



**CONTINUING EDUCATION AND
CERTIFICATION TASK FORCE
RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY AND REPORT**

December 1, 2022

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY

MSL Continuing Education and Certification Task Force (2022)

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MSL Continuing Education and Certification Task Force (2022)

Task Force Members

- Jennifer Ball, Stillwater County Library Director
- Colet Bartow, Continuing Education Coordinator, Montana State Library
- Carmen Clark, Bozeman Public Library Staff
- Miranda Evenson, Sidney-Richland County Library Staff
- Pam Henley, Statewide Consulting Librarian, Montana State Library
- David Ingram, Imagine!F Libraries Trustee
- Tina Peterson, Harlowton Public Library Director
- Robyn Scribner, Montana State Library Commission Member

Charge to the Task Force

1. Participate fully in the activities of the task force as a representative of library sizes, types, geographic location, and staff roles
2. Review and consider continuing education needs and priorities as identified by MSL Core Services Committees and the Network Advisory Council
3. Review and consider continuing education needs and priorities as identified by public library trustees, directors, and staff
4. Understand the 2022 Public Library Standards and changes to CE requirements
5. Evaluate the 2009 Goals for the CE Program and make recommendations for changes to the MSL Commission
6. Evaluate the 2009 Continuing Education (CE) program requirements and make recommendations for changes to the MSL Commission

Project Timeline



The task force met six times. Once in September, twice in October, and three times in November 2022.

MSL Continuing Education and Certification Task Force (2022)

Executive Summary

The Task Force recommendations are to:

1. Adopt fewer, clearer, measurable, and actionable program goals;
2. Adjust the Library Administration Track to increase flexibility;
3. Maintain the Voluntary Trustee Track Requirements as is;
4. Adjust the Voluntary Staff Track requirements to increase flexibility and encourage participation;
5. Address user experience with ASPeN to eliminate barriers to tracking and finding continuing education credits;
6. Provide lists of recommended courses for each certification track;
7. Develop an accessible and consistent plan to promote Continuing Education and Certification Program and,
8. Plan implementation for an effective date of July 1, 2024.

Information that Informed the Task Force

A brief history of the MSL Certification program was created to provide background on the development and changes over time. [View the video on the MSL YouTube channel](#) (8:02).

3 surveys were conducted to inform discussions of the Task Force. Responses were anonymous.

- Survey opened August 1, 2022. As of September 29, 2022, 58 responses were received.
 - [Survey Link](#)
- Survey opened October 18, 2022. As of Monday, October 31, 2022, 75 responses were received.
 - [Survey Link](#)
- Survey opened November 9, 2022. As of Monday, November 21, 2022, 40 responses were received.
 - [Survey Link](#)

A survey of State Library agencies was conducted in September 2022 to gather information about certification programs in other states. 24 states responded. 15 of the states do not have certification requirements for public library directors, staff, or trustees. Of the 11 states that have certification requirements, 10 of those require library directors to be certified. 1 state (Washington) requires all public library staff be certified by the State Library agency.

To access all meeting materials, please [visit the Task Force webpage](#). Presentations, reports, and working materials are [available in ASPeN also](#). Meeting recordings (6) are viewable on the [MSL YouTube Channel](#).

MSL Continuing Education and Certification Task Force (2022)

General Recommendations for Continuing Education Program

Recommendations

1. Address user experience with ASPeN to eliminate barriers to tracking and finding continuing education credits
2. Provide lists of recommended courses for each certification track
3. Develop an accessible and consistent plan to promote Continuing Education and Certification Program
4. Plan implementation for an effective date of July 1, 2024

Rationale

Address user experience with ASPeN to eliminate barriers to tracking and finding continuing education credits

Benefits

Data gathered through various surveys included feedback on difficulties that ASPeN users encounter when searching for continuing education opportunities and in tracking credits. The frequency of these comments indicates that improvements to ASPeN would potentially increase participation in continuing education and certification.

Cost

The potential costs of implementing this recommendation are primarily the capacity and staffing needed internally at MSL to update ASPeN programming. Limited staffing and programming expertise with ASPeN will impact the timeline to implement changes.

Intended Outcomes

The intended outcome from this recommendation is improved user experience with ASPeN that supports increased participation in the MSL Continuing Education and Certification Program.

Provide lists of recommended courses for each certification track

Benefits

Creating and maintaining course lists would enable certification participants to have a roadmap they can rely on to plan how they will meet the certification track requirements. This will save time for participants and enable them to get started on a solid foundation. Curated lists that are organized by topics will also help participants engage in learning that is meaningful to their personal, professional goals.

Cost

The potential costs of implementing this recommendation are initial staff time and expertise to create the lists and then ongoing updates to keep the information from becoming stale.

Intended Outcomes

The intended outcomes from this recommendation are to save time and effort for participants in choosing continuing education that fits the requirements for a certification track.

MSL Continuing Education and Certification Task Force (2022)

Develop an accessible and consistent plan to promote Continuing Education and Certification Program

Benefits

A promotion and communication plan for the Continuing Education and Certification Program aligned with the goals will help staff create workplans and activities that are in alignment with the intent of the program.

Cost

The potential costs of implementing this recommendation are the staff time and resources to create and implement the plan.

Intended Outcomes

The intended outcomes from this recommendation are that a thoughtfully implemented promotion and communication plan will increase awareness of the program, increase participation in MSL continuing education activities, and increase the number of participants who become certified.

Plan implementation for an effective date of July 1, 2024

Benefits

Creating a timebound effective date will enable MSL to plan for the human and budgetary resources necessary to operationalize changes in ASPeN and create resources to support a successful transition. This date will also give participants the opportunity to understand and plan around changes that would effect continuing education track completion. An effective date that corresponds to the beginning of the fiscal year is consistent with changes to administrative rules or changes in budget.

Cost

The potential costs of implementing this recommendation are the requisite changes in ASPeN preventing timely completion and staff capacity to implement the changes.

Intended Outcomes

The intended outcomes from this recommendation are to provide time and resources to successfully implement changes to the program and effectively communicate those changes to program participants.

MSL Continuing Education and Certification Task Force (2022)

Program Goals

Recommendation

- Promote continuing education and demonstrate its impact for quality library services
- Promote recognition for librarians who participate and libraries that encourage staff to continue learning
- Provide continuing education opportunities that benefit library directors, staff, and trustees

Rationale

Benefits

Focused and clear goals will make staff workplan development, resource allocation, and evaluation of the program more meaningful, accountable, and reportable. If the program goals are understandable by participants and MSL staff, then it will be easier to monitor the effectiveness of the program over time.

Cost

The cost of maintaining the current program goals will be lack of focus and difficulty in measurement of effectiveness.

Intended Outcomes

The intended outcomes from this recommendation are to have clear program goals that allow focus and evaluation of how well the program promotes continuing education, recognition of participants, and expansion of continuing education opportunities.

MSL Continuing Education and Certification Task Force (2022)

Library Administration

Recommendations

Adopt modified requirements for initial certification in the library administration track.

Adopt requirements for renewal of library administration certification.

Initial Certification Requirements

Total Required Credits

60 continuing education credits earned in a 4-year period

Library Administration Category

30 credits

Electives

30 credits in any category

Renewal Certification Requirements

Total Required Credits

60 elective continuing education credits earned in a 4-year period

Rationale

Benefits

These recommendations emphasize library administration but also provide flexibility and personalized goals for specialization. These recommendations will increase the flexibility and personal choices that library directors have in creating their own learning plans. The initial certification requirements set a foundation that can serve small and large library needs while the renewal encourages professional growth based on the unique circumstances of the individual and the library. This recommendation does not change the requirements in [ARM 10.102.1160 Personnel](#) that library directors must be certified.

For library staff members who choose to complete an initial library administration certification track, the initial certification requirements have the potential to increase knowledge and skills that can help them move into leadership positions and improve library services.

Cost

The costs of initiating these recommendations are 1) the time and effort to code the requirements into ASPeN and 2) time and effort to effectively communicate the changes and timeline for implementation.

Intended Outcomes

The intended outcomes from this recommendation are to 1) increase flexibility, 2) increase participation and completion of library administration certification, and 3) increase the professional knowledge and skills of those who complete the certification.

MSL Continuing Education and Certification Task Force (2022)

Trustee Track

Recommendation

Maintain the Voluntary Trustee Track Requirements as is.

Total Required Credits

15 continuing education credits earned in a 4-year period

Library Administration Category

10 credits

Electives

5 credits in any category

Rationale

Benefits

The current trustee certification requirements provide both flexibility and focus on library administration credits. The voluntary option gives individuals trustees choice in how they will engage in continuing education on the role of trustees and their specific responsibilities. This is important for volunteer, unpaid service on a public library board. Continuity of requirements allows directors and trustees to plan ahead for continuing education needs that may change as trustees move on and off boards and as important continuing education topics change over time.

Maintaining the current requirements for the Voluntary Trustee Track also eliminates the need to reprogram ASPeN. Staff can focus on promoting the program to potential participants and developing continuing education opportunities specific to trustee audiences.

Cost

There is no fiscal cost to maintaining the current requirements.

Intended Outcomes

The intended outcome is to promote the opportunity for voluntary certification to trustees, evaluate participation and continuing education offerings, and increase the knowledge and skills of trustees who choose to become certified.

MSL Continuing Education and Certification Task Force (2022)

Library Staff Track

Recommendation

Adopt modified requirements for the voluntary staff track.

Total Required Credits

60 continuing education credits earned in a 4-year period

Library Administration Category

5 credits

Library Services to the Public

5 credits

Collection Management and Technical Services

5 credits

Technology

5 credits

Electives

40 credits in any category

Rationale

Benefits

The proposed library staff certification requirements provide a balance of foundation in library skills and flexibility for exploration and specialization. By reducing the required credits in each category, the number of elective credits is increased significantly. The voluntary track gives individual staff members choice in how they will engage in continuing education. The category requirements give library directors and supervisors support in planning continuing education for staff members who may not have prior experience working in public libraries.

Cost

The costs of initiating these recommendations are 1) the time and effort to code the requirements into ASPeN and 2) time and effort to effectively communicate the changes and timeline for implementation.

Intended Outcomes

The intended outcomes are 1) to promote the opportunity for voluntary certification to library staff, 2) evaluate participation and continuing education offerings, and 3) increase the knowledge and skills of library staff who choose to become certified.