



## Starting a Friends Group

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

- ❖ Formal committee structure to do administrative work and planning – executives, board and committees within the group
- ❖ 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.

### Goal setting

- ❖ Fund raising
- ❖ Advocacy
- ❖ Volunteering
- ❖ Support
- ❖ Programming
- ❖ Event Planning
- ❖ Promotion and marketing
- ❖ Community partnership
- ❖ 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 on their board. Often the Library CEO or a staff member acts as a liaison between the library and the Friends.

## **Steering Committee**

A Steering Committee will start the work to form a Friends of the Library group. The group 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.

- ❖ One of the Steering Committee members should be the treasurer.
- ❖ The Steering Committee will be responsible for drafting the Friends' constitution and/or bylaws.
- ❖ 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. Individuals can volunteer for positions rather than wait to be nominated.

- ❖ 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 that:

- ❖ 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 these people will be. It is usually the Treasurer and one other member of the Executive Committee who sign each cheque.

## **Communication**

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

- ❖ Website
- ❖ Social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
- ❖ Email groups
- ❖ Newsletter

## **Incorporation**

Check provincial regulations on not-for-profit organizations to learn if incorporation is required.

## **Charitable Status**

A non-profit organization can exist without having registered charitable tax status. However, some advantages to having charitable status are that it attracts donations, the organization can issue tax receipts and it is exempt from taxation. Application can be done through the Canada Revenue Agency.

## **Support from the Library**

Libraries invest in Friends of the Library groups by providing support. Common types of support include:

- ❖ Meeting rooms and use of office facilities or supplies
- ❖ Space on the library website or newsletter
- ❖ Storage space for merchandise and/or book sales
- ❖ Help from library staff

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