



**Planning for Library Excellence:
Standards for Virginia Public Libraries
2019**

INTRODUCTION	3
Purpose	3
Background	4
Approval	6
Ratings	6
GOVERNANCE, FUNDING, AND ADMINISTRATION	9
Governance	9
Library Boards	9
Library Directors	10
Administration	13
PUBLIC RELATIONS	14
HUMAN RESOURCES (HR)	15
HR Policies	16
Staffing Levels	17
Staff Development	19
Volunteers & Friends	21
Volunteers	21
Friends	22
COLLECTIONS	23
FACILITIES	25
TECHNOLOGY	28
ACCESS AND SERVICES	29
Access	29
Services	31
Information Services	32
Programs	33
CONCLUSION	35

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Library of Virginia has promoted excellence in the development of public libraries since establishing Traveling Libraries in 1904. As noted in the *Report of the State Librarian, 1903–1904*, "Aside from the consideration of the possibilities of this system of library extension, it is the duty of the State to afford every possible educational opportunity to its citizens. An investment in literature . . . such as the Library represents, without extending its resources to every section of the Commonwealth, is at least an unequal condition, and should be rectified at once." The enormous investment in staff, time, funding, creativity, and energy through many years has resulted in a statewide system of public libraries truly dedicated to serving the people of Virginia.

The "people's university" is now the people's source for job searching, access to government information only available online, e-mail and Internet resources, as well as traditional library activities. *Planning for Library Excellence, 2019*, would not have been possible without the body of work not only in building a strong library system, but also in providing practical standards to guide that development. *Planning for Library Excellence (PLE)* seeks to improve the quality of library service available to each resident of the Commonwealth. Since 1988, this document's clearly voiced concerns underscore the dedication of Virginia librarians to this end. In the context of these recommended goals, these concerns include a desire for

- practicality and achievability.
- provision of incentives for improvement of library service.
- applicability to a variety of sizes and types of public libraries
- ease of use and comprehension.
- rationale and justification for budget requests to governing bodies or funding agencies.

Further, PLE intends to provide benchmarks for direction and aspiration for library systems as well as offer education for parties less familiar with Virginia public libraries. When boards of trustees, governing officials, members of funding agencies, and community support groups involved in planning at the local level and within the context of regional and state library service use these standards, they ensure that all Virginians will be well-served, increasing community impact for all. PLE also provides information to help libraries plan and evaluate their services to meet the needs of their users in the most effective way their resources will allow. Even as planning is a dynamic process, *Planning for Library Excellence* is intended as a dynamic document, one which will spark debate and discussion, evaluation, and revision. Providing quality library service is an integrated process in which goals serve as an important tool in measuring a library's success in fulfilling its stated mission or role. The desired result of this process and of this document is excellence in the response of each public library in Virginia to the needs of its community of users.

The title, *Planning for Library Excellence, 2019*, denotes the importance and constancy of continuous planning and improvement to library service in a world in which current information is as necessary to government and an informed citizenry as oxygen is to human survival. Planning tools are numerous and adjustable to library size. This document is informed by the Public Library Association, a division of the American Library Association, the Research Institute for Public Libraries, and models from other sectors, such as education, local government and the private sector.

Background

These standards are part of a series of efforts to support Virginia's public libraries.

In 1936, Assistant State Librarian Randolph Church published a *Regional Library Plan* in which he made a strong plea for a state grant-in-aid program. His plan included ten regions to serve the state. Although funding for state aid was not allocated, the General Assembly enacted the first comprehensive general library law and declared, "It the policy of the Commonwealth, as a part of its provision for public education, to promote the establishment and development of public library service throughout its various political subdivisions." This very important language remains in the *Code of Virginia* §42.1-46.

In 1942, William A. Wright, of Tappahannock, was the patron of the first state-aid bill to receive funding—\$50,000. In the original state-aid formula, city libraries were eligible for grants up to \$5,000 while county and regional libraries were eligible for grants up to \$15,000. The state-aid program took its current form after changes to the formula and library laws in 1970. In January 1978, the State Library Board approved *Recommended Minimum Standards for Virginia Public Libraries*. The five-page document covered staffing, salaries and benefits, buildings, outlets, collections, reference service, staff development, children's services, adult services, programs, and cooperation. Two additional documents, *Children's Service Suggested Guidelines* and *Young Adult Services Guidelines for Virginia*, were later approved.

In 1982, the Library Development Committee of the Virginia Library Association started to review the *Recommended Minimum Standards*. In 1986, their document was sent to the Library of Virginia Board for consideration. These standards, *Planning for Library Excellence* (the blue book), were adopted on November 7, 1987. Chapters included Administration and Planning, Resources, and Services. The preface by Peggy Forehand, Board Chairman, and Ella Gaines Yates, State Librarian, notes:

The guidelines do not set forth statistical standards that represent a hypothetical average Virginia public library. Rather they set goals on various levels to which every public library in the Commonwealth may aspire.

Unfortunately, the first edition of PLE did not contain many references to technology at a time when the impact of technology on libraries was becoming a driving force for change. By the mid-1990s, the need for revision was obvious. In 1994, a committee of the Virginia Library Association (VLA) reviewing the formula for state aid to public libraries suggested that *Planning for Library Excellence* be revised. The Librarian of Virginia requested that VLA begin the process to revise the document,

and a VLA committee was appointed to do so. In 1995, the Virginia Public Library Directors Association (VPLDA) asked for, and received, the responsibility for the revision.

In July 1999, the Virginia Public Library Directors Association requested that LVA assume responsibility for the revision of *Planning for Library Excellence*. Incorporating new tools from ALA such as *Planning for Results* and the ability to analyze statistics from public libraries, the second edition of *PLE* was more of a planning tool than a traditional standards document. Libraries could quickly determine whether they met a basic standard, but to use *PLE* correctly, they needed to analyze progress toward essential, aspiring, and excel guidelines depending on the planning profile for their library. *Planning for Library Excellence* was intended to be a dynamic document. In order for it to continue as an effective planning tool, it required periodic revision and adaptation to reflect changes in library trends and services and the availability of new data. The 1998 planning profiles were to be updated yearly. This did not happen for a number of reasons, thus limiting the usefulness of the document.

In 2004, LVA commissioned a long-range study to "assist in assuring that the Commonwealth's public libraries are prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century as valued community resources responsive to the rapid change in technology and society." The consulting firm of Himmel and Wilson was hired to conduct the study. In 2005, their study, *Inventing the Future of Public Library Service in Virginia*, recommended that *PLE* be "reviewed, revised, and strengthened" because of the many changes in public libraries. Particularly noted were the need for better (updated) technology, a user-friendly format, a checklist, and a discussion on partnerships.

The H&W Task Force on Standards began work in April 2006. Members of the committee represented all types and sizes of public libraries. Using the new technologies, including a wiki, members were assigned sections to research and for which to draft standards. In June 2007, the Task Force substantially completed a working draft that was turned over to the LVA staff for standardization. Various drafts were shared with the public library community. At the Virginia Public Library Directors Association conference in April 2008, the directors requested testing of the standards. Test results were discussed at the September 2008 directors' meeting.

In 2018, a new task force assembled to review and update this document in light of the current needs, opportunities and challenges facing public libraries. The task force took the conversation to library directors throughout Virginia to seek feedback on each standards section; conducted a workday to assimilate that feedback, sought review and input from both directors and the Library Board's Library Development Committee before passing it on for formal approval from both groups in 2019.

The standards described here are consistent with those among the states who establish standards for their public libraries while the original literature supporting them remains elusive. The parties endorsing these standards assert that the universality of these standards, their derivatives, and their effective implementation for the past 30 years serve as the bedrock of their authority.

Approval

On June 24, 2019, the Public Library Development Committee of the Library of Virginia Board received the standards and unanimously voted to support this document as endorsed by the Virginia Public Library Directors, subject to stylistic and formatting changes.

Ratings

Service-Level Ratings

Planning for Library Excellence has established the following service ratings: essential, enhanced and exemplary, accompanied by a corresponding star rating for ease of use and advocacy.

E= “Essential” services meeting the basic needs and expectations of a public library, including circulation, internet access, and basic reference assistance, as mandated in the Code of Virginia. ★

EE = “Enhanced” services, providing a robust array of services beyond basic needs and expectations, such as community programming for all ages, a responsive digital environment, and specific research assistance. ★★

EEE = “Exemplary” services with advanced features in service provision on all fronts.★★★

PFLE 2019 service ratings are simultaneously cumulative, progressive and aspirational. For example, to attain an E or ★ rating, a library will meet ALL criteria but may surpass some E or ★ requirements. Wherever possible, the measures are progressive and aspirational, as a library system purposefully and strategically sets its sights on the next rating, as community need and funding dictates.

Issues in Rating Libraries

Library comparisons or service ratings are not easy nor always useful. Each library or library system differs from its neighbors in enough significant ways to make comparisons very difficult. The best guide for evaluating library service is the improvement of a single library over time when the same statistics are kept in the same manner. Ranking a library fairly against a comparable system requires a great deal of knowledge about the operations of the two libraries.

For example, the service areas of four library systems are similar. These populations vary so much, however, that any reasonable comparison of library operations is futile.

Library	Square Miles Served	Population (US Census Bureau, 2019)
---------	---------------------	-------------------------------------

City of Suffolk	400	90,237
Fairfax Regional	402	1,166,331
Highland County	416	2,212
Chesterfield County	426	343,599

Best practice would indicate that any comparisons should be established between libraries of similar size, demography, workforce, in addition to data points such as numbers of library cardholders, circulations; internet users, etc.. Non-standardized methods of data-collection and measurement further diminish an apples to apples comparison between libraries. However, because comparisons can be helpful in developing service levels and aspirations, useful information and data charts regarding Virginia libraries may be found at:

<http://www.lva.virginia.gov/lib-edu/LDND/libstats/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Planning for Library Excellence, 2019, would not have been possible without the dedicated assistance of the Library of Virginia staff and Board, but especially by the public library community and the library director taskforce.

Standards Task Force:

John Huddy, Director, Handley Regional Library System
 Jill Hames, Director, James L. Hamner Public Library
 Ryan Higginbotham, Director, Robert Jamerson Memorial Library
 Betsy Fowler, Director, Williamsburg Regional Library
 Diane Rebertus, Director, Gloucester County Public Library
 Amy Kimani, Director, Bristol Public Library
 Martha Hutzler, Director, Central Rappahannock Regional Library
 Maria Del Rosso, Director, Fauquier County Public Library

Library Development and Networking Division Staff:

Kim Armentrout, Public Library Consultant
 Nan Carmack, Director
 Paranita Carpenter, Administrative Assistant/Procurement Officer
 Cindy Church, Continuing Education Consultant
 Susan La Paro, Children's and Youth Services Consultant
 Nelson Worley, State Data Coordinator

LVA Public Library Development Committee

Robert D. Aguirre, Harrisonburg
 Paul Brockwell, Richmond

The Hon. Jon Bowerbank, Vice-Chair, Lebanon
 Mohammed Esslami, Fairfax

Barbara Vine Little, Orange
Shelley Viola Murphy, Chair, Palmyra

Mark Miller, Leesburg

GOVERNANCE, FUNDING, AND ADMINISTRATION

Governance

Governance of libraries is a collaborative effort between elected officials, the library director and the library, as guided by Virginia State Code for the benefit of its citizens. The organization, governance, and funding of Virginia public libraries is delineated in the *Code of Virginia*, § 42.1-33–45, and the *Virginia Administrative Code*, 17VAC 15-110- 10: Every county and city in Virginia should provide free public library service. Differences in structure for city, county and regional libraries are outlined in the code.

All relevant sections of Virginia State Code may be found online at <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title42.1/>

Library Boards

Governing: Appointed by elected officials, these residents must be truly committed to the goals of the library and willing to donate time and effort to advocate effectively for improvement of library services. The ultimate responsibility and liability for the governance of the public library rests with the library board.

Roles include:

- understanding management practices of both the library and the locality
- seeking financial and political resources to achieve library goals
- provide leadership and vision
- provide communication to their appointing body and the community
- govern policy rather than procedure
- employ, direct and review the library director

Regional: Regional boards perform the above functions AND have fiscal oversight of library budgets.

Advisory: For the Virginia public libraries who are not required to have a governing library board (*Code of Virginia*, § 42.1-36), the advisory board functions as described above with the exception of governing policy and library director employment. The advisory board must seek public support and advocacy in accordance with local conditions.

Library Directors

The director administers the public library, usually, though not always, as appointed by the library board. The director is responsible for all day-to-day management issues including personnel. The director establishes procedures to implement the library policies adopted by the board, provides leadership to the staff and the board, and ensures board knowledge of important concerns.

Governance Level E ★

- ★1: The library is established and maintained according to state law under *Code of Virginia*, § 42.1-33 through 42.1-45.
- ★2: The library is governed under the direction of a board according to state law under *Code of Virginia*, § 42.1-35 *et seq.* or under the direction of the jurisdiction governing body (see § 42.1-36).
- ★3: The library complies with the Requirements Which Must Be Met In Order To Receive Grants-in-Aid, 17VAC15-1 10-10.
- ★4: Members of the library board after appointment or election receive a current copy of the *Virginia Public Library Trustee Handbook* from the director.
- ★5: The director conducts an orientation for each new board member using the *Virginia Public Library Trustee Handbook* as a guide and encourage completion of online training as provided by the Library of Virginia.
- ★6: The library board adopts bylaws, rules, and regulations for its own guidance and for the governance, maintenance, and function of the library system. These bylaws, rules, and regulations should be reviewed at least every three years.
- ★7: The governing board or other appropriate authority controls the expenditures of all moneys budgeted for the library fund.
- ★8: The governing board or other appropriate authority has the authority to accept donations, gifts, endowments and bequests of money, personal property, and real property for the establishment and maintenance of the library system.
- ★9: The governing board or other appropriate authority employs a qualified director and delegates management of the library system to said director.
- ★10: The governing board or other appropriate authority shall conduct annual performance evaluations of the director using the *Virginia Public Library Trustee Handbook* as a guide and/or as guided by local government processes.

- ★11: The library board has regular meetings as specified in the bylaws at a time and place convenient for the board members and the public at large, said meetings to be in accordance with state law (See Appendix *Code of Virginia*, § 2.1-340).
- ★12: The library board evaluates its own performance annually, as described in the *Virginia Public Library Trustee Handbook*.

Governance Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: Copies of current policies are readily available in each library facility and easily accessible by the staff. Policies relevant to, and which have an impact on, the public are accessible from the library's Website.
- ★★3: In creating and updating the strategic plan for the library system, the planning process includes systematic community input, community studies, and the use of other needs' assessment techniques to ensure community participation in the design and delivery of public library service.
- ★★4: In creating and updating the strategic plan for the library system, planning models developed by the Public Library Association, county- or city-mandated planning models, or other available models are used.
- ★★5: The director and the library board monitor the provisions of the strategic plan regularly. The director reports on the progress toward the goals and objectives in the plan to the library board, regularly.
- ★★6: The library board bylaws address continuing education for board development.
- ★★7: Members of the library board participate in relevant training.
- ★★8: The library holds an affiliate membership in the Virginia Library Association.

Governance Level EEE ★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2: Members of the board participate in annual group continuing education as well as identify personal continuing education goals.
- ★★★3: All members of the library board and the director are individual members of the Virginia

Library Association, while maintaining an organizational affiliate membership.

Funding

A public library in Virginia may receive funds in a variety of ways, but its major source is tax revenues from the local government. Successful operation of a library requires local funds from a source that will provide stability in funding. Public libraries receive state aid, as funded by the Virginia General Assembly, according to a formula based on population, local expenditure per capita, and maintenance of that effort, in addition to fulfillment of requirements outlined here: <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/lib-edu/LDND/state-aid/requirements.asp> .

Fundraising, capital campaigns, endowments, grants and donations can provide significant funding but must be considered as secondary, not primary, to the operation of the library. Library officials must work assertively to ensure that the taxing authorities are aware of library services' being provided, areas in which the library may be deficient, and funds needed to allow the library to meet its goals.

Funding Level E★

- ★1: Public libraries are funded primarily through local tax revenues.
- ★2: Governing bodies establish local funding based on local revenues and well-considered budget requests.
- ★3: Local funding for the library are maintained at a level equal to or greater than the preceding year.
- ★4: Reasonable funding levels begin at the **minimal level** required to receive state grants-in-aid, as defined by the formula found here: <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/lib-edu/LDND/state-aid/requirements.asp>
- ★5: The library board or other appropriate authority review, modify as necessary, and approve the proposed annual budget developed by the director to ensure that it reflects board-approved priorities and goals before submitting it to local funding entities.
- ★6: After the proposed budget is submitted to local funding authorities, the director and library board make budget presentations to the local funding entities, if requested.
- ★7: State grants-in-aid are available to libraries meeting all legal qualifications according to the applicable citations.
- ★8: Funding from private sources (such as foundation or corporate grants, individual contributions raised by Friends, and bequests) may help support and enhance library

services, **but these support, not supplant local government funds.**

- ★9: The library board or other appropriate authority adopt a final annual budget based on available funding and reflecting library goals and priorities.
- ★10: The director provides written financial and statistical reports for review at library board meetings and shall communicate regularly on matters that affect policy.

Funding Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: The director and library board seek supplemental sources of funding.

Funding Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2: The director and library board pursue continuous increases in supplemental funding to support the library's strategic plan.

Administration

The library board/governing authority and the director are responsible for providing the best possible service to the community, including creating a stable administrative environment, from which long-range planning and goals may be derived.

Administration Level E ★

- ★1: The director manages all operations of the library, including budget, personnel, planning, and evaluation.
- ★2: The director provides leadership and communication to the staff, the library board, the local government, and the public.
- ★3: The library system has written service and personnel policies that are adopted by the governing board or other appropriate authority.
- ★4: The library system has administrative procedures developed by the director with guidance from the governing board or other appropriate authority to ensure consistency of service/employment and a positive public image for the library system. These procedures are reviewed regularly.
- ★5: The director provides frequent formal and informal communications to the library board

members or other appropriate authorities about the programs, policies, budget, and service plans of the library system.

Administration Level EE ★★

- ★★1: The Library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: The library has a strategic plan that has been adopted by the governing body or other appropriate authority and updated annually. Copies of the plan are readily available in each library facility and easily accessible from the library's Website.
- ★★3: The library system regularly collects data on resources available, usage statistics, and outcomes/impact on individuals and groups and the service area. The state library agency requires this information for its annual statistical report.
- ★★4: The director participates in community organizations, as funding and staffing allow.

Administration Level EEE ★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E and EE.
- ★★★2: The library system regularly collects and analyzes data appropriate to evaluate its impact and progress on stated goals and objectives.
- ★★★3: The library board and director seek advocates and develop partnerships to increase understanding of the library's role in the community and to garner support for the library.
- ★★★4: The library staff and director are encouraged to participate in other community organizations, including paid time and association dues as appropriate.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations involves the process of invoking a public understanding and goodwill toward the library. The community and public relations program should be both internal and external, reaching staff members, trustees, volunteers, Friends' groups, the media, and community leaders, as well as users and nonusers of the library. Serving as an integral portion of the five-year/long-range plan, the availability of library services and materials and the essential role libraries play in improving the quality of life should be conveyed on a continuous basis through a sustained public relations program.

Public Relations Level E★

- ★1: The library develops and approves a media policy with consideration given to patron

- privacy, transparency, and adherent to copyright law, and ethics.
- ★2: Community/public relations programs are a part of the library’s official strategic plan.
 - ★3: The library’s annual budget allocates funds for public relations activities.

Public Relations Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: The director designates a staff member to coordinate public relations activities within the library and between the library and other local agencies.
- ★★3: Annually, the library implements a number of generally accepted publicity techniques to inform its community about programs and resources.
- ★★4: The library assesses community perceptions of both users and nonusers of its services through current and accepted opinion/market research techniques.

Public Relations Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2: Public relations staff members and/or teams have access to continuing education and information about theory, practice, and current developments in public/community relations and library marketing.
- ★★★3: The library establishes a schedule for assessing community perceptions and efficacy of the public relations plan.

HUMAN RESOURCES (HR)

Staff brings a library to life. To be successful, libraries should establish well-developed policies, staffing levels, and professional development plans. In any case, the library director must possess the ability to manage people by balancing their legal, ethical, fiscal, organizational, and political concerns while meeting the fiscal and service goals of the system. Further, this document recognizes that municipal and county HR practices govern its libraries and recommend that the library director participate in and be knowledgeable about these processes.

HR Policies

Policies provide a framework on which to hang the performance of library processes and staff. Many policies respond to the needs of the community for the efficient functioning of the institution while law requires others. Library policy should be approached from general practice, refraining from governing isolated poor performance or behavior from a policy perspective.

Policies Level E★

- ★1: The library adopts written personnel policies outlining the conditions and requirements of employment for all library staff members that include:
- job descriptions
 - recruitment process
 - salaries and classifications schedule
 - benefits
 - regular performance reviews
 - disciplinary actions
 - grievance procedures
 - standards of conduct
 - equal employment opportunities
 - diversity and other related topics for effective personnel management that are consistent with local, state, and federal regulations, including Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other relevant court decisions currently in effect, as well as being correlated with personnel policies of local governing body(ies).
- ★2: The library has a written personnel classification plan and/or job descriptions describing the duties/responsibilities of each staff position, any educational and experience requirements, physical requirements of the job, and the minimum/maximum salary range.
- ★3: The personnel classification plan ensures that all qualified individuals have equal opportunity for employment and advancement within the library/system.
- ★4: The governing board or other appropriate authority reviews the personnel policies on a regular schedule and after any significant change in federal and state employment laws.

- ★5: Personnel policies are available to all library staff members.
- ★6: The library board or other appropriate authority determines the hours of the work week, salaries, and benefits for all library staff members that are comparable with other area community positions requiring similar education, preparation, and job skills. Assistance from the local governing body's personnel department is encouraged.
- ★7: Library staff compensation is regionally competitive and comparable to that for library positions that have the same level of education, training, authority, and responsibility.

Policy EE ★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: The library board or other appropriate authority reviews and/or updates library personnel policies regularly.
- ★★3: The library board or other appropriate authority reviews and/or updates job descriptions regularly.

Policy EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E and EE.
- ★★★2: The library board or other appropriate authority reviews and/or updates the library classification plan regularly.
- ★★★3: The library board or other appropriate authority reviews and updates the library wage/compensation plan regularly.

Staffing Levels

The library cannot meet community needs without sufficient staffing to provide high-quality services during all hours the library is open. The correct number of staff members depends on the number of library outlets, the hours of operation, the number of service points within the library that must be staffed, services to special populations, etc. The library board, or other appropriate authority, and the director must work together to determine this level for each system. Because selecting the appropriate level of staff necessary to operate a library system adequately depends on many factors beyond the population targets in this document, the leadership ability of the director is the key to a library's advancement through the service levels in this document. Every library serving a population in excess of 13,000 shall employ as director a full-time state-certified professional librarian. (*Code of Virginia* § 42.1-15.1 and 17VAC15-110-10. Requirements)

Staffing Level E★

- ★1: The library has qualified staff members who are paid and appropriately trained to fulfill their particular job responsibilities.
- ★2: Every new staff member receives an orientation, tour, and general introduction to the library.
- ★3: Every staff member receives a regular job performance reviews, at least annually.
- ★4: Every staff member is provided with the opportunity for training related to his/her job duties.
- ★5: The library establishes and meets a service target for staffing in full-time equivalents (FTEs) not lower than .3 per 1,000 in population.
- ★6: For every 25,000 in population, the library has 2.5 FTE's in professional staff positions with ALA-accredited education/training.

Staffing Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: Every staff member is provided with a staff handbook (printed or digital) containing the personnel policies.
- ★★3: The library board or other appropriate authority establishes and meets a service target for staffing in full-time equivalents (FTEs) not lower than .5 per 1,000 in population.
- ★★4: For every 25,000 in population, the library has 4.5 FTE's in professional staff positions with ALA-accredited education/training.
- ★★5: The library has an organizational chart.
- ★★6: The library has a designated staff member coordinating youth services.
- ★★7: The library has a designated staff member coordinating public services.
- ★★8: The library has a designated staff member providing outreach services.
- ★★9: The library has a designated staff member coordinating volunteer activities.
- ★★10: Managers who are not the director possess a Bachelor's Degree at minimum.

Staffing Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2: The library establishes and meets a service target for staffing in full time equivalents (FTEs) not lower than .6 per 1,000 in population.
- ★★★3: For every 25,000 in population, the library has 6.5 FTE's in professional staff positions with ALA-accredited education/training.
- ★★★4: The library provides comparable prorated benefits for part-time library employees.
- ★★★5: The library reviews and/or update the organizational chart regularly.
- ★★★6: The library has a full-time Youth Services staff member with a designated Children's Librarian and a designated Teens' Librarian.
- ★★★7: The library has an Outreach Services Librarian.
- ★★★8: The library has a Volunteer Coordinator.
- ★★★9: The library has a Technology Services Coordinator.
- ★★★10: All Managers have a Master's of Library Science or closely related field.

Staff Development

The purpose of staff development is to increase an employee's job effectiveness in his or her present assignment or to prepare a person for future responsibilities. A formal staff development program should identify specific objectives to achieve, embracing current and future staff development needs. Further, systematic evaluation should occur to determine if training needs are met and objectives achieved. Skills to enhance communication and management, to develop professional expertise, and to improve personal contacts with library users and the staff are encouraged.

Staff Development Level E★

- ★1: The library has a written staff development plan that addresses orientation for new employees, ongoing training, and continuing education.
- ★2: The library conducts a periodic staff development needs' assessment for all positions in the library.
- ★3: The library supports continuing education and professional activities by allocating a portion of its budget for the costs of continuing education/training activities to include paid work time for attendance, registration fees, travel, food, and lodging costs where needed for its Director.

- ★4: Professional staff members participate annually in at least 24 hours of formal and informal learning such as on-the-job training, instructional staff meetings, workshops, or similar activities.
- ★5: Support staff members participate annually in at least 16 hours of formal and informal learning such as on-the-job training, instructional staff meetings, workshops, or similar activities.
- ★6: The library provides all staff members with training in excellent internal and external customer services.
- ★7: The library provides all of the staff with resources/training to assist patrons with special needs.
- ★8: The director is be an active member of at least one professional association
- ★9: The library recognizes outstanding effort and achievement by its staff.

Staff Development Level EE ★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: Professional staff members participate annually in at least 34 hours of formal and informal learning such as on-the-job training, instructional staff meetings, workshops, or similar activities.
- ★★3: Such professional development is tied to performance plans and reviews.
- ★★4: Support staff members participate annually in at least 22 hours of formal and informal learning such as on-the-job training, instructional staff meetings, workshops, or similar activities.
- ★★5: The library supports continuing education and professional activities by allocating a portion of its budget for the costs of continuing education/training activities to include paid work time for attendance, registration fees, travel, food, and lodging costs where needed for its managers and full-time staff.
- ★★6: The library trains staff in the use and maintenance of new technology and equipment.
- ★★7: Professional staff and managers are a member of at least one professional association.
- ★★8: The library has an ongoing program of cross training to provide continuity of service for key library operations.

Staff Development Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2: Professional staff members participate annually in at least 48 hours of formal and informal learning such as on-the-job training, instructional staff meetings, workshops, or similar activities.
- ★★★3: The library supports continuing education and professional activities by allocating a portion of its budget for the costs of continuing education/training activities to include paid work time for attendance, registration fees, travel, food, and lodging costs where needed for all library staff and library board.
- ★★★4: The library provides its staff with the resources/training to meet the multilingual needs of its community.
- ★★★5: The library provides access to library journals and other professional literature for staff.
- ★★★6: Support staff members participate annually in at least 32 hours of formal and informal learning such as on-the-job training, instructional staff meetings, workshops, or similar activities.
- ★★★7: All staff are encouraged to members of at least one professional association, with time and financial resources allotted.
- ★★★8: The library has a written plan for recognizing efforts and achievements by library employees.
- ★★★9: With staff input, the library reviews and update the staff development and continuing education plan annually.

Volunteers & Friends

Volunteers

Volunteers constitute an important community resource for public libraries. They often come to the library on an individual basis and participate in ongoing work or special projects. Their tasks should enhance the services and capabilities of the library for which volunteers can become advocates. The use of qualified volunteers in a planned program is recommended to supplement, not substitute for, paid staff members. A key to a good volunteer program is the degree to which volunteers receive supervision, support, and direction from the staff. Training programs for library staff members who supervise the work with volunteers contribute to the likelihood of success.

Volunteers Level E★

- ★1: The library uses volunteers when, where, and as needed to provide support to library staff.
- ★2: Volunteers perform work that paid staff performs, such as shelving and or program preparation but do not substitute for paid staff members in the provision of library services.
- ★3: The library should have a written policy describing the recruitment, assignment, and assessment of volunteers working within the library. This policy shall be made available to volunteers.
- ★4: The library provides orientation and training for volunteers and the staff members who supervise volunteers.
- ★5: Volunteers are only assigned tasks for which they have received training.
- ★6: The library develops and implements a volunteer recognition program.

Volunteers Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: The library reviews and/or updates volunteer training regularly.

Volunteers Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2: The library has written job descriptions and requirements for volunteers.
- ★★★3: The library develops and maintains a volunteer manual.

Friends

Friends of the Library groups are also important library volunteers and, as a collective, often participate in the larger life of the library in advocacy, donor, and programming roles. The partnership between the Friends of the Library is valuable and should be nurtured for the maximum

benefit of the library. Because Friends organizations are not subject to library standards, standards below refer ONLY to library behavior in their interaction with Friends.

Friends Level E★

- ★1: The Friends are kept informed about library services and encouraged to promote them.
- ★2: Library staff promote Friends memberships and activities.

Friends Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: A member of the staff is assigned to be the official liaison with the Friends
- ★★3: The Friends are offered communication, organizational and/or storage spaces, such as shelves, a closet, a bulletin board, etc., based on availability.

Friends Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library comply with all standards of Level E and EE.
- ★★★2: The Library Board invites a designee from the Friends to attend board meetings.
- ★★★3: The Friends are included in communication, advocacy, and strategic planning.

COLLECTIONS

High-quality collections are carefully built over time. A successful collection supports the services the library provides and helps the library meet its defined goals. Collection development also takes into account other library and information resources in the community, the region, and the state. Weeding outdated, unused, and inaccurate materials is part of the collection development process.

A successful collection embodies the principle of free access to ideas on all sides of an issue, including potentially controversial topics. The size and format mix of a successful collection is unique to each community, considering factors such as broadband access, population and square mileage served, facility square footage, annual budget, circulation, etc.. Those responsible for collections should develop a strategy to determine their own community needs.

Collections Level E★

- ★1: The library has a written collection development policy that is reviewed and revised regularly and approved by the

- library board or other appropriate authority.
- ★2: The collection development policy considers the selected service responses and the information needs of the community.
 - ★3: The library's collection development policy includes selection and weeding policies.
 - ★4: The collection development policy endorses:
 - The Library Bill of Rights of the American Library Association and its interpretations.
 - Freedom to Read, a joint statement by the American Library Association and the Association of American Publishers.
 - Freedom to View, a statement of the American Film and Video Association.
- NOTE: These documents and additional resource material are available in the Appendix and in the American Library Association's *Intellectual Freedom Manual*, 7th edition.
- <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/iftoolkits/ifmanual/intellectual.cfm>
- ★6: The collection development policy includes procedures for timely responses for reconsideration of materials.
 - ★7: The collection development may include procedures for purchase requests.
 - ★8: The library routinely evaluates its collection to determine strengths and weaknesses and acts on that information to make improvements.
 - ★9: The library maintains a collection evaluated and weeded using a standard method such as the CREW method.
 - ★10: The library promotes access to the statewide collection of electronic databases.

Collections Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: The library provides digital resources to supplement those made available by the Library of Virginia, as meets the needs of its communities.
- ★★3: The library has a preservation policy, if it holds special collections, including local history.

★★4: At least every three years, the library evaluates its collection to determine strengths and weaknesses, allocating resources to address the identified weaknesses.

Collections Level EEE★★★

★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.

★★★2: The library promotes use of the collections through marketing, displays, and programs that increase user awareness and appreciation of library resources.

★★★3: The library provides a sufficient number of items in any format to serve the community reflecting the diverse needs of the community.

★★★4: The library updates its collection development policy at least every five years based on its current strategic plan.

FACILITIES

A public library building should offer the community a compelling invitation to enter. The building design should be adaptable to changing use patterns. The building should accommodate public use, support staff efficiency, and encourage economy. It must comply with the latest regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act and all local and state requirements for public buildings. Please note that the square footages indicated are TOTAL square footages for the population and may be spread among branches. For example, a four-branch library might determine their square footage based on voting district populations or other municipality divisions to determine appropriate square footage for an individual branch. As a general guideline, libraries should strive to meet the below recommendation but library size should be determined by a space/needs analysis for that community.

Service Level	Total Gross Square Feet Per Capita			
Population Level	Up to 25,000	25,001 - 100,000	100,001 - 500,000	Over 500,000
E★	.6 SF with .8 desired	.6 SF	.6 SF	.6 SF
EE★★	.9 SF	.8 SF	.7 SF	.65 SF
EEE★★★	1.0 SF	1.0 SF	1.0 SF	.85 SF

E=Essential
 EE=Enhanced
 EEE=Exemplary

Facilities Level E ★

- ★1: Library facilities are functional, attractive, accessible, and safe and large enough for the population they serve.
- ★2: Buildings are capable of supporting the infrastructure necessary for present and future technologies.
- ★3: All library buildings comply with building, fire, safety, sanitation, and other appropriate state and local codes and other legal requirements.
- ★4: Library buildings provide handicapped access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- ★5: Adequate, convenient, and well-lit parking is available to the library's users and staff at or near the library site. Check local and national codes for applicable formulas for amount of parking necessary.
- ★6: Library facilities have exterior signs so the library is clearly identifiable from the street.
- ★7: There is directional signage to the library.
- ★8: The library provides professionally produced interior signage adequate to help patrons make good use of the facility.
- ★9: Infrastructure is in accordance with state and national standards.
- ★10. The library has an up-to-date disaster response and recovery procedure plan.
- ★11. The library planning and building process is transparent. Opportunities for community comment is provided, as appropriate.
- ★12. Planning for library facilities' development is based on at least twenty-year population growth projections and other factors including location of possible future library buildings and plans for major new residential and commercial development.
- ★13. When siting new library facilities are located
 - In urban areas, no more than 20 minutes' driving time from residents as an average of multiple travel time studies from a) the edges of the service area to the nearest available library and b) between available libraries.
 - In rural areas, no more than 30 minutes' driving time from residents.
 - Where possible, on a fixed transportation route. Fixed transportation route refers to

public transportation where available or to easily accessible locations on or near main roadways.

- Near existing community resources, such as shopping, government services, restaurants.

Facilities Level EE ★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: The building promotes energy efficiency, usage of natural daylight, waste reduction, and improvement of air quality.
- ★★3: When possible, newly constructed and renovated library facilities are be "green" or sustainable facilities, constructed with ecologically sound materials.
- ★★4: Library facilities are located:
 - in urban areas, no more than 15 minutes' driving time from residents as an average of multiple travel time studies from a) the edges of the service area to the nearest available library and b) between available libraries.
 - in rural areas, no more than 20 minutes' driving time from residents.
 - where possible, on a public transportation route.

Facilities Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1. The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2. Whenever possible, facilities meet LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards established by the U.S. Green Building Council.
- ★★★3. Library facilities are located:
 - in urban areas, no more than 10 minutes' driving time from residents as an average of multiple travel time studies from
 - the edges of the service area to the nearest available library and
 - between available libraries;
 - in rural areas, no more than 15 minutes' driving time from residents;
 - where possible, on a fixed transportation route.

TECHNOLOGY

To use technology effectively, the library must plan carefully, provide ongoing support and training, and continuously upgrade and replace hardware, software, and information resources. All staff must be computer literate in order to meet community needs.

Technology Level E★

- ★1: The library has a technology plan that regularly reviews and employs emerging technologies in order to maximize library services.
- ★2: The plan includes a designated replacement cycle and strategies for keeping equipment up-to-date and secure on an ongoing basis.
- ★3: The library has an Acceptable Internet Use Policy, which has been reviewed by the library board (if applicable) and/or the governing jurisdiction, and which has been submitted to the Library of Virginia. (See Appendix *Code of Virginia*, § 42.1-36.1.)
- ★4: The library's strategic plan addresses the role of technology in the delivery of services to residents.
- ★5: The library maintains up-to-date public and staff access workstations, with internet connectivity.
- ★6: The library provides copy, fax, and scanning capabilities.
- ★7: The library has an automated/integrated library system that meets current and appropriate technical standards for library records.
- ★8: When appropriate, the library takes advantage of the E-rate program (www.usac.org/sl) to deliver the most comprehensive and effective telecommunications capabilities possible to library users and library staff members.
- ★9: The library utilizes the highest capacity network available in their community.

Technology Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.

- ★★2: The library provides wireless printing for patrons.
- ★★3: The library expands their network capacity as opportunity arises.

Technology Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2: The library circulates technology (laptops, devices, hotspots).
- ★★★3: The library pursues and offers emerging and automated technologies as they become available.

ACCESS AND SERVICES

Access

Access refers to making library services and resources as widely available as possible through library facilities, collections, and hours of operation. Access includes meeting needs of residents beyond use of the building itself.

Access Level E★

- ★1: The library provides basic services free of charge to everyone in its service population. (See *Code of Virginia*, § 42.1-55.)
- ★2: When the library is open, all basic services are available (See *Code of Virginia*, § 42.1-55.)
- ★3: Library patrons are able to use materials and services so long as state and federal laws are followed in their access of materials and services, such as copyright law.
- ★4: The library has written policies covering the following:
 - Use of facilities and display areas
 - Rights and responsibilities of patrons (patron behavior)
 - Children’s use of the library
 - Access to the Internet and personal computing applications
- ★5: The library is open to the public at fixed times and with a uniform schedule.

- ★6: The library provides minimum unduplicated service hours as indicated by state aid requirements.
- ★7: Every regional, county, and city library serving an area of more than 400 square miles, or more than 25,000 persons, provides some form of extension service acceptable to the Library of Virginia board, as required by state aid.
- ★8: If the library has two or more service units, either branches or stations, it maintains a scheduled frequent-delivery system, as required by state aid.
- ★9: Patrons have access to library services by telephone or online.
- ★10: The library provides a Webpage with contact information, hours, and service location information.
- ★11: When the library is not open, a recorded telephone message provides information on hours of service.
- ★12: The library offers an easily accessible catalog in facilities and on the web.
- ★13: The library's website exhibits Web and Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA success criteria.
- ★14: The library delivers materials to a patron's preferred library locations.
- ★15: The library facility is physically accessible to all people and meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities as published in *The Federal Register*, the *Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code*, and any applicable local standards.

Access Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: Library users are able to request and renew library materials online.
- ★★3: If public transportation is available, the library works with providers to encourage availability of public transportation to the library.
- ★★4: The library provides users with disabilities who are unable to travel to the library with service in keeping with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Access Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2: Library users are able to pay fees/fines electronically.
- ★★★3: Library users are able to register for a library card online.

Services

As the community information hub where people come together to exchange information and ideas through programming and interactive learning, library services are critical to the success of every library. As such, service policies, access, and programming should be immune to ideological, political, or religious censorship and commercial pressures while responding to community needs.

Services Level E★

- ★1: At a minimum, the library provides those services considered basic to the mission of all public libraries: lending, information, programming, Internet access, and current technologies.
- ★2: The library has policies defining the scope of its services and setting service priorities.
- ★3: The library has a policy emphasizing the delivery of accurate information, with an emphasis on customer service excellence.
- ★4: Lending periods are based on collection size, demand, turnover rate, and community need.
- ★5: The library does not place age restrictions on the circulation of materials except where local policies permit individual parental requests.
- ★6: The library's fine and fee policies promotes use by people of all income levels.
- ★7: The library has a policy regarding confidentiality of customer records that adheres to Virginia law.
- ★8: The library provides regular free programs serving informational, recreational, cultural, and educational needs.
- ★9: Library provides interlibrary loan services.

Services Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: The library pursues community partnerships for maximum impact.
- ★★3: The library provides outreach services to special populations,

Services Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2: When the library serves large populations that speak languages other than English, the library has signage, publications, and staff members designed to help non-English speakers use the library.

Information Services

The library staff serves as the link between users and resources. To support this activity, a library sustains a staff and collection of materials that reflect the assessed needs of the community. It is the responsibility of a library to identify the needs and to monitor the effectiveness of its reference resources and services to aid in the continuing planning process.

Information Service Level E★

- ★1: The library provides in-person information services by qualified staff members during all hours open to the public.
- ★2: The library's strategic plan addresses information and reference trends.
- ★3: Information provided to users in response to their queries is accurate and derived from sources that meet professional standards of authority and timeliness, both in person and remotely.
- ★4: At least one staff member is trained in basic information reference services.

Information Services Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: The library supports patron training in the use of technologies.
- ★★3: The staff are trained in and available to provide readers' advisory services.

- ★★4: The library has a staff member specifically devoted to information services.

Information Services Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2: The library supports patron training in the use of technologies including training for persons with disabilities.
- ★★★3: The library has a department devoted to information services with individual staff members having individual specialties.

Programs

Library programs animate and inspire patrons to engage in lifelong learning while encouraging the use and understanding of library resources.

Each library should provide appropriate adult, young adult, and children's programs, keeping in mind the needs of the community and its resources. Children's programs, especially those for the preschool child, are important in providing the child contact with the library, thus establishing the foundation for lifelong library use. Programs for teens should help them find resources that deal effectively with the intellectual, emotional, and social changes they are experiencing. These programs should foster their interest in the library by helping them bridge the gap between the children's materials and the adult materials. Adult programming should focus on lifelong learning, life satisfaction, and wellness.

Programming levels depend on funding, location, available personnel, space and community demand and should be responsive to these factors.

Programs Level E★

- ★1: The library provides programs that are designed for people of all ages to meet the needs and interest of the various groups of people in the community
- ★2: The library has written policies defining the scope of library programs in concert with its strategic plans.
- ★3: The library has adequate funding in its annual budget for program materials and program staffing, typically charging no fees for programs.
- ★4: The library plans programs that are held at times that meet community needs.
- ★5: The library provides programs that are in physically accessible locations for children, teens, and adults.

- ★6: The library advertises the availability of accommodations in program notices/publicity.
- ★7: The library uses standard methods of review/evaluation such as collection of attendance statistics to measure the effectiveness of the programs.

Programs Level EE★★

- ★★1: The library complies with all standards of Level E.
- ★★2: The library strives for maximum attendance possible in its space and community.
- ★★3: Periodically, the library revises its programming policies and procedures to meet the mission, goals, and objectives of the library.
- ★★4: The library cooperates with area libraries to extend the availability of programs to all residents.
- ★★5: Where appropriate, the library plans programs in partnership/ collaboration with other educational/community organizations including schools, homeschoolers, literacy groups, or service clubs.
- ★★6: The library includes its program offerings in its public relations campaigns.

Programs Level EEE★★★

- ★★★1: The library complies with all standards of Levels E and EE.
- ★★★2: The library collaborates with other community agencies to enhance programs beyond the library's individual capacity.
- ★★★3: The library uses technology to provide greater access to programs.
- ★★★4: The library identifies other community agencies that are serving special populations and works with these agencies in planning and implementing service to special populations, such as English Language Learners, adult basic education students, and differently abled community members.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this document, emphasis is placed on the unique situations in which Virginia libraries find themselves: from urban centers to the suburbs to rural communities; from the mountains to the islands. The needs and capacity of each community creates a difficult climate for standardization and, indeed, much value is placed on the unique services of each library. However, library leaders are encouraged to consider the standards offered here as a place to start, not necessarily finish. The future holds endless possibilities for new services, methods to consume the written word, and programming. Planning for Library Excellence may be used to mark a starting point as well as a path forward—setting a new target for advancement or surpassing targets to create a new standard. As with the creation of this document and its multiple revisions, libraries must collaborate to create a future of shared knowledge, experience, and innovation to sustain their critical role in the Virginia communities.