

Excellent Library Standards for Libraries to Review

These excellent standards are designed for libraries that are striving to serve all members of their communities sufficient unto that person's needs. We have included interpretive questions to help Library Directors and Board members review the standards to identify how the library is doing in achieving these standards.

Libraries that work on these standards will be recognized. All libraries are asked to select one of these standards to work towards achieving as part of the essential public library standards process.

Library Board Meetings, Governance, Duties, Working with the Director

1. The Board and Director have created an orientation and mentoring process for new Board members.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Has the new board member met other board members?			
Were they welcomed at their first meeting?			
Has an experienced board member been paired with the new member?			
Did the orientation include a review of upcoming decisions/duties that will help the board member feel confident about discussing and deciding on an issue?			
Is the orientation process regularly reviewed and improved?			

2. Board members are aware of the roles of the board chair, the library director, and board members.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do board members work together to govern effectively?			
Do board members work together with the library director to provide support and feedback, but avoid managing the library?			
Are board members aware of the role of the library director? The board chair? Board members?			
Can board members describe what skills they bring to the board? Can they describe or identify the skills of their fellow board members?			
Have board members reviewed trustee documentation available from the Montana State Library and discussed any questions they have about the material?			

Have board members reviewed the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights and discussed any questions they have about the material?			
Have board members reviewed the pertinent portions of Montana's statutes and library-related administrative rules and discussed any questions or concerns the board members have?			

3. The Board and Director use a performance evaluation process that allows for discussion about what has been accomplished and what needs to be accomplished.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Does the Board and Director use a plan to decide what needs to be accomplished in a given year?			
Have the Board and Director discussed and agreed upon what the Director and/or staff will try to accomplish in the coming year?			
Does the Director regularly report back on progress?			
If asked for assistance in achieving an objective, does the Board offer assistance?			
Does the Board give feedback on how things are going?			
Do the Board and Director meet at least once a year to evaluate how things are going?			

4. The Board evaluates its work.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Are board members asked to evaluate their own performance as a board member?			
Does the Board evaluate how things are going at least once a year?			
Does the Board use that information to change or improve a process or task the Board is responsible for completing?			

5. The Board and Director identify and discuss community needs and aspirations.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Are library board members and directors aware of community issues and aspirations?			
Has the Director spoken with staff about their knowledge of community issues? And has a summary of that information been shared and discussed at a Board meeting?			
Do board members and/or the Director participate in other community organizations?			

6. The Board and Director adopt a community-based plan for the library.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Has the Director reviewed community feedback in the form of surveys, focus groups, community discussions, and/or other community documents? And has that information been shared and discussed at a Board meeting?			
Did the Board and/or Director invite community and/or local government leaders to participate in the planning process?			
Have the director and staff identified who isn't using the library? And has that information been shared and discussed at a Board meeting?			
Has the Director or designee attempted to talk to members of that group to identify why they do not use the library? And has that information been shared and discussed at a Board meeting?			
Have the Director and/or staff discussed what role the library can play in better serving the community? And has that information been shared at a board meeting?			
Was the above information used to develop a community-based plan?			
Has the Board adopted a community-based plan for the library?			

7. The Board and Director can quickly communicate about the plan - specifically what is in the plan and progress on achieving the plan.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Have the Board and/or Director created a 50-word version of this plan that can be shared with community members?			
Is progress on achieving the plan communicated with community members and local government leaders?			

8. The Board and Director annually review progress on achieving the library's goals and mission.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Have the Board and Director reviewed the plan and what staff wanted to accomplish?			
Have the Director and staff identified what obstacles are keeping staff from achieving items on the plan? And has that information been shared and discussed at a Board meeting?			
Are the Director and staff trying to overcome these obstacles? If Board assistance is needed, has that information been shared and discussed at a Board meeting? Is the Board providing assistance where needed?			
Do the Board, Director, and/or staff regularly evaluate and measure the outcomes and impacts of library services?			
Have the Board, Director and/or staff considered how library services benefit community members?			
Do the Board and/or Director communicate these findings with funders and community partners?			

9. Board members receive training about advocacy at least every other year.
 10. Board members are advocates for the library.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Have individual board members identified what they would like to learn about advocacy?			
Are board members connected to local government leaders?			
Are board members connected to local community leaders?			
Does at least one board member attend a local government meeting at least once a year?			
Can board members use the language of local government leaders and community leaders to explain the value of the library?			

11. The Board and Director set policy that reflects the mission and goals of the library.
 12. The Board and Director review policies to identify potential barriers to use of the library.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Are the library's mission and goals reflected in library policies?			
Have staff, the Director, and/or Board members identified any barriers created by the policies that are keeping people from using library services?			
Have those barriers been addressed by changing library policy as needed?			
Has the Board and/or Director evaluated the policies and whether they are creating the kind of library the community wants?			

Access to the Library, Collections, services, Programming, and Technology

1. Members of minority groups see themselves reflected in the staff, volunteers, and/or Library Board.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do you see members of minority groups in the library?			
Does the staff, Board, and/or volunteers include members of your community's minority groups?			
Have you spoken with members of minority groups? Do they say they feel welcome?			

2. The library staff, director, and/or board work with local community organizations to improve library services for all community members.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do you work with local tribal communities to understand and better provide services for Native Americans?			
Do you work with other community organizations that provide support and guidance for the minority populations in your community – whether it be those with disabilities, Latinx, economically disadvantaged, persons experiencing homelessness, LGBTQ+ or another portion of your population?			
Has the Director reviewed the library’s strengths and weaknesses in order to understand what you can and cannot provide when working with community partners? Do the Director and/or staff use this information to align work with partners who complement the library’s work?			
Does your library provide services, programming, and materials that shares the stories of all members of your community from the majority members to the minorities?			
Do staff and/or the Director participate in other community organizations?			

3. The library provides training that helps staff identify inherent bias and how to overcome that bias.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do staff members recognize when they are failing to provide the same welcoming smile to people who do not look or act like them?			
Do the library director and staff annually discuss how to become more inclusive?			
Do you provide annual training that addresses trauma-informed care?			
Are staff members comfortable speaking up when they have identified a barrier to usage of the library?			

4. The library is easy to find.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Have you asked new members of the community about their experience with finding the library? If they identified problems, have you addressed those problems?			
Do you have adequate signage to direct people to the library?			

5. The library facility is accessible and welcoming to all community members.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Is your space accessible to everyone?			
Is it well-lit and designed in a way that is open, welcoming, and has clear line of sight spaces?			
Do you champion local community culture by having signage in local languages?			
Does it reflect your community – its culture, heritage, and all the people who live in the community?			

6. Community members can find information about local events and local government at or through the library.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do library staff know where to find out about local events? And do they share that information with community members?			
Do library staff know where to find local government information – meeting agendas, minutes, etc.? And do they share that information with community members?			
If the community has a way of sharing local information, does the library link to it and/or provide that resource?			
If the community doesn't have a way of sharing local information, does the library fill the gap by collecting, organizing, and providing access to that information?			

7. Library staff purchase, catalog, and provide access to materials that reflect community culture and languages.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Have you identified the different groups in your community?			
Do you order materials that represent the viewpoints, history, and/or culture of that group?			
Do members of your community speak a different language? Have you identified those languages?			
Do you have items in your collection that are in those languages?			

8. Community members can find items online.

9. The library participates in sharing groups in order to increase the number of library materials community members can access.

10. The library participates in cooperative collection development.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Is the library part of Montana Library 2 Go?			
Have library staff compared print and digital circulation? Is the library investing enough money into digital collections?			
Has the library investigated and/or considered other cooperative purchase arrangements in order to improve library services?			

11. The library provides programming for all ages, ethnicities, income levels, and abilities.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Does the library have programming for all ages?			
Are staff trained in providing programming and services for all ages? Do they use that knowledge when developing programs?			
Does the library offer intergenerational programming that gives people a chance to connect with people outside their normal age group or family unit?			
Have library staff identified gaps in services? Have they identified ways to address those gaps?			

12. The library provides programming that reflects community needs and interests.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Does library programming give all community members a chance to tell their own stories and help build the community's story?			
Does the library's programming address chronic/perpetual and changing community needs?			
Does it allow community members to come together to discuss and perhaps problem solve for the community?			

13. The library provides programming for children.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Does the library offer programming that supports early literacy skill development?			
Does the library have programming for school age children that supports their educational and personal development?			
Are staff trained in the growth stages of children and how to apply this knowledge in the development of children's programming?			

14. The library offers the fastest Internet access possible.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do library staff evaluate broadband use to understand how internet use might change over time?			
Does the library invest in internet service that meets users increasing demand for the internet?			

15. The library offers devices that patrons can use in the library or at home.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Is there a need for mobile hot spots? Is there a fast enough cellular connection to make this a worthwhile purchase?			
Do patrons need access to mobile devices to do their homework, search the Internet, or achieve other goals they have? Has the library considered offering these items?			

16. The library assists community members who need help using the technology the library offers.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do staff or volunteers provide one-on-one assistance or classes for patrons who need help with the technology?			

17. The library assists people with disabilities who need access to technology.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do people with a disability have access to technology that can help them read or obtain the information they want?			
If not, does the library staff know how to connect that person to a local or state resource that can help break down the barriers to access?			

18. The library provides software and programming that allows community members to create and develop local, relevant community content.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do staff receive regular training that increases their knowledge and skills in digital tools and software that community members can use to create content?			
Does the library own software that community members can use to create local content?			

19. The library participates in statewide/regional cooperative efforts that improves library services for community members.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Have the director and/or staff considered participating in a cooperative, statewide effort?			
Have the director and/or staff discussed the value that service might provide to community members?			
Have the director and/or staff discussed the ways they can help that cooperative service succeed?			

Personnel, Salaries and Benefits, Certification, Directors

1. The Board supports continuing education for its members, the director, and library staff.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Does the Board budget money for board members to receive training?			
Does the Board celebrate or acknowledge the director and/or staff when they receive certification from the Montana State Library?			
Does the Board budget funds for Montana Library Association memberships for staff, the Director, and board members?			
Does the Board agree to close the library to allow staff to participate in professional development opportunities?			

2. The Board reviews staff and Director salaries to see if they are compensated at whichever rate is higher - the salaries of other city or county staff with similar jobs or other directors of similar size/similar budgets.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Have the Board and Director reviewed salary and pay equity for staff members as related to each other, to other local officials, and/or to libraries that are a similar size and with similar budgets?			

3. Staff have the tools and training they need to perform their work.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Have the staff been asked what tools they need to perform their jobs? If they need different tools, do they now have those tools? If not, has the Director and/or Board identified how to obtain the right tools or explained why it is not possible to purchase that tool?			
Are new staff given an orientation and training that helps them understand what is expected of them?			
Is there a feedback/coaching process for staff that helps them develop as professionals?			
Does the Director have a positive relationship with staff and volunteers?			

4. Directors of any size library have a college degree.
5. Staff are encouraged to become certified.
6. Staff receive an increase in pay when they certify and maintain their certification.

7. Directors receive training about advocacy at least every other year.
8. Directors are advocates for the library.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Has the Director identified what they would like to learn about advocacy?			
Is the Director connected to local government leaders?			
Is the Director connected to local community leaders?			
Does the Director attend a local government meeting at least once a year?			
Can the Director use the language of local government leaders and community leaders to explain the value of the library?			

9. Directors annually explain the importance of staff in building relationships with community members.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Does the Director regularly talk to staff about the role they have in building and promoting the image of the library?			
Does the Director share key messages or information that staff need to support the work of library advocates?			
Has the Director arranged continuing education for staff that discusses advocacy and what library staff can and cannot do?			

Public Relations

1. Local media publishes positive articles about the library and its services.
2. Library staff use state and national marketing efforts to market the library.
3. Library staff identify the target audience for their communication efforts and create communication materials specifically for that audience.

Question	Yes	No	N/A
Have library staff asked people how they hear about library or community events? Do library staff use that information to communicate about library services and programs?			
Have library staff received training on how to best communicate with different audiences?			

4. Library has a community support group such as a Friends or a Foundation to advocate for the library and provide funding.
5. Library has community members who donate to the library and are willing to speak up in support of the library during community meetings.