Development and Redevelopment Plan in New Jersey because the proposed amendments concern health care co-payments for medical care and medication.

Racial and Ethnic Community Criminal Justice and Public Safety Impact

The Department has evaluated this rulemaking and determined that it will not have an impact on pretrial detention or sentencing. Health care co-payments do not directly impact probation and potential parole and have been implemented and updated in compliance with related State laws. Accordingly, no further analysis is required.

Full text of the proposal follows (additions indicated in boldface **thus**; deletions indicated in brackets [thus]):

SUBCHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

10A:16-1.5 Medical co-payment

(a) Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 30:7E-1 et seq., inmates shall be liable for the cost of, and charged a nominal co-payment as determined by the State Treasurer for health care to include surgery, dental care, hospitalization**,** or treatment; and medication to include prescription or nonprescription drugs, medicine**,** or dietary supplements, **not available in the commissary**. The medical co-payment shall be [$5.00] **$2.00** and the medication co-payment shall be $1.00 **per month for each medication and will be applied when the prescription is filled or when the nonprescription drugs, medicine, or dietary supplements are dispensed**. If fees for inmate co-payments change in accordance with N.J.S.A. 30:7E-1 et seq., these changes shall be published as a notice of administrative change in the New Jersey Register.

(b)-(d) (No change.)

(e) All medications shall be ordered by qualified health care professionals in the largest quantities and longest durations that are medically appropriate and in accordance with all applicable laws and pharmaceutical regulations. The inmate is charged [for a prescription when a health care professional writes an initial order and is then required to rewrite the medication order] **a co-pay when prescriptions are first filled and for each refill**; therefore, **prescriptions** for maintenance medications[, prescriptions] shall be written for as long a period of time as is medically acceptable.

(f) (No change.)

STATE

(a)

DIVISION OF THE STATE LIBRARY

New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act Rules

Proposed Readoption with Amendments: N.J.A.C. 15:24

Proposed New Rule: N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.2

Authorized By: Jennifer R. Nelson, State Librarian (with the approval of Merodie A. Hancock, Ph.D., President, Thomas Edison State University).

Authority: P.L. 2017, c. 149.

Calendar Reference: See Summary below for explanation of exception to calendar requirement.

Proposal Number: PRN 2026-066.

Submit written comments by January 1, 2027, to:

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Summary

The Division of the State Library ("Division" or "State Library") proposes to readopt, with amendments, N.J.A.C. 15:24, New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act Rules. The rules in this chapter were scheduled to expire on November 4, 2026. The Division filed this notice of readoption with the Office of Administrative Law prior to that date; therefore, the expiration is extended 180 days to May 3, 2027, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:14B-5.1.c(2).

The rules proposed for readoption with amendments implement P.L. 2017 c. 149, known as the New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act (the Bond Act), which authorizes the issuance of $125 million in general obligation bonds for the construction, reconstruction, development, extension, improvement, and furnishing of New Jersey's public libraries.

Amendments are proposed to update and streamline the administration of the grant program, clarify the reimbursement process and applicant and grantee obligations, increase administrative flexibility, and strengthen oversight of project costs and post-award changes.

The Division has conducted an administrative review and determined that, except for the proposed amendments described below, these rules are necessary, reasonable, and proper for the purposes for which they were originally promulgated as required pursuant to Executive Order No. 66 (1978), and the State Library is, therefore, proposing them for readoption with amendments at this time. Minor clarifying and/or technical amendments are proposed that do not change the meaning of the text and are not discussed further.

A summary of N.J.A.C. 15:24 and the proposed amendments follows:

N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.1 describes the purpose and scope of the rules.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.2 sets forth the authority for the rules to implement the Bond Act.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.3 defines words and terms used in the subchapter.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.1 describes the allocation of funds and the matching funds requirement.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.2 describes types of eligible and ineligible projects.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.3 describes funding priorities.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.4 describes the means by which priority alignment will be determined and evaluated.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.5 describes the computation of square footage costs.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.6 lists eligible and ineligible project costs.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.7 lists primary criteria for eligible projects.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-3.1 explains applicant priorities for the receipt of grants for multiple and single projects.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-3.2 explains the amount of the grant and the method of allocation.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.1 sets forth procedures for grant application by potential applicants.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.2 describes the process for review and approval of the grant applications.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-5.1 describes the reporting requirements of the State Librarian to the Treasurer of the State of New Jersey, the New Jersey Commission on Capital Budget and Planning, and the State Legislature.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-5.2 explains the ongoing reporting requirements applicable to those receiving awards.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.1 describes the grant administration process, how funds will be paid to the applicants awarded grants, the requirement for State receipt of matching funds, and other requirements for construction of the project. Grounds for termination of a grant agreement and allocation of balances to another approved grant are also included.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.2 details certain post-award terms.

A summary of the proposed amendments and new rule follows:

The proposed amendment at N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.1(b)1iv deletes a priority that was found to be unnecessary in review of two prior rounds of application responses.

At N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.3, the proposed amendments are as follows: The definition of "matching funds" is revised. In administering two rounds of a competitive grant program, the State Library learned that actual project costs were often significantly higher than proposed in the application. As a result, Bond Act grant funds provided for less than 50 percent of the total project costs. This change clarifies that a grant may fund less than 50 percent of a project, as long as the grantee documents the availability of funds to cover all remaining costs. The definition of "project" is updated to clarify that the acquisition of land and/or a building is an eligible project. The definition now reflects the full range of possible library building projects and types of acquisitions. The definition of

"rehabilitation" is updated to clarify that the purpose of a rehabilitation project is to establish a public library. The definition of "repair" is updated to acknowledge that materials identical or similar to existing materials may no longer be manufactured or otherwise available, particularly in the case of historic buildings. In addition, existing materials may include substances that are now considered hazardous, such as asbestos. The definition of "substantial changes" is updated to spell out the 10 percent threshold, as well as to recognize the State Library's need to review changes in project square footage. This is due to the fact that a decrease in total square footage of a project may require a possible recalculation of the grant award amount. The State Library recognized the need for these clarifications through administering two competitive grant rounds.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.1(b) is proposed for amendment to reflect the new definition of matching funds at N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.3 and to clarify that the grantee is responsible for providing additional funds to cover excess costs.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.3(a)4 is proposed for amendment to delete growth in critical public library services as a funding priority to ensure alignment between N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.1(b) and 2.4. In administering the grant, the State Library found that maintenance of critical library services was as important as growth in critical library services. This was evidenced by the number of grants awarded that focused on physical plant repairs or rehabilitation, rather than remodels or new buildings. A reduction in the number of criteria required at N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.3(a) allows applications for future rounds of funding to be more tightly focused on criteria that the State Library considers relevant and important.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.4(a)5 is proposed for amendment to delete criteria that is time bound and did not prove to be useful for decision-making or distinguishing between grantee responses, and poses an excessive burden on applicants and reviewers. A reduction in the number of criteria required pursuant to N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.3(a) allows future applications to be more tightly focused on criteria that the State Library considers relevant and important. Recodified N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.4(a)6 is proposed for amendment to add a cross-reference to clarify which standards are being reviewed for compliance. Recodified N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.4(a)9 is proposed for amendment to delete references to specific certifications that require a fee for designation and to indicate the included items are not all required.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.4(a)11 is proposed for deletion to recognize that not all building projects need to result in new services. For many projects, particularly those that are repair or rehabilitation in nature, the project goal is to maintain services. N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.4(a)12 is proposed for deletion, as the purpose of community support and partnerships varies significantly by type of project, and it is not equitable to compare projects on this basis. Recodified N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.4(a)11 is proposed for amendment to expand the definition of cost-effectiveness to include economic analysis of the cost of operations and maintenance of the project as compared to the existing building. This includes consideration of lifespan, aesthetics, and other aspects as appropriate. The amendments also delete vague terminology or terminology that could be interpreted in various ways (that is, "good value").

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.5(a)2 is added to clarify that the maximum per square foot costs included at N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.5(a) are applicable only to grant solicitations that took place prior to January 1, 2026. This provides the State Library flexibility in determining minimum and maximum grant award amounts in future rounds. The new paragraph also adds that the State Librarian can consider cost effectiveness as described at N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.4(a)11.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.7(a)3 is proposed for amendment to update the cross-reference due to the proposed deletion of N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.7(b). N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.7(b) has been relocated to new N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.2, which discusses post-award requirements. Recodified N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.7(d) is proposed for amendment to remove the requirement that a building program be submitted as part of an application. This was removed because building programs, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 15:21-2.10, are no longer required to be submitted to the State Librarian. Recodified N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.7(d)3 is proposed for amendment to delete reference to the aforementioned building program that is no longer required. Recodified N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.7(e) is proposed for amendment to further clarify that applicants can certify that they have secured or committed matching funds even if they do not possess the funds at the time of application. Language has also been added to reiterate that State grant funds may not be used as matching funds pursuant to N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.3.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-3.1(a) is proposed for amendment to replace "construction" with "project," to reflect that rehabilitation and repairs are considered eligible projects in addition to construction projects.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-3.2(a) is proposed for amendment to reflect the revised definition of matching funds at N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.3 and corresponding changes to the allocation of funds and match requirements at N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.1(b). N.J.A.C. 15:24-3.2(b) is proposed for amendment to add the phrase "eligible project" to clarify that only costs in the approved application are considered if the grant amount is reduced.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.1(a) is proposed for amendment to add "acquisition" to clarify that the acquisition of a building to be used as a public library is an eligible project and to delete "renovation" as this proved to be indistinguishable from other project types and created confusion for applicants. N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.1(a)1 is proposed for amendment to add language requiring applications to include square footage of the project and how space is allocated in the case of a shared use facility to provide additional clarification for how eligible project costs are calculated. N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.1(a)6 and 7 are deleted to remove reference to the building program and community analysis deleted from N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.4 and to delete the requirement for schematic plans since they are not relevant for all types of eligible projects, respectively. Recodified N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.1(a)10 is proposed for amendment to replace "purchase" with "acquisition" to recognize that the acquisition of land and/or building may not include a financial transaction. N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.1(a)11 and 12 are proposed for deletion to remove reference to statements of intent and related certification(s) that are deleted from N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.3(a)10.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.1(c) is proposed for amendment to add language to be consistent with updates to N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.1(b), as amended. N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.1(d) is proposed for amendment to replace "chosen freeholders" with "commissioners" because the State of New Jersey no longer recognizes the term with the enactment of P.L. 2020, c. 67. N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.1(h) is proposed for relocation to new N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.2, which discusses post-award requirements.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.2(d) is proposed for amendment to add criteria of cost competitiveness to review of applications, so that similar projects can be comparably assessed.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-5.2(b) is proposed for amendment to delete the requirement for evidence that funds have been appropriated or bonds issued for matching funds to account for scenarios where applicants have on hand or will have other forms of matching funds. Details on matching funds have been added to ensure the validity and availability of such funds. The amendments expand the types of acceptable evidence based on the State Library's experience with previous rounds of funding and require certification that no State of New Jersey funds are used as matching funds, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.3. The amendments further require grantees to notify the State Library of material changes to matching funds, so that the State Library can ensure that the matching requirements of the Bond Act will be fulfilled.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.1(c) and (d) are proposed for amendment to replace "construction" with "project" to be consistent with the changes at N.J.A.C. 15:24-3.1(a). N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.1(d) is additionally proposed for amendment to refer to amended timelines, which are allowed pursuant to N.J.A.C 15:24-6.1(f). The amendment also clarifies that the initial timeline starts when the grant agreement is executed to avoid confusion on the part of grantees. N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.1(e) is proposed for amendment to add a qualifier since the addition of N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.5(a)2 permits subsequent solicitations to remove the maximum per square foot cost requirement. N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.1(e)1 through 4 is proposed for amendment to change the grant payment structure to four equal reimbursements of grant funds based upon the satisfaction of certain requirements. The original payment structure allowed for a 25 percent advance of funds followed by a 50 percent payment based upon 50 percent completion of the project. Due to the one-to-one matching requirement, however, grantees were required to spend 75 percent of their matching funds to receive the second 50 percent payment. This caused a great deal of confusion on the part of grantees and added an undue administrative burden to the State Library. The new reimbursement-only structure also

aligns future grant solicitations with other higher education tax-exempt bond grant programs.

N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.1(f) is proposed for amendment to clarify that an extension to either the original timeline or a subsequently approved timeline may be requested. The amendment acknowledges that the completion date may change from the original completion date due to one or more timeline extension approvals. N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.1(g) is proposed for amendment to replace "construction" with "project" to be consistent with the changes at N.J.A.C. 15:24-3.1(a) and to clarify the distinction between the original approved timeline and any subsequent extensions. N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.1(h) is proposed for amendment to replace "construction" with "project" to be consistent with the changes at N.J.A.C. 15:24-3.1(a). N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.1(i) is proposed for amendment to replaces "shall" with "may" to provide the State Librarian flexibility in determining if grant funding should be withheld based on the specific set of circumstances. N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.1(j) is proposed for amendment to correct the name of the Joint Budget Oversight Committee.

Proposed new N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.2 combines the rules that are applicable once a grant has been awarded into one section. N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.2(a) relocates substantial changes to a project after a grant is awarded from N.J.A.C. 15:24-4.1(h). New N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.2(b) relocates the sale of land and/or structures purchased with grant funds from N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.7(b). Subsection (b) further defines circumstances that would necessitate a pro rata reimbursement of grant funds to the Department of the Treasury and requires grantees to notify the State Librarian prior to any such changes taking place. This ensures that projects funded with taxpayer funds are being used as intended. New N.J.A.C. 15:24-6.2(c) requires grantees to notify the State Librarian of a permanent closure or a closure of indeterminate duration of a public library funded or improved with grant funds, which may require a pro rata reimbursement of grant funds to the Department of the Treasury. This ensures that projects funded with taxpayer dollars are being used as intended.

As the Division has provided a 60-day comment period on this notice of proposal, this notice is excepted from the rulemaking calendar requirement, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 1:30-3.3(a)5.

Social Impact

All people of New Jersey should have equitable access to public library facilities, collections, technology, and services regardless of age, race, religion, socioeconomic status, or disability. This principle underlies the Bond Act, which recognizes public libraries as essential spaces for bridging the digital divide, supporting civic engagement, providing educational and recreational programs, and fostering lifelong reading and learning for individuals and families.

The purpose of the Bond Act is to improve public library facilities so they can better support the wellbeing and success of New Jersey residents. Modern, efficient, resilient, and technologically current buildings with flexible space are necessary for libraries to deliver critical educational, training, and civic services. The Bond Act provides funding to build, equip, and expand libraries, including addressing long-standing deficiencies such as outdated infrastructure and lack of adequate space for technology and programming.

Funding through the Bond Act improves accessibility, safety, and technology, significantly benefiting people with disabilities, residents with limited technological experience and access, and growing communities. Enhanced libraries will continue to serve as safe, inclusive community centers that support learning, career development, civic life, and social connection for residents of all ages.

Economic Impact

No economic impact is anticipated, as the funding allocated to the Bond Act will not increase or decrease as a result of the rules proposed for readoption with amendments and a new rule.

Federal Standards Statement

The rules proposed with amendments and a new rule are not subject to Federal standards or requirements; therefore, a Federal standards analysis is not required.

Jobs Impact

The State Library anticipates that there will be no increase or decrease in the number of jobs resulting from the rules proposed for readoption with amendments and a new rule.

Agriculture Industry Impact

The rules proposed for readoption with amendments and a new rule have no impact upon the agriculture industry.

Regulatory Flexibility Statement

The rules proposed for readoption with amendments and a new rule do not create additional requirements related to compliance, recordkeeping or reporting upon small businesses, as that term is defined in the Regulatory Flexibility Act, N.J.S.A. 52:14B-16, as the rules pertain to the State Library, and not small businesses.

Housing Affordability Impact Analysis

The rules proposed for readoption with amendments and a new rule will not have an impact on the affordability of housing in New Jersey nor will they evoke a change in the average costs associated with housing because the rules proposed for readoption with amendments and a new rule concern the New Jersey State Library and the State Library Construction Bond Act.

Smart Growth Development Impact Analysis

The rules proposed for readoption with amendments and a new rule will not have an impact on smart growth in Planning Areas 1 or 2, or within designated centers, pursuant to the State's Development and Redevelopment Plan because the rules proposed for readoption with amendments and a new rule concern the New Jersey State Library and the State Library Construction Bond Act.

Racial and Ethnic Community Criminal Justice and Public Safety Impact

The rules proposed for readoption with amendments and a new rule will have no impact on pretrial detention, sentencing, probation, or parole policies for juveniles or adults as they concern the administration of the Bond Act. Accordingly, no further analysis is required.

Full text of the rules proposed for readoption may be found in the New Jersey Administrative Code at N.J.A.C. 15:24.

Full text of the proposed amendments and new rule follows (additions indicated in boldface **thus**; deletions indicated in brackets [thus]):

SUBCHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

15:24-1.1 Purpose and scope

(a) (No change.)

(b) The purpose of this chapter is to improve New Jersey's public library facilities to ensure the well-being and success of New Jersey's residents. Today's public libraries offer the residents of New Jersey critical education, training, and civic services, which are more cost-effectively provided through modern, technologically current buildings with flexible spaces adaptable to many types of programs and services.

1. To support this need, the State is distributing funding to communities seeking to improve and expand their access to resources, including technology. This subsection describes the procedures and criteria for communities to apply for and receive funding. Broadly speaking, the State's priorities for this funding are:

i.-iii. (No change.)

[iv. Growth in critical public library services available to the citizens of New Jersey (including those that support education, employment, welfare, job training, career assistance, college preparation, securing government assistance, and civic services).]

(c)-(d) (No change.)

15:24-1.3 Definitions

The following words and terms, when used in this chapter, shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. Additional definitions that apply to this chapter can be found at P.L. 2017, c. 149.

. . .

"Matching funds" means [cash, local governmental appropriations, grants, and other funds from any private or Federal source, and the proceeds from the sale of municipal bonds. Matching funds must equal the grant amount dollar-for-dollar. Grants] **funds equal to or greater than the amount of the grant from Bond Act funds, allocated by the grantee to the specific project for which the grant is awarded and derived from local sources, other grants, borrowing, or other sources as permitted through the grant approval process; provided, however, funds** from State of New Jersey sources may not be used to satisfy the matching requirement.

. . .

"Project" means the acquisition of land for construction of a new building(s)**, the acquisition of land and/or a building,** or expansion of an existing building(s) to be used as a public library; the establishment and construction of public libraries; the rehabilitation and repair of public libraries; and the acquisition of additional and upgraded furniture, fixtures, and/or information technology equipment.

. . .

"Rehabilitation" means the renovation, alteration, or reconstruction of any building or structure **for use as a public library**.

"Repair" means the restoration to a good or sound condition of materials, systems, and/or components of a public library building that are worn, deteriorated, or broken[, using materials or components identical to, or closely similar to, the existing materials].

"Substantial changes" means a 10 percent or more change in the eligible costs as submitted in the grant application[, and]**;** any internal structural changes that alter the function of the public library building or the allocation of space as submitted in the grant application**; or any change in total square footage of the project as submitted in the approved grant application**.

SUBCHAPTER 2. TERMS OF GRANT PROGRAM

15:24-2.1 Allocation of funds; match requirement

(a) (No change.)

(b) For any grant for a project approved by the State Librarian and the President, which is financed by Bond Act funds, the grant shall support no more than 50 percent of the **total** cost of the project **as specified in the approved grant application** and the applicant shall provide matching funds to support **no less than** 50 percent of the **total** cost of the project. **Any project costs incurred in excess of the total cost of the project as specified in the approved grant application shall be the sole responsibility of the applicant and will not result in an increase of the grant award.**

15:24-2.3 Funding priorities

(a) To ensure equitable distribution of grant monies across the library system and to meet the goals specified [in] **at** N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.1(b) and the Act, projects will be evaluated to determine whether they further the following State priorities. For each project, applicants should indicate which priorities will be promoted by such project and support such assertions using the means by which priority alignment will be determined as specified [in] **at** N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.4. The State priorities are as follows:

1. (No change.)

2. Enhancement of public libraries to serve as public spaces and community centers in which people engage and interact for civic, educational, informational, and recreational purposes; **and**

3. Optimization of the technological infrastructure to promote access to the Internet, electronic resources, and instruction in their use(s), helping all people to bridge the digital divide[; and]**.**

[4. Growth in critical public library services available to the citizens of New Jersey (including those that support education, employment, welfare, job training, career assistance, college preparation, securing government assistance, and civic services).]

15:24-2.4 Means by which priority alignment will be determined and evaluated

(a) Project alignment with the State priorities, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.3, will be determined and evaluated using the following criteria:

1.-4. (No change.)

[5. Future projected needs. Assess the anticipated library service needs of residents through the year 2030, particularly as they are related to core library services, as stated in N.J.A.C. 15:24-1.1. This analysis may include, but is not limited to, projections of future community demographics, review of current and projected library use statistics, and an examination of city planning documents.]

Recodify existing 6.-8. as **5.-7.** (No change in text.)

[9.] **8.** Functionality of the public library building. Evaluate how well the building works as a library, how it is consistent with the library's mission, [how it is consistent with the building program,] flexibility of the building design in adapting to future needs, and overall functionality of the building for the ease of the customer.

[10.] **9.** How the investment furthers existing functions. Describe how the project will enhance functions of the [existing] facility through augmentation of collections management, technology, dedicated space, programming/meeting space, and services, among others. This may include, but is not limited to, projects fostering energy efficiency using green design principles [and targeting Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certifications]; addressing collection preservation as part of building and rehabilitation design, such as the inclusion of climate control systems[, where necessary,] **or** [and] ambient lighting; promoting healthy internal building environments that protect human health and well-being [according to WELL Building Standards, as promoted by the International WELL Building Institute]; laptop plug-in and lab areas; WiFi enhancements; age-specific collaboration spaces; workforce training/job searching equipment; consortium and delivery operations; and reconfiguration in anticipation of projected future growth.

[11. How the project provides new services. Illustration of how the proposed project will contribute new or enhanced services for the broader communities it serves, including how the opportunities enabled by the project will complement other social services and programs within the community.

12. Degree of community support/partnerships. A description of the formal partners, both traditional and non-traditional, that support the library and/or the specified project, as well as the partners' respective roles dedicated to bolster the library's mission as it relates to the community it serves.]

[13.] **10.** (No change in text.)

[14.] **11.** Cost-effectiveness of the project. Feasibility of the costs; are they reasonable, accurate, [a good value,] do they support increased efficiency of the building, [and/or have an environmental impact.] **the degree to which a project produces a positive economic analysis when considering the construction, operating, and maintenance expenses compared to the project's resultant facilities and/or equipment, the life span of the facilities and/or equipment, facility usage and capacity, user productivity, and, where appropriate, such attributes as aesthetics, historic preservation, security, and safety.**

15:24-2.5 Computation of square footage costs

(a) The maximum per square foot costs for computation of the project grant funding of construction, rehabilitation, and repair have been set at $500.00 per square foot for new construction and $350.00 per square foot for rehabilitation and repair. For the rehabilitation and repair of a building registered as a New Jersey or Federal historic site, the maximum cost per square foot has been set at $500.00. If the grant program is administered in a phased-solicitation process, these costs will be adjusted annually according to the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), Northeast Region, All Items, not seasonally adjusted.

1. (No change.)

2. The maximum per square foot costs set forth above shall apply to all rounds of grant funding for which the solicitation for grant applications was published prior to January 1, 2026. Nothing in this section shall be construed to require that future rounds of grant funding administered pursuant to the Bond Act be subject to the same maximum per square foot costs. In determining the amount of a grant to approve, the State Librarian shall consider the cost-effectiveness of a project.

(b)-(e) (No change.)

15:24-2.7 Primary criteria for eligible projects

(a) All applications shall meet the following criteria:

1.-2. (No change.)

3. The applicant shall be in possession of a fee simple title or such other estate or interest in the project site, including access thereto, as is sufficient to assure undisturbed use and possession of the facility(ies) for not less than 20 years, or shall have met the criteria set forth at (a)4 and (b) [and (c)] below. Ownership of the site by the applicant includes ownership of the land by the municipality(ies) in which the applicant is located, or the county(ies,) in the case of a county or regional public library application, provided that such land has been formally dedicated to public library use.

4. (No change.)

[(b) If land and/or structures purchased with grant funds are sold within 20 years of the grant award notification, the applicant will be required to reimburse funds equal to the amount of grant funds received for such purpose to the Department of the Treasury.]

[(c)] **(b)** (No change in text.)

[(d)] **(c)** For each rehabilitation and/or building acquisition project, a building analysis shall be prepared by an architect licensed in the State of New Jersey and shall be submitted as part of the application. [The architect or a building consultant shall prepare a building program and such program shall be submitted as part of the application.] The architect shall certify that the rehabilitated structure and all its component parts shall have a life expectancy of 20 years or more from completion of the project. Analyses made by the architect regarding the following shall be submitted in substantiation of the suitability and practicality of the acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, or repair:

1.-2. (No change.)

3. [The] **An** evaluation of the space requirements and allocation of space demonstrating that the structure, as acquired or rehabilitated, will serve the specific needs of the applicant and its community [as defined in the library building program submitted as part of the grant application]; and

4. (No change.)

[(e)] **(d)** Certification by the applicant that it has, or will have, [local] **secured or committed** matching funds for the project, including a detailed listing of the matching funds **and the expected date of availability**. [The applicant shall support 50 percent of the cost of the project.] The local governing entity in the area served by the public library may solicit and receive grants and other funds from any private or Federal source to support its required share of the project. **State grant funds may not be used as matching funds.**

Recodify existing (f)-(h) as **(e)-(g)** (No change in text.)

[(i)] **(h)** All contracts shall be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder on the basis of open competitive bidding, as specified in the Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. [40:11]**40A:11**-1 et seq., unless exempt from the public bidding process [under] **pursuant to** that law.

[(j)] **(i)** (No change in text.)

SUBCHAPTER 3. GRANT ALLOCATION AND APPLICANT PRIORITIES

15:24-3.1 Applicant priorities for the receipt of grants for multiple and single projects

(a) Applicant priorities for the receipt of [construction] **project** grants shall include the following:

1.-3. (No change.)

15:24-3.2 Amount of grant and method of allocation

(a) A grant shall support no more than 50 percent of the **total** cost of the project **as specified in the approved grant application** and the applicant shall provide matching funds to support **no less than** 50 percent of the **total** cost of the project.

(b) When actual **eligible project** costs are less than the amount approved, the grant award shall be reduced proportionally, pursuant to (a) above, to reflect actual amounts.

(c) (No change.)

SUBCHAPTER 4. APPLICATION PROCEDURES; REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

15:24-4.1 Application procedures

(a) An application for a construction, **acquisition, or** rehabilitation[, or renovation] grant [under] **pursuant to** this chapter shall be on the official form, available from the New Jersey State Library and shall include the following:

1. A complete description of the project to be financed with a grant**, including the total square footage of the project and allocation of library versus non-library space**;

2.-5. (No change.)

[6. A building program and community analysis pursuant to N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.4(a);

7. Project schematic plans, which include a site plan, elevations, and floor plans;]

[8.] **6.** (No change in text.)

[9.] **7.** The applicant's certification of compliance with minimum criteria for receipt of State Aid pursuant to N.J.A.C. 15:21[-2] or a justification for not meeting the minimum criteria;

[10.] **8.** Certification, from an architect, as to the project's suitability for the rehabilitation or [purchase] **acquisition** of a library building pursuant to N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.7[(e)]**(c)**;

[11. A statement of intent from an architect that the project design aspires to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver level or higher certification, when applicable, or a listing of Green design elements in the proposed project;

12. A statement of intent from an architect that states the project design intends to meet WELL certification standards for improving human health and well-being in buildings, when applicable;]

Recodify existing 13.-15. as **9.-11.** (No change in text.)

(b) (No change.)

(c) All applicants will certify that they have, or will have, **secured or committed** the necessary required matching funds pursuant to N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.1[(c)]**(b)**.

(d) An application shall be made by the governing body charged with the responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of the public library (board of trustees or county library commission, or county board of [chosen freeholders] **commissioners**, as appropriate).

(e)-(g) (No change.)

[(h) Any substantial changes to a project after a grant is made shall be submitted, by a method as prescribed by the State Librarian, to the State Librarian and the President. The initial substantial changes to a project request form will be made available on the New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act page of the New Jersey State Library website, and such additional forms as the State Librarian requires the applicant to complete will be provided to the applicant individually. The State Librarian and the President may request meeting(s) with the applicant, the architect, and others associated with the project, as necessary. The State Librarian and the President shall approve or deny the proposed substantial change(s), in part or in whole, following review and analysis of the materials submitted by the grant recipient; provided, however, that where the proposed substantial changes require the reallocation of any funds appropriated by the Legislature and allocated to the projects, the approval of the Joint Budget Oversight Committee shall also be required in accordance with the Bond Act. Approval of the substantial changes to a project or changes to the amount of a project grant are necessary in order for the grant recipient to proceed.]

Recodify existing (i)-(j) as **(h)-(i)** (No change in text.)

15:24-4.2 Review of applications and approval process

(a)-(c) (No change.)

(d) Completed applications will be reviewed based on a competitive application process, whereby applications will be submitted by a certain date and will be evaluated to determine which applications are eligible for funding**, are cost competitive,** and are the most qualified to receive funding.

(e)-(g) (No change.)

SUBCHAPTER 5. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

15:24-5.2 Applicant/grant recipient reporting requirements

(a) (No change.)

(b) Within three months following notification of eligibility for a grant award, the applicant shall submit evidence [that funds have been appropriated or bonds or debt have been authorized for financing of the project] **satisfactory to the President and State Librarian demonstrating that the applicant has secured or committed the matching funds required pursuant to N.J.A.C. 15:24-2.1(b)**. Such evidence shall [include copies of the ordinance of appropriation passed on final reading and approved. Other evidence of funding, such as] **identify the source and amount of each component of the matching funds, the date on which such funds are or are expected to be available, and shall demonstrate that the funds are allocated or committed to the specific project for which the grant is awarded. Acceptable evidence may include, but is not limited to, duly adopted appropriation or bond ordinances or** resolutions, bank statements, [and] grant award notifications [shall be]**, or agreements, financing commitments, or other documentation** deemed acceptable at the discretion of the President and State Librarian. **The applicant shall certify that funds from State of New Jersey sources are not included as matching funds. The applicant shall promptly notify the State Library of any material change in the source, amount, or availability of the matching funds and, upon request, shall submit updated evidence demonstrating the continued availability of sufficient matching funds for the project.**

(c) (No change.)

SUBCHAPTER 6. GRANT ADMINISTRATION

15:24-6.1 Grant administration

(a)-(b) (No change.)

(c) Architectural or engineering supervision and inspection shall be provided by the applicant at the [construction] **project** site to ensure that the completed work conforms to the approved plans. For the purpose of inspection, representatives of the State Librarian shall have access, at all reasonable times, to all [construction] work being funded by the Bond Act. The applicant and contractor shall be required to facilitate such access and inspection.

(d) [Construction] **Work on the project** shall be initiated and completed according to the proposed timeline specified in the grant application**, or a subsequently amended and approved timeline**. The **initial** time limit for completion of the [construction] **project** shall be measured from the date of execution of the grant agreement.

(e) The grant shall be paid to the applicant in four installments as set forth in this subsection, but only upon receipt of satisfactory evidence upon completion of each phase, including the certification by the architect as to compliance with the **approved** maximum per square foot costs**, if applicable**.

1. Twenty-five percent [upon approval of the award of the construction contract(s). Satisfactory evidence of the award may be minutes of the governing body approving the award of construction contracts, copies of title pages of contracts with necessary signatures, letters of award, or other proofs of award of contract;] **of the total grant when the project is at least 25 percent complete and upon submission of the architect's certification as to such completion;**

2. [Fifty] **Twenty-five** percent **of the total grant** when the project is **at least** 50 percent complete and upon submission of the architect's certification **as to such completion**;

3. [Twenty] **Twenty-five** percent **of the total grant** when the project is substantially complete and upon submission of the architect's **final** certification **as to such completion**; and

4. [Five] **Twenty-five** percent **of the total grant** upon receipt of a temporary certificate of occupancy**, if applicable, or other evidence satisfactory to the State Librarian that the project is complete and available for its approved use,** and final project expenditure report.

(f) If the [construction] **project** period exceeds the **original** timeline **or a subsequently amended and approved timeline** by more than 12 months, a request for an extension must be made to the State Librarian no less than three months prior to the [original] **approved** completion date on an approved form. The State Librarian, in consultation with the President, will grant an extension for good cause with documentable reasons.

(g) In the event that [construction] **the project** is not substantially completed according to the **originally** approved timeline, or within reasonable extensions as granted by the State Librarian, the State Librarian has the authority to rescind the balance of the approved grant.

(h) Each recipient of a project grant shall provide such information as the State Librarian or President may request regarding the use of grant funds and the progress of the project. [Construction] **Project** progress status reports and up-to-date spend-down timelines may be requested as necessary.

(i) Failure to comply with any of the rules set forth in this chapter [shall] **may** make an applicant ineligible for funding not yet disbursed.

(j) The President, with the approval of the Joint Budget Oversight [Commission] **Committee**, may, in a manner consistent with the allocations provided in the Bond Act, allocate any balance in an approved grant to another eligible library; a new solicitation for grant applications; an amended application; or toward a library's larger project, if the approved project was only for a portion of a larger library [construction] project.

1.-3. (No change.)

15:24-6.2 Post award

(a) Any substantial changes to a project after a grant is made shall be submitted, by a method as prescribed by the State Librarian, to the State Librarian and the President. The initial substantial changes to a project request form will be made available on the New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act page of the New Jersey State Library website, and such additional forms as the State Librarian requires the applicant to complete will be provided to the applicant individually. The State Librarian and the President may request meeting(s) with the applicant, the architect, and others associated with the project, as necessary. The State Librarian and the President shall approve or deny the proposed substantial change(s), in part or in whole, following review and analysis of the materials submitted by the grant recipient; provided, however, that where the proposed substantial changes require the reallocation of any funds appropriated by the Legislature and allocated to the projects, the approval of the Joint Budget Oversight Committee shall also be required in accordance with the Bond Act. Approval of the substantial changes to a project or changes to the amount of a project grant are necessary in order for the grant recipient to proceed.

(b) If land and/or structures purchased with grant funds are sold, transferred, leased, otherwise disposed of, in whole or in part, or cease to be used for the public library purposes for which the grant was awarded, within the final maturity date of the original bonds funding such grant, the applicant will be required to reimburse to the Department of the Treasury a pro rata amount of the grant funds as determined by the State Library's Bond Counsel. The applicant shall notify the State Librarian, in writing, prior to any such sale, transfer, lease, disposition, or change in use. The cost of such review shall be borne by the applicant.

(c) Upon a permanent closure, or a closure of indeterminate duration, of a public library, the applicant shall submit to the State Librarian, a detailed plan regarding the status, intended use, and anticipated reopening of the facility, if applicable, and shall continue to provide updates regarding any proposed change in use of the facility or plans for reopening. If the State Librarian determines that the facility is no longer reasonably expected to reopen as a public library, the applicant may be required to reimburse to the Department of the Treasury a pro rata amount of the grant funds as determined by the State Library's Bond Counsel. The cost of such review shall be borne by the applicant.