**Finding Your Library’s Core Values**

Core values are a set of your library’s fundamental beliefs. These guiding principles dictate behavior and can help people understand the difference between right and wrong. Core values help your library staff and board determine if they are on the right path and fulfilling the library’s goals by creating an unwavering guide for decision-making. They can guide hiring decisions, your onboarding process, and keep staff and board members engaged in their role at the library. The process below can help you discover your library’s core values.

1. **Interview staff and board to find values. This could be done in-person or by email or on paper.** 
   * Explain why you’re looking to define core values: to find out what the library stands for, hold the library accountable to itself and the community, to guide decisions made by library staff and representatives at all levels.
   * Ask questions to get people thinking about what matters to them and what defines the library:
     1. Describe an action the library took or a decision it made that you believe was right. Why do you believe we chose to do that?
     2. Describe a crisis or challenge the library faced. How did the library respond to the situation? Why did we respond that way?
     3. Describe a meaningful moment you experienced while working at the library. What happened? Why was that moment meaningful?
     4. If you could choose 3 words to describe the library, what would they be?
     5. At the end of the day, what one thing will the library be remembered for?
2. **Group and distill themes to create draft values and write descriptions for each value.** 
   * Group common words and ideas you heard in your interviews or received in email.
     1. Focus on strengths. Don’t assign importance to something you’re not good at as an organization.
     2. Limit the number. A long list of values will be difficult to recall. Pick what’s most important and keep it in the range of three-to-six values.
   * Write descriptions that further define the core values you’ve recognized.
     1. Speak to your audience. Who are your values for? Use words that mean something to them.
     2. Evoke emotion. As humans, we give importance and ascribe meaning to how we feel.
3. **Share draft values and definitions with staff and board members**
   * Make revisions based on their feedback.
     1. Share revised values and definitions until you have consensus your library’s core values.
4. **Promote your values**
   * Share your values with staff and the community.
   * Use the core values to guide decision-making at your library.
   * Live up to your core values every day.

Sample Core Values

**Mahopac Public Library Core Values**

Our professional service demonstrates the core values of the American Library Association and the Library Bill of Rights, as well as the following organizational values:

We believe that Mahopac Public Library is central to the intellectual and creative lives of the people we serve. We are committed to the following values:

1. *Access* – to facilitate equal and equitable access to information resources provided directly or indirectly by the Library;
2. *Professionalism and service to the community* – to offer training and staff development opportunities that encourage personal growth and excellence in service to all patrons and visitors to the Library;
3. *Diversity and inclusiveness* – to provide services, collection items, resources, technologies, and facility modifications that serve the diverse needs and requirements of all of our users;
4. *Social responsibility* – to educate community members of all ages, to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information, and to encourage innovative solutions to social and community issues;
5. *Collaboration* – to cultivate relationships with local organizations and businesses in order to actively participate in the growth and development of our community;
6. *Confidentiality* – to protect user privacy while respecting individual rights and responsibilities.

**West Vancouver Memorial Library Core Values**

Our values represent our most deeply held beliefs.

**EXCELLENCE**We cultivate a culture of excellence, holding ourselves accountable to a high standard. We support people in achieving their highest potential.

**INCLUSIVENESS**We practice inclusiveness by respecting, reflecting and appreciating the diversity in our community.

**INNOVATION**We continuously learn and improve by seeking new ways of being, seeing and doing.

**SUSTAINABILITY**We manage our resources responsibly to maintain financial, social and environmental sustainability for the well-being of our community.

**TRUST**We conduct ourselves openly and with integrity.