

THE BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE METROPOLITAN LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Set the Mission and the Vision of the System

The Board is responsible for creating the System's mission and purpose statements, and reviewing them periodically to be sure they fit well with the direction of the organization's growth. The mission statement explains why the organization exists and whom it exists to serve; the vision articulates a picture of the future that the organization hopes to create.

Create a Plan for the System

The MLS Board is also responsible for working with staff and members to create a strategic plan for the growth of the System, including resources, staffing, programs, and other aspects of organizational development. The Board should periodically monitor progress.

Determine Programs and Projects

The Board should take a broad perspective on projects and programs, being sure that the work of the organization is consistent with its mission and vision. The staff is responsible for carrying out the programs, and the Board should support them and avoid micromanaging tasks and decisions.

Support and Evaluate the Executive Director

The Board is also responsible for evaluating the performance of the Executive Director. For this task, it is important to have clear goals and expectations for the position. The Executive Director is responsible for hiring, firing and evaluating all other staff. The Board should play a support role for the Executive Director as he or she carries out this task and the other work of the organization.

Select the Executive Director

One of the Board's biggest responsibilities is to hire the Executive Director of the organization. The Board should come to consensus on a solid job description and clear expectations for the job, and then find the most qualified person for the position. The Board also has the responsibility to replace the Executive Director when and if his or her leadership is no longer in the best interests of the organization.

Recruit, Train and Evaluate Board Members

The Board is responsible for its own growth and development, finding committed individuals to serve on the Board, and making sure that the final Board composition is balanced and appropriate. Experienced Board members should take the lead in training and orientation for new members. The Board is also responsible for self-evaluation and ensuring that it is adequately carrying out its leadership role.

Build Strong Public Standing

The Board serves as the public face of the organization. Board members should promote the mission, vision and programs of the organization, and represent the organization positively to constituents, the media, and the general public. It is understood, however, that the official voice of MLS in cases of controversy or dispute is to be the Executive Director or the Chair of the Board in accord with MLS's crisis-management policy. No Director will have any authority to speak or act on behalf of the Board or MLS itself other than that authority specifically granted in the MLS bylaws, in MLS Board policy, or by specific vote of the Board of Directors.

Ensure Adequate Resources

The Board is responsible for making sure that the organization has adequate resources to carry out its work.

Manage Resources Effectively

At the same time, the Board should be sure that the organization is using its resources efficiently. The Board must help develop and approve the annual budget, and be sure that proper financial controls are in place.

Maintain Integrity and Accountability

The Board is ultimately responsible for being sure that the organization maintains legal and ethical practices. Creating clear and effective by-laws, staff policies, evaluation methods and grievance procedures all help ensure accountability.

Based on materials from the National Center for Nonprofit Boards, by Craig White – Washington DC.