

Elective Roadmap to Library Excellence

Ideas for next steps when your library has achieved the basic public library standards



Large pile of rocks at the top of Grinnell Glacier Trail marks the summit of the trail, in Glacier National Park Montana, photo by Melissa Kopka.

How to get the most out of this document

Purpose: This is a voluntary list of suggestions for improving library services. Libraries that are interested in going above and beyond the required public library standards can use this document to select possible pathways to excellence.

How to use this document:

1. The document has two ways of displaying the information. For visual learners, a cairn of possible ways to improve the library is presented. If a reader prefers content to be displayed in a linear fashion, they can jump to page 9 to see the same content presented in a table format.
2. Identify what area you want to improve. Pick as many or as few areas as you like.
3. Review the ideas listed on the page. Discuss other ways you might improve in that area.
4. Pick one idea to try.
5. Try it and see what happens. Build in time to discuss your progress, what you learned, and what you might do next.
6. Repeat as desired!

Reminder, this is voluntary. You aren't required to do any of these items.

Table of contents:

- Visual exploration of library excellence, pages 2-8.
- Linear exploration of library excellence, pages 9-15.

Ideas for Staff Development

OUTCOME

Our community members receive library services sufficient unto their needs because staff are trained and have the tools and support that they need to succeed.

Pick one of the following items to begin your library's journey.

Staff receive recognition when they certify and maintain their certification by the Montana State Library.

The director has a Master of Library Science or equivalent degree.

At least 25% of staff achieve Montana State Library Certification.



Everyone receives good quality customer service at the library because library staff complete customer service training.

During all open hours, paid staff are available to assist users.

Choose your own measure of excellence. How will your library achieve this outcome?

Ideas for Board Development

OUTCOME

Our community members receive library services sufficient unto their needs because library boards are trained and have the tools and support that they need to succeed.

Pick one of the following items to begin your library's journey.



Choose your own measure of excellence. How will your library achieve this outcome?

The board has a process for identifying what skills are needed on the board and seeks new board members that can fill those needs.

The board evaluates its work annually.

The board has a formal process for welcoming and educating new board members.

The board receives at least six hours of continuing education every year.

At least one board member is certified by the Montana State Library.

Ideas for Providing Better Access to Library Materials

OUTCOME

Everyone has easy access to relevant library materials and services.

Pick one of the following items to begin your library's journey.

Libraries provide mobile access for searching and retrieving library materials.

The library joins a shared library system (online catalog) such as the Montana Shared Catalog to reduce staff workload and to provide seamless access to other libraries' collections.

Everyone has safe, comfortable and convenient access to community destinations and public places—whether walking, driving, bicycling, or taking public transportation through the work of the library and other local community organizations.

Everyone has access to materials that reflect community culture and languages – both present and historical. For example, the library has a digital collection in the Montana History Portal.



Everyone has access to sufficiently reliable and speedy internet and internet-ready devices at their library.

Everyone has access to a wide range of materials because the library participates in cooperative services such as shared collections and sharing groups.

Choose your own measure of excellence. How will your library achieve this outcome?

The library board and director review library policies to remove barriers to library use when reasonable. For example, assess the impact of late fees on library use.

Ideas for Programming

OUTCOME

Everyone has access to programming sufficient unto their needs.

Pick one of the following items to begin your library's journey.

Choose your own measure of excellence. How will your library achieve this outcome?

Children and caregivers have access to early literacy programming through the library.

Everyone has access to programming that reflects community needs and interests.

Everyone can create and develop content because of programming or technology offered by the library. This may be technology-based, such as a makerspace, or as simple as an arts and crafts or writing group.



Ideas for Increasing Community Awareness

OUTCOME

Everyone in the community is aware of library services.

Pick one of the following items to begin your library's journey.



The library cultivates donors.

The library has access to someone with marketing experience who helps advertise library services.

Choose your own measure of excellence. How will your library achieve this outcome?

The library supports local businesses by purchasing items locally, when feasible.

The library has a community support group such as a Friends or a Foundation to advocate for the library and provide funding.

Library staff participate in local, state, and national marketing/public relations efforts for the benefit of the library and potentially other libraries.

Board members are strong library advocates and receive training about advocacy at least every year.

Trustees, support groups, and community members advocate for the library.

Ideas for Improving the Library's Structure and Funding

OUTCOME

Everyone receives library services sufficient unto their needs because the library is well-funded and managed by the board and director.

Pick one of the following items to begin your library's journey.

The library seeks additional dedicated, voted mills, if needed.

Choose your own measure of excellence. How will your library achieve this outcome?

The library has multiple funding sources.

The library sets up or revitalizes a Friends of the Library or Foundation group.

The library considers partnering with other libraries to share a county levy.



90% of local tax revenue funds support the services and personnel necessary to achieve the essential standards. Grants, private funds, supplement and help libraries meet the excellent standards. If a tribal college library serves tribal members, the Tribal Council recognizes and supports the efforts of the library to obtain funding.

Ideas for Planning and Evaluation

OUTCOME

Our community members receive library services sufficient unto their needs because the board and director make planning and evaluation a routine part of their work.

Pick one of the following items to begin your library's journey.

The library board and director identify community needs and trends in order to create a strategic plan for addressing these needs. The plan is reviewed annually and updated, as needed.

Choose your own measure of excellence. How will your library achieve this outcome?

The board and director use relevant data when planning, evaluating, and communicating about library services.

The board and director work with other libraries on statewide initiatives that will improve services to all Montanans.



The board and director can succinctly communicate to the public about the library's long-range plan - specifically what is in the plan and progress on achieving the plan.

Summit Trail

Another way to think about the road map

Outcome: Our community members receive library services sufficient unto their needs because staff are trained and have the tools and support that they need to succeed.

Suggested routes to achieve this outcome (pick one or add your own example)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
At least 25% of staff achieve Montana State Library Certification.	During all open hours, paid staff are available to assist users.	Staff receive recognition when they certify and maintain their certification by the Montana State Library.
Option 4	Option 5	Trailblaze
Everyone receives good quality customer service at the library because library staff complete customer service training.	The director has a Master of Library Science or equivalent degree.	



Outcome: Our community members receive library services sufficient unto their needs because library boards are trained and have the tools and support that they need to succeed.

Suggested routes to achieve this outcome (pick one or add your own example)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
The board has a formal process for welcoming and educating new board members.	The board receives at least six hours of continuing education every year.	At least one board member is certified by the Montana State Library.
Option 4	Option 5	Trailblaze
The board has a process for identifying what skills are needed on the board and seeks new board members that can fill those needs.	The board evaluates its work annually.	



Outcome: Everyone has easy access to relevant library materials and services.

Suggested routes to achieve this outcome (pick one or add your own example)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Everyone has safe, comfortable and convenient access to community destinations and public places—whether walking, driving, bicycling, or taking public transportation through the work of the library and other local community organizations.	Libraries provide mobile access for searching and retrieving library materials.	Everyone has access to a wide range of materials because the library participates in cooperative services such as shared collections and sharing groups.	The library joins a shared library system (online catalog) such as the Montana Shared Catalog to reduce staff workload and to provide seamless access to other libraries' collections.
Option 5	Option 6	Option 7	Trailblaze
Everyone has access to sufficiently reliable and speedy internet and internet-ready devices at their library.	Everyone has access to materials that reflect community culture and languages – both present and historical. For example, the library has a digital collection in the Montana History Portal.	The library board and director review library policies to remove barriers to library use when reasonable. For example, assess the impact of late fees on library use.	



Outcome: Everyone has access to programming sufficient unto their needs.

Suggested routes to achieve this outcome (pick one or add your own example)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Everyone has access to programming that reflects community needs and interests.	Children and caregivers have access to early literacy programming through the library.	Everyone can create and develop content because of programming or technology offered by the library. This may be technology-based, such as a makerspace, or as simple as an arts and crafts or writing group.
Trailblaze	Trailblaze	Trailblaze



Outcome: Everyone in the community is aware of library services.

Suggested routes to achieve this outcome (pick one or add your own example)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
The library has access to someone with marketing experience who helps advertise library services.	The library has a community support group such as a Friends or a Foundation to advocate for the library and provide funding.	The library cultivates donors.	The library supports local businesses by purchasing items locally, when feasible.
Option 5	Option 6	Option 7	Trailblaze
Board members are strong library advocates and receive training about advocacy at least every year.	Library staff participate in local, state, and national marketing/public relations efforts for the benefit of the library and potentially other libraries.	Trustees, support groups, and community members advocate for the library.	



Outcome: Everyone receives library services sufficient unto their needs because the library is well-funded and managed by the board and director.

Suggested routes to achieve this outcome (pick one or add your own example)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
The library seeks additional dedicated, voted mills, if needed.	The library has multiple funding sources.	90% of local tax revenue funds support the services and personnel necessary to achieve the essential standards. Grants, private funds, supplement and help libraries meet the excellent standards. If a tribal college library serves tribal members, the Tribal Council recognizes and supports the efforts of the library to obtain funding.
Option 4	Option 5	Trailblaze
The library sets up or revitalizes a Friends of the Library or Foundation group.	The library considers partnering with other libraries to share a county levy.	



Outcome: Our community members receive library services sufficient unto their needs because the board and director make planning and evaluation a routine part of their work.

Suggested routes to achieve this outcome (pick one or add your own example)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
The library board and director identify community needs and trends in order to create a strategic plan for addressing these needs. The plan is reviewed annually and updated, as needed.	The board and director can succinctly communicate to the public about the library's long-range plan - specifically what is in the plan and progress on achieving the plan.	The board and director use relevant data when planning, evaluating, and communicating about library services.
Option 4	Trailblaze	Trailblaze
The board and director work with other libraries on statewide initiatives that will improve services to all Montanans.		

Did you reach the summit? What new trails can you explore? Challenge yourself to complete more than one path for each outcome.

