

Year 2: Community & Municipal Relations

Search Words | termes

Search | Rechercher

The Four Year Board Cycle

Community Relations

[Understanding the Community](#)
[Community Partnerships and Alliances](#)

Municipal Relations

[Creating Value by Linking to Municipal Priorities](#)
[Advocacy](#)
[Governance HUB homepage](#)


Understanding the Community

A full understanding and analysis of the community uncovers what people need and want from the public library. This allows the library board, ceo, and staff to make more informed decisions at every level of the organization to position the library as a vital part of local infrastructure.

Methods for collecting community information are varied and can be found within the library, through external sources, and, most importantly, by asking the community for direct feedback.

Internal Information Sources:

- ILS reports and statistics
- Annual Survey of Public Libraries data
- Planning documents (e.g Strategic Plans or Business Plans)
- Customer comment forms
- ROI / SROI toolkit results
- Anecdotal feedback received in person or online

External Information Sources:

- Community demographics (such as through the Census Profile or local/regional market research)
- Municipal planning and priorities
- Information on partners and competitors
- Information on other local organizations

Seeking Community Input:

- Community survey
- Focus group
- Customer comments
- Program evaluations
- Online engagement and feedback


Much of this work may be completed as part of the library's strategic planning process - for more information on and resources on understanding the community, see the Situational Analysis section of the OLS Professional Resource on Strategic Planning.

Community Partnerships and Alliances

Meeting the changing needs of a community requires a commitment to excellence and creativity. Library boards and CEOs often turn to community partnerships, joint ventures, or other cooperative projects as a method of providing enhanced and relevant service that extends beyond the capacity of a single organization operating on its own.

Examples of partnering with another organization may include reading programs or delivery to those with mobility barriers. Sharing space and facilities, such as with a community centre, is another common way public libraries can extend their reach. A sponsorship program may involve partnering with a donor/sponsor to deliver a particular program, event, or service for that falls outside the library budgetary scope. The type and extent of partnerships are limited only by the imaginations of the local parties involved.

For more information, including questions to consider, examples of partnerships and a sample agreement, please review the document linked below and the resources provided in the Community Outreach and Engagement and Volunteers and Friends of the Library guides.

-  [Launching a Successful Community Partnership](#)

Next: Municipal Relations >>

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