



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2023 Results

Date: February 26, 2024
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 2023 to the Board for approval. This is the eighth year that the Board has conducted the survey as a best practice in Board governance. Eight of nine Board members completed the survey in 2023. 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. In particular, there was strong agreement that the Board has financial control, that Board membership provides diverse representation, that controls are in place to maintain integrity at the Library and among staff, and that members act collegially and support the final decisions of the Board. Board members

provided comments towards improvement in several areas, including related to advocacy, external partnerships, and topics for future Board education topics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. receives the results of the Board self-evaluation survey in Attachment 1; and
2. directs staff to conduct a survey in 2024.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with this report.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on January 23, 2023, the Board approved the [Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2022 Results](#) report and directed staff to conduct a survey in 2023, the first year of the current Board’s term.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In keeping with Toronto Public Library Board’s [Procedural By-Law](#) and requirements of Ontario’s [Public Libraries Act](#), the Library Board held ten open hybrid meetings and one in person meeting in 2023, fulfilling its governance role. While TPL board meetings were conducted in a hybrid model since May 2022, one Board meeting in 2023 was conducted in person only due to a cyberattack that resulted in restricted online services.

In the hybrid model, some or all members of the Board, library staff, guests and members of the public can attend and/or participate in the meeting either in person (in the boardroom at the Toronto Reference Library) or by tele/video conference. Recordings of board meeting proceedings are also made available on TPL’s website following each board meeting.

Goals of the Board self-evaluation are to:

- determine the degree of alignment and agreement by Board members on TPL'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

Eight out of nine Board members completed the Board self-evaluation survey in 2023. Results indicate that current Board members agreed on more statements than in previous years. The strongest and most unanimous statements were:

- The Board understands and contributes to the mandate, vision and mission of the Library
- Plans and initiatives approved by the Board demonstrate value for money and a prudent use of public funds
- The Board ensures that its Financial Control Policy is adhered to
- The Board reviews the annual audited financial statements and takes action where necessary
- Board members demonstrate clear understanding of the respective roles of the Board and the City Librarian
- Board membership provides for diverse representation, expertise and experience
- Board members participate in discussions in a manner that is reflective of their duty of loyalty and due diligence
- Conflict of interests are declared and effectively addressed
- Board members are aware and comply with the Board's Code of Conduct
- Board members are aware and comply with the Board's Lobbying Disclosure Policy
- The Board has an approved strategic plan that sets out goals and priorities and receives semi-annual updates on progress through an enterprise balanced scorecard
- All members fulfill their role and responsibility and at meetings have an opportunity to contribute equally to Board discussion

- Members act collegially, debate independently and decide collectively
- All members support the final decisions of the Board

There was least agreement on the following statements:

- There is an ongoing education program for Board members
- Annual performance targets are met
- The Board pursues relevant advocacy initiatives at all levels of government and with other stakeholders
- The Board works in partnership with the Friends of the Library and library customers encouraging them to voice their support on behalf of the Library

Compared with past year's reports, the overall satisfaction has improved significantly (88% overall rating in 2023; 72% in 2022; 78% in 2021). There was most notable improvement in the Board's evaluation of governance, integrity, and teamwork.

Comments from Board members highlight some common thoughts. Board members have a high regard for each other, actively participate in meetings, and experience a very positive working relationship. The Board reported that they were kept well-informed by staff, who brought their expertise to the Board.

Some members would like to see better performance targets for online services and branches, and would like more opportunities to work with other city services and local programs. The Board also expressed a desire to continue to learn about cyber security, lobbying, advocacy and staffing.

Next steps

It is recommended that the Board direct staff to conduct a Board self-evaluation in 2024.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE














Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: 2023 TPL Board Self-Evaluation Survey Results

2023 TPL Board Self-Evaluation Survey Results

Governance role

Questions	% of responses
1. The legal and regulatory framework governing the Board is well understood by Board members	
2. The Board understands and contributes to the mandate, vision and mission of the Library	
3. The Board is effective at solving problems and leveraging opportunities	
4. Plans and initiatives approved by the Board demonstrate value for money and a prudent use of public funds	
5. The Board reviews and approves operating and capital budget submissions ensuring that they are aligned with Library and City priorities	
6. The Board ensures that its Financial Control Policy is adhered to	
7. The Board reviews the annual audited financial statements and takes action where necessary	
8. Board members demonstrate clear understanding of the respective roles of the Board and the City Librarian	
9. Board membership provides for diverse representation, expertise and experience	
10. There is an ongoing education program for Board members	
11. Board members are given the opportunity to attend Library events	
12. The Board has a good working relationship with the Toronto Public Library Foundation	
13. Orientation for new Board members is adequate (please only answer if you joined the Board in 2023)	

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

Comments on the Board's governance role:

- There are a few new Board Members, but I'm sure they will be well briefed on governance

Integrity, ethics and values

Questions	% of responses
14. Board discussions are guided by the best interests of the Library and the public it serves	
15. Board members participate in discussions in a manner that is reflective of their duty of loyalty and due diligence	
16. Conflict of interests are declared and effectively addressed	
17. Board members are aware and comply with the Board's Code of Conduct	
18. Board members are aware and comply with the Board's Lobbying Disclosure Policy	
19. Controls are in place to maintain a high level of integrity of the Library and its staff	

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

Comments on the Board's integrity, ethics and values:

- It is nice to see so many of the Board Members actively participating in the meetings

Strategy development and performance monitoring

Questions	% of responses
20. The Board has an approved strategic plan that sets out goals and priorities and receives semi-annual updates on progress through an enterprise balanced scorecard	
21. The Board is appropriately focused on providing guidance on strategic items relevant to the Board in fulfilling their governance function	
22. The Board keeps a steady focus on monitoring and adjusting plans to meet goals and strategic vision	
23. The Library's performance measures are realistic and challenging	
24. Annual performance targets are met	

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

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

- We do not have the right performance targets for online services and branches

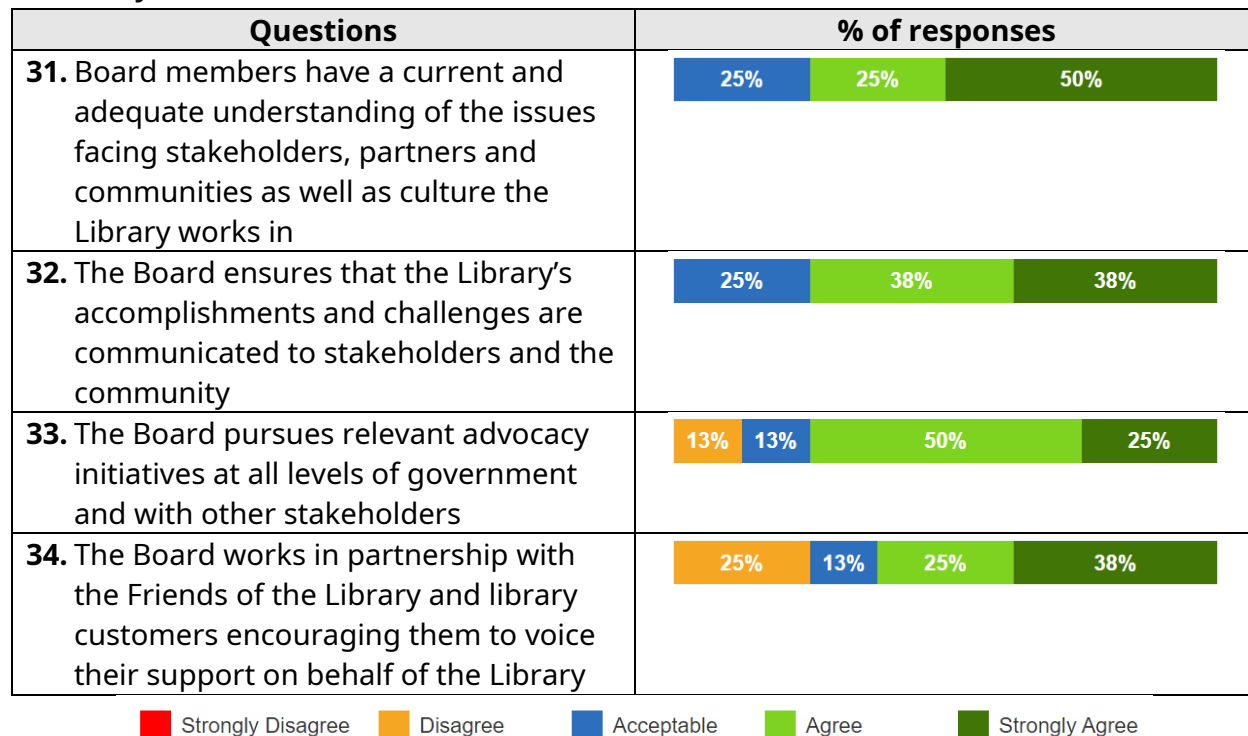
Teamwork and collaboration

Questions	% of responses
25. All members fulfill their role and responsibility and at meetings have an opportunity to contribute equally to Board discussion	
26. Members act collegially, debate independently and decide collectively	
27. Members work together to find the best solution	
28. All members support the final decisions of the Board	
29. There is a high level of trust and respect between Board members	
30. The Board avails itself of external advice or opinion when needed	

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

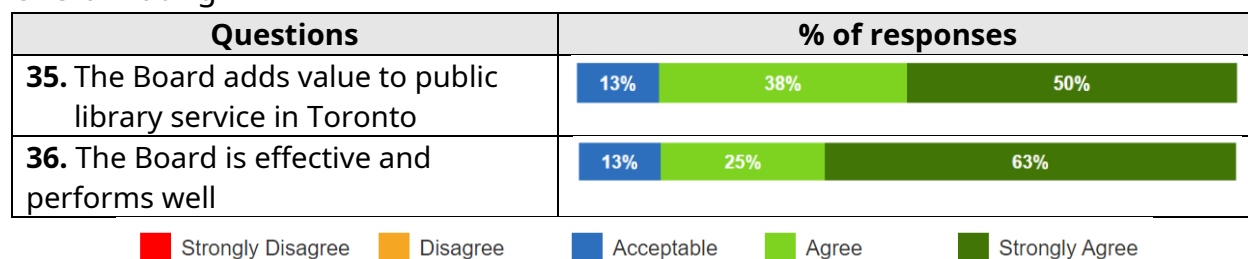
Comments on the Board's teamwork and collaboration:
None

Advocacy and communication



Comments on the Board's advocacy and communication:
None

Overall rating



Comments on the Board's overall rating:
None

Areas of Board excellence:

- Excellent teamwork and a great working environment within the board and with library staff
- Staff expertise
- Staff commitment to public library & services

Areas where the Board could better:

- Advocacy
- More collaboration with other partners

Suggestions for improvement:

- More opportunities to work / collaborate with other city services & programs, as well local school boards

Potential topics for future Board education sessions:

- Cyber security
- Lobbying
- What library advocacy groups do to assist public libraries in Ontario such as the Ontario Library Association and the federation of Ontario Public Libraries
- Staffing challenges