

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 of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

Descriptive statistics are collected for all public libraries. Data is available for individual public libraries and is 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

As with past editions, the *Serving Our Public 4.0* task force struggled in finding the balance between inclusivity and setting the bar at a meaningful level. The consensus of the current and former task force members 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 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;
3. have written library policies approved by the library’s governing body;
4. have a fixed location(s) with posted regular hours of services;
5. have a trained, paid staff to manage the collection and provide access to it;
6. be supported in part or in whole by public funds; and,
7. have an identifiable library materials budget.

**Illinois law does also recognize contractual libraries.*

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 A)
- 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.
- Core 6 The library adopts and adheres to the *Code of Ethics of the American Library Association*. The library adopts and adheres to the *Public Library Trustee Ethics Statement*, developed by United for Libraries, a division of ALA.
- 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 C)
- 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 Master of Library Science (MLS), Master Science in LIS, Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS), or other comparable degree from an ALA-accredited program and/or actively participates 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 ALA-accredited master's degree.)
- 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 administrator and the board with input from the staff.
- Core 12 The board of trustees annually determines if the library's revenues are sufficient to meet the needs of the community. If the revenues are not sufficient, the board of trustees will take action to increase the library's revenues.
- Core 13 The library has a board-approved mission statement, a long-range/strategic plan, disaster prevention and recovery plan, collection management policy, personnel policy, technology plan, and other policies as appropriate to the library's operation and regularly updates and maintains them as appropriate. (See Appendices F and H)

- Core 14 The library administrator presents written monthly reports, including statistics, on library operations to the board of trustees. In addition, monthly fiscal reports are presented by the library administrator and/or the library board treasurer.
- Core 15 The board of trustees annually reviews the performance of the library administrator.
- Core 16 The library is a member of an Illinois regional library system, fulfills the membership requirements of its system, is a responsible partner in the Illinois Library and Information Network (ILLINET), and participates in resource sharing through interlibrary loan and reciprocal borrowing.
- Core 17 The library provides access to resource sharing databases, participates in resource sharing by entering the library's collections into a regional, statewide, or national database, and actively promotes resource sharing via interlibrary loan and reciprocal borrowing.
- Core 18 The library utilizes a variety of methods to communicate with its community.
- Core 19 The library is located in a facility designed or renovated for library purposes and complies with all applicable local, state, and federal codes.
- Core 20 A library is open a minimum of fifteen hours per week according to the *Illinois Administrative Code* [23 Ill. Adm. Code 3030.110].
- Core 21 As a baseline, the library appropriates money to major budget categories (personnel, benefits, library materials, other operating expenditures) using the *Illinois Public Library Annual Report* statewide percentages analysis.
- Core 22 The library board and staff promote the collections and services available to its community.
- Core 23 At least every five years, and more frequently if necessary, the library conducts a review to determine if the library is providing facilities, collections and services in a quantity, at a time, and in a manner that meets the needs of the community.

