

# Membership Review

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*Lincoln Trail Libraries System*

## Summary

Library systems in Illinois are charged with certifying new and ongoing member libraries in the ILLINET network. This document outlines the methods used by LTLS to accomplish this process.

Every year, LTLS member libraries submit an annual survey (Annual Profile Summary) with summary data on finances and self-reported benchmarks. Data from this form is used to evaluate and consider ongoing membership for the library system members. Data reported by libraries may indicate that the status of the library requires a change in membership.

The LTLS Board of Directors Membership Committee meets every year to assess each library's survey data that has been summarized and condensed by LTLS staff. Based upon the assessment by the Membership Committee, the LTLS Board acts upon its committee's recommendations about member libraries' ongoing status.

This document sets forth the Best Practices used by the Membership Committee and LTLS Board to accomplish the yearly assessment of libraries.

## Membership Policy

The LTLS Board of Directors adopts a Membership Policy after it has also been approved by a vote of the LTLS membership. The LTLS Membership Policy is the primary document used to assess new member libraries who wish to join LTLS.

The Membership Policy includes a definition of a library, requirements of certain levels of funding, staffing, hours of access, and technology. Also, libraries are required to have collection development and patron confidentiality policies, board bylaws, and staff training.

In addition, different types of libraries must adhere to standards that apply to their specific type of library. For example, school libraries have different staffing requirements than public libraries and these different

requirements are part of the Membership Policy.

The LTLS Membership Policy allows for two categories of library members – Full and Developmental.

Full member libraries are those libraries that meet the standards in the LTLS Membership Policy. These libraries are eligible for the entire range of services offered by LTLS and the ILLINET network.

Developmental libraries are those members that do not meet all of the standards in the LTLS Membership Policy but have indicated a desire to make progress and meet those standards within 3 years. Developmental libraries are only eligible for consulting, communications, and continuing education.

## **Annual Profile Summary**

The Annual Profile Summary (APS) is the primary tool used to evaluate libraries for ongoing LTLS membership. Now in an online form, the APS requests information on budgets and expenditures, staff and their education levels, and other data related to library transactions and activities. Also included is a self-assessment on how the library meets standards applicable to their type of library.

The library is also given an opportunity to express concerns about LTLS

services or talk about accomplishments achieved by the library during the last year.

Data from each library is summarized and presented to the LTLS Membership Committee for discussion purposes. Most libraries show stable or increased support, but those that have problems are identified and may be the subject of much discussion, particularly if there is an obvious trend or decline in budget, staffing, and access opportunities.

## **Full Member Evaluation**

Evaluation of Full member libraries generally happens soon after the library has submitted their Annual Profile Summary and the committee has met to review the information from that survey.

If no problems are identified, a recommendation is made to the LTLS Board to approve the library for ongoing yearly membership.

If problems are identified, followup can take several forms:

1. LTLS consulting staff may schedule a follow-up visit to determine if the problem is unusual or ongoing and report back to the committee.
2. The committee may ask the staff to draft a letter of concern to the Full member, asking for additional information. When the information is returned, the committee will revisit the

issue and determine whether to recommend ongoing membership or not.

3. The library may be approved for ongoing Full membership with an identification of the problem as perceived by the committee. Such problem identification, if it persists, will be dealt with more formally the following year.

Should problems as identified persist, the member library may lose its Full membership status. Libraries can either be offered Developmental Membership or may elect to disassociate with the system entirely, particularly if the problem seems too difficult to overcome.

If the status of a Full member changes to Developmental or the library ceases to be a member of the System, the LTLS Board formally notifies the Illinois State Library of that action.

## Developmental Member Evaluation

Evaluation of Developmental member libraries generally happens soon after the library has submitted their Annual Profile Summary and the committee has met to review the information from that survey.

Because Developmental libraries have already-identified issues, the APS will be evaluated on whether progress has been made or not to address those issues. The Developmental library has 3 years to make progress, but a trend or some effort to make some improvement is expected on a yearly basis.

If progress is being made each year, the committee will evaluate the progress in Year 3 to determine if the library is eligible for Full membership status.

If progress is not being made each year, the committee will ask for followup as follows:

1. LTLS consultants or members of the committee will schedule a follow-up visit

to determine if progress is being made.

2. The committee will ask staff to draft a letter of concern to the Developmental member, asking for additional information on why progress is not being made. When the information is returned, the committee will revisit the issue and determine whether to recommend ongoing Developmental membership or not.

Should problems as identified persist, the member library may lose its Developmental membership status and will be removed from system membership.

If the status of a Developmental member changes or the library ceases to be a member of the System, the LTLS Board formally notifies the Illinois State Library of that action.

