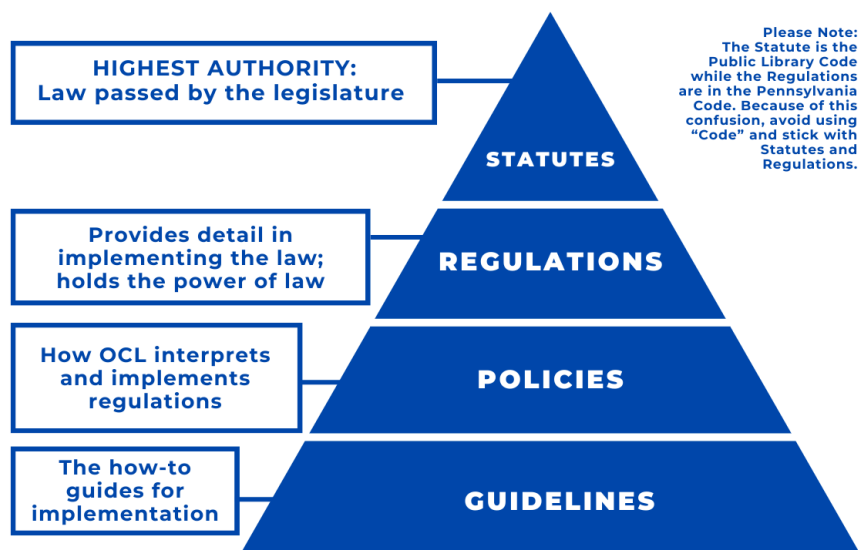


LIBRARY LAWS

PAST & PRESENT



LEGISLATION HIERARCHY

There are many layers to Pennsylvania library laws for state-aided libraries.

- **Statutes** are laws enacted by the Commonwealth's legislature and are held to the highest order.
- **Regulations** are written by administrative agencies, which in this case is the Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL) in the PA Department of Education (PDE). They are designed to explain the implementation of the statute and to increase flexibility and efficiency in the operation of laws. They hold the power of law, but do not override the statute.
- **Policies** are how the agency, OCL, interprets and implements the regulations.
- The **Governor's Advisory Council** develops guidelines to provide libraries with procedures and guidance for implementing laws, regulations, and policy. The GAC assigns work groups to research and discuss topics and releases additional guidance.

HAVE QUESTIONS? CONTACT YOUR DISTRICT CONSULTANT OR SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS.

TIMELINE

1860s: First legislation permitting the existence of libraries

Late 1800s - Early 1900s: Laws encouraging municipal support

1961: Library Statutes were established, outlining state aid distribution and initial standards.

1997: "Libraries in Distress," a series of articles published to highlight the distraught state of public libraries. A five year plan was set in motion to increase the Public Library Subsidy, with strong encouragement of local funding support.

Commonwealth Budget

2002-2003: With a roughly 50% cut to the Public Library Subsidy line, the formula was frozen based on the 2000 Census figures.

*The formula doesn't run currently because of legislative language that supersedes the formula outlined in the statute. It's not related to a certain threshold of funding.

2012: A legislator was approached, prompting changes to the Statutes. These changes were not thoroughly addressed with the library field before enacting. Following the enactment of the Statutes, the Regulations were supposed to be updated to align with the Statutes.

2022: OCL formed a work group to review the existing statute and regulations and began the process of writing new regulations.

TYPES OF STATE AID

- Quality Aid:** Eligible when a minimum Local Financial Effort (LFE) based on expenditures & minimum standards are met
- Incentive Aid:** Eligible when a minimum Local Financial Effort (including various tiers – more money spent means more Incentive aid) and Incentive Aid standards are met
- Equalization Aid:** Eligible when a library/system has met Quality Aid standards, has met or exceeds the previous year's LFE, and it's financially supported by an economically distressed municipality
- Equal Distribution Aid:** Distributed based on the number of eligible outlets meeting Quality requirements. Additional funding may be available if County Coordination distribution is met.
- County Coordination Aid:** State Aid received by a county library or library system, dependent on the financial support of their county commissioners/government.
- District Library Center Aid:** Aid distributed to libraries that are designated by the State Librarian to serve as a district library center and that meet minimum standards. Provides services, leadership, coordination, and consultation to local libraries.
- Statewide Library Resource Aid:** Aid distributed to libraries that are designated by the State Librarian. They provide information to Pennsylvanians that augment local library and district collections. Resource libraries include Free Library of Philadelphia, Penn State University Library, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and the State Library of Pennsylvania.

TYPES OF STATE AID

- QUALITY AID
- INCENTIVE FOR EXCELLENCE
- EQUALIZATION AID
- EQUAL DISTRIBUTION AID
- COUNTY COORDINATION
- DISTRICT LIBRARY CENTER AID
- STATEWIDE LIBRARY RESOURCE AID

STATE AID DISTRIBUTION

For Quality, Incentive, Equalization, & Equal Distribution:

The purpose of these State Aid categories is to encourage and enable the improvement of public library service. Eligibility for these categories is based on standards which a library or system has met.

The State Aid distribution received in 2025 is for libraries that met the eligibility requirements in reporting year 2023.

Here's how, in a 3-year cycle:

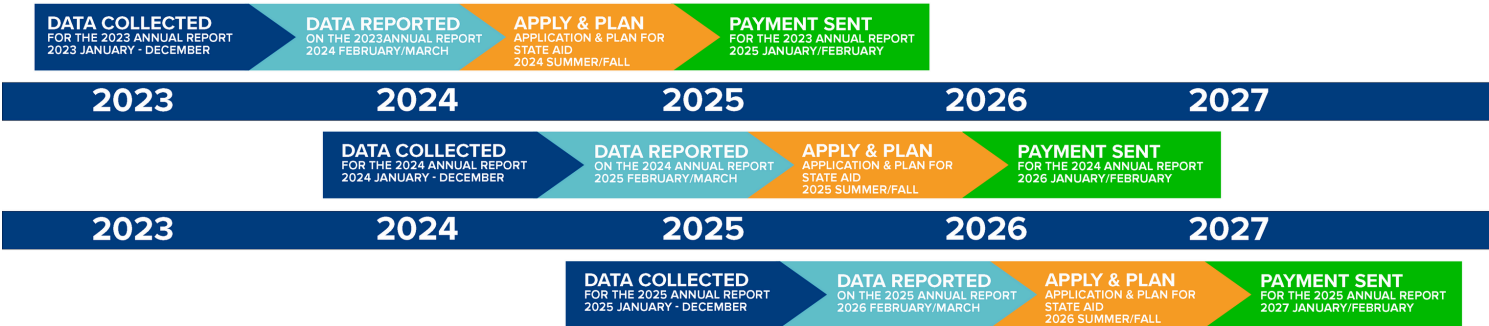
Year 1: A library/system meets standards throughout the fiscal/reporting year.

Year 2: The library/system reports data at the beginning of the following year on the Annual Report. OCL reviews the data for standards met.

Year 3: The library/system receives the State Aid award for standards met in Year 1, which the library can use on wages, collections, facilities, and library services.

STATE AID PAYMENT CYCLE

QUALITY, INCENTIVE FOR EXCELLENCE, EQUALIZATION, EQUAL DISTRIBUTION GRANT, & COUNTY COORDINATION AID



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