

Minimum Standards and Regulations for Rhode Island Public Libraries

Definitions

- 1) "Assistive technology" means equipment or a service that helps individuals with disabilities improve, maintain, or increase their functional capabilities.
- 2) "City/town" means any one of the 39 designated municipalities in Rhode Island.
- 3) "Continuing education" means training that supports the development and advancement of skills necessary for the performance an employee's job at the library and should relate to the employee's duties at the library.
- 4) "Digital literacy" means the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information.
- 5) "Digital subscriptions" means purchased online information resources such as research databases or learning tools that are usable at a library facility or through remote access; it does not include subscriptions to streaming services or content delivery services.
- 6) An "FTE" means a full time equivalent equal to 35 hours per week and may be composed of more than one person's time.
- 7) "Industry-compatible office productivity software" means software or cloud services that are interoperable with similar software generally in use or available commercially.
- 8) "Legal service area" means the population of the municipality that the library serves, as established by the most recent decennial census. In cases where there is more than one free public library serving a municipality, the Office of Library and Information Services will define the legal service area of each library through an analysis of cardholders of each system; such analysis will be conducted at least once every 10 years.
- 9) A "library" means an institution that is established or designated by a city or town council or town financial meeting to provide library services to all individuals residing in the city or town. and functions as a free public library in accordance with RI Gen. Laws Chapter 29-4.
- 10) A "plan of service" means the library's strategic or long-range plan.
- 11) A "professional librarian" means an individual who holds a master's degree in library science from a graduate school accredited by the American Library Association.
- 12) A "technology plan" mean's the library's documented and scheduled approach to the procurement, maintenance, and replacement of library computers and other technology as well as software used on such computers and devices, and security measures established to protect the network and devices from cyber attack.
- 13) "Trained staff" means professional librarians and other staff who have expertise in technology, library service areas, instruction, and/or customer service.

Governance

- 1) The library operates according to relevant federal, state, and local laws and regulations including but not limited to:
 - a) Free Public Libraries (R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 29-4);
 - b) State Aid to Libraries (R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 29-6), specifically §§ 29-6-2 and 29-6-3 and §§ 29-6-4 and 29-6-5 as relevant;

- c) Access to Public Records (R.I. Gen. Laws [Chapter 38-2](#));
 - d) Open Meetings (R.I. Gen. Laws [Chapter 42-46](#));
 - e) Rhode Island Code of Ethics (R.I. Gen. Laws [Chapter 36-14](#) and [520-RICR-00-00-1](#));
 - f) Confidentiality of Library Records (R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 11-18-32, 11-49.3, 38-2-2(4)(U));
 - g) Records Retention Schedules established by the Rhode Island Public Records Administration;
 - h) Full and equal accommodation (R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 11-24);
 - i) Other laws and regulations as cited in these standards; and
 - j) Newly enacted laws that apply to libraries as enumerated on the Office of Library and Information Services website and adopted into these standards by reference.
- 2) The library operates according to relevant American Library Association (ALA) ethical and philosophical statements for public libraries. Relevant statements will be enumerated on the website of the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS).
 - 3) The library adopts a five-year plan of service, based in part on a community needs assessment, and reviews it annually.
 - 4) The library conducts a community needs assessment no less than once every five years.
 - 5) The library is a certified member of the Library of Rhode Island.
 - 6) The library is a member in good standing of Ocean State Libraries.
 - 7) The library shall be governed by a board of trustees in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 29-4-5, 29-4-6, 29-4-7, and 29-4-8. The board of trustees shall:
 - a) Establish bylaws for the structure and governing functions of the board and review such bylaws at least once every five years;
 - b) Meet no less than 6 times a year, or more in accordance with its bylaws;
 - c) Provide orientation for new members of the board within 30 days of their appointment;
 - d) Evaluate the director of the library at least once every two years;
 - e) Through its chair or the chair's designee, attend an annual trustee orientation by the Office of Library and Information Services;
 - f) Individually attend informational sessions or relevant trainings on topics related to their role as trustee in an amount totaling no less than 2 hours annually; and
 - g) Individually comply with the Rhode Island Code of Ethics (R.I. Gen. Laws [Chapter 36-14](#) and [520-RICR-00-00-1](#)).
 - 8) For non-municipal libraries, the Board of Trustees must additionally establish within its bylaws a process for the appointment of members to the board that will:
 - a) Ensure broad representation of the community through an open and public process;
 - b) Define the length of terms; and
 - c) Establish a staggered process for the appointment of new members to the board.
 - 9) In a city or town that has designated more than one free public library to provide services, a library council composed of the chairs of each board of trustees, the directors of each library, and a representative of the city or town meets at least annually to determine the division of state grant-in-aid. Such division may be based on each library's legal service area or the allocation of local tax-based funding unless another division is agreed upon by the library council.
 - 10) In a city or town that has more than one free public library to provide services, the directors of each library shall meet no less than annually to coordinate library services in that city or town.

Policies

- 1) The library through its board of trustees adopts and periodically reviews policies governing its services and makes them available to the public on the library website. Such policies must include but are not limited to:
 - a) Collection development;
 - b) Reconsideration of acquired library materials;
 - c) Use of meeting rooms and exhibit spaces;
 - d) Computer and internet use;
 - e) Behavior or code of conduct;
 - f) Child safety;
 - g) Library programs and displays;
 - h) Confidentiality of library records; and
 - i) Such other policies required to ensure safe operation of the library while establishing the rights of individuals to have access to materials, services and programs to meet their information needs.
- 2) The library through its board of trustees adopts and periodically reviews policies and procedures governing personnel that follow federal, state, and local laws. Such policies must:
 - a) Incorporate relevant provisions of R.I. Gen. Laws [Chapter 11-37.3](#) (Child Safe Zones);
 - b) Apply to all staff, trustees and volunteers; and
 - c) Be made available to all staff, trustees and volunteers.
- 3) The library through its policies affirms the principle of intellectual freedom.

Facilities

- 1) The library must comply with all federal, state, and local building, fire, safety, and accessibility codes for public buildings including but not limited to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- 2) The library provides adequate space to implement a full range of library services, including community meeting space(s), as determined by its plan of service.
- 3) The library maintains dedicated funding and a schedule for maintenance of the facility and grounds.
- 4) The library develops a plan for capital improvements and reviews the plan on a regular defined schedule, providing the plan to the city or town for inclusion in the city or town's comprehensive plan as established in R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-22.2-6(b)(8).

Personnel (Staffing)

- 1) The library is managed by a professional librarian who serves as the director.
- 2) The library is staffed by individuals with training and experience in providing library service, with professional librarians or qualified individuals assigned to provide specific services as established *[see Chart Personnel-2]*.
- 3) The library provides initial job orientation and ongoing training to all staff and supports ongoing continuing education as a job duty:
 - a) Paraprofessional staff must be trained on relevant systems and services and provided with regular training to support their job functions; and

- b) Professional staff must complete annually no less than 20 hours of continuing education or professional development through attending workshops, conferences, or other learning opportunities on topics relevant to their job function, or participating in statewide or national committees, or any combination thereof. Part time professional staff requirements are proportional to the average of their regularly scheduled hours.
- 4) The library has a minimum number of one FTE staff to provide library service to the public, excluding custodians, security staff, and pages, per every 3,000 population, rounded up to the nearest 3,000.
- 5) The library is staffed by at least two library or municipal employees, including custodians, security staff, or pages, at any stand-alone outlet during all open hours for safety reasons.

Services

- 1) The library is open a minimum number of hours each week based on community needs and the legal service area of the library as established *[see Chart Services]*.
 - a) Open hours are calculated as the number of hours all facilities in an independent library system are open with concurrent hours being counted only once.
 - b) Hours refer to the winter schedule when winter and summer hours differ.
 - c) When there is more than one independent library in a community, the combined non-concurrent hours of the multiple libraries must meet the total required hours and each library must meet the individual minimum hours. In such communities, the libraries must develop a cooperative plan for library services that includes how the multiple libraries will serve the community as a whole in terms of hours open and programming.
- 2) The library extends full access to facilities and onsite services and full borrowing privileges for physical materials to all Rhode Island residents free of charge. In the case of digital subscriptions that are purchased directly by the library, access may be limited in accordance with contractual constraints.
- 3) The library provides access to programs, services and materials in compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), providing assistive technologies, alternative access to library resources, or staff assistance as needed.
- 4) The library provides a website with access to online library resources, promotion of "AskRI.org", and current information about library services, including hours of operation, schedules of library events, contact information, policies regarding public services, and other information necessary to inform the community about library operations.
- 5) The library ensures its website and electronic content meet the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act ([28 CFR Part 35](#)).
- 6) The library offers free access to computers for public use, including access to the Internet, industry-compatible office productivity software, and basic printing services.
- 7) The library ensures that all public hardware and software are updated regularly and in proper working order, in accordance with the library's technology plan.
- 8) The library provides free access to the Internet via wireless technology.
- 9) The library provides assistance to support digital access and digital literacy, such as one-on-one technology training and instruction in basic computer skills.

Charts

Standard Personnel-2

Core Competency	Population Under 10,000	Population 10,000 – 19,999	Population 20,000 – 40,000	Population Over 40,000
Management (Director – this position may not be shared)	½ FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE
Youth Services* (Professional Librarian)	½ the time the library is open	1 FTE	Children: 1 FTE Young Adult: ½ FTE	Children: 1 FTE Young Adult: 1 FTE
Adult Services (Professional Librarian)	½ the time the library is open	½ FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE
Digital Services (trained staff)	Whenever the library is open	Whenever the library is open	Whenever the library is open	Whenever the library is open
Technology Support (including cybersecurity)	Staff is available to fix basic computer and technology problems within 2 business days.	Staff is available to fix computer and technology problems within one business day.	Staff is available to fix computer and technology problems within one business day.	Staff is available to fix computer and technology problems as they occur.
Additional Professional Librarian(s)		To provide service whenever library is open	To provide service whenever library is open	1 FTE librarian per 10,000 population (rounded to the nearest 10,000) in addition to above requirements
Minimum Total MLS Staff Required	1.5 FTE librarians	3 FTE librarians	5 FTE librarians	5 FTE librarians plus additional librarians as determined by population

*Youth Services must provide services to children and teens; services to Young Adult/Teen Services may be provided by either Youth or Adult Services librarians, but the individual must have training and experience in working with this population.

One person may fill more than one requirement as long as the total hours worked equal the hours required for those positions. A position may be filled by more than one individual as long as the combined hours meet the requirement with the exception of the director position.

Requirements would be phased in to allow libraries not currently in compliance to add staff on an incremental but defined basis.

Standard Services-1

Population	Total Unique Municipal Hours	Individual Minimum
Under 10,000*	35 hours	25 hours
10,000 – 19,999	45 hours	35 hours
20,000 – 40,000	55 hours	35 hours
Over 40,000	60 hours	50 hours

*Hours would be phased in to enable smaller libraries not currently meeting the hours minimum to add hours on an incremental but defined basis.