



Formal Response Regarding HPLD Programming Policy

As we enter a new year, we want to reflect and update our community on what High Plains Library District has accomplished and where we are headed. At the end of 2018, High Plains approved the HPLD Strategic plan for 2019-2024. The plan was informed by feedback and information provided by communities throughout the District. We have been diligently working toward the goals of that plan. In 2020, we embarked on the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program Journey in pursuance of our Excellence Goal. In 2021, we broke ground on LINC, our newest project that is a combination of Library, Innovation Center and Events Space.

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was established by Congress to promote improved quality of goods and services in U.S. companies and organizations. The goal of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-107) was to enhance the competitiveness of U.S. businesses. Achieving this goal would mean we would be the first Library District in the country to do so. On average, only four organizations are recognized with the award a year. This is a lofty goal, and whether or not we earn this award, the process of continual improvement will make for a better High Plains Library District year over year.

In our journey down the Baldrige path, we have committed ourselves to implementing a strategic plan to satisfy our community's needs. During that process, it was determined we review and update our current procedures and practices to ensure they are aligned with our policies. We dedicated a staff member to this endeavor and made great progress.

The community input also led to an update in our Mission and Vision.

Mission

Helping build Community

Vision

High Plains Library District gives access to answers for every question.

In the Aspiration section of our Strategic Plan, we included the following steps in response to community feedback:

- Shift focus of programming to skill-based and development, with the goal of providing people throughout the District an opportunity to improve their skills and life.
- Offer programming that encourages crucial conversations and civil discourse.

In this shift, we had to allocate resources and even make budgetary decisions. This change coupled with the Baldrige Framework has led us to further evaluate the outcomes of programs and their potential for success. As a result, some underutilized programs were discontinued or reworked. Program topics

were not eliminated but were worked through with managers and the programming committee for the best outcomes.

Much like our collection, we must make choices in what we add to the collection in accordance with our budget. If one book is selected over another, it is not about its stance, but for a mix of formal processes of consideration used for collection development and management. In collection management, books that do not meet usage goals are often removed. The same choice must be made with a finite budget for programming. Programs need to be reviewed and evaluated prior to approval and throughout their life cycle. For a variety of reasons, some programs are not approved. Again, these decisions are not made based on content; they are the result of program development and management and the need to ensure our limited physical space and budget dollars are being used efficiently and productively.

Despite the space and budget limitations, the public is free to reserve our study and meeting rooms on a first-come first-served basis, for any legal purpose.

HPLD firmly believes in the Jo Godwin quote – “A truly great library contains something in it to offend everyone.” This is true in our collection. Over the years, we have received challenges and reconsideration requests and have maintained our collection. We value having a robust collection that presents information from various points of view. This is the core of the definition of Intellectual Freedom as defined by the American Library Association.

Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored.

It is of vital importance that we provide materials that represent all points of view. This is a foundational principle of libraries, but as of late, has been surrounded by controversy. We can only stand on a solid foundation if we continue to be recognized as being objective in our programming. If we are viewed as pushing or supporting only one specific view or stance on a subject, our foundation cracks. Doing so risks alienating one or more sides of an issue.

We continue to hear how divided people are across our nation. Many factors in life are driving people apart. We have worked to offer programming that encourages crucial conversations and civil discourse. We have worked to plan and message our programming in a way that can bring people from diverse viewpoints together to discuss, learn and grow together.

These ideas and issues have driven our programming decisions throughout the years. As the overall review of policy was conducted, it became apparent that the evolution of our programming did not always align with our goals. Staff worked to update the policy, it was reviewed by the Library Managers Group and the Board Governance Committee and was ultimately recommended by staff to go to the Board for approval. The policy change does not represent a drastic departure from our core principles and goals, but a small realignment to ensure they are met.

We believe providing programming in this manner will increase the likelihood of success in bringing our community together to have needed discussions and ultimately help to build our community further.

Sincerely,

Your High Plains Library District