

Richards Memorial Library (RML) Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget FAQs

Q. What does the library's budget cover?

A. The FY26 budget covers staff salary and wages, purchased services (CW Mars network fee), building supplies (cleaning supplies, lightbulbs, air filters, paper towels, toilet paper), office supplies (printer toner and paper, traditional office supplies), and materials for loans (books, audiobooks, magazines, movies, games, and video games).

Q. What percentage of the proposed town budget does this represent?

A. The library is requesting 1.2% of the FY26 town budget as of 3/26/25. Historically, the library has received an average of 1.3% of the town budget.



Q. How does the library's budget compare to other municipal library budgets?

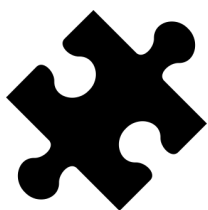
A. In FY23, Paxton had the sixth lowest municipal library budget in our population group in Massachusetts.

Q. How is the library's budget calculated?

A. [Massachusetts General Law](#) states that a municipality must appropriate a figure of *at least* the average of the last 3 years' municipal appropriations to the library for operations, increased by 2.5%, to be certified for State Aid to Public Libraries. This figure is the [Municipal Appropriation Requirement \(MAR\)](#).

Q. What is the State Aid to Public Libraries program?

A. [State Aid to Public Libraries](#) is a program administered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) that distributes local aid to municipalities. RML applies for State Aid every fiscal year.



Q. What are the requirements for State Aid certification?

A. To be certified for State Aid each fiscal year, a municipality and its library must meet its MAR and the [Minimum Standards of Free Public Library Service](#) and submit annual reports to demonstrate compliance.

Per the MBLC's [Accommodation Policy](#), municipalities can apply for reduced State Aid if they meet 90% of the materials or open hours requirements. In this case, State Aid would be reduced by 12.5% for each requirement that is not met.

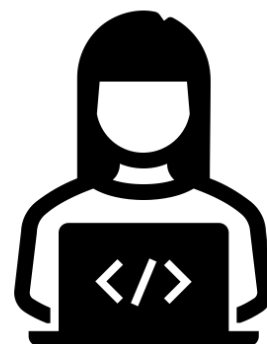
Q. Where does State Aid funding come from?

A. The state legislature appropriates State Aid funding to the MBLC annually. State funding to libraries is less than 1% of the total state budget.

Q. Can other funding sources be used to meet the MAR?

A. No. [Per state law](#), the MAR must be municipally funded. Funding from other sources cannot be considered for State Aid certification.

Q. What can RML's trust fund be used for?



A. In his 1928 will, RML's president and treasurer Ellis G. Richards granted a trust fund to the [Library Board of Trustees](#) (the library's governing body).

Only the interest earned from this trust fund, and not the principal balance, may be used for the library's maintenance.



Q. What happens if Paxton does not meet State Aid certification requirements?

A. If Paxton does not meet certification requirements, the following would apply:

- RML would not receive any State Aid funds [per state law](#).
- Libraries in certified municipalities would not be required to lend library materials or extend reciprocal library services to Paxton residents.
- RML would lose support from the [Small Libraries in Networks Program](#), which provides libraries that serve small communities (populations under 10,000) with funding to support their network memberships.
- The town would be ineligible for library construction grants through MBLC's [Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program](#) and any existing grants would be invalidated.
- The library would be ineligible for [federal grant money for local needs](#) through the MBLC's Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) program.



Q. If the town does not meet the MAR, can it apply for a waiver?

A. Municipalities that experience fiscal hardship may petition the MBLC for an [MAR waiver](#). To receive a waiver, the town must provide evidence that the library's budget was not disproportionately reduced relative to other municipal departments. A cut to the library budget is considered disproportionate when the library budget reduction exceeds the overall municipal budget cut by 5% or more. Waivers are not guaranteed.



Q. Is there a limit to the number of waivers a municipality can apply for?

A. Yes. Municipalities are limited to 5 consecutive fiscal years as a waiver applicant. If a municipality applies for a second fiscal year, they must submit a Five-Year MAR Waiver Plan to the MBLC. This plan outlines the steps the town will take to bring its library appropriation back to the required level of funding (the MAR).

Learn more:

[Massachusetts laws governing libraries](#)

[Overview: State Aid to Public Libraries](#)

[State Aid Annual Report](#)

[Understanding the Benefits of State Aid](#)

