The Library Construction Grant Program,
An Explanation of the Program and the Application Process

Introduction
This program provides grants for public library construction projects that create usable space (i.e. new buildings, additions, and renovations - known as Category #1 grants), and for projects that improve existing space (i.e. accessibility, correcting building and fire code violations, remodeling, and energy conservation - known as Category #2 grants). Your library’s success in receiving a grant depends on completing all application requirements, including planning for a library that fulfills the library service needs of your community for many years to come.

The Basics
1. All Construction Grant forms, documents, and information, including the Application Form (in Excel) and all documents mentioned here are available on our Construction Grants web-page.
2. The “Timetable and Guidelines” document provides all the rules governing this grant program. Refer to this document for all program details.
3. The grant amount is one half of the total cost of your project, with a maximum grant of $1 million. The total project cost must be at least $60,000.
4. Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is most important and has priority in the awarding of grants. See the ADA Checklist to find out how your library can improve its accessibility.
5. Eligible costs: construction of new buildings, expansion, remodeling and alteration, maintenance and repair of existing buildings (distressed municipalities), bond issue costs, expenses related to acquiring land or acquiring a building for the project, site grading and improvement of land, demolition, professional services, legal fees, equipment, furniture, and rent of temporary facility.
6. Ineligible costs: equipment and furnishing over 25% of project cost (Category 1 only), library materials, fundraising costs, personal computers, cost for space not used for library services, library staff salaries, town-wide study costs, lease of facilities, service and maintenance contracts, off-site town improvements, moving of non-library facilities, and any fees or services (including contracts for architects, engineers, construction managers) in excess of $10,000 that have not been competitively bid.
7. Construction grants must comply with the DAS Contractor Prequalification Program. This program requires all contractors to prequalify "before they can bid on any construction, alteration, remodeling, repair or demolition of any public building, for work by the state or a municipality, estimated to cost more than $500,000 and which is funded in whole or in part with state funds.” See the DAS Compliance information for municipalities and awarding authorities (PDF) for more information.
8. Grants for libraries in the 25 distressed communities (as determined by the Department of Economic and Community Development), are eligible for maintenance projects and are given some grant priority.
9. When there is not enough funding available to approve all the acceptable applications submitted in any particular year, applications from libraries in distressed municipalities and applications from principal public libraries have priority. Further priority is determined by scoring system described in the “Timetable and Guidelines.”
10. If your library is awarded a construction grant, you have 3 years for Category 1 grants and 1 year for Category 2 grants in which to raise the local funding necessary to begin your project, or the grant award will be forfeit. One-year extension requests must be approved by the State Library Board.
11. You must provide an assurance that the proposed public library facility will be devoted to public library purposes for a period of not less than 10 years after completion of the project, or until the building outlives its usefulness.
12. State-funded construction projects will usually need to follow requirements of the State Historic Preservation Office (historic buildings) and the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

The Process

1. Most projects involve the participation of the Library Director, Library Board, Municipal officials, a building consultant, and an architect.
2. The application process for Category 2 grants is less rigorous than for Category 1 grants, but Category 2 remodeling projects must not exceed $500,000 in total project cost and must not involve more than ½ of building’s space. There are two separate application forms. For Category 2 applications, a Building Program will be necessary only for the area in the library immediately affected by the project.
3. Category #1 applications require a Library Strategic Plan, a full Building Program, and a proposed square feet calculation. See “Timetable and Guidelines” for how to make this calculation.
4. To complete the application form you will need a variety of information besides what is in your Building Program. The Conservation Development Policies Plan, 2013-2018 is available for download from the Office of Policy and Management. The AENGLC (wealth) rank comes from the State Department of Education. Use these Connecticut Population Projections. Municipal libraries applying for grants should be aware of the requirement that municipalities should have adopted a plan of conservation and development (POCD) within the past ten years to be eligible for state grant.
5. Besides the grant application form, you will be required to include a number of supporting documents. See the application form for a full listing, but expect to provide some schematic drawings, a site plan, and assurances regarding financing, accessibility, and building safety.
6. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design’s (LEED) silver level is required for all projects where total costs exceed $10 million.
7. Your grant application must be submitted by September 1. Expect State Library staff to request follow-up information that will assist them in making your application complete. Complete applications will be submitted to the State Library Board for approval in November. Notification of approval will go out shortly after the meeting. Approval will depend on availability of funding and the evaluation of the application. See the “Timetable and Guidelines” document for a description of scoring system.
8. When your library has its local funding in place, the State Library will assist you in obtaining State Bond Commission approval for the grant you received. This may take some time. After approval, you have 18 months in which to initiate your project.
9. After Bond Commission approval, you will sign a contract with the State Library for your construction grant. You are advised not to begin a formal construction bid process and you are prohibited from signing with a building contractor or order furniture or equipment until after the contract is signed. Be sure to read the “Step-by-Step Guide to the Construction Grant Process” so that you understand everything that will be expected of you during this grant process.

Information for 2018
Approximately $9 million in grant funding is currently available for this year, though the legislature always has the authority to revoke some of this funding.

1. The State Library will make a grants availability announcement in May.
2. Libraries must submit a Notice of Intent form by June 30.
3. The application deadline would be September 1.
4. You will likely need assistance in compiling all your application materials. Contact Tom Newman, Construction Grants, 860-757-6573 or Tom.Newman@ct.gov, with your questions.