

The Excellent Library Service Award (ELSA)

The Montana State Library Commission recognizes libraries for achieving excellence in serving their communities with the Excellent Library Service Award (the ELSA). Each year, academic, public, school, and special libraries will have an opportunity to apply for the award using this checklist of enhanced and excellent recommendations. The checklist is adapted from Montana's current Public Library Standards which serves as a measuring tool for libraries in the state. Not every recommendation may apply to your library, but most will.

Library directors will complete and submit the checklist indicating all of the recommendations the library has achieved. Branch libraries do not apply separately, but are included in the checklist for the main library. If a library meets the required number of recommendations and categories, the library will be honored with an ELSA.

GENERAL LIBRARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- In order for the board to be knowledgeable about current library issues, new board members receive an orientation by the library director, a board member, and/or others;
- On an annual basis, board members report on how they have promoted and supported the library, its programs, and services.

Excellent recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library provides for continuing education for its board members by allocating funds to support continuing education costs, including travel expenses;
- At least two members of the board will attend a regional or statewide library related activity each year;
- Board members will discuss library issues with local government officials at least twice a year and state and/or national government officials at least once a year;
- Every five years, the board will review, evaluate, and compare its own governance structure with different governance structures for the library. This includes districting, county library systems, etc;
- At least three library board members join any professional library association and dues are paid by the library;
- At least two board members are certified by the state library.

PLANNING AND EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library has a written three- to five-year long-range plan, and reviews it annually. The long-range plan addresses services, facilities, public relations, technology, etc;
- The board evaluates the library's performance against the stated objectives in the long-range plan;

- The library must have a vision statement.

Excellent recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- Community representatives, the board, and the director develop a long-range plan for the library;
- At least every five years, the library conducts community studies and makes use of other needs assessment techniques to ensure community participation in the design and delivery of library service.

FINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library sets aside money in a depreciation fund to meet requirements for capital expenditures;
- Local tax revenues provide the majority of the support for the library. Grants, donations, and other revenue sources supplement but do not supplant local tax support.

Excellent recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library has established a foundation or endowment;
- The foundation board and/or the library board develops a plan for planned giving;
- The foundation board and/or the library board establishes a policy regarding the acceptance of gifts of real and personal property, endowment funds, and planned giving;
- The library has a Friends of the Library organization;

HUMAN RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS: LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The director conducts a formal performance appraisal of each staff member at least annually;
- The library director informs the board of pending legislation that affects libraries on the local, state, and national levels;
- The library director reviews and updates procedures every three years; and
- The library director joins the State Library Association.
- Library director has an AA/AS or BA/BS degree.

Excellent recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The director keeps the community and funding officials aware of the library's purpose, planning, and services through the use of newspaper articles, web sites, radio programs, attending meetings, etc;
- The director forms collaborative partnerships with other agencies and organizations in the library's service area;
- Library director has an MLS or equivalent;
- In addition to the library director's annual evaluation, the library director is evaluated every three years by the board with the input of staff, library users, and/or library nonusers;
- The board pays for the library director to join the State Library Association.

HUMAN RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS: GENERAL

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- Volunteer programs have written policies, procedures, and job descriptions;
- Every staff member attends at least one continuing education eligible training program per year;
- Appropriate library staff have e-mail accounts available for communication and professional development;
- There is at least one personal computer for staff use only;
- Staff receives in-house training or are encouraged to attend workshops.

Excellent recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- Regardless of population, total library staff is not less than one full-time employee;
- The library board encourages and supports staff involvement in community organizations and activities;
- Employees have access to health insurance and retirement through the library.

HUMAN RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS: ACCESS

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- Library customers are able to access library information from remote locations;
- When necessary, the library refers customers to other places to fulfill the customer's information needs;
- Library has a web site where users can access electronic resources.

Excellent recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library provides appropriate access to library services for specialized populations, including, but not limited to, the homebound, the institutionalized, and non-English speaking populations.

MATERIALS AND COLLECTIONS RECOMMENDATIONS: COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library cooperates with other community institutions to plan and implement access to electronic resources;
- The library provides access to materials for those with disabilities and others who may have special needs

Excellent recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library cooperates with other local and regional libraries in collection development to provide a wide range of materials in a variety of formats to meet the needs of the community.

ACCESS TO THE COLLECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library uses an online interlibrary loan system; and

The library has an automated system for circulation, cataloging, and public access catalogs that has reporting features and supports MARC records.

Excellent recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library collection is available online;
- The library, if appropriate, has joined a shared integrated library system, also known as a shared catalog.

COLLECTION EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library monitors the use of the collection through analyzing statistical information, including circulation per capita and the collection's turnover rate.

NO EXCELLENT RECOMMENDATIONS AT THIS TIME

FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library has an exterior sign visible from the nearest roadway that identifies it as the library;
- The library has a public meeting area available;
- The library facility is evaluated for accessibility.

Excellent recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library has adequate, well-lit parking; and
- The library's facilities conform to federal requirements for accessibility.

PUBLIC RELATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library targets special groups within the community for programs or services (seniors, ethnic populations, etc.);
- Funds are budgeted for publicity either by the library and/or the Friends of the Library;
- Staff and board are encouraged to bring the library's message to the community at appropriate venues.

Excellent recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library allocates funds for public relations, has a community awareness program, and actively promotes its mission;
- The library conducts a community assessment to evaluate the library's marketing efforts;
- The library establishes or works with existing community advisory groups to encourage community involvement and improve service. Examples of such groups include youth, seniors, genealogy, local history, and other identified segments of the population;

SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library provides information about the community to customers;
- The library offers programming for children, adults, and young adults; and
- The library offers or makes patrons aware of virtual reference services.

Excellent recommendations for libraries are as follows:

- The library collaborates with other community organizations and educational institutions to promote library services;
- The library provides library outreach services;
- The library has wireless internet access for patrons.