



Ready to Read Grants and the State Library Budget Support HB 5017 and the State Library

HB 5017 is the State Library budget which includes funding for Ready to Read grants to local libraries. The State Library provides resources for blind and print-disabled Oregonians, supports the other executive agencies and the state legislature, and offers technical assistance to libraries in Oregon. The Oregon Library Association supports the Governor's recommended budget of maintaining the State Library's budget, including Ready to Read grants at the level of **\$1,586,812 or \$1.08 per child**.

A small increase could go a long way:

- **\$609,577** would increase the Ready to Read grant fund investment to \$1.50 per child.
- **\$129,000** dedicated to the smallest of small public libraries currently receiving the minimum \$1,000 Ready to Read Grant would double the investment in communities like Vernonia, Yachats, Echo and North Plains.

About the State Library of Oregon:

The State Library serves three key functions. First, it provides free audiobooks and braille publications for blind and otherwise print-disabled Oregonians. Second, it supports other state executive agencies and the state legislature through research assistance, cooperative purchasing of information resources, and serving as depository for state and federal publications. Third, it assists public, school, academic, and tribal libraries by offering expert consulting, digital resources, training, and grant programs, including the Ready to Read grant. The State Library is funded by the General Fund, federal monies, and assessments on other state agencies.

About the Ready to Read Grant Program:

In 1993, the Legislature created the Ready to Read grant program to improve library services to children by providing funds to every public library in the state. Oregon's public libraries use Ready to Read grants to help children learn to read and to maintain their literacy skills as they grow.

Ready to Read grants are the only State General Fund program directly supporting Oregon's public libraries. **In 2020, each \$1.00 of state funds leveraged \$2.98 in local funds and in-kind contributions.**

- Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, attendance at library literacy-based activities for children and teens increased annually – 1,477,788 in 2019.
- Summer reading participation has doubled since the grant program started. In 2020, 70 public libraries used state funds to implement and enhance their early literacy programs.
- 132 eligible public libraries in Oregon applied for and were awarded a grant in 2020, 78% of them were rural or small libraries.

Last year, 132 public libraries across Oregon received Ready to Read grants, but 38% of those only received the minimum amount – the majority of which are located in rural areas of the state. Now more than ever, our small rural communities require additional funding to advance early childhood literacy, engage adolescents in reading activities, and support summer reading programs. **OLA strongly advocates for an additional investment by the legislature above the Governor's Recommended Budget. This timely investment will allow Ready to Read grants to have a more significant impact on early literacy outcomes in our smallest and most rural libraries.**