

TRANSPARENCY AS A BEST PRACTICE

Problems Caused by Lack of Transparency in Central America

- Corruption in government and local organizations
- Mismanagement of funds leading to misallocation of resources and inefficient spending
- Lack of accountability leading to a culture of impunity
- Influence of special interests leading to undue influence over government decisions and policies
- Erosion of trust in local and government organizations

“In Central America, lack of transparency in local organizations and civil society can hinder development efforts and exacerbate social inequalities. Without accountability and transparency, resources intended for community development can be mismanaged or misappropriated, leaving vulnerable populations without necessary support.”

-Amnesty International

Transparency is an essential American Best Practice for a functioning society. For Riecken Community Libraries, it means adopting and implementing library processes and procedures that increase access to information that is readily available and easy to understand.

The implication of transparency for information professionals—records managers, archivists, information officers, computer systems managers, librarians, writers, journalists, publishers, and editors—is that when it comes to official information, they have a responsibility to meet the demand for intensive and effective management of information to serve the requirements of freedom of information legislation.

One of the most visible ways that Riecken Community Libraries can practice—and promote—transparency is by setting an example through “transparency corners” in each and every Riecken Library. This compelling and visible demonstration of accountability for library finances, activities, and programs is underpinned by training for library boards in operating transparently.

By allowing citizens to improve their lives through self education, libraries contribute to the economic and social development of the region. They also contribute to the democratic process, offering citizens the opportunity to expand their political awareness beyond what daily media (newspapers, radio, TV, and magazines) provide. This supports creation of a strong civil society with more fully engaged citizens.

Riecken Community Libraries is aligned with these practices of the American Library Association (ALA) to ensure transparency:

- **Open Meetings and Public Access** to them
- **Regular Reports and Publications** made available
- **Variety of Communication Channels** to keep stakeholders informed
- **Governance Documents** publicly available
- **Transparency in decision-making** processes



Transparency Corner in El Tejar Community Library