

Public Libraries Survey FY2026 Data Element Changes

The following are additions and revisions to the federal data elements on the FY2026 Public Libraries Survey, covering calendar year 2026 for South Dakota libraries.

NOTE: For *new* federal data elements, libraries are encouraged to report in the first year if possible but are not *required* to track and report until the second year the new question is fielded.

Meeting Room Spaces (new data elements)

Three new data elements have been added at the outlet level: total meeting spaces, reservable meeting spaces, and meeting space reservations. These additions acknowledge the importance of reporting meeting spaces and their usage, highlighting the expanded services libraries provide to their patrons. These questions are specific to the outlet level; if your library has multiple branches, you will report these data elements separately for each branch.

1. Total Number of Meeting Spaces Available to the Public

Count all rooms or areas designated by your library as meeting spaces, regardless of whether they are reservable. Examples include meeting rooms, study rooms or pods, alcoves, auditoriums, and conference rooms. Be sure to include spaces used for both public and internal events. This data element is a straightforward count of the spaces.

2. Number of Reservable Meeting Spaces Available to the Public

Count the subset of meeting spaces that patrons can reserve, either in advance or at the time of use. This number will always be less than or equal to the total number of meeting spaces. As before, include spaces used for both public and internal purposes.

3. Number of Times Members of the Public Reserved Meeting Spaces

Count each reservation made during the reporting period, regardless of whether it was booked ahead of time or at the time of use. Include both free and fee-based reservations, as well as those during or outside normal business hours. If a space is reserved for multiple days, count each day as a separate reservation.

Do not count:

- Times the space was used without a reservation
- Attendance figures
- Reservations for library-run programs or events

Program Sessions and Attendance

The process for reporting these data elements will be significantly simplified. There are three major changes regarding recorded programs, virtual in-person programs, and off-site programs.

Recorded Programs – Retired

The questions for Total Number of Asynchronous Program Presentations (#620) and Total Views of Asynchronous Program Presentations (#630) will be removed from the FY2026 Public Libraries Survey.

This data element was introduced during the Covid pandemic to capture how libraries were providing programming to patrons. However, a significant decrease in libraries reporting asynchronous (recorded) programs has been observed. For context, in the FY2020 South Dakota Public Libraries Survey, 49 libraries reported posting about 1,500 recorded programs with nearly 180,000 views. By FY2025, only five libraries reported 21 programs with 1,000 views.

In-Person Virtual Programs – Retired

The questions for Number of Synchronous In-Person Virtual Program Sessions (#608) and Synchronous Virtual Program Attendance (#616) will be removed from the FY2026 Public Libraries Survey.

Similar to the recorded program questions, tracking virtual programming was introduced during the Covid closure years in FY2021. Since then, there has been a dramatic reduction in libraries across the United States offering in-person virtual programming. For example, in South Dakota, during the FY2021 survey, one quarter of libraries reported nearly 800 programs with over 10,000 attendees. By FY2025, only five libraries reported 30 in-person virtual programs attended by 300 people.

In-Person Offsite Programs – Revised

The questions for Number of Synchronous In-Person Offsite Program Sessions (#607) and Synchronous In-Person Offsite Program Attendance (#617) will become subsets of Total In-Person Program Sessions (#600) and Total In-Person Program Attendance (#610), rather than being reported separately for each age category.

The IMLS determined that it was burdensome to record programs by both age category (Children ages 0-5, Children ages 6-11, Teens, Adults, General Interest) and by venue (Onsite, Offsite, Virtual). Feedback showed that tracking offsite programs was most valuable, and that including them as a subset of total programs and attendance would simplify reporting.

The new layout for reporting In-Person Programs is anticipated to follow the example below:

In-Person Synchronous Programs

Age Group	Number of Synchronous Program Sessions	Attendance at Synchronous Programs
Children Ages 0-5	(#601)	(#611)
Children Ages 6-11	(#602)	(#612)
Young Adults Ages 12-18	(#603)	(#613)
Adults Ages 19 or Older	(#604)	(#614)
General Interest	(#605)	(#615)
TOTAL (summed)	(#600)	(#610)

In-Person Synchronous Programs Held Offsite

Of the total program sessions and attendance listed above, indicate how many took place somewhere other than the library.

Number of Synchronous Program Sessions Held Offsite	Attendance at Synchronous Offsite Programs
(#607)	(#617)

Please contact the State Library's data coordinator, [Shawn Behrends](#), if you have any questions about these changes.