

## **COSLA Statement of Core Values**

COSLA is an independent nonprofit organization comprised of the chief officers of state and territorial agencies designated as the state library agency and responsible for statewide library development, which seeks to nurture state library administrative agencies and lead with a collective voice for the nation's libraries.

Every state library agency is committed to providing and supporting high-quality library services and does so in ways that are as unique and diverse as each state. COSLA understands the autonomy and distinctive local awareness that each state library agency brings to the implementation of their services. Libraries are most effective when they are aligned with, and reflective of, the communities they serve.

COSLA declares these precepts as an unequivocal statement of the foundation for state library agencies.

- I. Every state in the union should maintain a state library agency.
- II. Every state library agency should be funded and staffed at a level that is consistent with the scope of work that it has been established to provide.
- III. Every state library agency should be administered by a leader who is adequately knowledgeable of and proficient in applying the professional standards of modern librarianship.
- IV. Every state library agency should be administered in a manner that is nonpartisan and apolitical, serving all patrons equally and without bias or discrimination.

### **I. Every state in the union must maintain a State Library Agency (SLA).**

State libraries are government agencies that are responsible for providing support for library services to all residents of their state. They play a vital role in supporting and enhancing local library services throughout the state. Some SLAs set minimum operating standards for public libraries, and in some cases, those requirements are stipulations for state funding. Often minimum operating standards are related to minimum hours of operation and education requirements for the library director.

State libraries typically provide a variety of services, including (but not limited to):

- **Collection development and maintenance:** State libraries collect and maintain a wide range of materials, including books, journals, newspapers, government documents, and other media. They also provide access to electronic resources, such as online databases and e-books.
- **Reference and research assistance:** State libraries provide reference and research assistance to librarians, students, state government and the public.

- Interlibrary loan: State libraries facilitate interlibrary loan, which allows users to borrow materials from other libraries throughout the state. This service is especially important for users who live in rural areas or who need to access specialized materials, as well as items that are beyond their local libraries budget.
- Training and support for librarians: State libraries provide training and support to librarians throughout the state. They offer workshops, webinars, and other resources to help librarians stay up-to-date on the latest trends and technologies.
- Training and support for library boards of trustees who are entrusted with governance of public libraries
- Funding for libraries: State libraries advocate for and distribute funding for libraries at the state and federal levels. They work to ensure that libraries are adequately funded and that they have the support they need to serve their communities.
- Ensuring equal access and services for marginalized communities: through services such as the Talking Book Services, which focuses on low and no vision patrons; as well as services for incarcerated patrons, and students with learning differences.
- Conservation of historic and government materials via digitization, cataloging, and archiving.
- Technical support to libraries that might not otherwise be able to support these activities; computing and electronic resources.
- Provision of expertise in specific areas of librarianship, including library facilities and construction; information technology; statistics and data; archival services; resource sharing; youth services and early literacy.
- Representing libraries in state efforts including those dedicated to literacy, technology, and workforce development.

*COSLA affirms that every state, and its citizens, are improved by the existence and operation of a state library agency.*

## **II. Every state library agency must be funded and staffed at a level that is consistent with the scope of work that it has been established to provide.**

As each state determines how best to serve its citizens via library services, it is incumbent upon the government of that state to provide the resources necessary to effectively deliver those services. Under funding and/or understaffing of a state library agency inevitably results in the agency's inability to fulfill its charge.

*COSLA affirms that every state should provide adequate funding and staffing for the operation of a state library agency.*

## **III. Every state library agency must be administered by a leader who is appropriately versed in the professional standards of modern librarianship.**

The evolution of modern librarianship over the past 150 years has resulted in a profession that encompasses a broad range of specialized knowledge. In order to most effectively conduct the operation of a state library agency, an individual must possess the experience and training incumbent upon those

deeply engaged in the profession. These qualities will serve to support the successful advancement of the state library agency's mission.

*COSLA affirms that each state library chief officer should be a library professional.*

**IV. Every state library agency should be administered in a manner that is nonpartisan and apolitical, serving all members of the community equally and without bias or discrimination.**

State library agencies play a critical role in providing open and safe opportunities to access information in ways that transcend politics, so that individuals and families can pursue content that best aligns with their own needs and values, to enrich and improve their own lives as they choose.

*COSLA affirms that every state library agency should operate in a nonpartisan, apolitical, and unbiased manner.*

###

#### **About COSLA**

The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA), an independent organization of the principal library officials in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and two territories, responsible for statewide library development. Its mission is to nurture state library administrative agencies, and lead with a collective voice for the nation's libraries. [cosla.org](http://cosla.org)

Adopted February 2025