

Excellent Library Services Award Evaluation Criteria

Revised January 2021

The Montana State Library Commission annually recognizes libraries that, by working to ensure patrons have access to information sufficient to their needs, have achieved excellence in their communities with the Excellent Library Service Award (the ELSA). Each year academic, public, school, and special libraries have an opportunity to apply for the award using a checklist of excellent recommendations. The open question in each category allows a library to provide a brief explanation of excellent services.

For libraries where the recommendations don't apply there is the opportunity to provide a longer explanation of how they meet the criteria in each category.

Criteria

Programming, Outreach and Engagement

Programming helps develop a library community voice and supports civic dialogues. Programming and outreach build awareness of the library and its value within the user community which draws increased attention to many important services the library provides. Programs encouraging people to think and talk about ethics and values, history, and other cultures are integral to the library's mission.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The excellent library meets at least **(2)** of these recommendations **AND** answers the open question:

- The Library regularly evaluates programming to align with community priorities
- The Library collaborates with a community group to host a program
- The Library has offered at least one new or innovative program this year
- The Library has expanded program offerings to a new patron group or at a new location, responding to community changes
- The Library hosted programs to increase local civic engagement and dialog

Open question: Give an example of how a program impacted/benefited a patron, group or entire community (100 character limit)

None of the statements apply. The library meets this criteria in the following way: *(300 character limit)*

Diversity/Equity

Equity and Diversity are fundamental values of the Library. Diversity includes age, gender, culture, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic background and ability. Equity refers to fairness and social justice, such as treating people fairly, while recognizing different people's needs. Diversity and Equity in Library collections reduce barriers to learning and the pursuit of knowledge.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The excellent library meets at least **(2)** of these recommendations **AND** answers the open question:

- Library collections follow a collection development plan that is routinely evaluated for ongoing validity and suitability to the community
- Library collections represent diversity by including a wide array of voices and perspectives.
- The library provides appropriate access and outreach for specialized populations, including but not limited to: the homebound, the institutionalized and non-English speaking populations.

Open Question: Briefly describe one way the library meets the needs of an underserved/marginalized group (100 character limit)

None of the statements apply. The library meets this criteria in the following way: *(300 character limit)*

Collaboration

Effective collaboration between libraries, individuals, and other organizations (local or regional) can dramatically change communities. Collaboration benefits both libraries and communities by establishing partnerships that meet the needs of their institution and community. School and academic librarians help in curriculum development by curating educational resources for teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The excellent library meets at least **(2)** of these recommendations **AND** answers the open question:

- The Library has worked with one new community group
- The Library has discussed policies with officials of a stakeholder, collaborator or support group
- The Library has a support group (if so, list:)
- The library collaborates with other community organizations and educational institutions to promote library services.
- The Library is part of a statewide or regional collaborative effort.

Open question: Give an example of how an existing partnership supported community goals (100 character limit)

None of the statements apply. The library meets this criteria in the following way: *(300 character limit)*

Marketing and Communication

Marketing is the link between the library user's needs and its resources and services; as a library marketer, you create that link. Your skills will help connect the library to its users, who know they can get information many other ways without even coming to the library building or

interacting with a librarian. Library services will reach their users easily when they use advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations which are components of the marketing communication mix.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The excellent library meets at least **(2)** of these recommendations **AND** answers the open question:

- The library maintains a web presence that is routinely updated
- Stakeholders are kept aware of the library's purpose, planning, and services through the use of newspaper articles, web sites, radio programs, meetings, etc.
- The library allocates funds for public relations, has a community awareness program, and actively promotes its mission.
- The library conducts a community assessment to evaluate the library's marketing efforts.
- Marketing has improved prominence of library in community
- Library staff provide polite and welcoming personal service

Open question: Describe a successful marketing strategy/campaign that had a measurable impact on library usage (100 character limit)

None of the statements apply. The library meets this criteria in the following way: *(300 character limit)*

Planning & Evaluation

Planning and assessment are crucial elements of a library that functions efficiently and flexibly. Library planning and evaluation prepares for service in the future and fulfilling future community library needs. A long-range plan, based on knowledge of the community, community expectations, resources of the community, and realistic projections of the future needs will enable library trustees and administrators to perform their responsibilities better by providing efficient and progressive library service.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The excellent library meets at least **(2)** of these recommendations **AND** answers the open question:

- In the past 5 years, the library has conducted community studies to ensure the values of community and library align
- The library is focused on maintaining/developing a physical environment that promotes equity, curiosity, and social-emotional well-being; evaluates their physical space, staff and policies in regard to the best customer experience
- Training and policy manuals reflect current procedures including a plan for succession
- The library has a strategic plan that was developed with stakeholder input and has a method of evaluating efforts towards completing that plan.

Open question: Describe one goal that was met this year (100 character limit)

None of the statements apply. The library meets this criteria in the following way: *(300 character limit)*

Professional Development

For a library to be effective and able to deliver its intended outcomes, its workforce needs to be skilled, competent and confident. Training and development are crucial elements in ensuring positive user experiences within libraries. Equipping staff with the essential skills they need to perform and fulfil their roles can contribute to delivering excellent services and provides a motivated workforce. Library staff and library directors need to identify not only where training and development is appropriate, but also what kind development could be used.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The excellent library meets at least **(2)** of these recommendations **AND** answers the open question:

- Each staff member participated in at least one learning event this year that provided an individual stretch/challenge
- Staff have an opportunity to mentor new staff/librarians/volunteers
- The library demonstrates leadership by developing programs that can be emulated by others
- Each staff member has developed a professional development plan that matches the library strategic plan and/or job expectations that can guide training efforts
- Library staff offer training for other library and/or educational professionals throughout the state or region
- Staff have received customer service training

Open question: Describe how a program, service or activity was changed, or a new one implemented, as a result of staff training (100 character limit)

None of the statements apply. The library meets this criteria in the following way: *(300 character limit)*