



What MLS Program is the Best for You?

This worksheet will help you determine the most important factors when searching for your perfect MLS program.

1. How much schooling have you completed at this point?
 - High school
 - Associates degree
 - Bachelor of Science
 - Bachelor of Art
 - Graduate degree

2. Where do you live?

3. Would you move to go to school?

4. What state do you want to practice in as an MLS?

5. Do you prefer working alone or in groups?

6. Would you prefer a large class size or a small?



7. Are you willing to consider a private institution?

Can be a great option but private institutions are often more expensive.

8. Some programs offer students a small living stipend.

- Necessary
- Nice to have but, not a deciding factor

9. Do you have other obligations for your time? Kids, family, full-time job?

10. Now that you have answers to the above questions. Take a minute and decide which are the **two** most important to you.

- Location
- Cost
- Program size (class size)
- Program type (online / in person / post-bacc)
- Stipend



Summary

1. The amount of schooling you have will determine the program type you should apply to.
 - a. If you don't have a Bachelor of Science, a 2+2 or a 3+1 program is what you should look to apply to. These programs confer you with a BS and make you eligible to sit for the MLS ASCP BOC exam.
 - b. If you have an associate degree you should apply to a 2+2 or a 3+1 program. Some of your classes may transfer and allow you to shorten the length it takes you to complete the program. You will not be allowed to apply to a 4+1 program without a BS already. If you are not interested in going back to school for your BS at this moment in time you could consider applying to a MLT program (which is two years in length – find out more about MLTs [here](#))
 - c. If you have a Bachelor of Science, you should consider a 4 + 1 post-baccalaureate program. These programs will have pre-requisite courses that you need to take before you apply. But, with a BS you will most likely have completed at least some already. If you find that you have very little of the required coursework, then you might consider applying to a 2+2 or a 3+1 program. These will confer you another BS but, they will ensure you have all the pre-requisite classes for the professional part of the MLS training.
 - d. If you have a Bachelor of Arts, then you may find it easier to apply for a 2+2 or a 3+1 program. 4+1 MLS programs require many pre-requisite classes (often at least 16 semester hours (24 quarter hours) of biological science (with one semester in microbiology), 16 semester hours (24 quarter hours) of chemistry (with one semester in organic or biochemistry)). Those who completed a BS covered these classes while completing their degree. If you are in this situation contact the programs you are interested in to see what they recommend. If you have most classes already it could make sense to



just completed the few you need instead of going back for another baccalaureate degree.

- e. If you have completed graduate education, you should apply to a 4+1 program. Be sure to check the required coursework for each program to ensure you have completed the pre-reqs before applying.
2. If staying close to home is important to you make a list of all the MLS programs offered near your hometown. A list of all NAACLS accredited MLS programs can be found [here](#). If you are not able to find a program that suites you near your hometown there is always the option of an online program.
3. If you are open to moving for school, you will have a wider pool of programs to look at. Determine what is the most important factor is to you. Narrow down choices by those filters instead of location. Cost, program type, and program size are all factors to consider. MLS programs are competitive. Giving yourself more programs to apply to by being flexible on location can increase your chances of acceptance.
4. What state you hope to practice in is important information. Some states have licensure requirements and others don't. States that require licensure may have additional requirements that you have not completed. Gaining licensure in another state is not hard but it can be a pain. Keep this in mind as you are looking for programs. It helps to attend a program in the state you wish to practice in.
5. This is a good question to reflect on as you look for programs and later down the line as you are searching for employment. Some programs are large and will encourage group work, collaboration and cooperation. My program had two options for potential hospital rotation sites – one hospital required you to rotate in pairs and the other site had students rotate by themselves. Some may find it comforting to have a partner while others know they get more out of one-on-one training. Reflect on how you learn best and keep it in mind as you look through potential programs.
6. This question is similar to the previous one. If you are looking for one-on-one training a smaller program might be a better fit for you. This may not be your top



deciding factor when choosing what school to apply to. But, it could help you choose between two schools you have acceptances to.

7. Time to consider the financial aspect of schooling. Unfortunately, programs can be expensive and if money is tight, a private institution probably is not the way to go. Private institutions are often much more expensive than public ones. There are many great private schools out there. If your heart is set - look for a loan or a scholarship!
8. Some programs offer a stipend to students. It is often small but, can help cover costs of housing ect. If this is an important financial incentive, be sure to rank schools offering a stipend highest on you list. Stipends are most commonly available for 4+1 type programs.
9. Your other obligations are important to consider. Are you raising a family, working full-time or have other obligations for your time? If this is the case, consider an online program. They will often still require you to come to campus at some point, but you are able to be more flexible with your time. Taking courses at night or when you have spare time in your day instead of going to classes at scheduled hours.
10. Congratulations! You have considered all the deciding factors. Checked them twice. And made a list of the most important ones to you. Use this insight. Make a list of the schools in your desired location (you can use the next page of this worksheet). Cross off programs that don't meet your criteria. And continue until you have a list of programs you plan to apply to. Once you have your list start determining the pre-requisites you need to fulfill.

Here is the list of all **NAACLS accredited programs**:

<https://www.naacls.org/Find-a-Program.aspx>

Here is a list of **online programs**:

https://www.ascls.org/images/student_pdfs/ASCLS_Online_Directory_MLS.pdf

