

---

RA01

Capital - Maryland State Library Agency

---

Maryland State Library Agency

Response to the Analyst's Review and Recommendations

Senate Capital Budget Subcommittee - March 13, 2018

House Capital Budget Subcommittee - March 19, 2018



Irene M. Padilla  
State Librarian

## RA01 MSLA Response to the Analyst's Review

MSLA gratefully acknowledges the funding previously authorized through fiscal 2019 to complete renovations to the State Library Resource Center. The analysis provides an excellent description of the dire need at the Central Branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore City. When completed in June 2019, this \$104,444,000 project will result in a fully renovated facility that is the crown jewel of Maryland's public library network. It should be noted that the project is being overseen by DGS, and we wish to thank them for their expertise in managing a renovation of this scope.

MSLA also wishes to express its appreciation to the General Assembly for the legislation enacted in fiscal 2008 to create the Public Library Capital Grant Program.

Fiscal 2019 is the twelfth year that State assistance will be available to public libraries in Maryland. Since the inception of the program in Fiscal 2008, \$45,025,000 has been authorized to assist public library projects in 22 counties, leveraging more than \$250,000,000 in local matching funds, or nearly six times the amount of the State's investment. Program goals include geographic diversity in grant distribution and stimulating local support for public library facilities development.

While tremendous strides have been made in improving library facilities, the need for the program continues. As noted in the analysis, there are 24 public library systems in Maryland with a total of 191 branches. A recent assessment indicated that more than half of the State's existing libraries are more than 25 years old. Many of these facilities are in need of replacement, renovation, alteration or expansion. National library space planning guidelines suggest that one square foot (SF) per capita is the minimum required to provide basic services for the community. In Maryland, the average public library space available is 0.6 SF per capita.

As noted, most awards have been for smaller, but critical, projects such as new roofs and replacement windows or upgrades to the electrical and technology infrastructure to enhance 21<sup>st</sup> Century library service. However, eleven new libraries, roughly one per year, have opened with assistance from the program and are listed in the analysis.

On Saturday, March 10, 2018, Frederick County dedicated the twelfth new library facility to have received assistance from the program in Walkersville, and the new Berlin Branch in Worcester County is scheduled for completion in June 2018. Construction of the new Hancock Branch in Washington County is underway with a projected fall 2018 completion and groundbreaking for a new Leonardtown Library in St. Mary's County and a new public library facility here in Annapolis are anticipated later this spring. During fiscal 2019, construction of three more new libraries will be underway in Myersville (Frederick), Wheaton (Montgomery) and North East (Cecil).

**MSLA should update the committees on the status of discussions with Cecil County to limit and sequence State support for this project to prevent it from crowding out other projects from receiving State funds.**

During the most recent application cycle, the Cecil County Public Library submitted another extremely compelling proposal to begin construction of the new North East Library. Previously,

## **RA01 MSLA Response to the Analyst's Review**

the library received funding to acquire a site (fiscal 2010) and design the project (fiscal 2018). MSLA staff worked closely with the grant writers in Cecil County to ensure the request for construction funds did not exceed the percentage allowed by the wealth based cost sharing formula enacted in fiscal 2014. Additionally, MSLA appointed reviewers and DBM vetted the request against the project schedule and verified the viability of the local match in the Cecil County CIP in the event the State could not fully fund the requested amount of \$3,749,000.

This same scrutiny is applied to every project, both large and small, either renovation or new construction, each year. All 24 library systems, including Cecil County, and MSLA are aware that the program is capped at \$5,000,000. The out-year costs for the North East Library, as well as all of the recommended projects, reflect the total that may be requested or was anticipated when the current request was submitted in June 2017. This may not be the same amount recommended for future funding in fiscal 2020 and beyond. This is a competitive grant program, therefore all proposals are reviewed annually to ensure the broadest possible allocation of funds statewide and to provide a fair and equal opportunity for all library systems to benefit from the program. As noted in the analysis, awards are reduced when requests exceed available resources.

During the fiscal 2019 grant cycle, MSLA received 10 applications from 8 library systems totaling \$10,114,000, more than twice the mandated amount of \$5,000,000. One request for \$400,000 was subsequently withdrawn when construction bids were opened and the project came in under budget. Reviewers determined that due to the extremely large total amount requested statewide, only one of the three projects submitted by Montgomery County could be recommended. That left seven remaining projects totaling \$5,000,000 for your consideration, only two of which are being recommended for full funding. No other request was reduced more (by \$2,749,000) than that of Cecil County's this year.

There is no evidence that the North East project has crowded out other library systems from receiving State funds. In fact, two other projects, in Baltimore and Carroll Counties, are also recommended to receive at least \$1,000,000 during this funding cycle.

Until proposals for fiscal 2020 are submitted, MSLA cannot be certain what amounts will be requested. Current projects may fall behind schedule, cost estimates may change, and new projects will undoubtedly be received. MSLA will continue to recommend funding for projects as outlined in statute.

Finally, as noted in the analysis, the cost sharing formula enacted in fiscal 2014 has resulted in an increase in both the number of projects and jurisdictions receiving awards, particularly to geographic areas with less wealth. The substantial allocations received by Howard, Washington and Montgomery Counties before fiscal 2014 (when those systems had very large new construction projects and when the local match was 50% for all library systems) are now comparable to the totals received by Baltimore City and Somerset County.

During fiscal 2014 and 2015 grant cycles, MSLA was able to allocate \$5,189,000, or 90% of the total cost, for the new Crisfield Library in Somerset County. This unprecedented level of funding was only possible because fewer requests were received during those application cycles along with the reallocation of funds from other projects that were rescinded at the same time. The bottom line is that Crisfield simply would not have a new library today without this level of State support.

## **RA01 MSLA Response to the Analyst's Review**

While we understand the analysts concerns about the possibility of a single project requiring most of the State's resources in one year, Cecil County's request for the North East project is probably not the issue since the General Assembly has already outlined very clear limits, guidelines and goals for the distribution of grant awards. Instead, the larger problem may be that new libraries cost far more than \$5,000,000. Therefore, large construction projects are always going to exceed the funding available. Over the past decade, we have worked very hard to meet the General Assembly's goals for the program and again, we are extremely grateful for your support of public libraries.

With regard to the specific recommendations noted in the analysis:

### **Recommended Actions**

#### **1. Approve the \$5,000,000 general obligation bond authorization for the Public Library Capital Grant Program.**

MSLA concurs.

#### **2. Approve the \$4,831,000 general obligation bond authorization for the State Library Resource Center Renovation.**

MSLA concurs.