State Aid Review: Final Recommendations to the Board

After consideration of the work completed by the State Aid to Public Libraries Review Committee, the findings of the White Paper from the Collins Center, and the feedback received from the Library Community through a series of community meetings, an InformsUs survey created by Director Dianne Carty, and a Counting Opinions poll developed by State Aid Specialist Liz Babbitt, the following three recommendations are presented to the Commissioners for consideration.

5.1 Hours

Hours Compliance Period = Any nine months in a fiscal year

Current Regulation: The Minimum Hours Open requirement is defined in statute and regulation (MGL, c.78, s.19B and 605 CMR 4.01(3)).

In order to be eligible to apply for State Aid to Public Libraries, a library must be open the minimum required hours, days, and evening hours for its population group between Labor Day and Memorial Day of each fiscal year. Summer hours are not used in measuring compliance, but the library must be open at least some hours each week, with posted weekly hours, during the summer period.

Rationale for change:

This change allows libraries to determine which nine months of their public schedules in a fiscal year they will use to meet the compliance period; this change provides flexibility for those communities that are busier in summer months as a result of increases in vacation populations in resort communities or have high participation in popular summer reading programs. Libraries that prefer the current compliance period can continue to follow the Labor Day to Memorial Day compliance period.

This change is recommended to the Board for approval.

This modification requires changes in regulation, policy, and to the definitions related to Hours throughout the State Aid Program.
5.2: Materials Expenditure Requirement

5.2.1 Materials expenditure = Cost of technology for patron use

Current Regulation:
Minimum Requirements & Standards of Free Public Library Service:
Expend a reasonable portion of the library's total budget on library materials [605 CMR 4.01(5)]

Rationale for change:
Permits libraries to purchase hardware for direct patron use with operating funds allocated for materials; affords libraries an opportunity to keep up with the latest resources for patrons; provides patrons with greater access to electronic materials purchased for their use.

1. Hardware would include but is not limited to patron access computers, monitors, laptops, tablets, and peripherals including keyboards, mice, and headphones.
2. The purchases allowed would be from appropriated and/or non-appropriated operating funds NOT capital funds.
3. The library would not be required to expend materials budgets on patron access hardware.
4. Up to 10% of the Materials Expenditure Requirement would be available each year for the purchase of hardware. (see attached chart)

Although there is some concern that diverting materials funding to technology may reduce the total amount of money spent locally and statewide for print and electronic materials, this change offers libraries greater opportunity to provide patrons with up-to-date access to materials and content.

Note: Equipment that circulates can be included in the Materials Expenditure Requirement calculation currently. This change would include equipment used by patrons in the library.

This change is recommended to the Board for approval.

This modification requires changes in regulation, policy, and to the definition of materials throughout the program.
5.3 Municipal Appropriation Requirement

5.3.2 MAR Calculation = Calculate the MAR without including municipally appropriated Revolving Funds

Current Administrative Procedures: Municipally appropriated revolving funds are considered income since they must be approved annually at town meeting or by city council. They are reported in the State Aid to Public Libraries application as appropriated income and are considered to be part of the Total Appropriated Municipal Income (TAMI).

Rationale for change:

Revolving Funds voted annually are projections in anticipation of revenues; the Municipal Appropriation Requirement is calculated based on the actual appropriation by the municipality. Libraries that have Revolving Funds would have their MAR recalculated to reflect this change. Funds would still be reported on the Financial Report but would not be factored into the MAR calculation.

This change is recommended to the Board for approval.

This modification requires changes to current Administrative Procedures of the State Aid Unit.