



## SOCIETAL STATEMENT FRAMEWORK

This internal framework is intended to help VLA evaluate if, when and how the organization issues public statements about national and societal issues.

### EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

VLA staff and leadership should consider the following when evaluating whether it is appropriate and advisable to make a public statement about national and societal issues:

- **Connection to the Virginia Library Association and Virginia libraries of all kinds.**
- **Library impact:** Statements that would create threats to libraries, library staff, and the First Amendment shall be considered with caution; the impact of inaction also must be considered.
- **State interest:** Issues of state interest are most appropriate for statements from the Virginia Library Association.
- **State and National trends:** Statements provided by other industry associations may influence VLA's statement strategy. Examples of such associations include: American Library Association, the American Association of College and Research Libraries, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Association of School Librarians, Virginia Association of School Librarians and the Chief Officers of State and Library Association as well as the associations of neighboring states or regions.
- **Message clarity:** Association statements should be issued only when there is a clear and concise message, including a specific call to action whenever possible.
- **Leadership and collaboration:** Association statements that demonstrate VLA's leadership or provide opportunity to collaborate are preferred.

### DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

1. Use the Statement Criteria Scorecard to help evaluate if a statement is appropriate and beneficial.
2. Draft a potential statement according to the Statement Elements.
3. Vet the draft statement by the chief executive officer, executive committee, and/or council, as appropriate.

## TIMELINESS

To demonstrate leadership in alignment with its purpose, VLA should issue statements within 24-48 hours of an issue's emergence. However, speed should not compromise strategy. The correct statement and buy in of stakeholders should preempt speed.

## POSITION STATEMENT ELEMENTS

Statements should be short, clear, meaningful, and appropriately toned. Preferably, all statements will:

- Include a specific call to action related to a clearly articulated goal. This helps ensure the statement is strategic and purposeful, rather than empty talk.
- Be as concise as possible (ideally 3 sentences or less), briefly articulating why VLA is making the statement, and, if relevant, other supporting evidence. If additional commentary is necessary, the concise social-media-friendly core statement should be easily identifiable at the beginning of the larger statement.
- Avoid additional commentary that is unnecessary to achieve the above criteria.
- Avoid emotion-based statements attributed to the association itself (VLA is "disappointed by" or "saddened by," etc.). The association as an organization or membership body has positions (policies, etc.) but not universal personal emotions.

## OTHER ACTIONS

The following steps should be taken when considering or releasing an association statement:

- **Evaluate the impact on business operations.** Even when a statement poses no serious threat to the association, issuing a statement is often significantly disruptive to routine business operations, distracting from other association messages and increasing member inquiries and feedback (positive and negative) that might merit a response by staff.
- **Clarify roles for managing questions and feedback.** Identify a clear process to collect, review, and respond to questions or feedback.
- **Communicate to Membership and Stakeholders.** Alert membership and stakeholders when a statement is about to be released, with clear instructions about how to triage or otherwise respond to questions or feedback.

## STATEMENT CRITERIA SCORECARD

The scorecard is a tool to help evaluate whether a statement is appropriate.

An issue that meets minimum criteria suggests an association *may* be appropriate but does not mandate issuing a statement. Similarly, a statement meeting the maximum criteria does not mandate a statement—this scorecard is to frame discussion and decision-making.

Choose one statement by marking X.	Scoring	Topic
		<b>Connection to the VLA</b>
	3	Is specifically connected to the association
	2	Is connected to the association's profession at large
	1	Is connected to the population served
	0	Is NOT connected to VLA, the profession or the population served.
<i>sum</i>		<i>A score of 1 is required to consider</i>
		<b>Statement Reach</b>
	3	Is specifically relevant to the Commonwealth of Virginia
	2	Is specifically relevant to the profession at large
	1	Is an opportunity to lead collaboratively with a stakeholder group
	0	Is NOT specifically related to Virginia, a stakeholder group, or the profession at large.
<i>sum</i>		<i>A score of 1 is required to consider</i>
<i>SUM</i>		<i>A total score of 3 is required to consider</i>
		<i>For further review</i>
	1	More than 2 other related associations have issued a statement (ALA, AASL, ACRL, etc).
	1	A statement could involve significant risk for the Association
<i>sum</i>		<i>A score higher than 0 requires further review of the statement.</i>

This framework and scorecard draw heavily from and with thanks to the American Society of Association Executives at <https://www.asaecenter.org/>.