



## Illinois Heartland Library System

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TO: IHLS Board of Directors  
FROM: Leslie Bednar  
DATE: May 19, 2022  
RE: FY2023 System Area and Per Capita Grant

We are in the home stretch of our FY2023 System Area and Per Capita Grant (SAPG) process and we are happy to attach member questions and staff responses regarding the two primary components—the draft budget and budget narrative, and the draft operational plan.

Since April 27, we sought input at these events:

- [Thursday Directors' Chats](#)
- April 29<sup>th</sup> Small Public Libraries networking group
- May 19<sup>th</sup> [Members Matter meeting](#)
- May 19<sup>th</sup> [Metro-East Public Library Management Group meeting](#)

### **Member Feedback**

We have attached the questions and responses received via the Open Gov Townhall site. IHLS is currently in a Request for Information phase to investigate the purchase of an automated materials handling system (AMHS) and have received several comments to date that have focused on this project. It is evident adjusting to a possible AMHS is important to our members and they naturally have questions. There is a lot of enthusiasm and some trepidation, and all is valuable feedback. In addition to the comments attached, we have fielded questions such as:

- Where specifically on the outside of the item is the barcode to be located?
- How much of our collection needs to be re-barcoded?

It is also gratifying to be able to visit and meet with members again in person. The COVID-19 pandemic did not dampen member appreciation for our staff and innovative methods of service delivery.

Thank you for your consideration.

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## Please provide your feedback for the FY2023 IHLS Operational Plan and Budget(s)

### 10 statements

#### Name not available (unregistered)

May 19, 2022, 2:31 PM

I understand what some of the other comments have said about the deficit, but as a taxpayer, I appreciate spending being taken from reserves (within reason) before doing what most businesses do, which is take out a loan to be "in budget." I also appreciate the various feedback mechanisms sprinkled throughout the plan. I'm very excited for the start of consulting hours. I had some questions about staffing, but the responses shared here have explained them. Looks good. Thank you.

#### Vicki Carr (registered)

May 19, 2022, 11:54 AM

South Macon Public Library appreciates the staff, support and programs that IHLS offer and look forward to working with them in 2023. Vicki Carr,

Director



#### Message from IHLS Open Town Hall Admin

Thank you for taking the time to review our data and provide your input. We look forward to working with you too!

#### Name not available (registered)

May 15, 2022, 11:01 AM

The open.gov refused to take this statement so I am resubmitting for a third time. The annual budget has a projected deficit of 1.38 millions dollars. This type of budget is irresponsible and poor fiscal management by the IHLS and its Board. The Capital Fund expenditures should be rank ordered by what is the most important and essential need. This budget should be cut by \$400,000. The Share program is a valuable program, but with a deficit no new people need to be hired, any grant monies for new positions should be filled with current positions. The General Fund has a history of over-projecting expenditures. This budget needs to be trimmed to at least half of its projected deficit budget. This current budget year some people received some huge raises, and yet in the projected budget a 4 percent raise has been budgeted. This needs to change, and cuts need to be made overall in this budget. In this budget there are no in-house food expenditures so that will save thousands of dollars. The Board needs to be fiscally responsible and represent its members. To my knowledge there is no law that puts a limit for the amount in reserve. With this current history of deficit the reserve can be gone very quickly with these spending projections.

In the Operating Plan under Communication there needs to be an anonymous survey for all members, IHLS staff and the Board. This will give everyone a change to express concerns as well as let IHLS know what is good. This type of survey is very important so that weaknesses can be addressed, strengths can be celebrated, and improvements can be made to the organization, and everyone will feel like they have been heard. There is also concern about nothing in the plan to support two Rails proposals, one for a state wide data base system for all libraries, and the other on the non-resident card proposal that is projected to become law. Why is there such an appearance of dysfunction between the two systems? Under the finance portion there needs to be a review of the finance policy and investment strategies. Hiring of someone to write grants needs to be filled by an in-house person. The automatic handling machine that is being researched is a huge concern to all members. The cost of changing to this system by many libraries would be huge. It is perceived that IHLS does not understand what the costs would be to the members. Member libraries are wanting to be reached out to so the costs of this endeavor to the members would be know by the Board before this project moves forward.

I hope that the Board members will be good representatives to the membership, be fiscally responsible, and be willing to give guidance to the director to help to continually improve IHLS.



## Message from IHLS Open Town Hall Admin

Thank you for taking the time to review our data and provide your input. Your concerns are valid, and we would like to provide a brief explanation.

IHLS moved to the OpenGov platform last fiscal year because it values transparency and stakeholder participation. IHLS has worked with OpenGov to address any issues and they have been very responsive.

We want to assure you that IHLS has no intention of ever spending more money than we have. We are all working towards the same goal of building a stronger, more impactful agency, and to do this we need a cohesive team. Each staff and board member plays an active and positive role in helping us move the organization forward. Without this team, there would be no services provided to our members. IHLS staff complete a Capital and General fund projects spreadsheet. This includes a list of every item that would need updated by the organization. On the same spreadsheet the years of useful life, estimated replacement date, and estimated cost are listed. IHLS staff then analyze this spreadsheet at budget times to determine which projects need to be completed in the next fiscal year. The items that are listed in FY2023 budgets are items that need to be replaced/repared. Completing these projects now will further delay the inevitable need of upgrades and replacements and will allow us to forecast more accurately for future years. We have an adequate General Fund & Capital Projects fund cash balance to complete these projects that are budgeted. As a result of multiple years of unspent funds in the General fund, it has allowed IHLS to build a reserve amount in the General & Capital Projects fund to absorb these deficits. We'd also like to note the IHLS service area square mileage is large and the cost to provide delivery is more than 64% of our Service Area and Per Capita Grant (SAPG) funding. That leaves 36% of our budget to provide the library administration, resource sharing, bibliographic access, and consulting and continuing education. The cost of providing delivery alone in FY2023 has increased over 25%.

With the great resignation upon us there are more job openings available. People are searching for better compensation, better benefits, or a better career path. If we don't meet employee needs, we lose our ability to attract and retain top talent. We cannot serve our members to the best of our ability if we don't have the right people in the right positions. IHLS provided wage adjustments, not raises, to staff who were underpaid in their positions. The wage adjustments that occurred during this fiscal year are a result of the benchmarking project that was completed by an independent and unbiased organization. They reviewed each job description and created salary ranges for each position. Each position was then vetted and the employees that were underpaid were brought up to the salary that they should have been paid based on the work that they do. These wage adjustments were then approved by the IHLS Board of Directors. At no point did IHLS have any say in the ranges that were developed for our organization. While the results of this benchmarking project did increase some staff members' salaries, this impacted less than 50% of our employees. The remaining 50% have not seen an increase in their salary since July 2020 (FY2021). The consumer price index reports an 8.1% increase in all costs over the last 12 months, this does not consider the price increases from May 2020 to May 2021. While costs continue to increase, we need to offer a competitive salary to our employees without risking further detriment to the organization, which will inevitably impact our ability to provide services to members. A 4% raise is minimal in comparison to the percentage increase Consumer Price Index reports. To successfully operate as an organization and continue, as well as increase, support to members, it is imperative we stay competitive and invest in our staff.

In FY2023 we will be conducting our triennial all-member survey. This is listed on the top of page 2 in the Operational Plan under the "Communications" section. All surveys to members, past and present, have anonymity. We provide an option to enter a name, should the person wish to do so, but it has never been a requirement. We understand the need and desire by individuals for anonymity when submitting feedback and would never require an individual to release their name to us. We want to ensure the services we are providing are aligned with the charge of Illinois Library System statutes. These Illinois statutory priorities are library administration, resource sharing, bibliographic access, consulting and continuing education, and delivery.

The non-resident cards legislation is currently expected to be signed into law by the governor. When it is signed into law, we will do as we always have: support and inform our members of this new legislation. The RAILS database initiative is a great endeavor, and we absolutely would love to see it come to fruition. The Illinois Library Association Legislative Initiative did not adopt the RAILS database initiative as a priority to add to their legislative agenda. ILA concluded that there are other services more vital to members that are taking priority, such as broadband access; therefore, IHLS chose to take the same stance on ILA's priorities. While the database initiative is something we have currently chosen to not make a priority, this does not mean we do not support that initiative. Should RAILS share more information with us, we will be more than happy to pass along the information to our members and offer our support for their efforts.

Grant research is an exhaustive and time-consuming process, and something our current in-house staff have neither the time nor the capabilities to take on. All current staff have specific day-to-day duties that take priority, making grant research a low priority for any staff who may have the appropriate background and education to do so. Hiring a grants consultant with a sole focus on grant research, allows a stronger attention and effort to researching and applying for grants that can benefit our organization and members.

You are correct that it is important to consider the member impact with an AMH system. Next fiscal year we will begin a full analysis (for IHLS and the member libraries) of the AMH system with the information we have received from the Request for Information (RFI) from AMH vendors. The RFI will provide us with important data for next potential steps. Once we have an analysis of this data, we will be bringing it to our members so we can present what we have, discuss our ideas, listen to member feedback, and work on solutions. IHLS is aware of the impact on member libraries and will take that into consideration in the decision before moving forward on this project. We also made this announcement in a Directors' Chat session on May 5. IHLS also plans to look for grant funding for the purchase of the AMH system along with member support for barcodes and/or RFID tags. IHLS realizes this is a pivotal moment in library technology and we are focused on technology improvements that benefit our member libraries.

We have full confidence in our board of directors. They act in full knowledge of appropriate state and national statutes and with our member and staff needs top of mind.

Links:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/09/majority-of-workers-who-quit-a-job-in-2021-cite-low-pay-no-opportunities-for-advancement-feeling-disrespected/> (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/09/majority-of-workers-who-quit-a-job-in-2021-cite-low-pay-no-opportunities-for-advancement-feeling-disrespected/>)

<https://www.bls.gov/charts/consumer-price-index/consumer-price-index-by-category.htm> (<https://www.bls.gov/charts/consumer-price-index/consumer-price-index-by-category.htm>)

### Name not shown (registered)

May 6, 2022, 11:08 AM

The budget deficit is rather large, but I see that you have the cash flow to support these expenditures. I assume that in future years the budget will not remain as negative because you cannot spend money that you do not have. I am interested to learn more about the AMH when the information is available to us. IHLS has always looked for innovative ways to support us members. The consulting program that you will be starting would be good for us. I also like the library trustee program, that would be very beneficial to my board. Have you gathered information on what other organizations are budgeting for the salary increases for staff? Does the Illinois State Library plan to increase your funding or what measures can be taken with increasing costs? I have heard before that RAILS receives much more funding than IHLS, why are the amounts so different?



### Message from IHLS Open Town Hall Admin

Thank you for taking the time to review our data and provide your input. Your concerns are valid and we would like to provide a brief explanation.

IHLS will never plan to spend more money than we have. Based on an article published by HR Source on March 29, 2022, survey reports the average pay increase for non-exempt employees is at 4.63% and exempt employee increases are averaging 4.38%. RAILS is considering a 5.9% increase based on their FY2023 Operational Plan board document. The Secretary of State's FY2023 budget included an increase of over \$2.8 million to the three library systems. From that approved budget request, IHLS received an increase of \$519,300 in the System Area & Per Capita Grant. Currently, IHLS is funded below statutory funding. Our hope is that library systems will be fully funded in the future years. We have budgeted for a grants contractor to assist in finding alternative revenue sources for the support of future projects. The library systems are mainly supported by the System Area & Per Capita grant. Even though IHLS does cover a slightly higher service area, RAILS has a much larger population. Also, with the results of the census, IHLS population recorded a decline while RAILS recorded an increase. Thus resulting in RAILS receiving approximately three times more System Area & Per Capita Grant revenue than IHLS.

### Name not available (registered)

May 5, 2022, 9:17 AM

I read the part where ongoing work is being done on the building at Edwardsville. Is this necessary? Aren't the majority of employees still working from home?

I would think it should be a priority only if the remodeling is to get the staff back to the building. Also if the re-modeling would be for in-house continuing education workshops for library staff on budget, policies, by-laws, new requirements on IPLAR and Per Capita Grants and in-person professionals such as Phil Lenzini that have so much information that is helpful to current and new library directors.



### Message from IHLS Open Town Hall Admin

Thank you for taking the time to review our data and provide your input. Your concerns are valid and we would like to provide a brief explanation.

IHLS staff fully returned to the office in 2021. As it was prior to COVID, there are some staff members that are able to work remote a certain number of hours per week based on their job description. The Edwardsville building has not been updated since 1994 and the building is in need of some repairs and updates. IHLS started the remodeling process in FY2021 and we have a remainder of the upstairs to complete along with a small training room on the first floor. We need to make accommodations for our growing number of staff that are now located in the Edwardsville location and we will have another meeting room space on the second floor. Unfortunately, we will no longer be able to accommodate large groups for training sessions at the Edwardsville location but if we have a large in person group session, we plan to rent a space that will accommodate the group size. We will continue to offer trainings virtually on a variety of topics and we truly appreciate the list of workshops that you have provided. It is very beneficial to know what are libraries are needing. In FY2023 we will be conducting our triennial all-member survey. Please take the time to complete this survey, as these are great suggestions for training topics! The training topics are developed based on member input from this survey.

### Name not available (registered)

May 3, 2022, 9:46 AM

I am concerned at the deficit budget, and the hiring of additional staff. Should IHLS be taking on new staff without the means of support for that position long-term? Deficit budgets are not the standard and I worry about the outcome, especially with the Illinois elections this year.



### Message from IHLS Open Town Hall Admin

Thank you for taking the time to review our data and provide your input. Your concerns are valid and we would like to provide a brief explanation.

The new positions that are in the General fund are a Membership Coordinator for a partial year and a Project Coordinator that is allocated 25% to the General fund and 75% to the Trustee Training Grant. The Membership Coordinator is budgeted to start in January 2023, this is to enhance member services with a focus on Continuing Education. This is an area that IHLS has identified that needs additional staff for the development of these services for our members. The Project Coordinator is mainly supported by the Trustee Training Grant. This position will be determined by the length of this grant and the need for this position. With the importance of this training grant, the Project Coordinator will allow for the full development of this project in ample time. This position will also assist in the organization of General fund projects. For the SHARE budget, the Administrative Assistant will provide much needed support for all SHARE management staff. This position will alleviate administrative tasks from management personnel that will allow them to focus on high level projects that will support SHARE members.

While some of the budgets are in a deficit, these budgeted amounts are intended to be "no more than" amounts and IHLS has historically ended well under the budgeted Total Revenue Over (Under) Expenditures. Please see the Historical Budget vs. Actual memo presented to IHLS Board of Directors at their April meeting.

<https://www.illinoisheartland.org/sites/default/files/meetings/other/14.3%20Historical%20Budget%20vs.%20Actual.pdf>

Since existence, IHLS has not received full funding based on the Illinois statue of Area and Per Capita funding. While a negative budget is not ideal, it is important to ensure that IHLS can provide all the necessary services to our members libraries and the communities they serve. Both SHARE and General fund have fund balances to absorb these deficits at this time.

### Name not available (registered)

April 29, 2022, 10:29 AM

I understand that an automated system at IHLS would save IHLS money, but it would cost individual member libraries a lot in terms of products (new barcodes for everything) and time (personnel to re-barcode everything.) Perhaps IHLS could explore a way that the barcode could be printed on the slips that are currently being placed on the front of the books? I would think that a change in the systemwide software would be a far less expensive option for member libraries and still be compatible with an automated system. However, I am not skilled or knowledgeable enough to know if that is possible. Just a thought.



### Message from IHLS Open Town Hall Admin

Thank you for taking the time to review our data and provide your input. You are correct that it is very important to consider the member impact with an AMH system. Next fiscal year we will begin a full analysis (for IHLS and the member libraries) of the AMH system with the information we have received from the Request for Information from AMH vendors. IHLS is aware of the impact on member libraries and will take that into consideration in the decision before moving forward on this project. Once the full analysis of AMH has been completed, the results will be posted for member comment prior to a decision being made. IHLS plans to look for grant funding for the purchase of the AMH system along with member support for barcodes and/or RFID tags. IHLS realizes this is a pivotal moment in library technology and we are focused on technology improvements that benefit our member libraries.

## Name not available (registered)

April 28, 2022, 3:51 PM

I am a little confused by why IHLS needs a four person accounting department. It doesn't indicate which of them are full-time, but that seems like an awful lot of people to handle the finances of an organization this size. The IT department also seems a little oversized for the size of the organization, but since SHARE's primary product is software, that at least seems somewhat justified.

The service which seems underfunded relative to its importance is Consulting to libraries. In particular, it would be very valuable for IHLS to hire a HR professional which can provide training, but especially situational advice and assistance, to member libraries. We have hundreds of libraries and no more than a handful have anything like an HR professional, and most cannot even afford to belong to an organization such as Employers Association. This is a great need I would like to see considered in future budgets.

Perhaps there would be value in hiring an outside consultant to review job descriptions and how much work is actually being done by each position. Especially since staff started working at home, it seems like we have persons performing very few duties. Is there accountability? There are staff at IHLS who can always be seen actively supporting libraries (Anna Yackles is a good example) and there are others from whom are almost never seen nor heard. (Sadly, Ms. Bednard is on this list.)

I would like to see more accountability and honestly, more value given to libraries, from a budget this size.



## Message from IHLS Open Town Hall Admin

Thank you for taking the time to review our data and provide your input. Your concerns are valid and we would like to provide a brief explanation.

Our Accounting Department has 4 staff members and this is equivalent to 3.8 full-time equivalent (FTE). Of this number, 1.75 FTE do the work and are financially supported by the OCLC Billing Grant, which is the OCLC Fund on our organizational budget narrative. We are the fiscal agent for the statewide billing of OCLC services for the Illinois State Library, which includes libraries throughout all of Illinois. This grant manages approximately 5 million in revenues and expenditures each year. The other 2.05 FTE in Accounting are financially supported by the General Fund. They manage the SHARE and IHLS billings and collections, accounts payable for General fund, CMC fund, OCLC fund, SWAYS fund, Capital Projects fund, and SHARE fund, the in-house payroll processing for all funds (roughly 100 employees), tax filings, grant reporting, management of IHLS annual audit, and many additional duties beyond listed here. The IT Department consists of 4 FTE; 2 FTE for General fund and 2 FTE for SHARE. IT provides internal support for the organization as well as for all IHLS and SHARE member libraries.

We could not agree more that consulting and continuing education for member libraries is an area that needs development. IHLS has been focusing on the development of our Membership department and the fulfillment of member needs are expanding with the recent addition of a school liaison focused on school library needs and concerns, and a future addition of a Membership Coordinator with continuing education focus in FY2023. Additional details on the FY2023 Membership planned activities can be found on page 18 in the operational plan. Our HR Department (along with other departments such as IT and Marketing/Communications) plan to initiate consulting hours for member libraries to schedule a time to meet one-on-one to discuss specific issues. IHLS offers webinars annually related to staff development of a variety of HR topics. Please see this link on our website for information for the current series <https://www.illinoisheartland.org/ce/hr-webinars> (<https://www.illinoisheartland.org/ce/hr-webinars>). Additional details on the FY2023 Human Resources planned activities can be found on page 6 in the operational plan. Please note that we cannot advise on specific situations when pertaining to HR laws due to the legality, but we can provide resources for guidance.

We can assure you that all staff at IHLS work diligently to serve member libraries. Each staff member has a different role that they serve within the organization. Some staff are externally facing and some staff are internally facing. While the presence of every staff member is different at every level, all staff have the best interest of members in mind while completing their tasks and our focus is on IHLS member libraries no matter what our role is within the organization.

We value accountability and honesty within our organization. Please feel free to contact us if this response has not addressed your concerns.

**Name not available (registered)**

April 27, 2022, 4:14 PM

Thank you for the opportunity to examine and give feedback. As a member library, we have 2 areas of concern in the FY2023 budget proposal. The AMH (automatic material handler) would save IHLS money in the long run, but it would come at the cost of the member libraries. This would require member libraries to operationally change our current barcode systems, and likely would mean a continued replacement of the entire collections barcodes. This route should only be considered if the AMH system would not require any significant change to how member libraries are applying barcodes, and after considerable input from any member libraries who would be affected.

(Context: as a member library, I do not know which of these projects are necessary and emergent. If all of these projects are imperative, please ignore this feedback.) It is worrisome to see such negative balances. Libraries around the state are struggling, and such drastic increases to spending sends a mixed message. Considering current material costs, labor costs, and the continued uncertainty of the supply chain, it may be worthwhile to examine pushing some of these projects back, instead of trying to fit them all into the same fiscal year.

**Message from IHLS Open Town Hall Admin**



Thank you for taking the time to review our data and provide your input. You are correct that it is very important to consider the member impact with an AMH system. Next fiscal year we will begin a full analysis (for IHLS and the member libraries) of the AMH system with the information we have received from the Request for Information from AMH vendors. IHLS is aware of the impact on member libraries and will take that into consideration in the decision before moving forward on this project. Once the full analysis of AMH has been completed, the results will be posted for member comment prior to a decision being made. IHLS plans to look for grant funding for the purchase of the AMH system along with member support for barcodes and/or RFID tags. IHLS realizes this is a pivotal moment in library technology and we are focused on technology improvements that benefit our member libraries.

IHLS prioritizes projects prior to placing them in the budget and executing them. All the items budgeted this year are items that need to be accomplished. Completing these projects now will further delay the inevitable need of upgrades and replacements and will allow us to forecast more accurately for future years. We have an adequate General Fund & Capital Projects fund cash balance to complete these projects that are budgeted. As a result of multiple years of unspent funds in the General fund, it has allowed IHLS to build a reserve amount in the General & Capital Projects fund to absorb these deficits.

**Name not shown (registered)**

April 27, 2022, 1:58 PM

Although the budget will be projected to end in a deficit, I feel that the staff and administration has worked diligently to review expenses and revenues. Have ideas of future savings and/or revenue offers. Lean times have always been around for systems and this post-Covid environment has placed some hurdles to the systems funding. The system will manage the rocky road ahead and I am sure come out stronger.



**Message from IHLS Open Town Hall Admin**

Thank you for taking the time to review our data and provide your input.

IHLS Open Town Hall is not a certified voting system or ballot box. As with any public comment process, participation in IHLS Open Town Hall is voluntary. The statements in this record are not necessarily representative of the whole population, nor do they reflect the opinions of any government agency or elected officials.