

PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATIONS RESOURCES FOR FLORIDA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES

6. THE LIBRARY FOUNDATION'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

"The Board has to understand that they have a role and what that role is in fundraising. And they have to be donors themselves at a significant (for them) level."

Robert Melanson, Director, Winter Park Public Library.

The board of directors of the library foundation is the governing body of the organization. It is, perhaps, one of the most critically important assets that the library foundation has. The foundation's board of directors has several key responsibilities. These include:

- Setting organizational policy and direction.
- Hiring and evaluating key library foundation staff (if and when the foundation employs staff).
- Determining library foundation priorities.
- Overseeing library foundation finances, including budgets, campaigns and investments.
- Raising funds.
- Donating funds.

Building a library foundation board of directors must be done with good judgment, care and foresight. It is not enough to just put together a list of names of prominent individuals who are involved in many aspects of community life and send them a letter asking them to participate, hoping at least a few will agree. If the library foundation is to be a serious, competitive organization with the determination and wherewithal to achieve its goals, it must have a board of directors who is equally serious, committed to the goals of the organization, and most especially, believes in the library and its mission.

There is much work to be done before the first solicitation of prospective board members. The incorporators or founders of the library foundation - those who have been working on creating this new entity - should consult or meet with library staff and representatives of the library's administrative board and/or governmental entity to identify people who might be approached to participate. Prior to drawing up such a list, a short description of the proposed library foundation should be drafted, as well as a description of the obligations and expectations of board members. A sample follows.

PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATIONS RESOURCES FOR FLORIDA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES

FOUNDATION OF THE SUNSET RAYS PUBLIC LIBRARY GOALS AND BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

The Sunset Rays Public Library, in order to contribute to an informed and educated populace, is committed to serving Sunset Rays County and its more than 70,000 residents with the latest in library services and new technologies. To succeed in its efforts, the new Foundation of the Sunset Rays Public Library is being formed to raise funds from the private sector to help provide innovative services and collections. The Foundation of the Sunset Rays Public Library is in the process of incorporating and developing a Board of Directors who will lead and oversee the new Foundation. The responsibilities of the board of directors will include:

- *Serving as the policy-making arm of the Foundation.*
- *Overseeing the management and finances of the Foundation.*
- *Participating in the fundraising efforts of the Foundation.*
- *Setting priorities for the Foundation.*

Each member of the Board of Directors of the Foundation of the Sunset Rays Public Library is expected to:

- *Attend four meetings of the board of directors annually.*
 - *Participate, as a member, in at least one committee of the Foundation.*
 - *Assist in raising funds by making personal contacts, writing letters and/or making phone contacts.*
 - *Contribute to the Foundation at a level of at least \$1,000 per year (given personally or solicited from other sources).*
-

PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATIONS RESOURCES FOR FLORIDA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES

It is always best to solicit potential board members through personal contact. That is, someone who knows Mr. CEO should visit him and lay out the need and the case for the library foundation and ask for Mr. CEO's assistance and participation. As the foundation's board of directors is being developed, draft lists of people who would be great assets to the foundation, people who are influential in the community and people who have competencies that are needed on the board. Remember that involving people who are enthusiastic and eager to participate is more important than getting a big name who won't attend meetings or contribute. The competencies needed on the board of directors will vary from one community to another. If, for example, there is an active and important industrial or commercial sector in your community, such as real estate development or hospitality, make sure to try to involve someone prominent and key in that industry. If possible, the library director should accompany the person who has made the initial contact to the meeting with prospective foundation board members. The library director's role is to answer questions about the library, its finances and services and its vision for the future.

After the initial list is drawn up and appointments are made, it is critical to keep a record of what has occurred. This record should include:

- The person who approached the prospect and date of approach.
- Notes from that meeting or call.
- Questions that need to be answered.
- Follow-up needed.
- Final determination.

"The governing board of the foundation must have a good and fair mix of board members and not be dominated by elected officials, community group leaders with their own priorities, and even library support groups. There must be a clear understanding of what the library needs, and fundraising efforts and contacts must be coordinated with and through the library administration."

Robert Cannon, Director, Broward County Libraries Division.

Developing the board of directors is not an overnight task. It is best to be deliberate and take the time necessary to do the job right. A small group of dedicated board members is better than a larger group who don't take the job seriously. In addition, extremely large boards tend to be problematic to manage, both in the time it can take for a large number of people to interact outside of meetings as well as within the decision-making apparatus of a board meeting. That is not to say there are not communities and libraries where big boards can work. However, between 15 and 30 individuals is optimal. In Florida libraries, the size of the boards of library foundations varies from eight to thirty individuals.

Use all your community and professional contacts in developing the board. Ask the library's advisory board members, Friends, elected officials, community leaders, and other nonprofit executives for their recommendations. Most of all, find the people with the right fit. They should believe in the library and believe in the potential of the library foundation to make a difference and they should want to be involved not merely as names on a letterhead.

A suggested "Board of Directors Competency" chart as well as a sample "Foundation Board Member Contact Sheet" follow. The competency chart should be tailored to fit local needs.

**PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATIONS RESOURCES FOR
FLORIDA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

**LIBRARY FOUNDATION – BOARD OF DIRECTORS
COMPETENCIES NEEDED**

This is suggested as a means of organizing the types of prospective candidates who should be approached for board membership in the library foundation. It should be customized to fit the locality in which the library foundation will operate. For example, if there is a strong hospitality and tourism industry, it is advisable to include a key player from that industry on the library foundation board of directors. Suggested names and their affiliations should be listed under "potential candidates" and the contact person who knows those persons best and is willing to call them to make an appointment should be listed in the "known by" column.

COMPETENCY	POTENTIAL CANDIDATES	KNOWN BY
LAW		
ACCOUNTING		
INVESTMENTS		
REAL ESTATE		
TECHNOLOGY		
BANKING		
LOCAL INDUSTRY		
HOSPITALITY/TOURISM		
PHILANTHROPY (LOCAL)		
OTHERS - DETAIL		

PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATIONS RESOURCES FOR FLORIDA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES

POTENTIAL LIBRARY FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER CONTACT SHEET

What follows is suggested as a prototype contact sheet that can be used to gather information about prospective library foundation board members. The information on the sheet, in italics, is an example of the kinds of information that may be included.

NAME: *Jorge Machado*
POSITION: *CEO, Sunset Rays National Bank*
ADDRESS/PHONE: *5 Visto Way, Sunset Rays*
EMAIL: *JM@SRNB.com*
FAMILY: *Diana Machado, wife (physician)*
2 children in high school
BACKGROUND: *B.A., Florida State University*
M.B.A., University of Miami

INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:

Board of Directors, Girls and Boys Club
Board of Directors, United Way of Sunset Rays

PERSON WHO MADE CONTACT: *Jerilynn Reardon, Library Administrative Board member.*
June 8, 2010.

NATURE OF CONTACT: *Lunch meeting*

NOTES FROM MEETING: *Ms. Reardon reported that Mr. Machado is very supportive of the library and uses it with his family on a regular basis. He wants more information about the library's plans for the future and what it hopes to achieve through fundraising.*

FOLLOW-UP NEEDED: *Have the Library Director meet with Mr. Machado to answer his questions about the library and its plans. He expects a call from the Director in the next few days.*

DISPOSITION: *Follow up meeting between Mr. Machado and the Library Director with a call from Ms. Reardon who will ask him to join the Library Foundation Board.*