



Calif. Fire Foundation recovery grant



Wash. public schools to ins kits under new state law



Money is running out for on USDA grants



Reports highlight National weather vacancies as a risk in fo

Gov Grants Help

Prison libraries brace for staffing and program cuts after IMLS funding loss

The IMLS Grants to States program previously supported technology, materials and literacy services in correctional facilities

April 09, 2025 01:02 PM • Sarah Roebuck



The Washington State Library, which administers IMLS funds in the state, received \$3.9 million annually through the Grants to States program. Eight of the state's 11 prison facilities have branch libraries supported by these funds.

Washington State Library

Editor's note: Is your agency affected by the IMLS Grants to States funding cuts? We want to hear from you. [Email us](#) to share how your facility is impacted.

Correctional facilities in several states are facing program disruptions following the termination of funding from the [Institute of Museum and Library Services \(IMLS\)](#), a federal agency that has supported prison libraries for decades.

The cuts stem from a [March 2025 executive order by President Donald Trump](#) aimed at reducing the scope of federal agencies, including the IMLS. The IMLS began issuing cancellation notices for its [Grants to States program](#) shortly afterward, effective April 1.

What is IMLS?

The [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) is the primary source of federal funding for libraries and museums in the United States. Through the Grants to States program, the agency distributes funds to state libraries based on population. These grants support library services across public,

academic and institutional settings – **including correctional facilities.**

In prisons, IMLS funds often support branch library staffing, books and digital materials, technology, and literacy and reentry programs.

According to the **American Library Association (ALA)**, correctional libraries play a role in reducing recidivism and improving outcomes post-release. Libraries provide access to educational resources, legal information and job-readiness tools. Programs can include GED prep, resume writing, computer literacy training and more.

Impact in Washington state

The Washington State Library, which administers IMLS funds in the state, received \$3.9 million annually through the Grants to States program. Eight of the state's 11 prison facilities have branch libraries supported by these funds.

In an April 4 letter to the state's Congressional delegation, Washington Secretary of State Steve Hobbs and State Librarian Sara Jones said the termination will affect institutional library services, including those provided in prisons. The letter noted that IMLS funds covered 30% of institutional library services and the Talking Book and Braille Library.

Because of the abrupt nature of the funding cutoff, the library system was not reimbursed for staff salaries in April. A small state appropriation passed in 2022 is expected to keep some services running, but officials warned of likely reductions in staffing and program offerings. The letter described the situation as "urgent" and requested congressional support.

Library closures could strain operations

According to the Washington State Library, the termination of IMLS funding may result in fewer open hours and reduced programming at prison library branches. In the past, libraries staffed by a single librarian would close when the employee was absent. The IMLS grant had helped expand staffing to prevent that from happening, the Washington Department of Corrections said.

Without adequate staffing, program delivery – including education and re-entry services – could be scaled back or eliminated. This can affect facility operations, especially where structured programming helps with inmate management and engagement.

Illinois program also in jeopardy

The Illinois Department of Corrections received a \$420,000 IMLS grant in 2023 to support libraries at 28 correctional facilities. The funds were intended to provide reading materials and services that promote rehabilitation and reduce recidivism, according to the **Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS)**.

With the termination of IMLS funding, the future of that program is unclear. No replacement federal funding has been announced.

Role of libraries in reducing recidivism

A **2020 report by the American Library Association** highlights how correctional libraries contribute to rehabilitation and re-entry outcomes. The report notes that incarcerated individuals who participate in library programs are more likely to improve literacy skills, prepare for employment and reduce their risk of reoffending.

Programs funded in part by IMLS include resume workshops, digital literacy training, and access to legal and educational materials. The ALA emphasizes that these services are "essential for people preparing to rejoin society."

While library funding in corrections is often viewed as an inmate-focused service, its benefits can extend to facility operations. Library programming offers structured, prosocial activities that may help reduce behavioral issues and support a more stable environment, the ALA said. Correctional librarians also frequently collaborate with education staff and volunteers to deliver reentry-focused programs, including job search assistance, access to educational materials, and legal information resources.

Outlook remains uncertain

As state agencies evaluate how to sustain operations without federal assistance, many correctional facilities are bracing for reduced access to library services. The long-term impact on re-entry efforts, facility operations and program delivery remains unclear.

State officials and library administrators have called for federal intervention or alternative funding, but no restoration of IMLS funds has been announced.

Looking to navigate the complexities of grants funding? Lexipol is your go-to resource for state-specific, fully-developed grants services that can help fund your needs. Find out more about our [grants services](#) here.

Trending



Public Safety

Minn. PD turning to AI cameras to crack down on distracted driving

April 01, 2025 08:21 AM



Public Safety

NIOSH layoffs hit 9/11 health program despite earlier reversal

April 04, 2025 06:29 AM

[Finance](#)

[Gov Grants Help](#)

[Grants](#)



Sarah Roebuck

Sarah Roebuck is the news editor for Police1, Corrections1, FireRescue1 and EMS1, leading daily news coverage. With nearly a decade of digital journalism experience, she has been recognized for her expertise in digital media, including being sourced in [Broadcast News in the Digital Age](#).

A graduate of Central Michigan University with a broadcast and cinematic arts degree, Roebuck joined Lexipol in April 2023. Have a news tip? Email her at news@lexipol.com or connect on [LinkedIn](#).

MOST POPULAR



1 **What to do while Congress and the courts respond to the executive order to pause grants**

2 **5 gadgets that alert drinkers to date rape drugs**

3 **Trump order to freeze federal grants blocked by judge**

4 **Meet the nearly 6-foot tall robots patrolling a Ga. jail**

5 **Priorities for law enforcement to safeguard democracy**



EXPLORE

- About Gov1
- Government Topics
- Government Products
- Columnists & Experts
- Newsletters

RESOURCES

- Member Support
- Privacy Policy
- Contact Us
- Advertise

IN OUR NETWORK

- Police1
- FireRescue1
- EMS1

Lexipol

Copyright © 2025 Lexipol. All rights reserved.
Do Not Sell My Personal Information

