

History of State Funding for Ohio’s Public Libraries

“Free libraries maintained by the people are cradles of democracy, and their spread can never fail to extend and strengthen the democratic idea, the equality of the citizen and the royalty of man. They are emphatically fruits of the true American ideal.”

— Andrew Carnegie at the 1903 dedication of the Carnegie Library in Washington, D.C.

CURRENT STATUS

Calendar Year (CY)	Public Library Fund (PLF) Annual Total (millions)	% Change from 2008 base	% Change from year prior
CY 2008	\$450.6		
CY 2009	\$370.4	- 17.8%	- 17.8%
CY 2010	\$347.9	- 22.8%	- 6.1%
CY 2011	\$364.7	- 19.1%	+ 4.8%
CY 2012	\$344.3	- 23.6%	- 5.6%
CY 2013	\$351.9	- 21.9%	+ 2.2%
CY 2014	\$345.1	- 23.4%	- 1.9%
CY 2015	\$380.9	- 15.5%	+ 10.4%
CY 2016	\$377.0	- 16.3%	- 1.0%
CY 2017	\$378.5	- 16.0%	+ 0.4%
CY 2018	\$393.7	- 12.6%	+ 4.0%
CY 2019	\$410.2	- 8.9%	+ 4.2%
CY 2020	\$409.4	- 9.1%	- 0.2%
CY 2021	\$464.4	+ 3.1%	+ 13.4%
CY 2022	\$502.4	+ 11.5%	+ 8.2%
CY 2023	\$510.2	+ 13.2%	+ 1.6%
CY 2024	\$483.3	+ 7.2%	- 5.2%
CY 2025	\$493.4	+ 9.4%	+ 2.0%

In 2025, Governor DeWine proposed an increase in funding for public libraries by codifying the PLF at 1.75% of the state’s General Revenue Fund (GRF), up from 1.7%. However, the legislature changed the PLF from a percentage of the GRF to a line-item appropriation.

The General Assembly set the line-item appropriation for the PLF at \$490 million in FY26 and \$500 million in FY27. In addition, they added language to fund other state agencies and entities from the PLF, further reducing funding to public libraries by an additional \$10.3 million. Consequently, libraries will receive approximately \$25 million less in FY26 than in FY25.