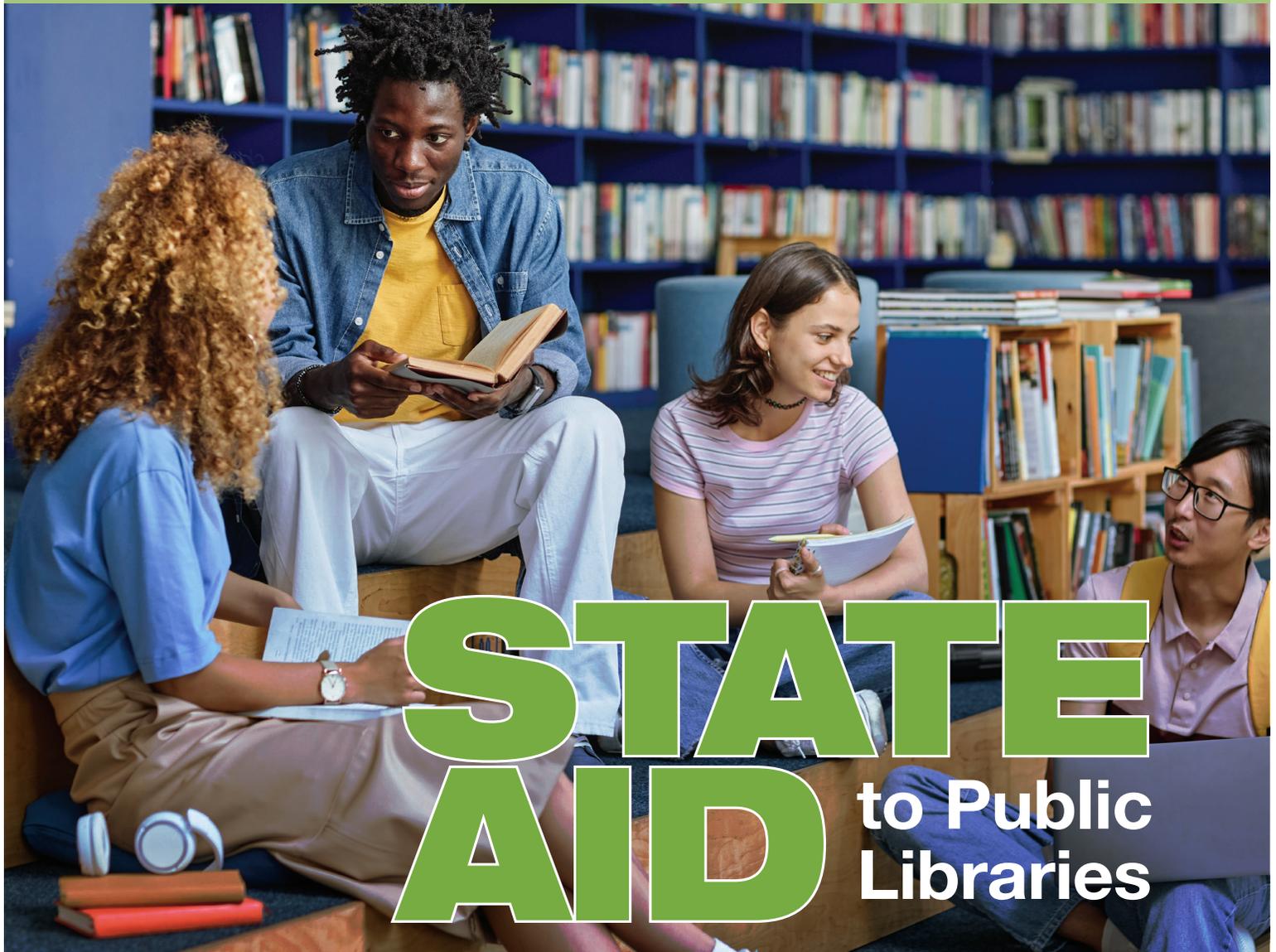


# State Aid to Public Libraries = Local Aid

For many communities State Aid awards have nearly doubled. See how much your community gets and how much they save by being certified in the program.



# STATE AID to Public Libraries

## A Guide for Municipal Officials

The State Aid to Public Libraries Program is at the heart of sharing materials across Massachusetts. It gives residents access to millions of items beyond what any single library owns. This means that residents get more while local communities save money.

MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF  
LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS

FOR THE COMMON GOOD SINCE 1890

# Why Staying Certified Matters

## State Aid Certified

**YES**

- State Aid funds can be used in any way that supports the library.\*
- Local communities save money. For example, because the library is State Aid certified, South Hadley residents were able to borrow more than **23,040 items** from other libraries. If the library had to purchase these items it would cost an estimated **\$345,600\***.

### MUNICIPALITIES have access to:

- Millions of dollars in library construction grants through the MBLC's Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program.
- Federal grant money for local needs through the MBLC's Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grant Program.
- The MBLC's Small Libraries in Networks program which provides libraries that serve small communities (population under 10,000) with funding to support their network memberships.

### RESIDENTS have access to:

- Millions of items beyond what their local library has.
- Resources through the Library for the Commonwealth at Boston Public Library.
- Statewide research databases.



### \*Use of State Aid Funds

Funds shall be distributed under the guidelines of the municipal equalization grant program, the library incentive grant program and the nonresident circulation offset program; provided further, that notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, any payment made under this item shall be deposited with the treasurer of the city or town and held in a separate account and shall be expended by the public library of that city or town without appropriation. Chapter 46 of the Acts of 2015.

**State Aid FAQs:** [mbc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-arls/faqs.php](http://mbc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-arls/faqs.php)



**NO**

### RESIDENTS have access to:

- Their library's own collection. ♦
- Resources through the Library for the Commonwealth at Boston Public Library.
- Statewide research databases.

♦ Libraries in certified municipalities are not required to lend library materials to patrons in noncertified municipalities (605 CMR 4.01 (6a)). Libraries in certified municipalities are not required to extend reciprocal library services, beyond in-library use of their materials, to residents of the noncertified municipality (605 CMR 4.01 (6b)). Some libraries may choose to lend to non-certified municipalities at the discretion of their trustees.

\*The amount was calculated at each item costing \$15.00.

# Annual Calendar

**June**  
ARIS workshops help librarians complete the statistics survey.

**July**  
Statistics survey opens online to all public libraries.

**August**  
Statistics survey closes; State Aid packets sent to all public libraries.

**September**  
State Aid workshops help librarians complete the program forms.

**October**  
State Aid forms due.

**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.

# 2025 2026

**January**  
Board meets and reviews petitions and hears presentations of applicants for a waiver of the MAR. \*Board certifies the next group of municipalities meeting all State Aid requirements.

**February**  
Board meets and votes on applications for waivers of the MAR.

**March**  
Board meets and hears appeals of MAR waiver denials, if necessary.

**April**  
Board meets and votes on appeals of MAR waiver denials, if necessary.

*\*Board approval process for libraries meeting all requirements may extend beyond January.*

## FY2026 NUMBERS

- Of the **351** municipalities in Massachusetts, **350** have public libraries or share public libraries.
- Of the **350** municipalities with libraries, **347** applied for State Aid to Public Libraries.
- Of the **347** that applied, **339** met all requirements and **8** received an accommodation for not meeting the full hours/materials requirement.
- **16** applied for waivers of the MAR: **7** received additional funding and withdrew their applications, which resulted in 9 waivers granted for FY26.
- **347** were certified to receive State Aid to Public Libraries.

For information on State Aid funding to individual libraries, waiver recipients and libraries that are not certified see: [mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-aris](https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-aris)

## 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 website: [mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-aris](https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-aris)

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**For More  
Information**

**Visit:** [mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-arls](http://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-arls)

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**Facts**

- The program is voluntary.
- About 98% of the public libraries in Massachusetts 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.
- The Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) is the required appropriation to the library based on municipal funding (the average of the three prior years' appropriation plus 2.5%).
- 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.
- Certification in the program guarantees borrowing privileges in all other certified public libraries in Massachusetts.