



Idaho
Commission
for Libraries

Best Practices Section 6: Services and Programming

Toolkit

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In this toolkit you will find value-added information that includes definitions, examples, and links to useful resources to help you respond to the questions in the corresponding Best Practices Checklist.

Core Level

6.1. My library's services and programs are directly connected to the library's mission and its strategic plan.

6.1.1. Policies, services, and programming are prioritized according to their relative importance in achieving the library's strategic plan.

6.1.2. Key Points to Remember When Identifying Service Priorities (from *Strategic Planning for Results* by Sandra Nelson¹. Quoted with the author's permission):

6.1.2.1. The most effective way to reach agreement on issues is to first identify objective criteria. [In the *Planning for Results* process, these criteria are community needs. The whole planning process is based on a belief that "the best possible public library services" cannot be defined in the abstract. The only valid definition is one that takes into consideration the needs of the people being served in each community.]

6.1.2.2. It is called a *community* planning committee for a reason. The director's presentations should be informative and not persuasive. The director already knows what she and the staff think. The purpose of planning meetings is to find out what community members think.

6.1.2.3. There is no need to reach consensus on the community vision, current conditions, or needs. There is room for several points of view in this process.

6.1.2.4. The identification of library service priorities is a collaborative process that includes community leaders, library staff, and the members of the library board.

6.1.2.5. The library service responses will be selected to meet identified community needs. The personal beliefs and values of the people selecting the service responses should not be a factor.

6.1.2.6. There is no magic number of service responses that can be selected. The appropriate number of service responses is different for every library.

6.1.2.7. Communicate, communicate, communicate.

6.2. My library's services and programs are consistently evaluated by customers using simple feedback mechanisms. These can include, but are not limited to surveys, postcards, and verbal feedback. Project Outcome is a free toolkit designed to help public libraries understand and share the impact of essential library services and programs by providing

¹ Nelson, Sandra S., and Sandra S. Nelson. *Strategic Planning for Results*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2008.

simple surveys and an easy-to-use process for measuring and analyzing outcomes:
<https://www.projectoutcome.org/>.

- 6.3. My library evaluates services and programs to gain information that will improve planning and delivery.
- 6.4. My library's hours are determined by community need and include a mix of morning, afternoon, evening, and weekend hours, the total of which places the library above the 50th percentile for hours open per week according to the *Idaho Public Library Statistics*.
 - 6.4.1. Ideally, the library's total open hours place the library above the 50th percentile for hours open per week according to the *Idaho Public Library Statistics*:
<https://libraries.idaho.gov/idaho-library-statistics/>.
- 6.5. My library does not charge residents of the library's taxing district for basic library services, such as borrowing materials, interlibrary loan, computer use, and basic library programs. It is important for staff and trustees to be able to explain to nonresidents of the library's service area that residents and property owners have already paid for their library service through taxation. It is, therefore, only fair that nonresidents should pay an equitable amount for their library service.
- 6.6. My library has considered or is considering going fine-free, except for lost or damaged items. To learn more about why eliminating overdue fines helps ensure equitable library service for all, watch Dawn Wacek's TED Talk:
https://www.ted.com/talks/dawn_wacek_a_librarian_s_case_against_overdue_book_fines
- 6.7. My library provides reference and reader advisory services to all of its patrons in person and by telephone during open hours of operation. The Idaho Commission for Libraries' Libraries Linking Idaho program offers quality databases to assist public librarians provide reference information and readers's advisory through NoveList :
<https://libraries.idaho.gov/lili/>
- 6.8. My library provides information and instruction on the use of the library, its materials, and its equipment.
- 6.9. My library makes reasonable accommodations in order to provide access to its collections and services to the deaf, the hard of hearing, the blind and visually disabled, and persons with disabilities. Accommodations include, but are not limited to, assisted listening devices during public presentations, screen reading software, furniture to accommodate wheelchairs, wheelchair ramps, motorized door openers, a certified sign language interpreter, and homebound services.
 - 6.9.1. See Appendix A for more information on accommodations for deaf and hard of hearing patrons.

6.9.2. See appendix B for more information on accommodations for blind and visually disabled.

6.10. My library develops and hosts educational, informational, and cultural programs across all age groups, abilities, and backgrounds, which are informed by a strategic plan and designed to meet the diverse needs and interests of the communities it serves at times and locations that best meet patron needs.

Enhanced Level

6.11. My library's services and programs take place in the library as well as out in the community.

6.12. My library brings outreach services to the underserved and unserved in the community. Outreach refers to services and programs a library offers to various service populations, such as schools, native speakers of Spanish, the homeless, the LGBT community, hospitals, senior facilities, and correctional facilities. Outreach is rapidly becoming the primary means for libraries to reach all members of their community. For example, the Administration on Aging has projected that, by the year 2030, 19.3% of the population will be aged 65 years or older, more than twice the number in 2000. The U.S. Census projects that the U.S. population over age 65 will grow to over 83.7 million by the year 2050. For more information, see <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2017/12/the-power-of-community-outreach-meeting-the-demands-of-the-growing-senior-population/>.

6.13. My library has gone fine-free, except for lost or damaged items, to eliminate barriers to access for library patrons.

6.14. My library's services and programs are developed in collaboration with external partners whenever possible.

6.14.1. To learn more about school/public library cooperative programs, visit <http://www.ala.org/alsc/aboutalsc/external-relationships/schoolplcoop>.

6.14.2. The Public Library & School Library Collaboration Toolkit is available at <http://www.ala.org/alsc/publications-resources/professional-tools/school-public-library-partnerships>.

6.15. My library provides reference and reader advisory services through multiple channels of communication, such as telephone, live chat, e-mail, and other innovative mechanisms.

Stretch Level

6.16. My library's services and programs are designed, deployed, and reviewed in consultation with stakeholder advisory groups.

6.17. My library provides training and equipment for digitization of community history and individual assets and artifacts.

6.17.1. To learn more about setting up a memory lab, see the D.C. Public Library's resources at <http://libguides.dclibrary.org/memorylab/in-the-lab>.

6.17.2. The Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) offers a Digital Reformatting and File Management module as part of its Public Library Partnerships Project: <https://pro.dp.la/projects/digital-reformatting-and-file-management>.

6.17.3. The Visual Resources Association (VRA) is a multidisciplinary organization dedicated to furthering research and education in the field of image management within the educational, cultural heritage, and commercial environments. VRA has gathered Best Practices and Procedural Guides from several organizations at <https://vraweb.org/resources/cataloging-metadata-and-data-management/best-practices-and-procedures-guides/>.

6.17.4. The Library of Congress has assembled preservation resources at <https://www.loc.gov/preservation/>.

6.17.5. The Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) has assembled conservation and preservation resources at <https://www.nedcc.org/>.

6.17.6. The Sustainable Heritage Network offers workshops, online tutorials and web resources dedicated to the lifecycle of digital stewardship: <https://www.sustainableheritagenetwork.org/>.

6.17.7. The Idaho State Historical Society provides grants related to community history and collection management: <https://history.idaho.gov/grants/ceg/>.

Appendix A

Deaf and hard of hearing patrons want and use many of the same services that hearing patrons utilize. However, they may require some accommodations in order to access these services fully. Accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- i) Communicating with staff via pencil and paper
- ii) Calling the library through video relay service (VRS)
 - a. VRS is a federally funded video telecommunication service that allows videophone users and voice telephone users to communicate through a certified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter.
 - b. VRS is free to users and is available 24/7.
 - c. Private VRS companies provide the equipment and service and are reimbursed for interpreted minutes by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
 - d. The FCC now requires VRS companies to provide videophone users with a 10-digit telephone number that will connect hearing callers to an interpreter automatically.
 - e. VRS providers also offer Voice Carryover (VCO), a service for videophone users who wish to use their own voices during the call. If you are a hearing person at one end of a VCO call, you will hear the caller's voice, but never that of the interpreter. It is up to the video caller whether or not to tell the hearing person that an interpreter is involved in the call.
 - f. VRS users can make all the same types of calls that users of voice telephones can make: catching up with relatives, attending teleconferences, calling the bake or the dry cleaner, signing up for a class through an automated phone system, making purchases over the phone, adult chat lines and the like ... this is all part of functional equivalence.
 - g. In the U.S., VRS interpretation is available ASL/English or ASL/Spanish.
 - h. VRS is also available in Canada, with interpretation offered between English and ASL or between French and Langue de Signe Québécois (Quebec Sign Language).
 - i. Many public libraries, universities, and community organizations serving the deaf have installed public videophone booths, kiosks, or stations that make outgoing VRS calls. There are many VRS vendors, the two most popular being Purple VRS (<http://www.purple.us/education>) and Sorenson VRS (<http://www.sorensonvrs.com>). You can also contact the Sorenson Customer Information Group at 866-756-6729.

- iii) Clear visual signage to help deaf and low-vision patrons navigate the building
- iv) Captioning of video or DVDs. If your library has a television playing in any public area, it is important to have the captions turned on at all times. Research shows that captioning helps all children, deaf or hearing, learn to read:
<http://www.zaneeducation.com/video-subtitles-captions/subtitle-and-closed-captions-research.php>.
- v) Depending on a deaf patron's proficiency level in English or the presence of physical disabilities, additional accommodations may be required.
- vi) Hiring an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter for library programs. The best way to do this is to contact the Idaho Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf:
<http://www.idahorid.org/>.
- vii) Programming staff often assume that providing interpreters for programs will automatically draw a deaf audience, but this is simply not true. Some programs are just inherently less interesting to the Deaf community in general than others. The best way to find out which programs will appeal to a Deaf audience is to ask them! You can partner with the Idaho Association of the Deaf (<https://www.facebook.com/Idaho-Association-of-the-Deaf-266548853371582/>), Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind (<https://iesdb.org/>), and/or the Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (<https://cdhh.idaho.gov/>) to survey deaf people to find out what kind of programs would interest them. And it is always a good idea to ask Deaf patrons for their feedback.
- viii) Whatever your library's specific situation, every staff member is in a position to improve service to deaf patrons. For most deaf people, miscommunications and misunderstanding by hearing people are an everyday occurrence. By simply being willing to educate yourself about the needs of your deaf patrons, you are displaying a positive and open attitude that can bring about greater changes. This attitude of willingness and patience to take the time to provide equal access to deaf patrons is the most important factor in improving these services.
 - a. A guide featuring resources for librarians and patrons can be found on the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library (DCDL) website:
<http://montgomerycountymd.libguides.com/mddeafculturedigilib>. You can follow DCDL on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MarylandDCDL/>.
 - b. Gallaudet University's Library has created a LibGuide for working with deaf patrons: <http://libguides.gallaudet.edu/c.php?g=773982>.

Appendix B

Blind and visually impaired (BVI) patrons want and use many of the same services that sighted patrons utilize. However, they may require some accommodations to access them fully. Here are some things to do – and not to do – when meeting a blind or visually impaired (BVI) person:

- i) Don't shout at the person. Blind does not mean deaf.
- ii) Don't grab a blind or visually impaired person to lead them. You may offer assistance and if it is accepted, he will probably prefer to take your arm.
- iii) If the person uses a guide dog, don't pet or distract the dog.
- iv) Don't try to guide the dog verbally or physically. Talk to the person using the dog if you need to give information. The appropriate place to walk with a guide dog user is on the opposite side of the person so that the dog is not between you.
- v) Don't be afraid to use words like *blind*, *see*, or *look*.
- vi) Don't move objects around in the environment without notifying the person who is blind.
- vii) Don't be afraid to have a casual conversation with a blind person. Regardless of her visual ability, she is still a person.
- viii) Don't give directions by just pointing or saying, "over there." The blind person may not be able to determine which way you are pointing where "over there" is.
- ix) Don't play the Can-you-tell-who-I-am-by-the-sound-of-my-voice game. It can be perceived as very demeaning and rude.
- x) When getting into a car, don't assume the blind person needs any help opening and closing doors, or putting on his own seatbelt.
- xi) Don't stop for a blind person standing at a crosswalk when the light is against her. Don't honk or yell to the person to tell her where to cross. She has been trained to listen to traffic patterns and cross accordingly; honking or yelling just interferes with this process and can also be unsafe. If you don't know how long the light has been green, don't tell a blind person that it is safe to cross.
- xii) Blindness is a fact of life for people living with vision loss. Don't feel the need to try to find them a cure. Religious beliefs are very personal, and it may make people very uncomfortable when complete strangers offer to pray for them.
- xiii) Don't assume a person using a cane can't see anything.

- xiv) Don't assume that a person *not* using a white cane can see everything.
- xv) Do introduce yourself.
- xvi) Ask if the blind person needs assistance rather than assuming.**
- xvii) Offer your elbow for sighted guide.
- xviii) Give specific directions, such as, "The door is in front of you and to the left of you."
- xix) When finishing a conversation, do let the person know that you are leaving the room. He may not realize that you have left and continue talking.
- xx) Speak directly to the blind person, not the sighted person who may be with her.
- xxi) Refer to the person by name, not by her level of vision.
- xxii) Be willing to see that a blind person is just a person, not an "amazing blind person" just because he walked up a few steps or crossed a street.
- xxiii) Do assume that a person knows where she is going if she is walking down the street with a cane or a dog. If a person is out independently, she most likely have been trained and knows what she is doing and where she is going. If she is in need of assistance, she will ask. If you want to let her know that you are there when she looks like she is in need of something, just say hello or *ask* if she needs help. Again, ask, don't assume.
- xxiv) If giving cash to a blind person, do tell him the denomination and position of the bills, such as, "The five-dollar bill is on top and the ten is underneath." This will help him stay organized so that he can put the bills away accordingly.
- xxv) Do remember that blind individuals are in charge of their own lives and do not need supervision or caretaking.
- xxvi) Most don't want your sympathy, but they do want to be treated with respect.
- xxvii) When in doubt of what to do, just ask!**