



MEMO

To: Montana State Library Commission
From: Tracy Cook, Lead Consulting & Learning Librarian
Subject: Revamp of Excellent Library Service Award (ELSA)
Date: November 12, 2024

It is time to review the criteria and purpose of the Excellent Library Service Award (ELSA). Staff would like feedback from the Commission before reviewing the current criteria, speaking to libraries, and creating recommendations for the award.

History of the Award

The Excellent Library Service Award was first created in 2013. It replaced a collection management honor roll award that recognized libraries who had collection management policies and a robust collection management program. All types of libraries were encouraged to apply for the collection management honor roll. So many libraries met the criteria that staff and librarians wanted to see a new award.

The purpose of the first version of the ELSA was to encourage libraries to pursue the enhanced and excellent standards created in the 2010 revamp of the public library standards. Because there was no funding for libraries who went on to pursue the enhanced and excellent library standards the ELSA was a way to acknowledge those libraries that chose to pursue the higher, voluntary standards.

Feedback from non-public libraries indicated that meeting the criteria outlined in the 2013 ELSA was difficult. Staff recommended changing the award - removing the references to the enhanced and excellent standards – which matched the update to the public library standards. A small task force of librarians from different types of libraries developed the current criteria. A pdf with the current criteria is available in your meeting materials. The current version of the award has been in existence for a few years.



Reasons for reviewing the ELSA

The current award still doesn't seem to be meaningful. There are a variety of reasons for this – from the ease at which the award is granted to the criteria for the award.

The current award application process is cumbersome for libraries and can be cumbersome for staff to manage.

Possible process and timeline for re-vamping the award

December 2024 – gather feedback from the Commission about the purpose of the award and possible criteria.

Jan – March 2025 – use the current criteria and system to grant the award to successful applicants

March 2025 – gather feedback from library board members and directors during the Montana Library Association conference

March – May 2025 – gather feedback from library board members and directors during the spring federation meetings

June 2025 – staff will present updated draft recommendations for the award to the State Library Commission for input and review

August 2025 – Commission adopts new award

September – January 2026 – staff publicize the changes and release the new award application



Questions for the Commission to consider

- What is the purpose of this award? Is it to recognize excellence which might mean the award only goes to a few libraries each year? Is it to encourage certain behaviors – like board development or achievement of items on the public library standards road map?
 - If it is to encourage excellence, what does that look like?
 - If it is to encourage certain behaviors, what would you like to focus on for this award?
- Do you want to focus on public and tribal college libraries only? Do you want to include all types of libraries?
- What metrics or other criteria would use to evaluate applications and accept award recipients?
- Any other questions, comments or observations about the ELSA and process for reviewing it?