

DATE: June 14, 2019

TO: MaryKay Dahlgreen
District Librarian

SUBJECT: **Consultant's Impressions and Recommendations**
Lincoln County Library District Board Practices Assessment
Conducted June 11, 2019

FROM: Rob Mills
SDAO Consulting Services

It was a pleasure meeting with your board members and conducting the Board Practices Assessment for your district. Accompanying this memo is your board's **Assessment Summary**. I trust they will find that it accurately reflects what was discussed and that it paves the way for continued discussion and follow-up actions as appropriate.

Your **Consultant's Impressions and Recommendations** are outlined below. We discussed in our meeting the importance of reviewing these documents at your next board meeting and taking action on "flags". SDAO will do a 60-day follow-up to check progress and offer additional consulting support if desired. Again, please extend to your board members my sincere thanks for participating in the Board Practices Assessment.

Impressions

Lincoln County Library District's board is comprised of both long-time and relatively new members all of whom have close ties to their community. Board members have a good rapport with each other and have a strong desire to serve the best interests of the community libraries operating under their jurisdiction. Board members have recently become aware of administrative deficiencies in the organization that have gone unnoticed for years due in part, as they acknowledge, to their own complacency and lack of attention. Now with new management in place, they are on a steep learning curve in understanding their proper roles and responsibilities. They express confidence, as one member put it, "that they have the background and courage to get us out of this mess".

Recommendations

Board members are incisive and reasonably straightforward in assessing their current situation. With much at stake in their effort to correct administrative deficiencies and redirect the organization, the board will do well to continue reaching out to make use of available expertise – SDAO library resources for policies and procedures models, SDAO regional trainings and conferences on board roles and responsibilities, and professional auditing and consulting services. The district's new leader appears to have gained the attention of a board that is willing to listen and learn – a combination that will serve the organization well.

SPECIAL DISTRICT BOARD PRACTICES ASSESSMENT

**LINCOLN COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT
 June 11, 2019**

Board: Marta West; Emily Portwood; Chris Boyle; Virginia Tardaewether; Brian Fodness; District Librarian: MaryKay Dahlgreen

| KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS | RATING | | | ASSESSMENT |
|--------------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Good | Caution | Danger | |
| Board Duties and Responsibilities | | | | |
| Adherence to standards of good stewardship | | | | The Board acknowledges that in prior years they were lax in monitoring the operation of the district and "did not pay attention" to the manager's performance. According to Board members, "we got complacent" and "we let go", believing important administrative details were in order but then learned of deficiencies when new management took over. There remains some confusion among Board members about the proper balance between their administrative and policy making responsibilities. |
| Demonstration of good governance practices | | | | Since hiring the new manager, the Board has become more engaged and is paying closer attention to the governance of the organization. Board members see the need for more structure, process, and communication to reverse past practices of "letting things slide" and failing to "ask the right questions". |

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| Operational Compliance | | | | |
| Overall regulatory compliance | | | | Board members report they now have a better understanding of the district's compliance responsibilities but need to be more aware of "what we should be looking at". Policies, a schedule of compliance responsibilities, a board orientation packet were cited as needs. |
| Timeliness of compliance reporting | | | | Based on input from the new Librarian the Board feels they are "well on our way" In managing a regular schedule of compliance reporting responsibilities. |
| Potential compliance challenges | | | | Still early into the management transition, the Board acknowledges they are on a steep learning curve about compliance matters and need to be on guard against "finding another woodchuck in the pile". |
| Budget and Finance | | | | With no bookkeeper and no annual audit, "last year this area would have been red" is how the Board describes progress in budgeting. Though it is "still a material weakness", Board members credit the new Librarian for "getting a handle on it" and reinforcing standard budgeting practices recommended for special districts. |
| Consistency in budgeting to meet needs | | | | |
| Soundness of financial practices | | | | Board members maintain that even while past practices are being corrected their approach to budgeting and overall financial management is "conservative" with an emphasis on caution in dealing with public funds. |

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| Customer Relations | | | | | |
| Management of service problems | | | | | The Board is responsive in working on issues with individual libraries as they arise but those issues have to be dealt with at the local level. A planning process is scheduled to assess the district's libraries' overall customer needs. |
| Improvements to customer service | | | | | |
| Personnel Administration | | | | | |
| Staff morale and work climate | | | | | From Board members' first-hand observations, the work climate is described as "positive and encouraging". The district offers generous pay and benefits and is perceived generally as a "good place to work". |
| Management of employee performance | | | | | Another significant change made with the new management is the implementation by the Board of formal, documented, regularly scheduled performance reviews for the Librarian. |
| Alignment of positions with work assignments | | | | | Pay equity policy issues are being addressed as revisions and updates are made to position descriptions, warranting a "fairly green" rating in this area. |
| Policies and Procedures | | | | | |
| Soundness of administrative policies | | | | | Board members acknowledge the "need to look at our entire policies and procedures" in order put in place the documents that "tell us what to do". |
| Consistency between work practices and policies | | | | | |
| Efficiency of staff and work systems | | | | | |

