OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

The public library as a catalyst for economic, social and cultural development

A STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES 2013-2017

Public Library Standards And Benchmarks

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Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government

CCMA
Cumann Lucht Bainistíochta Contae agus Cathrach
County and City Management Association

LGMA
An Ghníomhaireacht Bainistíochta Rialtais Áitiúil
Local Government Management Agency

Opportunities for All
Public Library Standards and Benchmarks

Preamble

The public library strategy *Opportunities for All* provides a framework for the development of the public library service in Ireland from 2013 to 2017. To ensure that the development is uniform, monitored and sustained, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government has developed a series of performance measures for the library service encompassing the seven *Opportunities for All* programmes for action.

The performance measures are listed under eight sections relating to core aspects of the service. Each section contains the overarching objective(s) from *Opportunities for All* with corresponding performance measures.

The performance measures are levels to be attained by all local authorities and take the form of standards and benchmarks. A standard in the context of this document is regarded as a specific level of quality of service to be attained. A benchmark is a measurable point of reference. Both standards and benchmarks may be standalone, or a standard may have one or more benchmarks associated with it. As the process evolves, more standards and benchmarks may be introduced.

Each local authority is required to measure the performance of the library service according to the standards and benchmarks outlined and ensure compliance with these nationally agreed levels of service delivery.

In order to facilitate local authorities in meeting the performance targets, a transition phase of 3 years will be applied during which local authorities must progress incrementally towards the achievement of the standards and benchmarks.

All standards and benchmarks will be subject to annual review by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government to ensure currency and relevance.

1. Strategy and Planning

Objective
To provide a roadmap for the development and delivery of the library service in line with local and national government policy and with library service best practice nationally and internationally.

Benchmarks

Each public library service will develop a library development programme on a five-yearly basis in line with the national guidelines, informed by the city / county development plan, corporate plan and national policy.

Each public library service will implement and monitor the programme and review progress on an annual basis.

Each public library service will prepare an annual work plan for the implementation of the development programme, will report on progress to the City / County Council via the local authority management reports on a quarterly basis and progress will be advised annually to the Department.

2. Physical Library

Objectives
To provide well-located, well-planned, effective public libraries and civic spaces, open and welcoming to all.
To improve the physical community environment, promoting urban regeneration and sustainable communities.

2.1 Access

Benchmark
For the development of a static library, the minimum population within the catchment area should be no less than 3,000. The catchment population will be determined by population density, proximity to other branches, economic and social activity of the population centre.

This standard will be reviewed in consultation with local authorities to determine the best service standards in terms of efficiencies and effectiveness.

2.2 Size

Benchmarks
The minimum size for a new branch serving a population of 3,000 within the catchment area should be 500m².

New branches serving populations in excess of 3,000 within the catchment area should be scaled to be appropriate to the needs of the community and the services required.

2.3 Location
A new public library branch should be:
- clearly visible and signposted
- accessible, attractive and welcoming
- centrally and prominently located
- at street level
- supporting urban regeneration
- contributing towards sustainable communities
- a multifunctional meeting, event and study space.

3.   Core Principles

Objectives
To provide equity of access for all through the provision of free core services by 2017.

In conjunction with the introduction of a free core service, to establish automatic registration for universal public library membership for all children

Standard
3.1 Each public library service will offer core services to the individuals and communities in the most equitable, democratic and accessible manner possible.

3.2 Each public library service will apply a policy of inclusivity in all strategies, services and practices of the service at all times.

3.3 Each public library service will input to the social inclusion policy of the local authority.

Benchmarks
Each public library service will provide free access to core services across all categories of members by 2017.

Each public library service will participate in the provision of a universal membership system across all public library services in Ireland by 2017.

Each public library service will participate in the provision of automatic registration for membership to all children by 2017.

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4. Core Services / Service Provision

Objectives

- To deliver equity of core services to all users and manage resources efficiently and effectively
- To be a key frontline service and leader in local authority community engagement.
- To provide opportunities for individuals to develop as literate, informed, articulate and confident citizens.
- To strengthen the role of the public library in supporting economic initiatives and developments, particularly supporting the information and research needs of locally based entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs.
- To act as a support network for those seeking employment.
- To provide the community with a range of activities related to library strategy, services and collections that enrich the lives of community members.
  To support lifelong learning and return to learning.
- To support parents and carers to help children develop their literacy, numeracy and communications skills.
- To ensure that every school child has access to educational support and leisure reading
- To support children and adults with learning difficulties.
- To place imagination and creativity at the heart of collection provision, participative programming and of quality cultural experiences.

4.1 Reading for Pleasure and Knowledge

Public libraries work with individuals and communities to develop reading skills and a love of reading for creativity, information and imagination.

Standard

4.1.1 Each public library service will adopt and implement a collections policy, to include strategy and procedures for stock acquisitions and withdrawals.

4.1.2 Each public library service will achieve the current per capita stock fund target as issued by the Department and will ensure that expenditure from the stock fund is expressly on stock items.

Benchmark
Each public library service will achieve a per capita stock expenditure of €3.77 annually.

4.2 Information

The library has a key position in the information world, collecting, organising and exploiting information, operating as a guide to information for the individual and the community and as a trusted source of access to information of all kinds.

Standard

4.2.1 Each public library service will provide access to a range of online and in-library information resources, supported by skilled information professionals, to provide responsive access to the changing information needs of the local population. This standard will be measured with reference to an identified list of recommended resources customised for local relevance.

4.3 Local Studies

Public libraries are [...] a focus for cultural identity in the community, preserving and promoting national and local culture, providing opportunities for creative development and the collective cultural experience.

The local studies service supports the local authority and community identity, research, family history, tourism, education, local events and celebrations.

Standard

4.3.1 Each public library service will incorporate a local studies curation and development strategy, including a legacy acquisitions policy, into the collections policy.

4.3.2 Each local studies service should be located in the designated central library.

4.3.3 Each public library service will increase access to the collection through a digitisation programme.

4.3.4 Each public library service will develop an annual programme of exhibitions and events to promote the collection.

4.4 Literacy and Learning

Public libraries support the transition from childhood into adulthood; as families, as schoolchildren, as students and as lifelong learners, libraries provide opportunities for individuals to develop as literate, informed, articulate and confident citizens.
The Right to Read Campaign will provide a nationally co-ordinated framework for literacy support and development through all local authorities, via local literacy networks led by public libraries.

Standard

4.4.1 Each public library service will promote and support literacy development for all ages as a core function of the service.

> **Benchmark**
> **The public library service as the leader for the local Right to Read network will ensure annual qualification for the status of Right to Read Champion.**

Standard

4.4.2 Each public library service will promote and support learning for all ages as a core function of the service.

> **Benchmark**
> **Each public library service will provide appropriate resources, deliver a programme of learning support activities and work in co-operation with local stakeholder bodies, agencies and community organisations.**

4.5 Public Library Services to Schools

Public libraries have always been central to the provision of learning opportunities and educational support for parents and children, both for formal education and leisure reading and development.

Standard

4.5.1 Each public library service will deliver a support service to schools.

> **Benchmark**
> **Each public library service will supply an agreed range of services to each school within its catchment.**

4.5.2 Each public library service will deliver a defined support service to early childcare bodies.

> **Benchmark**
> **Each public library service will work with identified early childhood organisations in the locality and supply an agreed range of services to each early childhood facility within its catchment.**

4.6 Business and Enterprise

Public library services operating as learning, working and meeting places for people who are seeking employment, starting a business, self-employed and entrepreneurs;

working with the Local Enterprise Offices and other agencies in delivering the local authority economic and job creation objectives;

providing opportunities for business professionals, fostering an environment for the development of local economic initiatives.

Standard

4.6.1 Each public library service will promote and support business, enterprise and job seeking.

Benchmark

Each public library service will deliver a programme of business information activities, including the provision of appropriate resources and research guidance, working in co-operation with Local Enterprise Offices, Intreo offices, local business and enterprise stakeholder bodies, agencies and community bodies.

4.7 Technology Access and Support

The public library exploits new and emerging digital technologies for management, service delivery and creative learning and communications for the economic and social benefit of users and communities. The library service responds to and promotes the technological change essential for sustainable organisations and services in the digital age.

Standard

4.7.1 Each public library service will make internet access devices available for use in IT training.

4.7.2 Each public library service will upgrade the delivery of its service through the exploitation of technological developments on an ongoing basis to improve the user experience and enhance service delivery.

4.7.3 Each public library service will support digital innovation, maximising the opportunities offered by digital systems and media in extending the reach, relevance and accessibility of library services for users and local authorities.

Benchmarks

Each public library service will provide:

- **Wi-Fi access in all branches**
- **a learning space and support for IT skills development**

Benchmark

Each public library service will upgrade at least one branch library per year to be Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) enabled, until all branches are enabled.

4.8 Community Engagement

Public libraries will be the frontline service of the local authorities and lead in community engagement, in line with the changing role of the local authorities and government policy.

Standard

4.8.1 Each public library service will fully engage with the Local Community Development Committee to strengthen community engagement and partnership.

> **Benchmark**
> **Each public library service will operate a planned programme of community engagement.**

4.8.2 Each public library service will offer a wide range of themed programmes, based on the core services as outlined, to encourage and enhance library usage.

4.9 Age Friendly Libraries

4.9.1 Each public library service will operate Age Friendly policies in accordance with the Age Friendly Guidelines for public libraries.

> **Benchmark**
> **Each public library service will operate Age Friendly policies, in accordance with the guidelines, in each service point.**

5. Optimum Opening Hours

Objective
To achieve optimum opening hours for individuals and the community.

5.1 Opening Hours
Better opening hours does not always mean longer opening hours. The overriding principle should be that the library is open when it best suits the public.

Standard
5.1.1 Each public library service will provide optimum, user friendly opening hours.

Benchmarks

Each public library branch serving a population of 3,000 – 5,000 will open to the public for a minimum of 30 hours per week.

Each public library branch serving a population of 5,000 – 10,000 will open to the public for a minimum of 35 hours per week.

Each public library branch serving a population of 10,000 – 20,000 will open to the public for a minimum of 40 hours per week.

Each public library branch serving a population of 20,000+ will open to the public for a minimum of 50 hours per week.

Each public library branch will offer user-friendly opening hours including opening on Saturday, late openings and lunchtime opening.

Library branches participating in the Open Libraries programme will be open to the public in accordance with the requirements of the programme.

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6.   Staffing

Objectives
- To develop further a responsive, effective, user-focused public service that is part of community and national life.
- To provide leadership, effective management and service delivery skills.
- To ensure that staff are equipped with the skills of the modern library, information and knowledge professional.
- To harness the PMDS and competency framework process to promote continual learning and development.
- To develop the culture and skills for collaborative working, service evaluation and planning, and continuous innovation and improvement.

6.1 Workforce Planning
A national workforce planning review will deliver stronger, more effective and efficient public libraries in the context of local government reform and shared services.

Standard
6.1.1 Each public library service will operate a workforce plan in accordance with the national workforce plan guidelines for public libraries.

6.2 Workforce Development
Public library staff will lead and manage library service development and will maintain and enhance their professional skills in line with the changing requirements of delivering a service to meet the economic, social and cultural policy objectives of the service.

Standard
6.2.1 Each public library service will participate on an ongoing basis in the national programme in leadership development for library managers.

6.2.2 Each public library service will participate in the national learning and development programme for public library staff and will ensure continued investment and support in library staff training and development.

6.2.3 Each public library service will support continuing professional development for library staff in line with the changing requirements of the service and the environment in which it operates.

6.2.4 Each library service will fully engage with a national training programme for library staff.

7.   Service Delivery

Objective
Local authorities will provide an agreed core public library service accessible through a networked matrix model of central, municipal and community libraries.

7.1 Service Delivery Matrix
All users should have access to the full range of services offered by a public library service regardless of their location and nearest service point.

Standard
7.1.1 Each library user will have access to the full range of services offered by the public library service regardless of their location.

7.2 Web Services
7.2.1 Each public library service will work towards delivering a digital library service.

Benchmarks
Each public library service will provide online access to:
- **Online registration**
- **Reference enquiries**
- **eBooks / periodicals**
- **eEducation resources**

7.3 Mobile Library Service
Traditionally the mobile library service has been the means of serving isolated rural and urban communities. The service has worked most effectively in targeting schools, residential care facilities, in addition to small villages and through a flexible approach to hours of service.

7.3.1 Mobile libraries will maximise public access to the service through optimum timetables and access schedules.

8.   Service Performance

Objectives

Local authorities will work with Libraries Development, LGMA to undertake a comprehensive and ongoing National Audit of Public Library Buildings and Services to identify current service provision and best practice from which to plan national and local investment and improvement in library buildings and services.

Analyse the National Audit of Library Services to identify current service provision and identify best practice from which to plan national and local investment and improvement in library buildings and services.

Standard

8.1 Each public library service will provide comprehensive statistical information annually in a timely manner through the National Audit of Library Services to inform national decision-making and facilitate library planning and service development.

Benchmark
Each public library service will submit its returns annually through the National Audit of Library Services by the end of the first quarter of the following year.