Middle Management Resource Guide for Public Library Leaders

Bklyn Public Library

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Section 1:

Interpreting and Communicating Policies, Procedures, and Organizational Changes

1. Read the policy, procedures, or organizational change document/communication you received from leadership in full and complete the following table to confirm you understand it before communicating with your team.

Interpretation Validation Template: Confirming Understanding of Policies, Procedures, and Organizational Changes

Policy Title and Link	
Effective Date	
Policy Owner / Contact	
Plain Language Summary (3-5 points)	**1.**
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
Intent (why does it exist)	
Non-negotiables (must comply)	
Areas allowing manager discretion	
Impacted individuals/teams	
Key risks if misapplied	
Dependencies/related policies	

Examples	**Do:**
	Don't:
Team implications	**Process changes:**
	Tools/access needed:
	Training required:
My questions to the policy owner(s) (seeking clarification)	
Decision/guidance received (date and source)	
Communications plan (who/when/how)	
Where documented? (ex: team doc/ SharePoint)	

2. Complete the table below to help you identify how to communicate any relevant information with your team.

Key Takeaways Template: Identifying Relevant Information to Share with Your Team

What is staying the same?	
What is changing?	
What can I share with my team?	
What do I need clarity on?	
Who can I get clarity from?	

3. Send your outstanding questions to the relevant stakeholders using this template.

Email Template: Clarifying Policy, Procedures, and Organizational Changes

Subject: Clarification request: [Policy/Procedure/Organizational Change] for [Team/Process]

Hi [Name],

We're implementing [policy/procedure] and want to ensure compliance and consistency.

Our current interpretation is:

- ❑ [Plain-language summary]
- ❑ [Non-negotiables we're applying]
- ❑ [Where we believe discretion exists

Outstanding Questions:

1.

2.

3.

Proposed interim approach (safe default) until clarified:

[Brief]

If I'm correct, I plan to communicate this to my team at our upcoming team meeting on X date, and to follow up in an email to the team.

Thank you for your help.

– [Name], [Role]

4. While you await a response from the individual(s) you are seeking clarification from, you can use the email template below to communicate with your team.

Email Template: Communicating Policy, Procedures, or Organizational Changes with Your Team

Subject: Update on <insert> Decision & What It Means for Our Team

Hi team,

I want to ensure you have all seen the recent decision that <insert name> emailed on X date regarding <brief description of the decision—e.g., new policy, change in process, shift in priorities, restructuring of work, etc.>. I want to ensure you have clear, timely information about what's changing and what's expected of us moving forward.

What was decided

<Org> has decided to <insert simple, plain language summary of the decision>. The intent behind this decision is to <explain the "why" in 1–2 sentences—efficiency, consistency, regulatory need, alignment, patron experience, etc.>.

What this means for our team

Here's how the decision impacts our work:

- ❏ Impact #1: process changes, shifts in priority, timeline changes, new requirements
- ❏ Impact #2: what stays the same
- ❏ Impact #3: new expectations or responsibilities

If something is not listed here, assume it stays the same. I'll update you as soon as I have additional details.

Expectations for our team

To help us move forward smoothly, here's what I need from all of us:

1. Follow the updated guidance beginning <date>.

2. Capture any questions or concerns in our team channel or bring them to your 1:1s.

3. Flag any blockers early so we can escalate them quickly and avoid delays.

4. Use our existing workflows (decision log, FAQ, documentation) to keep information visible and consistent.

5. Lead with curiosity and collaboration—ask questions, share interpretations, and help each other adjust.

I'll continue to consolidate team questions and update all of you.

What we're still clarifying

There are a few areas where I'm actively seeking more detail from senior leaders:

- ❏ <Open question #1>
- ❏ <Open question #2>
- ❏ <Open question #3>

As soon as I have clear guidance, I will share it with all of you and update our documentation.

How I'll support you

I know changes like this can raise questions, and I want to ensure the team has what it needs to succeed. I'll be:

- ❏ Holding space in team office hours this week for questions
- ❏ Updating our FAQ with each clarification I receive
- ❏ Reviewing workloads and timelines with each of you in our 1:1s
- ❏ Partnering with cross-functional teams to reduce friction where possible

Please continue to reach out with questions—your feedback helps us implement this decision thoughtfully and consistently.

Thank you for your flexibility and professionalism as we navigate this update. I'll keep you updated as soon as I learn more. If anything here feels unclear or raises concerns, I want to hear from you.

5. Use these checklists to help announce changes to your team.

Quick Reference Checklists to Help Announce Policy, Procedures, and Organizational Changes to Your Team

Before You Announce a Change	Before You Announce a Change	Before You Announce a Change
❑ Clarify the why: intent and desired outcome	❑ State the problem in one sentence	❑ Update the team FAQ and decision log
❑ Define what's changing and what's staying the same	❑ Quantify the impact (time, cost, risk, or patron experience)	❑ Share a plain-language summary with the team
❑ Identify who's impacted and how	❑ Outline options and tradeoffs	❑ Notify or tag impacted individuals
❑ Show what success looks like, with examples	❑ Recommend a path forward	❑ Set a review date for any temporary or interim decision
❑ Clarify decision rights and escalation paths	❑ Specify the decision needed and deadline	
❑ Determine where to ask questions and find FAQs	❑ Include relevant attachments and links	
❑ Identify available support and training		
❑ Confirm the effective date and owner of the policy, procedure, or organizational change		

Section 2:

One-on-One Meeting Template

Use this agenda to help guide 1:1 meetings.

1:1 Meeting Agenda

Employee name	
Manager Name	
Date	
Meeting Frequency	

1. Check-in	**Purpose: Build trust and camaraderie.** **Discussion prompts:** ❑ **How are you doing this week?** ❑ **What has been going well?** ❑ **Is there anything affecting your work I should be aware of?**
2. Accomplishments	**Purpose: Celebrate successes and reinforce positive impact.** **Discussion prompts:** ❑ **What accomplishments are you proud of since our last meeting?** ❑ **Have you received any positive feedback from patrons, coworkers, or leadership?**
3. Current Projects & Work Updates	**Purpose: Review priorities and track progress.** **Discussion prompts:** ❑ **What projects are you currently working on?**

Sample Task Tracker:

PROJECT / TASK	STATUS

4. Challenges or Roadblocks	**Purpose: Identify issues early and solve problems together.** **Discussion prompts:** ❑ **Are there any obstacles preventing progress?** ❑ **Are you experiencing any operational concerns?** ❑ **Are you experiencing any team dynamics or workflow issues?**
5. Support	**Purpose: Identify how the manager can help.** **Discussion prompts:** ❑ **What support do you need from me?** ❑ **Are there resources, training, or connections that would help?** ❑ **Create action items for manager**
6. Professional Growth & Development	**Purpose: Encourage career development and engagement.** **Discussion prompts:** ❑ **What skills would you like to develop?** ❑ **Are there any upcoming conferences, trainings, or webinars you would like to attend?** ❑ **Share any opportunities for leadership** ❑ **Stretch assignments**
7. Team & Workplace Feedback	**Purpose: Create psychological safety and foster continuous improvement.** **Discussion prompts:** ❑ **What is working well on the team?** ❑ **What could improve our workflows or services?** ❑ **Any ideas for improving patron experience?**
8. Upcoming Priorities	**Purpose: Align on the next focus areas for team member.** **Discussion prompts:** ❑ **What are the top priorities for our next meeting?**
9. Action Items Summary	**Purpose: Ensure everyone is on the same page about action items.** **Discussion prompts:** ❑ **What are our next steps?**

Sample Action Items Template:

ACTION ITEM	DUE DATE	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPLETING IT?	NOTES

10. Closing Reflection	**Purpose: Build trust, camaraderie, and collaboration.**
	Discussion prompts: ❑ **Is there anything else you'd like to discuss?** ❑ **What will make our 1:1s more useful?**

Section 3:

New Employee Kickoff Meeting Template

Use this template to guide meeting with a new employee.

New Employee Kickoff Meeting

Employee name	
Manager Name	
Department	
Date	
Position Title	

1. Welcome & Introductions (5–10 min)	**Purpose: Create a welcoming and supportive environment.** **Topics:** ❑ **Welcome the employee to the team** ❑ **Your role as their manager** ❑ **Your management style** ❑ **Encourage open communication**
2. Role Overview & Expectations (10 min)	**Purpose: Ensure the employee understands their role on the team.** **Topics:** ❑ **Primary job responsibilities** ❑ **Daily workflow** ❑ **Performance expectations** ❑ **Team responsibilities** ❑ **Customer/community service expectations (especially important in libraries)**
3. Team Structure (5–10 min)	**Purpose: Ensure the employee understands the team structure.** **Topics:** ❑ **Team members and roles** ❑ **Key internal partners** ❑ **Reporting structure** ❑ **Collaboration expectations**

4. Workplace Culture & Values (5–10 min)	**Purpose: Align on workplace culture and values.** **Topics:** ❑ Core values ❑ Commitment to community ❑ Team norms ❑ Expectations around respect, communication, and collaboration ❑ Public service ❑ Community engagement ❑ Equity of access
6. Communication & Support (5 min)	**Purpose: Ensure the employee knows how to communicate with you and feels supported.** **Topics:** ❑ One-on-one meeting schedule ❑ Best ways to reach you ❑ Feedback culture ❑ Asking questions
7. Professional Growth (5 min)	**Purpose: Align on career goals and encourage career development.** **Topics:** ❑ Career goals ❑ Interests ❑ Opportunities for growth
8. Questions & Open Discussion (5–10 min)	**Purpose: Build trust and communication.** **Topics:** ❑ Encourage openness with key internal partners **Discussion prompts:** ❑ What questions do they have about the role? ❑ Is there anything they need to feel more prepared? ❑ How can you best support them in their role?
9. Next Steps	❑ Complete action items ❑ Employee completes training module ❑ Manager schedules next 1:1 ❑ Employee shadows team member

Section 4:

Team Building Activities

Team Problem-Solving Challenge

Goal: Strengthen teamwork and creative thinking.

Activity: Present a scenario such as: "Our branch suddenly receives a grant to launch a new community program in 30 days. How would we design it?"

Teams work together to create:

- ❑ Program concept
- ❑ Budget idea
- ❑ Marketing plan

Then each group presents its solution.

Impact:

- ❑ Encourages innovation
- ❑ Builds collaboration
- ❑ Strengthens decision-making skills

Use these activites to encourage teamwork and commradery.

Additional Team-Building Activities: gamestorming.com

Appreciation Circle

Goal: Build a culture of recognition.

Activity: During a meeting, each person shares appreciation for a colleague.

Examples:

- ❑ Helping with a program
- ❑ Covering a shift
- ❑ Supporting a project

Impact:

- ❑ Improves morale
- ❑ Strengthens relationships
- ❑ Encourages positive workplace culture

Innovation Brainstorm Sessions

Goal: Encourage staff ownership and creativity.

Ask questions like::

- ❑ “What new program should our community have?”
- ❑ “How can we improve customer service?”
- ❑ “What would make our branch even more welcoming?”

Impact:

- ❑ Promotes goal-setting, collaboration, and innovation.
- ❑ Encourages a sense of belonging.

Team Goal Setting Workshop (Vision Board Party)

Goal: Align the team around shared priorities.

Ask questions like:

- ❑ Identify 3 major goals for the year
- ❑ Discuss how each role contributes
- ❑ Assign team champions for each goal

Impact:

- ❑ Clarifies purpose
- ❑ Improves accountability
- ❑ Builds collaboration

Celebration and Milestone Events

Goal: Recognize progress and achievements.

Activity: Celebrate successful programs, staff anniversaries, completed projects, and team accomplishments.

Examples:

- ❑ Small lunch
- ❑ Recognition certificates
- ❑ Team shout-outs

Impact:

- ❑ Improves morale
- ❑ Reinforces appreciation
- ❑ Encourages engagement

Section 5:

Theory, Leaders, Concepts, Ideas to Draw Inspiration From

Use these resources to draw inspiration from to excel as a manager.

Theory, Leaders, Concepts, Ideas

Appreciative Inquiry: A strengths-based approach to organizational change that focuses on "what's working" rather than what's broken.	*Why it matters:* Helps managers guide teams through transitions and ambiguity by grounding discussions on strengths and possibilities. This approach focuses on collaborative solutions and conversations. Suggested Resources: ❑ Adam Grant Ted Talk ❑ Association of College & Research Libraries Publication
Dare to Lead (Brené Brown): A courage-building leadership framework grounded in vulnerability, trust, and empathy.	*Why it matters:* This framework supports middle managers in navigating emotional complexity and leading with clarity and humanity. Suggested Resources: ❑ Dare to Lead Hub (assessments, workbooks, and skill-building tools) ❑ Brene Brown: The Engaged Feedback Checklist (for giving feedback)
Radical Candor (Kim Scott): This framework teaches leaders to care personally and challenge directly.	*Why it matters:* Essential for managers who must coach staff, address performance issues, and maintain trust. Suggested Resources: ❑ Radical Candor Website (workshops, guides, videos, and templates) ❑ Radical Candor Blog: How to Receive Feedback: 6 Tips for Receiving Feedback Well ❑ Radical Candor in 6 Minutes with Kim Scott
Peer Mentoring & Manager Networks: Intentional engagement with fellow managers for real-time problem solving and support.	*Why it matters:* Middle management can be isolating, and peer communities build solidarity, resilience, and shared wisdom. Suggested Resources: ❑ The Black Librarian in America ❑ Mentorship Matters Ted Talk
Other Resources: Professional training associations and free online opportunities.	*Why it matters:* One of the most effective ways for middle managers to strengthen leadership capacity, stay current on best practices, and expand professional networks. Associations provide structured learning opportunities that support both individual career growth and organizational development. Suggested Resources: ❑ American Library Association and Public Library Association On-Demand Webinars: Administration and Leadership ❑ WebJunction Webinar Calendar ❑ ALA CORE network, which offers curriculum, competencies, best practices, and journal access for leadership learning at all levels.

Building a Strong Bench (Staff Development & Empowerment): "Building a Strong Bench" is a leadership and talent development strategy focused on preparing staff to step into future leadership or critical roles within an organization.	***Why it matters:*** **Empowered teams lighten the load on middle managers, improve consistency, and reduce burnout.**
Self-Care & Work-Life Balance: Self-care for middle managers is the intentional practice of protecting your mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing so you can lead effectively and sustainably	***Why it matters:*** **Middle managers absorb emotional labor from all directions. Boundaries, emotional literacy, and recovery are essential to sustainability.** **Suggested Resources:** ❑ **Brené Brown's resource library** ❑ **How to Get Better at Receiving Feedback**

Additional Suggested Resources:

Library-Focused Leadership & Management

- ***Middle Management in Academic and Public Libraries*** **by Tom Diamond offers insights from practicing library middle managers on real issues like people management, delegation, collaboration, and change management.**
- ***Library Management: A Practical Guide for Librarians*** **by Bridgit McCafferty offers a clear, practical overview of managerial roles at libraries with strategies you can apply immediately.**
- ***Managing in the Middle*** **by Robert Farrell is a handbook for supervisors "in the middle," focusing on communication, performance management, juggling responsibilities, and surviving challenges.**
- ***Now You're a Manager: Quick and Practical Strategies for New Mid-Level Managers in Academic Libraries*** **by M. Leslie Madden, Laura Carscaddon, Denita Hampton, and Brenna Helmstutler offers short, actionable tips for everyday managerial tasks and team building.**
- ***Leading in Libraries: Perspectives from Lived Experiences*** **by Maha Kumaran and Beth McNeil is a more recent collection exploring inclusive, modern leadership contexts and strategies.**
- ***Influence Without Authority*** **by Allan R. Cohen & David L. Bradford discusses how to lead from where you are.**

Library & Leadership-Focused Podcasts

- ***Library Leadership Podcast*** **includes conversations with library leaders about strategic planning, middle management challenges, communication, inclusivity, and career development.**
- ***Circulating Ideas*** **is a long-running podcast featuring librarians and thinkers discussing issues in libraries: leadership trends, innovation, technology, and equity.**
- ***Libraries Lead!*** **Features discussions on big-picture library and information science topics with expert hosts.**
- ***Librarian Linkover*** **(via New Books Network) focuses on librarian careers and professional growth — helpful for understanding different paths and leadership styles.**

Broader Leadership & Management Podcasts (Skill Development)

- ***Manager Tools Podcast offers practical skills for daily management tasks (staff coaching, meetings, feedback).***
- ***HBR IdeaCast*** **presents research-based leadership discussions from Harvard Business Review (excellent for strategic thinking).**
- ***WorkLife with Adam Grant*** **explores workplace dynamics and psychological insights on leading teams.**
- ***Coaching for Leaders*** **offers tactical leadership coaching conversations.**
- ***Beyond the To-Do List*** **focuses on time, task, and priority management and is great for mid-level leaders.**