



Providing inclusive places to gather is a core principle of public libraries. We offer equitable access to educational advancement, economic opportunity, and lifeline services for all. This funding would enable us to complete more robust upgrades to our oldest branches, exponentially increase the supply of borrowable technology and internet access, and dutifully ensure the staffing needed to meet community needs.

The Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) has established procedures to receive requests and distribute State capital funding through the annual County Library Capital Grant Program. Since the inception of the grant program in FY 2008, the number of annual awards has varied from 20 to 4 projects.

More than half of the 191 public library buildings in Maryland are over twenty five (25) years old. Consequences of this aging infrastructure are: 5 buildings need a new roof, 3 facilities require alterations for ADA compliance, 4 libraries have HVAC systems that are at the end of their useful life, 26 buildings require technological upgrades in order to provide 21<sup>st</sup> century library services, 23 existing facilities require general renovation, and 6 buildings have been identified for replacement with a new structure. The total estimated cost of these projects is **\$424.38 million**.

With the escalation of construction costs, grant requests have become larger, thereby decreasing the number of projects/geographic diversity in the distribution of awards.

While the allocation of an additional \$40 million annually is more than 5 times the total allocation of \$7.5 million annually for the existing statewide program, it will not significantly increase the total number of projects being managed by the agency or require additional staff. Since requests are capped at 2 per system under the proposed legislation, the maximum number of requests could not exceed 48 projects.

However, smaller library systems may not be able to manage or match more than one project in a single fiscal year.

The agency anticipates fewer, but larger, requests under this proposed legislation since the minimum request is \$500,000. Under the current grant program the minimum request is \$20,000.

**Let's build on Maryland's commitment to its residents so we can strengthen and sustain our library infrastructure for generations to come.**