



Office of Community Involvement



Library CBAC

TO: Chair Jessica Vega Pederson and Board of County Commissioners (2) pages

FROM: Library Advisory Board

DATE: March 12, 2024

SUBJECT: Library Budget Advisory Committee Report & Recommendations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Library Advisory Board (LAB) fully supports the Multnomah County Library (MCL)'s proposed Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget. This budget reflects the progress of the bond work; continues to address security and safety; and supports the library's priority programs and services. The budget's priorities are sharpened by the vision and goals articulated in the 2023-2025 [strategic plan](#), adopted by MCL in summer 2023. We recommend adoption of the FY25 budget as proposed.

PROCESS

In accordance with Chapter 19 of the County Code, LAB continues to serve as the Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) for MCL. The Library Advisory Board holds monthly meetings throughout the year and is kept up to date on library operations, programs, policies, priorities, and the budget. This year, the CBAC subcommittee of the Library Advisory Board met to explore specific budgetary issues including economic forecasts, internal service charge projections, staffing and personnel, and program offers. MCL Director of Finance & Facilities Katie Shifley led these sessions and provided information, reports, and budget briefings for the committee's review, supported by Maddelyn High, Management Analyst. The CBAC subcommittee updated LAB at regularly scheduled meetings throughout the process. Based on these discussions, LAB approved this report on March 12, 2024.

EMERGING ISSUES & CHANGES

The FY25 budget works to further MCL's mission "to empower the community to learn and create," providing funds for meeting community needs through existing services and supporting ongoing bond projects. This budget reflects the challenges facing the library in juxtaposing the moving parts of the bond project with the uncertainty of a looming deficit in FY26 and beyond.

LAB would like to highlight the following developments in the FY25 Budget:

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- The FY25 budget marks the 12th budget of the library district. Library budget planning adjusts for projections of increasing costs and slowed revenue growth, while also examining how bond projects, such as the East County Library and Albina Library, will affect future resource needs. As the library works to understand cost implications of these new and expanded locations, increasing personnel costs and declining property tax growth rates complicate future budgets — when decisions on service levels and tradeoffs will need to be made. LAB appreciates proactive initiatives, such as a new staffing framework, that will help the library make difficult choices in order to serve the community. With the 2023-2025 strategic plan in place, LAB is confident that the library will meet the challenge to make these choices while keeping the level of excellence and equity the community expects from MCL.
- Safety remains a chief concern for staff, as highlighted in the [2023 audit](#). LAB applauds the judicious use of one-time-only funds in the FY25 budget to address safety by allocating resources towards limited-duration positions to explore alternative models to meet Person In Charge responsibilities at high-incident locations. LAB also appreciates partnerships to bring other county departments' resources into libraries to improve library services through the proposed use of Supportive Housing Services resources.
- LAB supports the budget maintaining, but not increasing, materials and services funding; and addressing the continued effects of inflation on personnel costs, which represent the majority of the FY25 budget.
- We support the investment in technology and staffing to support the implementation of Automated Materials Handling (AMH) systems, as well as increased technology for community and staff use in new and expanded bond locations.
- We also support other personnel changes (such as the reclassification of two positions to support language accessibility), which exemplify library efforts to ensure accessibility for the critical communities identified in the strategic plan.

BUDGET FEEDBACK

We recommend that the Library District Board adopt the proposed budget of \$116.6 million and 537.5 FTE. LAB recommends adopting all Library Department program offers as proposed.

LAB's further comments and recommendations are as follows:

- LAB appreciates the more robust examination of internal services rates by the county that are currently underway — specifically relating to facilities and IT costs — as a more transparent process will help future budgeting be more accurate about expenditures

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needed for new and expanded library locations. This in turn allows the library to make more informed decisions about service levels in the future and needed trade-offs to account for bond project spaces.

- LAB supports the library's efforts at increasing accessibility and encourages the library to balance advances in technology with accessibility for the communities the library has prioritized.
- LAB encourages the application of the 2023-2025 strategic plan to drive current and future prioritization of library services and programs, particularly in ways that maintain accountability to the communities the library serves, with equity at the center of its work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Library Advisory Board wishes to give special thanks to Finance & Facilities Director Katie Shifley and LAB Staff Liaison Maddelyn High, who provided outstanding support for the work of the board. LAB also thanks County Economist Jeff Renfro for his time in aiding LAB's understanding of the economic forecast implications. We thank the Library's Executive Management Team for their support throughout the year.

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