

Warp, Weft, Board, Director
Learning Checklist and Critical Take-Aways

Scenarios 1 & 2: Hiring Considerations

The **Charter** creates the entity (the **library**) that can hire the director.

The **Trustees** are the fiduciaries responsible for the library.

The **Director or Executive Director** is in charge of day-to-day operations of the library.

The Director is **supervised** by the board, all other employees are supervised by the Director.

The **Bylaws** set the initial dynamic for the board-director relationship.

The **Director's job description** should be developed with an eye toward governing law and regulations.

The Director's job description should be **reviewed annually** and adjusted as duties evolve.

Routine Evaluation methods can be used to set the stage for emphasizing strategic objectives of the board (innovation, new build, transformative emphasis on equity and inclusion, stability after turmoil, etc.).

An **employment contract** is optional; if desired, it should be used to achieve strategic objectives of the employment relationship (attract/retain an optimal director, greater assurance of continuity, tools for promoting excellence, additional process for relationship or performance concerns, added stability in the face of public pressure).

Background checks should be governed by policy informed by civil rights laws.

Hire letter is required (must list employer and employer's address, compensation amount, timing of compensation, start date); should at least reference other critical terms, including if employment is "at-will."

Compensation, and the range for compensation based on qualifications, should be determined through a careful analysis of comparable positions, and in scale with the library's overall compensation structure; a range should not be negotiated upward past identified ranges (throws off wage scale, creates equity issues and risk of salary discrimination).

Moving expense arrangements should be planned carefully and confirmed in writing in advance.



Onboarding should be planned using a "project management" approach that sets the stage for a positive working relationship between board, new director, and workforce. The impact of onboarding on director-workforce relations should be carefully considered.

Scenario 3: Board meetings

The **structure of meetings** should be supported in the bylaws and board policies.

Norms and procedures should be confirmed and applied consistently.

Meeting agendas should use a standard format.

Board packets should be ready (and posted per the Open Meetings Law) in advance (except for "special meetings" with less notice).

Board expectations for the director and other workforce support of technical preparations and logistics should be clearly articulated and allowed to evolve.

Workforce support of board operations (posting materials, preparing reports, finalizing minutes, setting up a meeting room) should be confirmed in job descriptions and budgeted for, not a "duty as assigned" or an unstated add-on.

Use a "board calendar" to set the cycle, critical deadlines, and responsibilities for routine board responsibilities such as: annual meeting, nominations, trustee elections/appointments, officer elections, committee mission confirmation, committee member appointments, insurance review, budget preparation, budget approval, votes, director evaluation, policy review, mandatory board training.

Plan for meetings to be **ADA accessible**.

If there is time on the agenda for **public comments**, maintain, post and uniformly enforce a policy to ensure orderly and optimal access to participate (and to be respectful to the director, the workforce, and the board members).

Scenario 4: Stay on mission

Boards empower the director and workforce to put the library's mission, plans, and policies into effect.

Boards are positioned by their legal structure to be **open to innovation**.

Board agendas can set aside **regular time to hear new ideas** from the director.



To foster innovation but **stay on mission**, a board should identify and apply an agreed-upon system to invite, nurture, evaluate, and when appropriate, support new initiatives. One technique is to **keep the "big picture" documents** (charter, bylaws, plan of service or strategic plan, current large grants, and budget) on hand for board meetings.

A board should be clear about when an action or new initiative requires board awareness, support, or approval.

Boards should ensure the director has a clear idea of when they are empowered to take action **without prior notice or approval**; a healthy relationship uses communication and feedback to maintain this awareness.

While allowing the director and workforce to take the initiative, boards should **ask the right questions** to ensure an initiative can succeed. Questions to ask are: Does this require the board to seek community or municipal support? Does this require a budget adjustment? Do we have the workforce capacity to do this? Are there any risks to the library's reputation if this does not succeed? What do you need to get the required permits, insurance coverage, or other risk management factors? In other words, once an initiative is deemed "on mission," the question for the board to ask the director is: what do we need to accomplish it?

As part of **trustee onboarding**, continuing trustees should ensure new trustees are given the information and time to absorb the tools of a healthy board-director dynamic.

Scenario 5: Assume Battle Stations

When facing a public relations crisis:

Safety first.

Personal well-being is part of safety.

Civil Rights are a critical condition.

Be ready to create a **public relations plan**; at all times, let library ethics and a cool head guide responses and decision making: **remain CALM**.

Be ready: discuss beforehand how the board supports the director and workforce during a PR event.

Consider implementing a **crisis response policy** to enable quick finalization of a response plan.

Be aware that there are times when **the director is the "face" of the library**, and times when the board needs to take the heat off the director.



Empower the director to receive training in public relations (if they are required to and/or want to have that responsibility).

After a PR event, a board should resolve to **set a time to do a "hot-wash"** to gather feedback on how it unfolded, and to identify areas of recovery, support, and further development. Identified needs should be addressed through board resolution or support to the director to take action.

Scenario 6: It's raining

What is the role of the board and director when their library has a **physically damaging on-site disruption**?

In advance: Have an **insurance policy** to cover assets and business interruption, and know the coverage and support your carrier can provide.

In advance: Have a **crisis response and business interruption plan**.

In advance: Have an **asset protection and recovery plan**.

In advance: Be ready to **have the right people at the scene of a crisis**.

In advance: Know the **terms of your lease**, or the **boundaries of the property** your library owns.

If feasible (and safe!), the **director will be on-site** addressing immediate safety, people, operations, and asset considerations. As the situation warrants, **board members who are designated leaders under the crisis response plan may join them**.

The board will be ready to **assess and make decisions regarding**: safety of all people impacted, denial of access (due to safety), support for temporary operations, tracking all expenses related to the situation, addressing budget impacts, working with the insurance carrier, public relations, compensation and benefits continuity for the workforce, impacts on critical initiatives, working with supportive community partners, soliciting and receiving donations of support.

During a crisis, a board may step up and have more to do with day-to-day concerns than is typical. In this, it should be carefully noted that such a role is a **temporary modification** taken under the library's crisis response plan.

Scenario 7: Director Evaluation and Evolution

Annual evaluation should be done per a clearly articulated method and set of criteria.

Critical objectives and areas of development should be set forth in detail.



All factors being used as evaluation criteria should be rooted in a **routinely updated (or confirmed) job description.**

The identification of **new or special initiatives or projects** should not impose unrelated expectations on the director; if a director is otherwise qualified and doing well, and does not have the experience to handle a temporary need (say, overseeing a major renovation), temporary assistance should be brought in to bridge the gap in skills.

To ensure a director is getting input from not just the board, **consider a 360 review** (which provides structured feedback from the workforce, as well as other stakeholders).

The board should ensure there is written confirmation (in a manual, contract, or policy) ensuring the director has **routine opportunities for professional development.**

Compensation and benefits analysis for the director and workforce should be done regularly.

For a longer-term employee who may have started without a contract, if there is a motivation to provide greater assurance of stability, **consider offering a contract** to ensure stability at critical times.

During the session, there was a reference to a template policy for public attendance at library board meetings. Please see the 5/4/22 RAQ "[Open Meetings Law 2022 Library Board Chart and Checklist](#)" posted on the "Ask the Lawyer" website for this content.

