
RA01A

Public Library Capital Grant Program

Maryland State Department of Education

Response to the Analyst's Review and Recommendations

House Capital Budget Subcommittee
March 9, 2011

Senate Capital Budget Subcommittee
March 21, 2011



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State Superintendent of Schools



Maryland Public Schools: **#1 in the Nation Three Years in a Row**

DLDS should comment on the rationale for allocating funds to a project that only involves renovating administrative space.

Howard County's request for funding for the Miller Branch Phase II: Library Space Conversion is not unique. Many of the library projects previously funded through this program have included pro-rated administrative space for each additional square foot of public service space.

Repurposing of the existing 23,500 square feet (sf) at the Miller Branch will enable the relocation and consolidation (providing economy of scale) of the library's business offices as well as the receiving and processing of all system library materials. It will also provide much-needed space for network equipment and computer storage to support the increased demand for public access computers, as well as staff space for library program planning. Furthermore, 3,200 square feet of this space will be used for community meeting rooms.

Additionally, it is important to recognize that this is not allocation of funds to a project that only involves renovating administrative space. As part of the same project, the 16,000 square feet of existing administrative space at the Central and East Columbia branches will be renovated into public service areas:

- At the East Columbia Branch, the 9,000 square feet will be used to add instructional spaces, technology classrooms, and community meeting rooms, as well as a dedicated venue for youth programs, including those for at-risk youth.
- The 7,000 square feet freed up at the Central Branch will be used to enhance Project Literacy (an Adult Basic Education initiative serving 500 students) by tripling its individualized and group instruction space. This same flexible space will also function as community meeting room space.

According to the Maryland Library Space Planning Guidelines (see Attachment 1) and various national standards, this essential work space is necessary to provide adequate and effective public library service. Minimum standards suggest a total (including both public service space and administrative/functional support space) of one square foot per capita.¹ Currently, Howard County Library is only providing 0.62 square foot of total library space to serve its residents and would require an additional 142,000 square feet to achieve the minimum standard for the county's projected population growth.

DLS recommends that the General Assembly consider whether mandated spending of \$5,000,000 annually on Public Library Capital Grants is essential. Furthermore, DLS recommends reducing fiscal 2012 funds by \$1,000,000, which is proportional to the overall 20% reduction experienced by the State GO bond program.

The grant program provides a great deal of public value for a relatively minor share of Maryland's Capital Budget. The program as mandated has had a very large impact on library

¹ The MD standards committee looked at several different states and all of them used 1 square foot per capita as a minimum. The committee primarily considered Florida because it had the most recent update (2006) and Wisconsin (because historically, the American Library Association had endorsed WI as the national standard - which no longer exists). The committee also looked into Public Library Association statistics on at least two states known for exemplary public libraries, Ohio and Washington.

development across Maryland, enabling more than 40 projects in 19 counties to move forward. Before this program was implemented in 2008, many of these projects had been stalled for years.

There continues to be a tremendous need to update public libraries as evidenced by the capital assessment conducted by MSDE’s Division of Library Development and Services (DLDS) in December 2010. Exhibit A shows that 112 of the 188 Maryland public libraries (approximately 60%) are more than 25 years old.

Exhibit A: Total Library Facilities by Age (in years):

| 0 - 5 | 6 - 10 | 11 - 25 | 26 - 50 | 51 - 100 | 100+ |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 19 | 17 | 40 | 84 | 24 | 4 |

As the State’s residents rely more heavily on public libraries to provide computer access for job training and the ability to file applications online (many employers no longer accept paper applications), the technological infrastructure must be updated to the standards of a 21st century library. In an increasingly hi-tech world, there are many other functions that can be accomplished more effectively or even only online. For all too many Maryland residents, access to a computer is available primarily or exclusively at their public library. The library stands in defense against the digital divide. Many of Maryland’s libraries remain woefully undersized providing only 0.47 square foot per capita. As noted above, the national standard is 1.0 square foot per capita. Reduced funding for the Public Library Capital Grants Program will cause Maryland’s public libraries to fall further behind.

DLS recommends that the General Assembly consider limiting allocations to each project to the lesser of \$800,000 or 50% of the project cost.

The limitation of State funding to 50% of the project costs is already in existing statute (Education Article Section 23-510). The Department believes that further limiting funding for each project to \$800,000 would actually diminish the opportunities for the smaller library systems and counties.

In Maryland, library systems range from those with three or fewer branches (e.g., Somerset and Kent County) to major metropolitan areas with more than 15 library locations (e.g. Baltimore City, Baltimore and Prince George’s County). A cap of \$800,000 would limit the maximum State funding eligibility in small counties to \$1.6 million and expand it beyond \$12 million in the larger and wealthier counties, thus potentially increasing the gap between small and large systems even further.

For example, in FY 2011, Talbot County’s initial request was fully funded (receiving \$765,000 along with a supplemental award of \$475,000 from rescinded grant funds). Inasmuch as Talbot County has only two library branches, it is unlikely that they will need to request another grant for many years. In contrast, Howard and Montgomery Counties received far less than the amounts requested. While MSDE considers the amount counties have received previously when recommending awards, there are more project requests from systems with a larger number of libraries.

This cap would significantly hinder the ability to fund larger projects in less wealthy and rural counties. One of the goals of this program is to encourage local library development, and the State needs to retain the flexibility to make larger awards to counties with the greatest need. To illustrate how effective the program has been in this regard, the State's investment of \$21 million through FY 2012 will generate an estimated \$211 million in local support.

DLS recommends that the General Assembly consider amending the Public Library Capital Grant statute to specify additional factors that should be considered in making awards, such as county wealth, average age of facilities, or population growth.

The factors noted in this recommendation are already included in the evaluation process. Based on existing statute, DLDS developed Grant Evaluation Criteria to take each of the additional factors suggested in this recommendation into account during the evaluation process. For example, county wealth is considered under the "need for additional sources of funding." The age of the facility and population growth are considered under "public necessity and urgency of a project."

During the FY2012 grant review cycle, DLDS worked with DMB to develop Library Space Planning Guidelines (see Attachment 2), which outline the square foot per capita required based on projected population growth. Attachment 2 also provides further information about the Grant Evaluation Criteria used in the determination of recommended award levels.

GO Bond Recommended Actions

RA01A Public Library Grant Program..... \$ 4,000,000

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| <u>Allowance</u> | <u>Change</u> | <u>Authorization</u> |
| 5,000,000 | -1,000,000 | 4,000,000 |

Explanation: This action reduces funds by \$1,000,000, which is proportional to the overall reduction of 20% in State general obligation bonds.

MSDE and the Maryland public library community are well aware of the State's dire fiscal challenges. In fact, the library community has acknowledged its understanding of the need to reduce the per capita funding originally slated for the FY 2012 operating budget grants.

The recommended reduction to this program, however, must be viewed in light of the already limited ability of the program to meet the statewide need. Applications for this program exceeded \$7.9 million. Further reductions would result in even less ability to develop and implement these crucial projects.

The Department of Budget and Management, DBM, requires that libraries refer to Maryland's planning guidelines (for square footage and number of items per capita) in order to justify and document the need for expansion.

Not all states have facilities standards, and the national trend has actually been to do away with them due to the rapidly changing nature of public library services and programs. However, these basic guidelines will assist Maryland public libraries in planning and documenting the need for expansion and new construction grant proposals at both the county and state level.

Among those states that do have standards for square footage, 1 SF per capita, is a universal minimum based on increased space requirements for technology and training programs. **The statewide average among public libraries in Maryland is less than .5 SF per capita in 2010.**

PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR SQUARE FOOTAGE PER CAPITA

Essential = 1 SF

Enhanced = 1.1 SF

Exemplary = 1.2 SF

Maryland's guidelines will be used to assist libraries to meet the nationally accepted minimum facility size and encourage innovation and excellence in service that requires more space than the bare minimum. No library will be penalized under the capital grant program for failing to meet the minimum guideline as individual projects are part of a comprehensive countywide facilities plan that may take several years to achieve. Project planning should be based on projected population growth rather than current population.

Renovation projects that do not expand existing space remain equally important in Maryland on account of the outdated infrastructure for technology in many older facilities.

These guidelines include both administrative and public service space countywide (which are both eligible for county library capital grant funding). They do not include space for regional libraries or the State Library Resource Center (SLRC).

PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR ITEMS PER CAPITA

FOR POPULATIONS UP TO 99,999

Essential = 4

Enhanced = 5

Exemplary = 6

FOR POPULATIONS BETWEEN 100,000 AND 499,999

Essential = 3

Enhanced = 4

Exemplary = 5

FOR POPULATIONS ABOVE 500,000

Essential = 2.5

Enhanced = 3.5

Exemplary = 4.5

Among those states that do have standards for collection size, smaller populations typically require more items per capita in order to provide a basic browsing collection. Often, there are different ranges for collection size based on the population served. Additionally, most state standards include all formats of library materials, not just the print collection. **In 2009, there were 2.9 items per capita in Maryland.**

Given the rapidly changing nature of library collections, these guidelines include all materials formats in addition to bound volumes. It should be noted that electronic formats do not reduce the space needed for libraries facilities since additional public computers are required to access electronic information.

County Library Capital Project Grants Program
Grant Evaluation Criteria
FY2012

The public library capital project grants will provide a uniform and objective analysis of proposed capital projects and support projects that address the library needs in the state.

The Division of Library Development and Services shall evaluate and prioritize grant requests to provide a uniform and objective analysis of proposed capital projects including the review of each applicant's master plan.

DLDS will use the following criteria for evaluating and ranking capital funding requests:

Eligibility of the Project

Viability of Matching Funds for a Project

Grant reviewers will review and score the applications based on the following criteria:

General rationale for the Project - 30 points

1. the nature of the work to be funded.
2. causes of the facility problems
3. consequences to the delivery of services.
4. any secondary objectives
5. any issues that will be dealt with

The Public Necessity and Urgency of a Project – 30 points

Existing facility problems that the capital funding is intended to solve such as:

1. **“Insufficient space”** (more space is needed for a function than is currently available) standards require more space overcrowding in the existing space due to an increase in users
2. **“Functional inadequacy of space”** (the physical characteristics of the existing space must be changed so that it can be more effectively utilized for the designated purpose)
3. **“Obsolescent/deficient space”** means that the space is out-dated or is defective in some way.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Has the facility problem interfered with the effective delivery of the grantee's services?
2. Does the application provide quantitative data to measure the service/operations problems?
3. How will completion of the capital project improve the grantee's delivery of services?

(What outcomes are expected to occur as a result of effectively delivered service?)

- a. Will the project enable the library's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?
- b. Will the project enable the library's compliance with historic preservation?

The Estimated Cost and Timeliness of Executing a Project – 20 points

Evaluation Criteria

1. How does the Library Facilities Master Plan support the application?
2. Is the applicant's annual and subsequent five-year capital improvement program consistent with the current library facilities master plan of record?
3. Has the applicant identified the prescribed scope and calculated the cost of the project?

The Need for Additional Sources of Funding for a Project – 20 points

Geographic Diversity – Discussion

Other Factors That May Give Priority to a Project – Discussion

1. Is the request part of a critical phase of the total project?
2. How does the proposal relate to prior (and future) state capital grant awards for the project?