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Federal government layoffs

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# Latest Trump cuts put summer reading, mobile libraries and local museums in jeopardy



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Federal employees who work at a tiny agency that funds the nation's libraries and museums expect to be put on administrative leave in the next few days, less than a week after [President Donald Trump](#) ordered the agency to be effectively shuttered.

AFGE Local 3403, a branch of the American Federation of Government Employees, said in a statement that the Institute of Museum and Library Services received new leadership from the [Trump](#) administration Thursday.

"The union still expects that most employees will be placed on administrative leave over the weekend or Monday. It remains unclear whether funding for existing grantees will continue, and whether new grants will be available in the future," the statement said.

Keith Sonderling, Trump's Deputy Secretary of Labor, was sworn in as acting director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services Thursday in the lobby of the building. He was accompanied by a team of security and staff from the Department of Government Efficiency, the federal advisory agency led by billionaire [Elon Musk](#).

The Institute of Museum and Library Services distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in congressionally approved funds to state libraries in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. and to library, museum, and archives programs through grants. It serves 35,000 museums and 123,000 libraries across the country, [according to its website](#).

In a statement released by the Institute, Sonderling did not address whether employees would be put on leave.

"I am committed to steering this organization in lockstep with this Administration to enhance efficiency and foster innovation. We will revitalize IMLS and restore focus on patriotism, ensuring we preserve our country's core values, promote American exceptionalism and cultivate love of country in future generations," Sonderling said.

In the statement, the local branch of the federal workers union said Sonderling and DOGE staff met with agency leaders, but did not interact with the agency's fewer than 100 workers.

"Sonderling, an employment lawyer by trade, appears committed to following federal law in treating employees with respect," the statement says. "After departing the office, Sonderling sent an email to staff emphasizing the importance of libraries and museums in cultivating the next generation's perception of American exceptionalism and patriotism. The union looks forward to working with him in good faith to continue (the Institute)'s mission with efficiency and innovation."

## **Executive order eliminates the institute**

On March 14 Trump issued an [executive order](#) eliminating the Institute of Museum and Library Services "to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law."

The order states that the Institute must be reduced to its "statutory functions." It also requires that "non-statutory components and functions ... shall be eliminated."

"President Trump's executive order is cutting bureaucracy and bloat to deliver better services for the American people. "With Keith Sonderling at the helm, the Institute of Museum and Library Services will be able to better showcase American exceptionalism with greater efficiency for the public," White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly said in a statement.

A [White House Fact Sheet](#) that accompanied the executive order states that the Department of Government Efficiency identified [the agency and six others as worth slashing](#).

"Cutting these governmental entities will save taxpayer dollars, reduce unnecessary government spending, and streamline government priorities," the fact sheet states.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services could not be closed outright because Congress established it as an independent agency in 1996.

This is the latest in a string of federal agencies, such as the the U.S. Agency for International Development, that Trump has made effectively defunct by gutting its staff. Earlier this week, [police helped DOGE officials](#) enter the U.S. Institute of Peace office in Washington after agency leaders denied them entry by pointing to its status as an ["independent organization,"](#) saying that makes them exempt from DOGE directives.

## **What do the cuts mean?**

The [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) supports museums, libraries, archives and other similar organizations through grants. The bulk of its budget goes to support basic library services, including high-speed internet access, Braille and talking books for people with visual impairments, and workforce development training.

During the 2024 fiscal year, the institute was budgeted more than \$294 million, according to the Institute of Museum and Library Services' [budget for 2023 to 2025](#).

In 2024, the institute awarded \$266.7 million to museums, libraries and archives throughout the country.

In a statement, the American Alliance of Museums said the executive order threatens jobs, education, conservation, and community programs. The Alliance also pushed back on the White House's efficiency argument, saying that the Institute receives just 0.0046% of the federal budget.

"This agency is incredibly efficient and does incredible work with the small amount of resources they are given," American Alliance of Museums spokeswoman Natanya Khashan told USA TODAY Thursday.

The American Library Association asked the president to reconsider his "short-sighted decision."

"By eliminating the only federal agency dedicated to funding library services, the Trump administration's executive order is cutting off at the knees the most beloved and trusted of American institutions and the staff and services they offer," the statement says.

Among affected services will be summer reading programs for kids, and small business support for entrepreneurs, it says.

## **The effects would be felt locally**

The Institute gives out hundreds of grants a year, which can be [searched in their online database](#). Among the 1,252 grants issued in fiscal 2024 are hundreds of millions of dollars to state libraries based on population that is then distributed to libraries.

Many states, like [Tennessee](#), use Institute grants help fund programs to provide books to deaf or blind patrons and to maintain the state library and archives. Many use it to provide high speed internet at rural libraries.

For example, in Wisconsin, the Children's Museum of Green Bay got \$25,000 this year for educational programming and free museum admission to support reading programs at rural libraries in Northeast Wisconsin. The Art Museum of Eastern Idaho in Idaho Falls got \$10,350 for a teen mentoring program that includes field trips.

In Texas, the [University of Texas at Austin, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#), one of the nation's top repositories of expert advice on native plants in North America, received \$115,214 to develop and test its seed bank.

Washington State Librarian Sara Jones told [local TV station King5](#) that losing the money would impact every library in the state. She said it could mean no ebooks for rural libraries, and a reduction in access to research databases and digital newspapers.