

Montana State Library Board Education Program

(October 2004)

Program Vision:

- Communities will have library board trustees who are able to assess the needs of the community and to plan, advocate, and lead the library in meeting those needs.

Program Goals:

- Trustees will receive customized local training on the role of the board, library laws, and planning for the library.
- Trustees will understand their duties as library board members in order to increase their overall effectiveness

Becoming a Volunteer Trainer

Application -- Experienced trustees interested in becoming a volunteer trainer can access the application and job description at <http://montanalibraries.org>.

Interview -- Potential volunteer trainers will be interviewed to ensure they meet the qualifications listed in the job description.

Job Description --The job description for the volunteer trainers has been carefully developed to reflect the qualifications for and responsibilities of the job. All applicants should read it carefully, to ensure that it is a good fit for his/her skills, interests and time availability.

Training -- Volunteer trainer applicants must complete a two-day Trainer Institute, which includes an orientation to help volunteer trainers understand the program goals and policies, as well as to welcome them to the team. The Trainer Institute will cover use of the prepared curriculum, adult-learning styles, successful training techniques and steps used in board needs analysis. Each volunteer trainer will receive a curriculum binder that includes all materials needed to successfully deliver the curriculum to local boards. Following successful completion of the Trainer Institute participants will receive certificates as volunteer trainers.

Supervision -- Volunteer trainers are encouraged to contact the Program Supervisor for consultation and assistance, or to report any problems or concerns about an assignment. We want you to be successful.

How the Program Works:

Volunteer trainers are recruited based on their experience as library trustees, their commitment to the program's goals, and their previous successful experiences in training adults. Interested individuals apply, are interviewed, selected, and trained. Volunteers will be delivering important information to local library boards.

After successful completion of training, volunteer trainers will be contacted to deliver the prepared workshop for three to four library boards at the requesting library's location during the next year.

The process works like this:

- (1) A board will contact the Program Supervisor with a request for training. The Program Supervisor will explain the general purposes of the workshop, the length of time of the workshop, and stress the importance of attendance by the entire board and the library director.
- (2) The volunteer trainer will be contacted by the Program Supervisor to schedule the workshop and provide contact information for the local board, so arrangements can be finalized.
- (3) Within a week, the volunteer trainer will contact the board chair and library director, and using the "Pre-Workshop Assessment" form, will gather information about any special needs, interests or areas of concern. This will allow the workshop to be customized to the extent possible within the curriculum. It will also help the trainer prepare for issues or questions that may arise during the workshop.
- (4) Trainers are also responsible for confirming logistical arrangements with the local contact person and reminding the local library contact person of the responsibility to "notice" this meeting according to the Open Meeting Law, MCA 2-3-203. Once the logistical arrangements are made, the trainer sends a "Confirmation Letter," to the contact person with a "cc" to the Program Supervisor.
- (5) The Montana State Library will reimburse reasonable travel expenses to the workshop location. The trainer must complete and submit an "Expense Reimbursement" form with original receipts for hotel/motel accommodations to the Program Supervisor within two weeks of completing the workshop.

Reasonable expenses include vehicle mileage or other required transportation, such as bus or train, hotel/motel accommodations as required, and appropriate meals. Telephone expenses will also be reimbursed. Other expenses incurred by the trainer will be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

(NOTE: There is no fee charged to the local library for the workshop.)

- (6) You may wish to check with your tax preparer regarding deductibility of these and other expenses incurred while volunteering, including your hours donated for workshop preparation and presentation.
- (7) The trainer will take copies of the handouts for all those attending the workshop. Copies will be provided by the Program Supervisor.
- (8) Within two weeks of completing each workshop, the volunteer trainer will:

- Prepare a short summary of the participant evaluation forms and send a “Workshop Follow-Up Letter” with the evaluation summary to the local library contact person and to the Program Supervisor.
 - Send an “Expense Reimbursement” form with original receipts (you may want to keep a copy) to Program Supervisor
 - Complete and send a “Trainer Workshop Summary Report” form to the Program Supervisor
- (9) Six months after the workshop, the Program Supervisor will send a “Six Month Follow Up” form to the local library to assess long-term impact of the workshop.
- (10) The volunteer trainer will complete a self-assessment and feedback form at the end of the project year to help MSL strengthen the program.

Role of the Program Supervisor

The Program Supervisor holds primary responsibility for maintaining the program. Duties include: recruitment, interviewing, and selection of volunteer trainers as needed, as well as ensuring volunteer orientation, training, supervision and recognition. Additional responsibilities are publicizing availability of the program to local libraries; processing requests from boards; matching volunteer trainers with requesting boards; and gathering, compiling and reporting workshop statistics, evaluation and follow-up data.

This position is also responsible for keeping the State Librarian and the Montana State Library Commission informed of progress, successes, issues and concerns of the program.

What To Do If It Isn't Working Out

If you find you're unhappy as a volunteer trainer, contact the Program Supervisor to discuss it. Please don't just “drop out!” We value your efforts. Feedback is always welcome, and helps us to strengthen our volunteer program.

Program Philosophy:

Board Effectiveness -- The focus of this program is on increasing the long-term effectiveness of local library boards. The prepared curriculum used by volunteer trainers is based on the “Montana State Library’s Public Library Trustee Handbook” and other resources on effective library boards and strategic planning. The program’s “learning objectives” include understanding the job of the library trustee, creating opportunities to plan for the library, exploring the relationship of the library to the community, and understanding important library laws. The curriculum also provides an opportunity for boards to identify and prioritize particular issues of interest or special areas that need improvement.

Customized Sessions -- While the volunteer trainers are trained to use a specific curriculum, the project also stresses the importance of customizing each session to meet the needs of the board being trained.

Content Boundaries -- Of course the Board Education curriculum cannot meet the full training needs of library boards in Montana. Volunteer trainers will be well trained on the prepared curriculum, and well experienced on their own local library boards, so they are able to bring anecdotes and information of interest to each training assignment. However, for some topics, the trainers will need to give the library board contact information for Montana State Library staff that can help with or provide referral for a particularly difficult issue. The State Library seeks to identify specific topic areas of broad statewide interest, and will attempt to offer training and information about those topics through workshops, newsletters, or website postings.

It is particularly important that the volunteer trainers not answer legal questions. Instead their role in this area can be to raise awareness of potential legal issues and provide some background information and resources, and to identify the board's primary local source of legal information (i.e., the city or county attorney).

A Word About . . . Confidentiality

Just as all transactions between library users and staff or volunteers are held in strict confidence, so is information you may obtain while working as a volunteer trainer. This is a critically important aspect of the service, and volunteers who cannot maintain confidentiality will be asked to reconsider their service in this volunteer capacity.

Funding

This program is funded by a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the Montana State Library Commission.

Special thanks goes to Carla Lehn at the California State Library and the California Association for Library Trustees and Commissioners for sharing their time and information to develop this program.