

Welcome to the Implementation Guide for **Strong Library Ecosystems**

Definition

A library ecosystem is the interconnected network of all types of libraries, library workers, volunteers, trustees, friends, foundations, and associations that provide and facilitate library services—for communities; K–20 learners; college and university communities; local, state and federal legislatures and government offices; businesses; nonprofits; and other organizations with specific information needs.



A patron of one library is the potential patron of any other library at a different time of life or in a different location. No library exists independent of the library ecosystem and, when we stand together in mutual support using common messaging themes that demonstrate this interconnectedness, every library is stronger.

Statement of Purpose

The ecosystem toolkit is created to assist state associations in strengthening the library ecosystem within localities and states. At its most effective, the strong library ecosystem supports a diverse library community in speaking with a unified voice about issues that are important to all members of the ecosystem in order to most constructively advance the collective goals of the group. This may be accomplished by encouraging organizational leadership to effectively advocate in crisis situations, as well as proactively work to build a climate of support so that all libraries are best positioned to serve their communities.

Four strands serve as the pillars of a healthy ecosystem:



Leadership for building a state-wide library ecosystem is dependent upon an awareness of and active collaboration with various and diverse library partners. Leadership must facilitate connections across library types as the multiplicity of library types *is* the ecosystem. Leadership refers to the expertise of representatives from participating groups, intentionality around building an inclusive model for participation, and the skills participants offer in communication and collaboration towards a sustainable ecosystem effort.

Communication requires clear, intentional sharing both internally and across participating organizations. It builds a unified voice and advances a shared advocacy and legislative agenda that reflects the goals of diverse stakeholders.



Collaboration towards a unified advocacy and legislative agenda and consistent messaging requires careful and consistent coordination among all participants that reflects the overlapping needs of all the contributing organizations.

Sustainability of the ecosystem requires equitable access to participation as well as ongoing attention to simple and essential aspects of teamwork.



The Toolkit is intended to support the ecosystem efforts of library leaders in all states. ALA will work with you to support your efforts and will model ecosystem thinking in its advocacy initiatives. Within our association, there are many effective ways to connect to other ecosystem leaders across the country. This work is ongoing: the ALA Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA) Ecosystem Subcommittee will continue to promote awareness of successes and challenges to state ecosystem efforts.

The [Ecosystem Continuum](#) is a rubric to help you assess the current strength of your ecosystem and see how you might improve collaboration across organizations. It can be explored as a whole or individual strands can be targeted for focus.

Additionally, we offer you this toolkit of resources - pick and choose what best supports your efforts.

→ **Tools to Get Started**

- ◆ [Self Assessment Checklist](#)
- ◆ [Understanding the Ecosystem: Webs of Connection](#)

→ **Tools for Building Shared Agendas**

- ◆ [Ecosystem Agenda Building: Information Gathering Template](#)
 - [Agenda Building: Legislative Issues \(Worksheet\)](#)
 - [Agenda Building: Public-Facing Advocacy Issues \(Worksheet\)](#)
 - [Agenda Building: Consolidating the Input \(Worksheet\)](#)
- ◆ [Year Round Advocacy Checklist](#)



→ **Tools to Track Progress**

- ◆ [Recording Progress Towards a Library Ecosystem Example](#)
- ◆ [Recording Progress Towards a Library Ecosystem Template](#)

→ **Tools for Sustainability**

- ◆ [Assessment of Ecosystem Progress](#)

→ **Ecosystem Visualization Tools (AKA Promotional Bits)**

- ◆ [Strong Library Ecosystem Recipe](#)
- ◆ [One Voice Magnifies the Message](#)

The Continuum with its supporting resources is a powerful tool to help your state develop a more robust library ecosystem. Select, use, modify, and share the tools that work best for where you are now, and come back often for new ideas. Most importantly, start now.

START NOW! ▶