

Library Community Engagement Toolkit Guide

Purpose

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) created this toolkit to help libraries communicate the value and impact of their services to local decision-makers, community leaders and customers using clear, accessible information, accurate data and local stories.

ODL provides these resources to help libraries communicate information about library services and their impact in their communities. Libraries should use their own judgment in determining which resources are appropriate for their communities and how they choose to communicate with local officials, community leaders and customers.

For purposes of this toolkit, “decision-makers” includes legislators, city officials and other community leaders who have an interest in the services and needs of your community.

What is in the toolkit?

The toolkit includes resources on several topics related to the work and impact of libraries, including, but not limited to:

- Ad Valorem
- AI and Workforce Development
- Early Literacy and School Readiness
- E-Rate

In each of these folders you will find:

- A subject specific flyer
- Social media images
- Impact stories from the field

Also in the toolkit are templates to be used to engage with decision-makers in your community. This includes:

- Template press release
- Template letters to send to legislators, decision-makers to visit your library for a specific program.

These resources are designed to help library staff communicate with customers and decision-makers about the services libraries provide and the impact they have in their communities.

How to use the toolkit

You do not need to use every resource in the toolkit. Choose the topic and materials that best connect to your library's current programs, services or community needs.

1. **Identify an opportunity.** Invite a legislator, city official or community leader to a library program, event or tour.
2. **Choose a topic.** Select a flyer and related resources that connect to the program, service or conversation.
3. **Make it local.** Pair the information with your library's own data, programs and customer stories.
4. **Share the story.** Use the social media, press release or letter templates to help communicate the impact of your library.

How to keep it local to your library

The resources in this toolkit provide general information, statewide context and examples from libraries. Libraries are encouraged to supplement these materials with information about their own programs, services and customers. Local data and stories can help demonstrate how these topics connect to the needs and experiences of your community.

Consider including information such as:

- Number of customers served
- Program attendance
- A customer success story
- A specific community need the library is addressing

Find Your Legislator or Local Official

Using the link below, identify the legislators and local officials who represent your library and community. You can use the Oklahoma Legislature's website to find your state senator and representative, and your city or county website to identify local officials.

<https://www.oklegislature.gov/findmylegislature.aspx>

On this webpage, you will enter your library address and it will show you your state representatives as well as federal representatives.

Tips for Engaging Decision-Makers

- Invite officials to see your library in action.
- Keep conversations focused on the services your library provides.
- Use clear, specific examples.
- Share local data when available.
- Tell a customer's story when appropriate.
- Follow up after a visit or conversation.
- Continue the relationship throughout the year, not just when an issue arises.

A visit does not have to be a one-time interaction. Follow up with a thank-you and continue to share occasional updates about programs, services and community impact.