

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY CERTIFICATION POLICY

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MONTANA STATE LIBRARY CERTIFICATION POLICY

Introduction

The Montana State Library Commission maintains a certification program and requires certification of Library Directors in Montana.

Administrative Rules of Montana

10.102.1160 Personnel

(6) The director is or will be certified by the Montana State Library within the required timeframe mandated by the certification program adopted by the Montana State Library Commission.

- (a) The purpose of the certification program is to ensure library directors have the foundational skills necessary to manage a public library that meets standards set forth in ARM Subchapter 10.102.11 Public Library Development.
- (b) A course of study will be reviewed by the Commission annually for approval at its final meeting of the state fiscal year.
- (c) Continuing education credits issued through the State Library certification program are the only eligible credits that can be applied to certification.
- (d) The certification program will be reviewed on a regular schedule with no more than 10 years between reviews.

Adopted December 10, 2025; Effective July 1, 2026.

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Initial Certification

Eligibility

Individuals who are seeking their first Montana State Library (MSL) certification.

Requirements

Applicants must complete twenty (20) credits as outlined in the approved Course of Study.

Timeline

All required credits must be earned within two (2) years of the applicant's employment start date.

Course of Study Reference

The Course of Study in place at the time the applicant initiated certification governs the credits required for completion.

Renewal Certification

Eligibility

Applicants who have previously earned an MSL certification are eligible to apply for renewal.

Requirements

Applicants must complete sixty (60) credits that meet the requirements of the approved Course of Study.

Timeline

All required renewal credits must be earned within five (5) years of the most recent certification date.

Notes

Renewal requirements apply to each subsequent certification period unless otherwise specified by the Montana State Library Commission.

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Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS/MLS) Degree Credit Substitution

Eligibility

A Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS or MLS) degree earned within the previous five (5) years may be applied toward Montana public library certification requirements.

Initial Certification Credit Substitution

Public library directors hired after July 1, 2026, who hold an MLIS/MLS degree earned within the previous five (5) years may substitute their degree for ten (10) credits toward the initial certification requirement of twenty (20) credits. The specific credits that may be substituted are identified in the Course of Study.

Renewal Certification Credit Substitution

Applicants who earn an MLIS/MLS degree after their initial or any subsequent certification may substitute their degree for ten (10) credits toward a renewal certification, provided the degree was earned within the previous five (5) years. The renewal substitution applies to any ten (10) renewal credits.

One-Time Use Limitation

An MLIS/MLS degree may be applied only once toward certification—either toward initial certification *or* toward a single renewal certification, but not both.

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Course of Study - Earning Credits

The MSL Commission reviews and updates the course of study annually at its June business meeting. The *course of study* is the plan that lays out the topics and number of credits in each topic that a student must complete to achieve certification.

The Commission reviews the course catalog and potential additions to the catalog at [their regular or special meetings](#). The *catalog* is a list of available courses approved for certification credit. Anyone can suggest a course for inclusion in the catalog by submitting [this form](#). [See the appendix](#) for required information.

The Commission encourages applicants to submit their proposals before taking a course. Credit will only be awarded if the course is approved by the Commission. Before submitting a request for credit applicants should consider whether a course fits within the course of study, is opportune, and the timing of the course did not allow for pre-approval.

Adding Classes to the Course Catalog

- Courses may be added to the catalog throughout the year by submitting a proposal to MSL staff using [this form](#).
- Staff and the commission will consider the following questions when reviewing suggested courses. Not all questions have to be answered “yes” for approval.
 - Do the learning outcomes of the course fall under one or more of the topics outlined in the course of study?
 - Does the presenter have expertise in the subject matter?
 - Do the learning outcomes address the needs of multiple libraries in Montana?
 - Does the learning support the library in meeting the public library standards?
- Courses approved by the State Library Commission will be added to the Course Catalog.
 - Each course fits under a specific topic and counts for a certain number of credits. Students choose courses from the catalog to gain the required credits in each topic.

Reconsideration of a Previously Denied Request

- If the Commission chooses to deny credit for a course, the applicant is welcome to work with MSL staff to address Commission concerns.
- If the applicant feels the concerns have been addressed, they may re-apply for credit using [this form](#) with the updated information.

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Special Circumstances

Live, In-person Training Opportunities

Workshops and trainings presented by MSL staff at Federation meetings, in libraries, and as part of consulting visits will be added to the course catalog using [this form](#).

In-person workshops and trainings arranged by local libraries that fit the criteria outlined in this policy may be submitted for approval using [this form](#). Staff may choose to collate responses that are similar when adding items to the course catalog.

Conference Sessions

To the extent possible, MSL staff coordinates with associations that run the most commonly attended conferences to obtain a list of sessions offered. Sessions will be submitted using [this form](#).

- The list will be presented to the State Library Commission at either a regular meeting or a special meeting prior to the conference.
- Approved conference sessions are added to the course catalog.
- Librarians are encouraged to submit upcoming conference sessions for credit approval well in advance of a conference using [this form](#).

Definitions

Credit – a numerical value given to a course listed in the course catalog. 1 hour is equal to 1 credit; .5-hour increments are allowed.

Course of Study — a plan that lays out the topics and number of credits in each topic that a student must complete to achieve certification. The course of study is reviewed and approved by the Montana State Library Commission annually.

Course Catalog — a list of available courses. The catalog is reviewed and updated continuously to provide learners with relevant courses that align with the course of study.

Transition from 2023 Policy

- Credits earned through June 30, 2026, follow the policy adopted in 2023 and remain valid.
- Credits earned after July 1, 2026, must follow the policy adopted in 2026.
- Current certifications remain valid until expiration.

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Appendix: Certification Catalog Proposal Questions

[The proposal form](#) requires answers to the following questions:

1. Course Title
2. Course Description
3. Competencies
4. Desired Learning Outcomes
5. Presenter Name
6. Presenter Credentials
7. Presenter's Association/Organization
8. Number of Credits
9. Cost
10. Name of Person Submitting Proposal
11. Email and Phone Number of Person Submitting Proposal
12. Are you submitting the proposal on behalf of your library or organization?
13. What is the name of the library or organization providing this opportunity?