

# Review of Library Construction Grant Program



Processes MHLS is undertaking an evaluation of the Construction Grant Program. Please complete & submit this BRIEF survey on or before Thursday, February 20. Survey responses are anonymous.

## 1. What is your perception of the fairness of the MHLS PROCESSES that support the Public Library Construction Grants Program? For a list of PROCESSES click here

		Response Percent	Response Count
Completely Fair		76.3%	29
Somewhat Fair		15.8%	6
Somewhat Unfair		7.9%	3
Completely Unfair		0.0%	0
answered question			38
skipped question			10

## 2. What would increase the fairness of the MHLS PROCESSES that support the Public Library Construction Grants Program?

	Response Count
	20
answered question	20
skipped question	28

**3. Has your library submitted an application for a Public Library Construction Grant in the past 5 years?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		70.2%	33
No		29.8%	14
answered question			47
skipped question			1

**4. If you received MHLS staff assistance in preparing and submitting your application for a Public Library Construction Grant, how satisfied were you with the staff assistance?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Completely Satisfied		80.8%	21
Somewhat Satisfied		19.2%	5
Somewhat Dissatisfied		0.0%	0
Completely Dissatisfied		0.0%	0
answered question			26
skipped question			22

**5. What would increase your satisfaction with MHLS staff assistance in preparing and submitting an application for a Public Library Construction Grant?**

	Response Count
	12
answered question	12
skipped question	36

**6. How satisfied were you with the MHLS Board PROCESS for reviewing and recommending applications for a Public Library Construction Grant? For a list of the PROCESS click here**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Completely Satisfied		57.7%	15
Somewhat Satisfied		26.9%	7
Somewhat Dissatisfied		15.4%	4
Completely Dissatisfied		0.0%	0
answered question			26
skipped question			22

**7. What would increase your satisfaction with the MHLS Board PROCESS for the review and recommendation of applications for a Public Library Construction Grant?**

	Response Count
	14
answered question	14
skipped question	34

**8. We welcome any addition comments you have regarding the Public Library Construction Grant Program?**

	Response Count
	13
answered question	13
skipped question	35



**Page 1, Q2. What would increase the fairness of the MHLS PROCESSES that support the Public Library Construction Grants Program?**

1	I believe that MHLS staff do everything in their power within the existing grant program structure to help MHLS libraries maximize their grant awards.	Feb 18, 2014 1:45 PM
2	Nothing. I think they have to system that works in place to be sure the money is utilized most efficiently.	Feb 18, 2014 8:11 AM
3	I do not perceive this process to be unfair. I have received a lot of attention and guidance from Rebekkah about the process and what to expect.	Feb 17, 2014 10:47 AM
4	It seems to favor large scale renovation and building projects	Feb 17, 2014 10:24 AM
5	I don't know if this is possible, but if the committee can determine what criteria they are looking for applicants to meet--in as specific terms as possible--it may save candidates with less obviously suitable needs the trouble of applying for moneys they are almost certainly not going to receive. MHLS consultants would likely to be able to advise prospective candidates from the get-go just how likely or unlikely it would be that they might receive funding. Maybe it could be spelled out in very specific terms what constitutes a qualifying building improvement and just what would be, in the committee's view, routine maintenance. There will always be some gray areas, that's understood, but it seems that for a time, we were being told to consider stating a case for whatever needs we might have (esp. if they included a potentially "green component" in at least the broadest sense). That seems to have changed in recent years. Also, if I am not mistaken, the committee seems to be favoring giving fewer "major" awards rather than several smaller ones. We've certainly taken note of that tendency--as I believe most libraries have--but I wonder if still wouldn't be beneficial to state that as a matter of policy (or at least, preference.).	Feb 14, 2014 12:39 PM
6	Make funding available for all projects including repair/maintenance projects.	Feb 14, 2014 5:24 AM
7	More transparency. Let libraries make their cases to the Committee making decisions and answer any questions that may arise. Combine the application with a presentation about what the library intends to accomplish (and what it has been accomplishing).	Feb 13, 2014 1:12 PM
8	Just make sure exactly what the theme or area of awards is to everyone, so no one goes for something outside this.	Feb 12, 2014 7:07 AM
9	If the applications were vetted at the state level rather than by MHLS.	Feb 11, 2014 11:01 AM
10	To give the same % of the project to all projects which meet the criteria to be funded. Although you say that the process is "blind" it would be obvious which library is Adriance, etc.	Feb 11, 2014 9:34 AM
11	I have not been involved in the process so from the outside looking in the process seems reasonable	Feb 11, 2014 6:29 AM
12	seems to be handled fairly to me	Feb 10, 2014 2:35 PM
13	I have only applied for the grant twice, once about 8 years ago (we didn't get it but I understood why) and this year (MHLS has recommended that we get the grant this year). I don't feel like I have enough experience applying to give	Feb 10, 2014 2:14 PM

**Page 1, Q2. What would increase the fairness of the MHLS PROCESSES that support the Public Library Construction Grants Program?**

feedback on this question.

14	I can't get enough info from the link. There's a limited amount of money each Library System can ask for, or is this money the MHLS got, that they want to decide how to pass out?	Feb 10, 2014 1:13 PM
15	n	Feb 10, 2014 12:13 PM
16	The process has always seemed fair. Not sure of why a problem has arisen. Must be that some library did not get the grant they were hoping for, and are blaming MHLS.	Feb 10, 2014 11:48 AM
17	The perception is that some projects are favored over others. Data to dispel this perception would be helpful.	Feb 10, 2014 11:43 AM
18	1. More transparency 2. Appeals process	Feb 10, 2014 11:42 AM
19	I thought it was very fair based on whether we were meeting energy efficiency, library productivity and accessibility. Additionally, having school lunch rates factored in adds to it's fairness because it captures the poverty of an area, hence the ability to raise funds. The ONLY other thing I would suggest including is whether or not a library has an ability to float a bond for a capital project. We did not, so are even more dependent on these grants.	Feb 10, 2014 11:34 AM
20	nothing comes to mind - you do a good job	Feb 10, 2014 11:31 AM



**Page 3, Q5. What would increase your satisfaction with MHLS staff assistance in preparing and submitting an application for a Public Library Construction Grant?**

1	MHLS staff, Rebekkah Smith Aldrich in particular, are extremely knowledgeable about the library construction grant program, process and limitations and are happy to use that knowledge to the advantage of member libraries.	Feb 18, 2014 1:47 PM
2	Nothing. I don't think anyone could have more knowledge to help us answer questions and do things the best way to enhance our chances of getting money.	Feb 18, 2014 8:12 AM
3	If it seems odd that I would say that I am "completely satisfied" when I have made some rather lengthy comments and suggestions above, it is because I wish to be clear that any issues we did experience were not due to MHLS staff but rested squarely with the reviewing committee. They have every right to evaluate applications as they see fit, BUT if they are able to articulate a sense of their own VISION to MHLS staff prior to the application process, I'm sure that said MHLS staff will be better able to advise and counsel applicants more effectively.	Feb 14, 2014 12:39 PM
4	N/A on this one. Rebekka is the best at what she does.	Feb 14, 2014 5:26 AM
5	Availability. It can be hard to get in touch with someone when help is needed -- staff is often out of the office.	Feb 13, 2014 1:13 PM
6	In retrospect it seems clear that MHLS would not have chosen to fund out applications. It would have been better if we had not been encouraged to apply because of the considerable amount of resources that we expended in the process.	Feb 11, 2014 11:03 AM
7	Rebecca especially is always very helpful and expert.	Feb 11, 2014 9:36 AM
8	Rebekkah was a tremendous source of support. Her recommendations were always concise and to the point, making the whole process much easier.	Feb 10, 2014 2:17 PM
9	It's complicated and I'd prefer not to commit it to writing.	Feb 10, 2014 11:42 AM
10	Honestly, we got so much support through the process. Having been through a DASNY funded grant without MHLS support -- I couldn't believe how easy (relatively speaking!) MHLS made it for us. You wouldn't believe how complex and how long in terms of the calender it takes for an non-MHLS supported DASNY grant.	Feb 10, 2014 11:35 AM
11	If Rebekkah would come live at our library :)	Feb 10, 2014 11:31 AM
12	Awareness, I always seemed to miss the announcements as to when we had to submit our interest.	Feb 10, 2014 11:06 AM



**Page 4, Q7. What would increase your satisfaction with the MHLS Board PROCESS for the review and recommendation of applications for a Public Library Construction Grant?**

1	The funding priorities should be revisited. If NYS is increasing the parameters of what types of projects can be funded by the construction grant, the MHLS Incentives Committee funding priorities should reflect more eligible projects.	Feb 19, 2014 5:40 AM
2	I feel confident that the preliminary work done by MHLS staff and the summary reports provided to the board make for a satisfactory process. I do not believe the process would be as fair or satisfactory if all review was left up to the MHLS board members.	Feb 18, 2014 2:04 PM
3	When an application is reviewed and the recommendation is for a portion of the amount asked for the applicant is asked if they will accept a lesser amount but still complete the project. It would be helpful to know what projects the MHLS board specifically felt was worthy of funding.	Feb 18, 2014 11:58 AM
4	Nothing - I think the system they have evaluates projects to utilize the money most efficiently.	Feb 18, 2014 8:13 AM
5	Again- the selection seemed to favor large scale projects. Smaller projects for energy efficiency and capital improvements were not considered.	Feb 17, 2014 10:26 AM
6	I believe I have stated my concerns in my (perhaps too) lengthy comments above. I believe the committee can and should articulate very clearly what they might like to see in an application. Many a project can be "green" in some sense, for instance, so spell out what you're really looking for and what will be more likely viewed as simple building "maintenance" (that just MIGHT enhance energy efficiency, say). If the preference is for MAJOR projects, that should be articulated well in advance too. A simple statement to the effect that the committee (and board) prioritize larger projects (even a range of dollar amounts, possibly) might be helpful.	Feb 14, 2014 12:39 PM
7	N/A	Feb 14, 2014 5:26 AM
8	It's hard to say -- the MHLS Board process is shrouded in mystery. I think increased transparency would help -- not sure why there decisions have to be made behind closed doors. Open it up and have libraries come make their cases and answer questions.	Feb 13, 2014 1:14 PM
9	The "process" is rather opaque. PPLD seemed to receive the majority of the funding and this gives the perception of undue influence.	Feb 11, 2014 11:06 AM
10	They should give the same % of funding to all projects which meet the criteria for funding. Even if the process is supposed to be blind, it would be easy to pick out Adriance, etc.	Feb 11, 2014 9:38 AM
11	This is a difficult question to answer since it all happens behind the scenes. I'm assuming that because Rebekkah is an expert in the area of these construction grants that board committee has sought some training from her or someone from DLD prior to them reviewing the grants.	Feb 10, 2014 2:22 PM
12	Not having any direct contact with the board was frustrating. Having the final decision conveyed via a phone conversation was disappointing. Frankly, I don't even recall the reasons why the BOT made the decision that they did.	Feb 10, 2014 11:44 AM

**Page 4, Q7. What would increase your satisfaction with the MHLS Board PROCESS for the review and recommendation of applications for a Public Library Construction Grant?**

13	I felt the results were impartial and fair. We have undergone the process three times, and clearly the more we adhered to the funding priorities, the more we were given. I felt that there was some attempt (although 75% funding is not possible) to help us a little more because we are an economically challenged area.	Feb 10, 2014 11:37 AM
14	Sometimes I wonder how they make a determination of preference without more background of library needs	Feb 10, 2014 11:34 AM



**Page 5, Q8. We welcome any addition comments you have regarding the Public Library Construction Grant Program?**

1	The NYS requirement that the grant application must have a project quote on letterhead from the contractor in August/September when funding may not be approved until the end of the year can have a negative impact on acquiring quotes. Contractors consider the preparation of a quote time consuming and they want a more immediate response.	Feb 19, 2014 5:40 AM
2	I'm very grateful to be working within the MHLS system. The support and guidance they provide through this process is invaluable. I appreciate that they work hard to educate themselves about the program and are committed to educating member library staff as well.	Feb 18, 2014 2:14 PM
3	MHLS is great!	Feb 18, 2014 7:06 AM
4	Our grant proposals were turned down citing they were considered "routine maintenance." In a small library the costs of replacing an HVAC system or putting in insulation or replacing a roof are all large capital improvements and are not maintenance. Even with putting money aside for this purpose additional monies are often needed to fund such projects. The Construction Grant would be very helpful the those circumstances.	Feb 17, 2014 10:31 AM
5	None at this time	Feb 14, 2014 5:26 AM
6	It's a great opportunity and if applied fairly, can help libraries of all sizes continue to grow or update spaces. It would nice if the emphasis wasn't on creating new space -- many of the smaller libraries are in old buildings that need to be renovated/rehabbed and updated for technology and other systems.	Feb 13, 2014 1:15 PM
7	We applied in each of the last two years and were denied funding both times. We do not understand why partial funding was not offered, as it is with most other grants, and why we were encouraged to apply at all. Being a small library we incurred an enormous amount of resources in order to undertake the lengthy application process. Projects identical to ours have received funding in other library systems in NY state. The decision-making process is unclear and therefore lends itself to the perception of being unfair.	Feb 11, 2014 11:11 AM
8	I'm not sure if this is already a rule, but usually libraries with smaller budgets need more help. Perhaps their applications could be weighted more? Also, if a library receives the funding, perhaps they should not be allowed to apply for another year or two to allow someone else a chance?	Feb 10, 2014 2:33 PM
9	As usual MHLS staff is a tremendous help.	Feb 10, 2014 2:23 PM
10	As coordinated by MHLS, the process is fine.	Feb 10, 2014 11:48 AM
11	I gave my comments in depth in the system evaluation. I'm very pleased that the process is under review. It's just a good practice to periodically reassess.	Feb 10, 2014 11:45 AM
12	I felt like it worked really well. It is an enormous amount of work, I think, for the staff at MHLS. When you do a DASNY project w/o this support, the process is much more complicated. I guess the only thing I wish (because I am nervous and have yet to file my first submission of expenses) is that MHLS would help us on this end. However, I have been told it is relatively straight forward.	Feb 10, 2014 11:39 AM

**Page 5, Q8. We welcome any addition comments you have regarding the Public Library Construction Grant Program?**

13 Thanks for all you do to encourage libraries to grow!

Feb 10, 2014 11:34 AM