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Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Board of Library Commissioners



# State Aid to Public Libraries

## A Guide for Municipal Officials

“With the economy in such tough shape we are being inundated by people who are job hunting and using our computers for that purpose. Since our space is so limited, we don't have the room to install another desktop computer, so we purchased a laptop, with state aid funds, and check it out for in-library use as an additional Internet station.”

*Roberta Rothwell, Director, Sutton Free Public Library*

### Additional Information

**Statute:** Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 78, Sections 19A and 19B  
[www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/78-19a.htm](http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/78-19a.htm)  
[www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/78-19b.htm](http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/78-19b.htm)

**Regulations:** Code of Massachusetts Regulations, 605 CMR 4.00  
[www.mass.gov/mblc/laws/code/605cmr4.php](http://www.mass.gov/mblc/laws/code/605cmr4.php)

**Policies:** Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners Administrative Policies  
[www.mass.gov/mblc/grants/state\\_aid/policies/index.php](http://www.mass.gov/mblc/grants/state_aid/policies/index.php)

**State Aid Program Details:** [www.mass.gov/mblc/grants/state\\_aid/index.php](http://www.mass.gov/mblc/grants/state_aid/index.php)

**State Aid Blog:** [www.mass.gov/mblc/grants/state\\_aid/blog/](http://www.mass.gov/mblc/grants/state_aid/blog/)



Libraries across the Commonwealth host nearly 23,000 Internet Session every day.

“During the current financial crisis we've used state aid funding to maintain staffing and hours open to better serve our users. State Aid is an essential tool in providing quality services for our residents.”

– Deborah Grimmer-Acting Director,  
Abington Public Library

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## Background

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners administers the State Aid to Public Libraries program. State aid has been awarded to municipalities and their public libraries since 1890 when The Acts of 1890, chapter 347, 'An Act to Promote the Establishment and Efficiency of Free Public Libraries', established the Free Public Library Commission of Massachusetts. This guide highlights key elements of State Aid to Public Libraries. For complete information, please visit the MBLC web site: [www.mass.gov/mblc/grants/state\\_aid/index.php](http://www.mass.gov/mblc/grants/state_aid/index.php)

## Facts

- The program is voluntary.
- About 97% of the public libraries in MA participate in the program.
- Municipalities and their public libraries apply to the program annually.
- The program is municipally focused. The requirements apply to local municipal funding of the library, as well as library services.
- When a municipality and its public library apply to the program and meet statutory (MGL, c.78, ss.19A & 19B) and regulatory (605 CMR 4.00) requirements, the Board of Library Commissioners certifies the municipality and its library to participate in the program, and State Aid to Public Libraries funding is awarded.

## Key Program Benefits

- **Local Aid** – participation in the program allows the municipality and its library to receive local aid to be used by the library (without appropriation) to promote library services.
- **Reciprocal Services** – participation guarantees that residents of a certified municipality be able to borrow materials from any other certified library in Massachusetts, either in person, or through interlibrary loan to the library in their municipality.
- **Services of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners** – participation in the State Aid to Public Libraries program also allows libraries to take advantage of federal, state, and private grant opportunities otherwise unavailable to them, including state construction grants. Participation in the program also allows access to research databases provided at the state level.

## Key Program Requirements

- **Hours Open Requirement** - the library's weekly hours of service required based on the municipality's population (605 CMR 4.00).
- **Materials Expenditure Requirement** - the library's materials expenditures required based on the municipality's population (605 CMR 4.00).
- **Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR)** - the municipality's required appropriation to the library based on municipal funding history [the average of the prior three years' municipal appropriations plus 2.5%]. (MGL c.78, s.19A)

## Waivers, Accommodations and Flexibilities

- **Waivers of the Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR)**. Statute allows the Board of Library Commissioners to grant up to ten waivers. Annual budget language reiterates or amends the number. The Board of Library Commissioners may be permitted to grant as many waivers as needed to eligible municipalities and their libraries. Waiver applications must accompany the annual state aid application.
- **Materials Expenditure and Hours Open Accommodation**. This accommodation policy allows libraries to meet one or both of the minimum library service requirements at a reduced, 90% or 80% level, and still be certified to participate in the state aid program, with a reduced state aid award.
- **Flexibility of Materials Expenditure Requirement**. Regulations allow a library that is meeting the hours requirement of the next larger population group to expend the lesser amount for materials required for that next population group.

## Statute, Regulations, and Policies

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners reviews and approves policies and regulations for the State Aid to Public Libraries program. These policies and regulations further define the statutory requirements for State Aid to Public Libraries as established by the state legislature.

## State Aid Awards

There are three components to the State Aid award that municipalities receive for their libraries. Each component is calculated with a different formula, for the distribution of funds from the state's annual appropriation for State Aid to Public Libraries.

- **Library Incentive Grant (LIG)** – per capita grant based on municipal population.
- **Municipal Equalization Grant (MEG)** – grant to municipalities based on revenue raising capacity, calculated using the state lottery formula.
- **Nonresident Circulation Offset (NRC)** – grant based on the number of circulation transactions to nonresidents of the library's municipality.

## Annual Calendar

2011	June	Workshops held to help librarians complete the statistics survey
	July	Statistics survey available online to all public libraries
	August	Statistics survey closes; state aid packets sent to all public libraries
	September	Workshops held to help librarians complete the state aid forms
	October	State aid forms due
2012	November	Board of Library Commissioners meets and certifies the first group of municipalities meeting all state aid requirements
	December	Board meets and certifies the next group of municipalities meeting all state aid requirements
	January	Board meets and reviews petitions and hears presentations of applicants for a waiver of the MAR
	February	Board meets and acts on applications for a waiver of the MAR
	March	Board meets and hears any appeals of denial of an MAR waiver
	April	Board meets and acts on any appeals of denial of an MAR waiver

## FY2011 Numbers

- Of the **351** municipalities in Massachusetts, **349** have public libraries or share public libraries.
- Of the **349** municipalities with libraries, **341** applied for FY2009 State Aid to Public Libraries.
- **218** met the FY2011 State Aid to Public Libraries requirements.
- **123** applied for and received waivers of the FY 2011 MAR.
- **341** were certified to receive State Aid to Public Libraries.

## How Are Libraries Funded?

- **87%** of library funding comes from local municipalities.
- **3%** comes from State Aid to Public Libraries.
- **10%** comes from other sources, such as endowment income, friends groups, etc.
- Municipal funding to libraries is locally decided.
- **1.26%** of total municipal operating expenditures are spent on public libraries in Massachusetts, based on the most recent Department of Revenue figures.