Starting a Friends of the Library Group

Checklist

Friends of the Library groups planning to become a more formal organization will have the following characteristics:

☐ Formal committee structure – executive, board and committees
☐ Arms length relationship with library management and governance
☐ Elected executive and/or Board
☐ Governing documents – Constitution or articles of continuance, bylaws
☐ Separate bank account
☐ Incorporated
☐ Charitable status/Revenue Canada

Planning

Strategic planning allows your group to look at their strengths and opportunities and outline what your group plans to do and why. As a group intended to support the library, your goals and objectives should complement the mandate and strategic plan of the Library Board.

Your group can write a simple mission statement and prioritize goals, and perhaps develop some action plans for the coming year. Tasks can be matched with the expertise and interests of various volunteers. Timelines will help you have a sense of accomplishment, and provide an annual schedule of projects and events.

Planning takes time at the beginning. However, it helps to attract volunteers if they can see at a glance what the time commitment is. Job descriptions are also helpful. Some members may never attend your monthly meetings, but may be your best book sale volunteer!

Goal setting

☐ Fundraising
☐ Advocacy
☐ Volunteering
☐ Support
☐ Programming

☐ Event Planning
☐ Promotion and marketing
☐ Literacy
☐ Community partnerships
☐ Membership recruitment

Arms Length Relationship

A good relationship should be established between the Friends Board and the Library Board, with open communication. Many Friends organizations have a Library Board member (Ex officio) on their Board. Often the Library CEO or a staff member acts as a liaison between the Library and the Friends.

Many Friends groups form because of initiative taken by a Library Board Trustee, manager or staff member. However, there is an important distinction between the role of the Library Board, Friends, and library management and staff.

	BOARD	CEO	STAFF	FRIENDS
Mission	• To govern	• To administer	• To implement	• To support
Mandate	• Public Libraries Act • Municipal By-law	• Job description • Mission statement, goals and objectives	• Job description	• Constitution
Role	• Policy & planning • Accountability • Advocacy	• Administration • Planning and procedures • Advocacy	• Implementation • Administration as delegated • Advocacy	• Fundraising • Volunteer support • Advocacy
Responsibilities	• Fiscal health of the library • Represent the community • Services that meet the needs of the community • Liaison with Council • Securing support for the library from Council and from the community	• Delivery of services • Staffing • Budget monitoring • Representing the library in the community	• Provision of services • Advising CEO on services • Representing the library in the community	• Fundraising campaign • Volunteer hours or scheduling • Speaking out for library services in the community
Activities	• Monthly meetings • Budget presentation to Council • Development and review of policies and plans • CEO performance appraisal	• Implement Board directives • Monitor service delivery through output measures • Supervise staff • Report to Board	• Execute procedures • Report to CEO or delegate • Report to Board	• Plan and execute fundraising activities • Work as volunteers on specific services

* This table originated from the Southern Ontario Library Service publication *Initiating* a *Friends of the Library group* SOLS Small Library Kit no. 10.

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee will start the work to form a Friends of the Library group. They may form the first Executive of the Friends' Board. A Library Board Trustee and a library staff representative should be part of the Steering Committee (ex officio).

- One of the Steering Committee members should be the Treasurer
- The Steering Committee will be responsible for drafting the Friends' Constitution and/or By Laws
- Discuss the need to incorporate as a non-profit organization
- Consider applying for Charitable status in order to issue charitable receipts

Elections

Elections are held to fill these positions. You may choose to appoint your Treasurer with the necessary skill set. Individuals can volunteer for positions, and not wait to be nominated. You may find many positions are filled by acclamation.

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

In addition to the Executive Committee, your full board will help to share the workload, and manage special tasks such as book sales, fundraising, event planning and communication.

Governing Documents

You may choose to keep your constitution and/or bylaws simple, and provide more detail in an Executive Manual. A "Memorandum of Understanding" between the Friends and the Library Board is a useful document, as are some policies.

- Outline the purpose of your group
- List the executive positions and a job description for each position
- What happens to the funds you raise
- Your relationship to the library board and staff
- How your assets are to be distributed at time of dissolution

Bank Account

Find a bank in the community that does not charge fees for community groups. Decide on signing authority – how many signatures are required, and who those people will be. It is usually the Treasurer and one other member of the Executive Committee who sign each cheque.

Communication

Your newsletter, website and brochure can help to recruit new members, promote your events, and solicit donations.

- ☐ Newsletter
- ☐ Website
- ☐ Brochure

- ☐ Posters
- ☐ Facebook Page
- ☐ Email group

Incorporation

Check provincial regulations on not-for-profit organizations to learn if incorporation is required. (*See references*)

- ☐ Register your name
- ☐ Objects - concise statements of the ultimate purpose of the corporation.

Charitable Status

A non-profit organization can exist without having registered charitable tax status.

Advantages to having charitable status:
- Attract donations
- Issue tax receipts
- Exempt from income tax

Applying for registration – Canada Revenue Agency (www.cra-arc.gc.ca/)

Recruit/Retain Volunteers

Recruit
- ☐ Identify - Who is your target?
- ☐ Differentiate - What do they want?
- ☐ Interact - How can you reach them?
- ☐ Customize - What is your message?

Retain
- ☐ Orientation and training
- ☐ Support and supervision
- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Recognition

Support from the library

Your library invests in the Friends of the Library by providing support. From our 2015 national survey the most common types of support include:

- ☐ Meeting rooms
- ☐ Use of office facilities/supplies/photocopier
- ☐ Space on library web site
- ☐ Publicity
- ☐ Space in library's newsletter

- ☐ Library staff collect funds for Friends group
- ☐ Book storage space
- ☐ Use of library staff
- ☐ Permanent space for merchandise and/or book sales