

# Montana State Library Certification Program Policy - DRAFT

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## **Feedback Form**

Review the contents of this draft policy and then submit comments in the form linked above.

## **Administrative Rules of Montana**

### 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.

(a) 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.

(b) A course of study will be reviewed by the Commission annually for approval at its final meeting of the state fiscal year.

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

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

Adopted December 10, 2025; Effective July 1, 2026.

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## **Transition from 2023 Program Requirements**

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All credits earned through June 30, 2026, will apply to the new rules that go into effect on July 1, 2026. After July 1, 2026, any new credits earned must follow the pre-approval requirements adopted in this policy to be eligible to apply to initial or renewal certificates.

All currently certified library directors, as of July 1, 2026, will maintain certification until the end date of their current certificate. Subsequent certification renewal will follow the requirements adopted in this policy.

## **Montana State Library Certification Requirements**

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

Trustees and staff may voluntarily certify following the certification requirements adopted in this policy.

### **Initial Certification**

Applicants complete 20 credits within two years of employment from a course of study and catalog pre-approved by the State Library Commission.

The course of study in place at the time certification was initiated will govern completion of the certificate.

### **Renewal Certificate**

Applicants complete 60 credits within 5 years from a course of study and catalog pre-approved by the State Library Commission.

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## Continuing Education

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The MSL Commission will review and update the course of study annually at its June business meeting.

Continuing education presented as a structured learning opportunity may be eligible for continuing education credits when pre-approved by the MSL Commission. The structure might be an online course, a workshop at a conference or federation meeting, or a video recording from an online workshop.

The course catalog will be updated throughout the year. The Commission will review requests for additions to the course catalog during a regular or special meeting.

Continuing education:

- Must be in the catalog to count toward certification credit.
- One hour of continuing education is equal to one continuing education credit. Half hour (.5) is the smallest increment of time eligible for credit.
- Continuing education credits will not be awarded retroactively.
- Continuing education that falls within the course of study and is presented by MSL staff will be eligible for continuing education credit.

## Continuing Education Pre-approval Process

- Courses may be added to the catalog throughout the year by submitting a proposal to MSL staff to present to the Commission for approval.
  - Proposals will include
    - course title
    - course description
    - competency(ies) the course will address
    - desired learning outcomes
    - presenter's credentials
      - name
      - professional biography with experience and/or degree
      - association and/or organization
    - number of credits
    - Cost for MSL (if any)
  - Proposal Form

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## **Special Circumstances**

### **Continuing Education from Conferences**

To the extent possible, MSL staff will coordinate with associations that run the most commonly attended conferences to obtain a list of sessions that will be offered at the annual conference. Staff will present the list to the State Library Commission at either a regular meeting or a special meeting prior to the conference.

Approved conference sessions will be added to the course catalog.

### **Master's in Library Science Degree**

Public library directors hired after July 1, 2026, with an MLIS/MLS degree earned within 5 years of hire will be allowed to substitute their degree for the initial certification track.

Certified directors, or staff, who go on to complete an MLIS/MLS may substitute the degree for 20 of the 60 credits required for a renewal track.

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## Definitions

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Continuing education opportunity – online, in person course, training, or workshop designed to change an attendee’s knowledge, skills, or abilities. Also referred to as professional development opportunity.

Continuing education credit – a numerical value given to continuing education 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. Competencies are aligned to the Montana Public Library Standards. The competencies are broad areas of knowledge and skills from which to plan continuing education that meets the requirements of ARM 10.102.1160 (6)(a). Competencies adopted by the MSL Commission can be found in the course of study.

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