

Book Vendor Criteria

Objective: This document outlines the guidelines and considerations the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) uses to approve or deny applications for book vendors who wish to directly mail books and other written materials to incarcerated people in our facilities. We want to provide transparency about what the review committee takes into consideration in this process to ensure decisions are objective and content-neutral.

Review Committee Must Deny:

- **Refusal to Submit Completed Application or Providing False Information**
 - An organization's refusal to provide all requested information to the best of its ability or evidence that an organization has provided false or misleading information will be immediate grounds for denial.
- **Purpose of Organization**
 - The DOC considers whether materials provided by the organization or on the organization's website, if applicable, lead to concerns about whether the organization intends to violate or abet violation of the DOC's [Contraband Policy](#).
- **Failure to Agree to Abide by DOC Policies**
 - All organizations that wish to mail books to incarcerated individuals in DOC facilities must agree to abide by all DOC policies.

Review Committee May Deny/Obtain Additional Information:

- **Order Filling Process**
 - This factor addresses whether the organization uses methods to fill their orders that minimize or prevent the risk of allowing contraband to enter DOC facilities. The DOC may conditionally approve a vendor subject to the vendor's agreement to implement changes required for these processes. Insufficient information or a refusal to meet safety and security standards may be grounds for denial.
- **How the Organization Obtains Materials**
 - An organization that publishes its own materials will generally be eligible for approval, absent other grounds for denial.
 - When an organization obtains materials through other methods such as donations or third-party vendors, this may be grounds for denial or the DOC may require further due diligence by the vendor to ensure steps have been taken by the applicant organization to minimize the risk of contraband entering the facilities created by more individuals having access to the materials prior to shipping.

- Measures Taken to Ensure Compliance with Contraband Policy
 - The DOC requires that organizations take sufficient measures to ensure compliance with the contraband policy. An organization does not necessarily need to take additional measures to meet DOC requirements if current measures are adequate. Increased variance involved in how an organization obtains, stores, or ships materials will increase the likelihood of additional scrutiny or denial under this factor.
- Use of Third-Party Vendors to Ship Materials
 - Because use of third-party vendors to procure and ship material increases the risk of contraband entering the facility in a way that may not be in control of the applicant organization, this alone may be grounds for denial.
- Instances of Introduction of Contraband to Other Facilities
 - When there are previous instances of an organization, or an individual at that organization, having introduced what the DOC would consider contraband into a facility, that raises safety and security concerns for providing books and other material to the DOC. If the facts and circumstances create an ongoing concern for introduction of contraband into one of our facilities, then that will be grounds for denial.

Non-Determinative Information Gathering

- Book Vendor or Non-Profit
 - The DOC provides the public and incarcerated people with information on how to obtain materials from the list of approved vendors. Identifying approved entities as for-profit book vendors or non-profit organizations allows individuals utilizing the approved vendor list, such as family members, to know whether they will need to purchase materials or may obtain them free of charge.
- Forms of Payment
 - This information is requested so that incarcerated people and other members of the public seeking to purchase items for incarcerated people know the various methods of payment accepted by book vendors. Incarcerated people may only purchase books from vendors by checks. If the vendor does not accept checks, that information should be included in the approved vendor list. This will indicate to incarcerated people whether they may obtain the materials directly or whether they will need to ask someone, such as friends or family, to purchase the materials for them.
- Methods of Ordering

- Similar to the reasoning provided above, this information serves to inform incarcerated people and other members of the public of the methods available to order materials from approved organizations (mailed in form, online only, etc.).

Other Considerations Not Included in Application Form

- **Appropriate Forum**
 - Occasionally an organization's materials may be better routed through other means offered by the DOC and available to incarcerated people. This can include library donations, correspondence courses, or following the magazine subscription policy, among others. In those circumstances, the committee may review and discuss whether it would be appropriate to reroute the organization to one of those other avenues.
- **Previous Application**
 - If the organization has previously applied, been reviewed, and was denied, the committee may consider whether the reasons for the initial denial still exist or if identified shortcomings have since been rectified. The committee may follow up on differences from prior applications to obtain evidence of the changes claimed to have been made.