# PUBLIC LIBRARIES COMPENSATION HANDBOOK



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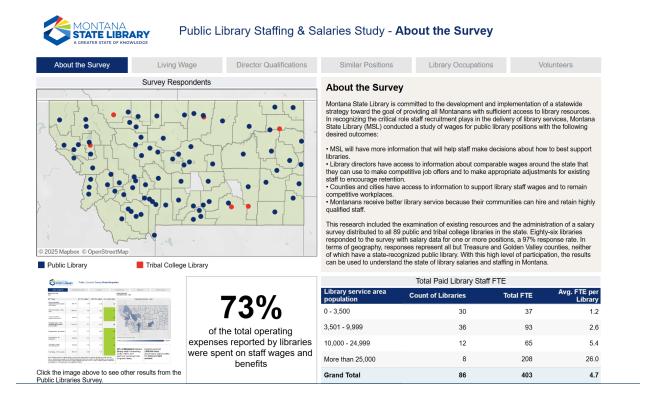
## Introduction

Montana State Library conducted a survey of wages for public library positions in 2023. The purpose of this survey is to provide directors and trustees with information about competitive wages for similar positions throughout the state so that libraries can hire and retain highly qualified staff. With approximately 97% of libraries responding, the survey results provide a comprehensive overview of the state of library salaries and staffing in Montana.

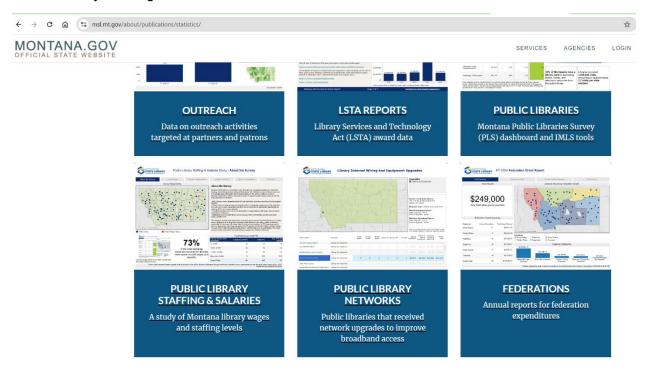
The results of the salary survey are organized in an interactive dashboard with six tabs. This handbook will provide a brief overview of each tab along with related action items and questions for you to consider.

# **Public Library Staffing and Salaries Dashboard**

To begin, please navigate to the <u>Public Library Staffing and Salaries Dashboard</u> on the Montana State Library website.



You can also navigate to the dashboard by visiting the <u>MSL Dashboards</u> page and selecting the Public Library Staffing and Salaries Dashboard.



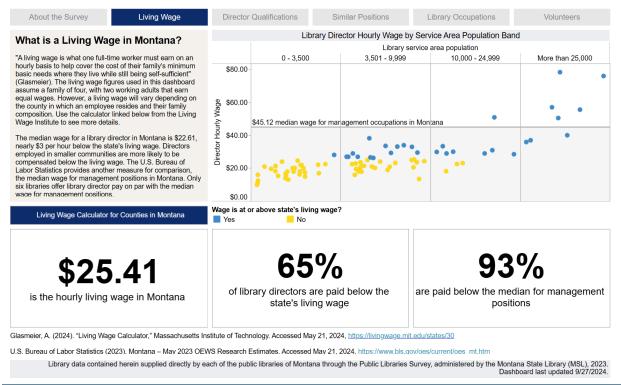
# **About the Survey**

This introductory tab provides a map of participating public and tribal libraries and a breakdown of the total and average number of staff grouped by library size (as determined by library service area population).

# **Living Wage**



#### Public Library Staffing & Salaries Study - Living Wage



A living wage is defined here as what a full-time worker must earn on an hourly basis to help cover the local cost of minimum basic needs for a family of four. This tab reveals that 65% of library directors in Montana are paid below the state's living wage of \$25.41 per hour. Your personal living wage, or cost of living wage, will vary depending on your personal circumstances and where you live, and you can adjust these calculations. The resources linked in this section can help you estimate the living wage for your community.

**Action item:** Review the Montana Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics report and the Living Wage Calculator.

#### **Compensation Data**

Montana Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics report - PDF document (library occupations are described beginning on page 70).

#### **Cost of Living and Cost of Labor**

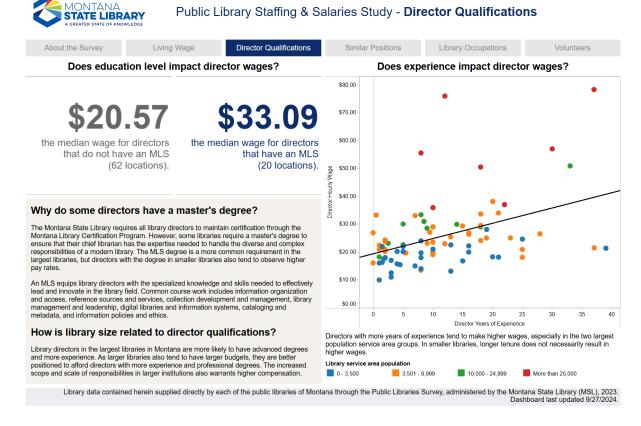
Cost of Living represents the amount of money necessary to cover basic needs (housing, food, taxes, healthcare).

Cost of Labor represents the difference in salaries based on the local market and what it costs to hire someone.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) provides a <u>Living Wage Calculator</u> that estimates a local wage rate that meets the minimum standard of living in specific areas.

- What did you learn from the Montana Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Report?
- What did you learn about your area's cost of living?
- Based on what you have learned, would you need to change your library's salary ranges to be more competitive and to meet the local living wage minimum?

# **Director Qualifications**



This tab shares data on library director salaries based on library size (service area population) and years of experience and also provides a comparison of the median wage for directors with and without a Master of Library Science degree.

The library board's authority to set the library director's compensation is addressed in state law:

Montana Code Annotated 22-1-310. Chief librarian -- personnel -- compensation. The board of trustees of each library shall appoint and set the compensation of the chief librarian who shall serve as the secretary of the board and shall serve at the pleasure of the board. With the recommendation of the chief librarian, the board shall employ and discharge such other persons as may be necessary in the administration of the affairs of the library, fix and pay their salaries and compensation, and prescribe their duties.

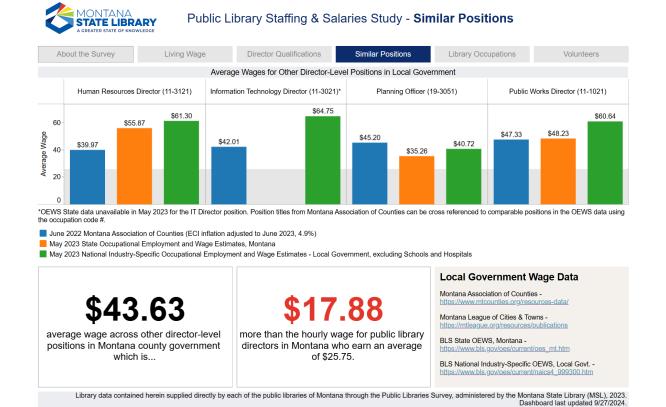
Although the board has the legal authority to set a director's salary, in most cases the local government still determines the overall budget amount to be allocated to the library. If an increase in wages is to be requested, the board will need to account for this in the proposed budget that is submitted to the local government and be prepared to explain and advocate for the increase.

State and federal labor and compensation laws may affect how compensation is determined within your local government. <u>A comprehensive list of Montana's labor laws</u> is available from the Montana Department of Labor and Industry.

**Action item:** find your library on the axis of director hourly wage and director years of experience. Hover over the other dots within your library's size range (those with the same color) along both axes to find out how your library compares. For example, if your library serves a population of 0-3,500 and your director has less than 5 years of experience, you can look at all the blue dots between 0-5 on the horizontal axis to review the salary range for similar positions and levels of experience.

- Looking at this tab in the dashboard, how does the salary for your director's position compare with other libraries of similar size?
- Where does your director's salary fall compared with other directors who have approximately the same amount of experience?
- Based on what you have learned, what, if anything, would you change about your library director position's minimum required qualifications and minimum hourly wage?
- Based on what you have learned, would you say that your current library director is fairly compensated based on their experience and the library's size? If not, how much of an adjustment would you want to request?
- What other observations do you have regarding this data?

# **Similar Positions**



This tab provides data on average wages for other director-level positions in local government. In addition to reviewing what library salary ranges are across the state, it is also important to understand the context of your county's budget and average wages compared to other counties. This should help you in determining what a fair salary request for library positions could be.

#### **Library Jobs and Comparable Examples**

Think about what the position's primary purpose is and what knowledge, skills, and abilities are required. What other positions in your local government would be comparable? How do the minimum job requirements and salary ranges compare? For example:

Library Clerk: may be similar to Permit Clerk, Tax Clerk, Customer Service Representative, Paraeducator.

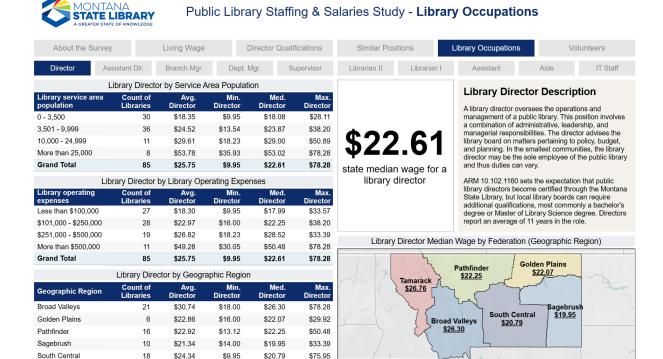
#### Action item:

Look over the local government wage data provided in the links on this tab.

- The Montana Association of Counties (MACo) salary study (found under the <u>Budget Resources</u> tab on MACo's website) provides an overview of average wages and wages by county for a variety of standard positions such as HR Director and Public Works Director. Find out how your county's wage compares to the average statewide wage for this position.
- You can download a spreadsheet from the <u>Montana League of Cities and Towns</u> to view salary data for different municipal positions from every municipality in Montana.
- The <u>BLS State Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics page</u> provides data from different major occupational groups in Montana. You could use this to compare your staff positions with positions in similar occupational groups.
- The <u>national BLS page</u> provides a broader view of this occupational information.

- What did you learn about your county's wages compared with other counties?
- What about your city's wages for similar positions?
- Are other positions with less responsibility or required experience making more money than library positions? If so, why?
- Based on what you have learned, would you say that your library is paying wages consistent with what similar positions are making within your city, county, and state? If not, what adjustments would you like to request?
- Would your target salary range for the director align with compensation rates for other department heads in your local government? If not, what adjustments might you need to make?

# **Library Occupations**



This tab provides in-depth data and job descriptions for ten positions commonly found in Montana libraries. The purpose of this tab is to provide you with salary ranges by library size, budget, and geographic region for each position, along with a standard job description. You may find this information helpful as you review the position classifications, descriptions, and salary ranges within your own library.

Library data contained herein supplied directly by each of the public libraries of Montana through the Public Libraries Survey, administered by the Montana State Library (MSL), 2023.

Dashboard last updated 9/27/2024.

\$55.55

\$78.28

© 2025 Mapbox © OpenStreetMa

Library federation (geographic region) median wage as labeled. All federations reported wages for

#### **Writing Job Descriptions**

14

85

\$27.72

\$25.75

\$13.54

\$9.95

\$26.76

\$22.61

Tamarack

**Grand Total** 

An effective job description contains clear and concise information regarding the roles and responsibilities of the position. It will clearly state the necessary qualifications and the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for the job. Job descriptions are often used to set classification and compensation levels, as well. Job descriptions done right take time, but they can help make the case for better pay.

It's a good idea for the library director to work with your city or county human resources point of contact to review your library's job descriptions annually, or any time the position is open for recruitment. The board may want to follow this process when recruiting for a new director, as well. Keeping your process consistent with your local government's process can help streamline the hiring and compensation determination process.

**Job Summary:** What are the 3-5 most important tasks of this position? The introductory paragraph summarizes what the position does and its role within the library. This should include Public Libraries Compensation Handbook – February 2025 - Page | 11

the key areas of responsibility and any factors that are important to know about the position (for example, if the position requires evening shifts or travel).

**About the Library**: This section provides an overview of the library and the community it serves.

**Essential Duties:** This section provides high-level information about the duties of the position. What work does the position do? How does this position carry out the work (what procedures, materials, tools, or equipment do they use)? What is the purpose of the work? Order your list of duties from most important or significant in terms of time and energy to least important or time intensive. Leave off small tasks in order to keep the list manageable.

**Education and Experience:** Use this section to define the minimum and preferred qualifications for this position.

**Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:** This section identifies key competencies necessary to carry out the work of the position.

- **Knowledge:** A set of information or facts
- **Skills:** The proficient use of an object, process, or set of knowledge necessary to perform a job
- **Abilities:** Capacity or means to do things. This may include temperamental requirements, such as the ability to demonstrate patience and kindness when working with the public.

#### **Types of Supervisory Responsibility**

The following section provides a scale of supervisory/managerial responsibilities of the position. When developing a job description, choose the one(s) that best describes the position.

- Non-supervisory: Job has no responsibility for the direction of others.
- Lead Worker: Job functions as a lead worker performing essentially the same work as those supervised. May assist in training.
- Supervisor/Manager: Job supervises work within a unit of the organization. Makes recommendations on hiring and disciplinary actions. Evaluates program/work objectives and effectiveness and realigns work as needed. Responsible for training, instructing, and scheduling work within a unit or agency. Has input into performance evaluations.
- Functional/Divisional Manager: Job oversees multiple work functions within the
  organization. Makes hiring decisions and carries out disciplinary actions. Evaluates work
  objectives and effectiveness and recommends modifications to staffing patterns as
  needed. Conducts performance evaluations.
- Administrative Manager: Job has direct responsibility for supervising and managing the operations of multiple departments and resolves the most complex problems.

#### Action item:

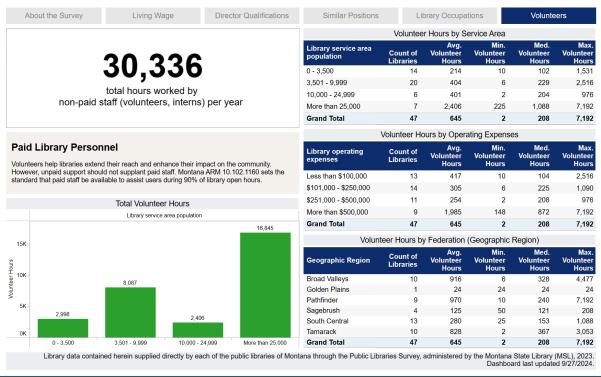
Match each of your library staff's positions to one of the ten positions represented in this tab.

- How do your current library position classifications compare with the classifications provided in this tab?
- Do the descriptions more or less align with your job descriptions? If not, is there anything that you would change about how your job descriptions are written?
- How do the salary ranges for your positions line up with the statewide and regional averages for your library's size and budget?
- Based on this information, what salary adjustments, if any, would you request for any of your library's positions?
- What other observations do you have regarding this data?

## **Volunteers**



#### Public Library Staffing & Salaries Study - Volunteers



This tab shares data about volunteer hours reported at libraries of different sizes, budgets, and geographic areas across Montana. Volunteers are a wonderful part of our library community. It is also important to remember that the Public Library Standards require paid staff to be in the library during 90% of the library's open hours.

**Action item:** Review the data on volunteer hours and find out where your library falls within each category (by service area, operating expenses, and geographic region).

- What is the volunteer recruitment process at your library?
- What tasks can volunteers do to help paid library staff focus on their primary responsibilities?
- What are some ways in which your library shows gratitude to volunteers for their service?

# **Next Steps – Bringing it all Together**

Now that you have thoroughly reviewed the dashboard and recommended resources, it's time to think about your next steps.

#### **Determine what would be Fair Compensation**

- Determine what you believe to be the position's value in terms of hourly wages. Ensure
  that the position's job description is up to date and reflects the current duties and
  responsibilities of the role. Compare with similarly classified staff at libraries with a
  similar size and/or budget. Consider your staff's years of experience and level of
  education if you are advocating for increases for a current employee.
- Identify and research similar positions within the local government or similar organizations. For example, a library director should be compared to the heads of other departments of similar size and budget to the library.
- Ask to see job descriptions of positions in your local government and seek to compare that way.
- Characteristics to consider:
  - Scope of responsibility (financial, supervisory, etc)
  - Impact of work (decision making, financial responsibility, etc)
  - Type and level of communication with others
  - Required knowledge, skills, and abilities
  - Working conditions and level of physical demands

#### **Example Job Comparison: Library Director and Other Department Head**

- Salary
- Key similarities
- Key differences

#### **Meet with Decision Makers**

If you have determined that a salary adjustment request would be appropriate, then the final steps are to discuss your findings with the full library board (if you haven't already) and with your budget decision makers. The board has an important statutory power and duty to hire and set compensation for the library director. Of course, this determination has an impact on the library's overall budget. A change in compensation levels may also raise questions among local government officials, so it's good to be proactive in addressing these potential changes.

- Schedule a meeting involving the director, the board chair, and any other individuals involved with compensation issues at the local government level.
- During your meeting, provide the information that you have collected and any appropriate comparison positions. Your goals for this discussion are to:
  - Highlight the role and responsibilities of the position in question
  - Identify key similarities and differences in comparison with other positions
  - Outline why the current compensation is not appropriate for the position
  - Provide a more appropriate salary range based on your findings
  - Share documentation of your overall research and findings

# Talking Points for Salary Discussions (from the State of Iowa's Compensation Toolkit)

- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today.
- The job description for this position has recently been updated to better reflect its role and responsibilities. Given my research on similar/comparable positions, the compensation provided to this position appears low.
- This position pays \$XX while another similar position within the local government pays \$XXX.
- This position at libraries X and Y, in the towns of X and Y, who are similar in terms of size, budget, and number of employees, pays X% more.
- This position is paid the same as another within our local government, however, this
  position includes additional responsibilities that should be recognized with additional
  compensation.
- The library/this position has not received salary increases in XX years. Due to this, the compensation for this position is no longer competitive with others in our city/county/area.
- My research indicates the appropriate salary range for this position within our city/county/area is \$XX - \$XX.
- Thank you for meeting with me today. What are the next steps to continue this discussion/process?

# Other Considerations for Workplace Satisfaction

In addition to fair compensation, consider other elements of job satisfaction for employees: benefits, library culture, and other factors as described in the Surgeon General's Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing framework.

An Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is the value that an organization offers to the employee, including but not limited to salary and benefits.

- Values: An organization's internal culture and external presence.
- Career: Fulfilling work and professional development opportunities.
- Compensation: The full package of total compensation related to pay and benefits.

- What are 3-5 words to describe your organizational culture?
- What makes your library a pleasant, meaningful, perhaps sometimes even fun place to work?
- How do you recognize your staff's good work?
- What do you do to help maintain positive staff morale?
- What mental health resources or practices are available to help staff prevent or manage burnout?
- What perks can you offer besides pay and benefits? For example, flexibility in scheduling, or paid professional development opportunities such as attending a relevant workshop or conference?

# **Conclusion**

We hope that this data and guidance helps support you in your effort to secure fair compensation. Please reach out to your <u>Montana State Library consultant</u> if you would like further assistance.

# **Appendix**

Glossary of action verbs to assist with outlining a position's essential duties (from the State Library of Iowa Compensation Handbook)

- Adjust—Bring to a more satisfactory state; change to enhance a situation.
- Administer—Exercise and implement control over the performance of specific operations, approved plans, or established policies within the scope of limited and well-defined authority.
- Advise—Give information or opinion pertinent to a probable course of action.
- Analyze—Study the factors of a problem to determine a proper solution.
- Arrange—Put into suitable order or sequence; to make preparations or plan.
- Assist—Take an active part or give support in performing a function.
- Balance—Arrange so that one set of elements exactly equals another.
- Calculate—Work out by mathematical computation.
- Check—Compare with a source, original, or authority.
- Compile—Put together a series or group of facts or figures from somewhat related sources into a related whole; usually used in the sense of making a report.
- Compose—Form by putting together; formulate or write.
- Communicate—Provide or exchange thoughts, feelings, or information.
- Conduct—Exercise leadership in a project or study.
- Coordinate—Combine (through balancing, tuning, or integrating) the efforts of separate groups to accomplish a specific objective; coordination can be exercised without line authority.
- Counsel—Give advice and guidance to another.
- Create- Originate; bring into existence or make something new.
- Demonstrate—To show clearly; illustrate or explain with many examples.
- Develop—Advance programs, planning or personnel capabilities to higher states.

- Direct—Authoritatively define, regulate, or determine the activities of subordinate organizational units to achieve predetermined objectives.
- Distribute—Give out; divide among several.
- Execute—Put into effect according to a plan (See "Administer").
- File—Arrange in order for preservation or reference; place among official records.
- Gather—Come or bring together into a group mass or unit.
- Initiate—Start, begin, or introduce a program or action.
- Install—Set up for use or service.
- List—Place in a specified category; register

Maintain—Keep in an existing state; to continue or preserve; keep in a state of efficiency or validity.

- Manage—Plan, organize, and control to achieve coordinated objectives by leading and directing subordinates without giving detailed supervision.
- Monitor—Watch, observe, or check for a special purpose; keep track.
- Negotiate—Reach agreement on specific proposals through discussion with others of a different viewpoint.
- Obtain—Gain or attain by planned action or effort.
- Operate—Perform a function.
- Organize—Set up plans and procedures for achieving objectives.
- Participate—Take part in and share responsibility with others for action but without individual authority to take action.
- Perform—Carry out, accomplish; to do in a formal manner or according to a prescribed method
- Plan—Devise or determine a course of action to achieve a desired result.
- Provide—Furnish necessary information or services.
- Post—Transfer an entry or item from one record to another.
- Prepare—Make ready for further action or purpose.

- Present-to show, introduce, or offer something or someone.
- Process—Perform a series of actions or operations leading to an end.
- Promote–Give awareness to; help further the progress of; support or actively encourage.
- Prove—Determine extent of agreement or disagreement with intended relation between results.
- Recommend—Offer for acceptance and support a course of action to persons responsible for approval or authorization.
- Record—Register, make a record of.
- Repair—Restore by replacing a part or putting together what is torn or broken; to fix.
- Report—Give an account of; make a written record or summary.
- Research—Careful or diligent search; investigate or experiment with the aim of discovery and interpretation of facts.
- Review—Critically examine (completed work, reports, performance) with a view to amendment or improvement.
- Schedule—Plan a timetable; to set, appoint, or designate for a fixed time.
- Sort—Put in a certain place or rank according to kind, class or nature.
- Supervise—Oversee or watch with authority work, proceedings, or progress; control employment status, including hiring, salary adjustment, promotion, termination; implies day-to-day concern with details of operation.
- Tabulate—Arrange figures or items in rows and columns; computing by means of a table.
- Verify—Determine the accuracy of one thing or figure in relation to other things or figures known to be accurate.