

Western Council of State Libraries
Certification Competencies
January 2, 2006

The Western Council of State Libraries developed this set of Competencies as an integral part of the "Continuum of Library Education" project funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. This set is based on an earlier document "Library Practitioner Core Competencies," developed by State Library continuing education coordinators, validated by an extensive survey, and adopted by Western Council in 2004.

After adopting the Core Competencies, Western Council's next task was to develop a competency-based Certification Program. The Task Force responsible for doing so found that the Core Competencies needed to be distilled so that educators could develop learning opportunities and that applicants could easily understand the certification requirements.

The Project's Implementation Committee and the Project Director drafted a set of Certification Competencies and sent this list for comments to identified practitioners and employers in the Western Council member states. After receiving feedback from respondents, the Committee drafted this final version. The Task Force will use this list to develop a certification model for Western Council to consider at its May 2006 meeting.

Like the Core Competencies, the Certification Competencies have multiple audiences. As noted above, educators can use them to set learning objectives and applicants for certification can find simple descriptions of the required competencies. Employers of practitioners can use them to understand job requirements and set realistic expectations for practitioners. The Committee hopes all audiences will find these competencies to be an accurate and comprehensive description of the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to be a successful library practitioner.

Practitioner Certification Competencies

Foundations

Philosophy and Ethics

1. Articulate the role of the public library
2. Protect the library user's right to privacy
3. Provide equal service to all community members
4. Ensure the right of people to access information
5. Encourage a free and open exchange of information and ideas
6. Ensure that personal biases do not interfere with the provision of services

Leadership

1. Develop and promulgate a vision for library services
2. Build effective relationships with members of the library board, staff, and community
3. Manage conflict and emergency situations
4. Conduct effective meetings
5. Acquire new skills and knowledge, especially of trends effecting library services
6. Negotiate agreements
7. Use strategies to cope with stressful situations and to manage time effectively
8. Use professional strategies and methods to understand the needs of all users
9. Make effective verbal presentations
10. Produce concise and effective written communication
11. Encourage and promote the active use of library services by all community members

Administration

Laws

1. Understand the library's governing structure, the powers of its board, and its relationship to other government levels
2. Articulate the role of state, regional, and national professional organizations
3. Apply local, state, and national laws affecting the library
4. Apply state and national library standards

Library Board

1. Identify the roles and responsibilities of the board and library director
2. Inform the board of matters affecting their authority and responsibility
3. Foster an effective and articulate board of trustees
4. Maintain frequent and open communication with the board
5. Encourage citizen interest in the board

Personnel

1. Comply with relevant state and federal laws pertaining to employment and personnel
2. Recruit, select, train, supervise, and evaluate paid and volunteer staff
3. Plan, implement, and encourage participation in staff development activities

Policies and Procedures

1. Implement and evaluate adopted policies
2. Review policy documents regularly and suggest revisions as needed
3. Identify when new policies and procedures are needed
4. Develop policies for consideration by the board for adoption

Finance and Funding

1. Implement accepted accounting practices and procedures, complying with state, local, and federal audit requirements
2. Develop, justify, negotiate, administer, and evaluate a budget, understanding the role of the board and other officials in these processes
3. Identify and seek potential additional sources of income, including grants
4. Apply appropriate processes to purchasing services and products

Facilities

1. Develop short and long-range facility plans
2. Modify the facility's layout to improve library service
3. Apply building and life safety codes in collaboration with appropriate officials

Planning

1. Develop, implement, and evaluate short and long-range plans, with measurable objectives, based on community analysis, library information, and stakeholder involvement
2. Use standard assessment processes to measure performance and progress toward meeting goals and objective
3. Compose regular reports to the board, other public officials, and the community regarding the library's progress

Partnerships

1. Participate in state library programs, cooperative information systems and networks
2. Initiate and maintain community contacts
3. Develop and maintain partnerships with other organizations, agencies and institutions
4. Develop library support groups such as Friends and a Foundation

Advocacy and Marketing

1. Promote the library's value, services, accomplishments and needs to library users, the community, and to funding agencies
2. Encourage Board and Friends to promote the library
3. Develop, implement, and evaluate a marketing plan, including media relations

Services

Circulation

1. Apply basic concepts of organizing and controlling library materials
2. Operate the process of circulation, interlibrary loan, reserves, registration, shelving, and inventory functions

Readers advisory

1. Determine the user's interests and reading level
2. Use standard resources about books and authors to recommend materials in all genres, subject areas, and formats

Reference and Information services

1. Determine the precise information needs of the user
2. Construct competent, complete, and appropriate search strategies
3. Select the appropriate resource to match the user's need
4. Follow up with the user to determine satisfaction
5. Instruct users in the use of information resources
6. Use available digital communication tools to communicate, learn, and discuss library issues and development
7. Show users how to operate library computers and equipment
8. Demonstrate efficient and effective use of the Internet

Adult and children's services

1. Plan, present, and evaluate library programs and services based on the interests, needs and abilities of the community
2. Use outside programming resources if appropriate
3. Cooperate with other community groups to enhance services

Collections

Planning and Selection

1. Develop, implement, and evaluate a collection management plan, including budget goals
2. Develop and maintain collections based on community needs
3. Evaluate materials in all formats using appropriate review sources and select materials based on the collection management plan
4. Budget systematically for collection development

Acquisition

1. Establish procedures for ordering, receiving orders, resolving problems, and accounting
2. Establish procedures for handling serials, digital resources, alternative formats and special materials

Collection Maintenance

1. Use standard methods for evaluating materials for retention, replacement, rebinding, weeding and duplication
2. Evaluate options for repairing and/or replacing worn or damaged materials
3. Perform basic repair of materials of various formats

Technical Services

Cataloging, Classification, Processing

1. Maintain an accurate, current catalog of library materials
2. Use standardized sources of cataloging information for copy and original cataloging
3. Apply basic cataloging methodology
4. Apply appropriate methods and technique for physical preparation of all materials, including archives

Technology

1. Operate computer hardware, software, and library equipment
2. Identify problems and seek appropriate resolution
3. Work with vendors to maintain equipment and to plan for upgrades or replacements
4. Apply privacy and copyright laws to the use of technology