

Navigating the Elective Roadmap to Library Excellence

Library Structure and Funding – October 7, 2025

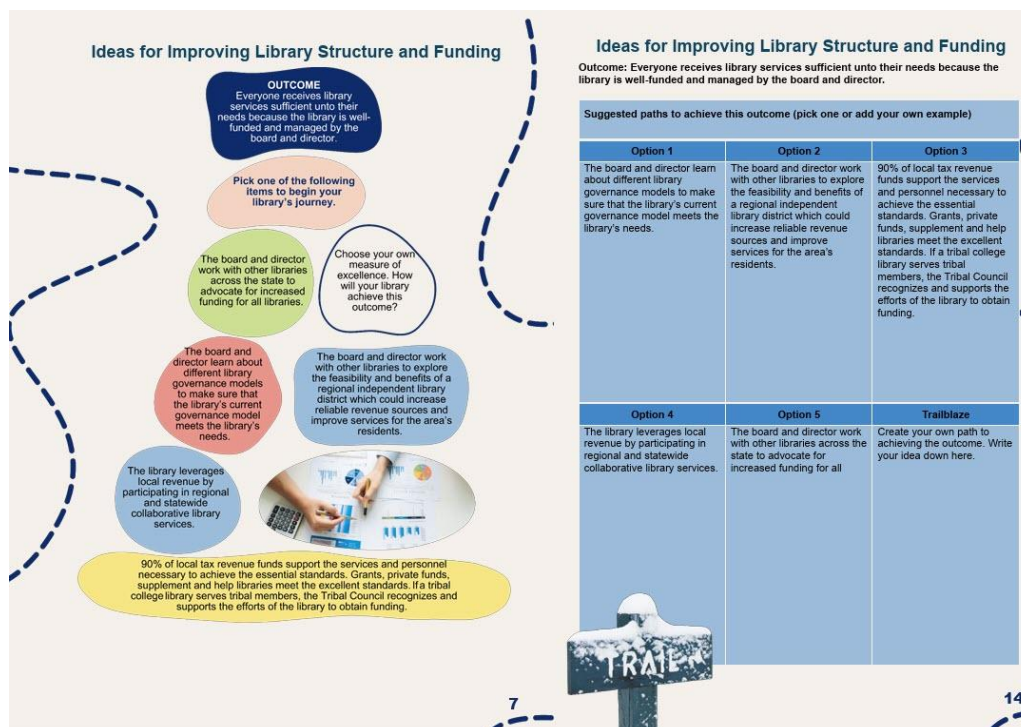


Contents

Webinar Recording	1
Summary	2
🕒 Purpose of the Webinar	2
📌 Key Themes & Takeaways.....	2
📅 Next Steps.....	3
👤 Discussion Questions.....	4
Links from Chat.....	4

Webinar Recording

- Recorded on October 7, 2025
- [Watch the Video](#)



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Summary



Purpose of the Webinar

- This session focused on the **Library Structure and Financing** section, which had not been widely adopted by libraries.
 - Tracy sought feedback on whether the roadmap goals were too ambitious or needed updating.
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Key Themes & Takeaways

1. Stable Funding & Governance Structures

- Libraries need **stable funding and solid governance** to provide consistent services.
- The roadmap encourages:
 - Exploring **independent library districts**.
 - **Collaborative advocacy** for funding.
 - Leveraging **local revenue** through partnerships.
 - Using **local tax revenue** (e.g., mill levies) for stability.

2. Feedback from Participants

- Many libraries rely on:
 - **Friends groups** and **foundations**.
 - **Mill levies** (some are planning new ones).
 - **Fundraising** (e.g., dinner theaters).
- Challenges include:
 - Inactive Friends groups.
 - Limited local government support.
 - Outdated or ineffective **MOUs** and **interlocal agreements**.

3. MOUs vs. Interlocal Agreements

- **MOUs** (Memoranda of Understanding):
 - Useful for clarifying responsibilities (e.g., maintenance, HR).

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- Not legally binding like laws; may not be enforced.
- Should be reviewed regularly.
- **Interlocal Agreements:**
 - Legally binding between government entities.
 - Used to create or define library governance structures.
 - Must follow Montana Code Annotated (Title 7).

4. Governance Models

- **Independent Library Districts:**
 - Offer autonomy and stable funding.
 - Board members are elected.
 - Require significant effort to establish.
- **Multi-Jurisdictional Service Districts:**
 - Blend autonomy with shared services (e.g., HR, accounting).
 - Can align with school or conservation district boundaries.

5. Legal and Strategic Advice

- Legal review is recommended when drafting MOUs or interlocal agreements.
- Use **building inspections** to document facility needs for funding discussions.
- Consider **shared funding models** for building maintenance.



Next Steps

- Final webinar in the series on **Planning and Evaluation**: November 4, 2025.
- Tracy, Cara, and Corey will revise the roadmap section based on feedback.
- Participants encouraged to reach out with ideas or resource needs.

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Discussion Questions

1. What aspects of your library's current governance structure support or hinder your ability to secure stable funding?
2. Have you considered transitioning to an independent library district or multi-jurisdictional service district? What would be the benefits or challenges in your community?
3. What role do your Friends group or foundation currently play in supporting library services? How could their involvement be expanded or improved?
4. If your library has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with local government, has it been effective? What would you change about it?
5. What are the pros and cons of pursuing a dedicated mill levy in your community? What steps would you need to take to prepare for one?
6. How does your library plan for large capital expenses like roof repairs or technology upgrades? Have you considered a depreciation reserve fund?
7. What strategies have worked well for fundraising in your library or others you know? Are there low-effort, high-impact ideas worth trying?
8. What additional resources or training would help your library board and staff better understand governance and funding options?

Summary and discussion questions generated by Microsoft Copilot.

Links from Chat

- [MSL Library Budget and Finance Resources Webpage](#)
- [Safety Inspections Webinar](#)
- [MCA Part 3. Free Public Libraries](#)
- [MCA Part 7. Public Library Districts](#)
- [MCA Part 11. Multijurisdictional Service Districts](#)
- [Guidelines for Mill Levy Elections](#)
- [MSL Learn Online Courses](#)

