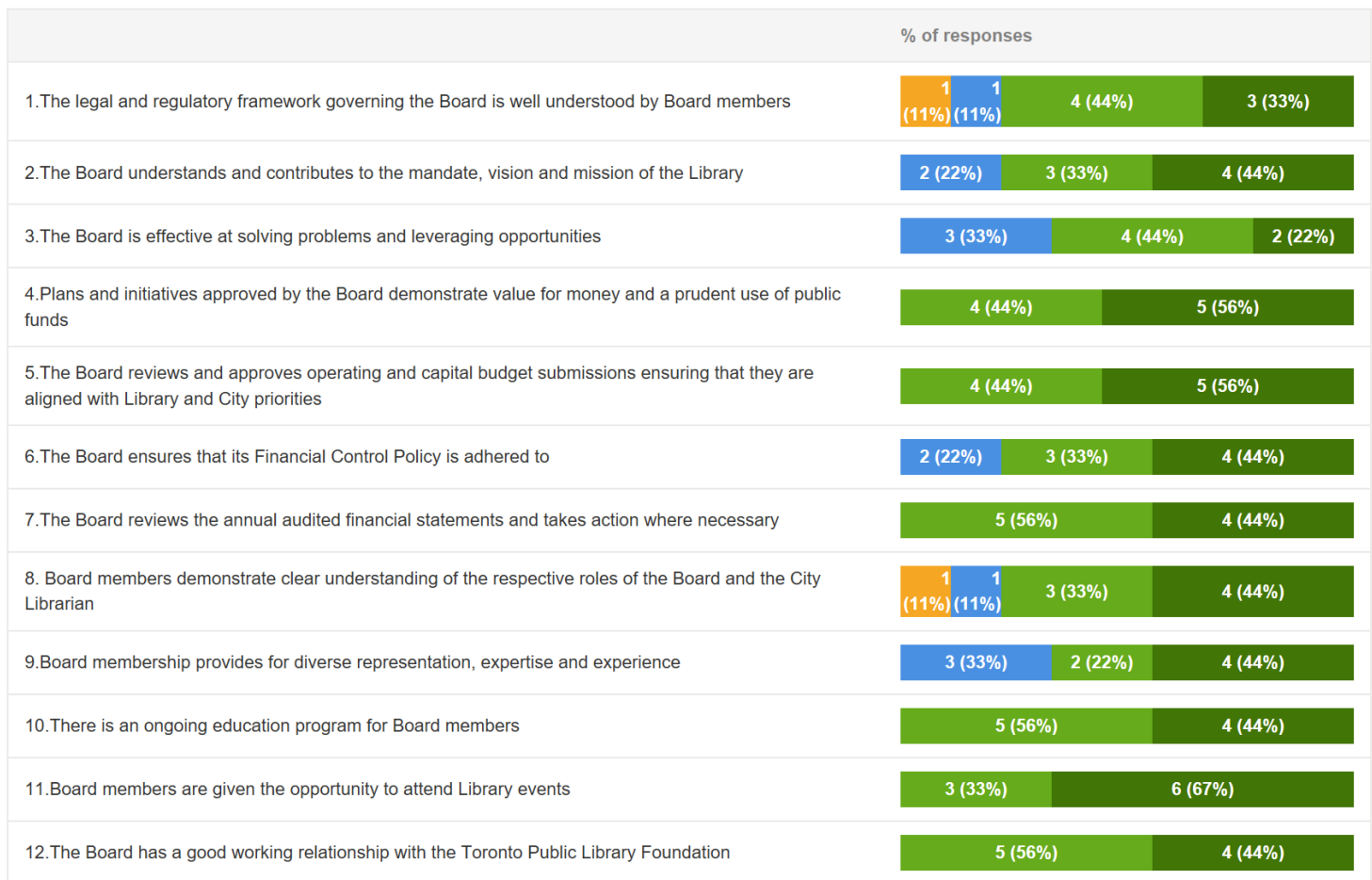
SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Board Self-Evaluation Survey Results 2021

Governance role



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

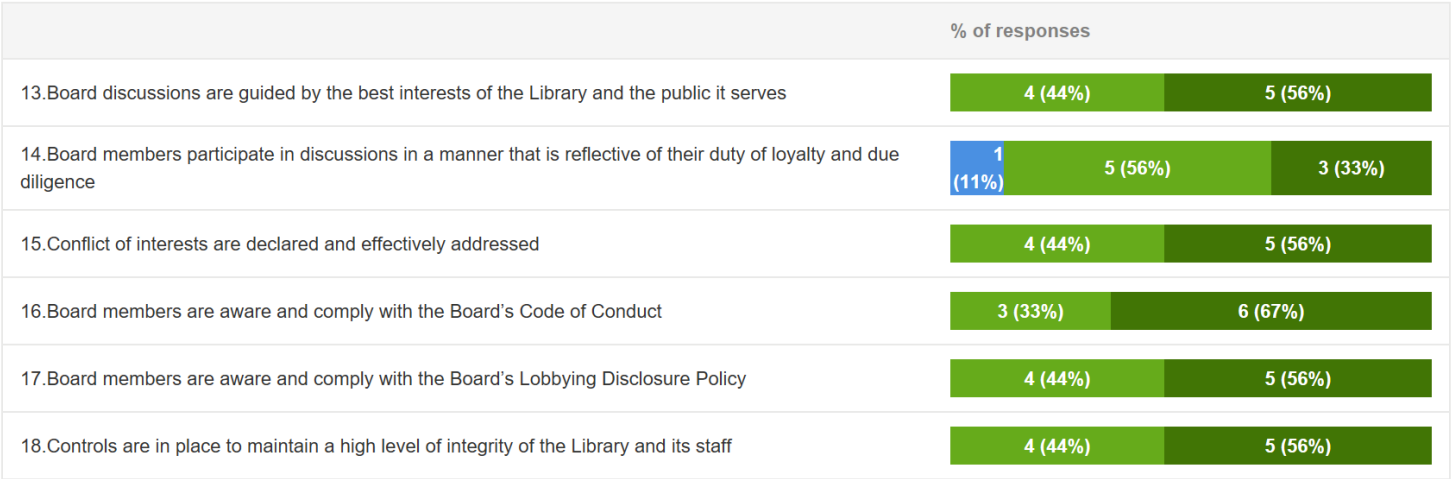
N 9

Comments:

Comments on the Board's governance role :
Board Members pre- COVID we're given many opportunities to attend TPL events, but very few Board members actually arr3nd
The City Librarian and staff have been very creative in their approach in ensuring the Board is kept updated on a very dynamic situation. The Board is advised of online opportunities to represent or attend library events.

N 2

Integrity, ethics and values



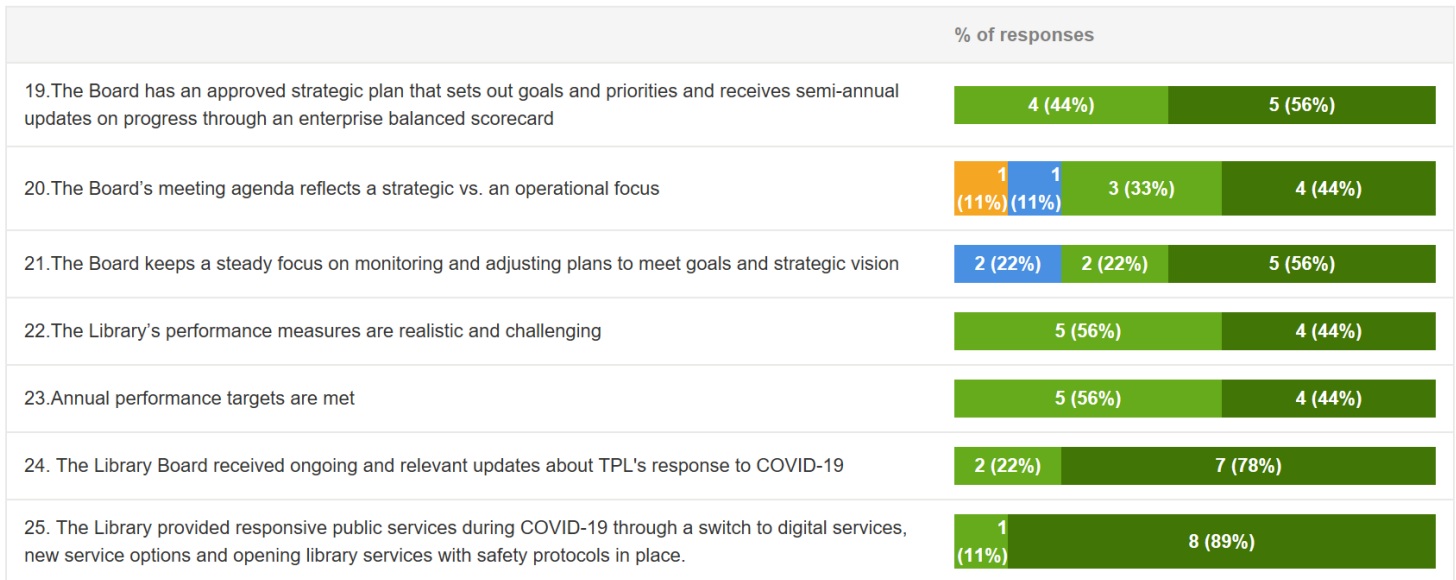
Strongly Disagree Disagree Acceptable Agree Strongly Agree

N 9

Comments:

No data found

Strategy development and performance monitoring



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

N 9

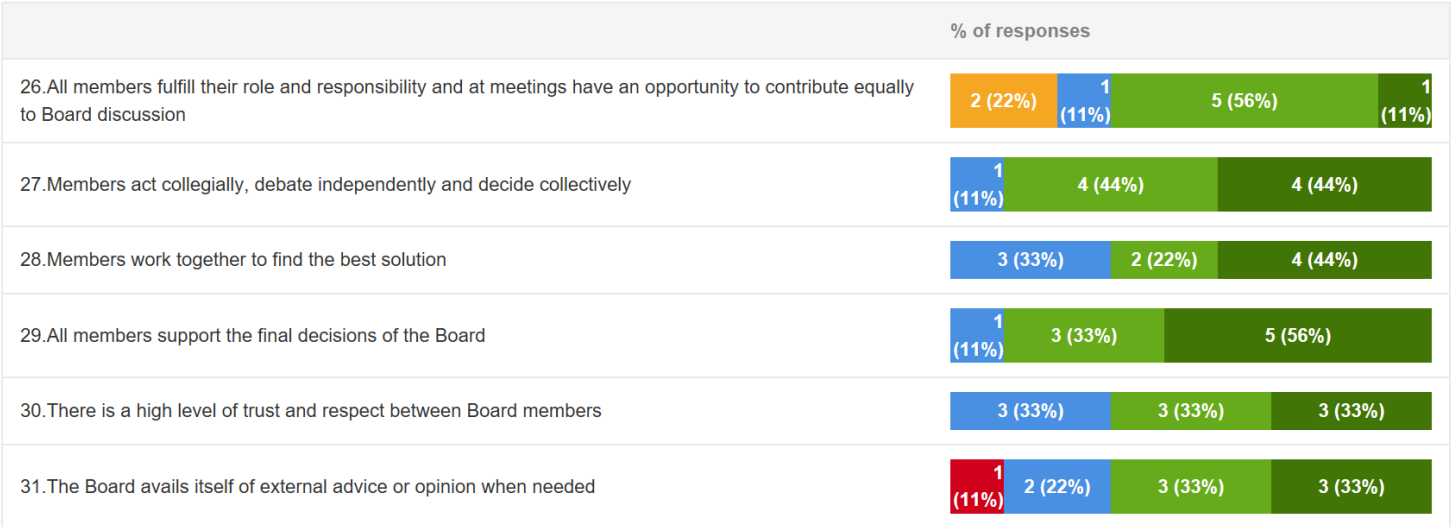
Comments:

Comments on the Board's strategy development and performance monitoring :

Despite COVID-19, TPL was able to continue meeting the vast majority of the deliverables of the Strategic plan. The staff of TPL are to be commended for the ongoing pivoting to meet the needs of the public, not only for traditional library services, but also food banks.

N 1

Teamwork and collaboration



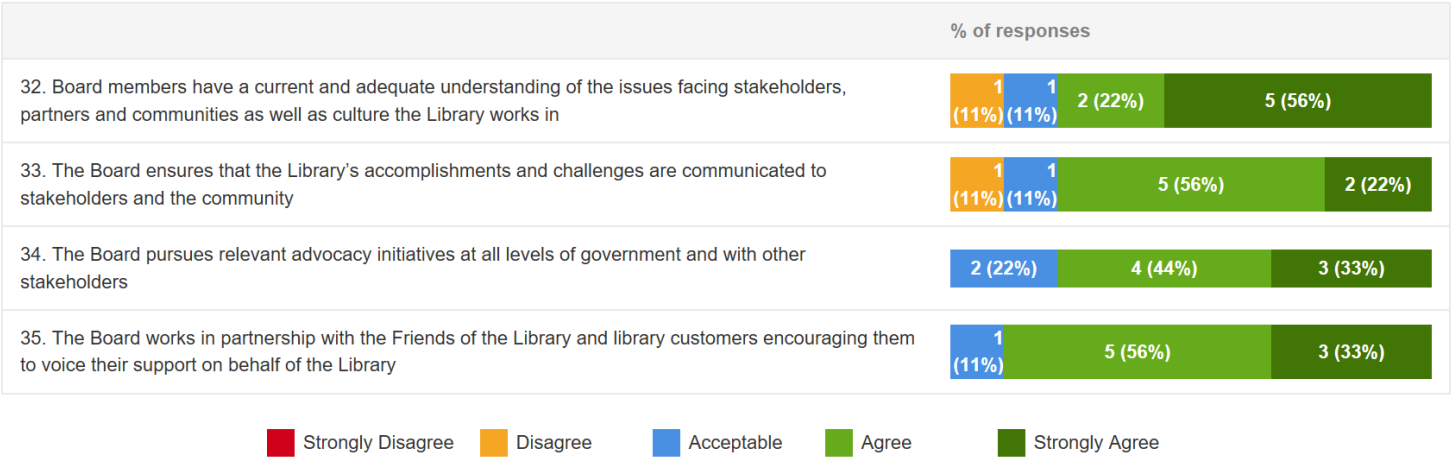
Strongly Disagree Disagree Acceptable Agree Strongly Agree

N 9

Comments:

No data found

Advocacy and communication



N 9

Comments:

Comments on the Board's advocacy and communication:
Mindful that it has been a very challenging year and a half - there seems to be a great opportunity for the Province to engage TPL more actively in the digital library and transformation underway. This would inevitably require concerted efforts to build a meaningful partnership - but might be something the Board can offer more support for.
The board is adopting a role that is more advocacy focused, carefully selecting which items the board will support.

N 2

Overall rating

	% of responses		
36. The Board adds value to public library service in Toronto	2 (22%)	2 (22%)	5 (56%)
37. The Board is effective and performs well	2 (22%)	2 (22%)	5 (56%)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Acceptable Agree Strongly Agree

N 9

Comments:

No data found

Areas of Board excellence:

Areas of Board excellence:
- Financial oversight
The board is well informed. Materials are provided in a timely manner to ensure meaningful contributions. The board is diverse with its membership reflecting varying skill sets.

N 2

Areas where the Board could do better:

Areas where the Board could do better:
More time for discussions built into the agenda
- based on the composition and make-up, has potential to offer more re: inclusivity - partnership building with corporates and Provincial government - advocacy to Provincial government
An area the Public Appointment Committee should consider is the continuity of board membership. There was little continuity in terms of board membership from the previous term.

N 3

Suggestions for improvement:

Suggestions for improvement:
Time/space for more generative discussions - e.g. at a Board retreat?
That the Public Appointments Committee strive for a board that a 50/50 split between new board members and second term board members. That the Public Appointments Committee continue to seek board members with previous board experience and with a mix of corporate, public sector and non profit skills. Special tech skills should be considered such as financial, technology etc.

N 2

Please identify potential topics for future Board education sessions:

Please identify potential topics for future Board education sessions:
tbh, I honestly don't have any....
Partnership building - how that's currently done and areas for opportunity
1. A deeper dive on the Master Facility plan, with a particular focus on strategies, if possible, to try and reduce the number of change orders. 2. A discussion of challenges with respect to staffing, and how to recruit and retain staff at all levels. I am mindful of the ongoing staff vacancies that we are apprised of.

N 3