

The Florida Library Association seeks support to revise Chapter 257 F.S. - State Aid to Public Libraries. State Aid to Public Libraries is comprised of three interrelated grants that provide funds to Florida’s public libraries: Operating, Equalization, and Multicounty.

The Problem –The rules and formula prescribing how Equalization grants are awarded to counties with limited tax resources are resulting in inequalities in distribution of available funds each year and need to be corrected in statute (F.S. Chapter 257). The Equalization formula takes into account fiscal capacity, need, and local effort. The problem being addressed in the proposed law changes addresses two major issues.

1. Inequalities within the Equalization grants

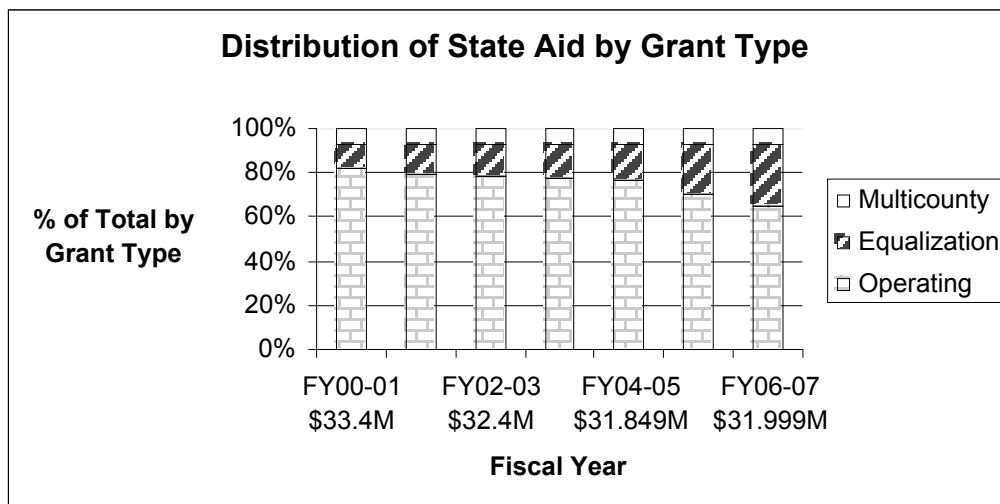
The thirteen year old formula determining which libraries are eligible for Equalization grants is out of adjustment. Some counties that do not need the high level of state support provided in Equalization grants are eligible for it now. They are getting a much larger grant than the other counties in the program.

2. Inequalities in Operating grants

Equalization grants are not pro-rated; Operating grants are. The total amount of state aid available increased very slightly since 2001 (see recent funding history chart below). Equalization grants received by libraries serving the 34 eligible counties are using up more of the available funds each year – Equalization grants are going up and Operating grants are going down.

The graph below represents the increase in the percentage of total State Aid for Equalization grants and the decline for Operating grants that has been occurring over the last seven years. **Equalization was 11% of total State Aid in 2000-01 and has increased to nearly 28% in 2006-07.**

State Aid to Public Libraries Distribution, 2000-02 through 2006-07





**Revision of State Aid to Public Libraries Program
Chapter 257, Florida Statutes**

The Solution – Revise the State Aid to Libraries law. The Florida State Library and Archives assembled a Task Force representing public libraries of different sizes, geographical locations, and funding patterns which assisted the agency in developing proposed changes that are broadly supported in the library community. The recommendations of the Task Force have been endorsed by the Florida Library Association.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Continue providing Equalization grants to libraries serving counties with limited tax resources.
2. Freeze the amount available to fund Equalization grants at the 2006-07 level until that amount is less than 15% of the overall state aid appropriation.
3. Cap Equalization grants at ten percent of the total amount available for this type of grant.
4. Adjust the formula to assure that only counties with a limited tax base are eligible for Equalization grants.
5. Phase out counties not meeting the Equalization grant need requirement over three years with funding reduced one-third per year. Once a county is phased out it cannot regain eligibility.
6. Increase the funding for MultiCounty grants from \$250,000 to \$350,000 when the overall State Aid appropriation is increased beyond three percent or about \$1 million. This increase will strengthen those libraries serving counties with limited tax resources since most of those are members of Multicounty systems.

Funding History

<u>FY 2003/04</u>	<u>FY 2004/05</u>	<u>FY 2005/06</u>	<u>FY 2006/07</u>	FLA Request <u>FY 2007/08</u>
\$31,849,233	\$31,849,233	\$31,849,233	\$31,999,233	\$41,999,233