



## MEMO

**To:** Network Advisory Council  
**From:** Tracy Cook, Lead Consulting & Learning Librarian  
**Subject:** New public library standards road map – first reading  
**Date:** February 29, 2024

The former public library standards task force wanted to keep the public library standards as simple and straightforward as possible. After working with libraries in Montana to develop the final document, several libraries expressed a desire to go above and beyond the core public library standards.

To respond to this request the former public library standards task force developed a “[road map](#)” that tried to use the essential services as a base and then have columns for excellent and cooperative standards. The linked road map was adopted by that task force. The road map is NOT in administrative rules. It is connected to the existing standards through a standard that asks library boards and directors to review the road map. It was always intended to be a living document that could be updated.

The road map that was adopted by the former public library standards task force doesn’t seem to work well for libraries. Several library directors talked to MSL staff about their experience with the road map. As a result, MSL staff determined that it was time to update the road map.

We worked on a new road map and would like the NAC’s feedback on what we created. We would like to incorporate any suggestions you have and then bring the road map to your May meeting for adoption.

We will then share the updated road map with libraries. We would like to create a tool that libraries can use to review and hopefully pursue items on the road map.

**After reviewing the proposed road map – found below - do you have edits and/or suggestions?**

# Possible “road map, excellent” items

## Library excellence is...

### Thoughtful education and recruitment

- Develop an orientation process for new board members, directors, and staff that helps them contribute sooner and be more successful.
- Adopt achievable informal or formal continuing education plans that support the board, director, and staff with
  - Achieving library goals.
  - Developing the skills needed to improve and support their work.
- Support and encourage certification for staff, the director, and the board to recognize their work and time investment.
- Identify what skills, knowledge, and abilities are needed to provide the best possible service for the community when recruiting board members, a director, and/or staff.
- Pay the director and staff salaries that are commensurate with the work they do.

### Community-based planning and evaluation

- Set goals – in writing - for the library and its services that are based on community needs and goals. Use these library goals to
  - Identify work priorities and what skills, knowledge, and abilities people will need.
  - Build a library budget that helps achieve these goals.
  - Creatively and bravely find funding for the library to achieve these goals.
  - Talk about the library, the work it does, and how community members benefit.
- Evaluate the library, its services, and the work of the board, staff, and director to identify
  - What is working well and should be kept.
  - What needs to change.
  - And how the library is doing in helping community members.

### Policies that balance community needs and library resources

- Craft and regularly update library policies that
  - Reflect the community.
  - Balance conflicting community wishes in a way that does its best to create a welcoming environment within the realities of the community and the world we live in.
- Develop positive, cooperative relationships with local government, community, and other library leaders that are focused on working together in service to the community. The



director and/or staff are community leaders focused on improving the overall wellbeing of community members.

### **Services are accessible to everyone**

- Be open convenient hours and as many hours as possible in a building that is accessible and welcoming.
- Identify areas and community members that aren't being served and creatively find ways to provide library services for them.
- Participate in cooperative groups that increase both access to library materials and the number of library materials that community members can use.
- Analyze your collection and update it to fill in gaps or improve access to information about and for the community.
- Provide and support mobile access to library resources.
- Assist library patrons who need access to adaptive reading devices by working with the Talking Book Library to certify patrons.

### **Relevant programming**

- Provide or develop programming that
  - inspires people,
  - brings people together,
  - enriches the community's understanding of itself and its history,
  - addresses community needs, and/or
  - encourages learning, literacy, and connection.

### **Sufficient technology to meet community needs**

- Adapt to changing community needs when it comes to technology and library services.
- Create technology plans that consider the community, the work of other community organizations, and the needs of target audiences when it comes to digital skills and access. Use that document to plan technology purchases, programming, and services.
- Ensure access to broadband that meets the FCC's Broadband Deployment Vision and purchase hardware, and software that supports learning, literacy, connection, and/or prepares people for the skills and jobs of tomorrow.
- Provide assistance and access to technology for people with disabilities and those who find it challenging to navigate the digital world.

## **A healthy and supportive workplace**

- Support and champion staff by
  - Recognizing their accomplishments.
  - Analyzing and, where possible, improving workloads, pay, benefits, and their work environment.
  - Allowing them to present and pursue ideas for creating new services or improving existing services and work.

## **Inspiring public relations work**

- Use social media to engage users from a variety of audiences through contests or other sharing opportunities.
- Create email promotions that target specific groups to encourage library use.
- Collaborate with local businesses to develop promotions that benefit both entities.