

MEMO

To: State Library Commission

From: Continuing Education/Certification Committee

Subject: Certification/Continuing Education Review

Date: August 6, 2025

Update from the committee

Members of the certification committee met in July and August 2025. The committee discussed policy versus ARM updates as well as what changes they would like to propose. Your meeting materials include a document that describes the timeline, possible ARM changes, an initial draft for a certification handbook, course of study, and course catalog.

Key changes being proposed

- There will be only one track.
- There will be a course of study tied to competencies librarians need to provide basic library services. This course of study will be reviewed by MSL staff and the Commission annually.
- There will be a course catalog that has pre-approved professional development opportunities. Only items on the course catalog are eligible for continuing education credit.
- There will be an initial track – 20 credits in 1 year – that will have a set course catalog and set number of credits to be earned under each area of responsibility.
- There will be a renewal track – 60 credits in 5 years – that will align with library director responsibilities and will include a course catalog. However, librarians will not be required to earn a certain number of credits under each area.
- There will be a process for the Commission to approve adding professional development opportunities to the course catalog.

Actions from the Commission

- Please let us know what questions, comments, or concerns you have about the proposed changes and meeting materials.
- If you approve of the process and changes being proposed, we recommend a motion to begin the Administrative Rules Process and initiate the timeline found in your meeting materials – pages 2-3 of the document.
 - Note: the suggested changes to the ARM language can be found on page 5 of the document.

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

Contents

Proposed Adoption Timeline	3
Proposed Addition to ARM – Draft for Review and Discussion	5
Montana State Library Certification Program Requirements.....	6
Initial Certification	6
Renewal Certificate	6
Continuing Education Pre-approval Process	6
Continuing Education Credits	6
Transition to New Program	6
Draft Certification and Continuing Education Program Definitions	7
Definitions.....	7
Continuing Education Course Catalog	8
Initial Certification Course of Study.....	8
1: Understand state and federal laws that apply to libraries (Total credits required: 3 hours).....	8
2: Understand the budget, library finances, and financial reports (Total credits required: 1.5 hours).....	8
3: Work with boards, local government officials, community members, and the Montana State Library (Total credits required: 3 hours)	8
4: Assist the board with policy development and adoption (Total credits required: 2 hours).....	8
5: Work with the board to create a plan for the library (Total credits required: 1 hour).....	8
6: Manage the library facility and ensure community members can safely access and use the building (Total credits required: 1 hour).....	9
7: Understand the basics of library services and oversee collection management, programming, outreach, information services, and technology. (Total credits required 5.5 hours).....	9
8: Supervise library staff and volunteers (Total credits required: 3 hours)	9
Renewal Certification Course of Study	10
1: Understand state and federal laws that apply to libraries.....	10

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

2: Understand the budget, library finances, and financial reports	10
3: Work with boards, local government officials, community members, and the Montana State Library	10
4: Assist the board with policy development and adoption.....	10
5: Work with the board to create a plan for the library.....	11
6: Manage the library facility and ensure community members can safely access and use the building	11
7: Understand the basics of library services and oversee collection management, programming, outreach, information services, and technology.....	11
8: Supervise library staff and volunteers (Total credits required: 3 hours)	11
Draft Process for Managing Credits and Certification	12
Altering the course of study vs. Adding a professional development opportunity to the course catalog	12
Altering the current course of study	12
Adding a professional development opportunity to the course catalog	12
CoPilot Generated Flowchart.....	14
History and Background	15
Terms	15

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

Proposed Adoption Timeline

Date(s)	Activity	Who
July 2025	Continuing Education Subcommittee drafts initial recommendations	CE Subcommittee
August 6, 2025	Commission Meeting Materials Due	MSL Staff
August 13, 2025	Subcommittee Recommendations and Discussion Action Item to Initiate Rulemaking	CE Subcommittee and Commission
August 14-September 15, 2025	Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Public Hearing prepared	MSL Staff
September 16, 2025	Notice of Public Hearing on Proposed Action filed with the Secretary of State's Office for Publication in MAR	MSL Staff
September 23, 2025	Notice of Rulemaking published in MAR	SOS
October 1, 2025	Commission Meeting Materials Due	MSL Staff
October 8, 2025	Second information item discussion (if needed)	CE Subcommittee and Commission
November X, 2025	Conduct Public Hearing	Commission/Legal Counsel
November X, 2025	Special Meeting to Prepare Response to Public Comment Adopt Responses to Public Comment	State Librarian/Commission/Legal Counsel
December 3, 2025	Commission Meeting Materials Due	MSL Staff
December 10, 2025	Action item to adopt new rule	Commission
December 11, 2025 -January 13, 2026	Notice of Adoption prepared	MSL Staff
January 13, 2026 (Tentative)*	Notice of Adoption filed with Secretary of State's Office for publication in MAR	MSL Staff
January 23, 2026 (Tentative)*	Notice of Adoption published in MAR	SOS

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

Date(s)	Activity	Who
January-February 2026	New Certification Program Handbook Drafted	MSL Staff
February 2026	Draft Certification Program Handbook as discussion item	MSL Staff
April 2026	Adoption of Certification Program Handbook Adoption of Course of Study	Commission
July 1, 2026	Effective Date of Rules	

*Dates based on the most current proposed [Montana Administrative Register](#) publication schedule. The official schedule will be published on September 1, 2025.

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

Proposed Addition to ARM – Draft for Review and Discussion

ARM 10.102.1160 Personnel

(6) The director is or will be certified by the Montana State Library within the required timeframe mandated by the certification program adopted by the Montana State Library Commission.

NEW The purpose of the certification program is to ensure library directors have the foundational skills necessary to manage a public library that meets standards set forth in ARM Subchapter 10.102.11 Public Library Development.

NEW A course of study and topics offered by the State Library will be reviewed by the Commission annually for approval at its final meeting of the state fiscal year.

NEW Continuing education credits issued through the State Library certification program are the only eligible credits that can be applied to certification.

NEW The certification program will be reviewed on a regular schedule with no more than 10 years between reviews.

REASON: This action is intended to simplify the certification program through defining a process to adopt a course of study and further requirements for library director certification. This action is justified because rulemaking is within the statutory powers and duties of the Montana State Library Commission and operational policies will be governed by this rule.

Ref: 22-1-103, MCA

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

Montana State Library Certification Program Requirements

Directors must be certified to meet requirements in ARM 10.102.1160 Personnel.

Trustees and staff may voluntarily certify.

Initial Certification

Applicants complete 20 credits within the first year of employment from a course of study approved by the Commission.

Renewal Certificate

Applicants complete 60 credits within 5 years from continuing education topics and courses pre-approved by the Commission.

Continuing Education Pre-approval Process

- Commission will annually review and update the course of study and course catalog.
- Courses must be in the catalog to count for credit.
- Courses may be added to the catalog throughout the year by submitting a proposal to MSL staff to take to the Commission.
 - MSL staff proposals will identify
 - course topic
 - learning outcomes
 - provider (if not MSL staff)
 - number of credits
 - MSL staff will request to present course proposals for approval at a regular Commission meeting following the schedule for public notice and materials' posting.

Continuing Education Credits

- One hour of training is equal to one continuing education credit. Half hour (.5) is the smallest increment of time eligible for credit.
- Continuing education credit will not be awarded retroactively.
- MSL staff that provide face-to-face training in any of the approved topics and courses can issue continuing education credits for that training.
- Continuing education offered by MSL staff at Federation meetings from the approved topics and courses will be eligible for continuing education credit.

Transition to New Program

If 50% or more credits toward certification are completed, they will apply to the new certification program.

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

Draft Certification and Continuing Education Program Definitions

The following information is provided to add further context for development of the program handbook and policy changes after the ARM process has concluded with adoption of new rules.

Definitions

Professional development opportunity – online, in person course, training, or workshop designed to change an attendee’s knowledge, skills, or abilities.

Continuing education credit – a numerical value given to professional development opportunities that meet State Library Commission requirements and are added to the course catalog. 1 hour is equal to 1 credit; .5 hour increments are allowed.

Certification – a credential given to an individual that completes the course of study and earns the required number of continuing education credits.

Course of study – a pathway of learning that outlines competencies librarians need to provide basic library services. It identifies which courses align with specific competencies. It is a required part of the certification process of the State Library.

Competency – description of knowledge, skills, or abilities a librarian needs to provide basic library services.

Course catalog – the list of professional development opportunities aligned with the competencies listed in the State Library Commission’s course of study for certification. Professional development opportunities must appear in the course catalog to be eligible for credit.

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

Continuing Education Course Catalog

Initial Certification Course of Study

This list includes online courses and webinars from MSL Learn along with pre-approved courses from other providers. Face-to-face training provided by MSL staff that covers these topics can be substituted for the online courses.

Course of study aligns with responsibilities of public library directors.

1: Understand state and federal laws that apply to libraries (Total credits required: 3 hours)

- MSL Learn: Montana Library Law 101 – 1 hour
- MSL Learn: Next Level Library Law – 1 hour
- MSL Learn: Public Library Standards – 1 hour

2: Understand the budget, library finances, and financial reports (Total credits required: 1.5 hours)

- MSL Learn: Trustee Essentials: Understanding Local Government Budgeting and Finance – 1 hour
- MSL YouTube Channel: Public Library Budgets and Finance, 4 videos – 30 minutes

3: Work with boards, local government officials, community members, and the Montana State Library (Total credits required: 3 hours)

- MSL Learn: Trustee Essentials: Understanding Local Government and its Relationship to the Library – 1 hour
- MSL Learn: MSL: A Greater State of Knowledge – 1 hour
- MSL Learn: Trustee Essentials: Responsibilities – 1 hour
- NOTE: MSU's Local Government Center provides a 4-hour board training that covers many of these topics. It would be nice to substitute their training for the board and local government sessions.

4: Assist the board with policy development and adoption (Total credits required: 2 hours)

- MSL Learn: a policy class is in development – 1 hour
- MSL YouTube session – we have a session with a subject matter expert that goes over developing legal and enforceable policies. - 1 hour

5: Work with the board to create a plan for the library (Total credits required: 1 hour)

- MSL Learn: Written Plans – 1 hour

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

6: Manage the library facility and ensure community members can safely access and use the building (Total credits required: 1 hour)

- MSL YouTube Channel - we have subject matter experts who cover safety inspections and facilities management in libraries – total 1 hour for both videos.

7: Understand the basics of library services and oversee collection management, programming, outreach, information services, and technology. (Total credits required 5.5 hours)

- Need to develop a library 101 that goes over types of libraries, purpose of public libraries, most common services offered. - 2 hours OR we can use the first course of LIFT (Library Foundational Training).
- MSL Learn: Youth Services Overview – 1 hour
- MSL YouTube – we have subject matter experts who talk about collection development and managing Montana collections – 2 hours for both videos
- MSL Learn: Getting to Know ASPeN – 30 minutes
- MSL YouTube – Montana Shared Catalog overview - .5 hours
- MSL YouTube – The Item Life Cycle in the Montana Shared Catalog – 1 hour

8: Supervise library staff and volunteers (Total credits required: 3 hours)

- Need to develop in-house coursework. We have a short video and will advise, but we rely on personnel management training from Associated Employers or MACo. These sessions are usually 3 –4 hours.
- Face-to-face sessions by MSL staff have ranged from 2-3 hours. They cover hiring, performance evaluation, board/director relations, board/director/staff relations, and general HR areas to consider such as ADA, Fair Labor Standards Act, working with local governments, importance of following personnel policies, etc.

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

Renewal Certification Course of Study

This list includes online courses and webinars from MSL Learn along with pre-approved courses from other providers. Face-to-face training provided by MSL staff that covers these topics can be substituted for the online courses and webinars.

Course of study aligns with responsibilities of public library directors.

Any of the courses within the course catalog are eligible for continuing education credit. Applicants are not required to take a certain number of credits for each area.

1: Understand state and federal laws that apply to libraries

- MSL YouTube – webinar series from a subject matter expert covering legal and operational issues facing Montana libraries, surveillance and video recordings, meeting rooms, minors, and conducting executive sessions – total credits – 5 hours
- MSL YouTube Navigating the Road Map webinar series – ideas for implementing some of the optional public library road map items – 8 hours

2: Understand the budget, library finances, and financial reports

- We do not have a higher-level offering at this point. Taking budget/finance sessions from either the League of Cities and Towns or the Montana Association of Counties would meet this need.

3: Work with boards, local government officials, community members, and the Montana State Library

- MSL Learn: Board member basics – 2 hours
- MSL Learn: Connecting with local government officials – 1 hour
- MSL YouTube: Connecting with local government officials' series – 4.5 hours
- MSL webinars covering MSL services – varies. Each webinar is approximately 1 hour long and covers Cadastral, state government publications, the Montana Field Guide, and other MSL services.
- MSL YouTube Data Tutorials – covers various reports required by MSL and how to get the most from the reports – 2 hours
- MSL Trustee Training videos – short videos that cover the job of the board, specific duties, the role of the chair, and how to have effective meetings – 5 hours

4: Assist the board with policy development and adoption

- MSL YouTube – we have a subject matter expert who has a webinar about patron behavior and safety policies – 1 hour

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

5: Work with the board to create a plan for the library

- MSL YouTube strategic planning videos – 30 minutes

6: Manage the library facility and ensure community members can safely access and use the building

- We need to develop more in this area.

7: Understand the basics of library services and oversee collection management, programming, outreach, information services, and technology.

- MSL Learn: Montana History Portal – 1 hour
- MSL Learn: Montana Library 2 Go – 2 hours
- MSL Learn: Hacking ASPeN – 2 hours
- MSL Learn: Youth Services – early childhood to teen – 3 hours
- MSL YouTube Collection Management and Technical services – includes subject headings, catalog clean up, historic newspapers, state government publications, and call number analytics – 3.5 hours
- Lifelong Learning – varies but covers early literacy, summer reading, health literacy, programming for older adults, and outreach
- Montana Shared Catalog quarterly webinars – 1-hour webinars that cover how to use various elements of the system
- MSL YouTube Webinar about managing data and patron privacy – 1 hour

8: Supervise library staff and volunteers (Total credits required: 3 hours)

- MSL YouTube – we will have a subject matter expert talk about personnel and the law – 1 hour

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

Draft Process for Managing Credits and Certification

Altering the course of study vs. Adding a professional development opportunity to the course catalog

- Altering the course of study - MSL staff will work with the State Library Commission to create and review the recommended course of study for librarians who are pursuing MSL certification. The course of study will only be reviewed once a year. It is built around the responsibilities of directors.
- Adding a professional development opportunity to the course catalog – It is difficult to identify every possible professional development opportunity that a librarian could take to learn about a competency. To add a professional development opportunity that is not currently in the course catalog, MSL staff will work with the State Library Commission to review professional development opportunities for approval and addition to the course catalog. This review will happen at regularly scheduled Commission meetings. There are approximately six times a year when a professional development opportunity can be added to the course catalog and therefore be eligible for continuing education credit through the MSL certification program.

Altering the current course of study

Scenario 1: Credit being requested is outside the scope of the adopted course of study or there is a desire to change the course of study

- MSL staff will review suggestion to see if course of study should be changed. If that is the recommendation, MSL staff will present it to the State Library Commission at their final meeting of the fiscal year.
- ONLY REVIEWED ANNUALLY

Adding a professional development opportunity to the course catalog

Scenario 1: MSL staff are providing continuing education that falls under the course of study.

- No pre-approval is needed. Credit can be granted.

Scenario 2: Non-MSL staff would like to provide a course that falls under the course of study/competencies or MSL staff wish to partner with a subject matter expert to provide a course that falls under the course of study/competencies.

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

- MSL staff will work with subject matter expert to develop course description and learning outcomes. MSL staff will determine where it falls under the competencies/topics.
- MSL staff will present this information to the Commission at one of their regular meetings.
- Commission will decide whether to approve the course or not. Course will be added to catalog, if approved.

Scenario 3: Participant in the certification program requests credit for a course already taken.

- Commission will NOT retroactively grant credit.

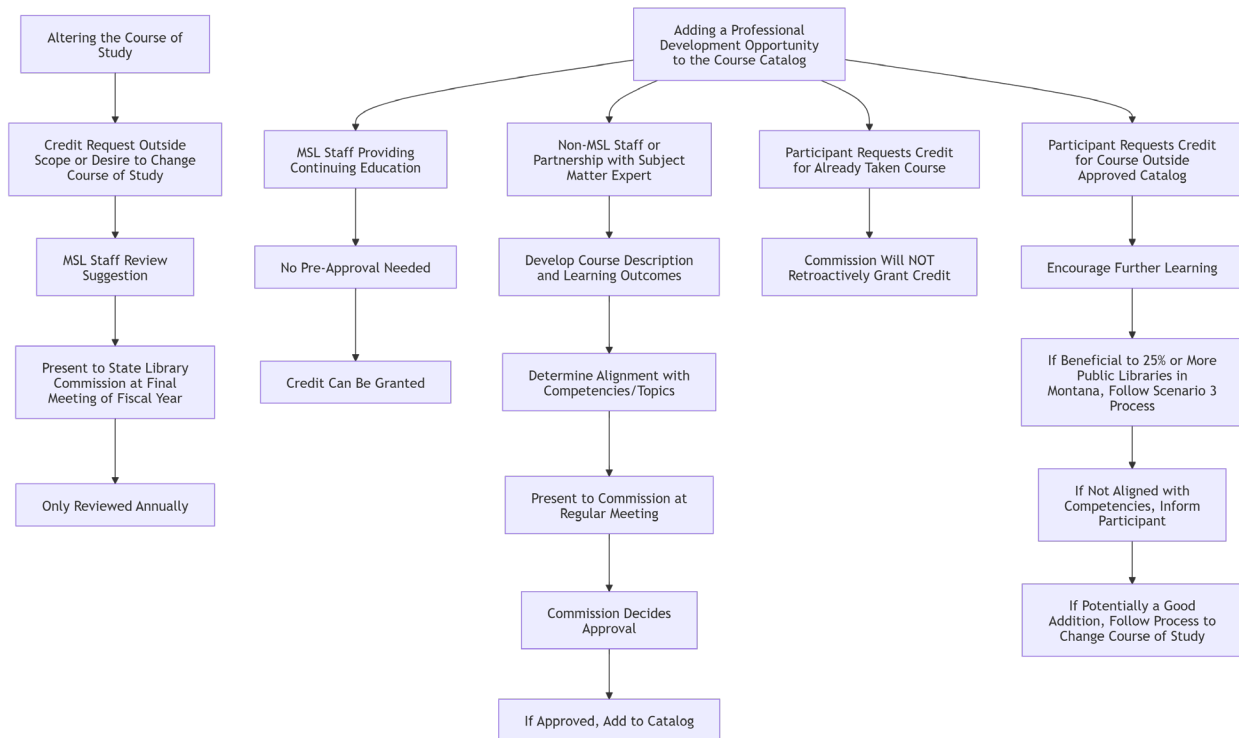
Scenario 4: Participant in the certification program requests credit for a course they would like to take outside the approved course catalog.

- Participants in the certification program are encouraged to further their learning. If they would like to take a course they believe would benefit 25% or more of the public libraries in Montana, they may work with MSL staff to follow the process outlined under Scenario 2.
- If MSL staff determine that the course does not align with any competencies under the course of study, they will let the participant know that it will not count for credit.
- If MSL staff determine that the course does not currently align with any competencies but would be a good addition to the course of study, they will follow the process required to change the course of study.

MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

CoPilot Generated Flowchart



MSL Certification Program

ARM Change Proposal, Program Requirements, and Timeline

History and Background

Montana's State Library Commission most recently adopted certification requirements of 60 hours of continuing education for public library directors, earned over a 4-year period on June 14, 2023. With some variations this requirement has been in place since 1990. However, professional library education has been an important part of qualification to work in Montana's libraries since the earliest enabling legislation was enacted in 1915.

The State Library Commission, before being formally established in 1929, was named as the body to set the standards and qualifications for public libraries and their directors in the 1923 Revised Codes of Montana (RCM) publication.

The connection between RCM, Montana Codes Annotated (MCA) and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) are consistent with the defined authority of the State Library Commission to "act as a state board of professional standards and library examiners, develop standards for public libraries, and adopt rules for the certification of librarians." 22-1-103, MCA

From 1931 until 1945, the Montana Library Association assumed responsibility for librarian certification. The Montana State Library Extension Commission was inactive and unfunded during this period.

Certification became the term of art for public library directors with adoption in 1990 by the State Library Commission of a voluntary certification program.

The ARM for public library standards first tied director certification to state funding in 1999.

Terms

RCM – [Revised Codes of Montana](#). Montana's statutes from 1889 until implementation of 1972 Constitution.

MCA – [Montana Code Annotated](#). Montana's statutes from 1978 to present.

ARM – [Administrative Rules of Montana](#). Formal business rules adopted by state agencies granted rule making authority.