

Public Library Trustee Orientation

Identifying a new board member is only the first step in what you hope will be a mutually rewarding relationship. Whether orientation of your new board member is approached informally, or formally, be sure to include the basics needed for new board members to become engaged in the work of the board right away, and to serve as a committed ambassador and advocate for your library's mission and vision for a long time to come.

Steps to ensure a positive experience for your new Trustee:

1. Create an Orientation Resources (packet or notebook, etc.) that includes:
 - Legal document outlining powers and duties of the Library Board. (This could be a local ordinance or code, a regional or interlocal agreement or contract.)
 - Board Bylaws
 - Meeting Schedule
 - Recent Agenda
 - Recent Board Minutes
 - Contact information and terms of office for Library Board Members, Friends Board Members, and other boards, such as Endowment or Foundation Boards
 - Library Organization Chart and staff roster with positions
 - Library Policies
 - Library History
 - Most current statistical report for Library and any other evaluative materials
 - Long Range Plan document including vision and mission statements
 - Adopted Budget and most recent Audit Report
 - Current library promotional materials
 - [Trustee Resources](#) provided by State Library, including NC Trustee manual, online orientation course and Working Together Charts.
 - Trustee Pocket Handbook from State Library (contact [State Library](#) for copies)
 - State Laws regarding public libraries (NCGS 153A, Article 14) and regional libraries, if applicable (NCGS 160A, Article 20, Part 1). Links available [here](#).

2. Meet with new Trustee prior to first meeting to review Orientation Resources and provide an opportunity to discuss:
 - How library is run
 - Relationship with local government and other community institutions such as schools, non-profits, colleges/universities

- Library Director's vision for future of the library
 - Ask board member what they are most interested in while serving on the board
 - How Board meetings are run and who to contact with questions
3. Provide trustee with tour of the Library and introduce staff.
 4. At the first board meeting:
 - Have name tags and/or tent cards to identify each person attending the meeting
 - Have Board Chair welcome new trustee and ask them to share about themselves
 - Consider appointing a veteran board member to serve as mentor for new Trustee during their first year of service

Beyond Orientation

Society expects so much from our volunteer board members – in turn we need to thoughtfully prepare and support them. Rarely do new members arrive on the board with years of experience. They may only have a passing familiarity with the library and what is all about, but lots of passion for the mission of your organization.

Consequently, finding ways to educate all your board members on a regular basis about their important role, as well as about issues that impact the environment in which the library operates, are high priority activities that promote ongoing board engagement.