



To support and represent trustees in advancing public libraries

Advocacy and Influence in Your Community: A framework for building and maintaining relationships

Advocacy and influence are defined in many ways. At BCLTA we approach advocacy as a planned, deliberate, and sustained effort that results, incrementally over time, in others understanding and supporting our priorities. Our advocacy efforts tend to focus on key funders and decision makers.

We approach influence similarly, but see it as encompassing a greater diversity of relationships and connections. It includes those who may not be direct decision makers, but who help us better understand, develop, and share our priorities throughout the community.

We suggest that public library trustees read, and set aside time at a board meeting to discuss, the following:

- Public Library Advocacy: An Evidence-Based Perspective on Sustainable Funding
- Cheryl Stenstrom & Ken Haycock on September 14, 2015
- <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2015/09/public-library-advocacy-an-evidence-based-perspective-on-sustainable-funding/>

Advocacy and influence are key responsibilities of public library trustees. The BCLTA, representing the collective voice of public library trustees, does this work at the provincial level collaboratively with our partner library organizations.

Trustee advocacy and influence is focused at the local level as local government provides approximately 80 percent of public library funding provincially. The framework presented here is designed to provide ideas. This work does not have to be onerous; boards can choose approaches to fit their needs and desired outcomes.

Focus #1 of this framework is on elected officials, and on local government and First Nations funders. **Focus #2** is on non-elected community leaders as these influential people can be invaluable champions for the local library.

BCLTA is building resources for your advocacy and influence work. Please email the Executive Director and execdir@bclta.ca with your comments and suggestions. Your contributions will improve our work.

FOCUS #1: Elected Officials

This focus includes mayors, councillors, regional district directors, and First Nations representing jurisdictions that contribute funding to public library service.

This focus might also include senior management staff (CAO, CFO, appropriate managers), although the BCLTA believes that, in general, it is preferable that this connection is a staff-to-staff relationship with the library director.

If appropriate, advocacy efforts could also include the board of education, parks boards and other elected boards.

NOTE: We recognize that this approach makes most sense for municipal public libraries and public library associations; it will need to be adapted for regional library systems (ORL, FVRL and VIRL) and for GVPL.

Goals:

1. A shared understanding of the value of the public library.
2. An excitement and commitment to the future of the public library in the community including new opportunities for the development of services, spaces, and resources.
3. Adequate, predictable, and sustainable funding for public library ongoing operations, emerging community initiatives that fit the Official Community Plan (OCP), capital projects, and emergency situations.
4. Informed and enthusiastic allies for championing public libraries to the provincial government.
5. Build awareness of the role and work of library trustees and the BCLTA in strong local governance of public libraries.

What	Who	Ideas and Resources
Advocacy Plan	Library board/committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCLTA 2018 commitment to expanding “Advocacy” section on new website to include advocacy plans, templates and other resources
Partner-up	Individual trustees are each assigned to a local elected official and potentially parks board and school board members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic communications: phone call, coffee, and other formal and informal meetings. • General updates which could include newsletters, stories, statistics and a summary of library operations. Work with the library director to ensure you are providing accurate and appropriate information. • Fact sheets on a particular timely issue (prepared with or by the library director). • Explore and identify opportunities to work together. • Keep up-to-date on council minutes, OCP initiatives/priorities, and other specific interests or projects of the councillor you are partnered with. • Share BCLTA news, particularly provincial priorities and recent advocacy actions.
Inform & Engage	Library board chair or delegated trustee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the board’s elected official liaison is supported with adequate and appropriate information for providing an influential and positive verbal report at council or other local government meetings. • Provide a summary of library operations (work with the library director to ensure you are providing accurate and appropriate information). • Report out on the library’s strategic plan and highlight where it aligns with and supports their strategic priorities (OCP). • Include stories and photos with reports. • Fact sheets on a particular timely issue (prepared by the library director). • Share BCLTA news, particularly provincial priorities and recent advocacy actions.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the role of the library director as part of the management team for the municipality or the regional district. • Consistently show up and have the board chair, with the library director, present the annual budget/financial plan. • Create experiential events at the library for elected officials: special open house; one-on-one tours; invitations to read to at SRC events; or to introduce / m.c. a community event or program. Take lots of photos and use social media. • Make it known how much you appreciate their support.
Community Endorsements	Board identified library champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the library director, ensure that these champions have the information and support to be able to compellingly communicate their stories, experiences, and messages. • Identify enthusiastic patrons, local business people, library program partners; anyone who can demonstrate the impact of the library may be your next champion!
Social Media Connections	Individual trustees and library director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with your local elected officials on social media to share photos, links and library moments. This is also a great place for sharing broader library news and trends (follow your library, @BCLTA and other library related accounts) and for other scanning/connecting such as Indigenous issues, government announcements, and other news and cultural feeds. • Discuss at a board meeting what the shared expectations are for appropriate posting and commenting to positively influence your audience and connections. • Where appropriate like, comment, and boost their Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or other social media accounts. • Find out if there is a local # - such as #newwest or FB page to keep up on local discussions.

FOCUS #2: Community Leaders (non-elected)

Goals:

1. A shared understanding of the value of the public library.
2. A mutually beneficial relationship through supporting each other's interests and priorities.
3. An excitement and commitment to the future of the public library in the community including new opportunities for the development of services, spaces, and resources.
4. Informed and enthusiastic allies for championing public libraries.
5. Build awareness of the role and work of library trustees and the BCLTA in strong local governance of public libraries.

Who and What	Ideas and Resources
<p>Board governance level relationships with local not-for-profits and community based organizations.</p> <p>Share the value of public libraries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only fee-free public spaces for lifelong learning, for knowledge sharing, for cultural exchange, and for preserving our communities' memories and history. • Integral part of a community where people want to live and where businesses want to be. • Cherished community institution that supports the community's social and economic development by ensuring equitable access to resources, collections, and programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These relationships often have greater strength when there is an already established social relationship and/or a library partnership developed through staff programming or some other operational initiative. • As appropriate annual presentations at their meetings. Work with the library director to tailor the information to their interests (the resources the library has available and the difference the library makes to the community regarding health, K-12 outcomes, family well-being, business development, arts and culture, youth activities ...) • Provide regular library updates (work with the library director to ensure you are providing accurate and appropriate information) • Include stories and photos with reports. • Connect on social media to share library stories and photos. As appropriate comment, like and boost their social media. • Share BCLTA news, particularly provincial priorities and recent advocacy actions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create experiential events at the library: special open house; one-on-one tours; invitations to read to at SRC events; or to introduce / m.c. a community event or program. Take lots of photos and use social media. • Make it known how much you appreciate their support with public acknowledgement and personal thank you notes.
<p>Local media and news outlets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the board chair has the responsibility of representing the public library, the library director is often the best person for speaking to library initiatives and services. • Working with your library director have consistent messaging about the value of your library to the community and the priorities of your library (expanded hours, capital project, increased broadband...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with your library director, or any assigned staff such as the library's communications and marketing person, identify media champions and send them stories, tips, photos and special invitations to events. • If there is capacity to do so, offer a regular library column from the board chair or a delegated trustee. Work with your library director to ensure accuracy and appropriateness of information. • Follow your local news on social media and comment, like, and boost as appropriate. Invite them to follow your library's social media accounts.
<p>Social Media Community Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage individual trustees and the library director to connect with local influencers on social media. • Discuss at a board meeting what the shared expectations are for appropriate commenting to positively influence your audience and connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with your community influencers on social media to share photos, links and library moments. • This is also a great place for sharing broader library news and trends (follow your library, @BCLTA and other library related accounts) and for other scanning/connecting such as Indigenous, government, and other news and cultural feeds. • You might find that social media will connect you with new champions and library relationships. • Where appropriate like, comment and boost their Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or other social media accounts. • Find out if there is a local # - such as #newwest or FB page to keep up on local discussions.