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CEO Performance Appraisal

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Step 1: Write a Policy

A policy needs to be established at the outset that reflects the board's commitment to conduct an annual CEO appraisal as part of their governance work. Setting policy is a way to ensure that the process is followed consistently, year after year, even after the current term of the Board ends. Setting the policy will provide a framework for fair and practical procedure over time.

What to Include in the Policy?

The policy should outline:

1. When the appraisal will take place

- For example, will it be six months after the date of hire and then an annual evaluation after that time?

2. What information will be gathered to support the process

- For example, do you have an annual report, an annual action plan, statistics, or will you collect input from stakeholders?

3. What steps will be used in the actual appraisal

- For example, will the CEO do a self-assessment, will committee meet to complete the form,

4. What to do if the CEO's performance needs improvement

- For example, offer training or mentoring opportunities, re-evaluate performance.

All this needs to be clearly documented and a policy is the best way to record the decisions.

Here is an excerpt from the sample Trillium Policy on Board-CEO Partnership which addresses CEO Performance Appraisal.

EXCERPT: Evaluation of the CEO

It is the library board's responsibility to appoint a qualified and competent individual as the Library's Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The library board oversees the performance of the CEO and supports the CEO's development. As part of this process the library board and CEO engage in annual performance appraisal, planning and review. This process facilitates communication between the library board and the CEO while ensuring that the board's priorities are achieved. This policy also sets out the basis for the CEO evaluation.

1. The CEO's performance will be evaluated after the first six months for a new hire, and annually thereafter. To complete this task, the library board shall:
 - a. have a current written job description which states the overall responsibilities of the CEO
 - b. develop with the CEO performance objectives based on the current

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strategic priorities of the library board

- c. appraise the CEO's performance based on the job description, his/her progress towards achieving the board's priorities, and his/her compliance with board policies and relevant competencies.

2. Information collected to assess the performance of the CEO may include:

- a. the annual report from the CEO on outcomes of the previous year's objectives and actions
- b. data on library performance measures such as circulation, membership, program statistics, collection development, etc.
- c. input from members of the library board, employees and/or outside stakeholders. END OF EXCERPT

Four sample policies, related to CEO Performance Appraisal, are provided in the next section.

- OLS Sample Policies
See Policy Number: GOV-08, Board-CEO Relationship
-  St. Thomas Public Library
Performance Planning and Appraisal - Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Librarian/CEO Performance Appraisal Policy
Hamilton Public Library
-  Blue Mountains Public Library Policy on Performance Appraisal

Step 2: Determine the logistics

While the policy provides the framework through which the CEO performance appraisal will take place, before the actual appraisal takes place, however, there are some logistics to be considered. Remember that you might be able to make a case for almost any of these options, but you need to have the conversation and document the decisions made with respect to the logistics. You will need to:

1. Decide who will be involved:

- Is there a standing committee of the Library Board such as a personnel committee who has been tasked with this responsibility
- Will the Library Board strike an Ad Hoc committee of the board, in which case, members will need to be assigned? Such a committee often has the Board Chair and two other board members
- Will the Board use a "Committee of the Whole" to complete the appraisal, allowing all board members to fully participate?
- What is the role of the library or municipal human resources department, if there is such a department? If you have an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between the board and the municipality/county, assistance from the Municipal or County HR department might be part of the process, but keep in mind that it is the responsibility of the Board to lead the process.

2. Decide on the timing for the appraisal

- After six months for new hires and annual thereafter
- Should the timing of the appraisal be tied to a cycle such as a planning or budget cycle or on a specific month of the year?

3. Develop a consistent appraisal form that will be used year after year

- Depending on the form to be used, the CEO may be given an opportunity to complete a self-evaluation and/or to submit an annual report, but if that style is implemented, it should continue each year for consistency.

4. Decide who is going to gather the data and information

- Board members may already have a copy of the Action Plan from their Board package, but if not, it should be gathered as part of the CEO Performance process. Similarly, if you are using the library's Strategic Plan, then the current and complete version should be available to those responsible for the appraisal.
- If the library has a job description for the Library CEO, then this is one tool. You may also wish to use a competencies profile to guide your discussion on the work of the Library CEO. A copy of the SOLS Competency Profile for a Library CEO is provided here.
- Sample CEO Competencies Profile

Step 3: Create an action plan

An Action Plan is the blueprint for the work of the board and of the CEO. In some libraries, this plan is called a work plan or an Annual Plan. The action plan should:

- Support the strategic directions of the library
- Set concrete goals and expectations
- Include agreed upon objectives
- Be reviewed and updated throughout the year.


At the beginning of each year, a blueprint or action plan is prepared with mutually agreed upon objectives based on the strategic plan as well as day to day operations of the library. Each objective should be tied to an indicator or measure of the anticipated outcomes. The CEO may be the one who is tracking progress towards the action plan which has been developed.

An action plan should clearly outline:

- Targeted goals
- Actions to be undertaken to support goals
- Targeted outcomes of those actions
- Responsibility for each of those items
- Targeted completion dates
- Status

Once the action plan is in place, it must be reviewed on a regular basis. In some cases, there may be items in the Action Plan which are not possible. For example, if there were key or critical instances that occurred throughout the year that the board should be aware of, and how it has affected their performance. Some examples might be a change of mayor, this year's pandemic, or even something the board did to change focus. One can make changes to it as needed. If there were specific barriers to success, these should not be secrets, board members should be kept in the loop on these scenarios and these exceptional circumstances should be taken into consideration in the appraisal process.

The Action plan can be formal or informal, as long as it clearly outlines expectations of the Board, the CEO and the staff. It needs to be a written document that the CEO and Board can reference and update as needed. Here are two good examples of Action Plans from Ontario public libraries:

- Blue Mountains Public Library (Note: At this library, the Action Plan is updated at each meeting of the Library Board, and copies can be found within the Board package for a specific month)
- Bruce County Library (Sample plan developed by Melissa Legacy, former CEO of Bruce County Library).
-  Bruce County Sample Action Plan

A note about Personal Goals

In addition to the priorities identified in the Action Plan, the Library CEO should have a chance to identify personal goals. The work of the CEO will involve a number of things that are not

including personal goals. The work of the CEO will involve a number of things that are not reflected in the action plan because they might not directly apply to the strategic directions of the library. But this work does need to be considered as part of the appraisal process.

Personal performance goals might focus on:

- Organizational priorities (for example, increasing public awareness of the organization)
- Leadership tasks (for example, work that the CEO undertakes within the library community such as participation on a committee of the Ontario Library Association)
- Professional development goals (for example, enrolling in a leadership development program such as the APLL/Advancing Public Library Leadership Program or taking specific courses related to the library or to communication or skills)

Including personal goals provides a way for the board to consider the work of the Library CEO as a whole. Keep in mind that qualitative measures and leadership qualities such as the ability to communicate, motivate and administer are more difficult to measure, and may be problematic if board members start to assess personality traits rather than competencies. This part of the appraisal needs to focus on the key personal accomplishments and areas of interest and involvement moving forward. Supporting these goals may encourage the CEO to seek opportunities for growth.

Step 4: Undertake the performance appraisal


The performance appraisal is really a cyclical process where goals and objectives set at one year are reviewed at the next one. The process itself should involve:

1. Completion of the form in the agreed upon manner, as discussed in Step 2 on logistics. The form may be completed separately, completed together or have separate sections for the board members and the Library CEO.
2. Review of the documentation provided. If the documentation is the action plan, those involved in the appraisal can review what was completed, what was not completed and then note the explanation of why specific items in the plan were not completed. The documentation provided might also include the goals and expectations set during the appraisal process in the previous year.
3. A discussion of ideas and goal-setting for the following year.
4. An opportunity for the CEO to speak to achievements that might not be reflected in the action plan.

If the process has all members of the Board completing the standardized assessment form, these responses should then be synthesized into a unified, collective view (with one voice) to determine whether the targets or goals have been achieved. The Chair of the Board (or of the Appraisal Committee) may be the voice of the committee to reiterate the positive achievements of the year, and, as necessary, suggest areas of improvement or change in an honest, constructive manner. One must keep in mind that *how* the information is conveyed is often as important as the message itself, and the annual appraisal is not a time for punitive words. The CEO should always be given the opportunity to provide additional comments in response to the appraisal, after all this is a partnership.

-  Appraisal Form - Sample 1

This form is from an Ontario public library serving less than 10,000 population.

-  Coaching For Service and Success: A Guide to Performance Feedback

A publication of the Ontario Library Service, published in 2003. Sample appraisal forms can be found in the appendixes F and G.

Step 5: Finalize the performance appraisal

Once the performance appraisal has taken place, there are a few steps to finalize the work:

1. Presentation of the outcome.

- Some libraries present the full performance appraisal at the board meeting through a closed session; some present a summary report; while others just record in the minutes of a regular board meeting that the annual performance appraisal was completed.

2. Documentation and Document storage.

- You need to be clear about who is entitled to receive a copy of the appraisal and where copies of the appraisal form will be stored.

3. Follow-up action required.

- As part of the appraisal process, the board will need to ensure that goals and action items that were identified in the performance appraisal process are reflected in next year's action plan.
- If additional training is required or requested for personal development, and there is a cost for this training, then they may need to be added to the library budget and, if necessary, time given to complete this training.
- If the completion of a performance appraisal is tied to compensation, then notification would need to be sent to the staff person responsible for payroll administration.

Finally, the board might wish to reflect on the process to determine where improvements could be made. The board may also wish to reflect on the results. By formalizing a structured approach to CEO performance appraisal, the board has a greater chance of building a strong relationship with the CEO, and with a stronger relationship can come a library system which is high-performing, adding great value to the community.

Additional resources

The Governance HUB is a collaborative project developed by the Ontario Library Service, the Ontario Library Boards Association (OLBA) and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL). This present document "CEO Performance Appraisal" is just one resource of many which cover the relationship and partnership between the Library Board and the Library CEO. Check out Year 1 resources which focus on governance roles and responsibilities and the CEO Recruitment Guide for the section on CEO roles.

In addition, the American Library Association has great resources for library trustees in a section called United for Libraries. The document, "Short Takes for Trustees: Evaluating the Library Director" includes a Tip Sheet called "Tools for Trustees".

Outside of the library sector, Charity Village has a good resource called "Assessing the Executive Director's Performance".

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