

Developing and Submitting a Portfolio

A Portfolio is one way to demonstrate your achievement of a competency set.

Your Portfolio will include:

1. Narratives, documents, audios, or videos that demonstrate your knowledge and skill for of the competencies in a competency set. A statement that explains how these items demonstrate your achievement of each competency.
2. A personal learning statement that provides:
 - a. an overview of your understanding of the competency set as it relates to your work as an LSS
 - b. a summary of your relevant experience and new learning

Instructions for Organizing the Portfolio

A Portfolio is a way for you to demonstrate that you have achieved each individual competency in a competency set through your experience or through new learning such as an unapproved course or your own self-directed study. The online portfolio instructions and instructions for using and maintaining the CAR will provide you with additional help in the process.

You may develop your own methods to demonstrate your knowledge and skills in each competency area. To help you get started thinking about the competencies and your own learning, we have developed Portfolio Development Suggestions (PDS), a list of possible activities that demonstrate performance of individual competencies. These are included in the description of each competency set. These are only examples and ideas to help you look at your own experience and to consider options for new learning. You may use the PDS or develop your own examples to demonstrate your competency.

You can follow these five steps in preparing and submitting your portfolio for assessment.

Step 1: Identify what you already know and what you still need to learn about the competencies in a competency set.

Your Portfolio may be based upon what you already know or prior learning, which is learning that you have already achieved through experience and/or education.

The portfolio may also be based on new learning that you achieve on your own or that you gain through courses and educational opportunities that are not currently approved LSSC courses. You can demonstrate your achievement of the individual competencies in a Portfolio through the following:

Prior learning

If you have experience in a competency set and believe you have already achieved one or more of the individual competencies in the set, you may use the Portfolio option to tell us and document what you have already learned.

Self-directed learning

If you enjoy learning independently, you may design your own course of self-study for a competency set or for individual competencies within that set. Engage in whatever learning activities are best for you. The Portfolio Development Suggestions may provide you with some ideas. Complete the portfolio instructions as described below to document your new learning.

Unapproved course

You may choose to take a course that has not been officially approved by the LSSC Program. In this case, you will use the portfolio to demonstrate your new learning. You may use the work you do in the course to demonstrate how you have met one or more individual competencies.

Combining prior learning and new learning

You may combine the options of prior learning and new learning. For example, you may be able to document achievement of some competencies in a competency set through prior experience, but not all. You may want to achieve other competencies in the set by pursuing new learning through an unapproved course or by pursuing your own research or other self-directed learning activities. Again, you will use the portfolio instructions to demonstrate your achievement.

You may choose to base your portfolio entirely on prior learning OR on new learning OR a combination of both kinds of learning. Each candidate's portfolio and path to completion will be unique.

None of these options is more valuable or legitimate than the others. Choose what best suits your learning style, experience, and needs. The goal is to demonstrate to the portfolio evaluators that you have successfully achieved the specific competencies listed for each competency set. You may use different options for different competency sets.

Look at the individual competencies in a competency set. Consider which competencies you have already achieved. Begin to think about which of your experiences are relevant to the individual competencies within the set. Begin to think about what kinds of documentation you might use to demonstrate your knowledge and skills.

Then note the competencies you have not achieved and for which you want to pursue new learning. Do you have opportunities to participate in new activities in your library or opportunities to volunteer elsewhere that offer you the chance to learn skills that you lack? (Federal Labor Law does not allow a paid employee to "volunteer" at their place of work, but there may be other opportunities to volunteer in your community).

Do you learn well independently? Consider researching competencies that you have not already achieved. You can provide annotated bibliographies of your reading. You can write a short paper with appropriate citations if you wish. You can also choose to design a new program or project to include in your portfolio that demonstrates your proficiency in a particular competency.

You could choose to interview an experienced librarian with expertise in a particular competency set and get her/his suggestions for new learning resources. You can also choose to interview library customers and librarians to learn more about the issues influencing libraries in your community. These interviews may lead to new opportunities for learning.

Remember that the Portfolio Development Suggestions are available for each competency set to help you.

Step 2: Organizing your Portfolio

To help you begin to organize your Portfolio, go to the Portfolio Individual Competency Worksheet for each individual competency. You can use it to take notes about how you may want to construct your portfolio to demonstrate your achievement of each competency. In either case, you can add to the worksheets as you have new ideas, and they can be a working outline of your electronic Portfolio.

Step 3: Gather documentation of your learning

The documentation for your portfolio will be of two types: PRIMARY and SECONDARY.

PRIMARY documentation gives direct evidence of your *knowledge and/or experience* in a particular competency. Primary documentation could include projects you developed on the job, such as marketing materials, program presentations, or video tapes of your work (for example, conducting a story hour).

Primary documentation may also be projects or programs that you design as part of your independent learning or as a part of an unapproved course. For example you may decide to design materials for a welcome center for youth and include them in your portfolio for Youth Services, even if you haven't had an opportunity to try them out in a library.

Some competencies will be more about what you know than about what you can do. In this case, you might choose to write an essay with appropriate citations to demonstrate your knowledge. The essay itself becomes your documentation. Primary documentation may also include assignments, papers or projects you completed as part of an unapproved course.

Please note: For some kinds of primary documentation, it is important to identify your role in the development and/or use of the materials. Many work-related projects will be the result of collaboration with others. Identifying your specific role and contributions will help you demonstrate your achievement of the competencies.

SECONDARY documentation provides indirect evidence of your mastery of individual competencies. SECONDARY documentation may include, but is not limited to:

- Job descriptions and performance evaluations
- Letters from colleagues, supervisors and library users that speak to your skills in this area
- Letters from representatives from other community agencies that describe collaborative relationships you may have been involved in to enhance library services in the competency set.
- Related training and/or education records.
- Related written policies from the library in which you work. (When you write explanations of your documents, include any instances and examples of when you applied these policies.)
- Transcripts of relevant college coursework. (For example, you may have taken a course in child development or children's literature for the Youth Competency set.) If this coursework was a significant number of years ago, indicate how you have used this knowledge in recent years.
- A list of resources you use in your work related to the competency set and/or an annotated bibliography of what you've read.

These are examples of SECONDARY documentation. The choice of documents will depend upon your unique experiences and opportunities. No candidate is expected to furnish all the documents listed above. There may be other documentation that is not listed here that you may include because it is appropriate for you.

In selecting primary and secondary documentation, ask yourself this question: how can I prove that I know and/or can do this competency? Typically, preference is given to primary documentation, with secondary documentation used as back-up.

Just as no two persons have the same experience, no two candidates will have the same documents in the portfolio.

Step 4: Relate your documentation to the competencies

Now that you have looked at the competencies in a competency set and considered how you want to demonstrate each one, gather the documentation you need for each individual competency. The notes you have written on the worksheet for each individual competency will help you take this next step.

Write a statement for each individual competency that briefly explains the documentation you have included and how it demonstrates that you have achieved that specific competency. This statement does not need to be lengthy.

It may take some time to assemble the documentation for the entire competency set. For some of the individual competencies, you may already have the documentation. For others, you may need to request letters, get copies of job descriptions, and/or complete new learning projects or one of the Portfolio Development Suggestions. You may want to do the reading required to help you complete an essay as your primary documentation.

You can upload documentation to the portfolio section of the CAR for each individual competency as it is ready. You will have time to edit, add documents, and move documents as you think best BEFORE you request evaluation of that section. Remember, no one will have access to your portfolio until *you* request an evaluation of a section for a particular competency set.

After you have gathered, organized, and uploaded the documents for the individual competencies including the short statement for each competency that briefly explains your documentation, you will write a personal learning statement about the competency set overall.

Remember, some competencies will be more about what you already know or about new learning than about what you can do. In this case, you might choose to write an essay with appropriate citations to demonstrate your knowledge. *The essay itself becomes your documentation.*

Step 5: The Personal Learning Statement

After thinking about your experience, collecting, and organizing your documentation, and writing short statements relating your documentation to individual competencies within the set, you will have some insights about what you have learned in this competency set.

You will write a personal learning statement that includes:

a) an overview of how you understand the importance of this competency set to your work as a Library Support Staff person:

b) a summary of your relevant experience and new learning: and

Your documentation and the statements that go with that documentation will provide the evaluators with the details of your learning and achievements. Your Personal Learning Statement is an overview of your learning and is an opportunity for you to share your own reflections about this specific competency set.

This statement is a personal reflection, not a research paper. There is no set required length, though a statement any longer than five pages is not recommended.

Communication skills are important in library service, so portfolio evaluators will review the quality of your spelling, grammar, punctuation, and how well you communicate your ideas.

Step 6: Evaluation of your portfolio for each competency set

When your learning portfolio for a competency set is complete, follow the directions in your CAR to request an evaluation of your portfolio. . During this time, you will not be able to edit or add additional documentation for that portfolio unless the portfolio evaluators request a revision from you.

Portfolio evaluators will assess your portfolio based on your personal statement, your evidence statements that address your achievements, and your documentation. They will determine to what extent you have achieved the specific competencies listed for that competency set.

Portfolio evaluators may:

- approve your portfolio as showing you achieved the competency set
- ask for additional information or documentation
- assess your portfolio and determine that your portfolio does not demonstrate satisfactory achievement of the competency set and suggest that you take an approved LSSCP course

The portfolio evaluators will provide feedback to you through the ALA-APA office which will notify you of the result. If the portfolio evaluators judge that you have achieved the competency set, you will receive notification to that effect.

Portfolio Individual Competency Worksheet

Use the following questions to think about each individual competency within a competency set. Addressing these questions will help you organize and complete a Portfolio. Remember this is a tool to help you think through how you want to use the Portfolio to demonstrate your achievements. You may change your mind as you consider the questions below. Use this worksheet as a work in progress that you can go back and change at any time before you request evaluation of your Portfolio.

These worksheets will NOT be included in your Portfolio or your CAR. They are for your use to help you plan and create your Portfolio.

You can go back to the Portfolio Development Suggestions for each competency set for ideas to help you get started.

1. Is this a competency that you think you can demonstrate through your experience? If the answer is yes, go to questions a, b and c. If the answer is no, go to #2.

- a. What experience do you have that is relevant to this particular individual competency? (Remember, you may have more than one volunteer or work experience that is relevant to a competency.)

- b. How is this experience relevant? What about this experience specifically demonstrates your achievement of this competency?
- c. How can you document your achievement so others can recognize it? Are there program materials, a job description, a performance evaluation, a video tape, letters from colleagues or other evidence that you'd like to consider for your Portfolio? List the documentation that you already have.
- d. Are there courses you've taken in the past that helped you achieve this competency? How are they relevant and how can you document what you learned?

2. If this is not a competency that you can demonstrate through experience, what options for new learning do you want to consider?

- a. Is there an unapproved course you can take that will help you achieve this competency? When can you enroll in it? (If you take the course, remember to save papers, projects, or other activities from the course that demonstrate your learning so you can include them in your Portfolio.)
- b. Are there programs, projects or activities at your library that you can join that will help you achieve this competency? What kinds of documentation might you collect along the way to demonstrate your achievement?
- c. Are there opportunities to volunteer outside of your place of work that will help you achieve the competency? Again, remember to save documentation that will help you demonstrate your achievements.
- d. Do you like to pursue learning on your own? What resources might you use? Is there an experienced librarian who might help you identify resources? How can you demonstrate your learning?
- e. Is there a project or program for your library you can design and document even if you do not have the opportunity to put it into practice immediately? How can you document what you have designed for your Portfolio?
- f. If this competency is more about what you know than what you can do, are you interested in researching the topic and writing an essay? Remember to include a bibliography of outside resources you've used for your essay.

