

2022-2025

SUSTAINABLE & RESILIENT
NEW ENGLAND LIBRARIES GRANT

IMPACT REPORT



Wilmot Public Library Entrance



K. Laughlin

MESSAGE FROM ARSL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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



NORTHEAST

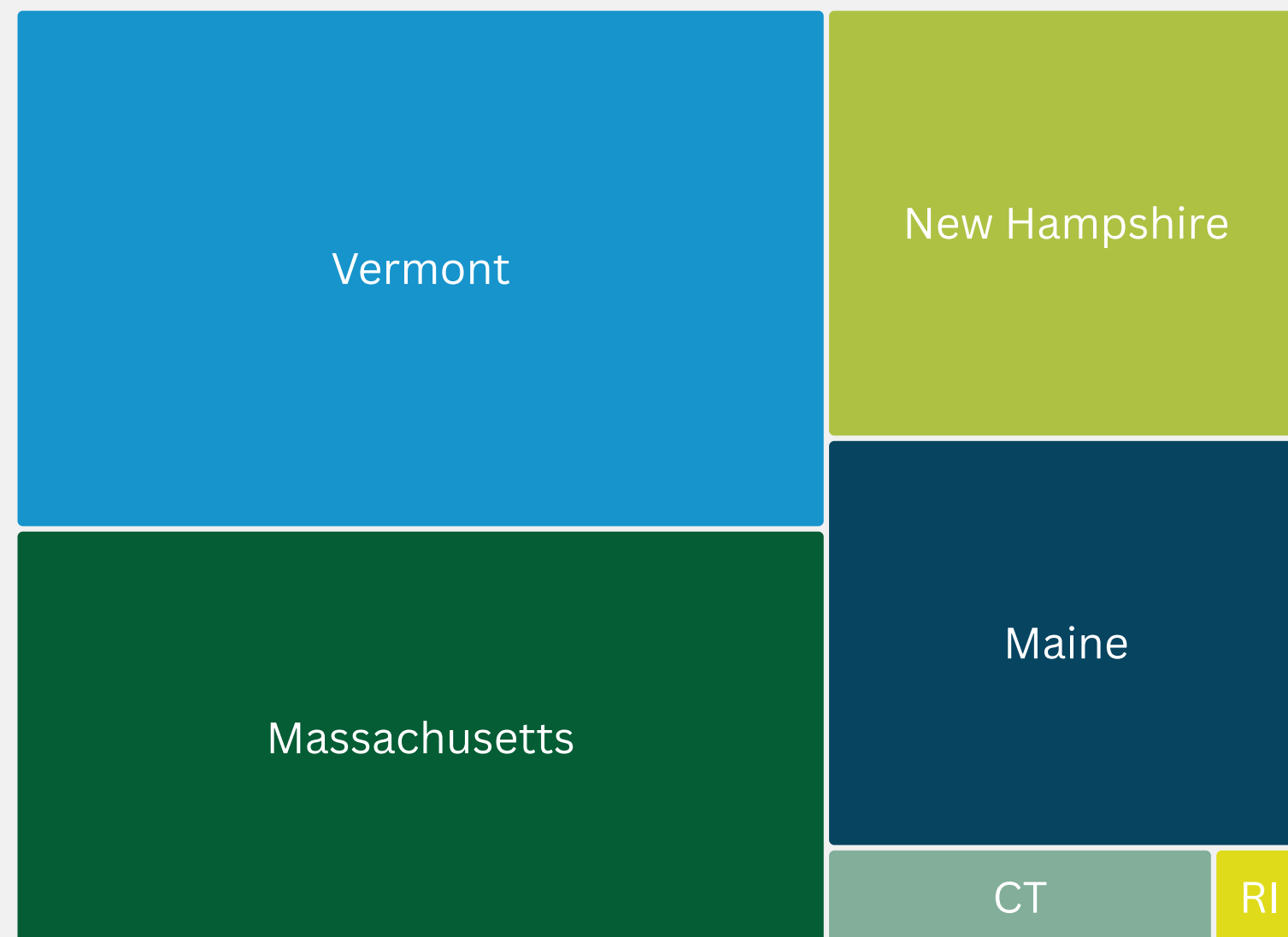


Bonney Memorial Library Teen Area

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

PROJECTS BY STATE (2022-2025):

VT-146, MA-117, ME-68, NH-71, CT-13, RI-3



\$2,277,000

Awarded to Libraries from
2022-2026



1,109,700

People Impacted



418

Projects Funded



172

Libraries Awarded

QUANTIFYING SUPPORT: NEW ENGLAND'S RURAL LIBRARIES

State	Percentage of Libraries considered Rural	Number of Rural Libraries in State	Percentage of Rural Libraries Supported by S&R Grant (2022-2025)
Connecticut	38%	72	10%
Maine	86%	221	23%
Massachusetts	31%	114	29%
New Hampshire	81%	179	22%
Rhode Island	19%	9	22%
Vermont	96%	175	23%

DATA SOURCED FROM IMLS PUBLIC LIBRARIES SURVEY, FY2024 | PERCENTAGES ROUNDED TO NEAREST WHOLE NUMBER

PROGRAM FOCUS



Facility Improvements

Capital improvements, such as ADA accessibility upgrades, heating and cooling center improvements, sustainable facility certification, improvements to library green spaces, and LED lighting conversions, **create long-term enhancements to library buildings.**

Outreach & Programming

The creation and ongoing support of **community-driven programs focused on sustainability**, including food security initiatives, garden projects, and educational programming.

Fundraising Efforts

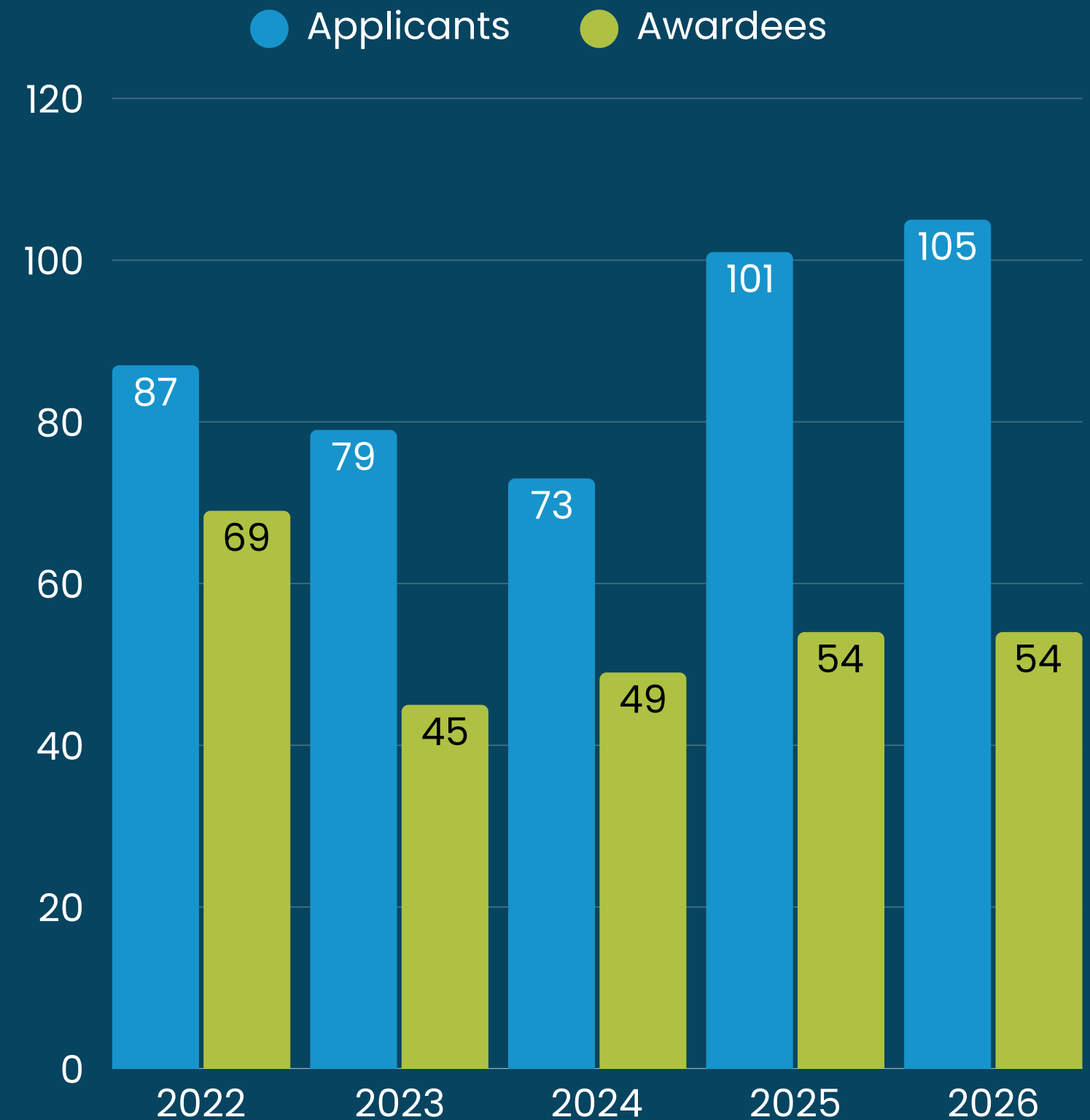
Supporting initiatives that enable libraries to broaden their funding sources is essential for **diversifying and strengthening long-term sustainability.** (Added in 2025)

PROGRAM EVOLUTION

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

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

Application success rate still remains at more than 50%.



PROGRAM REFINEMENTS

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

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



Bancroft Memorial Library Accessible Door Installation

PROGRAM REFINEMENTS: INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY & IMPACT

- **Flexible Funding Levels**

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

- **Expanded Focus Areas**

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

- **No Matching Funds Required**

- Libraries can apply without needing to secure additional funding.

- **Quick & Simple Application**

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



Edwards Public Library Garden

PROGRAM REFINEMENTS: INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY & IMPACT

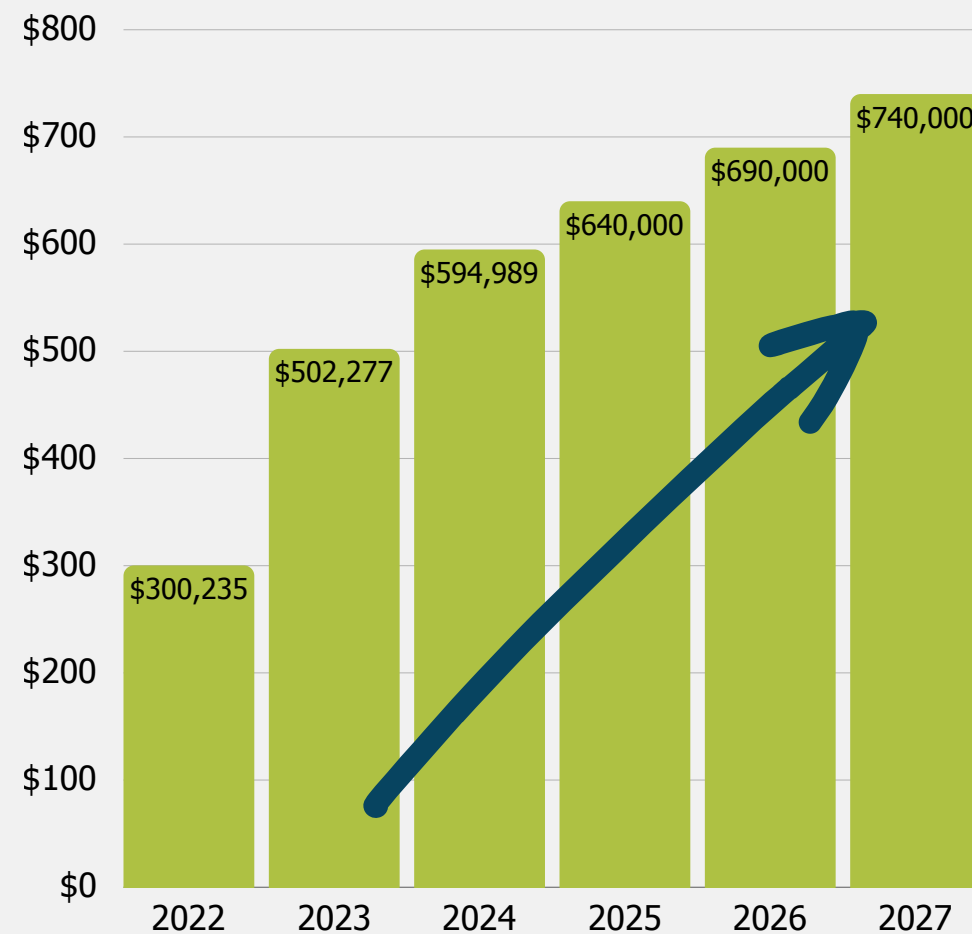
- **Minimal Reporting Burden**
 - Only practical, actionable data is requested.
- **Full Funding Provided Upfront**
 - Libraries receive the full grant amount at the start and may use leftover funds for other urgent needs.
- **No Receipt Submission**
 - Less paperwork means more time for program delivery.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



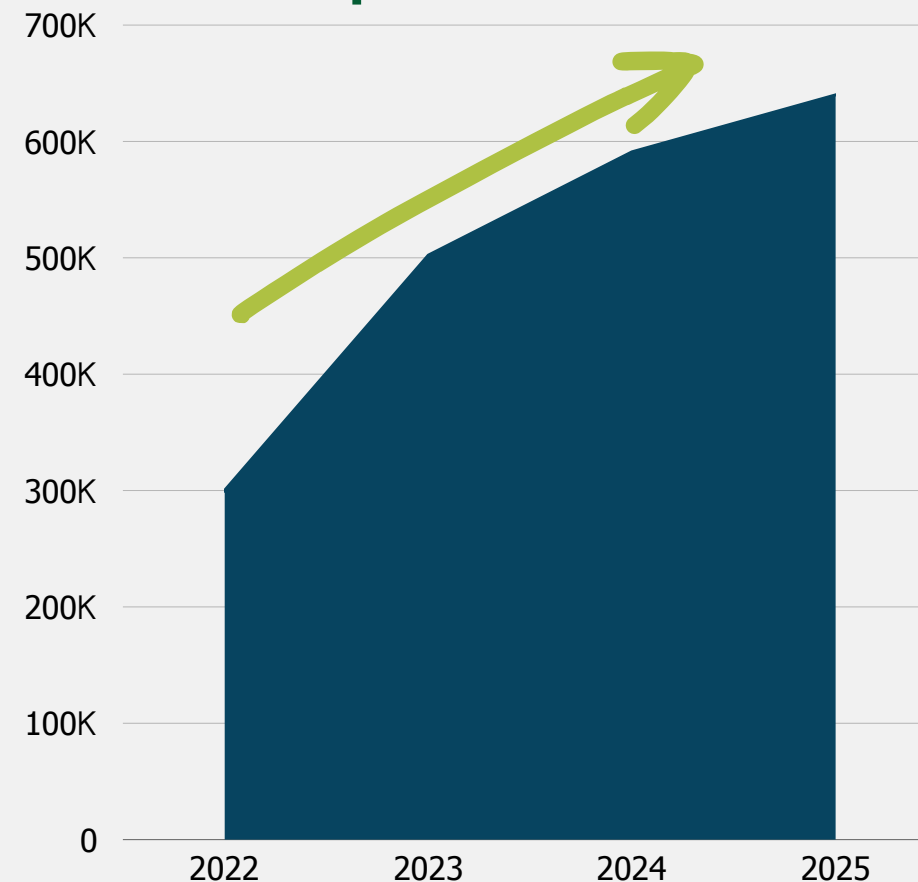
Bonney Memorial Library Storytime Area

GRANT PROGRAM GROWTH

Investment in New
England's Rural Libraries



Total Number of
Community Members
Impacted



\$9,269

Average Grant Size

2.44

Average Projects Completed
per Awardee

\$4,723

Average Project Cost

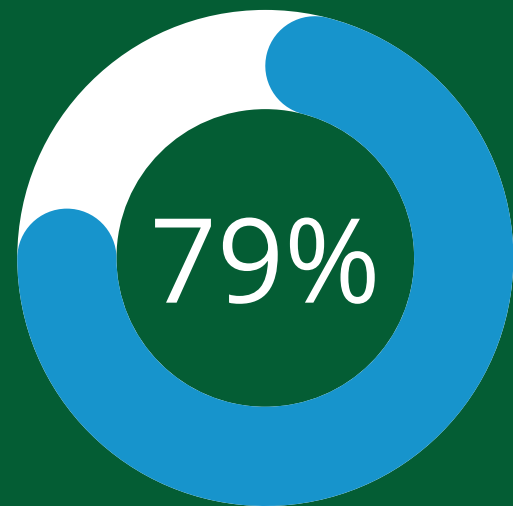
36

Libraries awarded more
than once

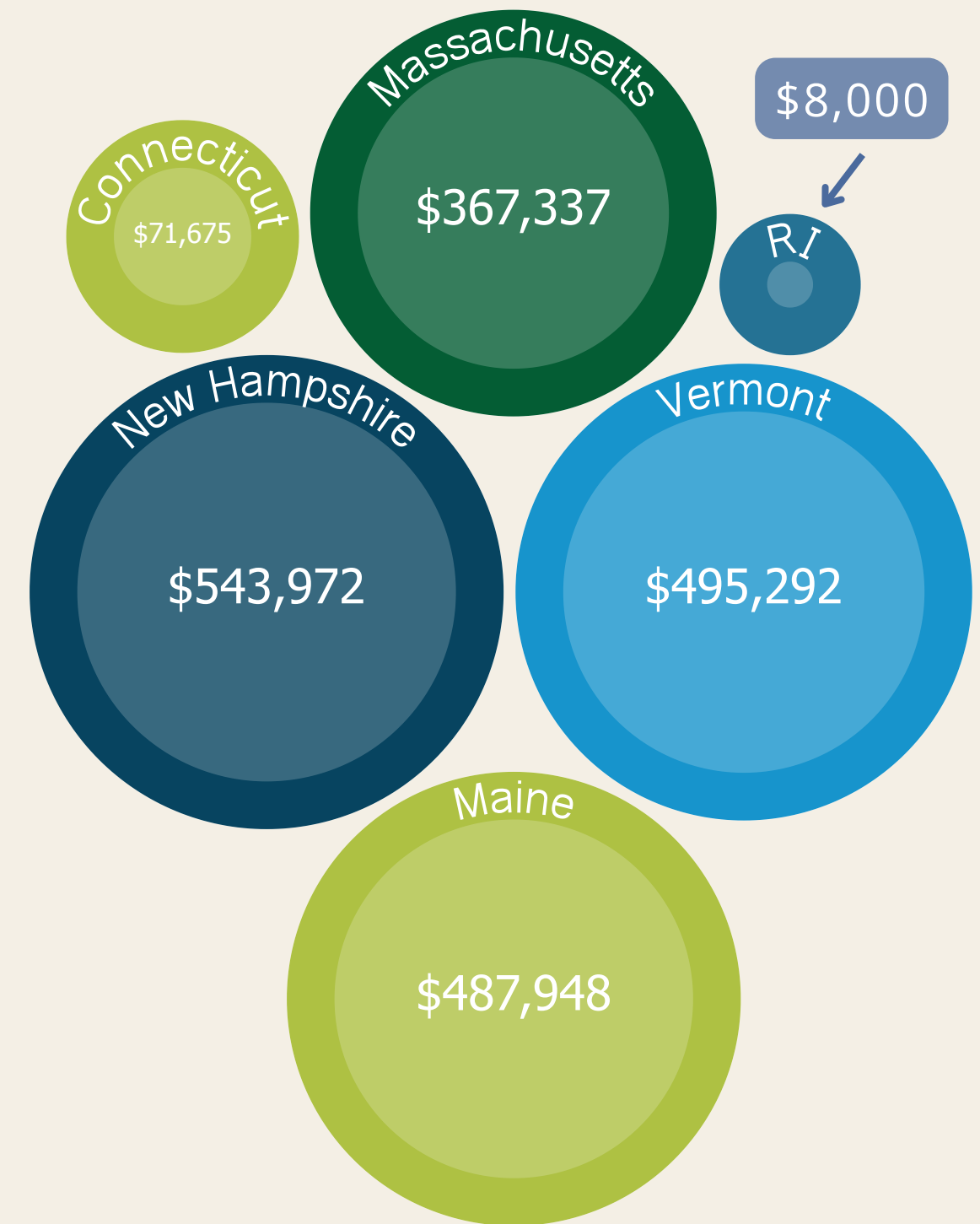
PROJECTS: FUNDING AT-A-GLANCE



OF PROJECTS
WERE FULLY FUNDED



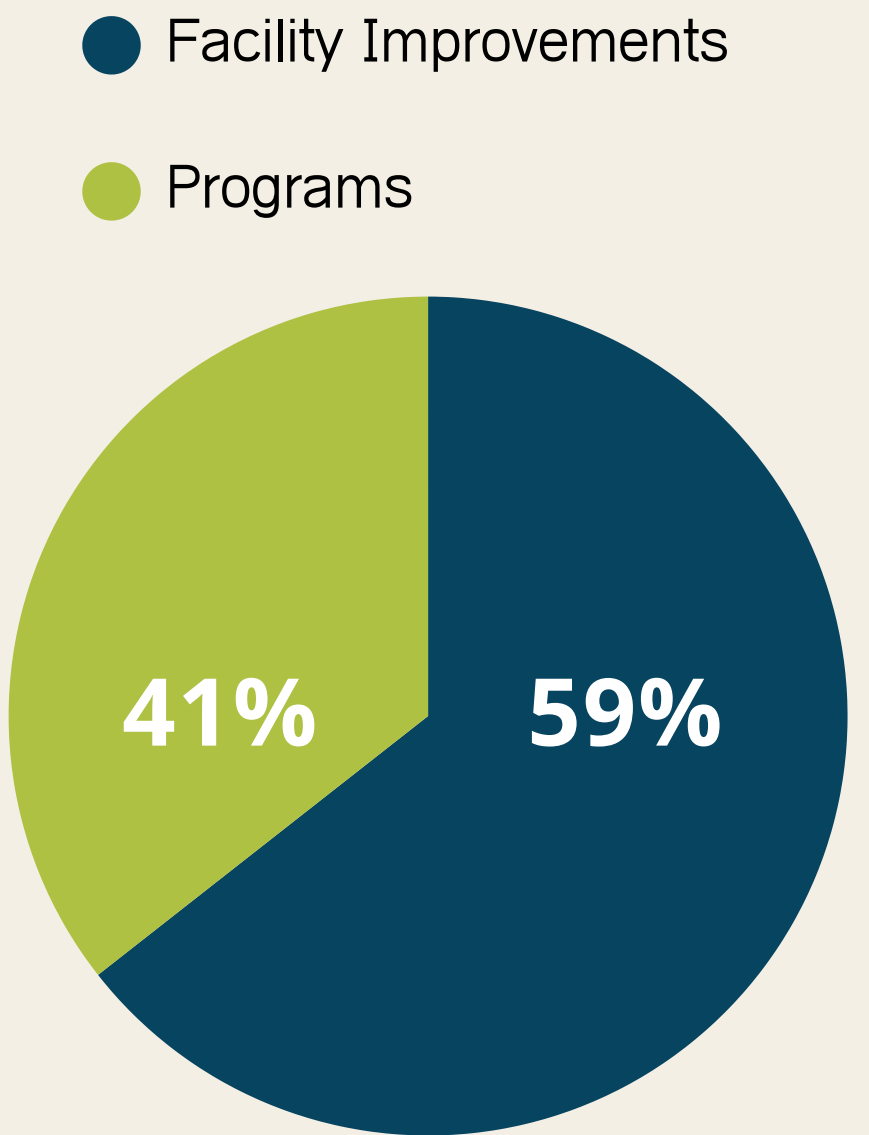
OF PROJECTS
INCLUDED LONG-TERM
SUSTAINABILITY PLANS



Funding Levels by State
2022-2025

PROJECTS: TYPES AT-A-GLANCE

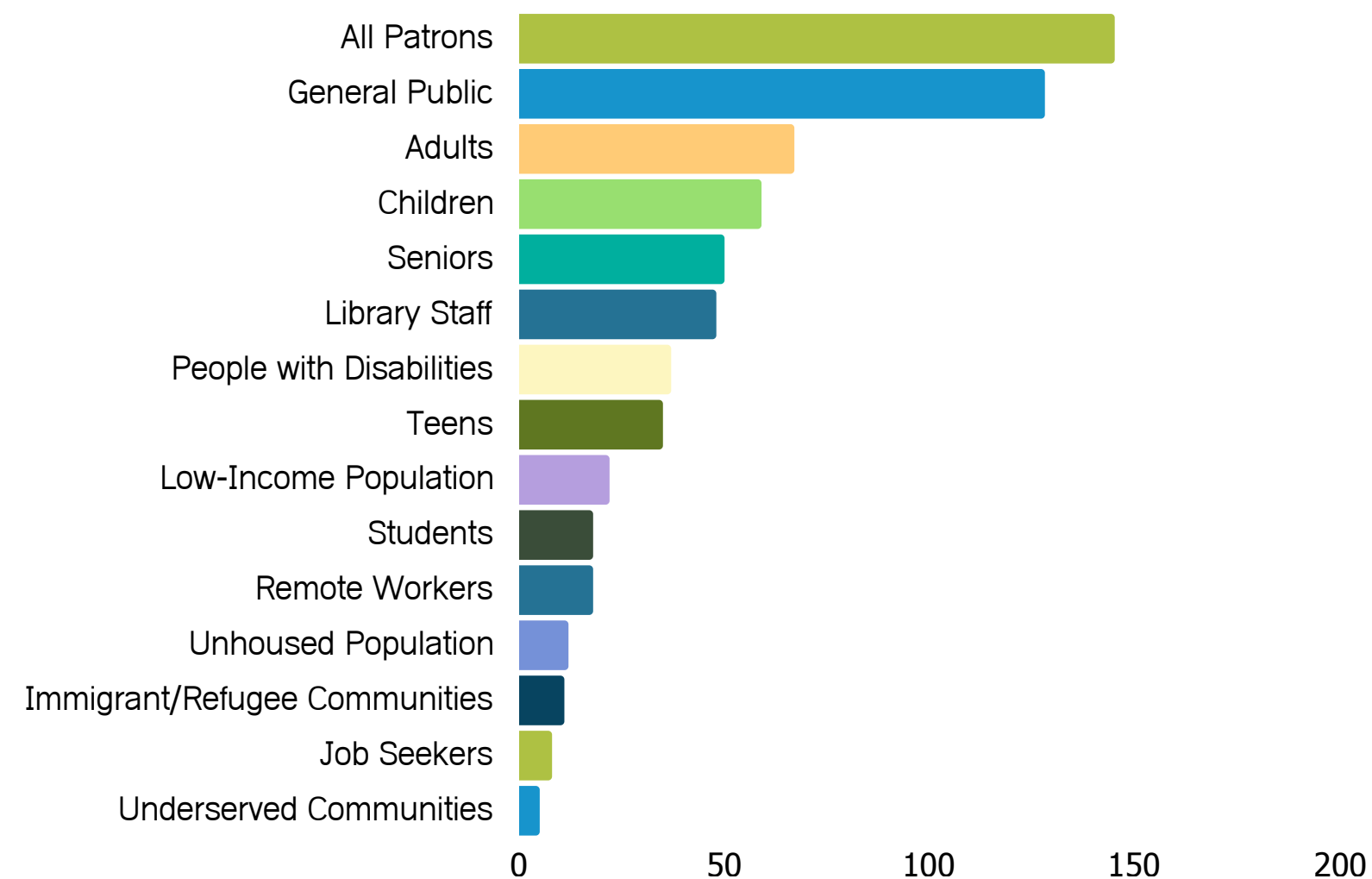
PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN



GRANT SUPPORT FOCUS

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY NEEDS

PRIMARY POPULATION IMPACTED BY PROJECTS



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

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

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

SELECTED STORIES OF IMPACT

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



Meekins Library Lighting Improvements



Philbrick James Library New Walkway with Accessible Automatic Door

“Sometimes we just don’t know how much of a difference a project will make until we actually see it complete.”

Using their \$15,000 of grant funding, the **Philbrick James Library (NH)**, service population 2,000, transformed their library, converting their lighting to LED, also taking advantage of state program savings. They also updated their aging walkways to granite pavers and installed an automatic door, making their library more accessible and welcoming to the community.

The **Skidompha Library (ME)**, service population 5,400, used their \$5,000 grant to re-establish their library as a reliable source of food assistance in the community through the improvement of its food shelf. Different groups of volunteers donated items and assembled resource kits, such as grab-and-go meal bags. There has been great enthusiasm surrounding these efforts. In the future, they plan to add a community refrigerator in order to expand the range of goods available.

“Skidompha’s development director reminds me often that a rising tide lifts all boats. I thank you for helping to lift our boats.”



Skidompha Library Food Shelf



Tracy Memorial Library Water-Damaged Window Replacement

“The generous support of the Manton Foundation and the ARSL allowed us to address not only immediately pressing significant risks to the iconic Tracy Memorial Library building in New London, but be proactive in addressing other facility problems as they arose during the construction project. ”

Tracy Memorial Library (NH), service population 4,400, used their \$15,000 grant to restore the function and appearance of their historic building. Originally built in 1823, the building needed significant repairs. Grant funds allowed the library to repair the original slate roof, repair rot-damaged wooden beams and trim, and replace failing windows. Now, this library can be enjoyed for decades to come.



Highgate Library & Community Center Greenhouse

“By integrating programming for multi-generational patrons all programs were, we have transitioned the library from a place of passive consumption to a hub of active, sustainable living, using the funds to create more outdoor experience for all ages and abilities.”

Highgate Library & Community Center (VT), service population 3,564, used their \$15,000 grant to add an outdoor kitchen, adult gardening programs, raised beds, new gardening benches, wooden picnic tables, and a gazebo with a sunshade. They are committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of their Backyard Project through a combination of ongoing community support, careful resource management, and strategic partnerships.

“We know that being outdoors greatly improves mental health. Being far north, we have long winters, and so being able to spend time outside in a beautiful space accessible to all is a wonderful gift to our community.”

Bethlehem Public Library (NH), service population 2,500, used their funding to build an outdoor pavilion for their summer programming, replacing an aging tent. The new structure is now home for outdoor activities in their green space, while providing a flat, stable surface that is accessible to all patrons.



Bethlehem Public Library Outdoor Pavilion Project In-Progress

ARSL MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

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

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

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



COMMITTEE MEMBER INSIGHTS: IMPACT OF THE WORK

DREA DOUGLAS

North Bend Public Library (OR)

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

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



KIMBERLY BRANTLEY

City of Wolfforth Library (TX)

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

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

COMMITTEE MEMBER INSIGHTS: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ANONYMOUS

(WY)

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



CARRIE BUSHMAN

Cook Memorial Library (OR)

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

THANK YOU



MANTON
FOUNDATION



ARSL
THE ASSOCIATION FOR
RURAL & SMALL
LIBRARIES