

County Library Planning Primer

Packet Topics

County Planning: the Primer

Statutory Authority

Goals/Purposes/Outcomes

Assigning Responsibility for the Plan

Topics/Issues to Consider

Components of a County Plan

County Appointments to Local Library Boards

The Counties/System Agreement

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Prepared by Winding Rivers Library System

This outline is intended to assist county boards in coordinating the review and revision of county library service plans. Further assistance can be obtained from Winding Rivers Library System and the Division for Libraries, Technology, and Community Learning, a part of DPI.

Statutory Authority:

W.S. 43.11(1): “Any county board may appoint a county library planning committee under this section....”

W.S. 43.11(3)(a): “The committee may prepare a new plan for the organization of a county or multicounty system, revise an existing plan or change the boundaries of a public library system. It shall conduct public hearings concerning these plans, revisions and changes to which representatives of all libraries in the county shall be invited.”

W.S. 43.11(3)(c): “The plan for library service for a county...shall provide for library services to residents of those municipalities in the county not maintaining a public library under this chapter. The services shall include full access to public libraries participating in the public library system and the plan shall provide for reimbursement for that access....”

W.S. 43.11(3)(d): “The plan of library services for a county may include minimum standards of operation for public libraries in the county. The county shall hold a public hearing on any standards proposed under this paragraph. The standards shall take effect if they are approved by the county and public library boards of at least 50% of the participating municipalities in the county that contain... at least 80% of the population of the participating municipalities in the county.”

W.S. 43.15(4)(b): “A county may participate in a federated public library system if it does all of the following: 1. Adopts and maintains the plan of library service submitted and approved under 43.11(3)...”

Ideally, plans should be reviewed and revised every five years.

Goals/Purposes/Outcomes:

Define Relationships: Determine and specify what the county’s relationship will be with 1) the library system, 2) the libraries within the county, and 3) library users/citizens, particularly those in rural areas, in regard to library services and

opportunities.

Assure Accountability: Since significant county tax dollars are invested in library services, it is important for the county to assure that desirable and justifiable results are achieved. This can be assisted by 1) developing county library standards, 2) having county representatives on local library boards as allowed by W.S. 43.60, and 3) discussing and defining what is equitable support to municipal libraries which serve the broader county population.

Improve the Quality of Life: Facilitate the development of components which positively affect the quality of life for all county residents. This can be achieved by supporting and advocating for library services which promote 1) life long learning, 2) constructive recreation and a sense of fulfillment, 3) citizen participation in the community, and 4) economic vitality.

Accept the Role of Libraries: The planning process can help the county board understand and acknowledge the place of the public libraries within the county. This can be achieved by investigating 1) how and how well libraries are meeting the needs of county residents, 2) the benefits realized by a county of having public libraries within its borders, and 3) what needs the libraries face in trying to meet their charge.

Assigning Responsibility for the Plan (three options):

- A. If there is a county library board, or a county library planning committee in place, this is an ideal group to have responsibility for gathering information, studying options, and preparing a draft plan.
- B. Create a standing committee of the county board to address library planning. This will make regular monitoring of progress and revision of the plan more likely to occur.
- C. Establish an ad hoc committee to just prepare a draft plan. Representation on this committee could include county supervisors, local library trustees and/or staff, citizens at large, including library users, members of the business and education communities, and municipal officials from communities with and without libraries.

NOTE: Recommended committee size is 7 to 15 members.

Topics/Issues to Consider:

- 1. Current Situation: How is library service provided and used now? Is it balanced throughout the county?
- 2. Purpose: From the county government's perspective, what is the mission of library service and of a county library service plan itself?

3. Desired Capabilities: What levels and types of library service does the county board want to see provided? What levels and types of technology? Of resources?
4. Goals: Service goals (How do you want libraries to enrich their offerings to the public?) vs. Management goals (How should the plan be implemented and funded?)
5. Objectives: What needs to happen to reach our goals? (Developing new services or operations; maintaining or improving quality; eliminating or minimizing problems/obstacles; optimizing resources.)
6. Funding: How are library revenues distributed and used? Is funding equitable and does it allow the libraries to satisfy the desires of the county?

Components of a County Plan:

1. A mission statement.
2. Brief description of the planning process and participants (including dates of public hearings).
3. Description of current service environment and relationships (local and regional).
4. A statement of the county's position on standards.
5. A statement of goals and objectives (which should incorporate standards if they are being established).
6. Budgetary statement relating financial support to services and goals.
7. Certification of approval by the county board (and any local boards if standards are established).

County Appointments to Local Library Boards:

W.S. 43.60 allows county board chairs, with the approval of the county board, to appoint trustees to local library boards if the county support of the library equals a specified proportion of the municipalities appropriation for the library. How many appointments the county can make to a given board depends on what proportion of the local appropriation the county support represents. The authorization is as follows:

County Proportion of Local Funding	Number of Appointments to Local Board
At least 1/6, less than 1/3	1
At least 1/3, less than 1/2	2
At least 1/2, less than 2/3	3
At least 2/3, less than equal	4
Equal to or greater than local	5

The terms for county appointees are 3 years, beginning on May 1 following the formal appointment. One appointee to a particular library board can be a county supervisor, but only one; other appointees must be county residents. If the funding proportion drops for a given year, the term of appointees related to that proportion will end on the following May 1.

These appointments offer a significant opportunity for the county to have an impact on the nature of the library service in the county and, in that sense, are a component of county library planning. The county library service plan should address this appointing authority if it is applicable.

The Counties/System Agreement:

Indirectly related to the county library service plan is the agreement among the seven counties and Winding Rivers Library System. This agreement formalizes the relationship that the counties have to the library system and each other. It has typically been reviewed, revised if necessary, and signed anew about every 10 years. It was last addressed in 1998, so it would be reasonable and practical to include a review of the agreement as part of the county library service planning process. Winding Rivers will prepare a draft of the agreement which can then be considered during the planning process and, hopefully, approved by the county boards before the end of 2008.