Sharon Public Library
community · literacy · technology
1 School Street | Sharon, MA 02067

STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICY

1. Purpose

This policy affirms Sharon Public Library's commitment to the ongoing professional growth of its employees. It outlines the types of staff development activities the Library supports, how they are funded and scheduled, and the responsibilities of staff, supervisors, and the Library Director in implementing them.

2. Policy Statement

Sharon Public Library recognizes that a knowledgeable, adaptable, and engaged staff is essential to providing high-quality service to the community. The Library supports the continuing education and professional development of all employees, consistent with the available budget and staffing needs, and encourages staff at every level to pursue learning opportunities relevant to their roles.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Library employees.

Volunteers may participate in relevant training at the Library Director's discretion but are not covered by the funding and leave provisions of this policy.

4. Objectives

Through this policy, the Sharon Public Library aims to:

- Ensure staff have the knowledge and skills to meet current job responsibilities and serve patrons effectively
- Prepare staff for greater responsibility and career advancement within the profession
- Keep the Library current with emerging technologies, best practices, and community needs
- Support staff retention, morale, and job satisfaction
- Distribute development opportunities equitably across departments and job classifications

5. Types of Staff Development

5.1 Orientation and Onboarding

Structured introduction to Library policies, procedures, systems, and job duties for all new employees, completed within the first 30 days of hiring.

5.2 Required Training

Training mandated by law, funding agreements, contractual obligations (*e.g.*, OCLN), Town Administration, or Library policy, which all applicable staff must complete, including:

- Workplace safety and emergency procedures

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- Confidentiality of patron records
- Preventing harassment and discrimination
- ADA and accessibility requirements
- Any additional training required by Massachusetts library statute or the Town's insurer

5.3 Professional Development
Conferences, workshops, webinars, and courses that build job-related skills or professional knowledge, such as those offered by the American Library Association (ALA), the Massachusetts Library Association (MLA), the New England Library Association (NELA), or accredited library and information science programs.

5.4 Continuing Education and Certification
Coursework or credentialing that supports an employee's professional certification or degree in Library and Information Science or a related field that is relevant to the employee's current or prospective role within the Library. This includes MBLC's paraprofessional certification program.

5.5 Cross-Training
Structured opportunities for staff to learn the functions of other departments (*e.g.*, Circulation, Reference, Technical Services, Youth Services, Technology) to build a more flexible and resilient workforce.

5.6 Technology Training
Instruction on new or updated systems, including the integrated library system (ILS), databases, self-service equipment, and other digital tools used in daily operations. This includes most OCLN and some Massachusetts Library System trainings.

5.7 Leadership and Supervisory Development
Training for employees moving into, or currently in, supervisory or management roles, covering topics such as personnel management, budgeting, and strategic planning.

6. Eligibility and Equal Access
All employees are eligible to request participation in staff development activities relevant to their position. Supervisors and the Library Director will make reasonable efforts to distribute funding and release time equitably across departments and job classifications over the course of the fiscal year, so that opportunities are not concentrated among a small number of staff.

Priority for funding and time allowances for training will be given to:

- Training fulfilling a strategic goal or an operational need
- Requests submitted by November of a given fiscal year
- Staff who did not receive funding in the previous fiscal year

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7. Time Allowances

Time spent in most trainings is treated as paid work time. Time spent for *5.4 Continuing Education and Certification* activities will not be paid.

Time spent in approved optional professional development is regular paid time.

Supervisors will coordinate scheduling so that release time does not create a gap in public service coverage. Requests should be submitted with enough lead time, generally at least three weeks in advance, to allow for scheduling adjustments.

8. Funding and Reimbursement

The Library allocates an annual staff development budget as part of the operating budget appropriated at the Annual Town Meeting. Subject to available funds:

- Educational courses related to employee duties are funded as outlined in Article 25 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- Travel, mileage, lodging, and meal expenses for approved out-of-area conferences or training are reimbursed according to Town policies, subject to prior approval of the Library Director.
- Membership dues for professional associations may be reimbursed if directly relevant to the employee's role, subject to prior approval by the Library Director. When the Library has an organizational membership, such as ALA, individual staff memberships will not be funded—except when an individual membership would reduce a staff member's conference attendance costs.

9. Request and Approval Procedure

To request participation in a staff development activity, an employee must:

- Submit a written or electronic request to their immediate supervisor, including the name of the activity, dates, cost, and its relevance to the employee's role.
- Allow at least three weeks of lead time for the supervisor to review the request and arrange coverage, except in the case of time-sensitive opportunities.
- Receive written approval before registering or incurring any expense.
- Submit receipts and any required post-activity summary within 10 business days of completion for reimbursement using Town reimbursement documents.

Submitted reimbursement requests will be processed within seven (7) business days.

10. Reporting and Knowledge Sharing

Employees who attend a conference, workshop, or training funded by the Library are expected to share relevant knowledge with colleagues, for example, by providing a brief written summary, giving a presentation at a staff meeting, or updating departmental procedures or training materials. This ensures that the benefits of individual development extend to the wider team.

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APPENDIX A: STAFF DEVELOPMENT REQUEST FORM

Use this form to request participation in a staff development activity described in Section 5 of this policy. Submit the completed form to your immediate supervisor at least 3 weeks before the activity date, except for time-sensitive opportunities (see *Section 9*).

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION			
Employee Name		**Job Title**	
Department		**Supervisor**	
ACTIVITY DETAILS			
Activity/Training Name			
Sponsoring Organization		**Activity Type (see *Section 5*)**	
Date(s) of Activity		**Location**	
Estimated Total Cost		**Funding Requested (see *Section 8*)**	
Relevance to Current or Prospective Role			
APPROVAL			
Employee Signature		**Date**	
Supervisor Approval	☐ Approve ☐ Deny Comments:		
Supervisor Signature		**Date**	
Library Director Approval	☐ Approve ☐ Deny Comments:		
Library Director Signature		**Date**	

Reminder: After completing the activity, submit receipts and any required post-activity summary to your supervisor within seven (7) business days, using Town reimbursement documents, per Section 9.

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EMPLOYEE INFORMATION			
Employee Name		**Job Title**	Library Assistant
Department	Adult Services Dept.	**Supervisor**	
ACTIVITY DETAILS			
Activity/Training Name			
Sponsoring Organization	Library	**Activity Type (see *Section 5*)**	5.1 Onboarding
Date(s) of Activity		**Location**	In-State
Estimated Total Cost		**Funding Requested (see *Section 8*)**	Membership Dues
Relevance to Current or Prospective Role			
APPROVAL			
Employee Signature		**Date**	
Supervisor Approval	☐ Approve ☐ Deny Comments:		
Supervisor Signature		**Date**	
Library Director Approval	☐ Approve ☐ Deny Comments:		
Library Director Signature		**Date**	

Reminder: After completing the activity, submit receipts and any required post-activity summary to your supervisor within seven (7) business days, using Town reimbursement documents, per Section 9.

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