

Trustee Education Requirements

Sample Reporting Forms

[Self-Assurance Form \(PDF\)](#), [Trustee Education Activities Record \(Excel\)](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why are continuing education requirements for public library trustees important?

A: Public library trustees in New York State oversee an estimated \$1.6 billion of the public's money—a responsibility that must be undertaken by informed, thoughtful, prudent, and trustworthy library boards. Requiring trustee education will foster an understanding of complex governance processes so that this responsibility is met.

Furthermore, to provide effective oversight, board members must appreciate their mandated duties and responsibilities. An effective way of providing this appreciation is to offer the training necessary to be good financial stewards.

The [Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State](#) states that “trustees must learn and grow during their entire tenure on the board, developing an ever-deepening awareness of the affairs of their own library and an appreciation and understanding of other libraries and library organizations. The public library is a multifaceted organization functioning in a complex world.”

Q: What are the trustee education requirements?

A: Beginning January 1, 2023, each member, elected or appointed, of a board of trustees shall be required to complete a minimum of two hours of trustee education annually. ([Education Law 260-d](#) added by [Chapter 468 of the Laws of 2021](#)).

Per Education Law, trustee education topics may include financial oversight, accountability, fiduciary responsibilities and the general powers and duties of a library trustee. Libraries should consult with their public library system about acceptable trustee education topics, formats and activities.

Q: Who is affected by the new trustee education law?

A: All boards of trustees of chartered (incorporated) and registered (licensed) public libraries, association libraries and Indian Libraries.

Q: Who approves the trustee education activities (topics and formats) and providers?

A: At the state level, trustee education providers and activities (topics and formats) are approved by the New York State Library acting on behalf of the Commissioner of Education.

In addition to pre-approving public library systems as trustee education providers, the State Library has delegated authority to public library systems to approve additional trustee education providers and activities (topics and formats) for their member libraries.

Q: Which trustee education providers are pre-approved at the State level?

A: The State Library has pre-approved the following trustee education providers:

- [New York State Library/Division of Library Development](#)
- [Public Library Systems](#)
- [WebJunction](#)

- [New York Library Association](#) (including the Library Trustees Section and other Sections/Roundtables)
- [Reference and Research Library Resources Councils](#)
- [Empire State Library Network \(formerly New York 3Rs Association\)](#)
- PULISDO (Public Library System Directors Organization)
- [ALA](#) including United for Libraries and other Divisions

Other providers may be approved by the public library systems. Libraries should contact the public library system to request approval of a provider.

Q: What types of trustee education formats are acceptable?

A: Trustee education may be delivered online or in person. Trustee education formats may include lectures, workshops, webinars, or online courses. Trustee education formats may also include educational programs held at in-person or virtual regional, state or national library association conferences. Libraries may contact the public library system if they have a question as to whether a trustee education format is acceptable.

Q: How do trustees demonstrate compliance with the education requirements?

A: Each trustee files evidence of completion of the education requirements with the library board president. Evidence of completion may include:

- Certificates of completion issued by the approved provider
- A signed self-assurance of completion. The self-assurance must identify the approved provider and include a description of the content and format of each activity (see sample form).

Q: How is trustee education compliance tracked by the Library?

A:

- The Library Board of Trustees should establish a written **policy** and procedures related to trustee education and compliance.
- Public Library Systems are available to Library Boards to assist with the development of library policies that comply with the trustee education law.
- The library should track trustee education compliance. This sample form, provided by the State Library, can assist library boards in maintaining a record of trustee education activities.

Q: How is trustee education compliance tracked by the State Library?

A: Compliance is tracked through questions on the *Annual Report for Public and Association Libraries*.

Q: What happens if a trustee fails to meet the trustee education requirements?

A: The State Library recommends that a Library Board address this topic in its Board-approved trustee education **policy** and procedures. In addition, the Library Board may wish to amend the library's by-laws to specifically address trustee education requirements and compliance. For assistance and for sample policies and bylaws, please contact your Public Library System.

Q: Can the costs for complying with the trustee education requirements be charged to the library?

A: Yes. Modest and reasonable costs incurred by a trustee in complying with the trustee education requirements may be charged to the library if there is board approved **policy**. All such costs must be approved by the board of trustees. The State Library recommends that the library's trustee education **policy** and procedures provide information on this topic. The Trustee Handbook recommends that 1% of the library's budget should be dedicated to continuing education.

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