

BOARD ACADEMY



This publication shares information of interest to public library boards. Links to the resources and full content can be found in the e-newsletter version.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE ECOSYSTEM? INFORMATION ON CURRENT TOPICS AFFECTING OUR LIBRARIES

STATE BUDGET

The State's budget process for 2025-2026 has begun. Here's what we know so far:

On February 4, **Governor Shapiro presented his budget address** with highlights on his initial budget proposal. Highlights included:

- Education Investments in K-12 schools
- Workforce Developments, Adult Literacy & Training
- Increasing Minimum Wage (Gov. is calling for \$15/hour; all surrounding states have increased above the federal minimum wage. The lowest is West Virginia at \$8.75.)
- New Revenue Sources via Regulating Skill Games & Legalizing Recreational Marijuana
- The public library subsidy and library access line items were level-funded; there was a small increase in the State Library line to support the work of the State Library and Office of Commonwealth Libraries Staff.

Appropriations Committee Hearings

Both the House and the Senate held Appropriation Committee hearings, where chamber members critically interview representatives from various departments about how they used previous years' funding as well as their plans and initiatives for 2025-2026 funding. Appropriation Committee meetings on our radar include the PA Department of Education, as this department houses the Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

Highlights of the Appropriation Hearings:

- Libraries are a strong part of the community ecosystem and lifelong learning.
- There is a focus on wanting better outcomes with funding, and being able to prove better outcomes are coming with more money.
- There was a lot of discussion surrounding supporting workers in education, particularly in early childhood education, qualified child care workers, and student teachers.
- There is a lot of interest in workforce development and Career & Technical Education.
- There were concerns raised about the impact of the changes/proposed changes at the Federal Department of Education and other federal agencies.

More details, including transcripts of library-specific questions, are posted on our website at <https://snoelibraries.org/2025-legislative-session/>

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PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Both the House and the Senate were quick to introduce bills that reach various ideals and agenda items. You can find the highlights at <https://snoelibraries.org/2025-legislative-session/>:

- **HR38: Recognizing National Library Week:** Impact on libraries: A positive resolution recognizing April 6-12, 2025 at National Library Week in Pennsylvania.
- **HB317: Requiring the Use of Watermarks on AI Generated Photos and Videos:** Impact on libraries: Brought to the attention of legislators by middle school students in Berks County, this bill will require any media generated by artificial intelligence to have a watermark on at least 30% of the image or video. This bill will impact libraries who use AI to generate images for their work, but it will also make it slightly easier to prevent the misuse of AI, particularly for deep fakes.
- **HB236: Removing Obscene Material from Our School Libraries:** Impact on libraries: This bill does not directly affect public librarians, but it does remove an exemption for K-12 school librarians that would allow them to be prosecuted for a crime if they are found guilty of providing "obscene and other sexual materials and performances". There is no definition for "other sexual materials and performances", which is an overreach; the current version would mean that a librarian could be charged for public indecency for providing materials on puberty.

OFFICE OF COMMONWEALTH LIBRARY UPDATES

OCL shared updates last month including:

- **Statewide Needs Assessment:** Data collection continues to help OCL shape its future plans for addressing community needs through libraries. The next phase includes phone and digital surveys to the general public about library usage. You can take the survey as a library user online with responses due March 9. Please see the email version of Board Academy for the link.
- **Regulation Updates:** No updates at this time. If you are not aware of the potential changes to the State regulations on public libraries, please reach out to your district consultant.



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TIMELY TOPICS

In Case You Missed It: Federal Funding for Grants & Freeze Confusion

In recent weeks, many nonprofits have been watching for updates on the potential freezes on grant funding from federal agencies to states and nonprofits around the country. We've been doing our best to track the updates and link resources. To check out the "Federal Spending Freeze" or other updates on state and federal legislation and movements, visit <https://snoelibraries.org/2025-legislative-session/> or bookmark the link in your browser.

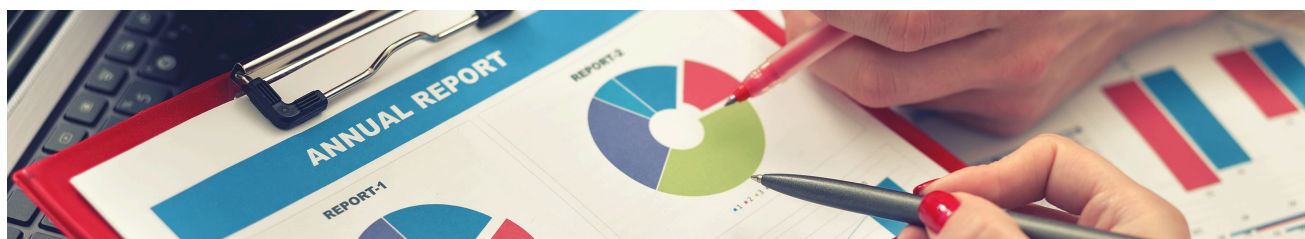
Reporting to Your Community About 2024 Achievements

As libraries are preparing data for their annual reports to OCL, it's a great time to look at all of your achievements in 2024. You know who else wants to hear about them? Your community! They want to hear the IMPACT your library has made, so make those waves!

Need some help on where to start? Check out Bloomerang's "The Essential Nonprofit Annual Report Template & Full Guide" for great ideas and tips. Looking to create your own? Canva has some great templates by search "Annual Report" that you can customize to your library's needs. (Visit the email edition of Board Academy to view the guide and many examples.)

Want to see some actual examples? Log in to Fundraising Academy and scroll down to the Annual Report Toolkit (found under Editable Templates/Downloadable Resources/Sample Documents) to find a training, checklist, optimized samples (yay, examples!), and a variety of other resources.

Fundraising Academy: <https://productivefundraising.com/academy/the-snoe-libraries-fundraising-academy/> - Password = LibrariesRock



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ADVOCACY TIPS BUILDING UP THE ADVOCACY TOOLBOX

LIBRARY PERCEPTION & SUPPORT

FAQ: Strategies to Strengthen Library Service and Support in Uncertain Times

With confusion and concerns surrounding changes in potential funding streams and/or support of public libraries, it's important to make sure our libraries are promoting their organizations and all of the great benefits they provide to their communities. Now is NOT the time to be your community's "best kept secret." By making your library known for the good things, it can build a stronger support base for if a public challenge of any sorts should appear on your doorstep.

Activity: Look at the end of this PDF to find the FAQ. Discuss these items with your board and library director to see where the library may be excelling and if there are areas that it could strengthen internally.

- Where do we stand with policies and procedures?
- How are we doing as a team?
- How do people perceive our library when they visit?
- How do people perceive our library beyond our walls?
- Who are the political leaders associated with your library's service area?
- Does anyone on the board already have a working relationship with a political leader?



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SPOTLIGHT ON LEARNING BUILDING AND REINFORCING STRONG LIBRARY FOUNDATIONS WITH CURRENT AND CLARIFYING INFORMATION

Thinking back on last month's Board Academy, do you recall your WHY? Why are you in your role at the library? Connecting with your why is crucial to maintaining a desire to put in effort, even when times are tough. After knowing your why, what else is important to recognize?

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITY

One of the most frequently asked questions we receive as district consultants from library folks is "What is my role?" What is the role of a board member? What is the role of the library director? While each organization may approach these questions a little differently, there are general rules which healthy organizations follow to assign duties, draw boundaries, and support each other as a team. The board and the library director When these roles are understood, communication flows easier and actions are more productive and forward moving.

Board members are responsible for governance, oversight, policy development, and long-term planning, ensuring the library operates efficiently and in alignment with community needs. They focus on the big picture, the library's direction, and legal/financial oversight.

The library director (executive director) is responsible for the day-to-day management, implementation of policies, operational decisions, staff management, and ensuring the library delivers services effectively and efficiently to the community. They are the main operational leader and manage the library's internal workings.

While there is overlap, particularly in governance and strategy, board members primarily set the direction, while the library director is tasked with executing that direction.

Check out the resources in the appendix:

- Working Together: Roles and Responsibilities Guidelines (ALA, Connecticut State Library)
- Public Library Board of Trustees: Working with the Library Director (North Dakota State Library)
- The Role of Library Trustees (United for Libraries)
- Q&A: Whose Role Is It? (Primary Roles Clarification)

LIBRARY SELF-ASSESSMENTS

In the next edition of Board Academy, we're going to start taking a deeper dive into board governance. For a sneak peek, take a look at or work through the [SNOE Self-Assessment: Governance](#).

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UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

Library Board Q&A with Strategy Solutions

Thursday, March 27 from 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. See email edition of Board Academy for registration link.



In the registration process, you'll receive an opportunity to submit your questions. This will allow the district consultants to combine similar topics and provide more anonymity during the session. Deb will be provided the questions in advance so she prepare responses as well. If you think of other questions or the box runs out of space, feel free to submit your questions to consultant@snoelibraries.org by Friday, March 14.

This session is ideal for library board members and library directors. You do NOT have to have attended the Thrive in 2025 workshop to register and attend this event. If your board has a meeting that night or wants to watch it as a group, you can have someone register and then stream it at your library (or wherever as a group).

HR & Employment Law Q&A with Knox Law

Tuesday, April 29 from 4 p.m. - 5 p.m. See email edition of Board Academy for registration link.



In the registration process, you'll receive an opportunity to submit your questions. This will allow the district consultants to combine similar topics and provide more anonymity during the session. Mark will be provided the questions in advance so she prepare responses as well. If you think of other questions or the box runs out of space, feel free to submit your questions to consultant@snoelibraries.org by Friday, April 11. Registration will remain open until Friday, April 25 to be sent a Zoom link, but questions will not be accepted for early submission after the question deadline closes.

This session is ideal for library board members and library directors. You do NOT have to have attended the Thrive in 2025 workshop to register and attend this event. If your board has a meeting that night or wants to watch it as a group, you can have someone register and then stream it at your library (or wherever as a group).

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SNOE REGION

Board Academy is a publication produced by the SNOE Region Libraries. The SNOE Region is a cooperative initiative of the Seneca, New Castle, Northwest, and Oil Creek Districts to help develop and strengthen the libraries in Northwestern Pennsylvania.

This information is provided to the best of our knowledge as of the date provided. Information is subject to change without notice. While authoritative, it is not guaranteed for accuracy or legalities. If there are questions, please reach out to your district consultant, who may encourage your library to ask a local solicitor/lawyer for further guidance.

If you have any questions about this publication or previous editions' content, feel free to reach out to all of the SNOE Region's District Consultants at consultant@snoelibraries.org. If you have questions on any topics related to board governance, duties, advocacy, or libraries, please feel free to reach out to your library's District Consultant:

- Leslie LaBarte, Seneca Library District: districtconsultant@senecadistrictlibraries.org
(Cameron, Elk, Forest, McKean, and Warren Counties)
- Barbara McGary, New Castle Library District: bmcgary@ncdlc.org
(Armstrong, Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties)
- Jessica Church, Northwest Library District: jchurch@eriecountypa.gov
(Crawford and Erie Counties)
- Erin Joyce, Oil Creek Library District: consultant@oilcreek.org
(Clarion, Jefferson, and Venango Counties)

Working Together: Roles and Responsibilities Guidelines

Responsibilities of	Library Director	Library Board	Friends
General Administrative	Administer daily operation of the library including personnel, collection development, fiscal, physical plant and programmatic functions. Act as advisor to the board and provide support to the Friends and community groups.	Recruit and employ a qualified library director; maintain an ongoing performance appraisal process for the director in accordance with town charter.	Support quality library service in the community through fund raising, volunteerism and serving as advocates for the library.
Policy	Apprise library board of need for new policies, as well as policy revisions. Implement the policies of the library as adopted by the library board.	Identify and adopt written policies to govern the operation and program of the library.	Support the policies of the library as adopted by the library board.
Planning	Coordinate and implement a strategic plan with library board, Friends, staff and community.	Ensure that the library has a strategic plan with implementation and evaluation components.	Provide input into the library's strategic plan and support its implementation.
Fiscal	Prepare an annual budget for the library in accordance with town charter.	Seek adequate funds to carry out library operations. Assist in the preparation and presentation of the annual budget in accordance with town charter.	Conduct fund raising to support the library's mission and plans.
Advocacy	Promote the mission of the library within the community. Educate the library board, Friends and community regarding local, state and federal issues that impact the library.	Promote the mission of the library within the community. Advocate for the library to legislators.	Promote the mission of the library within the community. Advocate for the library to legislators.
Meetings	Participate in library board and Friends meetings. Ensure that there is a liaison from the board to the Friends and vice versa.	Participate in all board meetings. Appoint a liaison to the Friends Board and become a member of the Friends.	Maintain a liaison to the library board.
Networking	Encourage City Board and Friends to join state and national professional organizations and make them aware of educational opportunities.	Join the Association of Connecticut Library Boards as a resource for policies, operations and advocacy for libraries.	Join the Friends of Connecticut Libraries as a resource to better support the library.



North Dakota State Library: Separation of Board and Director Duties

The board and the library director need to work together. In order to do so, it is important that there is a clear separation of responsibilities.

The library director is responsible for all operations of the library. In order to support the work of the board, the director provides information and research, proposes options, drafts policies, or makes other recommendations for board consideration. The director supplies staff work, coordinates major efforts such as a long-range planning process, raises questions, describes programs, and assesses both the successes and failures of the library program. The director may also provide, or arrange for, continuing education for trustees.

The library board, on the other hand, is responsible for the library on a broader scale. They adopt and approve policies, but they do not enforce the policies. They examine the budget and recommend changes, help direct the library through the strategic planning process and adoption of a mission and vision statement, and aid in the advocacy efforts on behalf of the library. They also communicate with the director about any concerns regarding staff, the collection, or the role of the library in the community.

Communication between the board and director is very important. The table below is from pages 13–14 of the [North Dakota Public Library Trustee Manual](#) to help understand the separation of duties:

	Duties of the Board	Duties of the Director
Staff	Employ a competent and qualified librarian. Includes recruiting, hiring, and annually evaluating the Director based upon a well-defined job description and expectations. Adopt personnel policy and set adequate salary and benefits for all staff.	Recruit, hire, and annually evaluate library staff based upon well-defined job descriptions and expectations. Suggest improvements needed in salaries, working conditions, and personnel policy.
Policy	Determine and adopt written policies to govern the operation of the library.	Carry out the policies of the library as adopted by the Board. Recommend policies to Library Board.
Planning/ Management	Determine the direction of the library by studying community needs. See that a plan is developed for meeting needs and that the plan is carried out.	Suggest and carry out plans for library services. Manage the day-to-day operation of the library. Design library services to meet community needs/interests. Report library's progress and future needs to the Board.
Budget	Examine the budget proposed by the Director; make revisions as needed; officially adopt the budget; present library budget to mayor/city council. Review expenditures in accordance with the budget, amending line items within the budget if needed.	Prepare and submit to Library Board a budget request based on present and anticipated needs. Maintain complete and accurate records of finances. Expend funds based on the approved budget.

Advocacy	Advocate for the library through contacts with the general public, civic organizations, and public officials. Attend city council meetings to keep the council informed on library activities. Work to secure adequate funds to carry out the library's services.	Advocate for the library through contacts with general public, civic organizations, and public officials. Attend city council and/or county supervisor meetings. Work to secure adequate funds to carry out the library's services.
Legal Issues	Be familiar with library ordinance as well as state and federal laws affecting the library.	Be familiar with library ordinance and keep Board informed on laws affecting the library.
Continuing Education	Participate in continuing education activities and encourage the Library Director to do the same. Participate in the orientation of new Trustees.	Participate in continuing education activities and professional organizations; encourage continuing education for library staff. Participate in the orientation of new Trustees. Provide and/or see that new Trustees receive an orientation to the library.
Communication	Communicate with the library director	Communicate with the library board
Collection Development	Adopt collection development policy.	Select and order all books and other library materials and resources.
Board Meetings	Regularly attend Board meetings; conduct affairs of Board at regularly scheduled meetings.	Attend Board meetings; prepare written progress report; provide information as needed/requested by Board.
Board Member Recruitment	Recommend qualifications and candidates for Board to mayor/city council. Notify city of Board vacancies.	Assist in developing qualifications for new Trustees.



The Role of Library Trustees

It is not uncommon for the role of the Friends and the role of the public library Trustees to become confused. What authority and responsibilities do the Friends have? What is the role of the Trustees? Should an individual serve on both boards? If either of these groups is unsure of the limits of their respective authorities, conflicts can, and often do, arise. Fact Sheets 10 and 11 outline the roles of the Trustees and the role of the Friends, specifically indicating where their work and communication should overlap or complement each other.

There are typically two types of Trustee Boards - a) a governing board or b) an advisory board.

The Governing Board is either elected by the general population or is appointed by the city or town's elected council. This type of board has full authority over the governance of the library. This Board hires the library director, sets policy, and works closely with the director in establishing and presenting the library's budget to the city.

The Advisory Board typically exists where the library is a city or county department, the library director is hired by the city or county, and the library director reports directly to the city/county manager or mayor. The Advisory Board typically has no

governing authority though it may be an appointed or elected Board. By law in most states, this board still has responsibility for assisting with policy setting, but does not have responsibility for the budget or the direct oversight of the library director.

In both cases, the library Board of Trustees engages in the development of policies that govern library services.

In both cases, the library Board of Trustees works with the library administration in planning and goal setting for the library.

In both cases, the library Board of Trustees should meet at least monthly with the library administration in an open meeting where a Friends liaison should be

present and have an opportunity on the agenda to update the Board of Trustees on the Friends' activities.

In both cases, all members of a library Board of Trustees should become personal members of the Friends at the highest level they are able.

Individually and collectively, Trustees should act as advocates of libraries and present the library point of view to their locally- and nationally-elected legislators and leaders.

At least yearly, the library board should plan a joint meeting to discuss mutual concerns with Friends. This can be done in conjunction with a breakfast or dinner meeting.

Should a member of the library Board of Trustees also serve as a member of the Friends of the Library Board? The generally accepted wisdom is "no." There are a number of reasons for this:

[continued](#)



The Role of Library Trustees, continued

It can imbue a single member with more power and authority than his or her peers on each of the boards.

There can be a perceived conflict if a member of the policy making Board is also in a decision making role on the Friends Board that helps fund the library's services.

There can be a potential conflict of interest when a policy the library Board of Trustees is proposing might not be considered to be in the best interest of the Friends. For example, deciding to give discarded library materials to an outsourced agency or proposing the establishment of a foundation for fundraising.

Even if your Trustee board and Friends board are working in perfect harmony right now, no precedent should be set that will allow possible conflicts in the future. Though it is the case that a Trustee Board member may take a leadership role in creating a new Friends group and therefore have a decision making role in both for awhile; this should be considered a temporary necessity and the new Friends should elect officers (other than library Trustees) as soon as possible.

Additional Resources

Tip Sheets

The Role of the Friends Board

Toolkits

Friends and Libraries: Working Effectively Together

Publications

101+ Great Ideas for Libraries and Friends (chapter on Organizational Effectiveness)

Webinars/Training

Short Takes for Trustees: Working with Friends

Other

Understanding Roles: The Separate But Complementary Roles of Friends, Trustees, and Library Directors

Primary Roles Clarification Worksheet

ANSWER KEY

It is important to note that each nonprofit organization is unique and the answers for your nonprofit may vary from those listed. What is important is that the distinction in roles is clear to and that the separation of responsibilities provides sufficient checks and balances. Having clarity around roles and responsibilities insures your organization is well run and in the best position to serve your constituency.

- 1. Determine the organization's mission – *The Board*.** The board is responsible for setting the mission and insuring that the nonprofit stays true to that mission. The board may also consciously decide to modify the mission.
- 2. Approve the annual budget– *The Board*.** This is one of the board's most important opportunities to have a substantive impact on the health of the organization. If the board approves a realistic budget that reflects the organization's needs and goals in a financially responsible way, it will give the Executive Director a road map to illustrate the board's plan for advancing the mission of the organization.
- 3. Fundraise for the organization– *The Board*.** It is ultimately the board's responsibility to insure the organization has the financial resources necessary to carry out its mission. The board can hire staff or form a committee to help the organization raise funds, but it cannot delegate its way out of its fundraising responsibilities.
- 4. Hire the Executive Director– *The Board*.**
- 5. Evaluate the Executive Director's performance – *The Board*.** The board as a group is the ultimate authority over the organization. As such, it has an obligation to supervise and provide opportunities for professional development for the Executive Director.
- 6. Hire and supervise professional staff (other than the Executive Director) –*The Executive Director*.** Putting together and maintaining the staff best equipped to carry out the mission of the organization is one of the most important responsibilities of the Executive Director.
- 7. Establish staff salary administration plan– *The Executive Director*.** The board sets the overall salary budget for the organization when they approve the annual budget, and the board sets the compensation for the Executive Director. The Executive Director then decides how best to allocate the balance of the salary line for the year. The board should review individual salaries periodically to insure that there is no bias in compensation levels.
- 8. Plan program procedures– *The Executive Director and Staff*.** Program refers to the day-to-day operations, which are the purview of the Executive Director and his or her staff.
- 9. Recommend policy to the Board– *Everyone*.** The organization should create a culture which values all input, but the hierarchy of the organization must be maintained. A staff person with a recommendation should bring that suggestion to the Executive Director, not directly to the board.

- 10. Assess organizational problems**— *Everyone*. An atmosphere in which everyone feels comfortable identifying organizational problems will prove beneficial to the organization. However, appropriate boundaries must be maintained. Again, the staff should not go directly to the board with their concerns. However, it is equally important that board members understand the difference between problems that should be addressed on the governance level and problems that should be addressed on the operations level, by the Executive Director.
- 11. Recruit new Board members**— *The Board*. The board is a dynamic and self-sustaining entity that exists at the heart of every nonprofit organization. Great effort should be expended to insure the board has the best board members available. It is appropriate to include the Executive Director in board development discussions, but the responsibility of recruiting Board members belongs solely to the board and should not fall to the Executive Director.
- 12. Orient and train new Board members**— *The Board*. New board members need to be instructed as to how best to fulfill their new role, and this is often best accomplished through peer-to-peer discussion. This can be accomplished by the Board President or a board-comprised development committee, and is often carried out with the assistance of the Executive Director.
- 13. Coordinate Board operations**— *Board President*. It falls to the Board President to organize the board's operations such that they are carried out effectively and efficiently.
- 14. Enforce Board rules on attendance and participation**— *The Board*. It is much more effective for peers to hold each other accountable. A discussion between two volunteers creates a more compelling argument for compliance than does a similar conversation between one volunteer and one paid member of the organization's staff. A board-comprised development committee can enforce these rules effectively.
- 15. Conduct assessment of Board performance** — *The Board*. It is incumbent upon the board to evaluate both its performance as a group and the performance of individuals. Regular performance assessment insures that the board operates efficiently and effectively, and that it keeps in touch with the organization's needs.
- 16. Participate in Board committee activities** —*Everyone*. Board Committees, as a rule, should be chaired by a board member. However, membership on many committees can be opened up to a larger group to include broader expertise and appropriate representation.
- 17. Recommend persons for committee positions** — *Everyone*. Anyone who has an interest in the organization and is knowledgeable about any committees' needs should have a mechanism through which they can recommend candidates. Appointment of individuals to a committee is frequently the responsibility of the Board President.
- 18. Insure that the organization stays true to its mission** —*The Board*.
- 19. Serve as official spokesperson** —*Shared, generally between the Executive Director and the Board President*. Often there is an understanding as to who will address specific topics. This eliminates the possibility of seemingly contradictory information being disseminated. Although responsibility for speaking on behalf of the organization can be delegated to others, it is imperative that board members do not take it upon themselves to act in the capacity of an official spokesperson.



FAQ: Strategies to Strengthen Library Service and Support in Uncertain Times

FAQ & Resource Sheet

Questions? E-mail the district consultants at consultant@snoelibraries.org

With quickly evolving changes and uncertainty in the library field, it's important to remain aware of what is going on at the local, county, state, and federal levels. Any number of changes could affect library funding and service.

Where should we start?

Let go of the notion that “It can’t happen here.” “Bad things” can happen anywhere at any time. There is no security in “We’re too small, no one is going to look at us,” or “We have the best people on our board/staff.”

What are some ways in which my library can build community support internally and externally?

- **DO: Establish/update policies and procedures so that boards, executive directors, staff, and patrons are on the same page with how the library should and will operate.** Have policies and procedures in place such as collection development, book/program challenge forms, meeting room reservations, board member selection and application, and bylaws. Also consider a communications plan and who has the authority to speak to the media on behalf of the library. For policies related to the public, have them easily available at the circulation desk or on the library’s website.
DON’T: Let these go on the back burner *before* your library needs them. It’s easier to have the conversations that build these policies and procedures before situations arise. This is an opportune time for the board to concentrate on its responsibility for strategic oversight rather than hovering over the director’s day-to-day responsibilities.
- **DO: Get on the Same Page.** If your organization has internal conflict, the tension will affect library service. Typically, a community (especially a small community) is more aware than you might think, and they’re more likely to stand behind organizations that they feel are strong and stable. When a decision is made, the library outwardly supports that decision despite any internal opposition that may remain.
DON’T: Bury situations or, on the flip side, contribute to a toxic or hostile environment. No one succeeds in those situations as it hinders real progress and proactive solutions.
- **DO: Maintain a positive presence in the library.** Support a welcoming atmosphere for all that encourages quality customer service. This could be with patron transactions, conversations between staff, or even using positive language in signage. Think of the “Pennies in a cup” analogy—goodwill goes a long way.
DON’T: Allow staff to bicker or engage in inappropriate conversations at the circulation desk or the continuous rude behavior of a staff person to other staff or patrons.

- **DO: Maintain a positive and visible presence outside of the library.** Be mindful of the library image being portrayed beyond the walls of the library—the parking lot, property, outdoor signage. Does it feel like a safe space? When you’re doing outreach, take that same “welcoming atmosphere” from inside the library with you.
DON’T: Speak poorly of your library (your board, director, staff, volunteers) while in a public setting, even if you’re off-the-clock.
- **DO: Keep the focus online and on social media to THE LIBRARY.** It’s easy to get tossed into related (or even unrelated) tangents. Keep on point with messaging that highlights the good of public libraries and services. Develop a plan to craft posts and how to respond to messages/comments in a mindful manner.
DON’T: Engage with posts or comments in a harsh, negative tone or verbiage. Don’t ignore social media entirely. While there may be fluctuations in usage and audiences, there are still many folks who use the platforms for connection and information.
- **DO: Promote the outcomes of library resources and services.** Promote not only the physical and digital resources, programs, and other library services—but more importantly, speak to WHY and HOW these make positive changes.
DON’T: Assume that others know the benefits of library resources and services, let alone what the library has to offer (more than books).

What are some ways in which my library can stay informed?

- **DO: Know your library’s funding/support streams - direct, indirect, and in-kind.** Be knowledgeable of which organization covers the cost of services. If it's not your library, who does—local municipality, county, consortium, district, state, federal support? If a funding stream or support network went away, how would your library prioritize and restructure its service offerings? Be fully engaged with these other groups or you could be missing out on invaluable information or services (that could be costing your library money if you don’t know they’re available through other channels).
DON’T: Discuss funding or services as if there is a “library fairy” that makes things happen. These efforts take time and money to generate. While your county, district, or OCL may be able to provide some level of support, these entities cannot “save” libraries or be responsible for a shortage of funding or staffing capacity. Your independently-governed organization is ultimately the unit responsible for ensuring quality library service and programs.
- **DO: Know your government officials.** Learn about your library service area’s political leaders at all levels and build relationships where you can. What do they support? How have they voted on legislation? What committees are they on? Do they support libraries? Share information about how your library has helped THEIR constituents.
DON’T: Make assumptions about officials based on what you have heard through the grapevine. Try to find ways to present information about your library that aligns with their interests, such as how much money the library has saved community members, programs that have been offered that match a leader’s priorities, and so forth.

- **DO: Raise your awareness on legislation and budget negotiations.** While the news may cover a handful of topics, there are many other pieces in play. At <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/>, you can browse House and Senate memorandums for initiatives which legislators intend to propose as bills as well as follow bills through the process. You can also follow along with budget negotiations between the governor and the General Assembly. Similarly, find information from the U.S. Congress at <https://www.congress.gov/>. At <https://snoelibraries.org/2025-legislative-session/>, we (district consultants) are attempting to follow and share the highlights from both levels. **DON'T:** Ignore the politics beyond what's happening in libraries. Don't stay submerged in negative news for the sake of being informed. Find a balance that works for you between knowing what's going on and your mental health.
- **DO: Look to organizations beyond your library, county system, or district.** While you may have local resources who share or facilitate discussion on current topics (i.e. your system administrator, district consultant, etc.), it is critical that you yourself remain informed about what's happening beyond the field and how any decision may ripple into the library field. Be sure to use authoritative, reliable sources such as:
 - American Library Association ([ALA](#))
 - Pennsylvania Library Association ([PaLA](#))
 - Association of Rural and Small Libraries ([ARSL](#))
 - Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations ([PANO](#))
 - [National Council of Nonprofits](#)

Many of these organizations, like PANO and National Council of Nonprofits, have had regular updates (almost weekly) with updates on changes and announcements via their email lists and subscription newsletters.

DON'T: Get caught up in sensationalism, quotes, or speeches. Look for and at the evidence. Look for citations—where did the information come from? Much like when, following legislation and budgets, please work within your boundaries for balance between information and self-care.