

2016 LEGISLATIVE TALKING POINTS

Library Construction Grants: Accessibility and Improvement

Minnesota Library Association and ITEM encourage the MN State Legislature to provide \$10 million in the 2016-2017 biennium for the Library Construction Grant program, administered by the Minnesota Department of Education.

Background: The Library Construction Grant Program was established in 1994 “. . . only to remove architectural barriers from a building or site.” It was expanded in 2005 to “. . . renovate or expand an existing building for use as a library or to construct a new library building.” In 2014 it was clarified with the addition of “. . . renovation may include remediation of conditions hazardous to health and safety.”

Since 1995, 61 counties have benefited from 134 projects. There were 95 projects in Greater Minnesota and 39 in the seven-county metro area. From 1995 through 2013 grants, based on one-to-one match, ranged from \$614 to \$806,500 with the average grant being \$82,917. The statutory review criteria includes degree of collaboration (other public or private agencies); public library jurisdiction’s tax burden; long-term feasibility, suitability, and need.

In 2016 twenty-six library projects are identified as potentially applying for grant funds. Assuming all entities apply for the maximum amount allowed according to statute, the potential grant applications would total \$17,025,000.

(PLEASE SEE THE REVERSE FOR MORE INFORMATION)

Additional Information

1. Historically, the Library Construction Grant program has leveraged the use of seven local dollars for each state grant dollar.
2. Minnesota has over 350 public library buildings, some of which are not handicapped-accessible, and many of which need to be updated or replaced.
3. Minnesota has many more library buildings which although partially accessible, still lack the capacity for updated computers and data services. In older buildings, the challenge to provide these services can be as simple as difficulties in installing new wiring and network technologies.
4. Growth in population and the demand for additional computer services have many libraries looking to expand their building or turn to new construction. Although all of Minnesota's counties provide library services to their residents, many counties still require or assume that cities will provide the library building. Smaller cities, with a limited tax base for construction, struggle to justify expansion or expensive modifications such as elevators in buildings that should be replaced.

