

# MHLS ACTION MEMO

#15-04

**TO:** MHLS Member Library Directors  
**FROM:** Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Coordinator for Library Sustainability  
**DATE:** April 2, 2015  
**RE:** Construction Needs Update & Intent to Apply in the next Construction Grant Cycle

## Background

Funding for public library construction is available thanks to the State Aid for Public Library Construction Grant Program. In order to facilitate this program MHLS tracks information about member libraries' construction/expansion/renovation projects for use when advocating for state funding and for allocating MHLS consulting efforts. This year we will once again use this information to assist in generating a local **eligibility list** for State Aid for Public Library Construction Grants.

## Issue

- 1) In order to fulfill the NYS Division of Library Development's request to help them paint an accurate picture of library construction aid needs so that they can adequately advocate for the State Aid for Public Library Construction Grant Program in coming years, we need every member library's help.

2) **\*You are required to submit the attached forms to MHLS to apply for State Aid for Public Library Construction funds later this year.** (Note: the online application is usually available in mid-to-late June)

**Action:** Please fill out Sections A and B below and return the form to Rebekkah Smith Aldrich @MHLS.

**Deadline:** May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**Please note:** There will be an **informational webinar on Friday, April 24th from 2:30 – 3:30pm** to help you fill out this memo. Please register online at <http://calendar.midhudson.org>

# Construction Needs Update (2015)

Library: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person (name & email address):  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION A | Construction Needs: Next 5 -10 Years

**A.1:** Has your library conducted a long-range planning process *that included direct community input* within the past 4 years?  
 Yes  No

**A.2:** Of the following, what are the facility project priorities your board has identified for the next 5-10 years? (*check all that apply*):

- new building
- expansion
- renovation
- handicapped accessibility
- energy efficiency
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**A.3:** Please list the **top three specific projects** in your facility plan and the estimated cost for each below (*example: new roof, \$50,000*):

Project	Estimated Cost

**A.4:** Please attach your prioritized, board approved facility plan.

## SECTION **B** | Intent to Apply for a Construction Grant: **2015-2016**

**B1:** Do you intend to apply for State Aid for Public Library Construction funds this year (FY2015-2016)?

Yes\*

No *(If you checked "no," you are done with this form.)*

**B2.1:** Please choose one or more of the following to describe the project:

- new building
- expansion
- renovation
- accessibility
- energy efficiency
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**B2.2:** Briefly describe the project (3 sentences or less):

**B3:** The approximate phase of the project:

- Phase I: talking to MHLS; evaluation of current building and needs; exploring options; full board buy-in
- Phase II: viewing other library buildings; RFP to architect, fundraising consultants
- Phase III: architectural plans are in place; solid funding plan in place; bid/quote documents in place
- Phase IV: funding plan in full swing; actual construction taking place
- Phase V: finishing touches on building; all funds needed are available

**B4:** Total estimated project cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

***Continued on the next page...***

## B5. Construction Grant Eligibility Checklist:

**Please go through the Checklist critically. \*\*If you cannot answer “Yes” to all of the items in the Checklist you may not apply.\*\***

- Yes**, our project falls within the **defined eligible projects** (see next page of this memo re: eligible / ineligible projects)
- Yes**, our project falls within at least one of the **MHLS Board’s priorities for funding** (check all that apply):
  - An increase in services**, through an increase in usable public space or increased staff efficiencies (e.g., new buildings, additions to current buildings, renovation of existing areas for new uses); and/or
  - An increase in access** (e.g., handicapped accessibility; to optimize a space to bring in a new or underserved population); and/or
  - Energy conservation in the context of a professional’s recommendations or with an historic preservation element.** For the purposes of the board’s ranking a “professional’s recommendation” will, *at least*, include the results of an Energy Audit by the NYS Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA).
- Yes**, we have a **quote/bid estimate** from a contractor  **or**  We will have a quote/bid estimate by August 1<sup>st</sup>.  
(Please note: Cost estimates done by an architect are not acceptable.)
- Yes**, our total project costs equal **at least \$5,000**.
- Yes**, we have the required **matching funds** in hand or will by August 2015<sup>^</sup>.
- Yes**, our project could begin **within 180 days** of notification that we will receive construction aid funds (estimated time of notification: May 2016)
- Yes**, our project will be finished by **June 30, 2018**.
- Yes**, our building where the work will be done will be used for library purposes for **the next 10 years**.

<sup>^</sup>State aid for public library construction can be provided for "up to fifty percent of the total project approved costs, excluding feasibility studies, plans or similar activities." If your library meets the new stated criteria for an economically disadvantaged community (see **attached document** for MHLS parameters) you may be eligible for up to 75% of project costs. **Before applications are approved, applicants must provide evidence of the availability of funds to pay for the entire cost of the project, minus the amount awarded through the Construction Grant Program** [Note: award amount is likely to be less than fifty percent of the total project approved costs - RSA]. **Verification must be in the form of bank or bond certification, an official document(s) signed by a financial authority connected with the applying institution, and/or such other evidentiary documents as necessary.** [<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/construc/faq14m.htm#b07>]

**Please return to MHLS, attn: Rebekkah Smith Aldrich by May 8, 2015**

# Frequently Asked Questions:

## Eligibility

### **Q: What kinds of projects are eligible for funding under the construction program?**

A: Costs eligible for approval include construction or acquisition of a library building, renovation or rehabilitation of a library building, or renovation or rehabilitation of a building leased for library purposes. The purchase and installation of equipment and furnishings are eligible costs within the context of a construction project application for a new building, building addition or substantially renovated/rehabilitated space. Other eligible costs include site acquisition (purchase of an existing building to be used for library purposes), site grading of owned property in conjunction with a building project, and supervision of the construction, renovation, or rehabilitation. The program gives priority to projects that increase energy conservation, provide accommodation for computer equipment and new technologies, and bring libraries into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Priority is also given to projects that will extend library services to people residing in geographically isolated and economically disadvantaged communities.

### **Q: May libraries buy computers and equipment and incorporate new technologies as part of a construction project?**

A: Yes, a library or system may use the construction funds to purchase computers and equipment that will upgrade the library or system's technology capabilities- e.g., automated systems that permit library users to check out materials themselves, public access computers for a newly constructed computer lab. The purchase of new technologies must be within the context of a construction project for a new building, building addition, renovation or rehabilitation project. Requests for new computers that are not part of a larger construction/rehabilitation project are not eligible for funding from this program.

### **Q: Will a project that consists of building maintenance be eligible for funding under the \$14 million construction program?**

A: No. Commissioner Regulations specifically exclude "routine maintenance," e.g., replacement of carpeting, roof repair, or repainting of walls, from eligible funding categories. Fundable projects include those that involve capital construction, site acquisition, renovation, or rehabilitation of owned or leased buildings used for library or library system purposes.

*[Excerpted from the Division of Library Development's "\$14 Million Public Library Construction Grant Program "Frequently Asked Questions":  
<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/construc/14m/faq.htm>]*

### **Q: What is ineligible?**

A: "Applicants are reminded here that architectural and engineering plans, building consultant studies, and the purchase of books and other library materials are listed among those costs deemed ineligible. In addition, the purchase and installation of initial equipment and furnishings are eligible costs *only with respect to new or refurbished space.*"

*[From: Education law, Section 273-a, as amended by Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2005 and Section 90.12 of the Commissioner's Regulations Law and Regulations]*

# MHLS Specifications

## MHLS Board Priorities for Funding:

- Project must be **part of a long-range plan or a prioritized facility plan** which is reported to MHLS through the Construction Needs Action Memo issued annually in March and
- **Provide for at least one of the following (the more the better!):**
  - **An increase in services**, through an increase in usable public space or increased staff efficiencies (e.g., new buildings, additions to current buildings, renovation of existing areas for new uses); and/or
  - **An increase in access** (e.g., handicapped accessibility; to optimize a space to bring in a new or underserved population); and/or
  - **Energy conservation in the context of a professional’s recommendations or with an historic preservation element.** For the purposes of the board’s ranking a “professional’s recommendation” will, at least, include the results of an Energy Audit by the NYS Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA).

The MHLS Board has generated the following definition of what an “economically disadvantaged community” will qualify as in our region to comply with the amended legislation that allows for state aid to be provided up to 75% for buildings/public libraries located in such a community. Application requests greater than 50% need to demonstrate how the project will address the service needs of one or more economically disadvantaged communities.

### Definition:

(1) a political subdivision within which **15 percent** or more of the population is living in poverty as shown on the latest federal census.

(2) a public school district within which the percentage of student enrollment that is eligible for free and reduced lunch under the national school lunch program is **40 percent** or more for at least one month during the twelve months prior to the date of filing of the grant application.

(3) a political subdivision as described in #1 within which **10 percent** or more of the population is living in poverty **and** a public school district as described in #2 within which the percentage of student enrollment that is eligible for free and reduced lunch under the national school lunch program is **30 percent** or more.