

Excellent Public Library Standards Survey

Dear Public Library Director and Board Members,

This document includes all of the excellent public library standards. We created this document to help you understand each standard and what it means. In the introduction of each section we explain why these standards are important and what, by meeting the standards, you will achieve in your libraries and communities.

You will see questions underneath the standards. The questions are designed to help you identify whether or not your library meets that standard. Each Montana library is unique so some of the questions may not apply to your library. If you have any questions or concerns about the standards themselves, or the survey process, please don't hesitate to contact Montana State Library staff. Thank you for working so hard to ensure that every Montanan has library services sufficient unto their needs.

Purpose of the standards

- Ensure that all Montanans and visitors receive library services sufficient unto their needs
- Give libraries direction in achieving the first purpose
- Help stakeholders understand the value and relevance of libraries

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

Board members have two primary responsibilities: to govern the library for the benefit of everybody in the community, and to help keep the Library and Board functioning effectively. Both tasks are equally important. Board members are part of a decision-making team that includes the rest of the library board and the library director. To function effectively, everyone needs a firm understanding of each other's different roles.

Our Intent: Library boards members and the Director work for the benefit of all Montanans

Desired outcomes: Board members and Directors

- are aware of community aspirations and needs
- work with community members to design services that help Montanans enrich and inform themselves
- work to develop the physical, financial, and social infrastructure that gives convenient access to sufficient library content and services

Excellent Standards

1. The Board meets at least 11 times a year.

2. The Board has a formal process for welcoming and educating new board members. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to at least 50% of the questions below.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
Have the Board and Director created a formal process for onboarding new board members?			
Does the Board have a mentoring program for new board members?			
Does the Board invite people interested in serving on the Board to board meetings?			
Does the Board have a process for recruiting new Board members?			
Does the Board have a non-voting position on the Board for people who have agreed to serve on the Board and are willing to spend a year attending board meetings to learn about the work of the library?			

3. The library evaluates the degree to which everyone in their community has access to library content and services, sufficient unto their needs. From this inclusive, ongoing individual-based discovery process, the library devises a community-based plan for addressing their community's needs. The plan is reviewed annually and updated, if needed. Mark this standard as met if you can answer yes to adoption and review of the plan and more than 50% of the other questions listed below.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do the Board and Director deliberately seek a wide range of input from library users and non-users when planning for the future of library services?			
Has the Director reviewed community feedback in the form of surveys, focus groups, community discussions, and/or other community documents? 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? 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? 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? 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? (MANDATORY)			
Do the Board and Director review the plan annually? (MANDATORY)			

4. The Board and Director can succinctly communicate to the public about the plan - specifically what is in the plan and progress on achieving the plan. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to more than 50% of the questions below.

Interpretive 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 there a short 1-2 page visual representation of the plan that can be shared with key stakeholders?			
Is progress on achieving the plan communicated with community members and local government leaders?			

5. The Board and Director are data-inspired when planning, evaluating and communicating about library services. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to at least 75% of the questions below.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
Have the Director, staff, and/or board members attended professional development opportunities about using data to plan, evaluate, and make decisions?			
Do staff and/or the Director identify how library services benefit those they serve?			
Do staff and/or the Director measure whether or not library services achieve the identified benefits?			
Do staff and/or the Director use that information to evaluate and make changes to services, if needed?			
Do staff, the Director, and/or the Board use that information to plan for new services?			
Do staff, the Director, and/or the Board use that information to communicate with key stakeholders?			

6. Board members are strong library advocates and receive training about advocacy at least every year. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to attending training annually and more than 50% of the other questions listed below.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do board members know local government and community leaders?			
Are board members able to communicate the value of the library in language that key stakeholders understand?			
Do board members follow state and national legislation regarding libraries?			
Do board members annually attend training about advocacy? (MANDATORY)			

7. 100% of local tax revenue funds support the services and personnel necessary to achieve the essential standards. Grants, private funds, supplement and help libraries meet the excellent standards.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
Are personnel costs for staff providing day-to-day services and administration of the library covered by local tax revenues?			
Are costs for Internet, hardware, and software used in providing day-to-day services covered by local tax revenues?			
Are costs for materials added to the collection covered by local tax revenue?			

8. At least three board members are certified by the Montana State Library.

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

The library plays an important role in the community. It provides access to information professionals, services, materials, tools, and spaces that support learning, decision making, personal growth, and play. You have an important job - providing these services in a way that makes everyone in the community feel welcome – no matter what their age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, or identity. You have an opportunity to showcase how beautiful your community is in all its diverse forms.

Our intent: Everyone is welcome at the library

Desired Outcomes: People have access to services, materials, and physical spaces that

- foster lifelong learning
- help people develop and pursue their ideas
- provide human connection
- encourage play

Excellent Standards

1. The library staff, director, and/or board foster partnerships with local community organizations to improve library services for all community members. Mark this standard as met if you can answer yes to at least 50% of the questions below.

Interpretive 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?			

2. The library staff attend training that helps staff identify implicit bias and how to overcome that bias. Mark these standards as met if you answer yes to the training question about implicit bias and to at least 50% of the questions below.

Interpretive 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?			
Within the last 3 years have staff members attended training about implicit bias? (MANDATORY)			
Are staff members comfortable speaking up when they have identified a barrier to usage of the library?			
Within the last 3 years have staff members attended training about trauma-informed care?			

3. The library works with other organizations to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, ability, income, race, or ethnicity, has safe, comfortable, and convenient access to community destinations and public places—whether walking, driving, bicycling, or taking public transportation.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do library personnel work with transportation and planning departments to make the library and area around it comfortable for people who are walking or bicycling?			
Do library personnel work with public transportation officials to ensure a stop near the library?			
Does the library provide information or assist people with finding information about public transportation and/or walking/bicycling paths?			

4. All people have access to materials that reflect community cultures and languages. Mark this standard as met if you can answer yes to at least 50% of the questions listed below.

Interpretive 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?			

5. People can find library materials online.
6. The library participates in sharing groups in order to increase the number of library materials community members can access. Mark this standard as met if you can answer yes to at least 50% of the questions below.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
Does the library participate in one of the sharing groups of the Montana Shared Catalog?			
Does the library participate in a local sharing group where library users are easily able to request materials from other libraries in the area?			

7. The library participates in cooperative collection development. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to more than 50% of the questions listed below.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
Is the library part of Montana Library 2 Go?			
Do library staff from different libraries work together to selectively order items that will serve all populations as well as your local population?			
Has the library investigated and/or considered other cooperative purchase arrangements in order to improve library services?			

8. People have access to programming for all ages, ethnicities, income levels, and abilities. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to at least 50% of the questions listed below.

Interpretive 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?			

9. People have access to programming that reflects community needs and interests. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to at least 50% of the questions listed below.

Interpretive 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?			

10. Children and parents are offered early literacy programming. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to the ALL of the questions listed below.

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

11. Users have access to sufficiently reliable and speedy Internet at their library. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to ALL of the questions listed below.

Interpretive 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 faster Internet?			

12. Users have access to devices that can be used in the library or at home. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to at least 50% of the questions listed below.

Interpretive 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?			
Does the library offer mobile hot spots for home usage?			
Do patrons need access to mobile devices to do their homework, search the Internet, or achieve other goals they have?			
Does the library offer mobile devices for patrons to use either in the library or at home?			

13. People with disabilities have access to technology and assistance with using that technology. Mark this standard as met if you can answer yes to ALL of the questions listed below.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do people with a disability have access to technology that can help them read and 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?			

14. The library provides software and programming that allows people to create and develop content. Mark this standard as met if you can answer yes to ALL of the questions listed below.

Interpretive 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 content?			

15. The library participates in statewide/regional cooperative efforts that improve library services for community members.

Interpretive 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

Library staff (and volunteers) are the ones who carry out the work of the library. They are the face of the library, and the services the library provides would not happen without them. Developing and providing support to library staff will lead to better services for all Montanans.

Our intent: Library directors and staff are fairly compensated and have the tools and education they need to provide library services so that all Montanans can seek information and pursue ideas.

Desired outcomes: Library directors and staff

- are fairly compensated
- have the tools and education they need to provide library services sufficient unto the needs of all Montanans
- build a learning culture that supports all Montanans’ lifelong pursuit of inquiry and learning
- work in a supportive environment

Excellent Standards

1. All community members see themselves reflected in the staff, volunteers, or board because the library board and/or Director make every effort to recruit and select staff, volunteers, and board members that represent community demographics, with an emphasis on recruiting under-represented community groups. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to ALL of the questions listed below.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
Do you see members of under-represented groups in the library?			
Does the staff, Board, and/or volunteers include members of your community’s under-represented groups?			

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 and staff of libraries with similar size staff/similar budgets. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to ALL of the questions listed below.

Interpretive 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?			
Are staff and the Director fairly compensated?			

3. Directors of any size library have a college degree or equivalent experience.
4. Staff receive recognition when they certify and maintain their certification by the Montana State Library.

Public Relations

Informing people about what is going on in the library is important and challenging. Public relations includes building awareness of the library and developing positive relationships with community members. Doing this connects the library to the community which helps staff build services that are in tune with community needs. It also builds support for the library.

Our intent: The community is strengthened by the relationships between the library and community members.

Desired outcomes: Community members

- are aware of the services the library offers that can help them seek information and pursue ideas
- inform the library about their information needs
- support libraries

Excellent Standards

1. Local media are encouraged to publish articles about the library and its services. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to at least 50% of the questions listed below.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
If the library has a local newspaper do library staff prepare press releases and/or encourage local journalists to write articles about the library?			
If there is a local electronic source for information about the community do library staff work with the moderators and writers to encourage postings about the library?			
If there is a local TV or radio station do library staff reach out to the reporters to encourage the publication of stories and interviews about the library?			

2. Library staff participate in state and national marketing efforts for the benefit of the library and potentially other libraries. Mark this standard as met if you answer yes to ANY of the questions listed below.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
In the last 3-5 years has the library participated in a national marketing effort?			
In the last 3-5 years, has the library participated in a state effort to market libraries, programming, or services?			

3. Library staff identify the target audiences for their publicity efforts and create materials specifically for those 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 cultivates donors.
6. Community members are advocates for the library. Mark this standard as met if you can answer yes to ALL of the questions listed below.

Interpretive Question	Yes	No	N/A
Does the library have community members it can call upon to speak to local government bodies?			
Does the library have a process for collecting and with permission sharing stories from people who use the library?			
Does the library share these stories to raise awareness of community support for the library?			

7. Library staff support local businesses by purchasing items locally, when feasible.