

TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: *Edge Initiative (formerly Public Library Public Access Technology Benchmarks Project)*

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:

Update of current activities related to the development of public access technology benchmarks for public libraries.

ACTION REQUESTED BY:

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DRAFT OF MOTION:

N/A

DATE: *1-3-12*

BACKGROUND:

Edge is a set of national benchmarks developed by a coalition of library and local government organizations designed to inspire continuous improvement and reinvestment in public access technology services in libraries. It is anticipated that a pre-beta version of the benchmarks will be piloted and available for wide public comment in early 2012. As members of this coalition, the Public Library Association and the ALA Office for Information Technology Policy will provide an update of current activities and next steps for the joint effort.

Attachment: Edge backgrounder (from December 2011)



- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) has funded a coalition of organizations to develop, pilot, and promote the adoption of public access technology benchmarks for public libraries. The coalition, facilitated by the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) includes:
 - Five library support organizations (ULC, ALA-OITP, PLA, Lyrisis, Web Junction-OCLC);
 - Three state libraries (CA, OK and TX);
 - Two university-based research groups (U-WA and U-MD);
 - A local government support organization (ICMA);
 - A nonprofit organization that provides technology support throughout the nonprofit sector (Tech Soup Global); and
 - BMGF staff participated in the creation of the Benchmarks as a member organization of the coalition.

- The primary goals of the Edge initiative are to create benchmarks that:
 - Motivate local re-investment in public access technology at public libraries, and
 - Inspire continuous improvement in library public access technology services

- The benchmarks are intended to help library leaders measure the effectiveness of their technology services, craft plans to guide continuous improvement of those services, and shape data-based statements to advocate for continued investment in them. This initiative, called Edge, will be a tool like the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Green Building Rating Systems insofar as they are voluntary and aspirational, not regulatory.

- The coalition is currently finalizing a set of beta benchmarks that will be piloted in early 2012. Information below represents current thinking and plans as of Dec. 15 and may change as the internal review is completed.

- The benchmarks fall into three broad categories:
 - Community Value: includes measures of programs and services
 - Engaging Community Decision Makers: includes advocacy, partnerships, and sharing
 - Organizational Management: includes policies, staffing and infrastructure

- As of 12-13-11, there are 14 total benchmarks consisting of 30 indicators. It is anticipated that each of the three categories above will be weighted equally, and there will likely be four possible levels of scoring.

- Libraries using the benchmarks will:
 - Complete a self-assessment
 - Receive a score, with an explanation of results and recommendations for future action
 - Have the option to take training to increase their capacity to improve services and advocate
 - Be able to reassess to see changes in score

- PLA's primary activities

- Designing a training curriculum to increase the capacity of low-scoring libraries to reach the most basic Benchmarks level, increase the capacity of libraries to move up the Benchmarks continuum and spur interest in and understanding of the value of benchmarks to libraries and the communities they serve
- Contributing to the development and content of support materials

- OITP's primary activities
 - Benchmark development input
 - Research and composition of background and documentary materials for roundtable members

Engaging experts for review and feedback