

Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2020 Results

Date:	January 25, 2021
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 2020 conducted between December 2020 and January 2021. This is the fifth year the Library Board has conducted the survey, beginning in 2016. Six of ten members completed the survey.

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 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

The Board received the first self-evaluation for the current term of the Board on January 27, 2020 <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 and 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

The results of the 2020 Board self-evaluation survey are included in Attachment 1. Six of ten Board members completed the survey. 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

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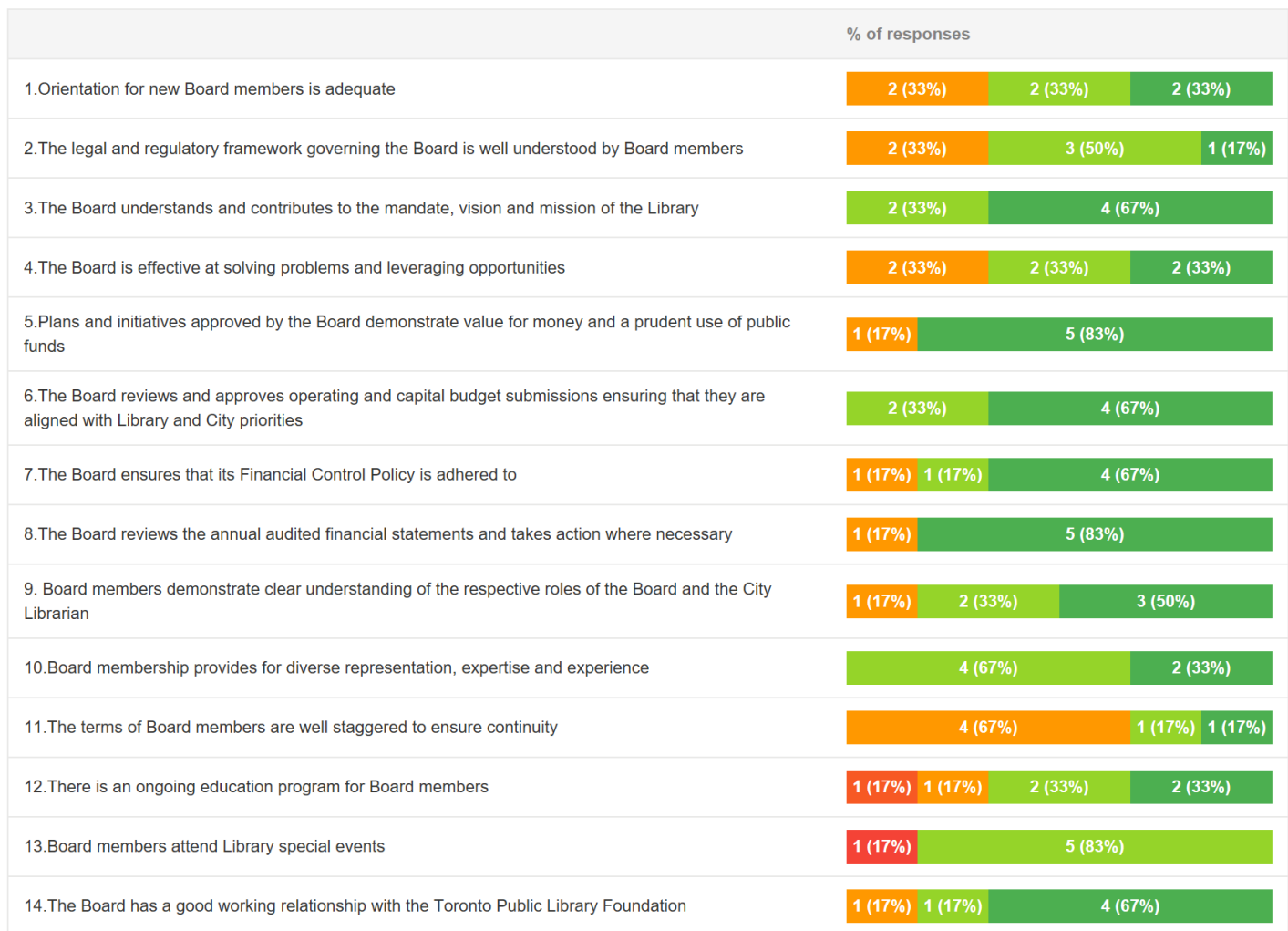
SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Board Self-Evaluation Survey Results 2020

Governance role



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

N 6

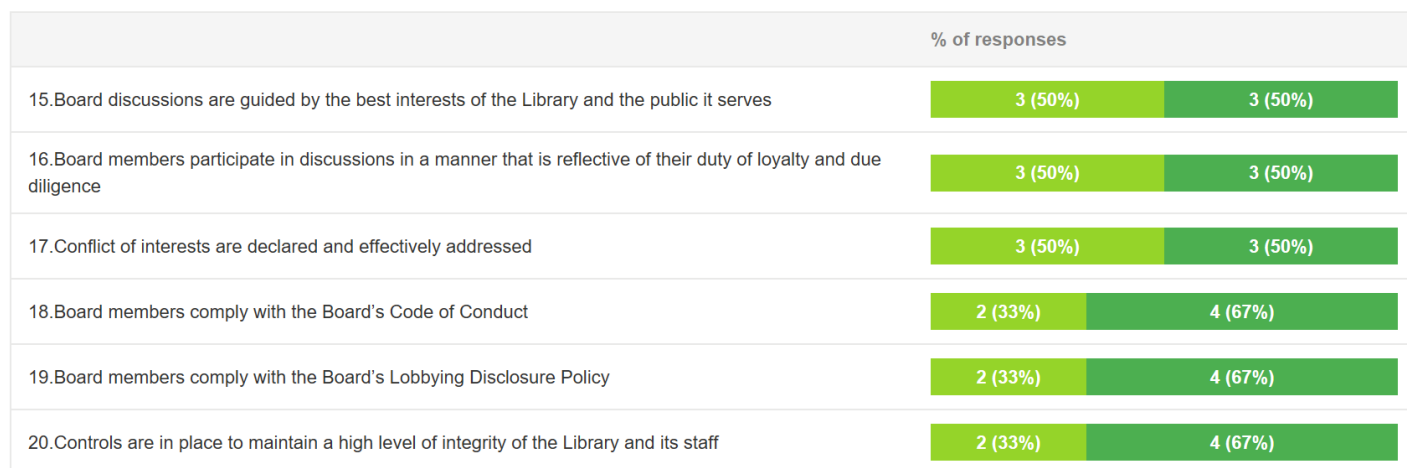
Comments:

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 2

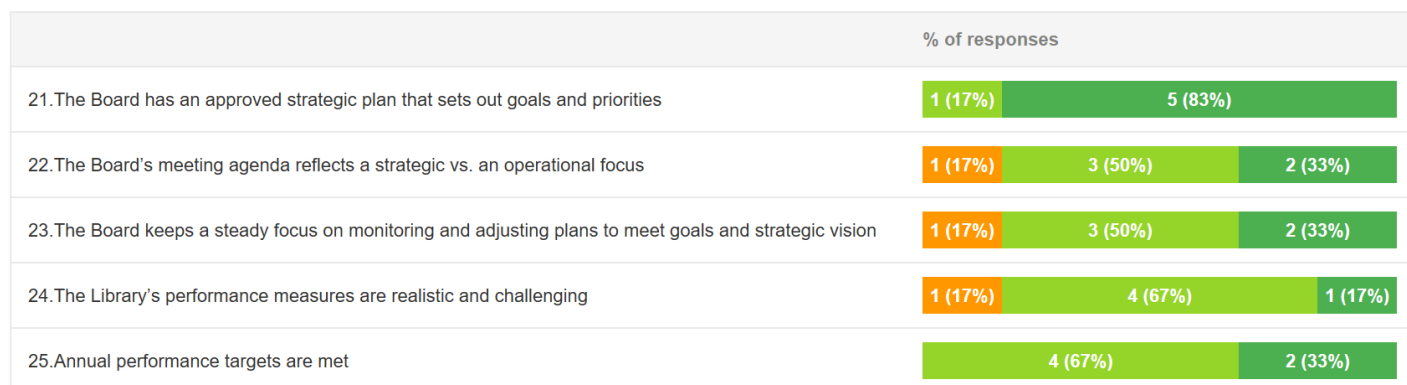
Integrity, ethics and values



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

N 6

Strategy development and performance monitoring



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

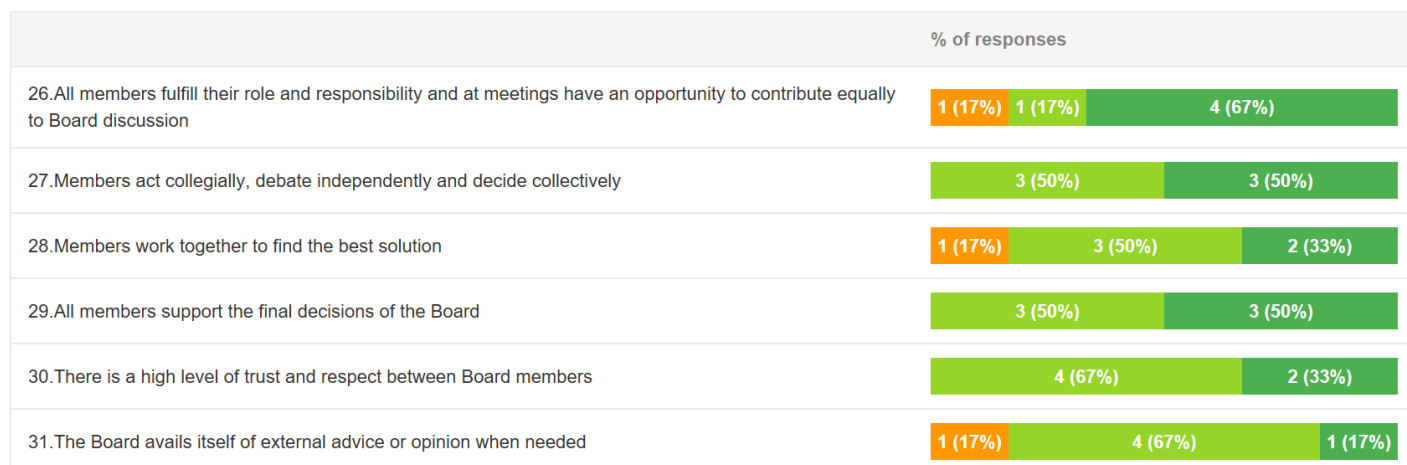
N 6

Comments:

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 1

Teamwork and collaboration



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

N 6

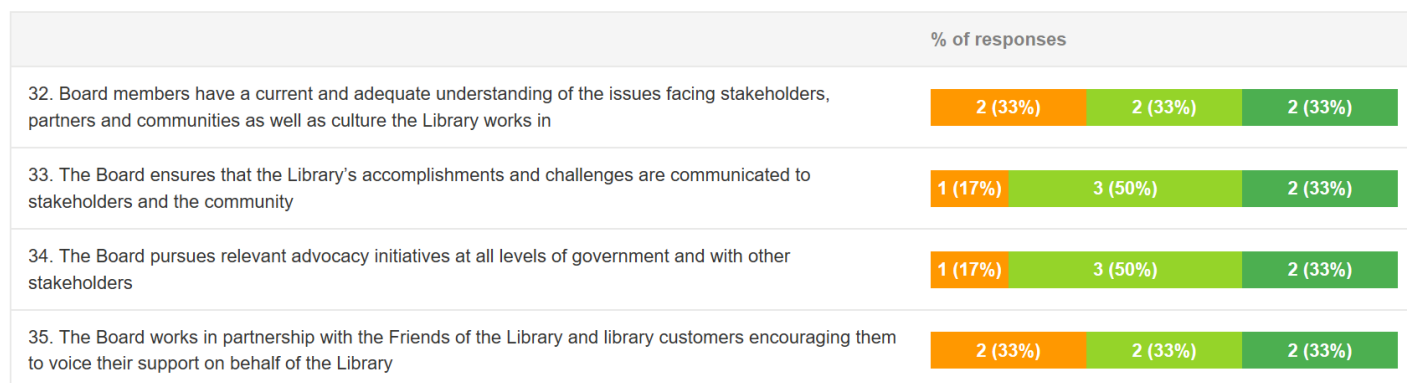
Comments:

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 2

Advocacy and communication



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

N 6

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

	% of responses	
36. The Board adds value to public library service in Toronto	1 (17%)	5 (83%)
37. The Board is effective and performs well	3 (50%)	3 (50%)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Acceptable Agree Strongly Agree

N 6

Areas of Board excellence:

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 3

Areas where the Board could do better:

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 detriment 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 5

Suggestions for improvement:

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 5

Please identify potential topics for future Board education sessions:

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 6