

How to Use *Serving Our Public 2.0*

Overview

Statewide public library standards are designed to serve as a catalyst from which local planning can take place. The *Serving Our Public 2.0* standards are seen as a guide for librarians, library staff, and board trustees' discussions during budget preparation and strategic planning. The regular review of the standards helps the library evaluate its progress over several years toward becoming an ideal library for its community. As the library staff and trustees discuss the Core Standards and individual chapters, the library's strengths and weaknesses are revealed, allowing celebration of the strengths and plans to eliminate or improve the weaknesses.

There are multiple ways to use *Serving Our Public 2.0*

- 1.** During board meetings, in-depth discussions of individual chapters provide a review, reflection, and refinement of the library's service philosophy and strategically guide library planning.
- 2.** Each month, as part of the librarian's report, the director reviews a chapter checklist, sharing the library's progress, as well as recommendations for changes, with discussion and input from the board.
- 3.** A board committee is appointed to compare the library's advancement toward achieving the standards, and a report is shared with the full board on a regular basis. As needed, the committee, with input and insight from the library director, proposes changes to the library's goals.
- 4.** Library staff meetings focus on the chapter standards, allowing incorporation of *Serving Our Public* into the staff's understanding of the library's service philosophy.

Core Standards

The Core Standards are considered essential to the foundation of quality library service to Illinois residents. The Core Standards are grouped together in Chapter 1 and applicable Core Standards are repeated with each chapter. The Core Standards can be discussed as a unit or in conjunction with the chapter standards.

Chapter Standards

Chapter specific standards provide a detailed blueprint for developing, improving, or enhancing areas of library activity. While the Core Standards provide the foundation, the chapter standards provide a superstructure for the library's advancement.

Checklists

A new feature is the chapter checklists. Many librarians and trustees asked for a way to formally compare progress from year to year. A board committee, the library director, and/or the staff can complete the checklist. When a checklist is completed, it should be dated and signed. Adding related comments and notes to personalize the checklist is encouraged.

Illinois public libraries operate under the *Illinois Compiled Statutes* [ILCS], generally chapter 75 [75 ILCS], but other statutes impact libraries. As librarians and their library boards must be familiar with Illinois statutes, this appendix provides a quick reference.

The recommended service level tables, when compared with results from the *Illinois Public Library Annual Report* (IPLAR), needed little change. The tables retained the minimum, growing, established, and advanced levels to allow library boards to self-select the appropriate goals for their library. Minimum is the foundation level where all Illinois public libraries begin, but should not remain. As each chapter is read, the accompanying appendices should also be reviewed to determine the library's current service level and to decide the target level of service.

Chapter 1

Core Standards

National Public Library Definition

Public library statistics are collected annually from more than 9,000 public libraries through the Public Library Statistics Cooperative (PLSC) for public library data and disseminated by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

Descriptive statistics are collected for all public libraries. Data are available for individual public libraries and are also aggregated to state and national levels.

In order to accurately compare public library data from all fifty states, every state has agreed to collect public library data using the “PLSC Public Library Definition” as detailed below:

A public library is an entity that is established under state enabling laws or regulations to serve a community, district, or region, and that provides at least the following:

1. an organized collection of printed or other library materials or a combination thereof;
2. paid staff;
3. an established schedule in which services of the staff are available to the public;
4. the facilities necessary to support such a collection, staff, and schedule; and,
5. is supported in whole or part with public funds.

Introduction

The late librarian, director, and library leader Susan Roberts commented that strong libraries need strong standards to provide quality customer service. The *Serving Our Public 2.0* Task Force has struggled in finding the balance between inclusivity and setting the bar at a meaningful level. The consensus of the task force is that a “one-size-fits-all” document is not plausible. Public libraries are largely locally funded and should be uniquely suited to the needs and resources of their communities and users. Nevertheless, it is in the public interest and the interest of the library community to have the word “library” signify certain standard conditions that one could expect to find. A library that does not currently meet one or more of the core or other standards might cite that deficiency in making a case for increased funding. Coming up to the standard might be the focus of one or more objectives in a library’s strategic plan. The staff and boards of libraries that meet basic standards might pose the query, “What makes a library effective?” and consider ways of enhancing the library’s effectiveness in serving its community. After reviewing the federal library standards and other states’ library standards, the task force has outlined the following basic essential standards that all Illinois public libraries should work daily to uphold:

1. operate in compliance with Illinois library law;*
2. have an organized collection of information;

In addition to these essential standards, listed below are standards that have been enhanced and defined.

Illinois Public Library Core Standards

- Core 1** The library provides uniformly gracious, friendly, timely, and reliable service to all users.
- Core 2** The library is established and operates in compliance with Chapter 75 of the *Illinois Compiled Statutes*.
- Core 3** The library is governed by a board of trustees elected or appointed and constituted in compliance with the relevant sections of Chapter 75 of the *Illinois Compiled Statutes*.
- Core 4** The library complies with all other state and federal laws that affect library operations. (See Appendix F)
- Core 5** The library adopts and adheres to the principles set forth in the American Library Association's (ALA) *Library Bill of Rights* and other ALA intellectual freedom statements and interpretations. (See Appendices A, B, and C)
- Core 6** The library adopts and adheres to the *Ethics Statement for Public Library Trustees*. The library adopts and adheres to the *Code of Ethics of the American Library Association*. (See Appendices D and E)
- Core 7** The board of trustees adopts written bylaws that outline the board's purpose and operational procedures and address conflict-of-interest issues. (See Appendix H)
- Core 8** The board of trustees appoints a qualified librarian as library administrator and delegates active management of the library to the library administrator. (For the purposes of this document, a qualified librarian is a person holding a Masters of Library Science (MLS) degree from an ALA-accredited program and/or actively participating in continuing education opportunities each year offered by the Illinois State Library, regional library systems, and the Illinois Library Association. Library boards and communities should strive to have a minimum of one staff member holding an MLS from an ALA-accredited institution and/or utilize the consultant services of their regional library system.)
- Core 9** The board of trustees meets regularly, in accordance with the *Illinois Compiled Statutes*, with the library administrator in attendance. All board meetings and board committee meetings shall comply with the *Open Meetings Act*.
- Core 10** The board of trustees has exclusive control of the expenditure of all monies collected, donated, or appropriated for the library fund and all property owned by the library.
- Core 11** The library has a board-approved written budget. The budget is developed annually by the library