



Idaho
Commission
for Libraries

Best Practices Section 3: Governance and Board Service

Checklist

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In Idaho, public library boards are governing entities. Governing is defined as having the authority to conduct the policy, actions, and affairs of an organization. The authority for a board governing a legally established public library is described in chapters 26 and 27, title 33, Idaho Code. While there are differences between city and district libraries, both chapters describe the formation and maintenance of the board, its meetings, powers and duties, and the annual appropriations process. Library boards are required to adhere to other parts of Idaho Code, such as title 74, which includes Ethics in Government, the Open Meetings Law, and the Public Records Act.

Library board members are stewards of taxpayer dollars, but they are also stewards of the institution. The idea of board service encompasses the board's statutory authority and oversight role but requires the board to assume broader roles with responsibilities that speak to the viability of the organization (and institution): promoting the mission, pro-active planning to ensure the needs of the community are met, engaging in advocacy to tell the contemporary library story, building a competent board that reflects the diversity of the population, and enhancing the organization's public standing so it remains a vital resource to the community.

At the heart of a successful library board is a positive partnership with the library director who provides a bridge from the professional world to the board so they can make informed and forward-thinking decisions.

Best Practices for Public Libraries in Idaho is a tool developed by the Idaho Commission for Libraries for the public library community to use in planning, staff and trustee development, orientation, and advocacy.

Together with an advisory group of practicing librarians, ICfL has developed a set of suggested Best Practices which are presented in seven content areas:

1. Collection Development and Maintenance
2. Facilities
- 3. Governance and Board Service**
4. Human Resources
5. Marketing and Advocacy
6. Services and Programming
7. Technology

Each of the seven checklists is supported by a toolkit which further defines or supports the Best Practices statements.

Checklist statements are divided into categories designed to assist the participant:

- Core – Statements in this category are fundamental to public library service in Idaho.
- Enhanced – Statements in this category add value to core library services.
- Stretch – Includes nationally trending library practices.

A good way to approach these tools is to work through each checklist, ticking off the boxes for those Best Practices currently maintained by the library. The remaining unchecked Best Practices present opportunities for local development, planning, and education.

The Idaho Commission for Libraries does not require attainment of levels for eligibility in any ICfL programs or services. The Best Practices are intended to be a tool for continuous improvement, not a library certification program. ICfL encourages public libraries to use the Best Practices in conjunction with ICfL's *Best Practices Improvement Plan*.

The Idaho Commission for Libraries is introducing a companion program for *Best Practices for Public Libraries in Idaho*. *The Best Practices Improvement Plan* will provide financial support, through a grant process, to assist libraries in improving identified areas of Best Practice.

Core Level

- Yes No 3.1. My library is established according to chapter 26 (city library) or 27 (district library) of title 33, Idaho code.
- Yes No 3.2. My library's trustees are placed on the library board in accordance with the process outlined in either chapter 26 or chapter 27, title 33, Idaho Code.
- Yes No 3.3. My library board abides by state and federal laws which pertain to public libraries in Idaho.
- Yes No 3.4. My library makes records not exempt from disclosure, such as meeting minutes, library policies, board bylaws, financials, and planning documents available to the public online or in accordance with the Open Records Act and Open Meetings Act.
- Yes No 3.5. My library's board members have discussed and considered adopting the values set forth in the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights and Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*.
- Yes No 3.6. My library's board and director provide orientation for new trustees.
- Yes No 3.7. My library's trustees participate annually in education and training on topics such as organizational mission, roles and responsibilities, budgeting and finance, and Ethics in Government.
- Yes No 3.8. My library has a current written strategic plan informed by board and staff input as well as by a community assessment process. The plan includes these elements:
- 3.8.1. Library vision and mission;
 - 3.8.2. High-level desired outcomes;
 - 3.8.3. Practical activities or action steps supporting the outcomes;
 - 3.8.4. Indicators tied to outcomes.
- Yes No 3.9. My library board has a plan for emergency succession and defined departure, which is part of the library's transition notebook.
- Yes No 3.10. My library board maintains a trustee job description that clarifies the responsibilities of the board as a whole, the individual trustee, and the offices of the board.
- Yes No 3.11. My library board strives to recruit potential trustees according to the needs of the board and the diversity of the community.

- Yes No 3.12. My library develops an annual workplan based on the strategic plan and uses it as the basis for monitoring goals at regular intervals of no more than six months.
- Yes No 3.13. My library director's job description is reviewed annually in conjunction with a performance evaluation and annual work plan goals in closed (executive) session during a regular or special board meeting held according to Idaho's Open Meetings Law.
- Yes No 3.14. My library allocates a minimum of [10 percent](#) of its annual budget to collection development and maintenance.
- Yes No 3.15. My library board allocates funds for the staff's continuing education and ensures that resources are in place to provide coverage as needed for participating staff.
- Yes No 3.16. My library provides the board with financial reports, including all income and expenditures, statistical information on library usage, services, and programs in the context of prior year actuals, as appropriate, at each board meeting.
- Yes No 3.17. My library's annual statistical report to ICfL's Board of Library Commissioners is submitted by the deadline specified in Idaho Code.
- Yes No 3.18. My library's board and director develop an annual budget which supports the strategic goals of the library and is structured through the division of line items to reflect the library's strategic priorities. Library accounting conforms to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).
- Yes No 3.19. My library's programs and services are regularly evaluated to gauge their effectiveness in advancing the library's mission and include outcome-based measures.
- Yes No 3.20. My library board's meeting agenda includes an opportunity for public comment.
- Yes No 3.21. My library board regularly reviews its bylaws and the library's core policies on the following topics and ensures that the director has developed related procedures, including, but not limited to:
- 3.21.1. Acceptable Behavior
 - 3.21.2. Audit (district libraries only)
 - 3.21.3. Circulation
 - 3.21.4. Collection Management
 - 3.21.5. Gifts
 - 3.21.6. Human Resources (district libraries only)
 - 3.21.7. Internet Safety

3.21.8. Meeting Room / Facility Use (if applicable)

3.21.9. Patron Confidentiality and Privacy

3.21.10. Communication

3.21.11. Request for Public Records

3.21.12. Sponsorship

3.21.13. Unattended children

Yes No 3.22. My library's board considers planning and policy through a lens of sustainability and resilience.

Yes No 3.23. My library's board reviews the content and liability insurance for the library every three years at minimum.

Enhanced Level

Yes No 3.24. My library's board develops and approves policies related to internal controls, spending authority, capital, petty cash, and fund balances including personnel-related liabilities.

Yes No 3.25. My library's strategic plan is created with the active participation of stakeholders including members of the community and community organizations and addresses services, facilities, public relations, and technology.

Yes No 3.26. My library's board allocates funds annually for trustee education.

Yes No 3.27. My library's board members have mission-based talking points or library stories to use when advocating for the library.

Yes No 3.28. My library's board evaluates its performance through annual self-evaluation.

Yes No 3.29. My library's board regularly reviews staff salary guidelines to ensure library staff wages are aligned with comparable positions in libraries of similar size as well as comparable positions in local government.

Yes No 3.30. My library has a supporting non-profit group, either a Friends group or Foundation, which provides supplemental funding for library services and programs. The relationship between the library board and the non-profit is guided by a memorandum of understanding.

Yes No 3.31. My library applies for local, state, and federal grants to supplement the budget and to support special services and programming.

Yes No 3.32. My library's board utilizes committees to facilitate the work of the board and includes community members when appropriate.

Stretch Level

- Yes No 3.33. My library's board has an advocacy committee to set advocacy priorities and to engage individual trustees in the work of being an ambassador for the library.
- Yes No 3.34. My library's board and staff facilitate community engagement as a method of planning for library services that are responsive to community needs.
- Yes No 3.35. My library board has a governance committee whose members develop an annual calendar of board education.
- Yes No 3.36. My library's individual trustees are members of community organizations to act as liaisons and ambassadors of the library.
- Yes No 3.37. My library's strategic plan is assessed using a set of pertinent, useful, and actionable data points, including and in addition to the indicators from the strategic plan.