

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Midwinter Meeting, Denver
February 9 - 12, 2018**

Topic: Evolving the Board Liaison Role

Background: At Annual 2017, the Board directed the O&B Committee to investigate ways to measure outcomes and make the work of the organization more efficient and effective. After a conversation with Sandra and Beth, Melissa McBride and O&B are seeking feedback from the Board on the role of the YALSA Board Liaisons, including seeing how the role can evolve to support YALSA's more outcomes focused approach.

Action Required: Discussion

Overview

As part of its review of YALSA, O&B has been looking at ways to streamline work that YALSA and its volunteers are currently doing, as well as create viable methods for measuring the impact of volunteer work, including appointed groups. During a conference call with Beth and Sandra it was discussed that one area that may need revisiting as a part of this effort is the role of the Board Liaison, which was last explored in 2011. The full text of the Liaison document that is a part of YALSA's Handbook is presented below:

The Role & Tasks of Liaisons in YALSA

Board Liaison Definition

A Board Liaison is a member of the Board who maintains a critical connection between the Board of Directors and a designated committee, jury, advisory board or task force. Board Liaisons are appointed by the President-Elect and assignments begin annually in July. The primary purpose is to facilitate communication between the Board and appointed member groups. The Board Liaison is the Chair's primary contact for all governance related issues and supports the Chair with leadership of the appointed group as necessary.

Overall Board Liaison Responsibilities

- Facilitates communication between the Board and the appointed group
- Ensures that the appointed group operates within the parameters of their charge/function statement
- Ensures that the work of the appointed group stays aligned with the strategic plan, the group's function statement and the annual committee task list (for process committees and advisory boards only)

- Fosters collaborative working relationships between staff, Chair, the Board and committee members
- Works with Chairs to ensure long-term productivity of the appointed groups, including facilitating a smooth transition from the out-going chair to the in-coming one

Specific Tasks

Supports the work of the committee

- Identifies potential cross-collaboration opportunities (e.g., between/among appointed groups, or between/among appointed groups and Association headquarters) and initiates/facilitates conversations on these opportunities to ensure alignment with each appointed group's strategic priorities and scope of work (as per the strategic plan and annual committee task list) while avoiding duplication of effort
- Attends group meetings, as requested by the Chair
- Refers the Chair to their Staff Liaison for questions outside of the scope of the Board Liaison role, such as conference logistics, award committee policy interpretation questions, scheduling conference calls, etc.
- If the appointed group (or a particular member or chair) is unable to perform its work successfully for any reason, the Board Liaison escalates concerns to the President and Executive Director

Helps the Chair with Leadership & Management Issues

- Makes sure the Chair has read and understands the “Job Description and Duties for Chairs,” in the YALSA Handbook (<http://tinyurl.com/289d6rp>)
- In the event a Chair or group member is not performing as required, the Board Liaison notifies the President and Executive Director then works to strategize on steps needed in order to improve performance. A call for a resignation is to be used as a last resort. Only the President can ask for a Chair or appointed group member's resignation
- As needed, assists Chairs with leadership issues, such as how to motivate committee/jury/taskforce/advisory board members, set schedules, and so on.
- Works with Chair to ensure appropriate chair succession planning and leadership development of group members
- Listens to Chair concerns and problems and provides Chairs with a chance to be heard, vent, ask for support and/or brainstorm ideas or solutions
- Points Chairs toward appropriate resources to help them with their leadership role, including the Chair Wiki, YALSA Handbook and training webinars and podcasts
- Helps the Chairs understand what they are empowered to do in their role as group leader, including: create a work plan, delegate tasks, make assignments, set deadlines, mentor new group members, intervene when a member's performance is below expectations, schedule meetings/e-chats, contact you (the Board Liaison), the Staff Liaison, the YALSA President, or the YALSA Executive Director at any time with questions or concerns
- Helps the Chair define what meaningful participation and expectations are in terms of group members' contribution to the work of the group. This includes: being prepared, following through on tasks, meeting deadlines, communicating in a timely manner, being respectful/congenial towards the chair and other members, and understanding the overall

goals/tasks of the group. Once the Chair is happy with his/her definition, make sure they share this with their group members

Facilitates communication between the Board and the appointed group

- Checks in with Chairs on a monthly basis. It is recommended that Board Liaisons schedule a conference call at the start of the Chair's appointment and mid-year
- Ensures that quarterly Chair reports are submitted to the Board (due: Feb. 15, May 15, Aug. 15 and Nov. 15)
- Acts as an advocate for the group during a Board meeting, as appropriate
- Reports to their Chairs any relevant action taken by the Board
- Provides Chairs with contact information so Chairs can reach Board Liaisons on-site at conferences if there is an emergency
- As needed assist Chairs with governance issues, such as interpreting how the work of the group supports the strategic plan
- Assist Chairs with submitting official Requests for Board Action (via the form available on the YALSA website), as needed
- Encourage chairs to introduce their Board Liaison via email to their group and to share this URL with their group:
www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/boardandcommittees/committeechair.cfm

Other

- Recognizes the work of the Chair and group members, including sending them thank you messages for National Volunteer Week (held annually in April)

Communications

- Before your official Board Liaison role begins on July 1st, contact the Chairs of the groups to which you'll be a liaison and introduce yourself
- On a monthly basis, check in with your Chairs and have a conversation with them about how things are going with their group. You might see if they have any questions, need any support, want someone to listen to their concerns or ideas, etc.
- If the communication is not time-sensitive, raise any Chair or group issues at the next regularly-scheduled meeting of the Board and/or group
- Transmit non-confidential information, questions and feedback between the appointed group and the Board in a timely manner
- When sharing information with the board, be clear whether the appointed group is making a formal request or if the group is simply offering observations

Note: Board Liaisons must be careful not to usurp the authority of the appointed Chair.

Staff Liaisons to Committees

The primary purpose of the Staff Liaison is to serve as a resource to the committee and to promote its work progress. The Staff Liaison should be viewed as a credible resource—not as an appointed secretary.

The exact tasks of the Staff Liaison will vary by committee. The overall role of the Staff Liaison is to:

- Provide information and resources as needed to support the work of the appointed group
- Assist with setting up conference calls, meetings, etc. as needed
- Help the Chair steward group with strategic goals and priorities in mind - ensure the alignment of group strategies with the goals and objectives as set forth by the board
- Communicate and share information relevant to the group with the Chair in order ensure that the Chair is up to date on activities that directly impact his/her group
- Assist the Chair with matters that must be addressed at the ALA-level, such as troubleshooting a technical problem in the committee space in ALA Connect or updating content on the ALA web site
- Work with Chairs to ensure long-term productivity of the group, including providing relevant background information and/or committee history
- Attends meetings, as able

Note: Staff Liaisons must be careful not to usurp the authority of the appointed Chair.

--adopted by the YALSA Board 6/25/11

Questions to consider:

- Has the fundamental role of the Board Liaison as connector between member groups and the board changed over the past seven years, If so, how? If not, should it change? Why?
- What do chairs and appointed groups need the most support with, and who is the best individual or group suited to support them?
- How might the Board as a whole, and Board Liaisons in particular, better support the work of appointed groups?
- How have appointed member groups (advisory boards, committees, juries, taskforces) changed since the board liaison role was last explored in 2011?
- What impact, if any, does the creation of new or emphasis on certain existing member engagement opportunities that support the Organizational Plan, like Resource Retreats, Interest Groups, Blogging Teams, etc. have on the Board's role as liaison to member groups working to support the plan?
- What impact does the smaller number of standing committees have on the role of Board Liaisons?
- What role, if any should Board Liaisons have in measuring outcomes of appointed groups?
- Other?

Additional Resources

- Measuring the Impact of YALSA groups, Annual 2017:
http://www.ala.org/yalsa/sites/ala.org.yalsa/files/content/MeasuringImpact_AN17.pdf