

# Trustee Certification



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*Montana State Library Certification for public library trustees is voluntary.*

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## Voluntary Trustee Certification Track

Library trustees must always be aware of the issues, opportunities and challenges facing public libraries. Providing high quality service to patrons is the way to assure Montana's public libraries remain successful. The Montana library community needs well-educated trustees to sustain this success. The skills developed through voluntary certification allow trustees to fulfill their responsibilities to their library and its patrons.

## Program Overview

Trustee certification requires completion of fifteen continuing education (CE) credits earned in a 4-year period which includes:

- Minimum of ten credits in the Library Administration CE category
- Balance of credits are electives

Upon completion of required credits, the Board Chair will verify the applicant's record. (NOTE: The Board chair's CE credits can be verified by another member of the library Board.)

Trustees can earn a specialization in Collection Management and Technical Services, Library Services to the Public, or Technology by accumulating a minimum of ten credits in that category.

One credit is equal to one hour. Only .5 (30 minutes) is accepted for partial credits earned; no other partial credits are accepted.

What do I need to do to get started on certification?

1. Sign up for an account in [ASPeN](#).
2. Login to ASPeN and register for CE in the events calendar
3. Claim CE credits when you complete CE activities
4. [Access ASPeN Help](#)

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*Contact [Colet Bartow](#), MSL Continuing Education Coordinator, with any questions.*

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### How much does it cost?

- There is no fee for certification; however, there are costs in terms of time, registration, and possible travel expenses.

### Why should I get certified?

- Contribute to a professional team atmosphere for the board
- Model commitment to continuing education for library staff
- Improve your library
- Increase board involvement
- Increase board member effectiveness

### What knowledge and skills should I focus on as a Trustee?

- Governance and Management
  - Ethical and legal responsibilities of public library trustees
  - Knowledge of applicable laws, current library trends and services
  - How to develop policies that will result in the effective operation of the library
  - How to recruit, hire, and evaluate the library director
- Communication and Relationships
  - How to conduct and contribute to effective board meetings
  - How to build effective relationships with the director, local government officials, and community members.
  - How to encourage and promote active use of the library
  - How to develop and maintain partnerships with other organizations, agencies, and institutions including Friends and Foundations
- Budget
  - How to adopt a budget that meets the current and planned operational needs of the library
  - Knowledge of funding sources, requirements, and budgeting timelines.
- Planning
  - How to assess library building needs and attempt to create and/or maintain a physical building that is user friendly and accessible
  - How to develop and evaluate short- and long-term plans for the library

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***Visit the [Montana State Library website](#) and [ASPeN event calendar](#).***

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## What Counts for CE Credits?

Training presented in a structured learning situation is eligible for continuing education credits. That structure might be an online course, a workshop at a conference, or a video recording from an online workshop.

There are a lot of possibilities but in general it is a good idea to choose trainings that you can answer “yes” to the following questions.

1. Is the training presented in a structured learning situation?
2. Is it library-specific and/or specific to your library’s needs?
3. Will it help you do your job better?
4. Does it fit into one of the four continuing education categories?
  - Library Administration
  - Library Services to the Public
  - Collection Management and Technical Services
  - Technology

If you can answer yes to most or all of these questions, then it is very likely something worthy of continuing education credits. If you have questions about categories, what counts and what doesn’t, please visit with your library director.

## Where can I find CE?

- Online and in person events sponsored by the Montana State Library
  - [MSL Learn Online Courses](#)
  - [MSL YouTube Channel](#)
- [Montana Library Association](#) conferences and retreats
- Federation meetings
- Online classes provided by library service providers such as [WebJunction](#).
- Online and in person events sponsored by regional, national, or international library associations
- Staff training days offered at your library
- Online and in person events sponsored by local government officials that are relevant to the library