

# Memo

**To:** Montana State Library Commission

**From:** Jennie Stapp, State Librarian  
Bill Cochran, Billings Public Library Director, LD Study Task Force Chair

**Date:** January 25, 2016

**Re:** **Final Library Development Study Task Force recommendations**

The Library Development Study Task Force is pleased to share with the State Library Commission our final recommendations which serve to inform the development and delivery of library development services as charged by the State Librarian last spring. The recommendations begin with a vision for Montana libraries: *Libraries are leaders in creating thriving communities*. The recommendations then identify those elements that libraries need in order to successfully achieve this vision. These needs are clearly articulated on subsequent pages. The needs are articulated as outcomes and library development programs and services will be prioritized and benchmarked to achieve these outcomes.

The task force also reviewed and made recommendations with regard to whether or not the State Library should increase, continue, or decrease investment in current library development programs and services.

At the request of the Commission, following the December Commission meeting, the task force worked to further prioritize our recommendations. That work included a ranking survey completed by all task force members which accompanies this memo.

In the survey rankings, “fundamental” means the outcome is a basic, essential need—something that is necessary in order for a library to continue to exist in their community. This ranking does not mean however, that it is a given that all libraries are currently meeting a fundamental outcome. Libraries differ in how successfully they may be meeting a fundamental outcome and MSL also has its own work ahead to ensure it is assisting libraries in meeting these fundamental needs.

Though the Commission requested that task force members rank the outcomes, the task force wants to communicate that all of the outcomes are important and some are difficult to rank. Those outcomes ranked lower are not considered unimportant for MSL to pursue as part of its services and resources. Instead, some of the outcomes simply are considered so essential to successful libraries that they are seen as fundamental.

In ranking the outcomes, not all task force members considered the statements through the same lens. Some viewed them through the lens of a library director, others as a community need and others viewed them through the lens of the Montana State Library. Patterns emerged despite these differences, especially where the outcome was viewed as fundamental.

For some task force members, the question arose of whether or not it was MSL's role to help libraries meet a particular outcome. However, most task force members felt that the outcomes were inter-related and there was a role for MSL in the majority of the outcome statements. An example of an outcome that may not be viewed as falling under MSL's responsibility to ensure is that "Collaboration" is respectful and polite.

It should be noted that the task force did not rank higher level needs against each other. For example, the task force did not rank lifelong learning against library infrastructure. The task force did acknowledge that in challenging funding times, it may be that the focus has to be on basic needs such as infrastructure and effective directors and boards.

More discretionary ranking occurred earlier when the task force prioritized specific existing MSL library development services, resources and programs. The task force also shares these rankings with the Commission as part of meeting their original charge.

Task Force members would like to express thanks to the State Library Commission and State Library staff for creating a task force to gather input from throughout the Montana library community about the changing roles of libraries and to make recommendations for how the State Library can best support them to be successful in coming years.