



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2025

### Sounding the Alarm: Federal Funding Cuts to Libraries Threaten Essential Services

The Iowa City Public Library Friends Foundation (ICPLFF) is warning Iowans about the recent [Executive Order](#) which dismantles the [Institute of Museum and Library Services \(IMLS\)](#)—the only federal agency focused solely on supporting the nation’s libraries and museums. According to the [Freedom to Read Foundation](#), “IMLS was created by Congress to assure that federal resources would be available to improve and support the nation’s public libraries, drawing on decades of legislation acknowledging the need for all citizens to have access to free public libraries to improve their lives and their ability to fully participate in our society, our economy, and the political process.”

The decision to dismantle IMLS also jeopardizes funding for the [Library Services and Technology Act \(LSTA\)](#), which provides federal support for library services in every state, including programs managed by the [State Library of Iowa](#). Without IMLS funding, libraries across Iowa—including the Iowa City Public Library (ICPL)—risk losing key services that help people learn, connect, and thrive.

In fiscal year 2022, Iowa received **over \$2 million** in LSTA funding. Statewide, this helped support, which was spent over a grant period from Oct. 1, 2022 to Sept. 30, 2024:

- **544 public libraries** (serving 99% of Iowans)
- **1,821,707** Registered library users
- **16.3 million physical items** checked out
- **4.2 million digital items** circulated
- **Nearly 12 million** library visits
- **Almost 2 million** program attendees
- **Over 3 million** public Wi-Fi sessions

IMLS funding cuts will disproportionately harm small and rural libraries, which often rely on federal support to access essential resources. Without federal funding, rural libraries could lose access to training, educational resources, and tools like STEM kits, online tutoring, and interlibrary loan systems, further widening the gap in services available to underserved communities. These cuts will make it even harder for small and rural libraries to meet the diverse needs of their patrons, limiting their ability to foster education, community engagement, and equal access to information.

## STATEWIDE IMPACT of IMLS and LSTA:

- **Facilitate the sharing of materials** via the statewide delivery service for public libraries [IA Shares](#) and interlibrary loan system known as [SILO](#).
- **Help Iowans understand topics on Iowa's laws** with a plain language legal resource website called the [People's Law Library of Iowa](#).
- **Support literacy and promote STEM concepts in libraries** with the statewide [Summer Library Program](#), the [All Iowa Reads](#), and [STEM To Go & Storytime Kits](#) available for checkout to libraries.
- **Train and support skilled public librarians and effective library boards** by offering ongoing [Continuing Education](#) opportunities and the [State Library Endorsement](#) program for library trustees, directors, staff, and youth services librarians.
- **Provide online resources and tools for library management, digital lending, and more**, including [WhoFi](#), a suite of tools to assist library operations with program scheduling and registration, statistics tracking, and a WiFi usage counter. In addition, LSTA funding covers the platform fee and magazine collection for the statewide digital library consortium [Bridges](#), and the [Brainfuse HelpNow](#) resource for learners.
- **Allow libraries to reach the communities they serve** by providing no cost website hosting and support through the [PLOW](#) program.
- **Set minimum standards for public libraries and recognize high quality libraries** through the [Standards and Accreditation](#) program.
- **Collect and provide data on Iowa's population, demographics, libraries, and more** through the **State Data Center** and [Iowa Library Statistics](#) programs.

“Every week, ICPL receives books from across Iowa through interlibrary loan which we wouldn’t otherwise be able to offer,” said Sam Helmick, Community and Access Services Coordinator. “These federal funds help job seekers use Wi-Fi, support kids learning science, and make sure everyone has access to books and tools they need. Losing this support takes away opportunity from every Iowan.”

## LOCAL IMPACT - How This Directly Harms the Iowa City Public Library (ICPL):

- **Loss of Interlibrary Loan Services:** ICPL borrows and lends books through [IA Shares](#) and [SILO](#) — cutting this service would shrink community access. ILL is a highly valued service that connects ICPL patrons with materials that are often unavailable through traditional purchasing and acquisition methods. Materials loaned through ILL include rare, out of print, and academic resources, in addition to more popular materials.
- **Summer Library Program:** The [iRead](#) program, made available to Iowa libraries through the State Library, provides essential Summer Reading materials, including resource guides, thematic graphics, and training sessions for library staff. This program ensures high-quality STEM activities and engaging Storytime sessions for children and families. The ICPL risks losing access to these vital resources and training opportunities. ICPL staff rely on these sessions to develop dynamic and inclusive programming, and Without them, the quality and reach of Summer Reading Programs could be severely diminished.

- **All Iowa Reads:** [All Iowa Reads](#) is a statewide program that brings communities together through shared reading experiences, selecting books each year for kids, teens, and adults. This initiative fosters literacy, discussion, and community connection across Iowa. Without IMLS funding, All Iowa Reads could be eliminated, depriving communities of a unifying program that encourages reading and meaningful conversations. While ICPL has hosted events centered on past All Iowa Reads selections, the loss of this program would remove opportunities for future community-wide literary engagement.
- **People's Law Library of Iowa:** The [People's Law Library of Iowa](#) is an electronic resource designed to help Iowans understand Iowa law. The resource is a collaboration between the State Library of Iowa and the University of Iowa Law Library. ICPL includes the People's Law Library of Iowa on its "Legal Resources" webpage.
- **STEM To Go and Storytime Kits:** [STEM To Go & Storytime Kits](#) provide Iowa libraries with high-quality, thematic materials designed for engaging youth programming. These kits support hands-on STEM learning and interactive Storytime experiences for children and families. If IMLS funding is cut, libraries like ICPL could lose access to these valuable resources. ICPL has used STEM To Go kits to enhance programming and community engagement, and staff have contributed to their development. Losing this support would limit opportunities for innovative, hands-on learning experiences that inspire young minds.
- **Continuing Education:** The State Library of Iowa's [Continuing Education](#) program provides essential training for library staff and trustees through online and in-person courses, many tailored specifically to Iowa libraries. These resources help ensure that library professionals stay informed and equipped to serve their communities effectively. If IMLS funding is cut, ICPL could lose access to these critical educational opportunities. ICPL has relied on these trainings to enhance staff and trustee development while maximizing its continuing education budget. Without this support, professional growth opportunities would be more limited, potentially impacting the quality of library services.
- **State Library Endorsement:** The [State Library Endorsement](#) Program strengthens library services in Iowa by providing specialized training for directors, general staff, youth services, and trauma-informed library practices. A dedicated continuing education consultant ensures staff receive the support needed to build essential skills. If IMLS funding is cut, this program—and the expertise it fosters—could be lost. At ICPL, 18 staff members hold State Library endorsements, with 16 required for their roles. Without this support, staff may lose access to critical training, ultimately impacting the quality of service ICPL provides to the community.
- **WhoFi:** [WhoFi](#) provides essential tools for public libraries, including a wireless internet usage tracker, community calendar, program registration system, and meeting room scheduler. If IMLS funding is cut, ICPL could lose access to WhoFi's wireless usage tracking, which helps measure and understand how patrons rely on the library's internet services. Without this data, it would be more challenging to assess community needs and advocate for resources that support digital access.
- **Brainfuse HelpNow:** [Brainfuse HelpNow](#) provides ICPL patrons with live, online tutoring in English and Spanish, offering vital academic support to students and lifelong learners. If IMLS funding is cut, access to this critical resource could disappear, leaving students

without free, high-quality tutoring assistance. In FY24 alone, ICPL patrons used BrainFuse 1,195 times —demonstrating the significant role it plays in helping community members succeed.

- **Standards and Accreditation:** The [Standards and Accreditation](#) program supports library development across Iowa, ensuring libraries meet essential service and operational benchmarks. Libraries earn tiered accreditation based on the number of standards they fulfill, with Tier 3 representing full accreditation. ICPL holds Tier 3 accreditation, valid through June 30, 2026. If IMLS funding is cut, the future of this program could be at risk, jeopardizing the framework that helps maintain high-quality library services statewide. Accreditation ensures accountability, service excellence, and eligibility for critical funding opportunities. Without it, libraries may struggle to meet community needs effectively
- **State Data Center:** The [State Data Center](#) is a vital resource that compiles Iowa-specific statistics on population, housing, business, and government, drawing from the U.S. Census Bureau and other state and federal sources. If IMLS funding is cut, access to this comprehensive data tool could be lost, limiting the ability of libraries, researchers, and community organizations to find reliable state statistics. While ICPL does not list it among its electronic resources, the library actively promotes it through blog posts and reference services, recognizing its value in informed decision-making and community research.
- **Iowa Library Statistics:** The State Library maintains a publicly accessible database of [Iowa Library Statistics](#), gathered through annual surveys and other sources. This data allows libraries to benchmark services, assess performance, and make informed decisions. If IMLS funding is cut, this valuable resource could disappear, leaving libraries without a centralized way to compare data and track statewide trends. ICPL regularly relies on this database for benchmarking, and the information it provides is not readily available elsewhere. Losing this tool would make it more difficult to evaluate and improve library services across Iowa.

“The loss of IMLS funds would have a direct and significant impact on Iowa City Public Library patrons and staff. Interlibrary loan—a vital service that allows patrons to access books from libraries across the state and beyond—could be reduced or eliminated.” said Elsworth Carman, Director of the Iowa City Public Library. “State Library support for our Summer Reading program may decrease or disappear, limiting engaging literacy opportunities for children and families. Additionally, the loss of funding for continuing education and accreditation programs would weaken professional development for library staff and diminish the quality standards that ensure excellent library service for our community.”

### **A Call to Protect Library Funding**

Public libraries are home to vast collections of books and resources that fuel curiosity, learning, and opportunity. They provide essential services—connecting job seekers, students, and families to knowledge and technology.

The loss of federal funding threatens these vital resources, stripping away book access, digital

learning tools, and community programs. Without this support, countless lowans will lose opportunities to learn and grow.

We call on the current administration to withdraw the Executive Order dismantling IMLS and urge Congress to fully fund the programs that expand access to libraries nationwide. The Iowa City Public Library Friends Foundation urges the community to take action—now is the time to stand up for libraries and the vital services they provide.

**Speak up here:** <https://bit.ly/ShowUp4OurLibraries>

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### **About the Iowa City Public Library Friends Foundation**

The mission of the Iowa City Public Library Friends Foundation is to strengthen the Iowa City Public Library through fundraising, advocacy, and promotion of its valuable resources. Our vision is to inspire every member of our community to support the Iowa City Public Library as a Library user, volunteer, or donor.

[www.supportICPL.org](http://www.supportICPL.org)

### **About the Iowa City Public Library**

ICPL is a community anchor, offering free access to books, technology, programs, and outreach for people of all ages and backgrounds. The ICPL's mission is to engage, inspire, and connect through equitable access to information and ideas.

[www.icpl.org](http://www.icpl.org)

### **State Library of Iowa's One Pager on the impact of LSTA funds:**

 2025 LSTA One Pager.pdf

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### **Media Contact:**

Katie Roche

Development Director

[Iowa City Public Library Friends Foundation](http://IowaCityPublicLibraryFriendsFoundation.org)

Phone: (319) 382-5797; Email: [Info@supportICPL.org](mailto:Info@supportICPL.org)