KEYSTONE GRANTS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY FACILITIES LONG RANGE PLAN

PREPARED FOR:

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF COMMONWEALTH LIBRARIES

SUBMISSION BY:

DELTA DEVELOPMENT GROUP, INC.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

In June 2021, Delta Development Group, Inc. *(Delta or Project Team)*, a Camp Hill, Pennsylvania-based economic development and planning firm, was retained by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Office of Commonwealth Libraries *(OCL)* to conduct an in-depth analysis of library facilities across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Commonwealth) and provide a Long-Range Plan to meet the need for improved library facilities through the use of the Keystone Recreation, Parks, and Conservation Fund, and more specifically, the Keystone Grants for Public Library Facilities Program *(Keystone Program)*. The Keystone Library Needs Assessment *(Needs Assessment)* serves as the foundation for the development of the Long-Range Plan.

The Keystone Program is administered by PDE OCL, Bureau of Library Development. Regulations in Title 22 Chapter 142 Section 142.2 require that PDE OCL, in coordination with the Advisory Council on Library Development, prepare a 3 to 5-year long-range plan for the allocation of grant funds to eligible public library facilities across the Commonwealth. The *Needs Assessment* fulfills this statutory requirement and will be integrated in the Long-Range Plan to meet current and future needs of the Commonwealth's public library facilities.

To accomplish the goals of the *Needs Assessment*, Delta was tasked with the following scope of work:

A. Working with PDE OCL, develop and conduct surveys, analyze responses, and evaluate the needs of public libraries, library systems, and municipalities; and

B. Gather descriptions and estimated costs for building needs in accessibility, maintenance, capital improvement, or other facility areas; and

C. Analyze responses by geographic region of the Commonwealth and size of the municipality; and

D. Review PDE OCL's policies concerning the grants for public library facilities program and gather information regarding the grant process, implementation, past problem areas, and suggestions and comments from past Keystone recipient municipalities, libraries, and OCL staff.

Below and on the following pages is a summary of Delta's methodology for accomplishing the goals of the *Needs Assessment*.

TASK A.1 – KICK-OFF MEETING

On August 30, 2021, the Project Team conducted a kick-off meeting with Heather Sharpe (Acting Director, Bureau of Library Development) and Ed Lupico (Library Development Advisor – Keystone Program Coordinator) from PDE OCL. The Project Team and PDE OCL staff discussed the approved statement of work, deliverables, project timeline, and communication framework. The Project Team mapped out a blueprint for designing, conducting, and evaluating the *Needs Assessment*, which were approved by PDE and followed in Tasks A.2 - D.1.

### TASK A.2 – DEVELOP AND CONDUCT NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

The Project Team developed the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey for all public libraries, library systems, municipalities, and counties. Questions varied based on respondent type and were approved by

PDE OCL staff prior to launch. On October 12, 2021, the Project Team officially launched the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey using ArcGIS Survey123 (Survey123). Survey123 is an online survey software that allows users to centrally locate, process, and manage survey data. Many federal, state, and local government agencies use location-based data and technology to improve operations and recognize the impact on their organizations when they use location to prioritize strategies, innovate, and collaborate with internal and external stakeholders. The Project Team also made special considerations to ensure equitable access to the survey. Latino Connection, a Harrisburg-based communications agency, provided translation services to develop a Spanish version of the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey. Paper copies of the survey were also developed to accommodate individuals with disabilities or individuals without internet access. All responses collected by paper survey or other formats were combined with Survey 123 results into a single database for analysis. The Project Team developed a FAQ sheet to provide background information on Delta and the Needs Assessment, as well as instruction on how to use Survey 123.

To disseminate the survey, the Project Team was provided a list of library facility contacts by PDE OCL. This list of contacts was expanded, as needed, to list contacts for individual library branches of larger library systems. In total, the Commonwealth is home to approximately 693 public library facilities, including 448 state-aided public libraries that operate 642 service outlets. To obtain municipal contacts, the Project Team contacted the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Local Government Services Division to obtain a list of contacts for the Commonwealth's 2,561 municipalities. Delta's goal for library surveys was 50% of all library contacts, estimated at 346 survey responses. Delta's goal for municipal surveys was 33% of all municipal contacts, estimated at 889 survey responses. In total, the Project Team collected 679 responses, including 512 public library surveys and 167 municipal surveys.

TASK A.3 – ANALYZE SURVEY RESULTS AND EVALUATE NEEDS

An advantage of utilizing Survey 123 is that all data collected as part of the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey could be taken one step further, transforming the survey results into live-action data visualizations with ESRI tools such as ArcGIS Dashboard. Delta developed an ArcGIS Dashboard to present location-based analytics with interactive data visualizations on a single screen.[1] The website was shared with PDE OCL at the launch of the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey.
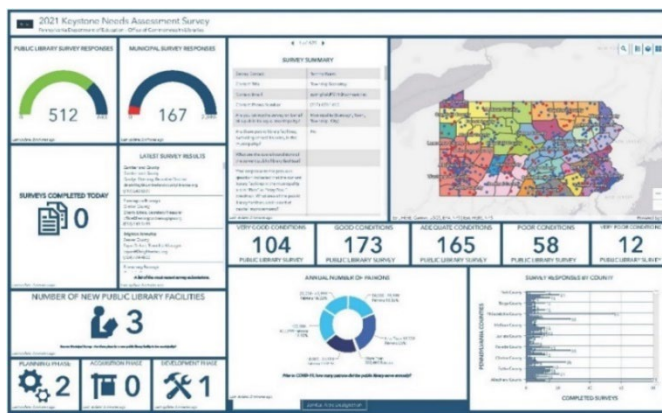
The Project Team utilized the ArcGIS Dashboard to monitor surveys for completion and accuracy; guide strategic outreach to ensure representation across the Commonwealth; and identify trends that can influence future decision-making. At the conclusion of the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey, Delta

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[1] https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/68bf7bd175394805a419ea7f366b2583

![Delta Development Group Inc. logo]

conducted a series of qualitative and quantitative data analyses to determine existing and future capital needs at public library facilities across the Commonwealth.

TASK B.1 – BUILDING NEEDS

The Project Team designed the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey in ArcGIS Survey123 to allow public library facilities and municipalities to upload photos and other supporting documents relating to capital needs. Respondents provided a variety of documentation on building needs, including photographs of existing conditions, strategic planning documents, and specifications and plans. The Project Team analyzed these documents to develop a comprehensive overview of public library facility needs across the Commonwealth.

TASK C.1 – ANALYSIS OF GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

The Project Team utilized Survey 123 to achieve PDE OCL's goal for collecting a geographically diverse survey sample of both public library facilities and municipalities/counties. Survey 123 allowed the Project Team to efficiently capture spatial data and use the ArcGIS Dashboard to analyze survey responses by various geographic regions (i.e., county, metropolitan, and rural planning organizations, etc.). Delta monitored the ArcGIS Dashboard daily to evaluate spatial patterns and conducted follow-up outreach to public libraries, library systems, municipalities, and counties where there was insufficient representation. Delta conducted several rounds of outreach to public libraries and library systems located in counties where there have been no grant awards since the inception of the Keystone Program (i.e., Greene, Mifflin, Potter, Snyder, and Wyoming counties). The Project Team tracked demographic and socioeconomic traits to ensure that survey responses or respondents showed an equitable sampling that represents the make-up of the Commonwealth's communities.

TASK D.1 – GRANTS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY FACILITIES POLICY ANALYSIS

The Project Team completed a historical review of grant awards through the Keystone Program as well as an in-depth analysis of PDE OCL's existing policies and procedures. This analysis included both interviews and review of program reports, guidance, and literature. Two types of virtual interviews were conducted:

- Interviews with Office of Commonwealth Libraries Staff
- Interviews with Current and Past Grantees

The interviews provided dual-perspectives of the Keystone Program – both internal and external. In total, six (6) interviews were conducted with PDE OCL staff (former Program Administrators and application reviewers), and six (6) interviews were conducted with current and past grantees. The Project Team developed two standardized interview sheets for PDE OCL staff and current/past grantee interviews.

In addition to the virtual interviews, the Project Team analyzed reports, guidance, and literature relating to the Keystone Program, including the *2021 Keystone General Guidelines*, Program Regulations: Keystone Grants for Public Library Facilities, annual *Keystone Legislative Reports*, and the *Keystone Library 10 Year Report*. The Project Team prepared an assessment of the current grant utilization, both at the regional and statewide levels, as well as a summary of current resource allocation to provide a common starting point for future recommendations.

OVERVIEW OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Below and on the following pages is a summary of significant findings. A complete copy of the Needs Assessment is included in the Long-Range Plan under Appendix A.

ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR AWARDS

The Project Team reviewed grant requests and award amounts for each grant cycle between 1994 and 2020. Data on grant awards are published in PDE's annual report, as required by Act 61 of 2011. All findings summarized below reflect overall grant trends from 1994 – 2020, unless otherwise indicated.

- The Keystone Program has awarded 409 grants, totaling $59.5 million dollars.[2]
- Of the 409 grants awarded to date, a total of 272 grants were distributed to unique libraries. The highest number of awards received by any single public library was six (6) grants. Approximately 30% of public libraries have applied for and received more than one grant under the Keystone Program.
- While total project costs are not available for all awards, based on available data and match requirements, the Keystone Program is estimated to have funded at least $222.1 million in library construction, rehabilitation, planning, and acquisition projects over its 26-year history.
- The maximum award size grew from $400,000 to $750,000.
- Approximately 99% of all grant dollars have funded construction and rehabilitation projects. Only 1% of all awards (3 grant awards) were used for planning and acquisition projects.
- 62% of all grants awarded and 72% of all grant dollars awarded have gone to public libraries located in urban counties.[3]
- Allegheny County has received the greatest number of awards of any county with a total of 48 awards.
- There have been no awards in five counties (Greene, Mifflin, Potter, Snyder, and Wyoming).
- Allegheny County has received the largest amount of cumulative grant dollars, totaling $10.6 million, followed by Delaware County ($4.9 million), and Montgomery County ($4.6 million).

SURVEY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY FACILITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES

The Project Team invited all public library facilities, library systems, municipalities, and county officials to participate in the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey. Questions varied based on respondent type. A total of 679 surveys were submitted – 512 surveys were completed on behalf of a public library facility and 167 surveys were completed on behalf of a municipality or county. Among the 679 total surveys, Allegheny County reported the greatest number responses (11.6%) followed by Philadelphia County (8.1%). No public library or municipal surveys were submitted for Montour County. Below and on the following page includes major takeaways from the public library surveys.

- Over 81% of respondents indicated the public library was part of a library system.
- Approximately 43% of all respondents identified the public library's service area as "Rural", followed by "Suburban" (36%), and "Urban" (21%).
- When asked to identify the condition of each feature of the public library, more than 40% of respondents indicated "Storage" was in "Poor" or "Very Poor" condition.

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[2] These figures exclude grants awarded to projects that were later withdrawn and funds returned.
[3] For the purpose of the Needs Assessment, the Project Team utilized the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's classification system to determine "Urban" versus "Rural" counties.

- Over 51% of respondents reported that COVID-19 impacted the need for additional public access computers at the public library.
- Less than 11% of respondents indicated that capital improvement plans were needed as a result of COVID-19.
- Over 70% of respondents were interested in submitting an application to the Keystone Program and would apply under "Rehabilitation".

Below is a high-level overview of municipal responses.

- Approximately 71% of respondents indicated public library facilities in the municipality were in either "Very Good" or "Good" condition.
- More than 65% of respondents indicated the municipality has contributed financially to the operations of public library facilities in the last five years. Approximately 46% of respondents indicated the municipality has contributed financially to the capital needs of public library facilities in the last ten years.
- Only 11% of respondents have ever assisted a public library with a grant through the Keystone Program.

INTERVIEWS WITH PDE OCL STAFF AND CURRENT/PRIOR GRANTEES

The Project Team conducted six (6) interviews with PDE OCL staff that had familiarity with the Keystone Program, as well as six (6) interviews with current or past grantees. Below is a summary of their insights on the Keystone Program:

- The Keystone Program is a vital source of capital funding for public library facilities across the Commonwealth. There are few programs available for capital improvement projects at public library facilities.
- Smaller, rural applicants often struggle with pulling together an application, often due to capacity or familiarity with requirements of the Keystone Program. Applicants in rural areas tend to have a more difficult time obtaining buy-in from an eligible grantee (municipality, county, etc.).
- In rural communities, the need for grants funds is shifting from new library construction projects to rehabilitation and/or modification of existing public library facilities.
- Applicants are generally pleased with the level of assistance provided by PDE OCL during the application and reporting/payment phase.
- Smaller applicants would prefer additional reimbursements as it is difficult for them to carry costs during longer reimbursement periods.
- PDE OCL staff and grantees agree that an introductory webinar about the application process would be beneficial.
- The role of public library facilities is changing, and the Keystone Program should evolve to meet those needs (emphasis on collaboration, accessibility, energy efficiency, etc.).

LONG-RANGE PLAN

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Based on results from the Needs Assessment, Delta developed a Long-Range Plan in accordance with provisions set forth by 22 Pa. Code Chapter 142. Grants for Public Library Facilities. The Long-Range Plan supports the long-term sustainability of the Fund and should be revisited and modified by PDE OCL, as need dictates. The Long-Range Plan is organized into three components, including:

1. An action plan to meet the need for improved library facilities through the use of the Keystone Recreation, Parks, and Conservation Fund and other available moneys.
2. Commonwealth Libraries' policies concerning the grants for public library facilities.
3. A plan for Commonwealth Libraries' administration of the program, including provision of technical assistance, monitoring of ongoing projects, and evaluation of completed projects.

Each component includes a prioritized list of recommendations and implementation strategy. Strategies are organized in short-, medium-, and long-term categories with a suggested phasing and timeline. Short-term strategies were developed to be achievable within one-year of the Long-Range Plan's publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin. Medium-term strategies are formulated to be reasonably achieved within 2-3 years, and long-term strategies are mapped out for 4-5 years.

OVERVIEW OF LONG-RANGE PLAN COMPONENTS AND STRATEGIES

Below is an overview of the strategies, partners, and timeline associated with each component of the Long-Range Plan.

COMPONENT 1: ACTION PLAN

SHORT-TERM STRATEGY: Marketing to Libraries About The Program

IDENTIFIED NEED: From 1994 – 2022, over 600 libraries have applied to the Program and PDE OCL has awarded over 400 grants. During this 28-year period, 82 libraries have applied for and received repeat awards. In 2021, Pennsylvania was home to approximately 625 public library outlets. The Needs Assessment verified that approximately half of eligible libraries in Pennsylvania have not received any grant funds from the Program. Libraries that are aware of the Program, appreciate its purpose and benefits, but a broader awareness of the Program across smaller libraries will increase its impact on Pennsylvania communities.

MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY: Marketing to Municipalities About The Program

IDENTIFIED NEED: The Keystone Grants for Public Library Facilities Program requires coordination with local or county government, and public sponsorship is critical to a successful application. The Needs Assessment found that there is a lack of awareness about the Program at the municipal level, as well as a lack of clarity about the role of the municipality/county/council of government in the grant application process.

LONG-TERM STRATEGY: Develop a Funding Resource Sheet To be Updated Annually

IDENTIFIED NEED: Library systems and facilities have additional federal, state, and local funding resources available to them for planning activities and capital improvements, including, but not limited to Community Development Block Grant, Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program, United States

Department of Agriculture Community Facilities Program, Local Share Account Program, and private foundation grants. Data collected during the Needs Assessment found that smaller and rural applicants frequently struggle to find matching funds and are not fully aware of other funding opportunities that are available to assist with project costs.

LONG-TERM GOAL: Survey Statewide Need

IDENTIFIED NEED: Utilizing consistent, quality data to drive PDE OCL's funding decisions will improve Program practices, influence the success of Pennsylvania's public libraries, and maximize the impact of the Fund to improve the quality of life for residents. Over 70% of libraries that participated in the Needs Assessment indicated their facilities were constructed between 1900-1999. In rural communities, the need for grant funds is shifting from new construction to rehabilitation and/or modification of existing facilities. The Needs Assessment unveiled that the role of public libraries are evolving, some in part due to COVID-19, and the Program must evolve to meet those emerging needs across rural, suburban, and urban communities.

COMPONENT 2: COMMONWEALTH LIBRARIES' POLICIES

SHORT-TERM STRATEGY: Define The Content, Use, and Benefits of Keystone Planning Projects

IDENTIFIED NEED: Throughout the history of the Program, approximately 99% of all grant dollars awarded have funded construction and rehabilitation projects. Only 1% of awards (3 grant awards) have been used for planning or acquisition costs. Further definition and explanation of the benefits of Keystone Planning Projects will entice more applicants to undertake crucial feasibility and pre-construction work.

MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY: Establish a "Mini-Grant" Pilot Program for a Planning Project Application Round

IDENTIFIED NEED: Many prospective applicants are unaware of the benefits of planning projects and how they can lead to successful project implementation. Current PDE OCL policy also prevents a planning grant awardee from applying for development or rehabilitation funding within five-years of the initial planning grant.

MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY: Evaluation of Scoring Criteria

IDENTIFIED NEED: To provide a quantitative basis for scoring criteria and evaluation, PDE OCL currently uses a standardized scoring rubric to evaluate submitted project applications. The current scoring rubric allows a reviewer to assign a numeric score to pre-defined criteria. Feedback collected from interviewees and policy analysis completed during the Needs Assessment revealed that there is no separate scoring rubric for planning and acquisition projects.

MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY: Reevaluate Eligible Expenses To Include Technology Infrastructure

IDENTIFIED NEED: The Needs Assessment identified a growing number of individuals that utilize public libraries for internet access. Over 51% of libraries surveyed reported that COVID-19 impacted the need for additional public access computers. Additionally, feedback from the Needs Assessment highlighted that technological infrastructure for library facilities, such as Wi-Fi, is one of the fastest growing needs among public libraries. Technology infrastructure improvements would demonstrably improve library service and provide important safety and resiliency functions to protect and preserve library facilities.

LONG-TERM STRATEGY: Improve Intra- and Inter-Agency Coordination

IDENTIFIED NEED: The Program funds a variety of facility improvements for public libraries across the Commonwealth. These facilities range in age, energy efficiency, and historic value, among other factors. There are untapped opportunities for PDE OCL to adopt internal policies to partner with other Commonwealth agencies, such as the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), to provide technical assistance on energy efficiency upgrades eligible for funding through the Program, or direct assistance to applicants interested in preserving the historic character of the facility during rehabilitation.

COMPONENT 3: ADMINISTRATION PLAN

SHORT-TERM STRATEGY: Increased Provision of Technical Assistance for New and/or Smaller Applicants

IDENTIFIED NEED: For first-time applicants, or those with limited staff capacity and resources, undertaking the preparation of a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities application can be a monumental task. The lack of familiarity with the Program, or inadequate staffing capacity, adversely impacts the quality of submitted applications. A more thorough and detailed application benefits both the applicant (i.e., higher score) and PDE OCL (i.e., faster and less complicated review and scoring process).

SHORT-TERM STRATEGY: Opportunities for Debrief Interviews

IDENTIFIED NEED: Establishing a framework for applicants to receive feedback on previous grant submissions will improve chances of success in future funding cycles; which in turn, will contribute to PDE OCL's goal to diversify (i.e., geographic region, size of library, type of eligible project, etc.) the public library facilities that utilize the Fund. Data collected from the Needs Assessment confirmed that prior applicants, particularly smaller libraries, have felt discouraged from reapplying to the Fund due to the complexity of the application requirements, and were not aware of any opportunities for a debrief.

MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY: Establish a Peer Advisory Network for Application Assistance

IDENTIFIED NEED: Prospective applicants that are less familiar with the Program, and have less capacity to develop a competitive application, may also be the greatest beneficiaries of available resources. These applicants often seek time-consuming one-on-one interaction and feedback.

MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY: Administration Role of Public Sponsors

IDENTIFIED NEED: The Needs Assessment confirmed that public libraries are typically the entity which identifies and prepares the grant request; however, it is the role of the municipality, county, council of government, or other eligible public body to formally sponsor and submit the application. As the grant recipient, municipalities, counties, or other local public bodies are responsible for the grant administration and reporting requirements associated with the program. The Needs Assessment revealed a disconnect between Program knowledge among public sponsors and the technical assistance required by smaller and/or new applicants from their public sponsor to assist with the floodplain and historical analysis requirements, among other application components.

MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY: Annual Review of Projects to Ensure Equitable Disbursement of Funds

IDENTIFIED NEED: Since its inception, the Program has awarded over 400 grants across Pennsylvania. During this period, 30% of libraries have applied for and received at least two awards, and 13% of libraries have

received more than two awards. The highest number of awards received by a single library was six (6) grants. Throughout the history of the Program, 62% of all grants awarded and 72% of all grant dollars awarded went to public libraries located in urban counties.

LONG-TERM STRATEGY: **Identify Other Revenue Sources to Meet Increased Demand**

IDENTIFIED NEED: The Program is a lifeline for many undercapitalized public library facilities. Originally authorized by Act 50 of 1993 (the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Act) and funded through a combination of bond revenues and realty transfer tax revenues, the Fund has not grown commensurate with the needs of the Commonwealth's aging public library facilities.

COMPONENT #1
AN ACTION PLAN TO MEET THE NEED FOR IMPROVED LIBRARY FACILITIES THROUGH THE USE OF THE FUND AND OTHER AVAILABLE MONIES.

KEY PARTNERS:

- Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
- Pennsylvania Municipal League
- County Commissioners Association
- Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Governments
- Non-affiliated Councils of Governments
- District Library Consultants
- Pennsylvania Library Association
- Regional Library Associations
- Qualified Needs Assessment Supplier

STRATEGY 1: Marketing to Libraries About The Program

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Short-Term (1 Year)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: From 1994 – 2022, over 600 libraries have applied to the Program, and PDE OCL has awarded over 400 grants. During this period, 82 libraries have applied for and received repeat awards. In 2021, Pennsylvania was home to approximately 625 public library outlets. Data indicates that approximately half of eligible public libraries have not received a grant under the Program. Libraries that are aware of the Program, appreciate its purpose and benefits, but a broader awareness of the grant opportunity, particularly for smaller libraries, would increase the Program's impact on Pennsylvania communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PDE OCL should perform targeted outreach to ensure that all libraries are aware of the Program, and can navigate, access, and deploy resources necessary to apply for funding. Examples of targeted outreach include, but are not limited to:

1. Engage District Consultants for Pennsylvania's 29 Library Districts as a resource to market the funding opportunity. Invite District Consultants to participate in PDE-hosted webinars about the Program. District Consultants can subsequently share this information with their networks, including smaller and/or rural libraries, that may not be familiar with the Program, as well as assist with channeling/interpreting updates from PDE OCL to help improve the application experience for libraries.

2. Solicit feedback from District Consultants on libraries that may be in need of construction, renovation, acquisition, or planning dollars.

3. Develop, maintain, and regularly update a list of public libraries that have never applied for and/or received a grant award.

4. Partner with the Pennsylvania Library Association and regional library associations to distribute information about the Program. Examples of these partnership activities include, but are not limited to:

   a. Request the Pennsylvania Library Association and regional library associations conduct email blasts, social media updates, and printed materials for members about the Program, including information on application deadlines, funding availability, examples of previously funded projects, how to secure a municipal sponsor, and how to notify PDE OCL of intention to apply.

STRATEGY 2: Marketing to Municipalities About The Program

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Medium-Term (2-3 Years)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: Keystone Grants for Public Library Facilities applications requires coordination with local or county government, and public sponsorship is critical to a successful grant request. The Needs Assessment found that there is a lack of awareness about the Program at the municipal level, as well as a lack of clarity about the role of the municipality/county/council of government in the grant application process.

Municipalities were asked about their previous experience with the Program and willingness to partner with a public library in the Needs Assessment Survey. When asked whether the municipality has ever assisted a public library with an application to the Program, 60% selected "No", and when asked whether the municipality would be willing to serve as a future applicant, more than 50% of respondents indicated that they were "Unsure" if asked by a public library. There are a variety of factors that play into why a municipality could select "Unsure", including but not limited to: staffing capacity, lack of details on planned capital improvements at public library facilities, and existing municipal policies and procedures. Over 15% of respondents selected "No". A spatial analysis on respondents that selected "No" found that three quarters of the respondents are located in rural counties. Throughout the duration of the survey period, the most common responses among municipal contacts for declining the survey included: 1. No knowledge of Program; and 2. Lack of capacity and/or direct benefit from participation in the survey.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Public libraries are important community hubs that play a critical role in the overall quality of life for residents. These facilities not only create and strengthen communities, they have served as a lifeline for many during the COVID-19 pandemic. PDE OCL should prioritize opportunities, in partnerships with local and state associations, to engage municipal and county governments about the community and economic benefits of partnering with public libraries to apply to the Program. Examples of these potential partnerships are outlined below and on the following page.

1. PDE OCL should partner with the Pennsylvania Municipal League, County Commissioners Association, and the Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Government to distribute information about the Program to local governmental units. Examples of these partnership activities include, but are not limited to:

   a. Request strategy partners, such as the Pennsylvania Municipal League and County Commission Association of Pennsylvania, conduct email blasts to members about the

Program, including information on application cycles, funding priorities, highlights and/or quote from a municipality that was previously a sponsor, links to pertinent information on PDE OCL's website, and contact information for appropriate PDE OCL staff.

b. Request strategy partners invite their members to participate in PDE-hosted webinars about the Program. These webinars should be designed specifically for sponsors, including topics such as how to register and sign up for eGrants, opportunities for planning grants, and the responsibilities of sponsors from application preparation and submission to grant contracting, administration, and reimbursement.

2. Coordinate with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development – Center for Local Government Services to obtain the latest list of municipal and county contacts across the Commonwealth. PDE OCL should continue with its existing practice of sending each library an email or letter announcing the opening of a new application cycle and available resources, as well as send an email to municipalities on the contact list. This additional outreach effort will assist to close the information gap that was identified by library administrators who stated that they either never received a funding notice by PDE OCL due to a new or updated email address; the funding notice was redirected to a junk folder; or there was confusion about the grant opportunity due to the number of other emails distributed by PDE during funding notice period.

3. Distribute a "Sponsor Handbook" specifically for municipalities, counties, and councils of government, that clarifies the sponsorship role in the Program. The "Sponsorship Handbook" should include an application overview and flowchart, key compliance requirements, along with frequently asked questions. This type of manual has been successfully utilized by other state agencies including the Governor's Office of the Budget that administers the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program, which requires the use of a public body (grantee), and by the Department of Community and Economic Development, that developed a "Business Contributors Handbook" for business participants in the Neighborhood Assistance Program, which have different administrative requirements than the program applicant.

STRATEGY 3: **Develop a Funding Resource Sheet to Be Updated Annually**

TYPE OF STRATEGY: **Long-Term (4-5 Years)**

OVERVIEW OF NEED: Beyond the Program, library systems and facilities have additional public and private funding resources available for planning activities and capital improvement projects. Many applicants, particularly smaller and rural applicants, are not fully aware of the funding opportunities available to assist with these costs. The Needs Assessment investigated the impact of matching requirements on the financial and technical feasibility of a library's grant application. Two interviewees stated that it took approximately 6-10 years of fundraising and planning before the matching funds were in place to submit an application. Another two interviewees explored federal low-interest loan programs to cover the matching funds, but one was discovered to be ineligible due to population size. One interviewee elected

to not submit an application due to the matching funds requirement. In general, smaller, rural, or/and disadvantaged communities reported difficulties in securing the matching funds for capital improvements as it took away from the library's capacity to fundraise for annual operating expenses and COVID-19 significantly hindered the library's ability to fundraise in a timely manner.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PDE OCL should publish, and frequently update, a funding resources sheet to provide prospective applicants with information about where they can provide eligible local and federal matching funds, interim/bridge financing, and other complementary state funding resources. Potential funding opportunities to evaluate and include on the funding resource sheet include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **Program:** Rural Development Community Facilities Grants and Loan Guarantees
    a. **Agency:** United States Department of Agriculture
    b. **Use of Funds:** Potential source of match or interim financing.
2. **Program:** Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program
    a. **Agency:** Governor's Office of the Budget
    b. **Used of Funds:** Supplementary, non-matching state funding resource
3. **Program**: Local Share Account
    a. **Agency:** Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and Select County Governments)
    b. **Use of Funds:** Supplementary, non-matching state funding resource
4. Private Foundation Grant Opportunities

By publishing a resource of this nature, applicants will have a clearer understanding of available funding resources to make their project a reality. PDE OCL staff can use prior Program-funded projects as case studies for the successful integration of other funding sources. Funding sources that were successfully integrated into the project can then be added to the resource sheet.

STRATEGY 4: Survey Statewide Need

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Long-Term (4-5 Years)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: Utilizing consistent, quality data to drive PDE OCL's funding decisions will improve Program practices, influence the success of Pennsylvania's public libraries, and maximize the impact of the Fund to improve the quality of life for residents. The previous Needs Assessment was completed in 2007 and the subsequent Long-Range Plan covered 2009-2013. Over 70% of libraries that participated in the 2021 Needs Assessment indicated their facilities were constructed between 1900-1999. In rural communities, the need for grant funds is shifting from new construction to rehabilitation and/or modification of existing facilities. The Needs Assessment unveiled that the role of public libraries are evolving, some in part due to COVID-19, and the Program must evolve to meet those emerging needs across rural, suburban, and urban communities. The need for outdoor structures/area of programming and additional public access computers were among the responses of libraries when asked whether COVID-19 created new capital needs at their facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PDE OCL should engage a qualified needs assessment supplier to conduct a statewide need survey, every 4-5 years, among public libraries and municipalities. The statewide need survey should utilize location-based analytics to extract more valuable insights and allow PDE OCL to make informed

decisions about the development and/or modifications of the Program. At a minimum, the statewide need survey should include the following topics:

1. Entity Type and Sub-Category Classifications
2. Contact Information
3. Full Address of Facility (Street Address, City, State, Zip Code)
4. Age of Facility
5. Details on New Construction, Modifications, and/or Rehabilitation (Cost, Timeframe, Type)
6. Type and Size of Service Area
7. Existing Conditions Analysis
8. History of Library – Municipality Partnership
9. Technology and Green Technology
10. Other Emerging Infrastructure Needs
11. Information on Prior Awards (Amount, Timeframe, Type of Project)

COMPONENT #2

COMMONWEALTH LIBRARIES' POLICIES CONCERNING THE GRANTS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY FACILITIES.

KEY PARTNERS:

- Pennsylvania Department of Education Staff
- Office of Commonwealth Libraries Staff
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
- Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

STRATEGY 1: Define the Content, Use, and Benefits of Keystone Planning Projects

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Short-Term (1 Year)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: Throughout the history of the Program, approximately 99% of all grant dollars awarded have funded construction and rehabilitation projects. Only 1% of awards (3 grant awards) have been used for planning or acquisition costs. Currently, the application guidelines outline the following eligible planning project types: Master Site Development Plans, Feasibility Studies, Maintenance Plans, Management Plans, and Other Plans and Documents. One potential cause of this disparity between construction and rehabilitation project versus planning projects is the lack of perceived value of planning projects. As currently written, the application guidelines provide only a high-level overview of planning deliverables eligible for funding through the Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PDE OCL should provide more specific examples and benefits for pursuing planning funds. For instance, the application guidelines could suggest that a feasibility study be comprised of a facility demand analysis, financial pro-forma, and conceptual design/engineering for future implementation funding request, including energy efficient technologies. Greater definition of these deliverables will provide clarity to prospective applicants on the content and benefits of pursuing planning funds.

PDE OCL should also promote the availability of planning dollars to municipalities as part of the marketing strategies identified under Component #1, Strategy #2. The Program is unique in that very few state

agencies have grant funds available for planning projects (including financial feasibility and conceptual design/engineering), yet there is a clear link between planning studies and the empowerment and well-being of residents. Community planning is an essential role of municipal and county governments, and PDE OCL could diversify the types of projects supported by the Program and advance the development of high-quality library facilities by advertising planning projects with local government officials, who are often the leaders advancing planning initiatives.

STRATEGY 2: **Establish a "Mini-Grant" Pilot Program for a Planning Project Application Round**

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Medium-Term (2-3 Years)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: As noted above, only 1% of awards (3 grant awards) throughout the life of the Program have been used for planning or acquisition costs. One potential cause of this disparity between construction and rehabilitation project versus planning projects is the lack of perceived value of planning projects. For libraries that are struggling to secure necessary pre-construction funding for feasibility analysis, conceptual design/engineering, site planning, etc., the Program offers immense potential for them to put their development or rehabilitation project into motion. Current Program guidelines also preclude a planning awardee from re-applying for development or rehabilitation funding within five (5) years. That places planning awardees at a distinct disadvantage and may discourage potential applicants from applying for planning funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PDE OCL should establish a "mini-grant" pilot program (capped at $10,000 - $25,000 in PDE OCL funding per request) for a separate planning-specific funding round. Advertising the new planning funding round will bring awareness to the availability of planning funds through the Program. Establishing a pilot program will also allow PDE OCL to examine the relationship between successful planning and development/rehabilitation requests. If PDE OCL finds that planning awards facilitate successful development/rehabilitation projects, the separate planning-specific funding round should be adopted as an annual practice. In establishing the pilot program, PDE OCL should eliminate the five-year moratorium on securing a subsequent development/rehabilitation grant for planning grant awardees.

STRATEGY 3: Evaluation of Scoring Criteria

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Medium-Term (2-3 Years)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: To provide a quantitative basis for scoring criteria and evaluation, PDE OCL currently uses a standardized scoring rubric to evaluate submitted project applications. The 2021 scoring rubric allows a reviewer to assign a numeric score to pre-defined criteria. Scores are calculated on a scale of 1-10 points, with 10 points as "Best", 6-9 points as "Good", 2-5 points as "Fair", and 0-1 points as "Poor". Criteria evaluated in the scoring process include the following:

1. **Project Need:** Demonstrated need for the project, including justification using data.
2. **Project Description and Timeline:** A detailed description of the proposed project activities and evidence of a feasible project timeline.
3. **Project Budget:** Inclusion of a feasible project budget and evidence of project sustainability through evaluation of library revenues and expenditures.
4. **Design Plan:** Description and evidence of a design plan.
5. **Project Cost Estimate:** Substantive and detailed cost estimate provided.

6. **Matching Funds:** Documentation supporting the availability of required matching funds.
7. **Project Planning:** Evidence of partnerships and stakeholder collaboration.
8. **Project Impact:** Justification for how the project will impact library service and library users.
9. **Readiness:** Demonstrated ability to complete the project as clearly described.
10. **Application Quality:** Overall quality of application contents.

According to interviewees, the application scoring process and criteria have changed over time. Scoring was previously bifurcated between mini-grants and major grants. Mini-grants were intended to fund the completion of smaller maintenance projects, including emergency repairs. Major grants were intended for major renovation and construction projects. To evaluate these two types of applications in an equitable manner, PDE OCL used two different scoring methodologies. The scoring criteria also incorporated various demographic and socioeconomic traits to ensure the equitable distribution of funds in disadvantaged communities. The process also incorporated application reviewers from outside of PDE OCL to reduce any risk of scoring bias.

RECOMMENDATIONS: In the next 2-3 years, PDE OCL should once again modernize its scoring criteria to meet the current and future needs of public library facilities. The Commonwealth's public library facilities, particularly in disadvantaged communities, are facing strained budgets that put their long-term financial sustainability at risk. When coupled with an unanticipated contingency, such as a nationwide pandemic or required emergency repairs, there is an increased risk of closure. Therefore, it is important for PDE OCL to financially assist public library facilities in a similar situation by assisting with facility planning or capital improvement costs. PDE OCL should consider the following when evaluating its scoring criteria:

1. Establishing separate scoring rubrics for planning projects and acquisition projects (some aspects of the existing scoring rubric are construction-centric); and
2. Inclusion of a "Service Area Economic Status" category within the scoring rubric to assess economic conditions within the public library facility's service area (with standardized metrics for data in the application guidelines), which builds upon existing Program priorities and provides a more holistic view of the community's economic profile; and
3. Inclusion of a "Funding Alternatives" category within the scoring rubric, and application guidelines, asking the applicant for justification as to why the Program is the most fitting for their project and what other funding alternatives they have explored.

To ensure that the changes (particularly those quantifying and weighting economic distress factors) meet internal policies of PDE and statutory requirements of the Commonwealth, PDE OCL staff should coordinate with the appropriate legal counsel before officially adopting the new scoring rubrics.

STRATEGY 4: **Reevaluate Examples of Eligible Expenses to Include Technology Infrastructure**

TYPE OF STRATEGY: **Medium-Term (2-3 Years)**

OVERVIEW OF NEED: The Needs Assessment identified a growing number of individuals that utilize public libraries for internet access. Over 51% of libraries surveyed reported that COVID-19 impacted the need for additional public access computers. Feedback from the Needs Assessment highlighted that technology infrastructure and facilities that can accommodate technology infrastructure, such as Wi-Fi, is a growing need. Facility infrastructure that provides for reliable internet access is an important tool to access information and research. Technology and communications infrastructure is now considered a community

lifeline by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and technological systems integrated with the library facility such as fire suppression systems, emergency response alerts, and dispatch systems, provide important safety and resiliency functions to protect and preserve library facilities.

Access to the internet is an important and powerful research tool for individuals accessing library services. Currently, the Program does not explicitly define technology infrastructure as an ineligible expense. Ineligible expenses are listed as "costs of equipment or software, or both, to automate library functions and catalogues unless the automation is part of the development or rehabilitation of a public library facility." This wording leaves flexibility to consider technology infrastructure for library facilities as an eligible project expense.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PDE OCL should prioritize the following changes to its Program relative to public library facility needs.

1. Evaluate the types of technology infrastructure that are required for the provision of wireless internet to library patrons, and which elements may be eligible for funding under the Program's current statute; and

2. Expanding the examples of eligible projects to include the installation of technology infrastructure or rehabilitation of buildings to provide for wireless internet access as an eligible project; and

3. Include technology infrastructure for expanded public internet access as an example of eligible planning project; and

4. Coordinate with partners including legal office to define technology infrastructure as it relates to facilities and external agencies such as the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority to determine unserved and underserved areas and to link to funding opportunities.

STRATEGY 5: Improve Intra- and Inter-Agency Coordination

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Long-Term (4-5 Years)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: The Program funds a variety of facility improvements for public libraries across the Commonwealth. These facilities range in age, energy efficiency, and historic value, as some facilities were constructed prior to 1800. The Program provides financial support to projects that advance energy efficiency and other green building technologies or upgrades. As technologies advance and energy prices increase, these types of upgrades will become more necessary. There are untapped opportunities for PDE OCL to adopt internal policies to partner with other Commonwealth agencies such as the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) to provide technical assistance on energy efficiency upgrades eligible for funding through the Program, or direct assistance to applicants interested in preserving the historic character of the facility during rehabilitation. In the longer-term, intra-agency coordination could be enhanced to connect public libraries with programming and educational opportunities offered through the Department of Public Education.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PDE OCL should prioritize the following steps to enhance inter- and intra-agency coordination of facility improvement offerings:

1. Coordinate with the Pennsylvania DEP's Energy Programs Office to provide an "Energy Efficiency Fact Sheet" or develop additional technical assistance about high-value energy efficiency improvements that can be made to public libraries as part of the Program.

2. Establish a Program Point of Contact at the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO) that can provide direct technical assistance to applicants, including policies related to preserving important historic buildings in local communities.

3. Evaluate the role of public library facilities in realizing Pennsylvania Department of Education objectives such as the Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan and develop internal policies to recognize and potentially prioritize projects that will improve access to early education or literacy in underserved communities across the Commonwealth.

4. Consider opportunities to coordinate with external agencies for funding opportunities, such as the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

COMPONENT #3

A PLAN FOR COMMONWEALTH LIBRARIES' ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM, INCLUDING PROVISION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, MONITORING OF ONGOING PROJECTS AND EVALUATION OF COMPLETED PROJECTS.

KEY PARTNERS:

- Municipal and County Project Partners
- Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
- Pennsylvania Legislature

STRATEGY 1: Increased Provision of Technical Assistance for New or Smaller Applicants

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Short-Term (1 Year)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: For first-time applicants, or those with limited staff capacity and resources, undertaking the preparation of a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities application can be a monumental task. The lack of prior familiarity with the Program, or strained staffing capacity, adversely impacts the quality of submitted applications. A more thorough and detailed application benefits both the applicant (higher score) and PDE OCL (i.e., faster and less complicated review and scoring process). PDE OCL currently offers the following technical assistance for applicants:

1. Published Guidance Documents on PDE OCL's Website
2. Pre-Application Webinar Workshop
3. Available Phone and Email Correspondence with Program Coordinator

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PDE OCL should integrate additional opportunities to provide technical assistance and resources for applicants. Although some recommendations will require additional staff time and financial resources to accomplish, others will not. Strategies for consideration include the following:

1. **Pre-Application Webinar Workshop:** Continue the recorded pre-application webinar workshop and post to PDE OCL's website and other social media channels for future viewing by prospective applicants.

2. **PA-SHARE/PHMC SHPO Guidance:** Include links to PA-Share/PHMC resources directly in the application guidelines. PA-SHARE is a new electronic database platform that is unfamiliar to many prospective applicants. PDE OCL should also consider including a representative from PA SHPO/PHMC during the recorded pre-application webinar workshop to explain the PA-SHARE system.

3. **Flood Mapping:** Include a link to the FEMA Flood Map Service Center directly in the application guidelines (https://msc.fema.gov/portal/home).

4. **Standardized Exhibit Sourcing:** Evaluate opportunities to standardize the source of other required application exhibits (e.g. flood maps from the FEMA Flood Map Service Center).

STRATEGY 2: Creating Opportunities for Debrief Sessions for Applicants That Are Not Selected

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Short-Term (1 Year)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: Establishing a framework for applicants to receive feedback on previous grant submissions will improve chances of success in future funding cycles; which in turn, will contribute to PDE OCL's goal to diversify (i.e., geographic region, size of library, type of eligible project, etc.) the public library facilities that utilize the Fund. Data collected from the Needs Assessment confirmed that prior applicants, particularly smaller libraries, have felt discouraged from reapplying to the Fund due to the complexity of the application requirements, and were not aware of any opportunities for a debrief.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PDE OCL should prioritize the creation of debriefs for applicants that are not successful with the Program. Debriefings allow applicants to gather insight on the evaluation and selection process, strengths and weaknesses of the application relative to the evaluation criteria, and an opportunity to discuss what the applicant can do, if anything, to make future applications better and to score more competitively. Ultimately, debriefs show transparency and an opportunity for feedback; both of which, are critical to the long-term sustainability of the Fund and ability of PDE OCL to meet the needs of public library facilities across the Commonwealth. PDE OCL's debriefing policies should take into account notification and communication requirements, timeline and scheduling, participants, and a debriefing form template.

STRATEGY 3: Establish a Peer Advisory Network for Application Assistance

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Medium-Term (2-3 Years)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: Prospective applicants that are less familiar with the Program, and have less capacity to develop a competitive application, are the greatest beneficiaries of available resources. These applicants often seek time-consuming one-on-one interaction and feedback.

RECOMMENDATIONS: In the medium-term (2-3 years), PDE OCL should establish a Peer Advisory Network for prospective applicants to seek guidance and assistance when preparing a Program application. The

DELTA DEVELOPMENT GROUP INC

Peer Advisory Network would put applicants seeking in-depth assistance and feedback on application preparation in contact with a network of individuals from peer library systems that have experience with the Program. A Peer Advisory Network would free-up resources from within PDE OCL to continue providing necessary program administration and general technical assistance while also allowing for more in-depth interaction among peer libraries.

STRATEGY 4: Administration Role of Public Sponsors

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Medium-Term (2-3 Years)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: The Needs Assessment confirmed that public libraries are typically the entity which identifies and prepares the grant request; however, it is the role of the municipality, county, council of government, or other eligible public body to formally sponsor and submit the application. As the grant recipient, municipalities, counties, or other local public bodies are responsible for the grant administration and reporting requirements associated with the program. The Needs Assessment revealed a disconnect between Program knowledge among public sponsors and the technical assistance required by smaller and/or new applicants from their public sponsor to assist with the floodplain and historical analysis requirements, among other application components.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PDE OCL should more clearly define and provide education around the sponsor's role in the application and administration process of the Program. PDE OCL should consider the following opportunities to improve the sponsor's experience with the Program.

1. Develop a "Sponsor Handbook" to clarify their role in the Program. This manual should address the following information:
    a. Overview of the Program and Match Requirements
    b. Primary Responsibilities and Expectations of Sponsor
    c. How To Obtain a Pennsylvania Vendor Number
    d. How To Sign Up for eGrants
    e. How To Sign Up for PA-Share and Complete a Project Review Form
    f. How to Sign Up for eSignatures
    g. Role of Sponsor Post Award
    h. Bid Specifications and Competitive Bidding Requirements

2. Include a question in the application that asks the sponsor to confirm if they either met with PDE OCL staff or participated in a pre-application workshop.

STRATEGY 5: Annual Review of Projects to Ensure Equitable Disbursement of Funds

TYPE OF STRATEGY: Medium-Term (2-3 Years)

OVERVIEW OF NEED: Since its inception, the Program has awarded over 400 grants across Pennsylvania. During this period, 30% of libraries have applied for and received at least two awards, and 13% of libraries have received more than two awards. The highest number of awards received by a single library was six (6) grants. Throughout the history of the Program, 62% of all grants awarded and 72% of all grant dollars awarded went to public libraries located in urban counties. Libraries that receive funding from the Program see its value and are interested in accessing the funds for additional projects. However, PDE OCL

should consider developing an annual review process to evaluate the disbursement of funds and ensure Program benefits are distributed in an equitable manner across the Commonwealth.

RECOMMENDATIONS: To develop an award review process, first, a framework should be established to define what an "equitable disbursement" of funds looks like. This framework should consider the following elements:

1. Geographic disbursement of funds across the state.
2. Funding compared to the size of the library's service population.
3. Funds designated for independent libraries or library systems.
4. The total amount of prior Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities award funds received.
5. Total grant dollars awarded by eligibility category (i.e., planning, acquisition, construction, rehabilitation).

Once a framework is established to define what an equitable distribution of funds looks like, PDE OCL should annually evaluate grant awards compared to this framework in tandem with its Annual Report pursuant to Act 61 of 2011. PDE OCL can then review the total number of grant applications received and total number and dollar amount of grants awarded against each of these criteria to identify areas of the state or libraries to target marketing efforts in the following application period.

STRATEGY 6: **Identify Other Revenue Sources to Meet Increased Demand**

TYPE OF STRATEGY: **Long-Term (4-5 Years)**

OVERVIEW OF NEED: The Program provides essential funding to library facilities throughout the Commonwealth. The available resources for planning, acquisition, rehabilitation, and new construction projects provide opportunities for public library facilities to achieve goals that may otherwise be unachievable. In situations where public library facilities are undertaking a critical or emergency repair, the status of a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities grant could determine the entire future of the facility. The Program is a lifeline for many undercapitalized public library facilities. Originally authorized by Act 50 of 1993 (the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Act) and funded through a combination of bond revenues and realty transfer tax revenues, the Program has not grown commensurate with the needs of the Commonwealth's aging public library facilities. The role of the public library facility has morphed from a building containing stacks and shelves of books to all-encompassing centers of enrichment and resources, which will require the Program to infuse new funding resources into the Program to meet expanding library needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PDE OCL should consider ways to infuse new funding resources into the Program. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR's) Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) could provide a model for blended funding sources being distributed through a centralized competitive grant process. DCNR's C2P2 program is funded by a number of state and federal sources, including the following:

1. Snowmobile and ATV Registrations – Act 97 of 2016 (State)
2. Growing Greener Bond Fund – Growing Greener 2 – 2005 (State)
3. Environmental Stewardship Fund – Growing Greener 1 – 1999 (State)
4. Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund – Key 93 – 1993 (State)

5.   Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State Assistance Program of 1965 (Federal)
6.   Federal Highway Administration Recreational Trails Program (Federal)

PDE OCL should develop a working group to examine additional potential revenue sources for the Program (in addition to Act 50 of 1993), including representatives from the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC), Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), and DCNR. DCNR can provide a model for a diverse array of funding sources being administered as one competitive grant program (albeit with subcategories) for the benefit of applicants throughout the Commonwealth. Because both agencies administer programs with an emphasis on constructing and improving community facilities, PHMC and DCED can be insightful partners in examining potential revenue sources and best practices for administering programs with multiple funding sources. From that working group, a list of potential revenue sources and strategies for securing support from the Pennsylvania Legislature (potentially in partnership with PHMC) should be advanced as the needs of the Commonwealth's public library facilities will only grow, not diminish, over time.

APPENDIX A – NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Project Team reviewed the grant requests and awards for each available grant cycle from 1994 to 2020. Data on annual grant awards are published in PDE's annual report, as required by Act 61 of 2011. Between 1994 and 2020, the Keystone Program awarded 409 grants, totaling $59.5 million.[4] While total project costs are not available for all years included, based on available data and match requirements, these grants are estimated to have funded at least $222.1 million in library construction, rehabilitation, planning, and acquisition projects over the Keystone Program's 26-year history.

PRIOR GRANT AWARDS BY YEAR

From 1994 – 2020, over 600 applicants applied to the Keystone Program, and PDE OCL has awarded 409 grants. The average award size has grown from $76,000 between 1994 to 1998, to $172,000 for 2019 initiated awards. During that same period, the maximum award size grew from $400,000 to $750,000. Grants initiated in years 2010 and 2011 are an exception to this trend. Less than $1 million in grants were awarded during these years as a result of revenue shortages attributed to the fiscal impacts of the 2008 recession.

FIGURE 1 – TOTAL LIBRARY GRANT AWARDS BY YEAR

Initiated Year	# Applied	# Awarded	Total Grants Committed	Award Size		
				Average	Minimum	Maximum
2019	32	19	$3,249,530	$172,000	$11,000	$750,000
2018	41	27	$6,851,497	$254,000	$7,000	$750,000
2016	31	26	$5,439,310	$210,000	$13,000	$500,000
2014	40	35	$6,664,072	$191,000	$8,000	$500,000
2012	28	15	$3,706,657	$248,000	$6,000	$500,000
2011	19	19	$586,069	$31,000	$3,000	$50,000
2010	16	16	$164,657	$11,000	$1,000	$12,500
2009	15	15	$3,662,456	$245,000	$15,000	$575,000
2008	16	8	$2,237,655	$280,000	$18,000	$500,000
2007	n.a.	18	$3,943,051	$220,000	$9,000	$500,000
2006	n.a.	24	$4,568,979	$191,000	$3,000	$500,000
2004	29	25	$2,828,843	$114,000	$2,000	$400,000
2002	30	11	$1,661,451	$152,000	$7,000	$400,000
2001	25	11	$2,170,372	$198,000	$3,000	$300,000
2000	35	20	$2,919,855	$146,000	$8,000	$400,000
1999	48	20	$1,517,985	$76,000	$3,000	$325,000
1994-1998	195	100	$1,505,178	$76,000	$2,000	$400,000

SOURCE: PDE Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund Reports 2009-2020 and Ten Year Report (1993-2003).

NOTE: Number of applicants for 2006 and 2007 not reported.

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[4] These figures exclude grants awarded to projects that were later withdrawn and funds returned.

GRANT AWARDS BY PROJECT TYPE

The originating statute for the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund outlined four broad uses for the library grant dollars: planning, acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation. Throughout the history of the Keystone Program, approximately 99% of total grant dollars awarded have funded construction and rehabilitation projects. Only 1% of awards (3 grant awards) were used for planning and acquisition costs.

FIGURE 2 – PERCENT OF FUNDS BY PRIMARY PROJECT TYPE (1994 – 2020)
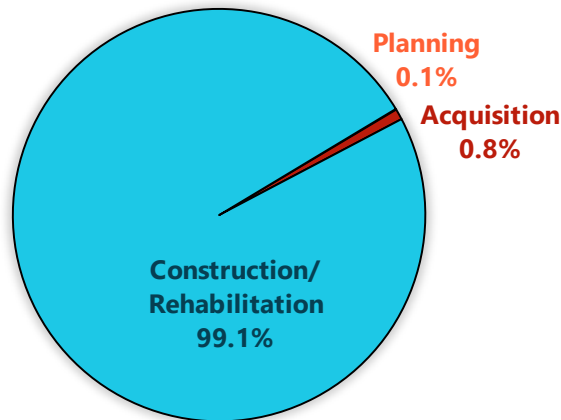
PDE OCL provides examples of projects eligible for grant awards, including ADA upgrades, new roofs, replacement windows, HVAC system replacements and other energy efficient upgrades, interior/exterior facility renovations, facility expansions, and new constructions. While many projects awarded grants spanned multiple categories (e.g., roof and window replacement), the graphic below provides a general breakout of the number of grants and total funds awarded to each project type between 1994-2020.

FIGURE 3 – PERCENT OF GRANT AWARDS BY SECONDARY PROJECT TYPE (1994 – 2020)
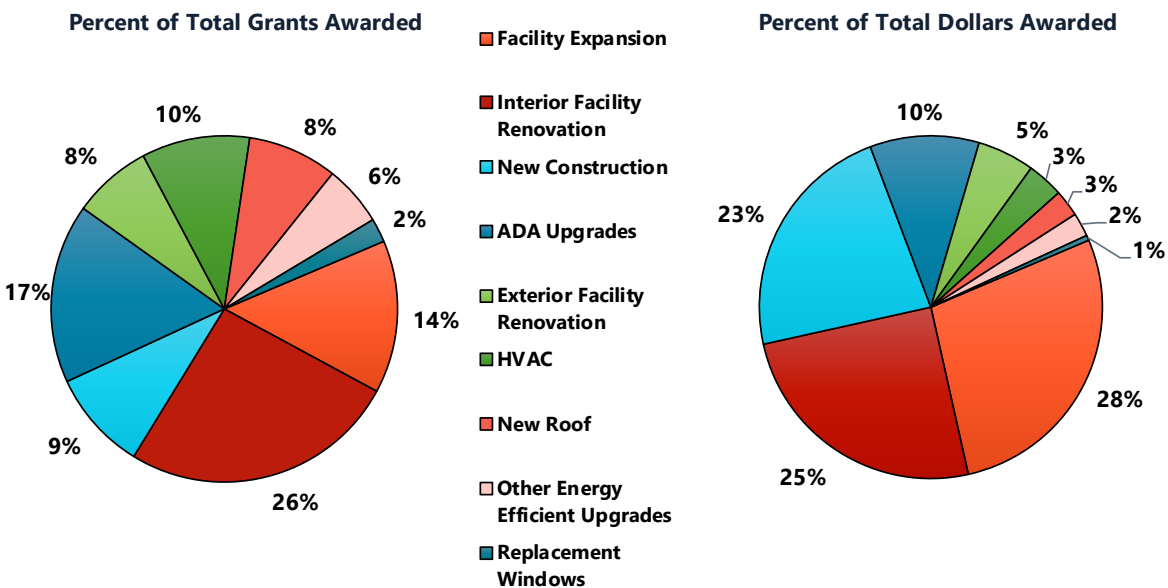
The most common type of grant request was for interior facility renovations (26%). This project type includes a variety of renovations including replacing worn carpeting, upgrading interior lighting, repairing ceiling tiles, etc. Other common award categories were ADA upgrades (17% of grants awarded), facility expansions (14%), and HVAC upgrades (10%). Over 75% of total grant dollars were awarded for new construction, facility expansions, and interior facility renovations (49% of total grants awarded). The remaining 51% of grants awarded funded smaller-scale projects that represent 25% of total grant dollars awarded between 1994 and 2020.

GRANT AWARDS BY COUNTY

Figure 4 provides details on the cumulative count of grants awarded to libraries located in counties across the Commonwealth. Between 1994 and 2020, libraries in Allegheny County recorded the largest share of grants awarded to any county, with 48 grant awards. During that same period, five counties (Greene, Mifflin, Potter, Snyder, and Wyoming) did not receive any grant awards. While this may be due to a lack of applications from these counties, this cannot be determined because the annual reports do not provide detail on applicants that applied for grants but were not awarded a grant during the grant cycle.

The Project analyzed the urban/rural breakdown of grant recipients at the county level. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania defines 19 Pennsylvania counties as "Urban" and the remaining 48 as "Rural"[5]. Between 1994 and 2020, 62% of grants awarded and 72% of grant dollars awarded went to libraries located in urban counties. This generally reflects the breakdown of the library service population as 74% of the 2019 service population live in an urban county and 26% live in a rural county.

FIGURE 4 – GRANT AWARDS BY COUNT

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[5] https://www.rural.pa.gov/data/rural-urban-definitions.cfm
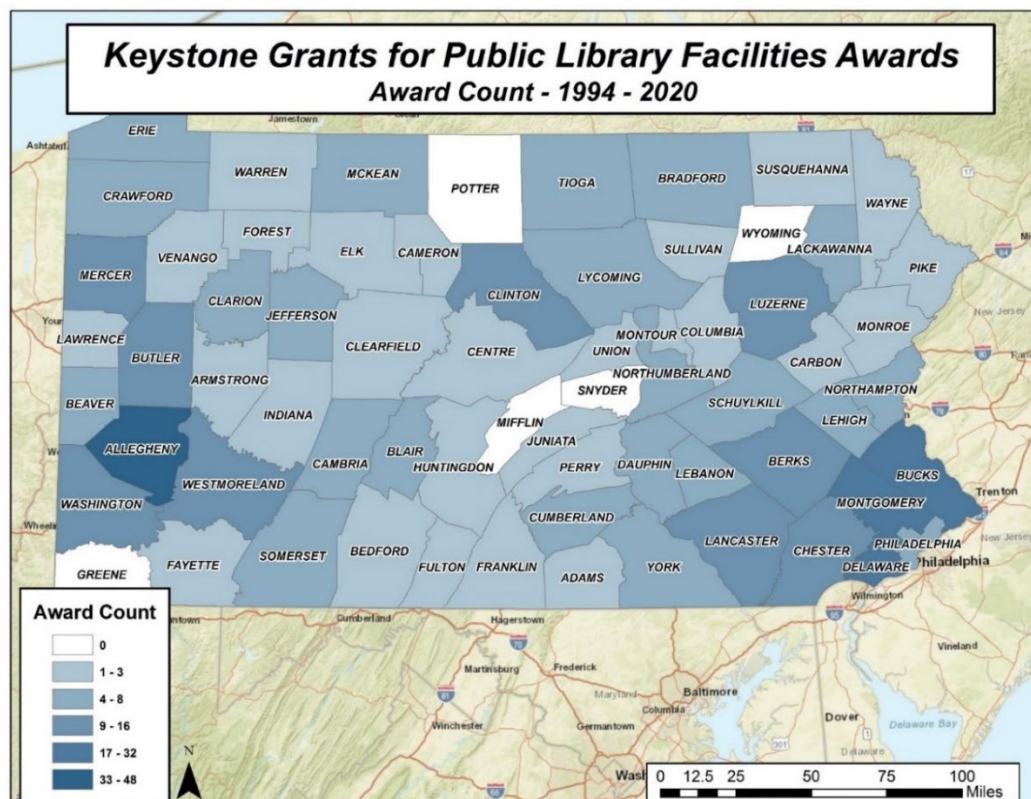
Figure 5 provides detail on the cumulative dollars awarded to libraries in each county across the Commonwealth. Allegheny County received the largest amount of cumulative grant awards, totaling $10.6 million between 1994 and 2020. The next three counties receiving the largest cumulative awards were Delaware ($4.9 million), Montgomery ($4.6 million), and Washington ($2.7 million). In general, rural counties received lower cumulative grant dollars. The average amount of grant dollars received across urban counties between 1994 and 2020 was $2.2 million. By contrast, the average grant dollars received across rural counties during the same period was $344,000.

FIGURE 5 – CUMULATIVE AWARD AMOUNT BY COUNTY
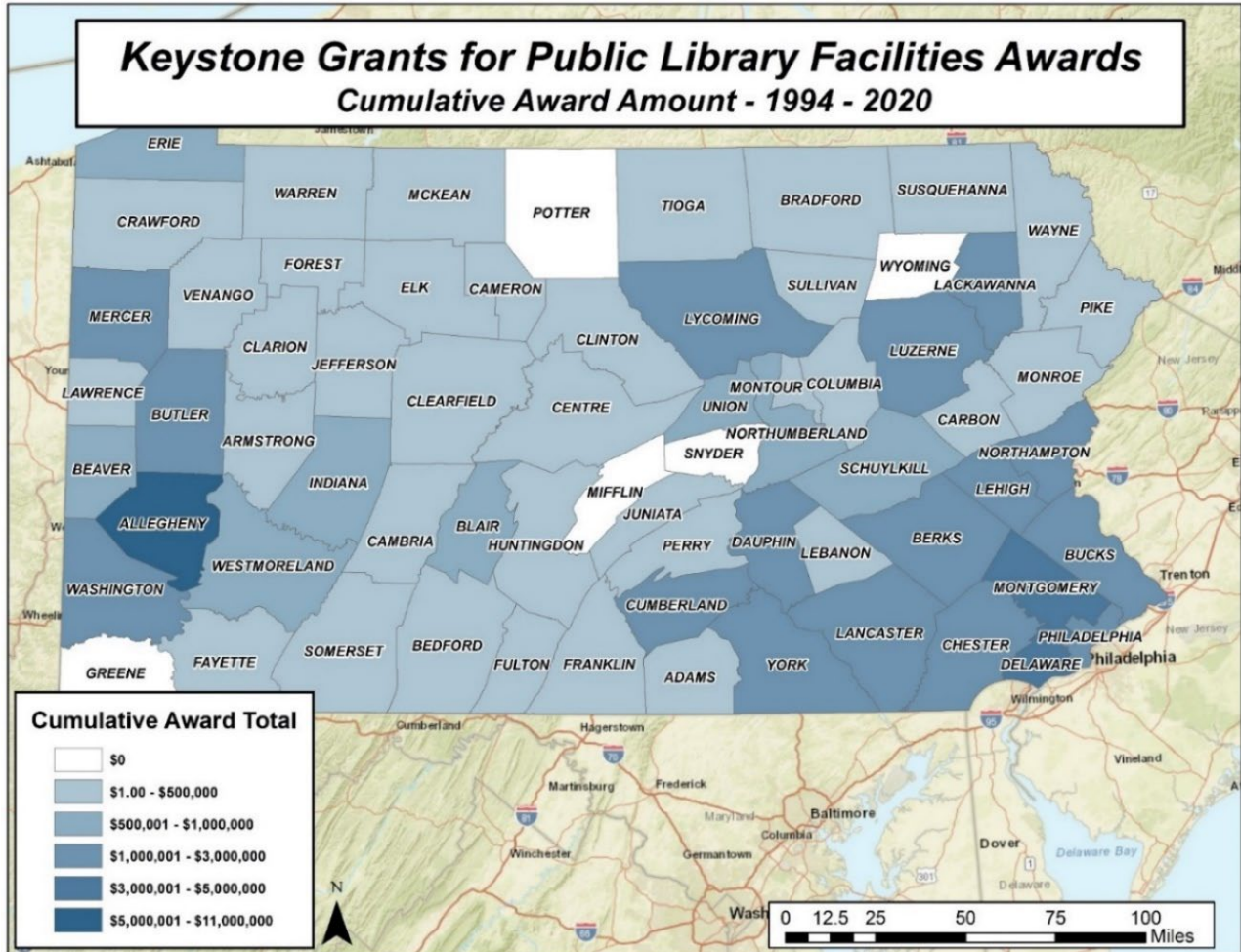
Figure 6 compares the cumulative dollars awarded per capita for the total library service population in each county. This attempts to adjust for areas in the state that have a larger service population and require larger and more numerous library facilities. On average, libraries were awarded approximately $6.10 for each person in the county service population. Generally, libraries in counties with very small service populations had the highest grant awards per capita. For example, between 1994 and 2020, Cameron County was awarded approximately $59 per capita in grant awards (2019 service population of 5,085). This was followed by Forest County ($37 per capita, service population of 7,716) and Fulton ($34, service population of 14,845). Notably, Allegheny County, which had a service population of 1.2 million, received an average of $8.75 per capita in grant awards. This per capita award was significantly higher than

Philadelphia County, which had a service population of 1.5 million and received $0.93 per capita in grant awards during the period.

<div align="center">FIGURE 6 – AWARD DOLLARS PER CAPITA PER COUNTY</div>
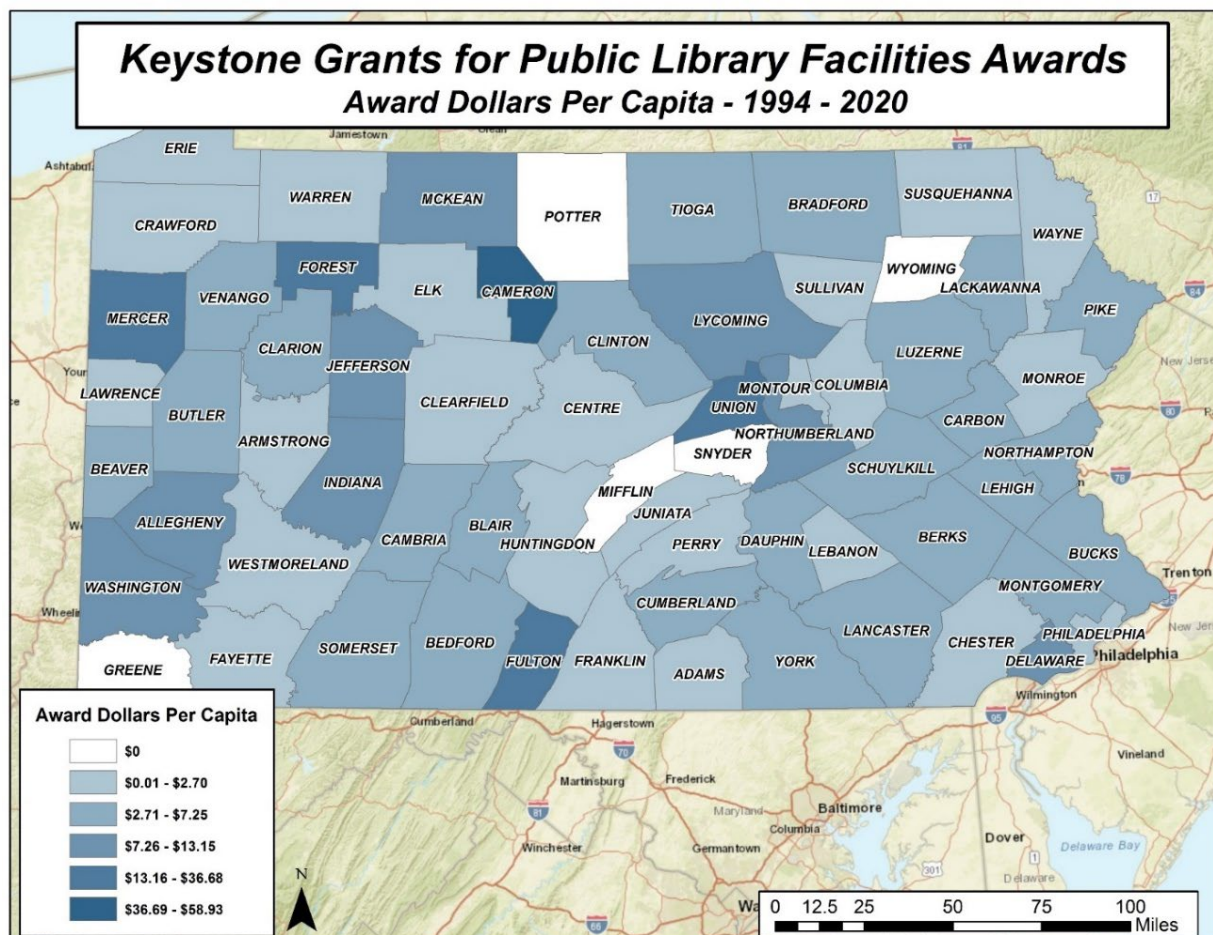
GRANT AWARDS BY LIBRARY

In 2019, there were 693 public library facilities located across the Commonwealth. Between 1994 and 2020, 409 grant awards were distributed to 272 unique libraries, or approximately 40% of public library facilities.[6] The remaining 60% (421) of libraries either did not apply to the program or did not receive a grant award during the 26-year period.

During the period, 82 (30%) libraries applied for and received repeat awards. The highest number of grant awards received by a single library was 6, while 13% of libraries received more than 2 awards during the 26-year period. One conclusion that can be drawn is that libraries that were aware of the Keystone Program and successfully received one grant award, found the grant program helpful and routinely applied. The map on the following page plots the locations of the libraries that were awarded grants. Even with the large number of repeat recipients, the location of the libraries receiving grant awards are relatively distributed evenly throughout the Commonwealth.

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[6] The number of unique libraries served is based on the detail provided in the annual Keystone Legislative Reports Keystone 10 Year Report. For grants awarded to library systems that did not specify a branch, it was assumed the grant was awarded to the system's central library.

FIGURE 7 – LOCATION OF AWARDED PUBLIC LIBRARY FACILITIES
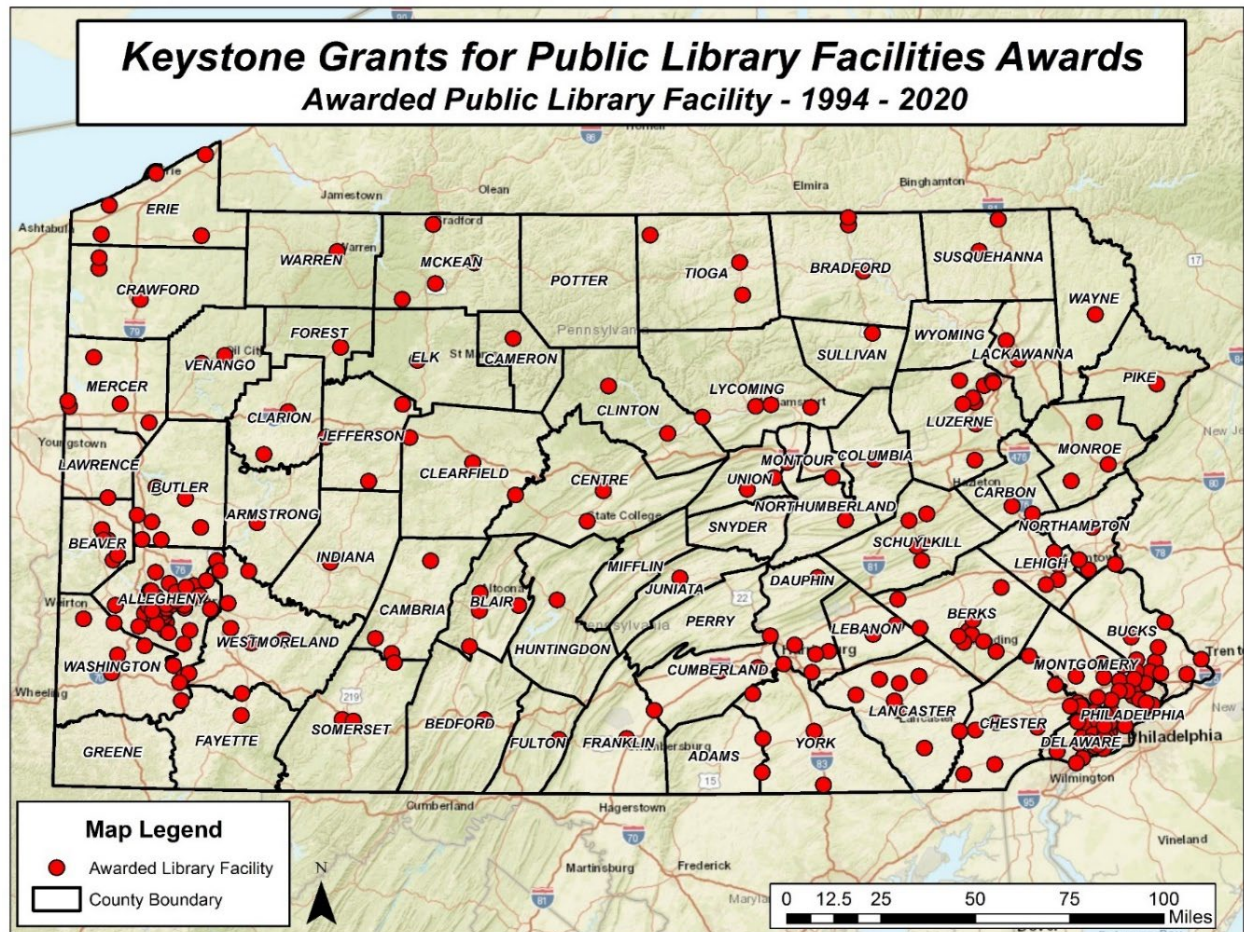
SURVEY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY FACILITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES

Delta designed the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey using smart forms via Survey 123. A smart form has built-in logic that supports default values, skip logic, calculations, branching questions, and multiple languages. For example, as a respondent answers questions in the form, additional questions may appear or some questions be removed in later sections, depending on responses to previous questions. A smart form only asks questions that are applicable to the respondent. Surveys were then published to the ArcGIS Dashboard for live-action analysis.

Multiple rounds of contact to public library facilities were conducted via email by PDE OCL. Utilizing the databases provided by DCED and PDE OCL, the Project Team called libraries, municipalities, and counties for a total of nine (9) weeks to collect responses. Delta also utilized Constant Contact on numerous occasions as well as a direct contact communication firm to assist with municipal outreach. Over 2,700 municipalities and counties were called through a partnership with the direct contact communication firm. Delta engaged the County Commissioners Associations of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Municipal League to assist with municipal survey responses. The original deadline for the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey was November 26, 2021; however, Delta extended the deadline two weeks to solicit additional municipal responses.

In total, the Project Team collected 679 responses, including 512 public library surveys and 167 municipal surveys. More than 75% of all responses were from public libraries or library systems. The Project Team found that public libraries and library systems were far more responsive and willing to complete the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey compared to municipalities. Throughout the duration of the survey period, the three most common responses among municipal contacts for declining the survey included: 1. No knowledge of Keystone Program; 2. No existing or planned public library facilities in the community; and 3. Lack of capacity and/or direct benefit from participation in the survey.

As illustrated in Figure 8, the greatest number of surveys were submitted from the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh regions, which can be attributed to population density and greater number of public library facilities. At least one (1) public library or municipal survey was submitted in 66 out of the 67 counties across the Commonwealth. No library or municipal surveys were submitted in Montour County.

Are you taking the survey on behalf of a public library or municpality?

- Public Library
- Municipality

24.59%

75.41%
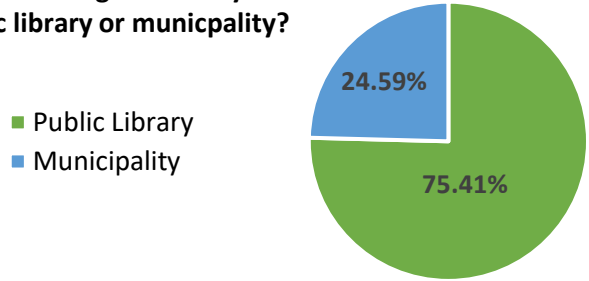
FIGURE 8 – SURVEY RESPONSES BY LOCATION AND TYPE
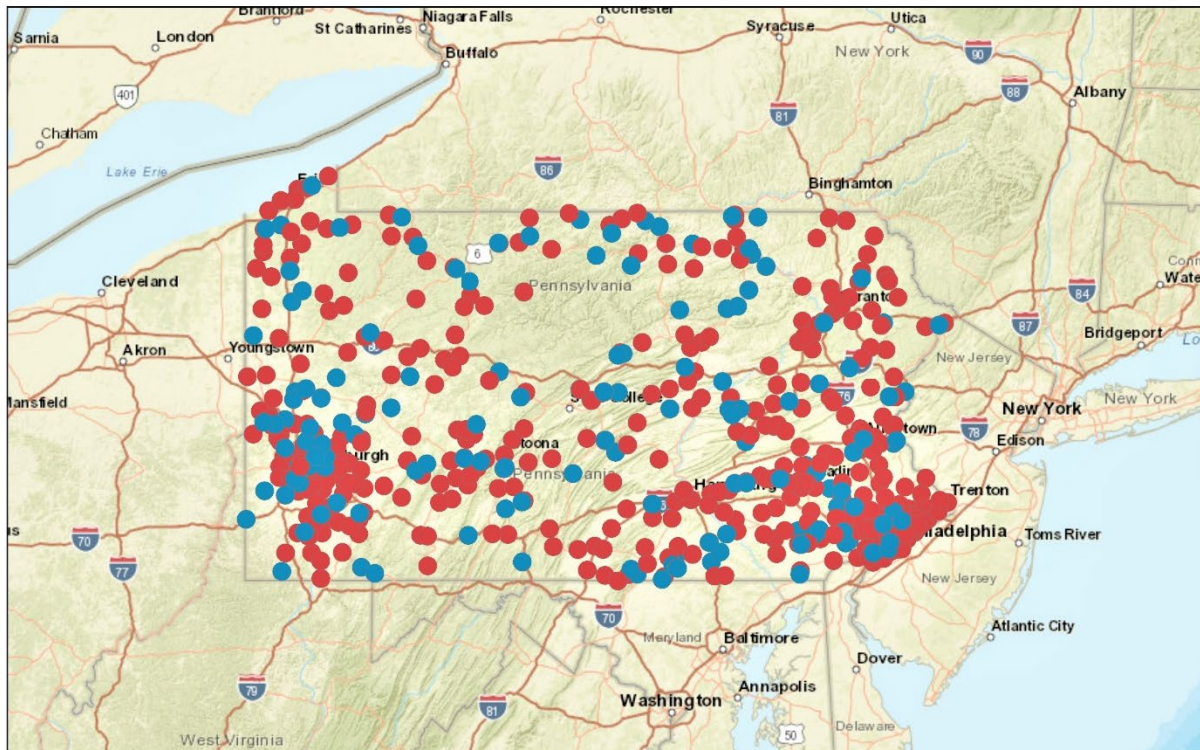
12/30/2021

Are you taking the survey on behalf of a public library or municipality?

- Public Library
- Municipality (Borough, Town, Township, City)

1:4,279,511

DELTA DEVELOPMENT GROUP
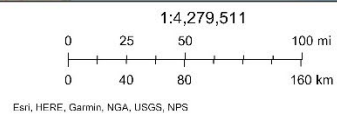
Of the 167 municipal responses, eleven (11) counties did not have any participation – Columbia, Dauphin, Franklin, Lawrence, Monroe, Montour, Perry, Philadelphia, Susquehanna, Venango, and Wyoming. Dauphin and Philadelphia Counties were the only urban counties [7] without representation in the municipal survey. As illustrated in the tree map below, counties with the highest participation rate included Allegheny County accounting for 10.18% of all municipal surveys, followed by Chester County at 5.39%, and Butler County at 4.19%.

FIGURE 9 – MUNICIPAL PARTICIPATION RATE BY COUNTY

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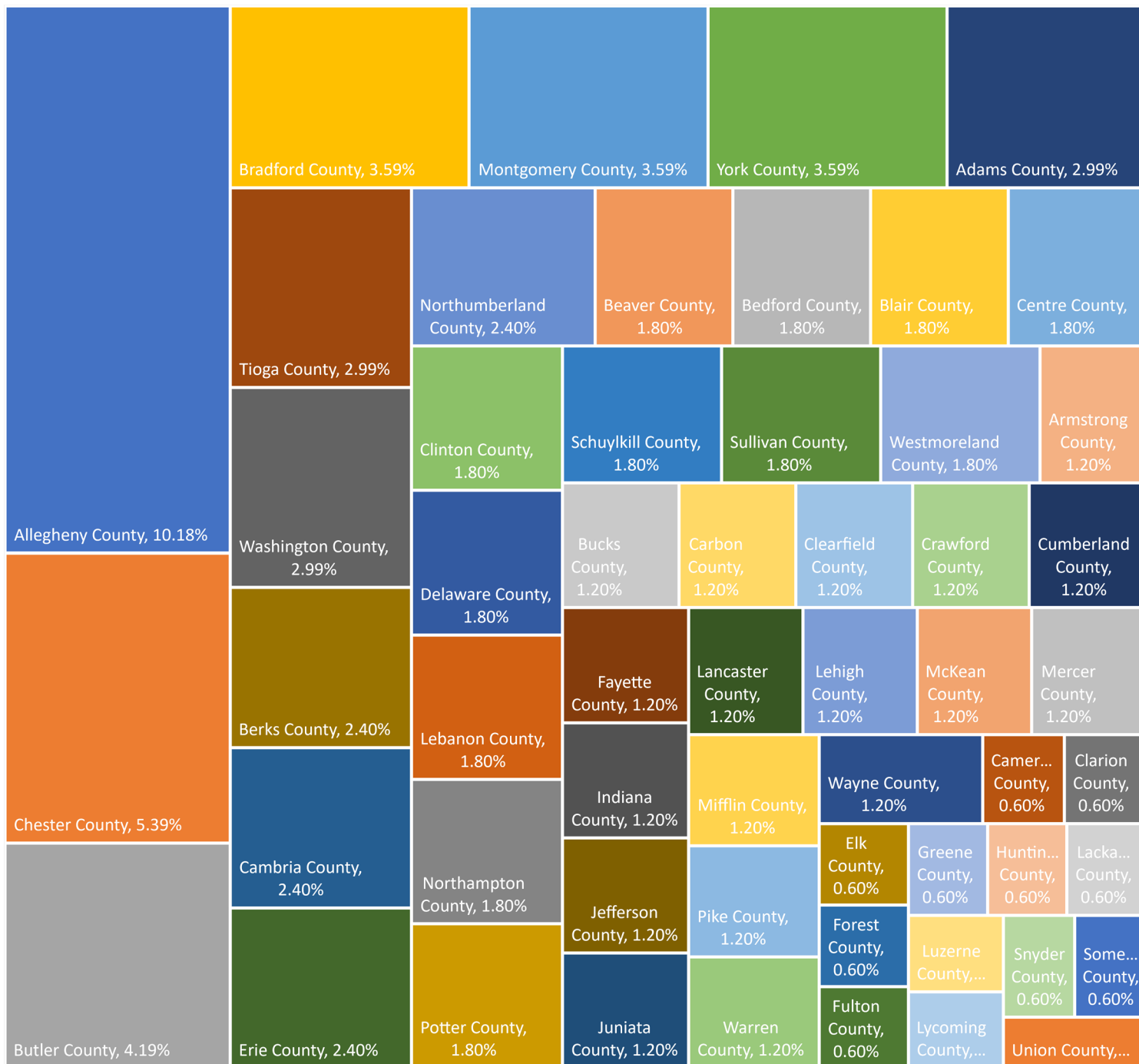
[7] *According to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's classification of "Urban" and "Rural".*

As illustrated in Figure 10, Allegheny County reported the highest participation at 12.11% of all public library surveys, followed by Philadelphia County at 10.74% and Delaware County at 4.88%. An average of seven (7) library surveys were submitted per county.

FIGURE 10 – PUBLIC LIBRARY PARTICIPATION RATE BY COUNTY
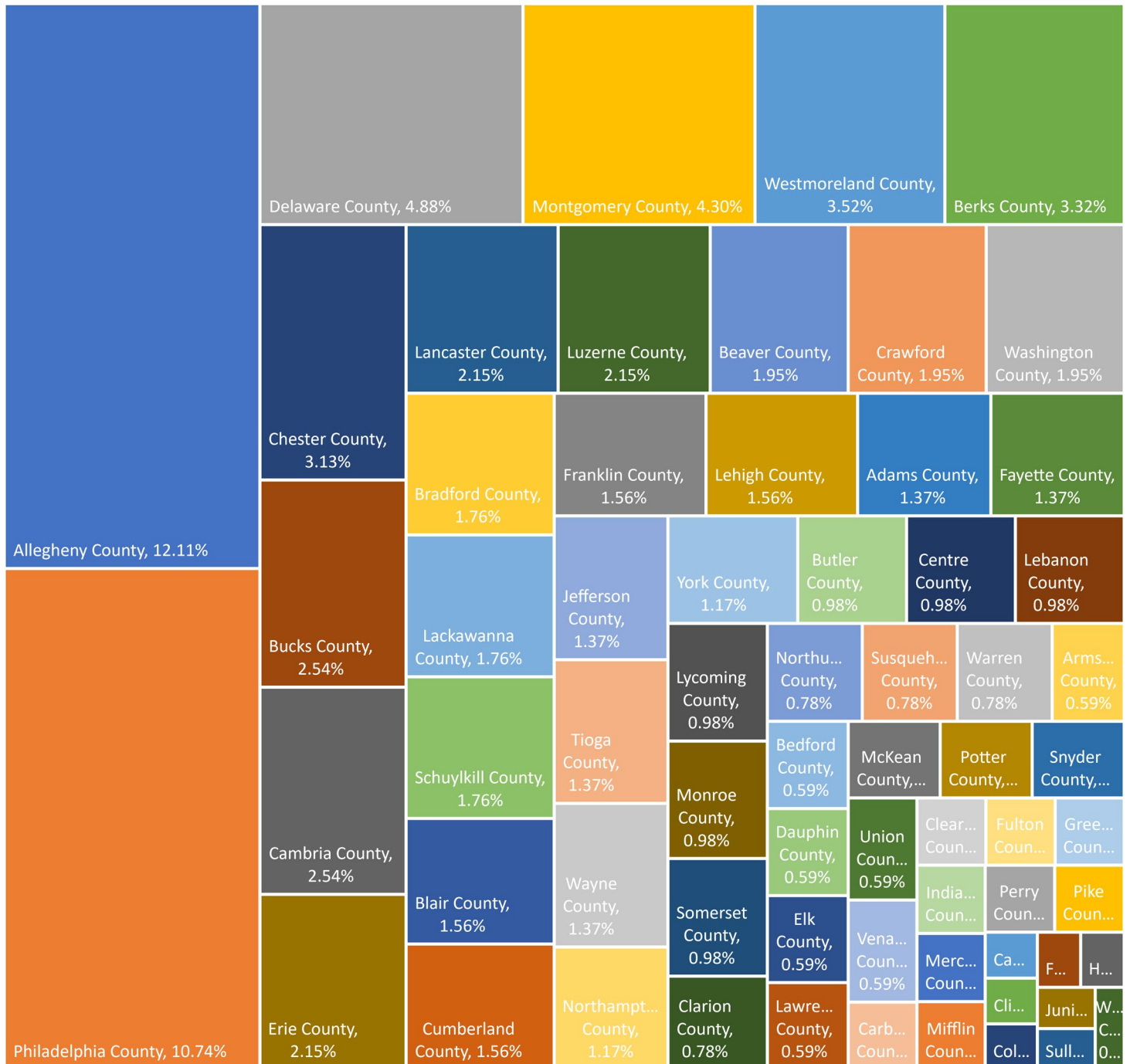
The Project Team utilized one survey link for all public libraries, library systems, municipalities, and counties. For the purposes of the *Needs Assessment,* Delta separated the municipal and public library responses to provide greater detail on current and future capital needs across the Commonwealth.

MUNICIPAL SURVEY RESPONSES

Question 1: Are there public library facilities, excluding school libraries, in the municipality?

Over 100 respondents indicated that there are no public library facilities in the community and only three (3) respondents were unsure if there are library facilities. The Project Team found geographic clusters among respondents that selected "No", including municipalities surrounding the City of Pittsburgh, communities in the Northern Tier (Tioga, Bradford, and Susquehanna Counties), and several communities scattered across the Northwest Rural Planning Organization ("RPO") (Crawford, Venango, Forrest, Warren, and Clarion Counties). There were also spatial patterns among respondents that selected "Yes", including large clusters around Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and State College.
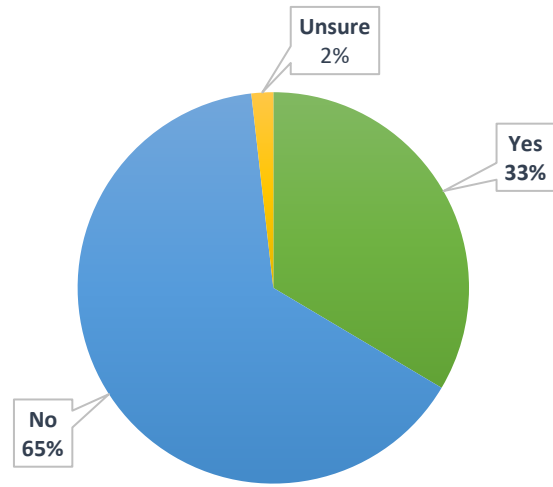
If respondents indicated that there are public library facilities in the municipality, they were directed to answer Question 2.

If respondents indicated that there are no public library facilities in the municipality, they were directed to answer Question 4.

Question 2: What are the overall conditions of the current public library facilities?

A total of 56 responses were collected for this question. Overall, respondents found the public library facilities to be in "Good" to "Very Good" condition. Two (2) respondents reported library facilities in "Poor" condition - Dushore Borough in Sullivan County and Cheltenham Township in Montgomery County.
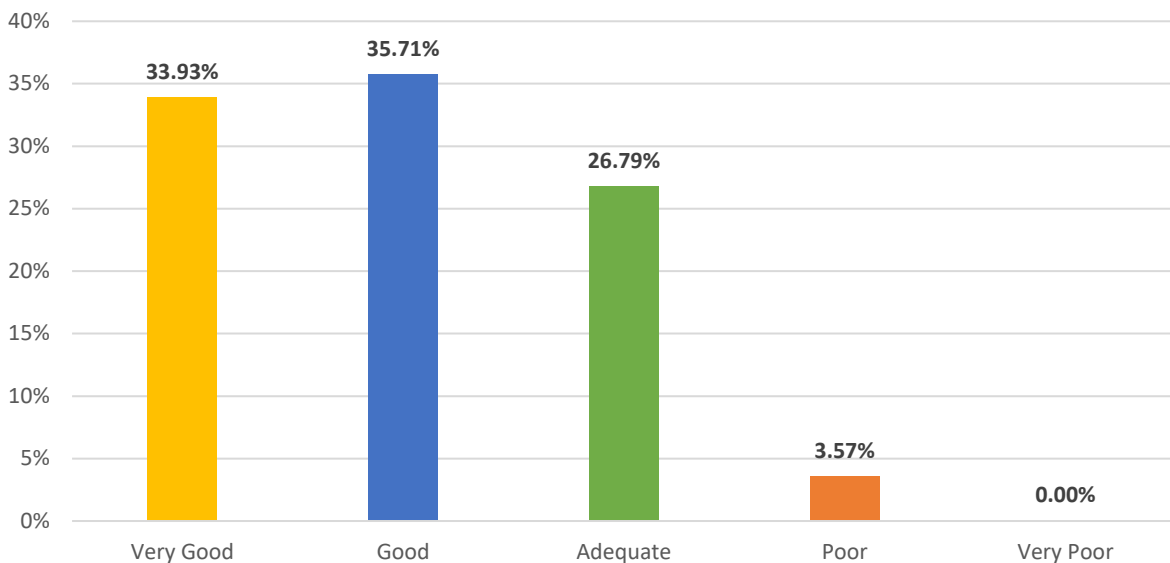
If respondents indicated that the overall conditions of the current public library facilities are in "Poor" or "Very Poor" condition, they were directed to answer Question 3.

If the respondents indicated that the overall conditions of the current public library facilities are in "Very Good", "Good", or "Adequate" condition, they were directed to answer Question 7.

Question 3: Your response to the previous question indicated that the current library facilities in the municipality are in "Poor" or "Very Poor" condition. What area of the public library facilities are in need of capital improvements?

Dushore Borough: "They are requesting a larger space with more rooms and storage. Also, would like a parking lot. Patrons have to park on the street and usually there is no street parking available."

Cheltenham Township: "The Township has four libraries, two are standalone buildings and two are in community centers, which are old school buildings. All have serious infrastructure issues, such as leaking roofs, aging mechanicals, size issues, and other concerns that make them inadequate to serve as public buildings. Cheltenham is just starting the needs assessment to consolidate as many of its 16 facilities into one campus. The libraries, community centers, art centers, etc. would be combined with Township facilities to improve delivery of service to Cheltenham Township residents."

All respondents that answered Question 3 were directed to Question 7.

Question 4: Are there plans for a new public library facility in the municipality?

Of the 111 respondents that answered this question, only three (3) municipalities indicated there were plans for a new public library facility.

If respondents selected "Yes", they were directed to answer Question 5.

If respondents selected "No or "Unsure", they were directed to answer Question 7.

Question 5: What is the current status of the new public library facility?

Two (2) respondents indicated the current status of the new facility is under "Planning" and one (1) respondent reported that status of the new facility under "Development".

2.71%

■ No, there are no current plans for a new public library facility.

■ Yes, there are plans for a new public library facility.

97.29%

All respondents that answered Question 5 were directed to Question 6.

Question 6: Does the municipality intend to apply for a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities?

Two (2) respondents indicated reported they were "Unsure" if the municipality intends to apply to the Keystone Program. One (1) respondent, Etna Borough in Allegheny County, reported "Yes" there is an intent to apply to the Keystone Program.

All respondents that answered Question 6 were directed to Question 7.
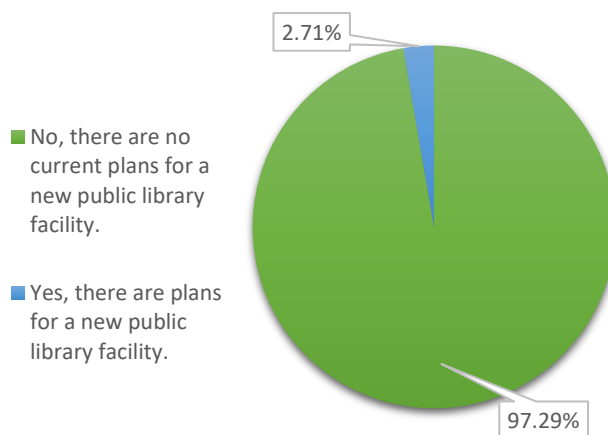
Question 7: Is the municipality aware of new capital needs for public library facilities as a result of COVID-19?

Approximately 53% of respondents reported "No" when asked whether the municipality was aware of new capital needs at public library facilities as a result of COVID-19. A total of 24 respondents selected "Yes", and respondents are scattered throughout rural, suburban, and urban communities in the Commonwealth, including:

- Millheim Borough, Centre County
- City of Lock Haven, Clinton County
- Abbottstown Borough, Adams County
- Bellefonte Borough, Centre County
- Dallastown Borough, York County
- Upper Mount Bethel Township, Northampton County
- Annville Township, Lebanon County
- Pleasant Valley Township, Potter County
- Riegelsville Borough, Bucks County
- Donegal Township, Washington County
- Upper Pottsgrove Township, Montgomery County
- Gamble Township, Lycoming County
- Sankertown Borough, Cambria County
- Valencia Borough, Butler County
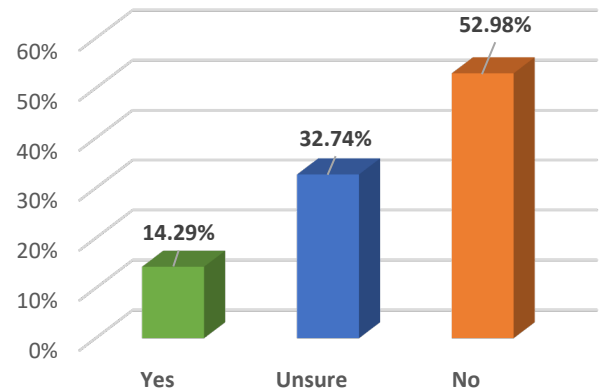
If respondents selected "Yes", they were directed to answer Question 8.

If respondents selected "No" or "Unsure", there were directed to Question 9..

Question 8: To the best of your knowledge, which of the capital project categories below represent the most immediate need of public library facilities in the municipality as a result of COVID-19?

A total of 24 respondents answered this question; however, no respondents reported that a "New Stand-Alone Library Building" was needed as a result of COVID-19. Approximately 40% of respondents stated they were "Unsure" on specific capital needs.

All respondents that answered Question 8 were directed to Question 9.

Question 9: In the last five years, has the municipality contributed financially to the operations of a public library facility in the last five years?

More than 65% of all respondents indicated that the municipality has provided financial contributions to a public library for operations. Approximately 8% of respondents selected "Unsure" and 26% of respondents reported "No". A greater number of respondents that selected "No" were located in northwest communities, including municipalities in the North Central and Northwest RPOs. Conversely, State College, York County, Adams County, Beaver County, Berks County, Butler County, and Philadelphia, were discovered to have large clusters of respondents that selected "Yes".

All respondents that answered Question 9 were directed to Question 10.

Question 10: In the last ten years, has the municipality contributed financially to the capital needs of a public library facility?

When asked whether the municipality has provided financial contributions for capital needs of public library facilities, the number of respondents that selected "Yes" dropped to 46% compared to the previous question. However, the percentage of respondents that selected "Unsure" increased to 19%. Among the 77 respondents that selected "Yes", large clusters were discovered in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, York County, and the Northern Tier.

All respondents that answered Question 10 were directed to Question 11.

Question 11: Has the municipality ever assisted a public library with a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities?

Nearly 60% of all respondents selected "No" when asked whether the municipality has ever assisted a public library with a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities. Only 11% of respondents selected "Yes", indicating that municipalities may not be in regular communication with their local library facilities; could lack capacity to support library facilities with grant applications; or are unaware of the Keystone Program and its benefits to the municipality. Among the 19 respondents that selected "Yes", there were only three respondents in the northern half of the state (i.e., north of State College) that reported previously assisting a public library with the Keystone Program – Cameron, Wayne, and Luzerne Counties.
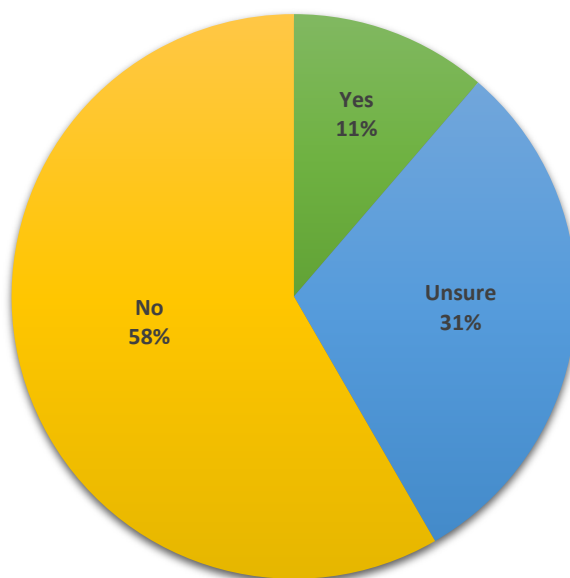
All respondents that answered Question 11 were directed to Question 12.

Question 12: If asked by a public library, would the municipality be willing to serve as the applicant for a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities?

More than 50% of respondents indicated that they were "Unsure" whether the municipality would be willing to serve as the applicant if asked by a public library. There are a variety of factors that play into why a municipality could select "Unsure", including but not limited to: staffing capacity, lack of details on planned capital improvements at public library facilities, and existing municipal policies and procedures. Over 15% of respondents selected "No". The Project Team conducted a spatial analysis on respondents that selected "No" and found that three quarters of the respondents are located in rural counties. In Question 11, the Project Team discovered few very municipal respondents in the northern half of Pennsylvania have assisted a public library with a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities. The ArcGIS Dashboard shows that these municipalities are the same respondents that selected "No" when asked whether the municipality would be willing to serve as the applicant.

PUBLIC LIBRARY RESPONSES

Question 1: Which of the following best describes the public library?

Nearly 300 of the 512 survey respondents identified the library as "Independent" and another 36 respondents identified the library as "Independent with Branches". A total of 45 respondents reported "Other" when asked to best describe the library from a list of classifications. For respondents that selected "Other", the survey requested additional clarification. Below is a sample of the further description provided by respondents that identified as "Other".

- Federated County System Library
- Independent Library In A Federated System
- District Member Library
- Consortium
- System Administrative Headquarters Only
- County Department with Bookmobile
- Municipal Library (Dept. of Local Government)
- Affiliated Museum

3.32%
7.03%
8.79%
24.02%
56.84%

- Consolidated System Headquarters with Branches
- Independent Library with Branches
- Other
- Branch Library
- Independent Library

Question 2: Is this public library part of a library system?

Over 81% of respondents selected "Yes" when asked whether the public library is part of a library system. All respondents that selected "Yes" were asked to provide the name of the library system.

If respondents selected "Yes", they were directed to answer Question 3.

If respondents selected "No", they were directed to answer Question 4.

Question 3: Name of Library System

A word cloud was designed to provide a visual representation of the most common words and phrases from this open-ended question. The most common responses included Free Library of Philadelphia (54 submissions), Allegheny County Library Association (35 submissions), and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (17 submissions).

Question 4: What year was the public library facility constructed?

Over 70% of public libraries that completed the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey indicated the facility was built between 1900 and 1999. PDE OCL should prepare for an increasing number of requests to the Keystone Program as more facilities will need rehabilitation, modifications, and/or expansions due to the aging stock of Pennsylvania's public libraries. Two (2) respondents identified an original construction date prior to 1800 – Franklin Public Library in Venango County and Milton Public Library in Northumberland County.
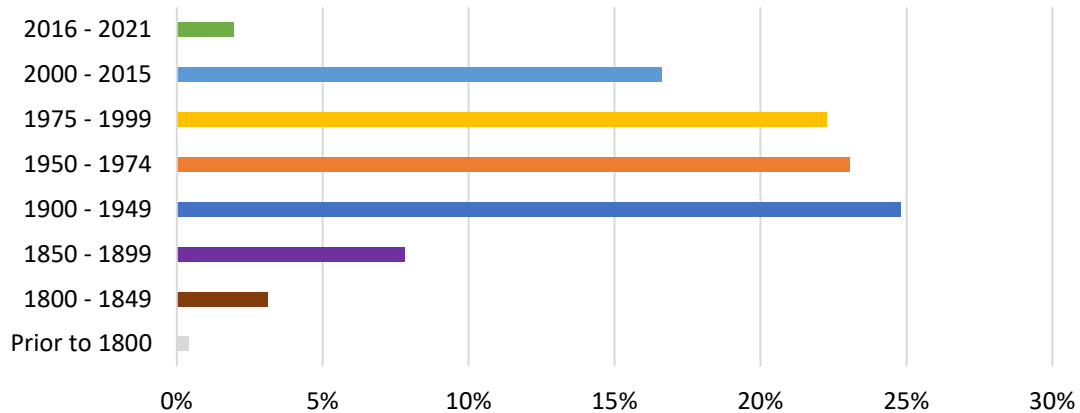
All respondents that answered Question 4 were directed to Question 5.

Question 4: Has the public library facility ever undergone an expansion and/or addition?

A total of 254 facilities have undergone an expansion and/or addition; however, another 239 facilities have not completed any expansion and/or additions to date. Based on the age of Pennsylvania's public library facilities and other data collected during the *Needs Assessment* (i.e., grantee interviews)*,* PDE OCL could experience an increase in grant requests in the next 3-5 years for expansion initiatives, particularly as libraries look to adapt their facilities to new social distancing practices and other health guidelines following COVID-19.

Less than 4% of all respondents reported that they were "Unsure" of previous expansion and/or additions, which could be attributed to staff turnover. Furthermore, with nearly 60 facilities built before 1900, it's reasonable that details on all previous expansions and/or additions were available to the individuals completing the survey.

If respondents selected "Yes", there were directed to answer Question 5.

If respondents selected "No" or "Unsure", they were directed to answer Question 6.

Question 5: When was the last expansion and/or addition to the public library completed?

Prior to 1975, only 12 expansion/addition projects were completed at Pennsylvania libraries. Four (4) expansion/additional projects were reported prior to 1950 including Carnegie Library of Homestead and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Braddock Carnegie Library Association, and West Pittston Library. More than 50% of all reported expansion/additional projects were in the last 21 years.

All respondents that answered Question 5 were directed to answer Question 6.

Question 6: Has the public library facility ever undergone major renovations?

Approximately 60% of all respondents indicated that the library facility has undergone major renovations. Nearly 180 libraries across the Commonwealth were reported to have never undergone any major renovations. There is a small percentage of respondents that reported "Unsure", which may be the result of the same factors identified question 4 (i.e., staff turnover, age of facility). As illustrated in Figure 11 below, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are homes to the largest clusters of facilities with no major renovations. Other regions of interest are Cambria County and Erie County, which are both home to multiple facilities that have yet to undergo any major renovations. Several of these facilities were reported in the library surveys to have been built between 1950-1974.
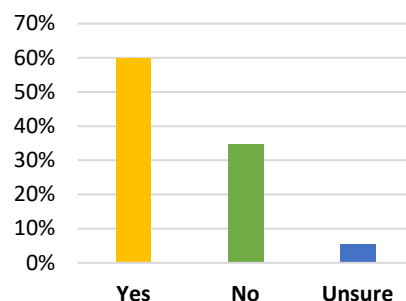
FIGURE 11 – LIBRARY FACILITIES WITH NO MAJOR RENOVATIONS TO DATE
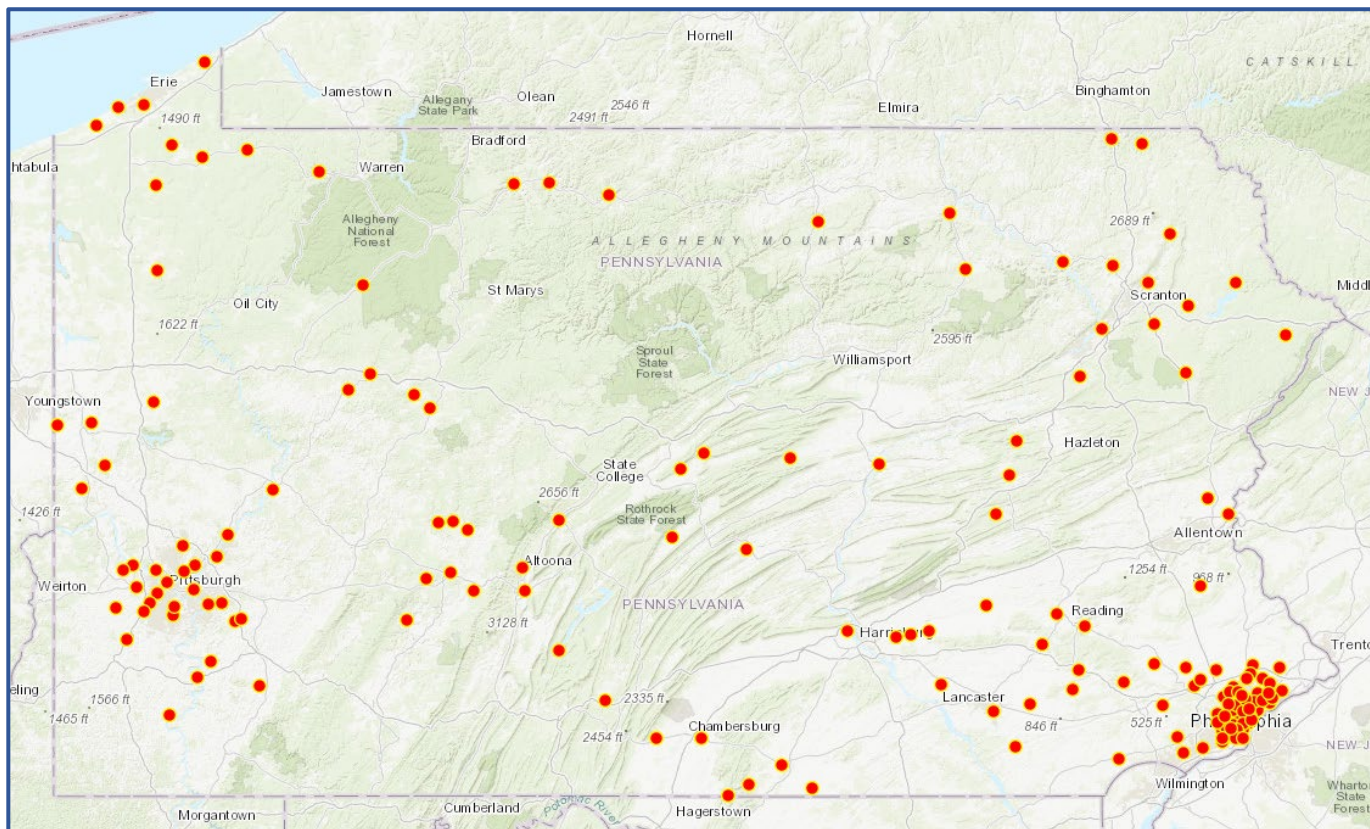
If respondents selected "Yes:", they were directed to answer Question 7.

If respondents selected "No" or "Unsure", they were directed to answer Question 8.

Question 7: When was the last major renovation to the public library completed?

Prior to 1975, there were only three (3) reported renovations to public libraries. The minor level of reported renovations is expected because almost 25% of Pennsylvania's public library facilities were

reportedly built between 1900-1949. From 1975-1999, a total of 30 library facilities were reported to have undergone major renovations. From 2000-2015, the number of reported major renovations more than tripled. In the last five years, the number of reported renovations has increased by 36%, a reflection on the growing age of Pennsylvania's library facilities.

All respondents that answered Question 7 were directed to Question 8.

Question 8: Who owns the building currently occupied by the library?

Nearly 90% of respondents reported that the library or municipality own the building occupied by the public library. There were approximately 30 respondents that reported renting or leasing from a third-party, particularly in Philadelphia. This trend does not carry over to Pittsburgh, where there were only two surveys that reported the use of a third-party. The remainder of the third-party agreements are dispersed throughout the state in rural, urban, and suburban communities.
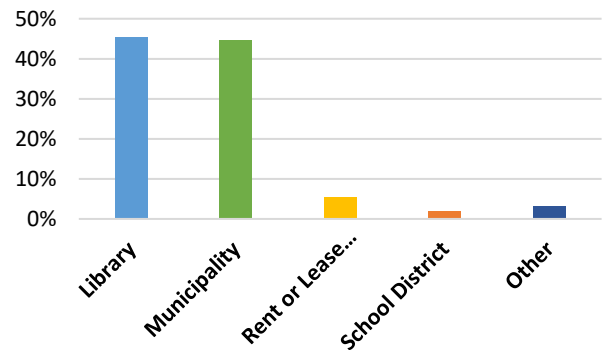
Question 9: Is the library currently located in a facility that is shared with another separate entity (i.e., municipality, commercial space, etc.)?

Only 25% of respondents reported being located in a facility that is shared with another separate entity. Among the libraries located in a shared facility, approximately 84% of the shared facilities are with municipalities.

Question 10: Prior to COVID-19, how many patrons did the public library serve annually?

The Project Team made strategic outreach efforts to ensure all service levels were represented in the 2021 Keystone Needs Assessment Survey. Each service level accounts for approximately 15%-25% of the total library surveys with the exception of facilities serving greater than 500,000 patrons. Less than 1% of all surveyed facilities serve more than half a million patrons annually.
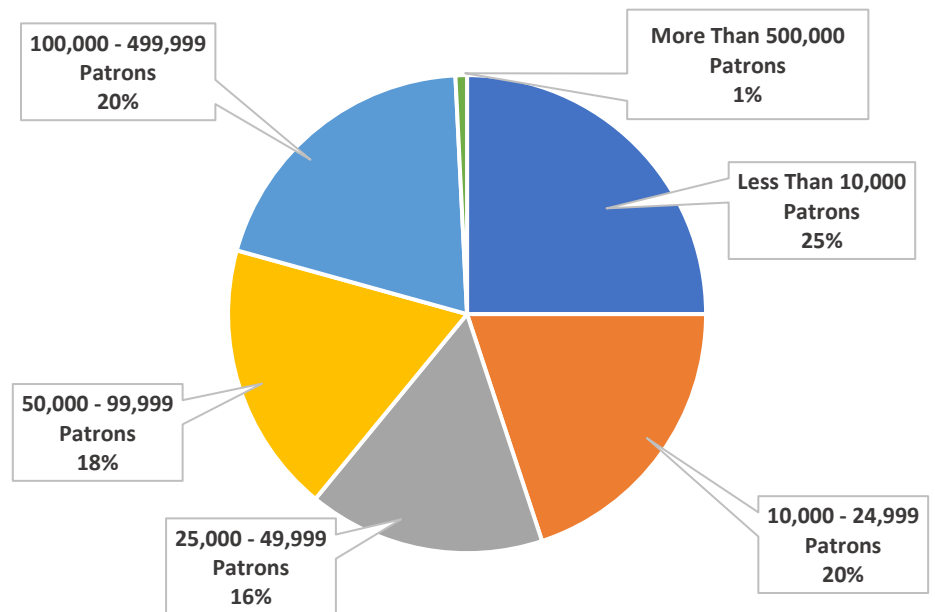
Question 11: How many people are in the library's service area?*

Nearly 62% of facilities reported a service area of greater than 10,000 individuals and another 19% reported a service area of 5,000 – 9,999 individuals. There are very few facilities, less than 3%, with a service area of less than 1,000 individuals, all of which are located in rural counties except Waterford Public Library in Erie County.

Question 12: What designation best describes the public library's service area?

The Project Team identified large pockets of "Suburban" respondents outside of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, as well as communities outside the cities of Harrisburg, Lancaster, Reading, Allentown, Scranton, and York.

- Rural
- Suburban
- Urban

21% 43% 36%
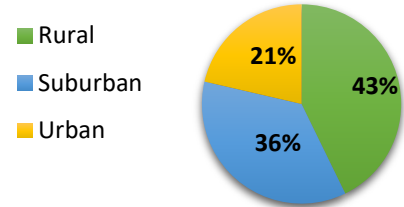
Question 13: From 2015 – 2021, what has happened to the number of library stacks/shelves at the facility?

Over 60% of respondents reported that the number of library stacks/shelves remained the same and another 21% reported an increase over the same five-year period. Approximately 95 libraries reported a decrease in library stacks/shelves. A spatial analysis found numerous geographic clusters of facilities with decreases in library stacks/shelves, including Philadelphia, Lehigh Valley, Scranton, Pittsburgh, and multiple facilities across Cambria, Blair, and Indiana Counties. Conversely, regions that experienced an increase in library stacks/shelves include Franklin, Adams, York, Lancaster, and Washington Counties.

Question 14: What are the overall conditions of the current public library?

In general, respondents identified the condition of public library facilities as "Very Good", "Good" or "Adequate", accounting for 85% of all library surveys. A total of twelve (12) facilities were reported in "Very Poor" condition, including:

- Charles Santore Library – Philadelphia County
- Fox Chase Library – Philadelphia County
- McPherson Square Library – Philadelphia County
- Paschalville Library – Philadelphia County
- Ramonita G. De Rodriguez Library – Philadelphia County
- Community Library of Western Perry County – Perry County
- Carnegie Free Library of Swissvale – Allegheny County
- Tamaqua Public Library – Schuylkill County
- Burrell Township Library – Indiana County
- Windber Public Library – Somerset County
- Andrew Bayne Memorial Library – Allegheny County
- New Castle Public Library – Lawrence County

Question 15: What are the conditions for each feature of the public library?

Please see the following pages.

AIR CONDITIONING AND HVAC SYSTEM
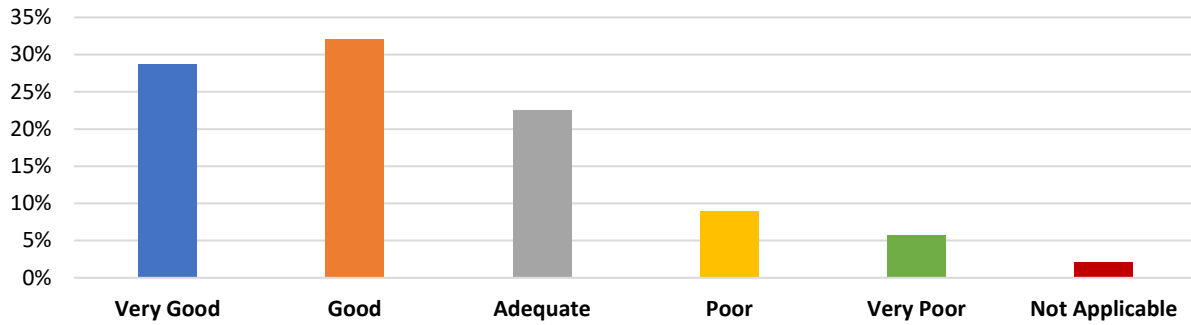
ADA ACCESSIBLE BATHROOMS
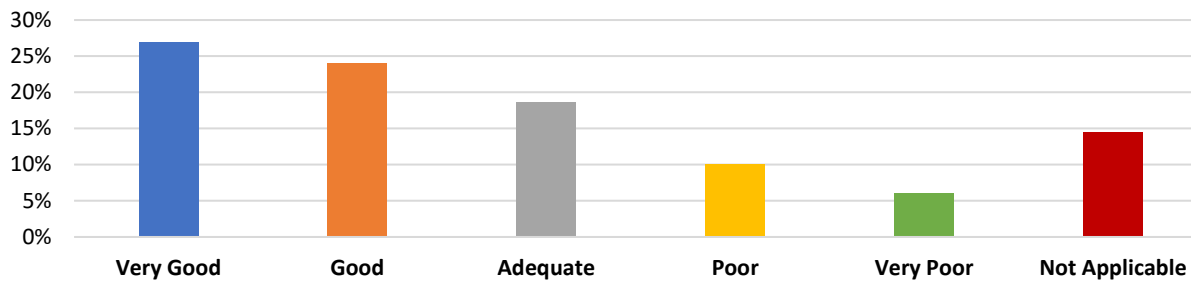
ADA ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCES

ADA ACCESSIBLE PARKING

DELTA DEVELOPMENT GROUP
INC.
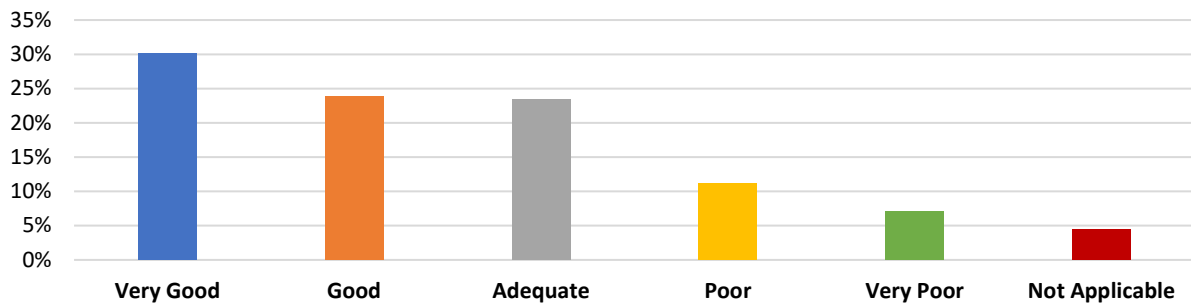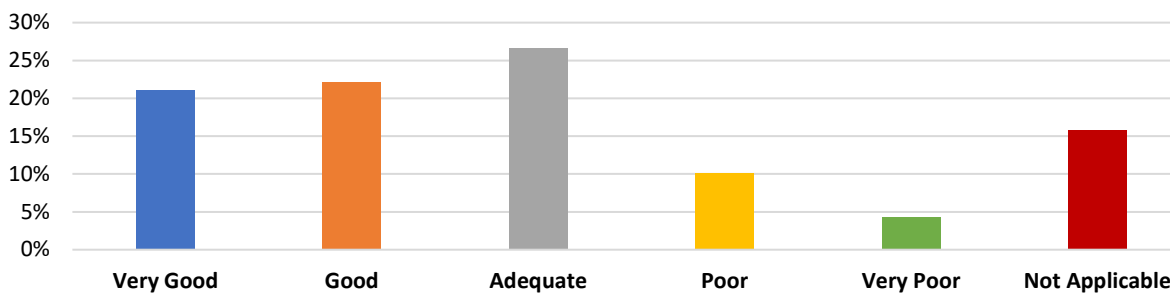
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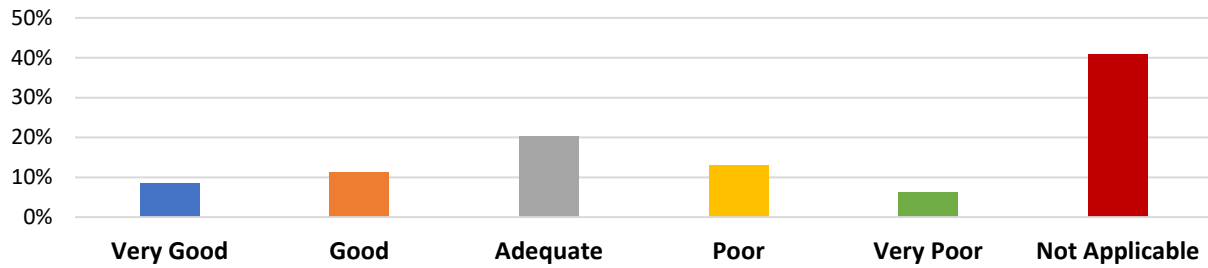
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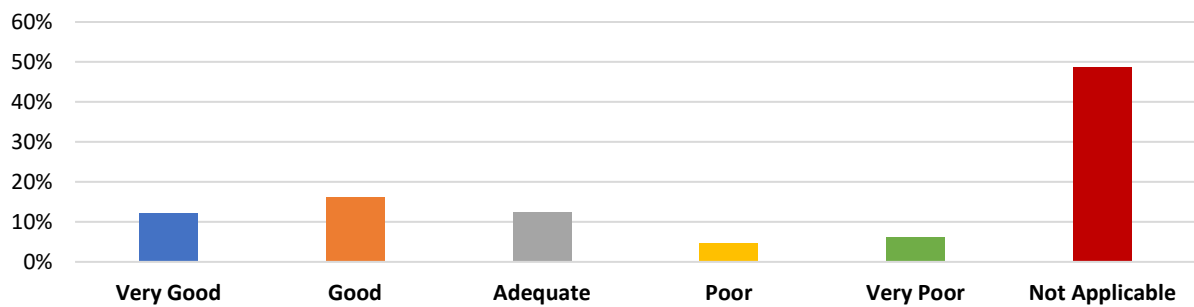
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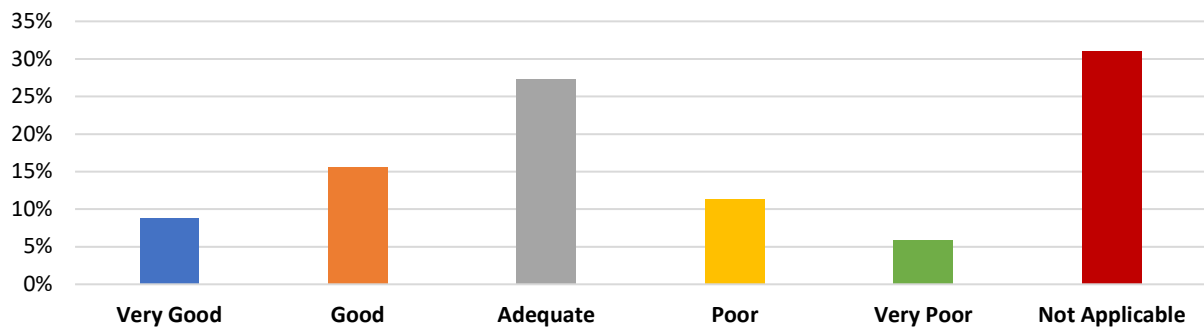
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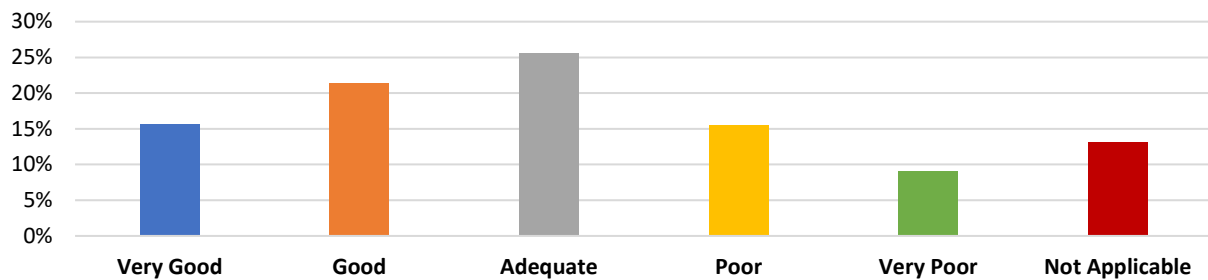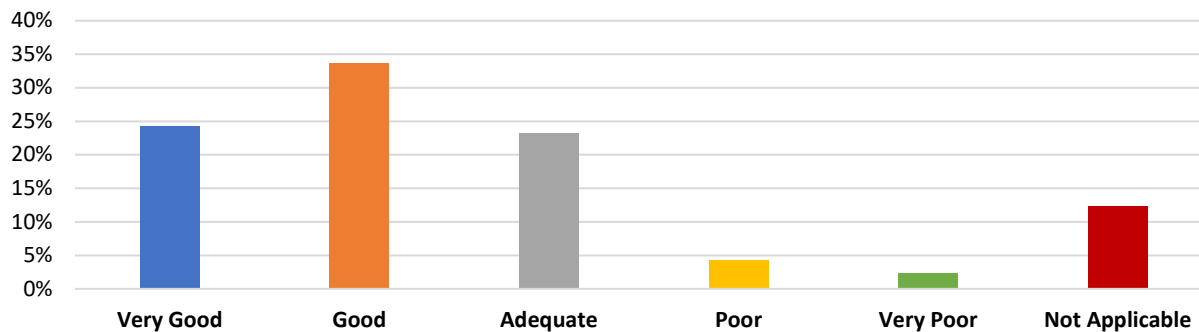
CHILDREN'S SPACES
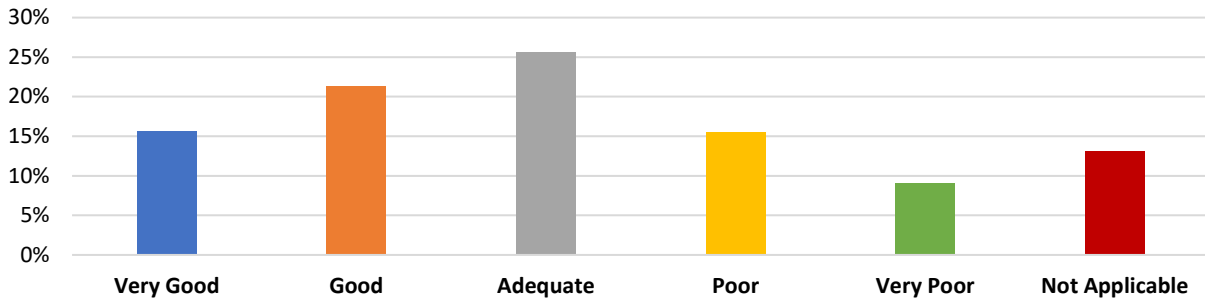
COMMUNITY/PROGRAM SPACES
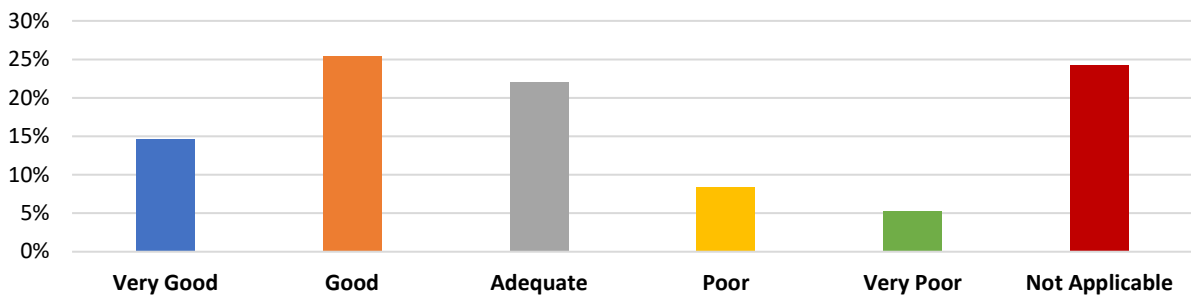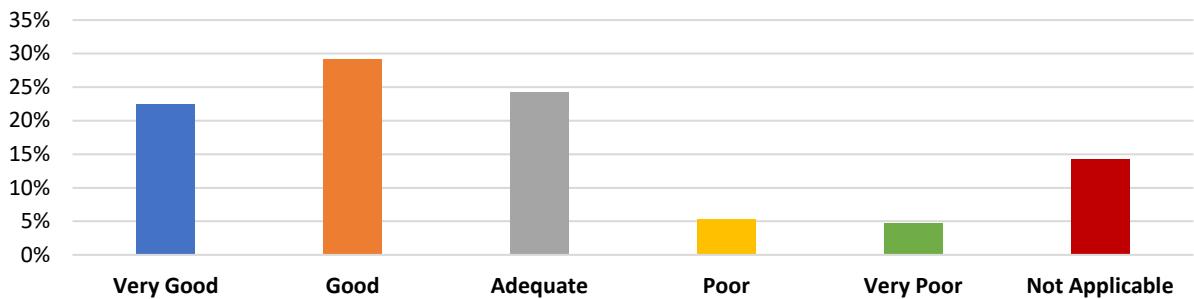

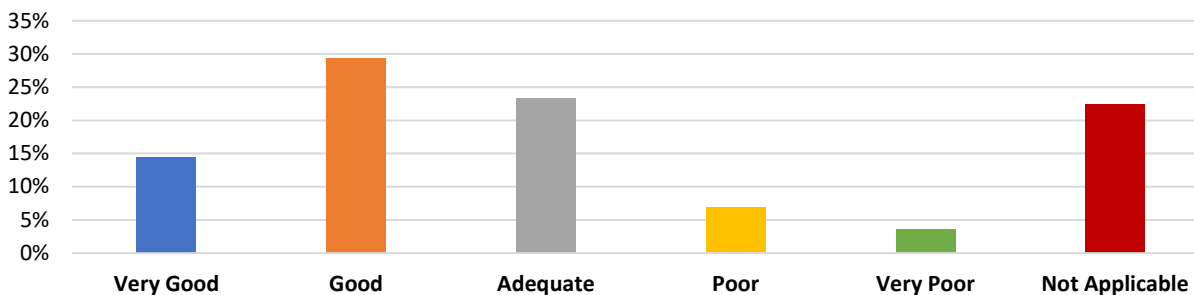## COMPUTER LAB
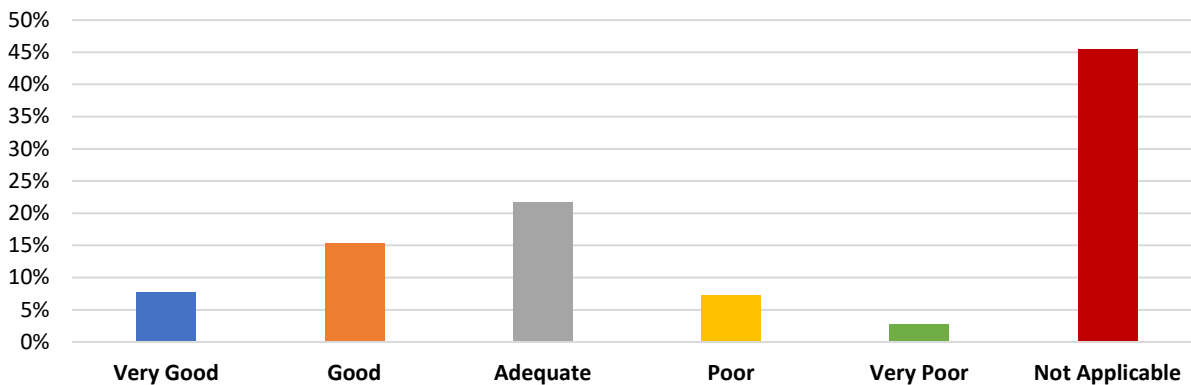
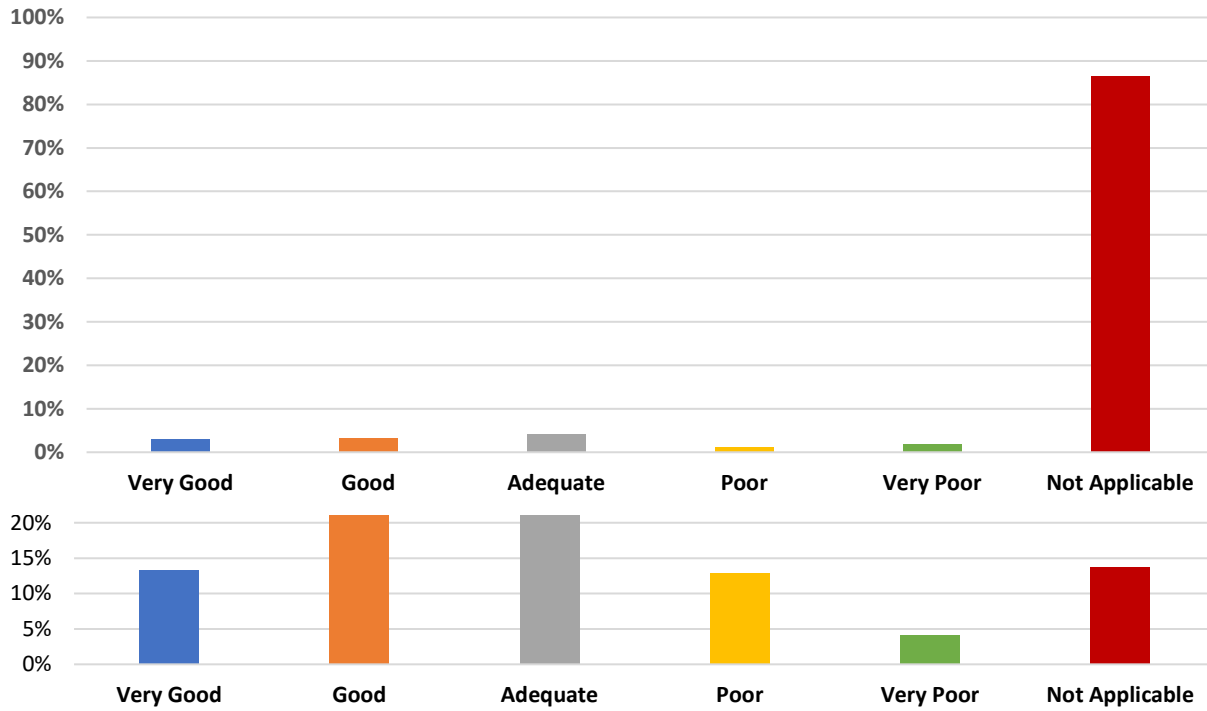## CONFERENCE ROOMS
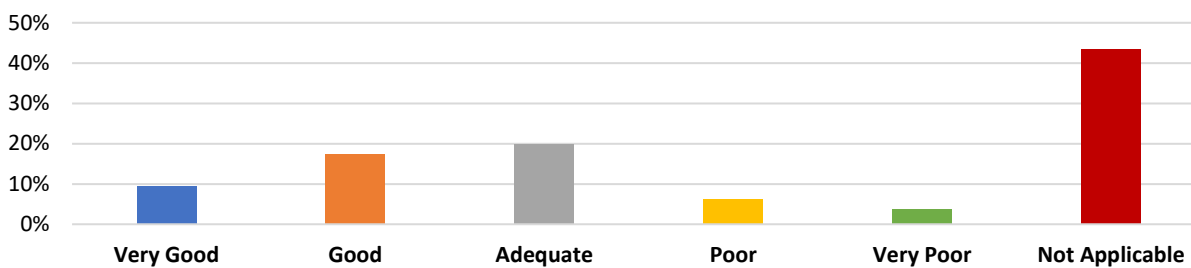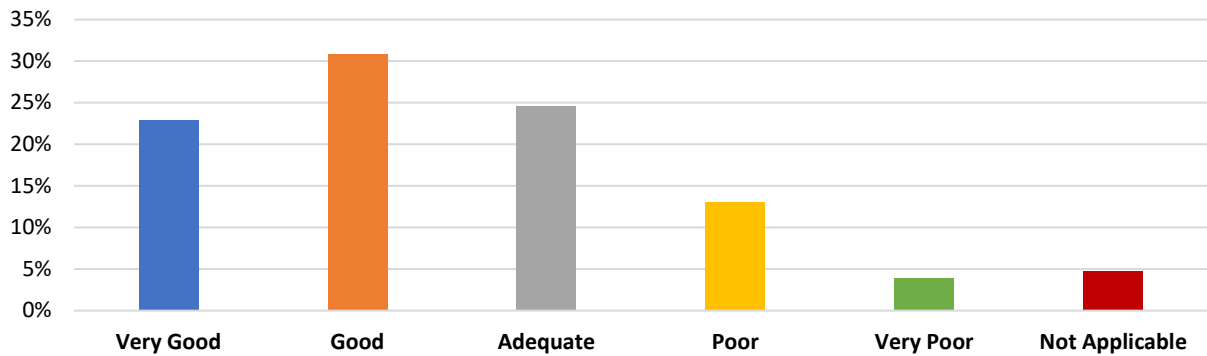
ELEVATOR
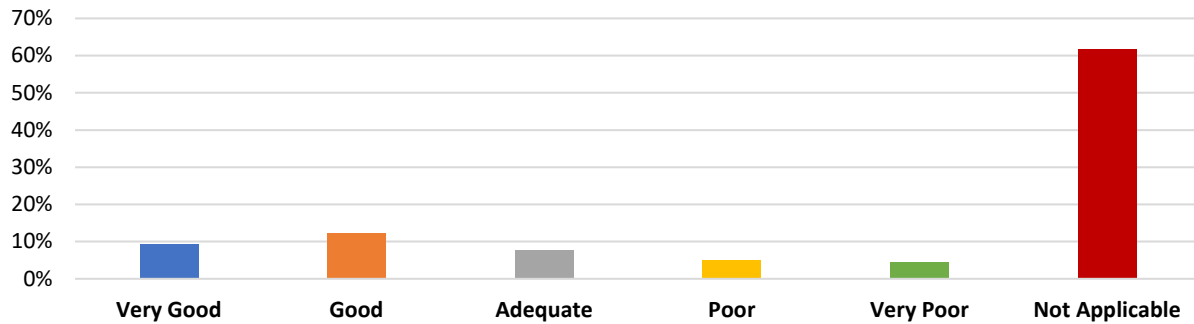
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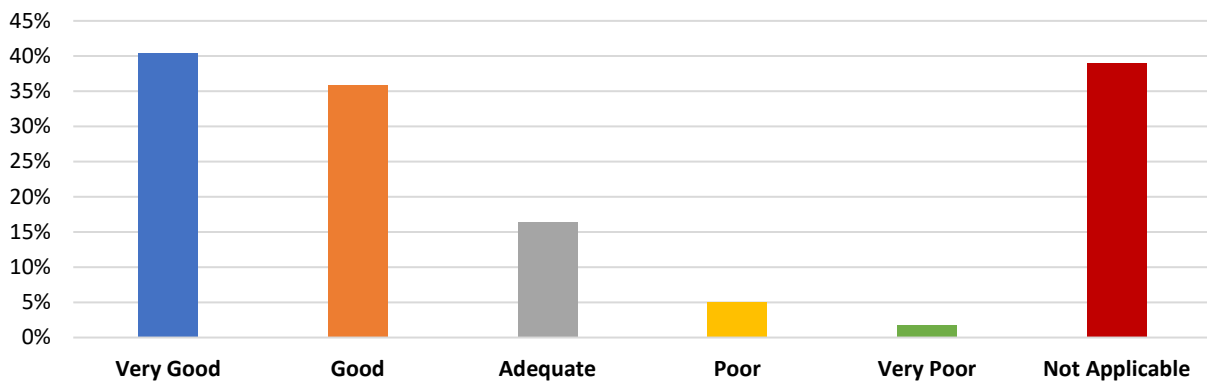

EMERGENCY LIGHTING

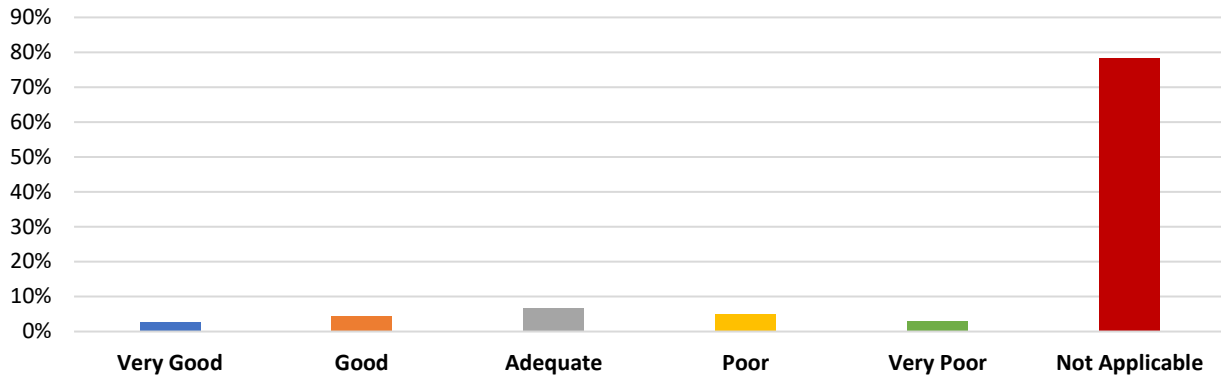## ENTRANCE DOORS (NOT AUTOMATIC)

LECTURE HALL/AUDITORIUM

INTERIOR LIGHTING

INTERNET/WI-FI

MAKERSPACE

MEETING ROOMS
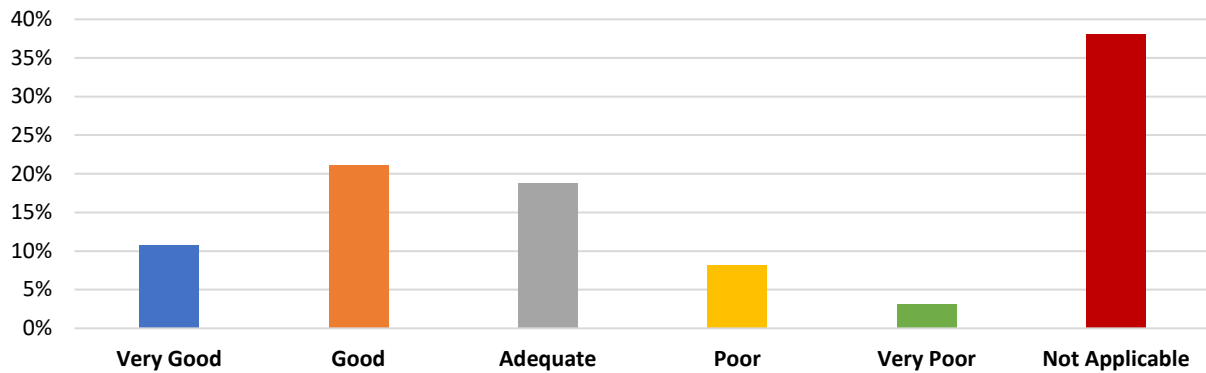
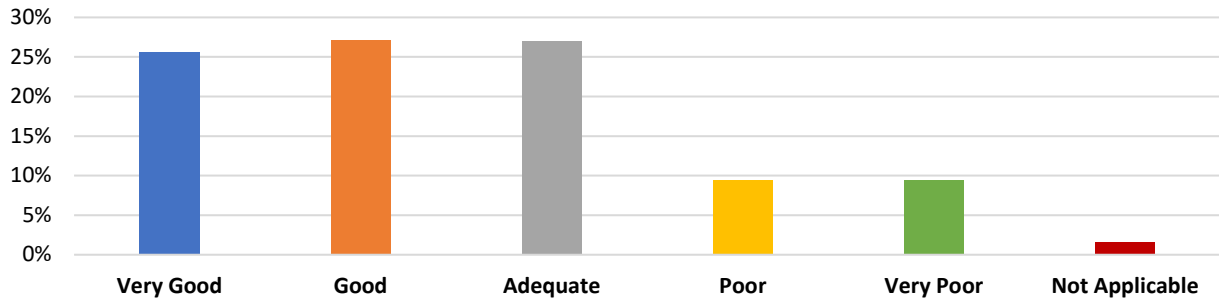## PAINT/PLASTER ON WALLS
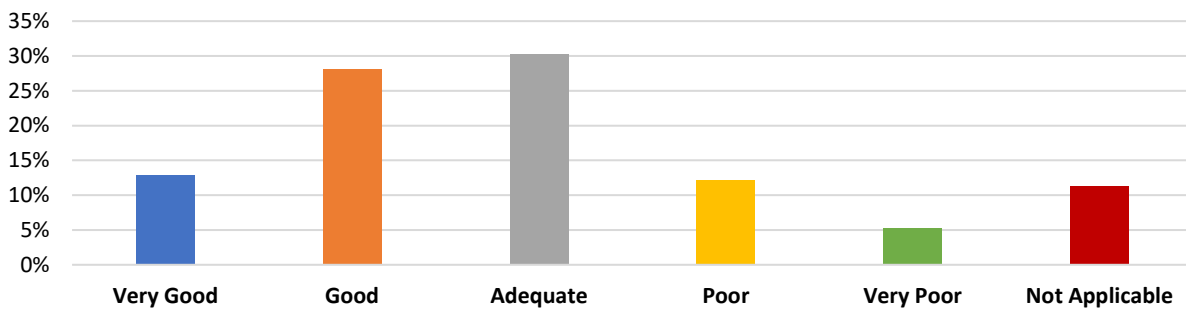
PARKING LOT
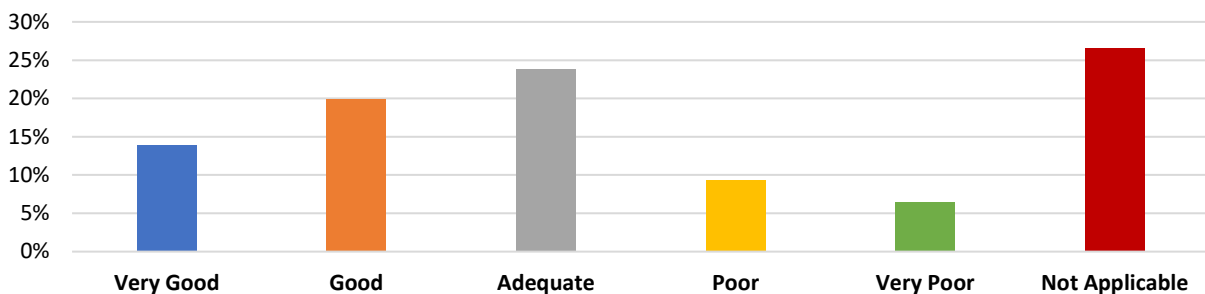
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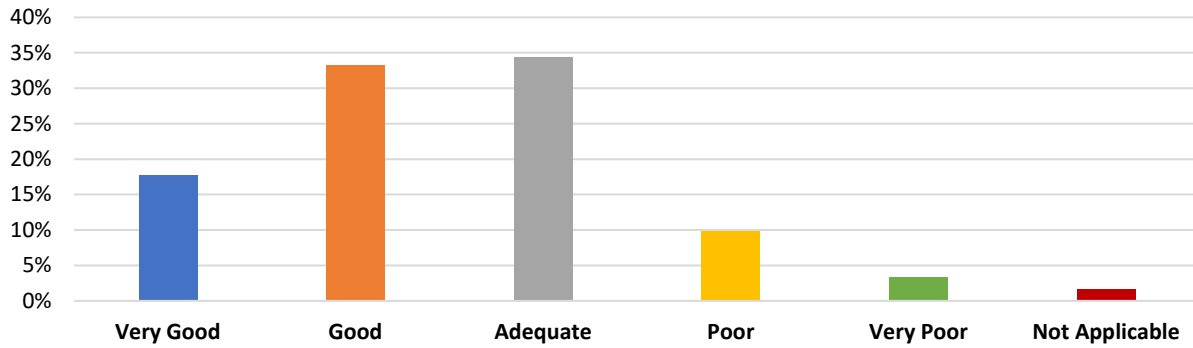
PUBLIC SEATING
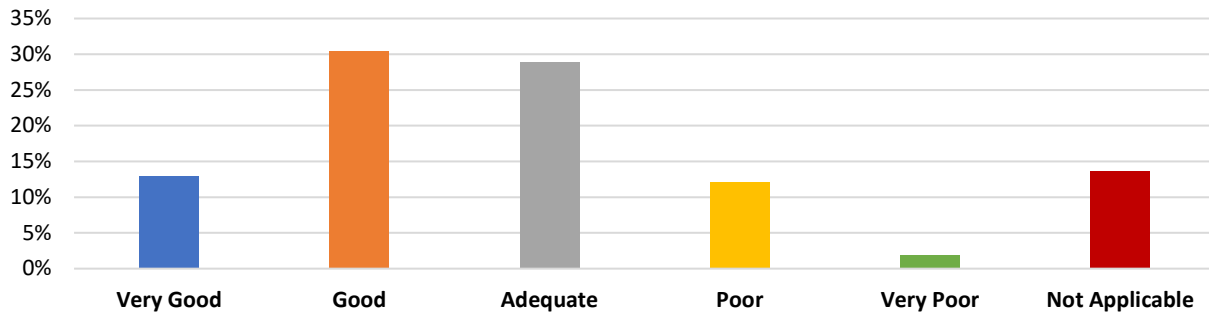
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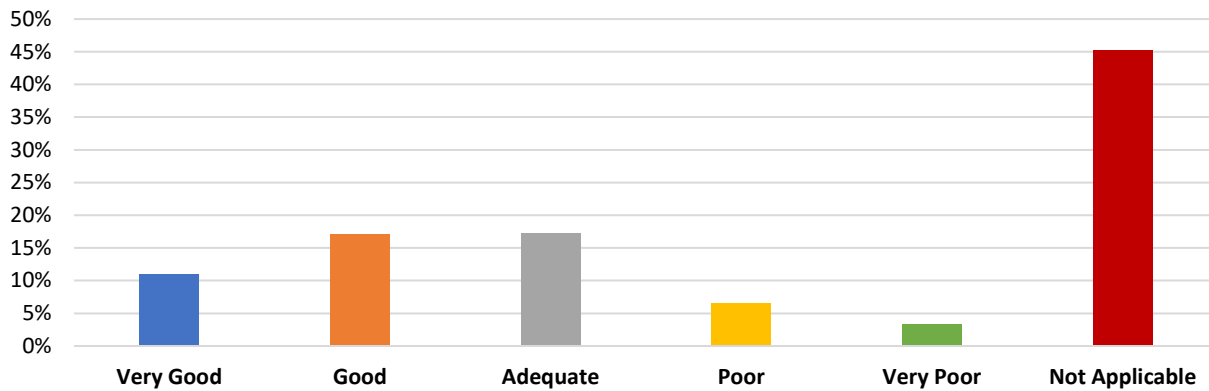
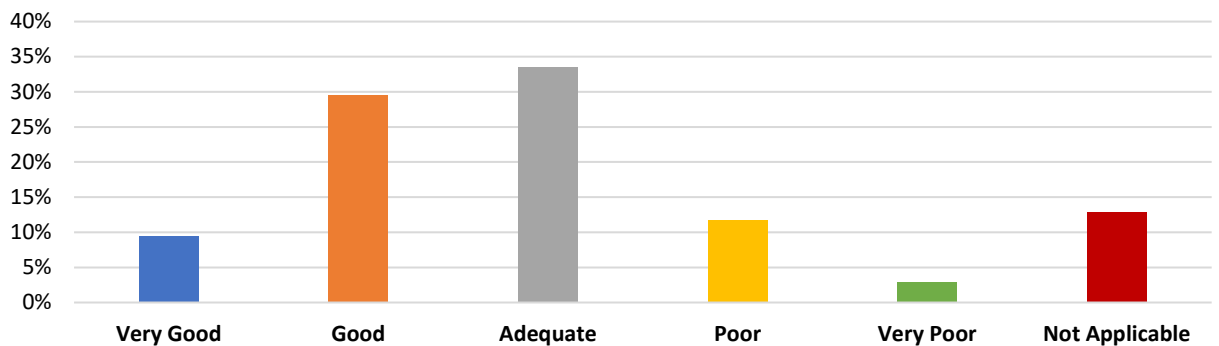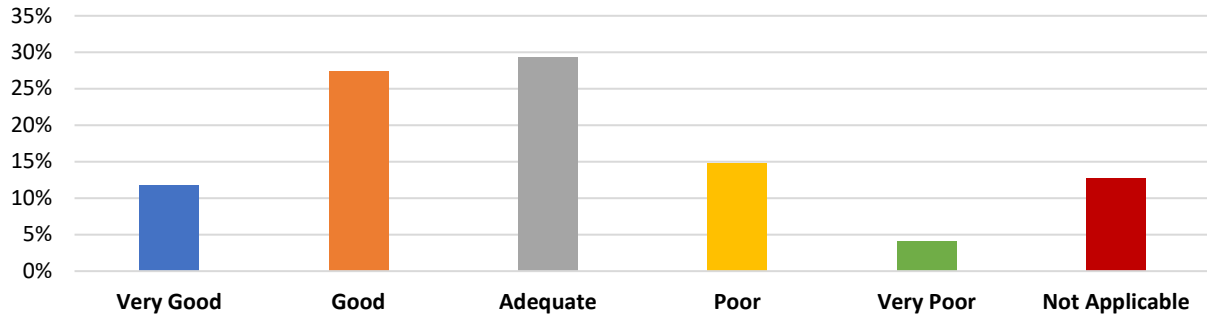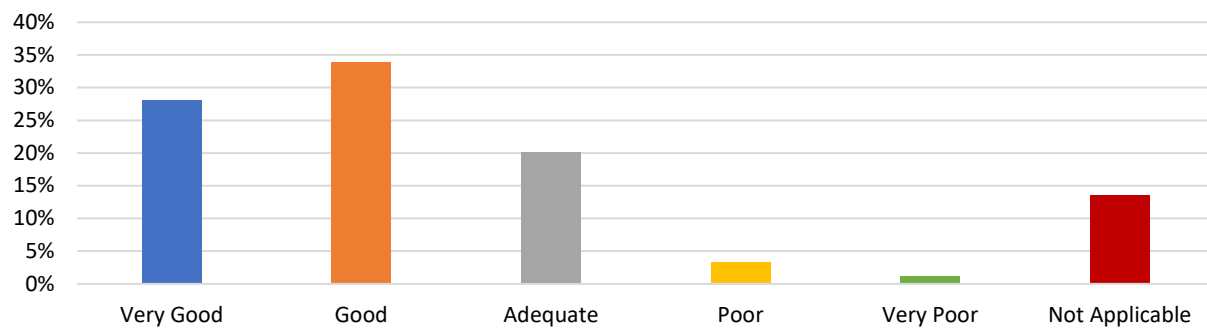## RESTROOMS
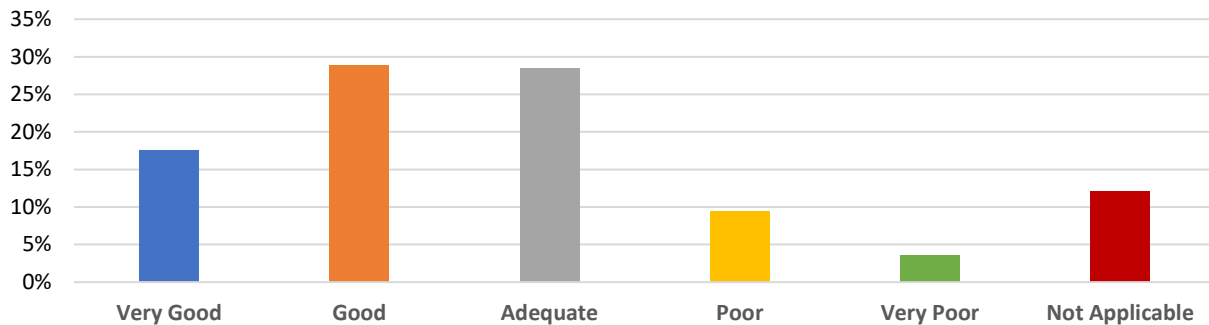
ROOFING

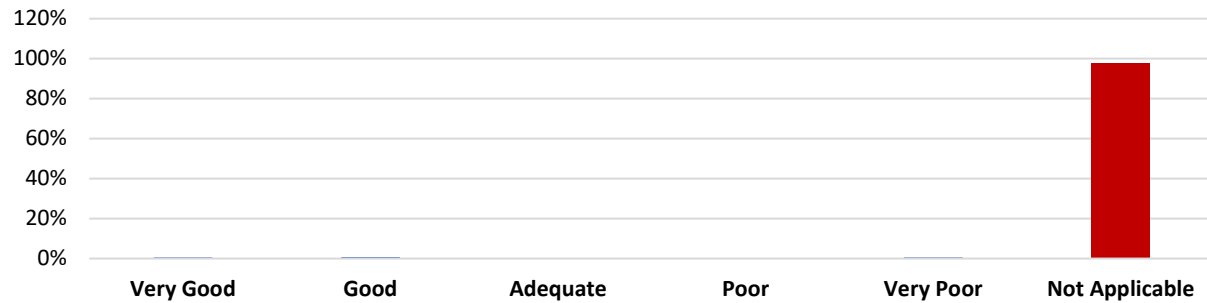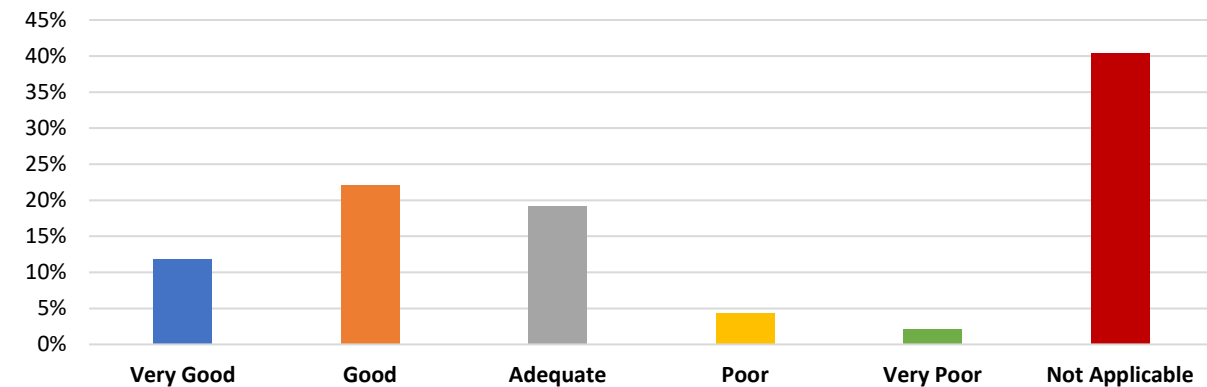## SHELVING
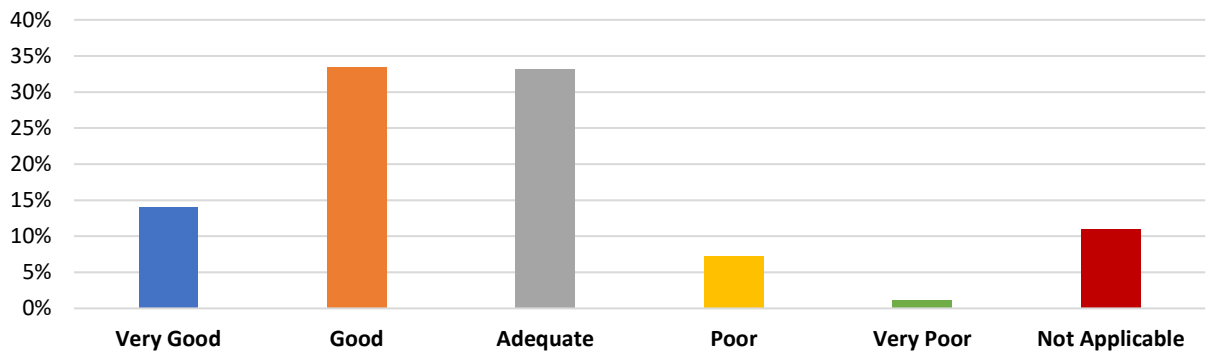
SIDEWALKS
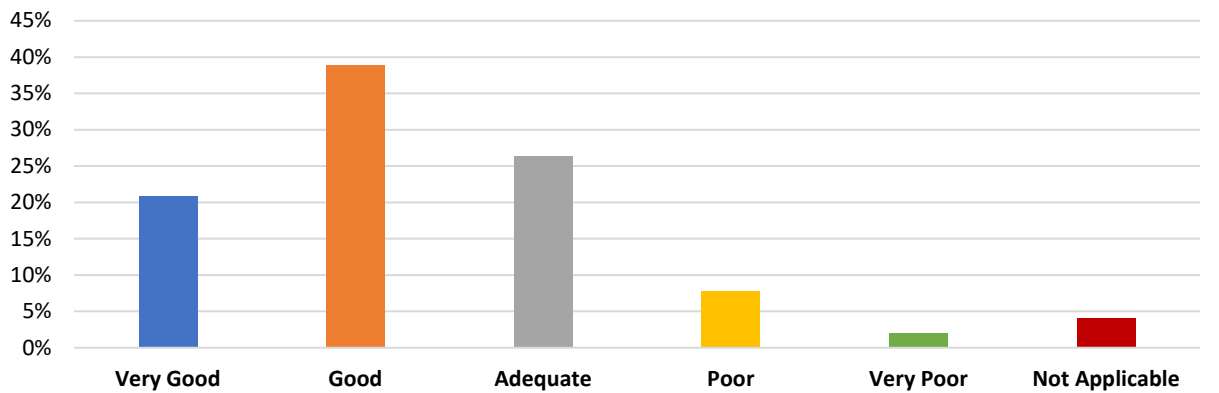
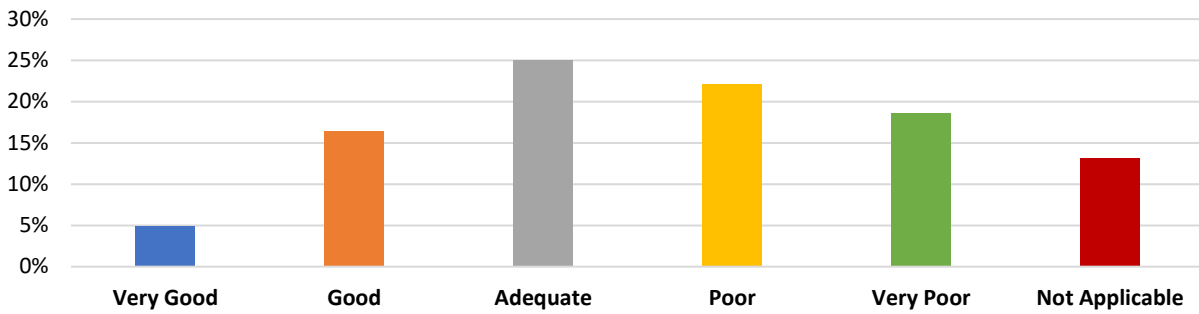## SIGNAGE - INDOOR

SIGNAGE - OUTDOOR

SMOKE/FIRE ALARMS

SOLAR PANELS

STAIRS/HANDRAILS

DELTA DEVELOPMENT GROUP
INC.

STORAGE

TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEM
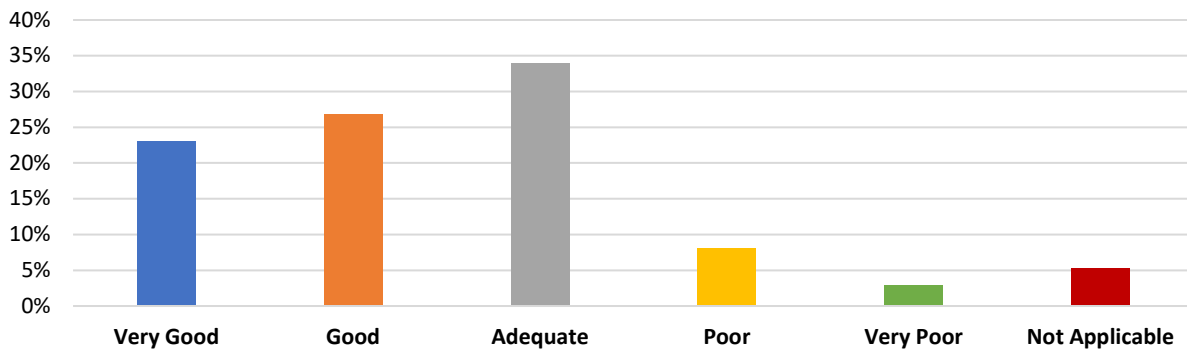
TUTORING SPACES
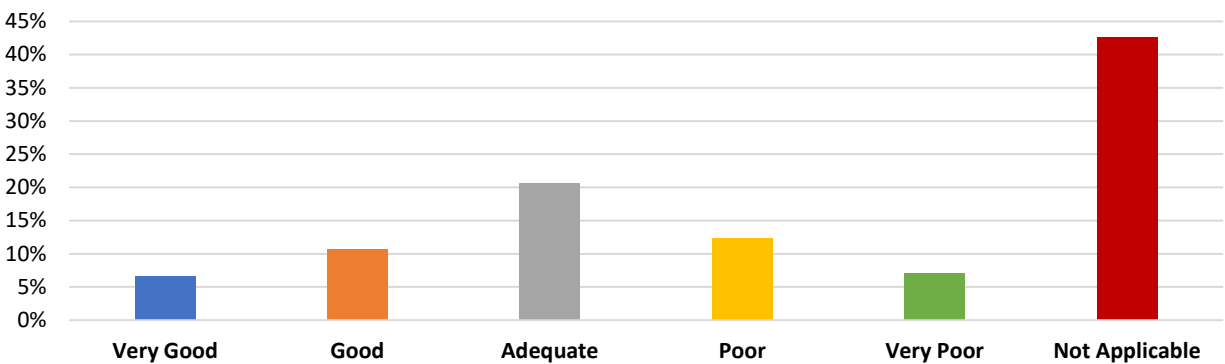
VENTILATION
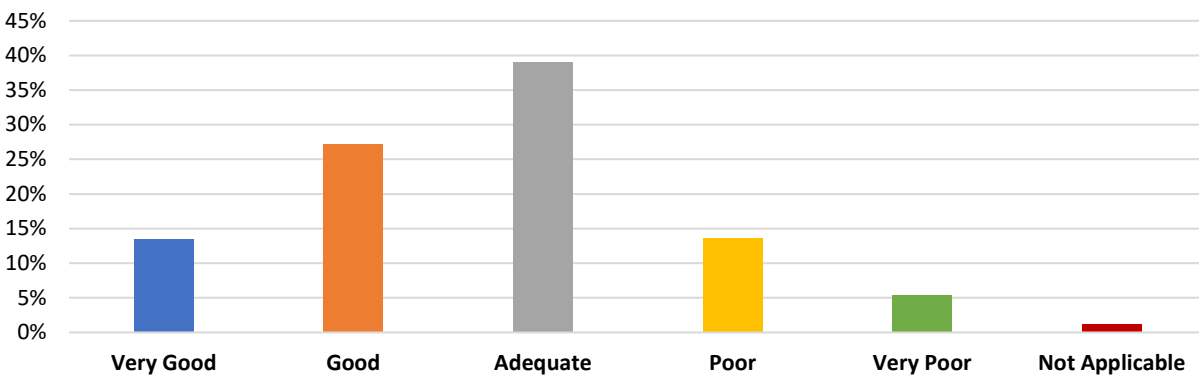
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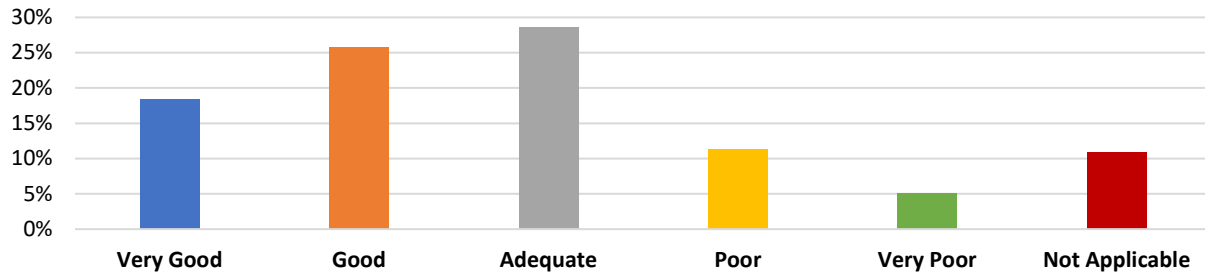
Question 16: Does the public library have energy efficient technologies?

Approximately 53% of all respondents selected "Yes" when asked whether the facility has existing energy efficient technology. As illustrated in Figure 12, the need for energy efficiency technologies exists in all types of service areas - rural, urban, and suburban communities.

FIGURE 12 – LIBRARY FACILITIES WITHOUT ENERGY EFFICIENT TECHNOLOGIES
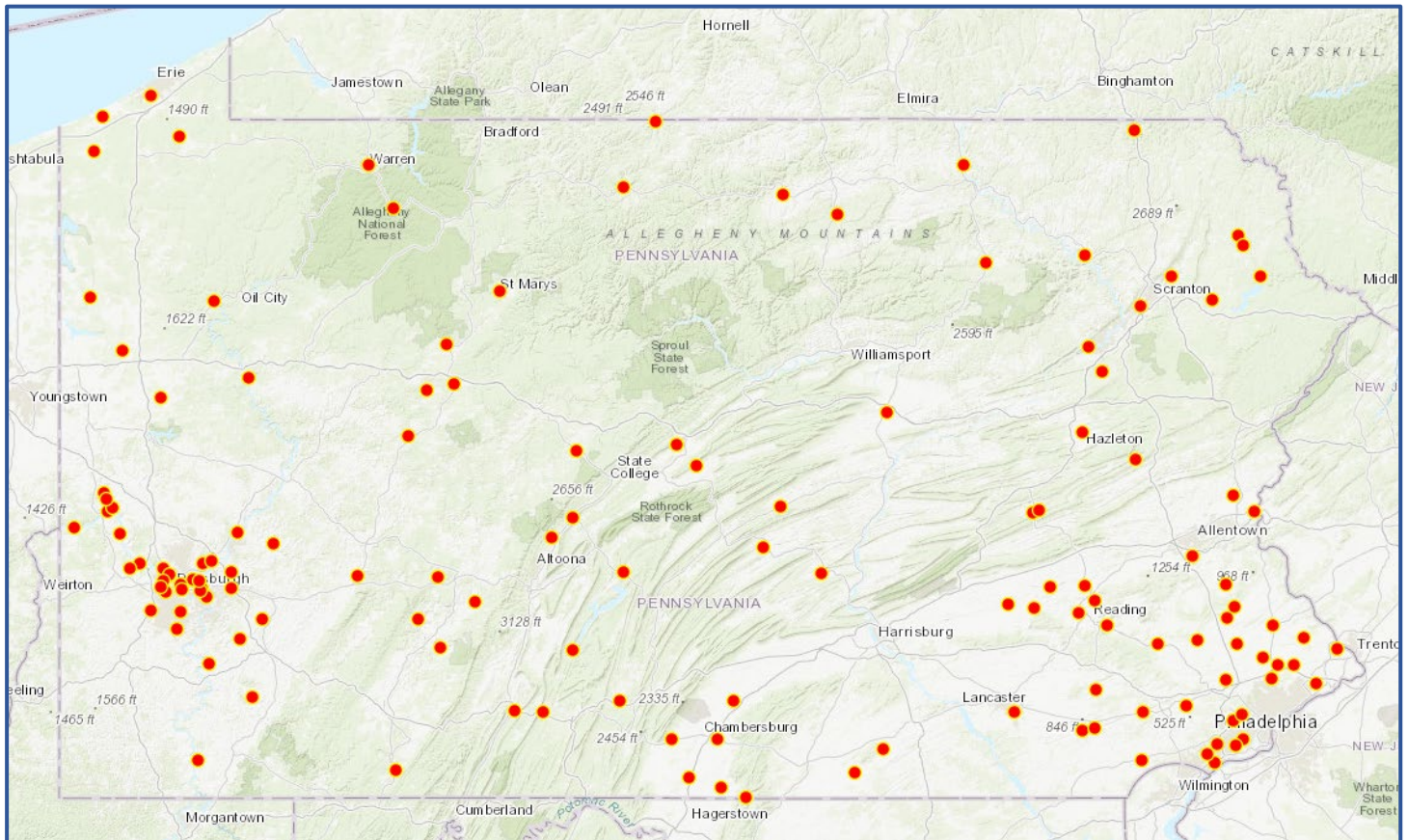
If the respondent selected "Yes", they were directed to Question 20.

If the respondent selected "No" or "Unsure", they were directed to Question 19.

Question 19: How much does seating at the public library need to increase to sufficiently meet the needs of patrons?

Approximately 40% of respondents that identified a need for additional seating would require a 10%-24% increase at the facility. Another 25% would require a 25% - 49% increase in capacity to sufficiently meet patron needs. One (1) respondent – Public Library of Catasauqua, reported the greatest need of all respondents relative to patron seating. Located in the Lehigh Valley, this suburban library requires more than a 100% increase in current seating to sufficiently meet patron needs.

All respondents that answered Question 19 were directed to Question 20.

Question 20: Does the public library have an adequate number of public access computers to serve the community?

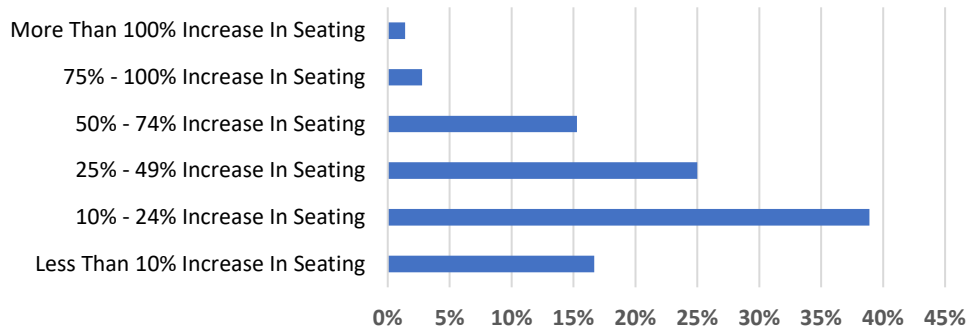Over 90% of respondents stated the facility has an adequate number of public access computers to serve the community. A total of 38 respondents, varying by size, location, and service area selected "No" when asked about whether the facility had an adequate number of public access computers. Among the respondents that selected "No", 40% of the facilities are classified as "Rural", 18% are classified as "Urban", and 42% are classified as "Suburban".

If the respondent selected "Yes", they were directed to Question 22.

If the respondent selected "No" or "Unsure", they were directed to Question 21.

Question 21: Did COVID-19 impact the need for additional public access computers at the public library?

Among the facilities that selected "No" to Question 20, more than 51% of respondents confirmed that COVID-19 directly impacted the need for additional public access computers. Public library facilities in the following counties identified a need for additional public access computers following COVID-19:

- Wayne County
- Susquehanna County
- Potter County
- Philadelphia County
- Lawrence County
- Indiana County
- Fayette County
- Delaware County
- Cumberland County
- Chester County
- Carbon County
- Cambria County
- Beaver County
- Allegheny County

All respondents that answered Question 21 were directed to Question 22.

Question 22: How many people can your meeting room accommodate?

Approximately 27% of all respondents indicated that the public meeting room can accommodate between 1-25 people. Another 20% of respondents stated the public meeting room can accommodate between 26-50 people. Less than 10% of all facilities can accommodate over 100 people in the public meeting room, and more than half of these facilities are located in or around Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.
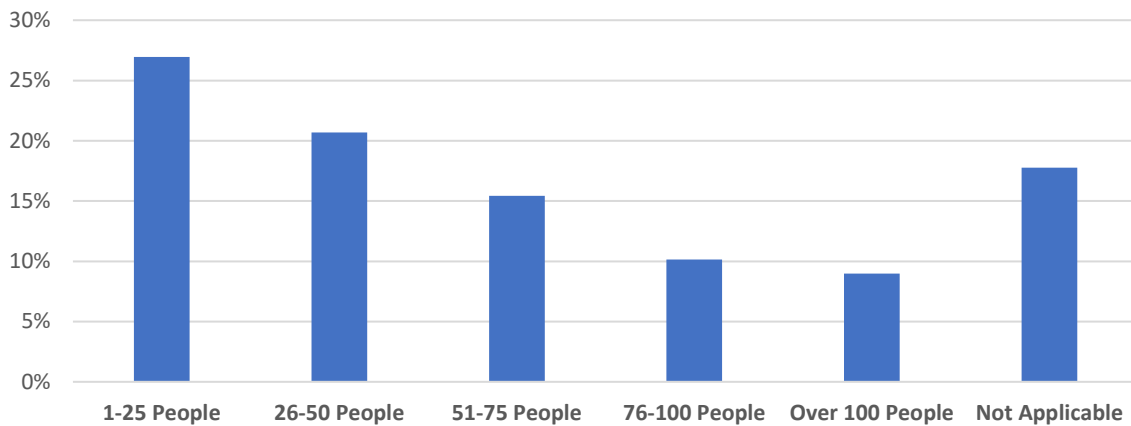
All respondents that answered Question 22 were directed to Question 23.

Question 23: Are there capital improvements planned for the public library?

Over 37% of respondents indicated there are capital improvements planned for the public library facility. Another 23% were "Unsure" of capital improvements at the time of survey submission. Of the 191 respondents that selected "Yes", a total of 72 facilities have a "Rural" service area, 49 facilities have a "Urban" service area, and 70 facilities have a "Suburban" service area.

Below is a breakout of how many facilities have planned capital improvements by year of original construction

- 1800 – 1849 Construction: 6 Facilities
- 1850 – 1899 Construction: 21 Facilities
- 1900 – 1949 Construction: 57 Facilities
- 1950 – 1974 Construction: 36 Facilities
- 1975 – 1999 Construction: 48 Facilities
- 2000 – 2015 Construction: 22 Facilities
- 2016 – 2021 Construction: 1 Facility
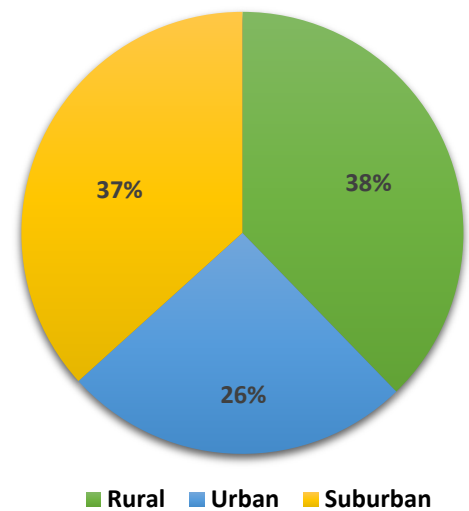
If respondents answered "Yes" to Question 23, they were directed to Question 24.

If respondents answered "No" or "Unsure", they were directed to Question 27.

Question 24: When are the capital improvements at the public library anticipated to begin?

Nearly 50% of all respondents that reported planned capital improvements stated that the capital projects are anticipated to begin in 2022, which would require facilities to have submitted an application by October 29, 2021, to be considered for a 2021 Keystone Grant. From 2023 – 2026, an estimated 68 facilities will begin capital improvements. An estimated 47 facilities reported capital improvement projects beginning in 2023. Based on the average size for 2019 Keystone Grants ($172,000), the Keystone Program would need to allocate more than $8 million to meet facility needs across the Commonwealth.
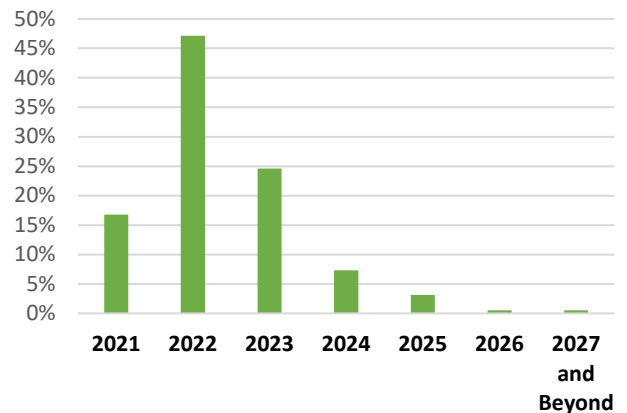
All respondents that answered Question 24 were directed to Question 25.

Question 25: Are the capital improvements needed as a result of COVID-19?

Less than 11% of the planned capital improvement projects were confirmed to be a result of COVID-19. The facilities that reported a need of capital improvements due to COVID-19 include:

- Andorra Library – Philadelphia County
- Bushrod Library – Philadelphia County
- Fishtown Community Library – Philadelphia County
- Holmesburg Library – Philadelphia County
- Lillian Marrero Library – Philadelphia County
- Oak Lane Library – Philadelphia County
- Paschalville Library – Philadelphia County
- Richmond Library – Philadelphia County
- Thomas F. Donatucci Sr. Library – Philadelphia County
- Wadsworth Library – Philadelphia Library
- Brownfield Community College – Fayette County
- McBride Memorial Library – Columbia County
- Norristown Public Library – Montgomery County
- Jeffrey W. & Jo Anne R. Coy Public Library of Shippensburg – Cumberland County
- Scottsdale Public Library – Westmoreland County
- F.D. Campbell Memorial Library – Lawrence County
- Sharon Hill Public Library – Delaware County
- Hughesville Public Library – Lycoming County
- Adams Memorial Library – Westmoreland County
- Ridgeway Free Public Library – Elk County
- Oakmont Carnegie Library – Allegheny County
- Carnegie Library of Homestead – Allegheny County

If respondents answered "Yes: to question 25, they were directed to Question 26.

If respondents answered "No" or "Unsure", they were directed to Question 27.

Question 26: Which of the capital project categories below represent the most immediate need of the public library as a result of COVID-19?

Among respondents that confirmed a need for capital improvements as a result of COVID-19, 38% of facilities require "Building Renovations Only". More than 50% of respondents selected "Other" when asked to select a project category; however, only two facilities (Jeffrey W. & Jo Anne R. Coy Public Library of Shippensburg and Ridgeway Free Public Library) provide specific comments on the types of capital improvements. Both facilities noted a need for outdoor structures/areas for programming, which can be inferred as a result of new social distancing guidelines.

All respondents that answered Question 26 were directed to Question 27.

Question 27: Has the public library ever been awarded a Keystone Grant for Public Libraries Facilities?

Of the 512 library surveys, a total of 193 respondents selected "Yes" when asked whether the facility has ever been awarded a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities. A total of 173 respondents selected "No", and the remaining 146 respondents were "Unsure".
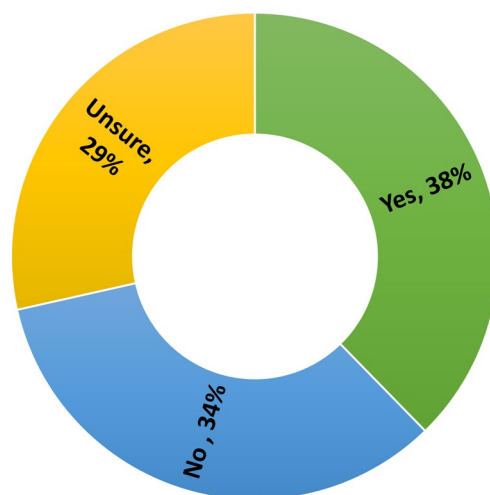
Among respondents that selected "Yes", 37% of facilities have a "Rural" designation, 16% of facilities have an "Urban" designation, and the remaining 47% of facilities are classified as "Suburban".

If respondents answered "Yes", they were directed to Question 28.

If respondents answered "No" or "Unsure", they were directed to Question 29.

Question 28: When was the most recent Keystone Grant for Public Libraries Facilities?

Among the 193 respondents that selected "Yes" in Question 27, approximately 61% of facilities have been awarded grant funds in the last ten years. Of the 21 respondents that reported a grant award between 1994 – 1999, the three counties with the largest share of recipients included Allegheny County (14%), Delaware County (14%), and Lancaster County (10%).
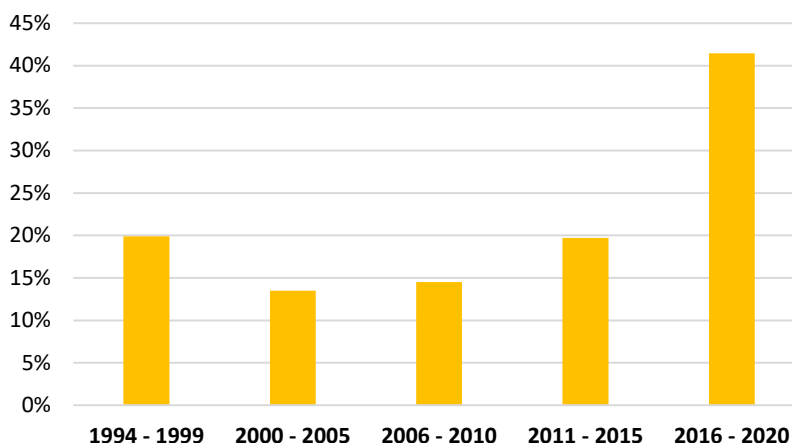
All respondents that answered Question 28 were directed to Question 29.

Question 29: To the best of your knowledge, does the public library intend to apply for a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities in the next five years?

Of the 512 public library surveys, a total of 139 respondents indicated that the facility intends to apply for a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities. For the purpose of this analysis, the Project Team assumed each of the 139 facilities will submit one (1) application to the Keystone Program over the next 3-5 years. Based on the average size for 2019 Keystone Grants ($172,000), the Keystone Program would need to allocate more than $29 million to meet facility needs across the Commonwealth. This does not include the 252 respondents that were "Unsure" of whether the library intends to apply to the Keystone Program.

FIGURE 13 – PUBLIC LIBRARIES WITH INTENTION TO APPLY TO KEYSTONE PROGRAM
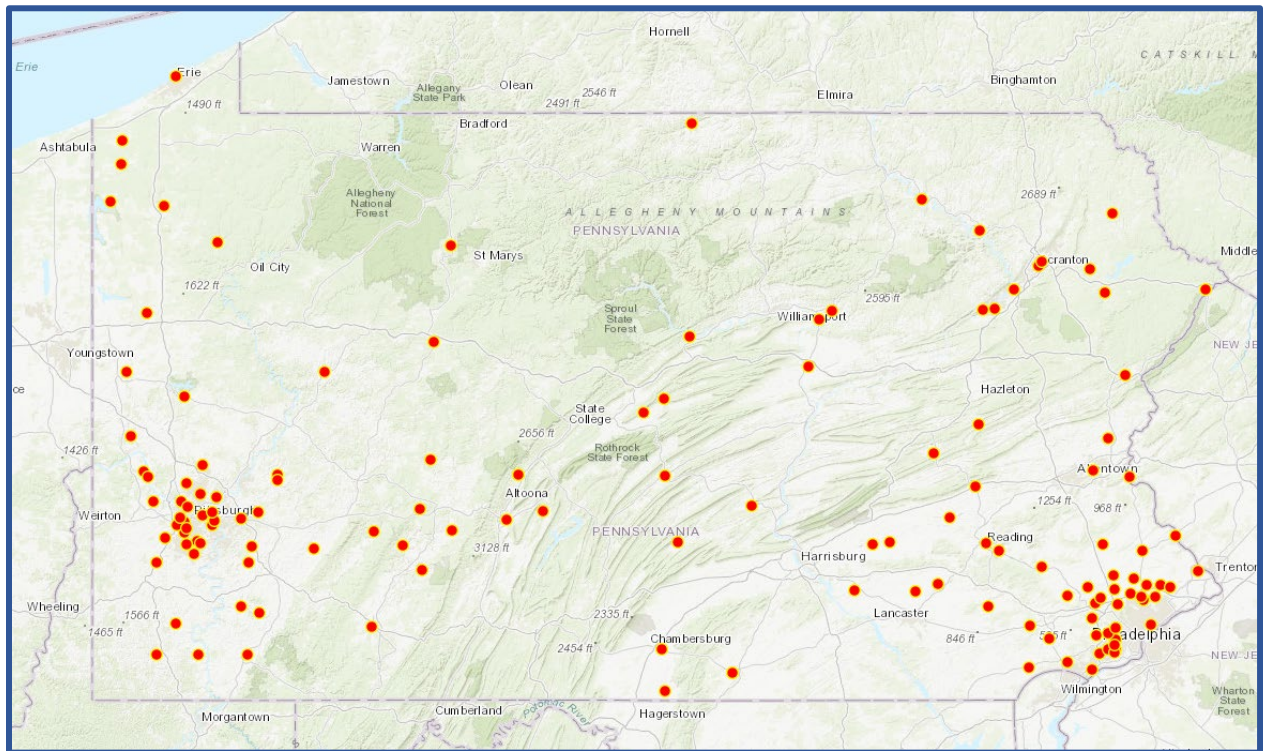
If respondents answered "Yes", there were directed to Question 30.

Question 30: Which of the categories below most accurately describes your future grant application?

A total of 97 respondents selected "Rehabilitation" when asked to describe what project category most accurately describes the library's future grant application. Four (4) respondents – Apollo Memorial Library, Northern Cambria Public Library, Franklin County Library System, and Abington Township Public Library Roslyn Branch, selected "Acquisition".

- Rehabiliation
- Development
- Planning
- Acqusition

3%
9%
19%
70%

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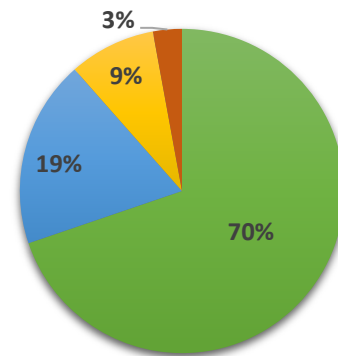
INTERVIEWS WITH PDE OCL STAFF AND CURRENT/PRIOR GRANTEES

Over the course of the *Needs Assessment*, Delta undertook a series of 12 virtual interviews. Six (6) interviews were with PDE OCL staff, and six (6) interviews were with current or past grantees. These interviewees were selected in coordination with PDE OCL. Staff were selected based upon their familiarity with the Keystone Program, either through prior administration of the grant program or current involvement in scoring of applications. Current and past grantees were selected based upon geographic location, community demographic and socioeconomic traits, and project type. Below is a comprehensive list of individuals interviewed as part of the *Needs Assessment.*

1. **Amy Geisinger** – PDE OCL Bureau of Library Development, Past & Current Keystone Application Reviewer
2. **Diana Megdad** – PDE OCL Bureau of Library Development, Past Keystone Program Administrator
3. **Eileen Kocher** – PDE OCL State Library, Past & Current Keystone Application Reviewer
4. **Ellen Shenk** – PDE OCL State Library, Past & Current Keystone Application Reviewer
5. **Stacey Mulligan** – PDE OCL Bureau of Library Development, Past Keystone Program Administrator
6. **Beth Bisbano** – PDE OCL Bureau of Library Development, Past Keystone Program Administrator
7. **John Euliano** – Millcreek Branch Library (Erie County)
8. **Melissa Hawk** – Lehighton Area Memorial Library (Carbon County)
9. **Carey Bresler** – Oxford Library (Chester County)
10. **Jacklyn McLaughlin and Janis Stamm** – Marienville Area Library (Forest County)
11. **Tracy Schwarz** – Wayne County Public Library (Wayne County)
12. **Rose Chiocchi** – Pike County Public Library (Pike County)

INTERVIEW FINDINGS – PDE OCL STAFF

As part of the interviews with PDE OCL staff, Delta developed a standardized questionnaire with questions about application scoring, program policies and procedures, including post-award reporting and payment, and the future of the Keystone Program. Interviewees generally had two frames of reference: (1) Individuals were past administrators of the Keystone Program, or (2) they have been involved in the scoring of applications. Below are summaries of the interview results. Responses have been slightly altered to read consistently across the multiple interviewees.

Application Scoring

Q: Have you ever been involved in the review of final applications? If so, what are some common deficiencies in application submissions?

- Some applicants request funds for ineligible purposes (such as furniture).
- Applicants, particularly applicants from smaller libraries, tend not to have enough demographic and socioeconomic data to demonstrate need.
- Lack of complete application documentation and difficulty following directions is an issue. Many struggle to provide flood hazard information.
- Applications are sometimes difficult for reviewers to flip through because every attachment must be opened. It would help if PDE OCL required tabs.

- Applicants do not always provide sufficient data regarding their ability to fund a project. Bank statements are not always sufficient to show that they have ample funds for project completion.
- Some applicants have math errors in their application, including mixing up matching funds.
- There is sometimes unintended inequality in the Keystone Grants for Public Library Facilities Program – larger, wealthier libraries have more staff and technical expertise to put together stronger applications. Smaller libraries tend to not do long-range planning and defer projects until something breaks.

Q: Do you believe that any of the eligible project categories (i.e. construction, rehabilitation, acquisition, or planning) score higher or lower in OCL's internal review process?

- A majority of awards are construction and rehabilitation; construction because it shows a need for increase capacity, and rehabilitation because PDE OCL likes to fund rehabilitation projects before larger issues manifest.
- There are not many requests for acquisition or planning; acquisition grants can be cumbersome due to legal requirements. Because the grant is a reimbursement program, libraries have difficulty fronting the money to cover land and building purchases.
- In the old days of the Keystone Grants for Public Library Facilities Program, PDE OCL would require applicants for construction and rehabilitation projects to hire a building consultant to plan for the projects (hiring of a building consultant could count as match). PDE OCL used to have a list of voluntarily provided building consultants, which needed at least three positive references to be on the list. In these days, there were not many planning awards because applicants were expected to have already planned.
- The new rubric being used should help to keep scores fair.

Q: Do you feel that OCL has clear guidelines and scoring criteria in place to allow you to make a fair and complete review of applications?

- Yes and no; there is a rubric for scoring applications, but there is some overlap in scoring criteria (e.g., project budget and project cost estimate).
- Scoring used to be different – there were different scoring criteria for major and mini grants. PDE OCL used to have review teams from outside of the Commonwealth to reduce bias, and reviewers had 6 weeks to review applications and score. The old scoring guidelines used to weigh different demographic traits. Once scored, reviewers would all sit together and discuss scores.
- The scoring guidelines are clear for reviewers to assess applications.
- The scoring guidelines are clear, and the rubric is straightforward. There are explanations for everything relative to scoring.
- Recent changes to the rubric make it better now, although "Need" can still be a somewhat subjective category. Potentially reaching out to other state library agencies in other states to see how they score applications might be beneficial.
- The guidelines and scoring criteria have consistently been clear for making decisions.

Reporting and Payment

Q: From your experience with the PA library field, do you know if grantees and subgrantees often face issues with reporting and payment procedures? If so, what kind of issues do they face?

- There were occasionally late reports, and payments were not typically an issue as long as the awardees set-up the payment process correctly. Progress report reminders were provided to awardees.
- Library directors tend to do most of the reporting, so there was sometimes a disconnect between the municipality and the library. It may be helpful to have a webinar for awardees regarding reporting and repayment.
- State hospital libraries would use a proxy to administer grant funds.
- Some awardees were confused by the reimbursement process and had trouble filling them out on time. Larger problems arose when libraries did not start construction of their project on-time or lied about their finances (they showed municipal funds as their own match in the applicant), which would cause them to have to fundraise during the reporting and repayment period.

Q: What are some common issues that tend to complicate Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities projects?

- Some applicants lack sufficient support from their selected municipality, especially in trying to put together the application. This lack of support sometimes discourages smaller libraries from applying. Potential applicants should be informed that any municipality in their service area can serve as the grantee.
- Lack of understanding of the bid process and requirements is sometimes a hurdle as many libraries do not have the funds to hire a construction manager (especially for smaller grants).
- There can be a fairly long wait from application to award, which is especially detrimental for library facilities that need funds for critical repairs.
- There is sometimes miscommunication between municipalities and libraries, so some kind of requirement for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would be beneficial to outline roles and responsibilities for each.
- The contracting process can lag, and weather can change/delay projects. Awardees asking for extensions is bad because it complicates the tracking of grants.
- Construction cost increases can be detrimental because some grantees do not write a contingency into the project (a contingency should be required in the budget).
- Some awardees have difficulty with local procurement, such as libraries not receiving any bid responses. The Commonwealth does not have specific bidding processes for Keystone Grants for Public Library Facilities projects.

Future of the Program

Q: From your experience, what are some current or future needs of public library facilities that may impact the future of the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities Program?

- Technology infrastructure and buildings that can accommodate it is a growing need (such as lack of technological capacity for wireless and computers). There have been instances where the design of the building itself makes it difficult to install new technologies (i.e. concrete walls that keep wireless signals out).
- The Program should encourage LEED certification and energy efficiency upgrades, as well as additional consideration for funding if smaller library facilities are being consolidated.
- Society is becoming more mobile and connected, so library facility design should reflect that trend (more outside spaces, movable walls, security upgrades, etc.).

- Libraries are more strapped for funding than ever, and library facilities are aging. Many have leaking roofs.
- In the age of virtual information, libraries are serving more people outside of their walls.
- Because the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities is dictated by state law, changes to the program may require changes in state law to meet emerging needs of libraries.
- ADA improvements, energy efficiency upgrades, and HVAC upgrades are all areas where the Program could provide funding opportunities.
- The Program should be changed to prioritize smaller and more rural libraries that have difficulty filling out the application. It should be easier for these types of libraries to apply.
- Many of the recent applications have focused on rehabilitation of existing facilities, including requests to fund the development of small meeting spaces (like a common room and smaller study areas). Electric upgrades and fire suppression upgrades are also commons requests.

Q: How can the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities Program be modified to meet those current and future needs?

- There should be considerations for the eligibility of wiring as it relates to technology infrastructure upgrades.
- Current Program guidelines do not allow for rehabilitation of staff areas as they are not considered "public service space", but there is a need to rehabilitate staff areas as well.
- There should be some kind of separate program or allocation to meet the immediate needs of public library facilities, such as required critical infrastructure repairs.
- The Program could always use additional funds to meet more needs, especially for the smaller libraries.
- The OCL should offer a greater level of assistance to smaller and/or rural libraries to assist with application preparation.
- The eGrants system is difficult for application reviewers to use; every file must be downloaded before the application can be reviewed. It would be easier for the reviewers if applicants submitted one PDF with tabs.
- PDE OCL should reevaluate how much documentation is needed in applications.
- PDE OCL should consider using a few consultants to assist smaller applicants with application preparation.
- Substantial changes may not be possible due to regulations and statutes, although PDE has the ability to control how changes are implemented. Applicants have been able to justify their needs relative to the four categories of eligibility. For example, the Lebanon Library installed horse stalls at its facility because public users of the facility are primarily Amish and travel to the facility by horse.

Q: Are there changes that should be made to the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities Program to make the application easier for applicants?

- The application process is straight-forward and spot-on.
- More training and technical assistance could be offered to assist applicants.
- The addition of the checklist has been helpful.
- The addition of asterisks to show fields that are required of applicants would be beneficial.
- It would be beneficial if applicants had "pointers" incorporated into the guidelines or eGrants to show applicants where to find information (e.g., FEMA flood hazard mapping).

- The recent changes to PHMC's SHPO process through PA-SHARE may require some training for applicants.

Q: Are there any other changes that you think should be made to the Keystone Grants for Public Library Facilities Program?

- There should be an ability to remodel staff areas and non-public use areas, as well as consideration for allowing necessary pieces of furniture (e.g., shelving, circulation desks, etc.).
- There should be required attendance at workshops and webinars and emphasize the need for early planning. These workshops and webinars could also discuss how to select a proper grantee partner (i.e., municipality, county, etc.).
- Interpretation of the prevailing statutes are the only option for substantial changes to the Program, and that is up to the Keystone Grants Administrator.
- Energy efficiency and green energy upgrades will become even more necessary as energy prices increase and other forms of energy are available. It would be great if this could be incentivized or more widely developed. Perhaps PDE OCL could partner with another Commonwealth agency to offer incentives or guidance.
- Perhaps PDE OCL could hire an architect to either consult with or do trainings in the field on how to plan for library renovation projects. This individual could also serve as a final reviewer of applications.
- The Commonwealth should try and use a portion of its recent stimulus and infrastructure funding, if possible, to provide funding for capital and maintenance needs of the Commonwealth's libraries.
- Libraries with less financial resources typically put together weaker applications because they do not have the capacity to write applications, so perhaps add a question regarding whether the library facility has filled out a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities Program application in the past.
- Perhaps PDE OCL could provide a list of librarians who have completed the grant that would be willing to be on a contact list for other applicants to provide insight and guidance.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS – CURRENT/PAST GRANTEES

Delta conducted interviews with current and past grantees using a similar standardized questionnaire. This questionnaire contained questions about how the applicant found out about the Keystone Program, what other funding was used for the project, the application process, reporting and payment, and any future plans for the library facility. Interviewees were selected based upon a number of factors, including geographic location, community demographic and socioeconomic traits, and project type. Below are summaries of the interview findings. Responses have been slightly altered to read consistently across the multiple interviewees.

Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities

Q: When did you first become aware of the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities Program? How did you become aware of the Program?

- Made aware of the Program in 2018 because the main library system facility received one.
- Made aware of the Program in 2015 through the District Consultant.
- Made aware of the Program around 1993/1994 through the District Consultant.
- Made aware of the Program in 2010 through the District Consultant.

- Made aware of the Program because she was promoted to Library Director in the midst of a building project where a Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities was being used.
- Made aware of the Program from prior Director who left her position after the first grant award was secured.

Q: Was this your first time applying through the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities Program [during the year of award]?

- Yes, this is the first time the branch applied.
- No, they applied several times (at least four). They initially had difficulty raising funds because funding agencies (including both the USDA and OCL) wanted to be "the last ones in" for project funding. In another cycle, they received feedback that they had too much in-kind services in the application. During another year, there were questions about the viability of a modular unit as it related to the Program guidelines.
- Yes, the branch was awarded on their first application attempt.
- Yes, this is their first time applying.
- The application was submitted by a previous Library Director, and she believes that it was the first Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities Grant received by the library.
- Yes, this is the first time applying as the Director; however, the library has applied once prior.

Q: What project did you request funding for? What was the cost of the project?

- The request was for a planning grant. The library facility is currently in a shopping center, and the lease is expiring in 3 years, so they wanted to know the best way to proceed. The award was for $25,000 and matched by the county in the amount of $25,000.
- The request was for $283,000 to purchase a modular library building. The total project cost was $566,000. The former building was a "pole garage" style building constructed in the 1960s, and it needed to be replaced because an engineering report came back and said it couldn't be expanded. The total project cost included the modular unit, delivery, and hook-up.
- The project was to add a 1,433 SF addition, including a children's area, community room, two ADA compliant restrooms, and a wrap in front of the building. This project cost $405,781.51, of which $169,700 came from the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities Program.
- The project was to add a new boiler, air handler, and water heater. The project cost $20,786, of which $10,393 came from the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities Program.
- The project, as submitted, was to repair the building's electrical system, install an energy-efficient gas boiler, and install energy-efficient windows. However, a rescope request was submitted to PDE because there were insufficient funds for the planned window replacement. Instead, they changed the scope to replace a door that swung the wrong way in lieu of windows. The total project cost was $173,522, of which $86,761 came from the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities Program.
- The total cost of the project is estimated at $250,000 and features relocation of the children's room to the lower level of the library, along with construction of two additional study rooms and computers.

Q: Before applying for the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities, did you seek any other competitive grant or loan funding? Where did you secure the required matching funds for the project? Was it a challenge to raise the necessary matching funds for the grant?

- No, they did not look at any other sources. The County (which funds the library system) provided the required matching funds. It was not a problem to raise matching funds.

- The interviewee looked at a USDA Community Facilities loan, local foundations, local businesses, and community fundraisers. One business did a matching funds challenge with the community, and it worked. In the end, most of the funds for the project came from private foundations, local businesses, and community fundraisers. A USDA Community Facilities loan was used for furniture. They started planning for funding in 2014, and it took until 2020 to raise everything.

- No, they did not look at other sources of funding. They had bequests from up to 10 years before the project began to help fund construction. The interviewee also undertook a capital campaign. It was difficult to raise these funds because the facility is in an economically disadvantaged area, so they were fortunate to receive the bequests.

- No, they did not look at any other sources. The interviewee had enough funds in their building fund to cover project costs. It was not difficult to find the matching funds.

- No, they did not look at any other sources. The library building was gifted, and the facility is now owned outright. They had previously raised funds through a capital campaign and endowments to purchase a new building, but because the building was donated, they had enough funds to undertake the construction activities.

- Yes, the library looked at the USDA's Community Facilities Program, but did not qualify based on population size. The matching funds for this project were secured entirely from fundraising and local share funds, but fundraising for capital projects proved to be difficult as it takes away from the library's ability to fundraise for its annual expenses (i.e., operational costs). COVID-19 also impacted the library's ability to fundraise in a timely manner.

Application

Q: When you first expressed interest in submitting an application, was your eligible grantee (i.e., municipality or county) open and willing to be your partner? Did your eligible grantee partner assist in assembling the application?

- Yes, the grantee (County) was open and willing to be their partner. The County's Planning Department assisted in assembling pieces of the application. The Purchasing Department assisted in developing the planning RFP.

- No, their home municipality (Township) refused outright to partner with them, but the County reluctantly accepted. However, the County wanted no responsibility for the grant itself. They did not assist with application preparation at all, although one of the County employees worked with them on a volunteer basis. The County did not want the volunteer to assist with application preparation on County time.

- Yes, the municipality (Borough) was willing to be a grantee. They offered limited assistance in preparing the application, such as preparing the Resolution and assisting with the permitting.

- Yes, the municipality (Borough) was willing to be the grantee. They also assisted with application preparation.

- Yes, the County was willing to be the grantee. However, the library was responsible for developing each section of the grant application. The County's Planning Department assisted the library with maps for the floodplain and historical requirements of the Keystone Program.
- Yes, the municipality (Borough) was willing to be the grantee, but the library did most of the application writing. The Borough was helpful in filling out the forms that they needed to. The Borough also made a small donation for construction of the project.

Q: Did you reach out to the Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL) for technical assistance when preparing the application? If so, which portion did you reach out about? Did you require any technical assistance with the PHMC SHPO Project Review form?

- Yes, the interviewee did reach out to PDE OCL with questions but can't recall the specific questions. The County Planning Department assisted with the PHMC SHPO compliance.
- Yes, they found PDE OCL to be helpful in preparing the application. They did not require any assistance with the PHMC SHPO Project Review Form.
- Yes, they requested assistance from OCL to determine who to contact for required floodplain information. They did not require any assistance with the PHMC SHPO Project Review Form.
- Yes, they did reach out to PDE OCL a few times for clarification. They also attended a session put on by PDE OCL to learn more about the program and application requirements. They reached out to OCL for some assistance on the PHMC SHPO Project Review Form.
- The interviewee is unsure because she did not directly work on the application.
- Yes, the interviewee did reach out for assistance on minor application questions. However, the library also received application assistance from a local consultant, pro bono.

Q: Are there any portions of the application that you think should be simplified? Do you have any other comments or recommendations for improving the application process?

- The interviewee did not find the application too complex but recommended that future applicants reach out to PDE OCL staff for more information.
- The interviewee did not find the application to be unreasonable, but it was sometimes difficult to get the County to sign-off on stuff. The library formed a Building Committee, which was helpful in preparing documents for the application. The move to annual application cycles helped them because they had to reapply multiple times.
- The interviewee had difficulty in determining who to contact for floodplain information. A workshop or webinar for all prospective applicants would be helpful, especially if it was explained where to find the required information. The interviewee was asked by another library to assist in assembling application, but they ended up not applying because of the matching funds requirement and inability to put together the required exhibits.
- The interviewee believes that the application could be simplified a bit; it was a little overwhelming at first. Guidance from PDE OCL was extremely helpful.
- The interviewee believes that it would be helpful if PDE OCL provided on an introduction on where to begin in the application process. It would also be helpful if there was some guidance on building/construction management as librarians do not have expertise in this area. The interviewee believes that it would have been easier to manage contractors if she had some training on this.

- The interviewee stated that the PHMC and floodplain requirements posed the greatest challenge during the application process. Librarians often do not have a background in construction management and may not be familiar with the state's historical review process. Without the assistance of a pro-bono consultant, the interviewee stated the library would have struggled to complete these sections.

Reporting and Repayment

Q: Did you have any issues contacting OCL for questions, concerns, or comments during the application phase or post-award phase?

- No, there were no issues making contact.
- Yes, there was some difficulty contacting them because of the COVID-19 Pandemic (OCL went remote around the time that bids were received).
- No, there were no issues making contact.
- Yes, there was some difficulty contacting PDE OCL.
- No, there were no issues making contact.
- No, there were no issues contacting staff with questions or concerns.

Q: Did you, or your partnering grantee, experience any issues during the reporting and payment process? Were there any delays in construction of the project that required an extension of the grant agreement?

- No, there were no issues during the reporting and payment process. There were no delays.
- The grantee (County) was not a good partner, and it was more difficult because the grant manager switched at that time. There was an issue with the policy of two reimbursements, which ended up being too long. The interviewee would have preferred three reimbursements because the contractors were weary of doing work between the standard two reimbursements. The interviewee also had difficulty with PDE OCL accepting in-kind contributions. The County did not want to do an extension, nor did the library. That would have resulted in a longer wait for the second reimbursement.
- No, there were no issues because PDE OCL provided well laid-out guidance on reporting and repayment. Yes, there was an extension because they could not obtain a bid that was within their budget. They had to increase their budget and matching funds requirement. They advertised the bid notice in the local paper and sent bid packages to local companies in the mail, but the project may have been too small to interest contractors.
- No, there were no issues during the reporting and payment process. There were no delays even though construction took place in 2020.
- No, there were no issues during the reporting and payment process. They did not request an extension, but they requested a change of scope very early on because the entire scope could not be covered with the available budget.
- The interviewee recently submitted its application to the Keystone Program so they could not speak as to the reporting and payment process for the current project. However, the Director was part of the reporting and payment process for the previous award and stated there were no issues in preparing reporting or receiving reimbursement.

Future Plans

Q: Do you have any capital improvement, acquisition, or planning projects planned within the next five years? Do you plan to pursue additional Keystone Grants for Public Library Facilities funding in the future?

- Yes, they will have a project because their lease will expire in three years. Yes, they will consider the Program.
- No, they have nothing major planned. They would only apply to the Program again on an as-needed basis.
- No, they do not have something placed, but the building is over 50 years old, so there could be mechanical issues that would cause them to apply. Yes, they would consider the Program again.
- Maybe, they are discussing possible projects but do not have firm plans. Yes, they would consider the Program again.
- Maybe, the interviewee does not have time to write grant applications, but they have issues that could be addressed through grant assistance, such as roofing, dormers and shutters falling off, etc. These are both major safety and maintenance needs. Yes, they would consider the Program again.
- There are no major capital improvements besides the current request for the children's room.

Q: If you were to undertake another capital improvement, acquisition, or planning project for your facility, what additional sources of funding (if any) would you pursue?

- Their potential funding sources would be a result of the plan's findings. They might ask their home municipality (Township) for some funds to move, but their library system also does capital campaigns and pursues other grant funding.
- The interviewee would look at the USDA Community Facilities loan again; that program is easy to work with. They also received a grant for a rain garden required as part of the project. The Western PA Conservancy assists with this grant.
- The Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities is the most targeted for this type of project. Most of the other grants out there for libraries are more programmatic.
- They may work with a private foundation or their local townships to assist with funding.
- The library would consider local share funds and any funding opportunities available through the county or local municipalities as a result of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Q: Have your facility needs changed as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic?

- No, it has not changed their facility needs, but it has changed their service model.
- No, it has not changed their facility needs, but it has changed their needs relating to technology (computers, Wi-Fi access, etc.).
- Yes, the new addition came at an ideal time because it allowed people to socially distance.
- No, it has not changed their facility needs.
- No, it has not changed their facility needs, but exacerbated existing needs. For example, there have no parking lot or elevator, which made it difficult to conduct curbside service. They also have rooms with dual functions, which makes it more difficult to social distance.

- The biggest facility needs have been redesigning common spaces to accommodate for social distancing.

Q: Are there ways that you would like to see the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities program changed to better reflect the current and future needs of public library facilities?

- The interviewee believes that there should be a greater emphasis paid to rural communities. It would also be helpful if PDE OCL would be more willing to accept volunteer services are in-kind match.
- More funding in the Program would be beneficial. They could not have gone through with construction of the addition if not for Program funding.
- It would be helpful if PDE OCL provided more follow-up to unsuccessful applicants as to why the project was not selected. Facility improvements are often overshadowed by programmatic funding among library grant programs, so the Keystone Grant for Public Library Facilities is crucial.
- It would be helpful if PDE OCL provided introductory classes and other technical assistance during the application process.
- The interviewee stated that annual maintenance costs are a challenge. The library would be interested in learning whether PDE OCL would ever consider a "Regular Maintenance" category under the Keystone Program.