

Committee Reviewing Continuing Education and Certification



Meeting held December 3, 2025

1:30pm – 3:00pm

Online via Zoom

Attendees: Carmen Cuthbertson, Tammy Hall, Colet Bartow, Tracy Cook, Rebekah Kamp

Notes

- ARM language and policy changes – review of decisions and discussion
 - Carmen suggested changes to the proposed ARM language. There is some confusion about only credits provided by MSL staff counting for continuing education credit. She suggested making the following change:
 - 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.
 - Tracy will check on the proper process for suggesting this change. ARM updates require following a specific process if changes are substantive. She will report back to the committee on next steps.
 - The group discussed changing some of the wording and agreed that it wasn't necessary. Instead, they will add definitions to the policy documents.
 - They agreed to suggest deleting "offered by the State Library" to clarify that credits provided by others may count for certification if they are pre-approved.
- Review and revisit timeline – at this time the committee believes the timeline is still viable.
- Discuss certification track comments – whether to reconsider recommendation to have only one track.
 - Group discussed multiple tracks versus only one track and decided to remain with recommendation of one track.
 - We will make sure the name is Montana State Library Certification and will remove references to directors or library administrators within the title. Directors are the only ones required to complete their certification. That is the Commission's legal mandate.
 - Committee members support staff certification. The renewal track gives attendees flexibility to select their credits. It's only the initial track that requires a certain number of credits in specific areas. This is similar to what was required in previous iterations.
- Discuss questions about pre-approval process
 - Suggestions from the group to clarify language within the current draft document
 - Move "Continuing education credit will not be awarded retroactively." from under Continuing Education Credits to the second bullet point under "Continuing Education Pre-approval process" It will be added as a second sentence behind "Courses must be in the catalog to count for credit."

- Delete “MSL staff that provide face-to-face training in any of the approved topics and courses can issue continuing education credits for that training.”
- Make the following changes “Continuing education presented ~~offered~~ by MSL staff ~~at Federation meetings~~ from the approved topics and courses will be eligible for continuing education credit.”
- What is the rubric for approval? What information does the Commission need to make a decision?
 - Group agreed that the Commission needs course title, course description, competency the course will address, desired learning outcomes, presenter’s credentials (name, bio with experience and/or degree, and association and/or organization), the number of credits, and for informational purposes the cost for MSL.
 - Tracy suggested creating the form and having the committee review it with some actual data to see if it helps them identify what else they might need to know.
- How will we handle conferences such as Montana Library Association, Association of Rural and Small Libraries, Mountain Plains Library Association, Pacific Northwest Library Association, Montana Association of Counties, and Montana League of Cities and Towns?
 - Group discussed how to handle conferences. Carmen emphasized that the associations are educational partners. The Commission values continuing education and wants to support the education of librarians. However, the Commission will require that conferences go through the pre-approval process.
 - MSL staff will be encouraged to reach out to these associations to let them know that there will be a pre-approval process and to encourage the associations to release their conference session information early enough to align with Commission meetings. As the pre-approval process is developed the Commission will meet via Zoom to review requests.
 - Tracy reported that staff have connections with the various organizations and will communicate with them.
- How will we handle one-time only trainings – such as those offered by the Local Government Center or sessions organized by federations? Ex. Golden Plains working with their local development office and Associated Employers to provide a Human Resources training for board members and directors. Other examples include Niche Academy, Webjunction, and other state libraries.
 - Committee ran out of time. Federation meetings can be managed in a similar manner to conferences with MSL staff encouraging federations to

- organize their training with enough time to have the Commission review the workshops.
 - How will we handle the Master's in Library Science degree? Librarians currently can use a new degree for the first certification. Do we want to continue this practice? Or accept some courses? If so, how will we award credits for college courses?
 - The committee visited about the best way to handle recent MLS degrees. They discussed new hires versus ongoing. They discussed some concerns about the content but recognized that it is outside of their control. They also recognize that librarians will want to take the courses most relevant to their work.
 - Final decision was to allow new hires with an MLIS/MLS degree earned within the last 5 years to substitute their degree for the initial track. Existing employees who have already earned their initial track and earn an MLIS/MLS may substitute the degree for 20 hours of the credits required for a renewal track.
 - Do we want to revisit the recommendation we made to only allow requests for pre-approval of credits that at least 25% of libraries would take?
 - Committee did not have time to discuss this question.
- Discuss questions about the number of credits
 - Should we reduce the number of credits required for the initial track?
 - Group discussed the burden placed on part-time directors. They also expressed a desire to support learning and knowledge and worry that the directors will feel pressured to take courses simply to meet the requirement.
 - Group recommends changing the initial track to 20 hours in 2 years.
 - Based on our work – should we further reduce the number of credits required for the renewal track?
 - Group did not think there was a need to reduce the number of hours. It will remain the proposed change of 60 hours in 5 years.
- Discuss the transition process
 - Committee agreed that all credits earned through June 30, 2026 would transfer to the new system. After July 1, any new credits earned would need to follow the pre-approval/course catalog system. Committee members believed this was the fairest option.
 - MSL staff will need to work with individuals that are transitioning. They will determine whether the person is earning an initial track or a renewal track. They will review how many credits are needed and in what competencies and will work with the individual to identify what the individual needs to do to complete their certification.

- Directors who have already earned a certificate under the current system will work towards the renewal track. New directors or those earning a certificate for the first time will be in the initial track.
- Public input/discussion - how could we better share this information with the public?
 - Tammy asked staff to create an FAQ that addresses some of the most common areas of confusion.
 - Committee discussed public drop-in sessions where individuals could ask questions about proposed policy changes. Committee members will attend these drop-in sessions.
 - Tracy and Colet will schedule a few drop-in sessions after the New Year.

Review next steps

- Tracy will verify proper process for suggested ARM change and will report back to the committee. She will type up her notes and share with the committee and provide the notes for the December Commission meeting materials.
- Colet and Tracy will schedule public drop-in sessions and will create an FAQ addressing the most common areas of confusion.
- Colet and Tracy will update the draft policy document to reflect the proposed changes.
- Colet and Tracy will create a form for the pre-approval process for the committee to review and test.