

Montana State Library Funding Guide

Libraries & Community Planning

Overview

Coordinating with community planning processes can help libraries leverage a wider range of funding sources. Since libraries often operate as part of the city or county structure, they often rely on these units of governments to submit a grant on their behalf. Consequently, it is important for libraries to coordinate with local officials to establish library improvements as a top priority. Participation in community planning processes will familiarize the community with library services, build local support and make it more likely that public officials will support funding proposals. Grants are more competitive when needs and priorities are documented in officially adopted community plans. This guide provides an overview of the various community planning processes and how they relate to library services.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS)

What: A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a local plan that provides a mechanism for coordinating the efforts of individuals, organizations, local governments, and private industry in regards to economic development. A CEDS includes a needs assessment and action plan that are based on broad community participation.

Why: Economic development professionals rely on the CEDS to support grant applications and to identify potential community partnerships. Libraries provides a range of services that may help a community achieve objectives found in CEDS. Examples include:

- Workforce – Computer access for job searchers, on-line learning, and skills development
- Broadband and Digital Inclusion – Wi-fi lending programs, community computing center
- Resilience -Disaster preparedness – Libraries as a communication center & emergency hub
- Child care – After-school programs, co-locate child care center at libraries

When: Regions must update their CEDS at least every five years to qualify for EDA assistance.

Who: Contact local economic development professionals about how to participate in the next CEDS update. Many economic development agencies can also assist with grant writing. The following link can help to identify economic development contacts.

- <https://eda.gov/resources/directory/states/mt.htm>

Growth Policies

What: The Growth Policy is based on public input and provides a vision for how a city or county wants to develop over the next 20-years. Per requirements in the Montana Code Annotated (MCA), the document includes analysis on land use, natural resources, **public facilities, local services,** population, economics, and housing. The Growth Policy identifies goals and policies that help decision-makers set spending priorities and evaluate whether a development proposal is consistent with the community vision. It is a tool to coordinate with other government agencies and provides the framework for regulatory updates, land use decisions, and capital improvements.

Why: The “Montana’s Growth Policy Resource Book” list many benefits of a growth policy. Those benefits relative to libraries include:

- Anticipates future growth in order to plan for more efficient provision of services.
- Helps communities prioritize investments in public facilities (including libraries).
- Promotes preservation of community historic and cultural resources such as libraries.
- Builds public consensus and demonstrates community support for upgrading public facilities.
- Identifies funding sources and implementation resources for library improvements.
- Results in higher ranking for CDBG grants that require consistency with the Growth Policy.

When: The MCA recommends the Growth Policy be updated every five-years. Often, the timelines for updates are longer. Check with the city/county Planning Department (or other staff) to determine the status of the next Growth Policy update.

Who: The MCA designates the Planning Board with the responsibility for preparing the Growth Policy and conducting public hearings on the document. The Planning Board then makes a recommendation to the governing body (City Council or County Commission). The governing body must adopt the Growth Policy by resolution.

Capital Improvement Plans

What: A "Capital Improvements Plan" (CIP) enumerates infrastructure and public facility needs. It establishes priorities, identifies funding resources, and schedules projects to either construct or improve facilities. The plan is a budgeting and financial tool used by a local governing body for maintaining, improving, or building new public facilities. A CIP should cover all public facilities owned or maintained by the local government, including libraries.

Why: Local governments rely on the CIP for annual budget decisions. Projects identified in the CIP are more likely to receive support for funding and grant applications. For example, if ADA improvements are identified, these could qualify for a USDA community facilities grant.

When: A CIP typically covers a 5-year period but is often updated annually. If library projects are already part of the locality’s CIP, check to make sure the information is up-to-date.

Who: Contact the public works department or planning department to determine if there is a CIP and the timeline for updating the document. If the city/county does not have a CIP, contact the Montana Department of Commerce – Community Technical Assistance Program for guidance on working with localities to prepare this document. CDBG grants are available for creating CIPs.

<https://comdev.mt.gov/Programs-and-Boards/Community-Technical-Assistance-Program/>

Historic Preservation Districts

What: Montana's Community Preservation program, also known as the Certified Local Government (CLG) program, is based upon an inventory of the community's historic patterns, architectural styles, influential architects and other historic assets. Under the National Historic Preservation Act, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) certifies local governments with historic preservation programs, provides technical assistance, and annually dedicates 10% of federal funding to cities, towns, and counties that are certified as a **CLG**. The office administers state historic preservation grants as well. The SHPO website list certified local governments: <https://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/index5>

Why: Many libraries are considered historic structures and are eligible for grants and technical assistance.

When: The state Historic Preservation Grant is a biennial grant. The next grant cycle is 2024 but libraries should start planning in advance to submit an application. The CDBG program has grants that can be used for Preliminary Architectural Reports (PARs) that would identify improvements for a historic structure and could be used as a basis for other grants. CDBG planning grants are reviewed on a quarterly grant cycle.

Who: Contact the [Montana State Historic Preservation Office](#) to determine if the building is located within a historic district or has been inventoried as a historic building. Local planning departments typically administer historic preservation programs and can alert you to local efforts. Montana Department of Commerce administers [CDBG grants](#).

Downtown Plan – Main Street

What: The Montana Main Street Program currently serves thirty-four communities across the state. It is a collaborative effort between the Montana Department of Commerce's Community Development Division and Office of Tourism. The program helps communities strengthen and preserve their historic downtown commercial districts by focusing on economic development, urban revitalization, and historic preservation. Even cities that are not part of the Main Street program, may have downtown plans addressing downtown revitalization. If a downtown planning effort is underway, it is important that the library participate to make sure the plan includes the library in the district.

Why: If your library is within a downtown district, it may qualify for a Main Street grant if the project is directly related to downtown revitalization and/or historic preservation. Additionally, local downtown planning efforts may include the establishment of a Tax Increment Finance District (TIF) or Business Improvement District (BID) that could provide funding for public improvements identified in the downtown plans. Libraries that have historic displays or information kiosks for visitors may qualify for Tourism Grants.

When: The Main Street grant deadline is typically in the fall and can including funding for PARs.

Who: Montana Main Street Programs has a list of cities participating in the Main Street program: <https://comdev.mt.gov/Programs-and-Boards/Montana-Main-Street-Program/>

Contact your local Planning Department to determine if there is a downtown plan or TIF District that includes the library.

Library Strategic Plan:

The most effective way to coordinate with community plans is for the library to first conduct an internal needs assessment and strategic plan. The strategic plan gathers public input, articulates overall mission and describes service provisions. Additionally, a strategic plan should include an assessment of library facilities and identify building improvements to help the library meet its mission. The library strategic plan can be shared with community officials so they can incorporate library priorities into community plans.

The Montana State Library strongly encourages all libraries to have a strategic plan. Strategic plans are helpful tools for libraries because they provide a focus for the library's programs, services and facility upgrades to help with decisions on allocating resources based on community needs. Furthermore:

- Plans help guide organizational, program, and service decisions and help prioritize projects
- Plans have recent, reliable data showing the need for programs/services/projects
- Plans describe projects including goals, timelines
- Plans can identify potential partners and funding resources

Resources:

Montana Department of Commerce (Growth Policies & CIP information)

<https://comdev.mt.gov/Programs-and-Boards/Community-Technical-Assistance-Program/Presentations,-Publications-and-Model-Documents>

Montana Historic Preservation Grant Program

<https://comdev.mt.gov/Programs-and-Boards/Montana-Historic-Preservation-Grant>

Montana Digital Opportunity Plan <https://connectmt.mt.gov>

Digital Equity: <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/resources/grant-programs>

Montana State Library - Library Directors Handbook (pg. 17)

https://msl.mt.gov/libraries/library_development/Directors/Directors

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<https://home.msl.mt.gov/>