

2022-2024

SUSTAINABLE & RESILIENT  
NEW ENGLAND LIBRARIES GRANT

# IMPACT REPORT

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*Dailey Memorial Library Entrance*



*Karen Laughlin*

# MESSAGE FROM ARSL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Association for Rural & Small Libraries is grateful for the generosity and forward thinking of the Manton Foundation in providing flexible support that allows us to create grant opportunities that adaptively respond to the needs of New England libraries.

This program provides a meaningful way to contribute to the strength and sustainability of libraries and the dedicated professionals who serve their communities.

This funding has and will continue to foster long-term resilience, connection, and support for our nation's critical library ecosystem.

# INTRODUCTION

Since 2022, with support from The Manton Foundation **the Sustainable & Resilient New England Libraries Grant** has helped Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont libraries make vital infrastructure improvements and carry out community-focused projects.

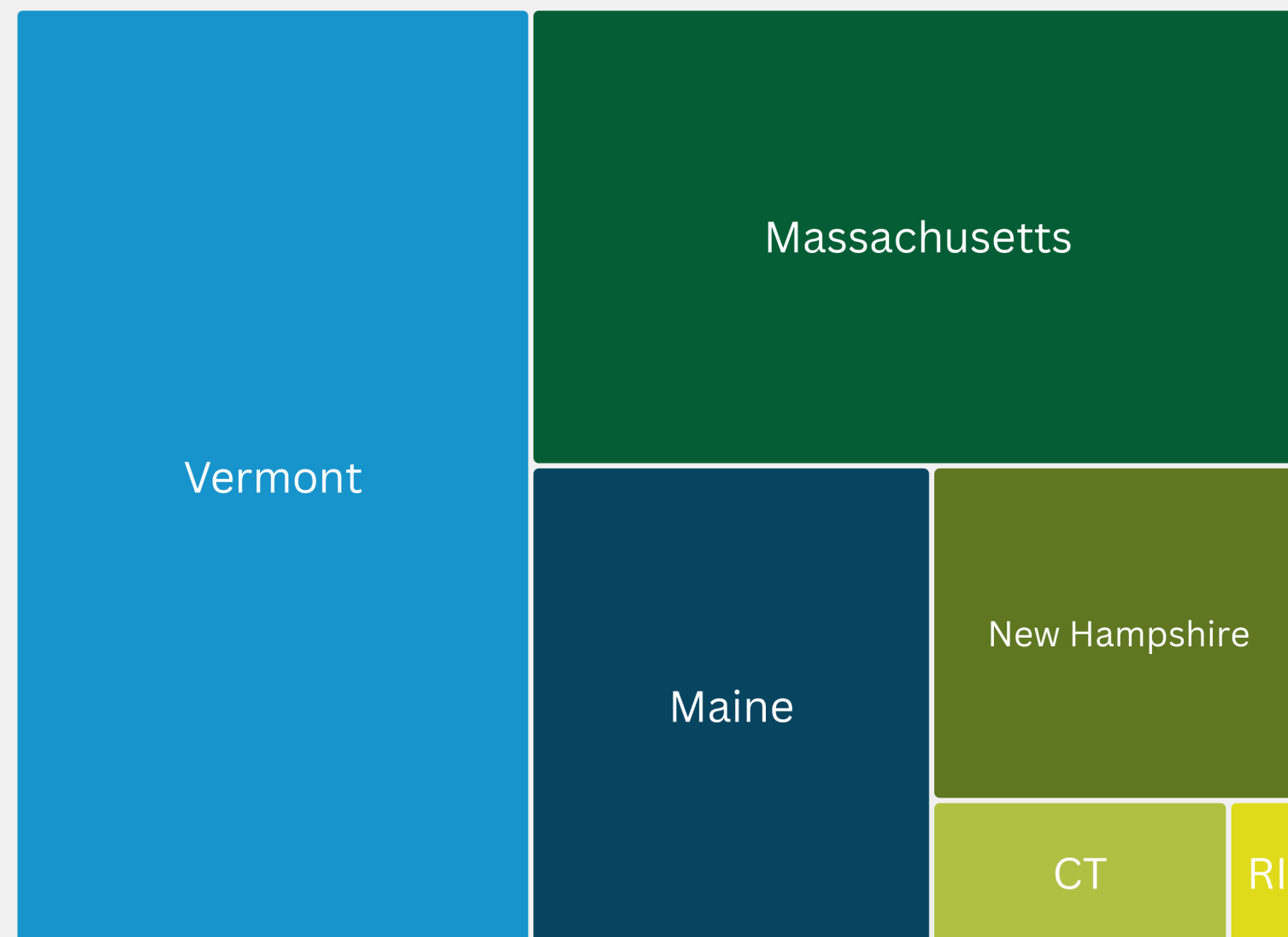
These efforts strengthen libraries as essential hubs for education, information, services, internet access, and vital programming, ensuring they remain strong, stable, and responsive to evolving community needs.



# KEY HIGHLIGHTS

## PROJECTS BY STATE (2022-2024):

VT-135, MA-99, ME-54, NH-35, CT-12, RI-8



\$2,037,000

Awarded to Libraries from  
2022-2025



1,065,250

People Impacted



338

Projects Funded



136

Libraries Awarded

# PROGRAM FOCUS



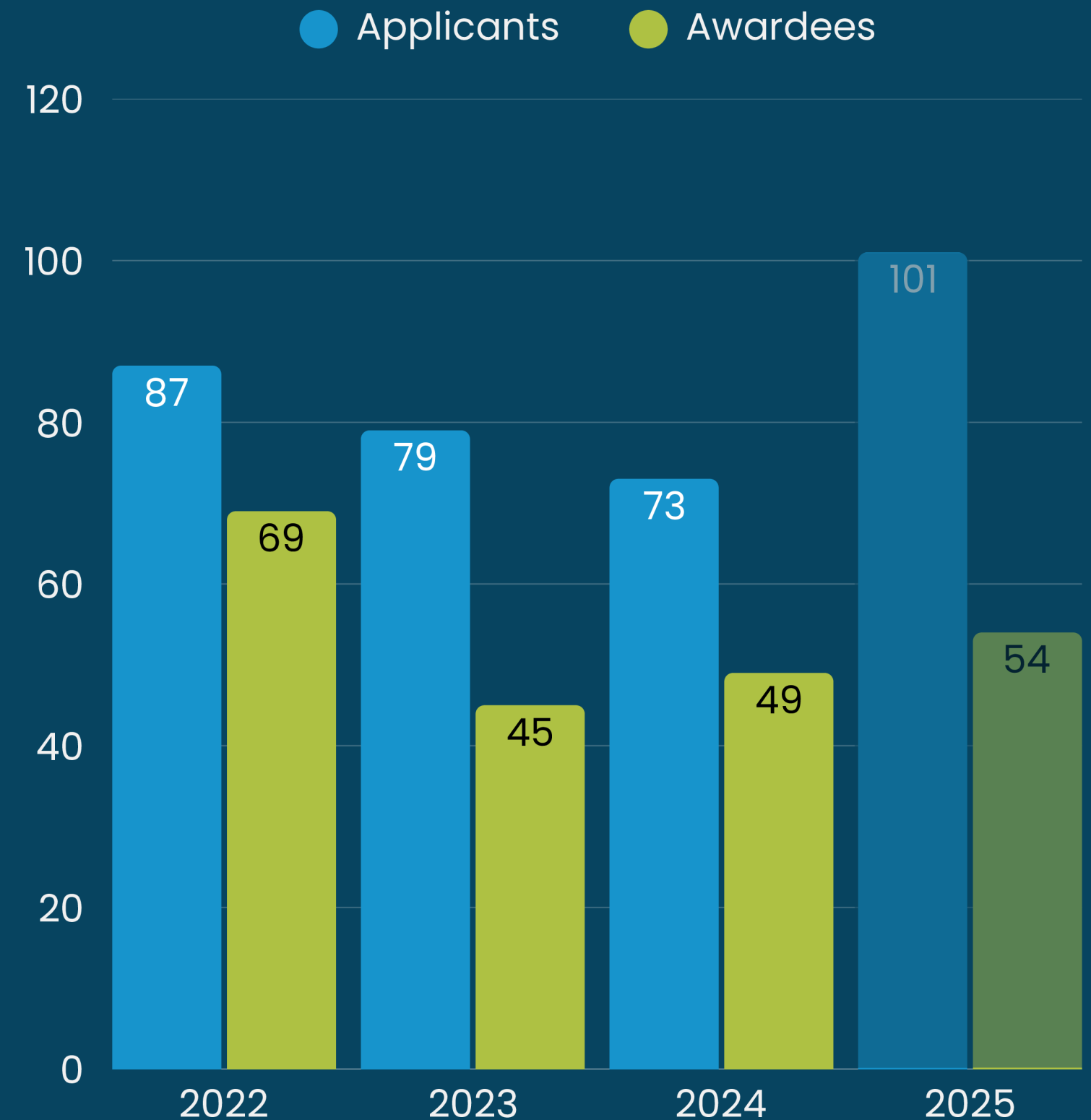
<b>Facility Improvements</b>	Capital improvements, such as ADA accessibility upgrades, heating and cooling center improvements, sustainable facility certification, improvements to library green spaces, and LED lighting conversions, <b>create long-term enhancements to library buildings.</b>
<b>Outreach &amp; Programming</b>	The creation and ongoing support of <b>community-driven programs focused on sustainability</b> , including food security initiatives, garden projects, and educational programming.
<b>Fundraising Efforts</b>	Supporting initiatives that enable libraries to broaden their funding sources is essential for <b>diversifying and strengthening long-term sustainability.</b> (Added in 2025)

# PROGRAM EVOLUTION

After conducting a survey of libraries in New England, the program began in 2022 via direct invite.

The program today is now open to all eligible libraries throughout New England.

**Application success rate still remains at more than 50%.**



*2025 Grants: In Progress*

# PROGRAM REFINEMENTS

This grant program was tailored to small libraries that often **fall outside the parameters of grant opportunities** despite having significant need and purpose due to limited staff time and a lack of large-scale grant administrative infrastructure.

Over the course of each grant cycle, we refine the program's structure **to ensure our focus aligns** with the evolving needs of libraries.



*Warren Public Library Interior Construction*

# PROGRAM REFINEMENTS: INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY & IMPACT

- **Flexible Funding Levels**

- A range of grant amounts let libraries request what best suits their unique goals and capacity.

- **Expanded Focus Areas**

- Broader program scope supports a wide range of community needs.

- **No Matching Funds Required**

- Libraries can apply without needing to secure additional funding.

- **Quick & Simple Application**

- Streamlined process takes less than 2 hours to complete, with all required information provided upfront.



*Westhampton Public Library*

# PROGRAM REFINEMENTS: INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY & IMPACT

- **Minimal Reporting Burden**
  - Only practical, actionable data is requested.
- **Full Funding Provided Upfront**
  - Libraries receive the full grant amount at the start and may use leftover funds for other urgent needs.
- **No Receipt Submission**
  - Less paperwork means more time for program delivery.
- **Expanded Outreach**
  - Targeted marketing efforts through trusted partner networks increase program visibility and participation.

## *Snapshot*

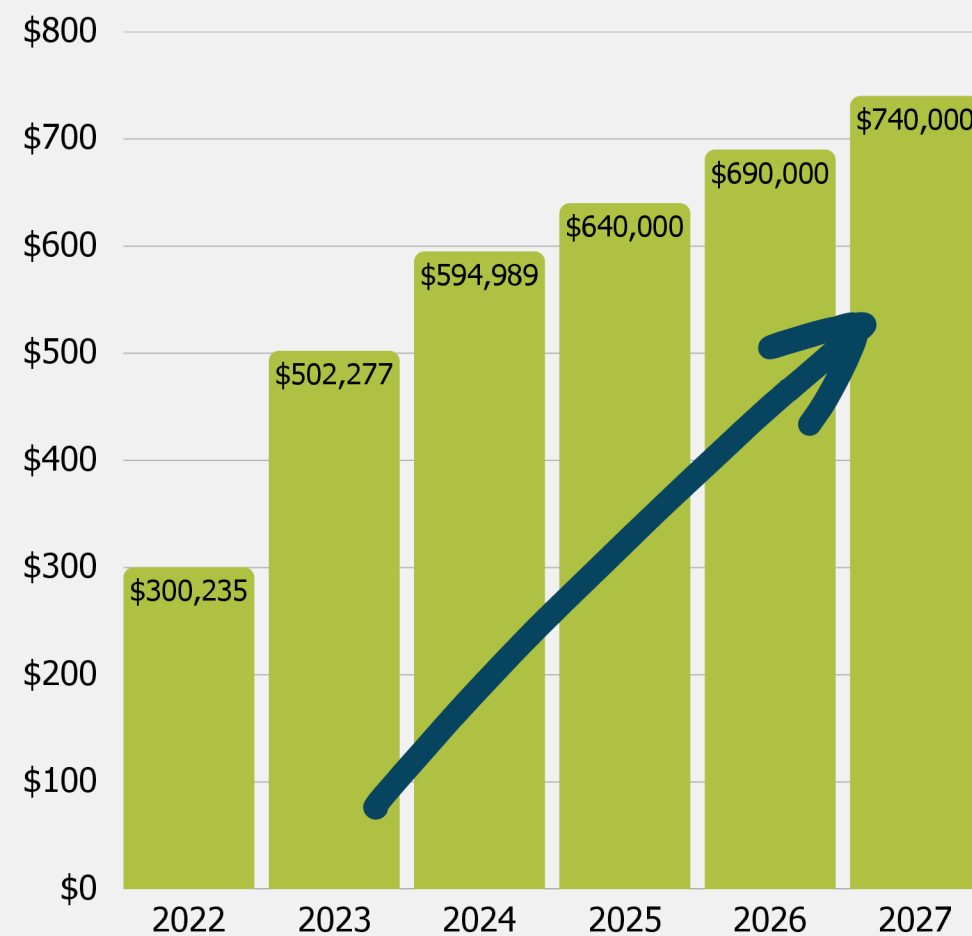


PHOTO BY JOHN BLODGETT

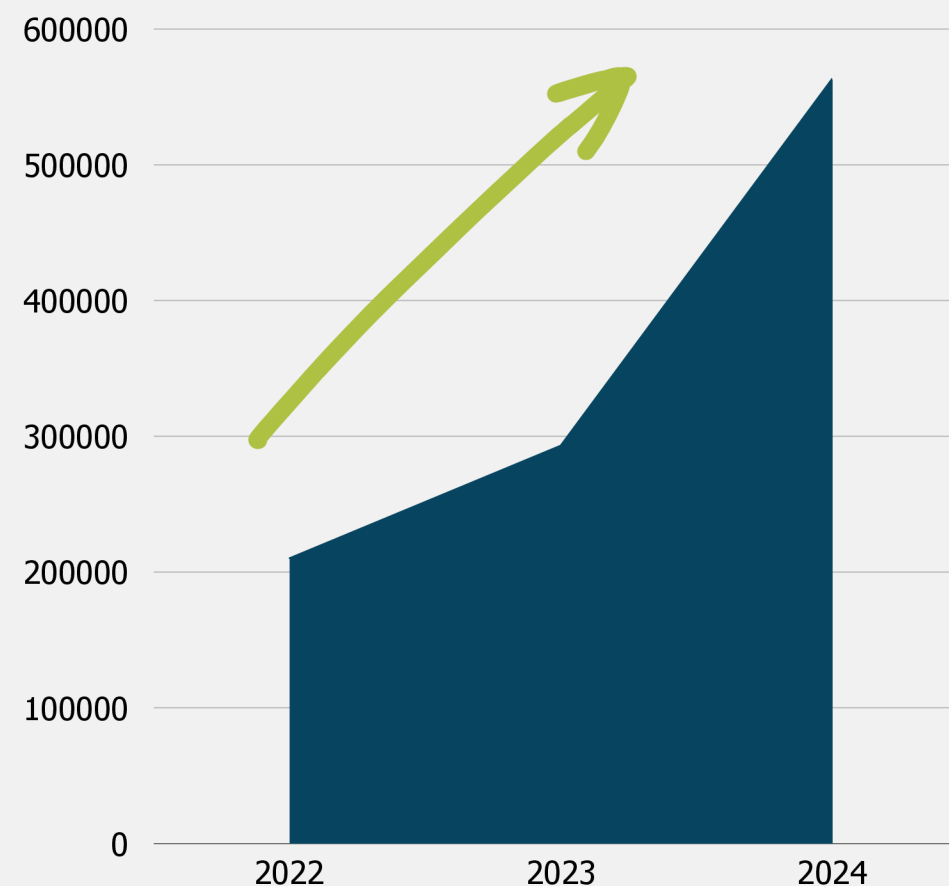
Bobbie Sauce, right, reads a children's book about Mardi Gras at Monroe Community Library March 1. The reading was followed by Mardi Gras-themed snacks and crafts, including king cake, mask-making and an indoor parade where the children handed out beads and toy doubloons. According to library board member Kit Hamley, the library has been ramping up its children's programming, with additions including a LEGO club, crafts related to the storytelling that takes place at 10:30 a.m. on Saturdays, and celebrations related to holidays like Mardi Gras or local events, such as the upcoming Maine Maple Sunday weekend. The refreshed programming follows recent renovations including new paint, flooring and bookshelves. Events are listed on the Monroe Community Library's Facebook page.

# GRANT PROGRAM GROWTH

Investment in New  
England's Rural Libraries



Number of Community  
Members Impacted



\$8,574

Average Grant Size

2.7

Average Projects Completed  
per Awardee

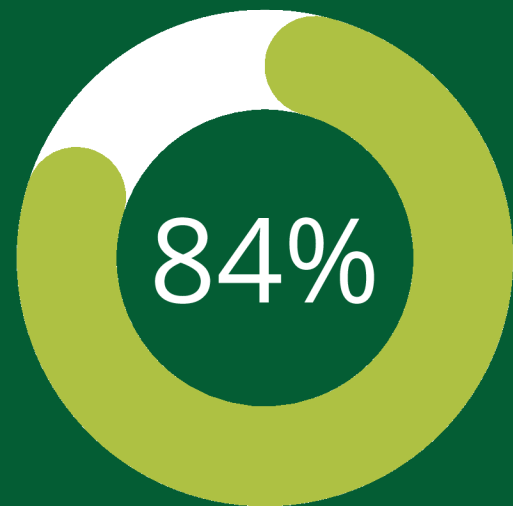
\$4,135

Average Project Cost

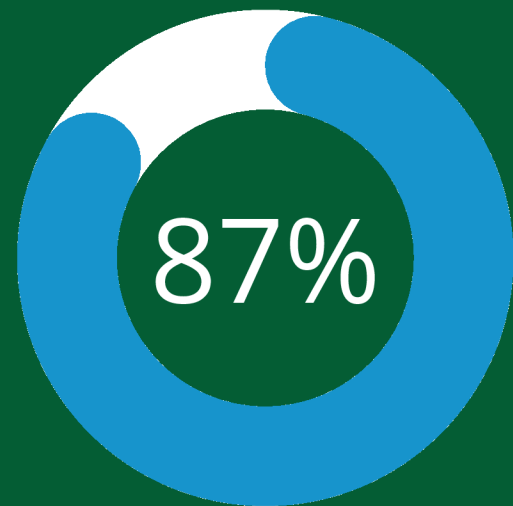
22

Libraries awarded more  
than once

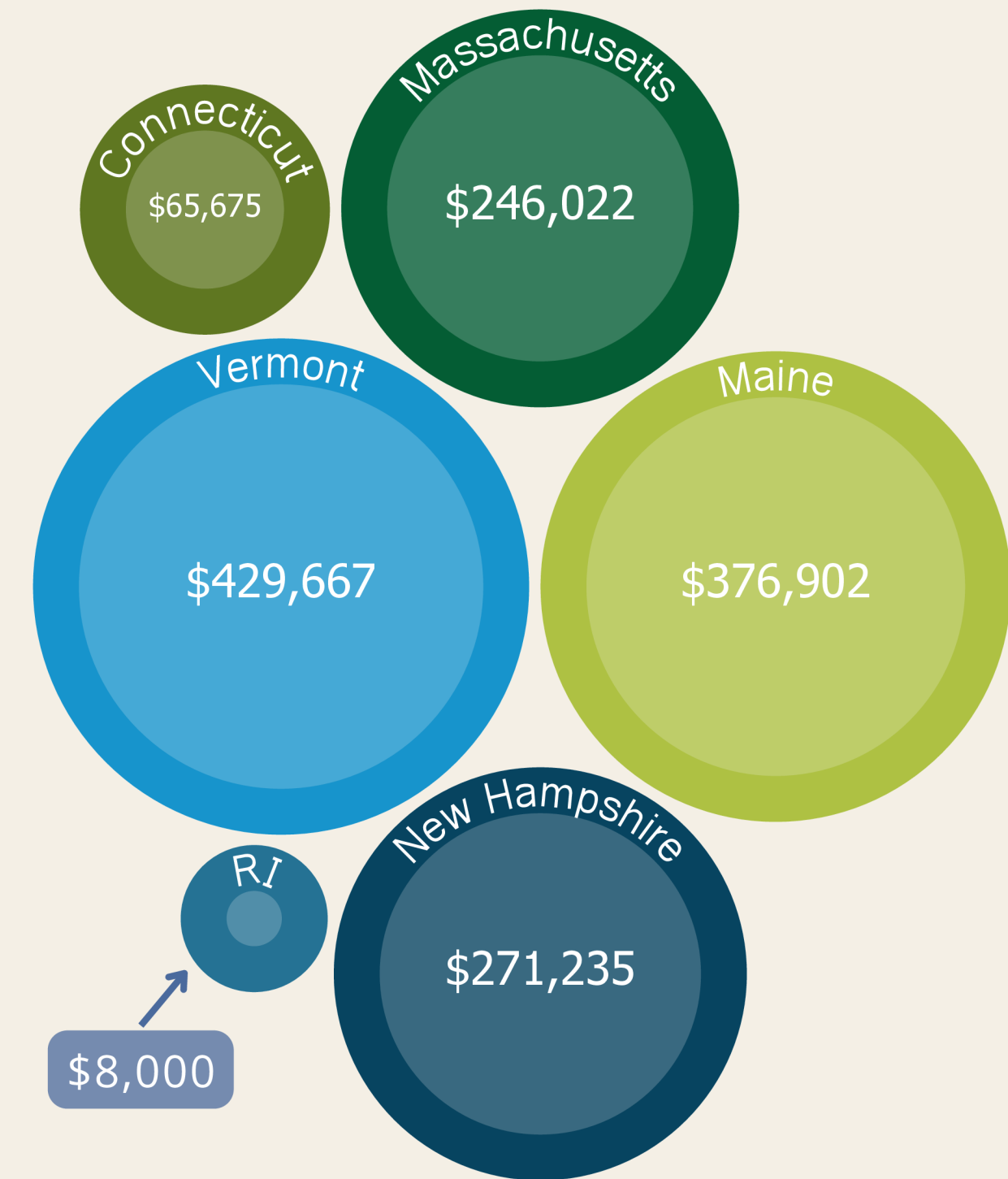
# PROJECTS: FUNDING AT-A-GLANCE



OF PROJECTS  
WERE FULLY FUNDED



OF PROJECTS  
INCLUDED LONG-TERM  
SUSTAINABILITY PLANS



**Funding Levels by State**  
2022-2024

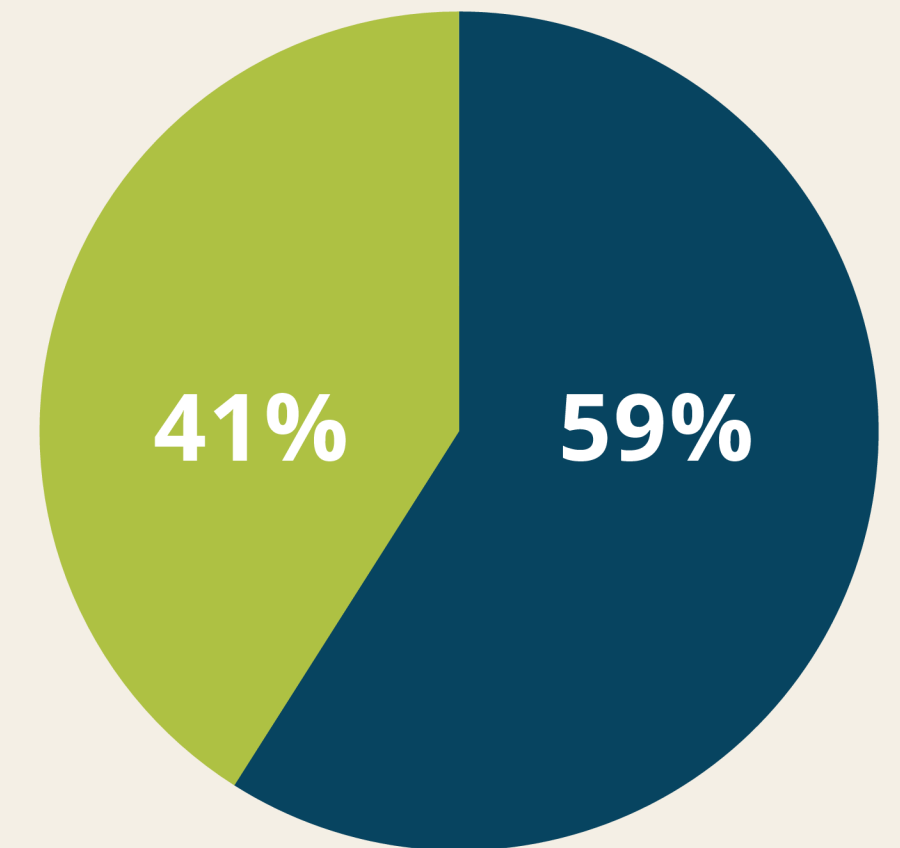
# PROJECTS: TYPES AT-A-GLANCE

## PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN



● Facility Improvements

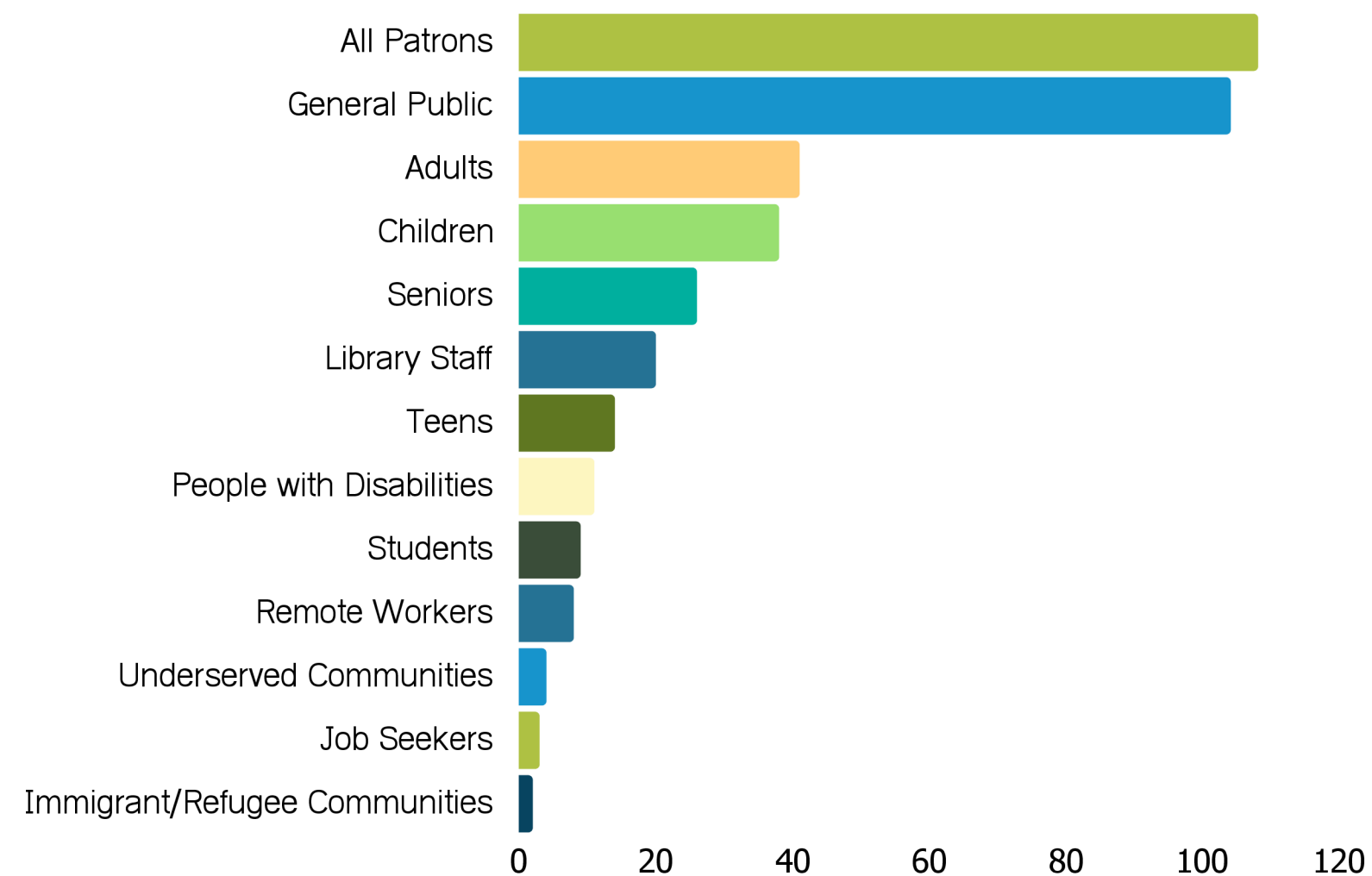
● Programs



## GRANT SUPPORT FOCUS

# SUPPORTING COMMUNITY NEEDS

## PRIMARY POPULATION IMPACTED BY PROJECTS



Throughout New England, this grant funding helps rural libraries across multiple communities expand access to vital resources and services that meet local needs.

From digital literacy programs to broadband access and tailored educational support, these grant-funded projects strengthen libraries' capacity to serve people of all demographics.

Despite limited staffing and resources, rural libraries are making a regional impact—fostering connection, opportunity, and lifelong learning across towns and communities.

# SELECTED STORIES OF IMPACT

From establishing supportive programs for patrons of all ages to making vital building upgrades that ensure long-term structural integrity, **ARSL is proud to showcase how rural libraries are addressing their most critical facility and community needs.**



*Soldiers Memorial Library Official Illustration*



*Montague Public Library Entrance*

***“At times, this was the only reason we had food in our fridge.”***

**The Montague Public Library (MA)** led a community partnership to fight food insecurity in Millers Falls (pop. 1,081) by stocking the library's food pantry, providing monthly grocery bags to families in need, and offering nutrition workshops.

The library received a grant of \$8,465 in 2024, and was able to run the program for six months.

**Orwell Free Library (VT)** launched the Orwell Food & Farm Fest to connect residents (pop. 1,239) with local farmers and celebrate the area's agricultural abundance. After the closure of the village's general store and feed store, these summer festivals became a vital source of community connection and support. In 2022, Orwell Free Library put their \$8,000 grant to work to host more than 800 visitors, funded by the program, which have made the town green more welcoming for all.

**“Our town felt gutted, but now patrons use our internet while sitting at our benches and access new programming on the town green. This is an important space that is open and free for everyone.”**





*Ipswich Public Library Exterior*

“*Before this grant, the building’s limitations restrained the capability and capacity of the library to serve community needs.*”

The **Ipswich Public Library (MA)** utilized a \$14,000 grant to renovate the damp, unfinished basement that was unusable - adding a permanent floor and new windows - allowing more much-needed open space upstairs for programs and community activities.

This renovation not only alleviated immediate space shortages but also positioned the library to adapt and expand to support community growth. (pop.13,903).

***“The new carpeting has made the library safer, warmer (literally and metaphorically), and far more inviting, encouraging children to spend more time reading and patrons to linger longer.”***

Thanks to a \$15,000 grant, the remote **Walter T. A. Hansen Memorial Library (ME)** transformed its aging facility by replacing warped tiles with new carpet and refurbishing the wheelchair ramp. Completed in late 2024, the project greatly improved accessibility, comfort, and safety for both patrons and staff, especially those with disabilities.

This project has not only enhanced the physical space but also strengthened the community's (pop. 1,513) connection to the library and helped secure increased local funding for 2025.



*Walter T. A. Hansen Memorial Library Exterior*

# ARSL MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

ARSL is grateful to our Grants, Awards & Scholarships Committee, who coordinates the selection of grant recipients with the help of dedicated volunteers—library workers from small and rural communities across the country.

This peer-led process offers a two-fold benefit:

- Applicants have their proposals reviewed by those who deeply understand the challenges and opportunities small libraries face.
- Reviewers bring lived experience and professional insight to ensure funding goes where it can make the biggest impact.



# COMMITTEE MEMBER INSIGHTS: IMPACT OF THE WORK

## DREA DOUGLAS

*North Bend Public Library (OR)*

"As a scholarship winner, I felt this was a good way to be of service to ARSL and the experience has been fantastic. We see a range of librarians and libraries apply for opportunities that will **enrich their work or benefit their patrons**.

While most of us struggle with funding, sometimes a request makes me realize what is happening in other library communities, such as the library who just wanted to purchase a bottle-filling drinking fountain, as clean water is not readily available in their community. How do you respond to such an ask? You could say it's not a library need, but in this case it was very easy to help a library to help their city."



## KIMBERLY BRANTLEY

*City of Wolfforth Library (TX)*

"Overall it is very rewarding and exciting to see all the amazing things happening in small communities across the country. Often, as a small community librarian, you do not get to really see what is going on outside of your community, and this allowed me to **see all the great things librarians are doing for their residents**.

I volunteered because I liked the idea of getting to work on the committee with ARSL because it is smaller and more personal. I really feel like being a part of this committee's work allows you to make a difference in the Library world."

# COMMITTEE MEMBER INSIGHTS: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## ANONYMOUS

(WY)

“Of all the ARSL committees, this committee is the most rewarding. Whether it's a grant, a scholarship, or an award, our work makes a difference in someone's professional life or in the operation of a library or a library program. Across the country, **in small and rural libraries, librarians are doing great work every day** and the GAS committee has the honor of recognizing/rewarding some of our colleagues and their exemplary work.”



## CARRIE BUSHMAN

*Cook Memorial Library (OR)*

“Getting to read what Librarians across the Country are doing in their communities and how we can help them. It has been a wonderful experience and so much fun to get to know the other members on the committee. There are so many deserving applicants out there and **it is wonderful to be able to help so many** of them.”

# THANK YOU



MANTON  
FOUNDATION



ARSL

THE ASSOCIATION FOR  
RURAL & SMALL  
LIBRARIES