Library Ecosystem Toolkit
Questions and Answers

Please email ecosystem@ala.org with any further questions you may have.

What if my state has multiple library organizations that aren't officially affiliated with ALA, or aren't the designated state chapter?

Every state is different. Some have a single umbrella organization for advocacy, and others have several organizations acting separately. This ecosystem effort is a way for everyone to work together even if they are officially separate organizations. It also offers the opportunity to include library-related organizations (vendors, friends, literacy groups, …) that may want to be active in planning library advocacy.

Who sets the state agenda?

State associations set their own legislative and advocacy agendas. This toolkit is meant to support states in building an ecosystem network to push their state-level priorities legislatively or in public awareness of how all libraries work together. Mutual support of different library types potentially facilitates a stronger response. It is also true that states with strong collaborative efforts at home will also find strength in ALA participation. ALA's priorities reflect the collective priorities of the states, just as state ecosystem learn from ALA and other states as they build agendas at home. We are all one ecosystem that shares in all directions.

Where do we start?

Any state can start where they see themselves in the rubric. Wherever you see the best fit with the most traction and how you can best work together to build new or strengthen existing state ecosystem structures.

What is an ecosystem team?

The ecosystem team is the group of member-representatives of all your participating library-related groups. This team can be as small as 2-3, if you only have that many organizations, or as large as you need. Each ecosystem team will find management methods that suit their situation. The toolkit includes some suggestions to ensure ongoing representation of all interested groups and recommends methods to support sustainability, but each team will make their own choices of what works for them.

[NOTE: If your group is especially large, you may choose to designate an executive group to oversee team decision-making.]

How often should we meet?

This can be decided by the group based on your needs. Many groups just starting out need to meet more often as they begin, but some groups may prefer to move slowly in order not to overwhelm potential members. Your group is the best judge of what will work in your situation.

What are some types of organizations we might invite to join our ecosystem team?

You likely want to begin with a few committed individuals from library organizations who understand the core mission of an ecosystem initiative, which is "*A library ecosystem is the interconnected network of all types of libraries, library workers, volunteers, and associations that provide and facilitate library services for community members; families; K-20 learners; college and university communities; local, state and federal legislatures and government offices; businesses; nonprofits; and other organizations with specific information needs.*" Once you have an organized group with communication and collaboration in place, you can bring any additional members you chose. Adding voices with legislative expertise, union awareness, business connections, and advocacy skills may contribute to the sustainability of your Initiative.

As listed in the toolkit, these are contacts to consider including:
- Library organization leadership [any and all in your state]
- State library leadership
- Leadership of friends/trustees/ foundation organizations
- Advocacy experts
- Advocacy bloggers, social media influencers
- Unions of library workers or teachers
- Majority and minority leadership of the state legislature
- Chairs of budget, education, and other key committees
- Legislators and their staff on budget, education, and other key committees

- Town councilors
- County commissioners
- School and college administrators
- Community and business leaders
- School board members, local or state
- Library school instructors

How does ecosystem work differ from the work of advocacy teams for each library organization?

The work of the ecosystem group will enhance and strengthen the advocacy of individual groups in the state, as well as increase collaboration among groups around a common purpose. Every group can continue their advocacy agendas at the same time as they participate in the collaborative ecosystem effort. Any/all of the groups can bring a specific focus to the team for support across the ecosystem membership groups. The ecosystem team will build an agenda that forwards the work of all its members. When working with either legislative goals or public awareness campaigns, common messaging across member groups will strengthen the probability of success.