

Strategic Certification Pathway – Montana State Library

(formerly called the Personal Professional Development Plan Pathway – PPDPP)

PILOT: research findings, analysis, & recommendations

July 24, 2019

“I am SOOOO Excited about this, as I have always felt it should be set up in a way that allows independence and configuration that fits each Library individually, as we all need different types of training.” Michelle Fenger, Ronan Library District, 7/12/2019

TIMELINE

2018 June-July

Applications received by interested libraries/librarians

[Manual](#) drafted, revised, placed online

August

Selections of participants made, consultants assigned as advisors for each participant librarian/library:

- Chouteau County (full staff): assigned to Lauren; reassigned to Jo January 2019
- Belgrade Community – Meghan: assigned to Suzanne
- Ronan District – Michelle: assigned to Tracy
- Kalispell Regional Medical Center – Heidi Sue & Joliet Public Library – Alyson: assigned to Pam
- Missoula Public Library – Mikyla & Desiree: assigned to Jo

September – December

All participants except Alyson in Joliet completed their initial planning forms and submitted them to their MSL advisor.

2019 January

MSL staff advisors met for an interim check.

May-June

Focus group sessions with four participants, two directors to assess the pilot program.

July

Report & Analysis

August

Recommendations to MT Library Commission

LOGIC MODEL - shaded areas still require work

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Evaluation Method/ Data Collected	Impacts	Data
Planning time : Jo, Tracy, Consultants, research & discussion; Jennie's review time; NAC & Commission review/approval	Pilot pathway that links PD to the strategic plan of the applicant's library, competencies in the field, provides more flexibility in the ways that the applicant can demonstrate learning has occurred.	Applicants design rigorous professional development to advance their careers in librarianship.	Meeting notes, reports to the MSL Commission, focus group reports from pilot libraries; evidence of rigor in applicant's utility of more flexibility: for example, applicants that choose to conduct research or review literature, report strong choices and specific outcomes related to their claim for credit.	Applicants that utilize the PD Plan Pathway to certification advance their careers and the field of librarianship in Montana	Correlations between PDPlan Pathway applicants and those that choose the traditional path to certification. The evidence may be anecdotal, but, overtime, we expect more applicants will be taking leadership roles in MLA, MSL committees and in library managerial positions.
Recruitment: Approximately 5 librarians from 3-5 libraries participate in the pilot. MSL staff are assigned to each participant for frequent check-ins to collect data.	Different-sized libraries participate; manageable number in the pilot;	Libraries utilize the PPD Plan Pathway to advance the strategic goals of the library.	Interviews with applicants and their supervisors at least once during the pilot; Library directors offer evidence of advancement of library's strategic goals.	Library staff, trustees and stakeholders recognize that their professional development is directly related to the library's success because the library achieves its strategic goals.	Fewer libraries have outdated or no strategic plans as noted in annual statistics, consultant visit observations or requests for help in creating a strategic plan.
Development of a CMS in Moodle; introductory course, review of	Discover if Moodle can manage all CE tracker data and	MSL staff organize training activities into a coordinated	PPDP Plans are the primary assessment data. Moodle participant data; Formative and	Better organization on MSL learning resources; appropriate MSL	MSL staff report satisfaction among library staff and trustees in being able to find rigorous and

<p>learner inputs; ongoing interviews with pilot libraries. 10 - 20 hours per month during formative phase. Test ASPeN for filing PPDP Pathway forms.</p>	<p>CE applications; test ASPeN</p>	<p>curriculum addressing the needs of our librarians as informed by data. PPD Plans become data that informs MSL staff on what training is needed. Data is accessible and organized for use in planning training activities.</p>	<p>summative surveys or interviews on how Moodle is working for the applicant and the library. MSL staff observations.</p>	<p>learning materials are integrated in Moodle going forward. ASPeN or Moodle permit learner to more easily find resources.</p>	<p>appropriate training activities. PPD Plans help libraries achieve their strategic goals.</p>
<p>Formative assessment development</p>	<p>Ongoing data on applicant progress, needs; formative evaluation data within 3-6 months of the pilot to inform a statewide roll- out* (extended this output to 9 months)</p>				

FINDINGS

Participants are very supportive of this pilot primarily because it gives them more control over their professional development. Most see it as a natural evolution of how one seeks PD as one's career advances: you begin with general training in a variety of library-related topics, but over time you come to understand better where the gaps exist in your skills and knowledge, and the areas of expertise where you have the potential to excel. This leads a learner to seek out more specialized learning experiences, that may or may not be within the scope of a common area of librarianship.

Participants found the forms for planning worked well. They like that their plan must be tethered to the library's goals. They recognized the value in being intentional in planning their professional development. Mikyla (Missoula PL) said that requirement allowed her to look at the library's plan and to consider how what she wanted to do with her PD fit into that. She also noted that it might not be helpful to those that have an older plan or outdated plan. Sandra in Chouteau County noted that using a PD plan is more impactful for the library because it is tied to strategic goals. Individual personal development follows that.

In the course of the pilot, self-paced independent learning presented some positive opportunities and some challenges for participants. In reality, most of the training that participants sought was formal instruction: classes, asynchronous modules online, webinars, conferences. They just weren't the standard library fare. Desiree (Missoula) set out to become the library's genealogy expert and quickly accumulated over 100 hours through a course of study at Boston College. She has since revised her original plan that had underestimated the hours she would need to do the course and submitted an application for certification and a new planning form toward her next renewal.

Participants created plans that were personally significant and related to what their library needs to achieve their goals. Making that connection was not always easy and MSL staff did have to assist participants and enlist the help of directors to get the planning form completed and to assure that the plan was suitably rigorous. Plans ranged from Desiree's laser focus on genealogy, to Michelle's fairly personal exploration to advance her management skills to the inclusion of library-wide safety and security training at Chouteau County Library in Fort Benton, to the project-based learning plan that resulted in a new long range plan for the Belgrade Library. Heidi Sue at Kalispell Regional Medical Center noted that this pathway presents the only way that she can reasonably earn a credential from MSL, as her work requires lots of training that is directly related to the medical field in which she works, and less in library-specific training, even though she is a full-time librarian and is active in the Montana library community.

When asked if this pathway is sufficiently rigorous, but not onerous, participants were clear in saying that this is not an easier way to get certified. It is not just a way to work around the category requirements of the traditional pathway. Participants did not find the process onerous.

Participants noted that this pathway is particularly useful for certain people, and certain libraries, at certain times. No one suggested that this pathway replace the traditional pathway with 60 credits in 4 categories and a minimum number in each category. Rather, this pathway is most appropriate for experienced librarians and that MSL should steer people to the traditional pathway for their first certification, especially for those librarians that did not attend library school. It's likely that most

librarians will continue to use the traditional pathway to attain their certification. Going forward, it is conceivable that some who would benefit from this pathway may be new to our state, but experienced in their careers and others may have specialized needs for their professional development (like Heidi Sue, a medical librarian), so while most will likely choose this pathway as their career is advancing after they have attained a MSL Certification via the traditional pathway, a limited option for others to utilize this pathway should also be provided.

The prospect of supporting mentorship as part of this project didn't happen. There are known barriers to mentorship in Montana: namely time, distance, and lack of a steady support system to promote and facilitate mentors and mentees. This project did not overcome those barriers. One participant attempted to secure a mentor, but was unsuccessful.

The core curriculum has not yet been created. This is due largely to lack of time by the CE Coordinator. In the meantime, however, COSLA has adopted a Moodle platform for shared content and this proved to be a best choice for MSL to host the core curriculum course. The CE Coordinator and one consultant also took a preparatory course on how to design an acceptable Moodle course for OPI, and the CE Coordinator and the MSC trainer attended the Mountain Moot conference at Carroll College to connect to the Moodle developers in Montana and the intermountain west. The purpose of the core curriculum, as originally conceived for this pilot, was to assure that all librarians choosing this pathway had a basic foundation of library science knowledge. Instead, a recommendation below is made to make this pathway only available to those who have attained a previous certification from MSL either via the traditional pathway or by graduating with an MLS/MLIS degree from an accredited program. The CE Coordinator will continue to work toward creating a core-curriculum foundations course in Moodle in FY2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This pilot proves that a new pathway to certification that allows an experienced librarian to design a professional development plan that is linked to their library's goals is desired. This new pathway supports local libraries in attaining their goals and advances the goals of the MT State Library as well. There were a few hitches, but the process did not prove onerous for participants, directors, or MSL staff. Therefore, the CE Coordinator makes the following recommendations:

1. A Strategic Certification Pathway be adopted following the pilot model with some adaptations:
 - The number of credits that may be earned through informal, self-paced learning be limited to 20 of the total 60 required as formal learning experiences seemed to be the way participants sought out most of their credits, and this is the area in the pathway that is least defined and perhaps more open to interpretation
 - Make an interim report optional – and recommended only when the participant needs to make a significant change to their original plan. This will limit the amount of oversight required of directors and MSL staff in reviewing submissions
 - Reports of logged hours for self-paced learning should be only between the participant and their supervisor. Credits posted for those learning activities will be verified by the

supervisor similarly to how credits are verified now. This limits the amount of time that MSL staff are needed.

- The CE Coordinator or an MSL Consulting Librarian as well as the participant’s supervisor will formally approve a professional development plan before the participant may begin to collect credits, using a form that will be completed in ASPeN. MSL staff will need to set aside time to manage this new task, perhaps as much as ½ day as we discovered that there can be a need to discuss a plan or request a revision. This part of the pathway is useful to MSL in providing authentic data about what it is that librarians want and need to learn, and the plan is pivotal to the success of this pathway, so it is a worthy investment of MSL staff time. So, the date that the plan attains approval from the supervisor and MSL staff is the start date of that participant’s learning journey.
 - Allow mentorship to continue as an option for self-paced learning, but do not make it a requirement.
2. All forms are created and completed in ASPeN. The CE Coordinator and the ASPeN administrator will collaborate to create the forms and the related functionality in ASPeN so that when participants select this pathway as their participation track in ASPeN, they are guided to the information they need to complete the appropriate forms and successfully begin their work toward certification
 3. Only those who have successfully attained an MSL certification via a recent MLS/MLIS degree or the traditional pathway or those, like Heidi Sue at Kalispell Regional Medical Center Library, who work at a non-public library with clear needs for specialized training should utilize this option. An exception to this rule could be made based on a formal request to the CE Coordinator and with the agreement of the lead consultant. But, for the most part, we want to see evidence that a librarian has a broad foundation in library science before they enter into a pathway that supports specialization or inquiry that is at the edge of the field of librarianship.
 4. The design of a Moodle course in the foundations of librarianship will continue on the CE Coordinator’s work plan to be posted on the COSLA National Training Center site, and will be recommended for all new library staff, but will not a requirement of this pathway.
 5. Complete the work required to revise the manual and update ASPeN so that this pathway will be available statewide by the end of the calendar year 2020.