FY2024 RAILS Catalog Membership Grant

Program Overview

This grant is intended to strengthen library resource sharing in Illinois and increase membership in RAILS Local Library System Automation Programs (LLSAP) by funding many of the one-time startup costs involved in joining. "Local Library System Automation Program means an integrated library system open to membership by full library system members of all types developed by or receiving financial or in-kind support from a library system" (23 Ill. Adm. Code 3030). LLSAP is a term used statewide and rooted in historical relationships between the regional library systems and consortia. RAILS LLSAPs are Cooperative Computer Services (CCS), Pinnacle, PrairieCat, Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC), Resource Sharing Alliance NFP (RSA), and System-Wide Automation Network (SWAN. Membership in LLSAPs is subject to their established policies and criteria.

Grants may be awarded to any RAILS member library that isn't currently an LLSAP member and meets all other eligibility and application requirements. Funds will be awarded for projects with expenditures beginning in FY2024 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024), with a grant period of 18 months from the time that funds are dispersed. Availability of grant funding is subject to changes in system funding levels, and the amount that RAILS budgets for this grant may vary from year to year.

What costs are covered by this grant?

Subject to the review process and available funds, expenses in the following categories may be funded:

- Vendor implementation and data migration fees
- Conversion of paper catalog records to MARC format
- Technology equipment (e.g., laptops, receipt printers, barcode scanners) needed to meet minimum requirements for successful participation in the LLSAP
- Initial purchase of supplies (e.g., barcode stickers, patron cards, receipt paper) needed for successful participation in the LLSAP

The following costs are **not eligible** for this grant:

- Library materials
- Furniture
- Personnel costs for permanent, full-time exempt employees
- Travel
- Special equipment not required for participation, such as self-check units, RFID equipment, automated material handlers, and library security systems
- Penalty fees assessed by vendors for early contract termination
- Fees assessed to new members by consortia (e.g., reserve fund contributions)
- Ongoing costs such as annual fees for LLSAP membership, telecommunications subscriptions, etc.

Who is eligible to apply?

Libraries of all types that meet the following basic criteria may be eligible for RAILS Catalog Membership grants:

- RAILS membership
- Ability to meet the membership requirements of the specific LLSAP
- Commitment to sustain membership in RAILS and the LLSAP for at least five years
- Ability to manage project activities and grant funds and submit quarterly reports to RAILS until all project activities have been completed and all funds expended.

RAILS will support projects for agencies that meet the basic eligibility criteria, and make award determinations based on the availability of funding, the strength of individual applications, and the following priorities (in order):

1. Mergers and partial mergers of existing consortia
2. Nonautomated libraries that can sustain ongoing costs of LLSAP membership (application will require an additional section demonstrating the library's preparation for LLSAP participation)
3. Libraries with standalone integrated library systems joining an LLSAP
4. Upgrades from union list to online participation (basic or full)

Not eligible:

- Individual libraries leaving a consortium to become a standalone library
- Individual libraries leaving one LLSAP for another
- Libraries upgrading from basic online to full participation
- Libraries wishing to join an LLSAP at the Union List membership level

How does my library apply?

Eligible libraries must work with directly with LLSAP staff as a first step of considering applying for this grant, and as a partner in planning the project and gathering the information needed for the application. When you're ready to move forward, the Application Checklist section on the following pages will guide you through the basic steps needed to assess your library's options and ongoing financial responsibilities, plan the project, complete and submit the application, and meet reporting and other grant requirements.

This application form, quarterly report template, and other grant information can be found at https://railslibraries.org/grants/catalog-membership.

Application deadlines

- November 1, 2023
- April 15, 2024

Who do I contact?

Questions about the grant process, LLSAPs or RAILS LLSAP support in general, or identifying which LLSAP you should join, can be directed to Anne Slaughter, RAILS Director of Technology Services, at anne.slaughter@railslibraries.org or 630-734-5127.

Questions about the specific LLSAP you wish to join, membership criteria, services offered, joining process, and other LLSAP-specific details should be directed to LLSAP staff. Contact information and links to websites for each LLSAP can be found on the RAILS website at https://railslibraries.org/catalogs.

Application Process and Checklists

The process of applying for this grant includes two phases: Initial Preparation, to ensure that your library is prepared for the responsibilities of LLSAP membership and is actively engaged with the LLSAP you wish to join, and Pursue Funding, to proceed with planning your project, gathering the required details to prepare and submit the application, and completing grant-related activities and requirements. These phases and steps are listed in roughly chronological order, but the actual order of execution may vary based on the specifics of your project, and some steps may be concurrent.

LLSAP staff are integral partners for libraries throughout this entire process and are required to provide their approval of your application before submission. You must engage with them before moving forward so they are able to supply critical information needed for a successful grant application.

Your library's decision to join an LLSAP strengthens library resource sharing and services across Illinois by expanding the materials available to your patrons and allowing you to easily share the materials in your collection that you wish to make available. Joining an LLSAP is also a major strategic decision for a library, and involves considerable investment of staff time, financial commitments, and ongoing responsibilities to the LLSAP organization and to your fellow member libraries. Following each step outlined below will help ensure a comprehensive project plan and the long-term sustainability of your library's participation.

Phase One: Initial preparation

Automated libraries: Initiate LLSAP membership

If your library currently uses fully featured catalog software and you are aware of your current automation-related costs and responsibilities:

1. Contact the Director of the LLSAP you wish to join to request a quote
2. Review services, costs, and membership requirements
3. Discuss the process and timeline to join

Once your library and the LLSAP have confirmed a mutual agreement to move forward, via the means established by the LLSAP, you may proceed directly to Phase Two: Pursue Funding.

Nonautomated libraries: Prepare for LLSAP membership

If your library does not currently use a fully featured catalog software platform to circulate items and manage patrons, contact Anne Slaughter, RAILS Director of Technology Services at anne.slaughter@railslibraries.org or 630-734-5127 to initiate this phase and discuss the steps required to proceed to the next phase. An overview is provided below.

Phase Two: Pursue Funding

After completing the Initial Preparation phase, your library may begin the Pursue Funding phase as detailed below.

NON-AUTOMATED LIBRARIES Phase One: Prepare for LLSAP Membership

If your library does not currently use a fully featured catalog software platform to circulate items and manage patrons, it is important to understand and plan for the impact of automation on your current operations, the ongoing costs involved in LLSAP membership, and the responsibilities of membership with regard to staff, training, technology, policies, procedures, and other requirements. These preparatory steps will vary depending on the library and LLSAP and are crucial in determining whether LLSAP membership is affordable for your library.

Contact Anne Slaughter, RAILS Director of Technology Services at anne.slaughter@railslibraries.org or 630-734-5127 to initiate and discuss a plan for working through Phase One (summarized below) and proceeding to Phase Two, including authorization from both RAILS and the LLSAP you wish to join.

Assess current library circumstances and costs

LLSAP membership helps make your collections more accessible to your patrons by providing an online interface for searching, placing holds, and other functions, and helps your staff manage circulation records, patron information, and information about your collections in one software platform. The services you receive from an LLSAP may significantly add to the ways your library is able to effectively serve your patrons, and may also incur new costs. It is useful to have a good understanding of your community's needs for library materials, the condition of your collection, and the resources your library may currently be devoting to these areas of operations:
- Community needs and/or library goals related to local collection access and interlibrary loan
- Cost and status of any software currently used to manage holdings and/or patron records
- Information about your collection and circulation, including:
  - Size (number of titles and items) and condition of collection, including weeding practices and any subcategories currently in use (children's, graphic novels, music, etc.)
  - Format and condition of any physical or digital cataloging records
  - Format and condition of patron records and library cards
  - Materials processing, including whether you apply call number stickers and item barcodes
  - Circulation policies and practices
- Condition of staff and patron computer equipment, including internet speed and network equipment such as routers and wifi, as well as staff training needs for working with library software
- Staff time and skills currently dedicated to working with patron searching and discovery, circulation tasks, and cataloging

Assess available automation and resource sharing options

LLSAP membership is a wonderful way to expand your library services and the materials your patrons can easily access, but it is not the only way. Considering your library's geography, community needs, and general financial position, you may also want to assess whether Find More Illinois participation is a more suitable option. RAILS enthusiastically supports both options; our priority is for your library to make the most of the resources available to you.

- To evaluate LLSAP membership, contact the LLSAP Director to request a quote, review membership parameters, and discuss the process and timeline to join. If needed, RAILS staff can help you identify the LLSAP serving libraries in your geographic area. Each LLSAP offers a different mix of services and has their own fee structures and membership requirements. Their staff can help you assess costs and identify points of comparison with your current situation.

- To evaluate Find More Illinois, visit www.findmoreillinois.org to learn more about the service, request a quote, and get in touch with staff who can answer questions.

Identify and plan for the costs and responsibilities of automation and LLSAP membership

Costs of automation and LLSAP membership may include but are not necessarily limited to the following categories. Some of these costs may be identified in consultation with the LLSAP's staff, and others will be gathered from within your library organization and/or your library's technology vendors. It is also important to understand all responsibilities of LLSAP membership and any specific preparation tasks your library may need to engage in, including training, technology equipment and internet access, policies, procedures, intergovernmental agreements, and other membership requirements.

Vendor and LLSAP Fees
- Annual fees for LLSAP membership, and any additional costs for optional services from or outside of the LLSAP
- Understand the possibility of increases in membership fees and other costs, and the ways membership may be subsidized by RAILS direct support to the LLSAP

Library Data
- MARC records for your library's holdings, including ongoing updating and maintenance
- OCLC membership or other cataloging utility, if required
- Patron records, including appropriate data collection practices and ongoing maintenance

Equipment and Supplies
- Computer equipment for staff and patrons, including catalog search, circulation, and cataloging
- Network equipment such as network switches, routers, and wifi access points, along with internet speed
- Peripheral equipment and supplies such as barcode readers, receipt printers and paper, library cards, barcode labels, and call number labels

Staff Roles
- ILS software – basic understanding of software functions, required training, and compliance with LLSAP policies and procedures for use
- Patron assistance – searching, placing holds, filling holds, and account management
- Cataloging according to the LLSAP's requirements; training is available from RAILS and may be available from LLSAP staff
- LLSAP governance and policies – understanding the terms of the membership agreement; participation in governing boards, committees, and user groups

Ensure sustainable funding and governing body support
- Buy-in from the library's board or other administrative body is required. Work with them to create a plan for sustaining RAILS membership requirements, ongoing costs of LLSAP membership for at least five years, including reasonable levels of possible cost increases, and sufficient staffing. Documentation of any relevant formal decisions or governance actions will be requested as a part of your grant application.

Phase Two: Pursue Funding

After completing the Initial Preparation phase, your library may begin the Pursue Funding phase.

Review grant requirements

1. Confirm library meets all criteria on page 2 and is eligible to apply
2. Confirm LLSAP membership approval has either been granted or is in process, via the LLSAP's established policies and practices

Download, save, and thoroughly review the application form at https://railslibraries.org/grants/catalog-membership.

Design your project plan

Work with LLSAP and library staff to identify and plan for all steps, costs, deadlines, and required elements of the project, including any work to be done by the LLSAP and their catalog software vendor, as well as work required of library staff. The plan, at minimum, must include a detailed timeline and the information needed to complete all budget and narrative sections of the application form.

Complete grant application

1. Complete the narrative sections of the application. ALL components requested in the description of each section must be addressed.
2. Complete the budget section for all relevant expenses, and add descriptions where required.
3. If you are requesting funding for an equipment purchase, you must complete all relevant fields of the Equipment and Supplies section of the budget chart, as well as the additional Equipment Detail chart. We cannot consider your request if this information is not supplied.
4. Submit completed application to LLSAP Director for their review and signoff (at least one week before application deadline, or earlier as specified by the LLSAP Director)

Submit grant application

1. Before submitting your application, please verify that you have completed all required steps listed above. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.
2. Submit your application via email to Anne Slaughter, RAILS Director of Technology Services at anne.slaughter@railslibraries.org
3. Submit additional information if requested by RAILS staff during the review process

Complete project and grant requirements

You will receive a letter from RAILS with the results of the grant review process. If your grant application is approved, the letter will include details of the award and further instructions, including a grant agreement. The period of time between grant approval and the completion of your project include, but will not be limited to, the following required steps.

1. Sign and return the grant agreement in order to receive funding
2. Complete the project activities as outlined in your project plan and timeline, and ensure you keep records of all expenditures
3. Submit quarterly reports to RAILS throughout the duration of the grant period. These reports are required beginning with the quarter in which you receive funds, and must be submitted each quarter until all project activities have been completed and all funds expended. Additional instructions and deadlines will be sent when you receive your grant award.
4. If any part of your grant award is left unused after completing all project activities and planned expenditures, return all unused funds to RAILS via check
5. Upon go-live, update the L2 directory (https://librarylearning.org/) with your new automation information and any other new information

Application Form

Submitting Agency: _____

Project Title: _____

Project Director

The individual who will be responsible for coordinating and leading the activities in the project plan and will ensure that all grant requirements are met.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Work Mailing Address

Building Name: _____

Street or P.O. Box: _____

City: _____

ZIP: _____

Financial Contact (if different than Project Director)

The individual responsible for tracking the grant budget and keeping a record of all expenditures.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Work Mailing Address

Building Name: _____

Street or P.O. Box: _____

City: _____

ZIP: _____

Library Information

Website URL:

Number of buildings:

(Count main and branch libraries, school libraries within a district, etc. Don't count office collections, collections in storage, etc.)

Number of titles in library collections:

Number of items/volumes in library collections:

Number of registered patrons:

Annual circulation:

Population Served:

For each library type, population is defined as follows:
- **Public Library** - Population residing in tax base. Please use latest IPLAR figure
- **Academic or School Library** - Full-time equivalents (FTEs) where FTE includes faculty and students, but not support staff
- **Special Library** - Full-time equivalents (FTEs) where FTE includes staff and affiliates served by the library and who are eligible to borrow materials

Current Automation Status

☐ Not automated

☐ Current Union List member of an LLSAP

LLSAP name:

☐ Automated standalone

Vendor, software name, and version (if known):

Administrative Capacity

Financial Capacity

Describe:

- Applicable policies for purchasing, hiring, or inventory management
- Any other internal financial controls

Staff Capacity

Describe:

- How the Project Director and other key staff involved in this project have the experience, training, and/or education to deliver activities proposed
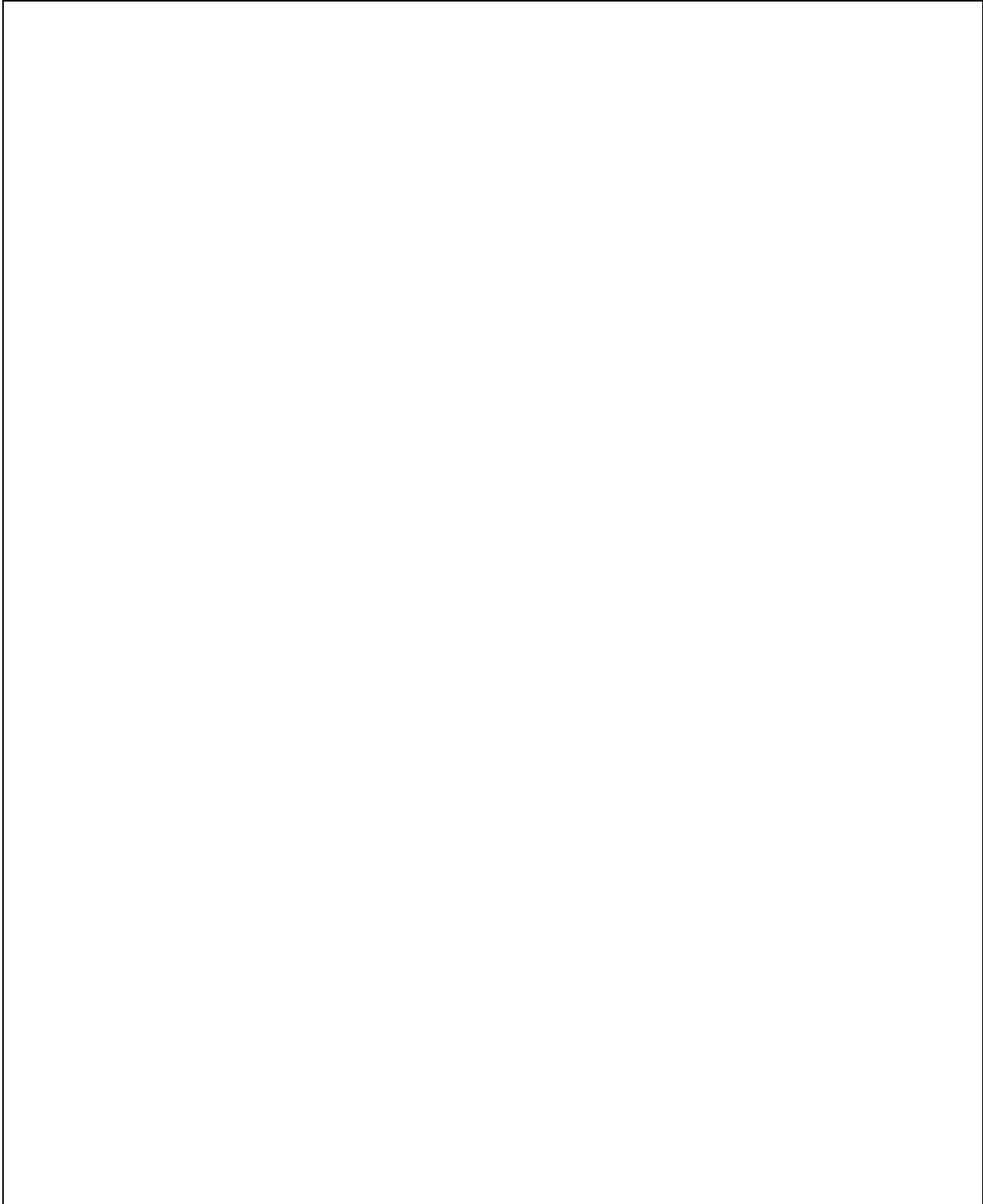
Project Description

Describe the overall project. Include:
- Project activities involving LLSAP staff as well as tasks undertaken by library staff
- Details about methods and activities and how they will be implemented
- How any items requested in the budget will be used

Project Timeline

Provide a timeline specifying when key phases and actions (e.g., planning, training, activities) will take place. The project should have a target completion date of no more than 18 months after anticipated receipt of grant funds.

Target Audience and Need

Describe the target audience served by your library and how this project will benefit them. Include information about any unique resources in your collection that could use exposure to a wider audience.

Project Promotion

Describe your plan for promoting the project, including communication strategies and tactics, outreach to new and existing audiences, and community partnerships. If your library does not currently have a website, please describe your plans to develop a website or provide other means of linking to the library's online catalog upon going live with LLSAP membership.

Budget

Complete relevant budget sections, referring to the lists of eligible and not eligible expenses on page one. Consult with the LLSAP staff and/or other vendors to determine which components are needed for your library's project and to get estimates. Local contributions are not required but will strengthen your grant application.

If you are requesting funding for equipment purchases, you must complete the Equipment Detail section on page 16 in addition to the general budget chart below.

Category	Description	Grant Funds Requested	Local Contribution
Vendor and LLSAP Fees			
Vendor implementation fees	Fees charged by the LLSAP's vendor to add new agencies or buildings and complete data migration		
Other vendor or LLSAP fees	Describe:		
Total vendor or LLSAP fees			

Category	Description	Grant Funds Requested	Local Contribution
Retrospective Conversion	Complete this section if your library does not have or is not able to use catalog records from an existing integrated library system and will be obtaining or creating them as a part of this project.		
OCLC or other vendor costs	Costs for retrospective conversion-related costs only, not annual OCLC membership.		
Permanent library staff	Not eligible for grant funding, but show local contribution for library employees working on this project.	N/A	
Temporary library staff, independent contractors, or additional hours for part time permanent staff	Enter the hourly wage and estimated hours needed:		
Other retrospective conversion costs	Describe:		
Total retrospective conversion costs			
Other Costs	List in left column and describe below.		
Cost:	Describe:		
Cost:	Describe:		
Cost:	Describe:		
Cost:	Describe:		
Total other costs			

Category	Description	Grant Funds Requested	Local Contribution
Equipment and Supplies	*Equipment purchased must meet recommended specifications for the LLSAP's system. Justification for and intended uses of any requested equipment must be outlined in the Project Description.*		
Staff workstations			
Local network equipment (router, firewall, etc.)			
Barcode scanners			
Receipt printer (regular)	Grant will fund maximum of one regular receipt printer and one case of receipt paper		
Receipt printer (restick)	Grant will fund a maximum of one restick receipt printer and one case of self-adhesive receipt paper		
Barcode labels			
Other equipment and supply costs	Describe:		
Total equipment and supply costs			

Budget Summary

Category	Grant Funds Requested	Local Contribution
Vendor and LLSAP Fees		
Retrospective Conversion		
Other Costs		
Equipment and Supplies		
Total		

Equipment Detail

Item	Unit Cost	Qty	Total Cost	Model	Intended Use (Circ Desk, OPAC, Tech Serv, etc.)	Age (in years) of equipment being replaced. Enter N/A for additional equipment.	% of time equipment will be used for access to LLSAP
Total							

Submission Authorization

LLSAP Director Approval

I confirm that I have reviewed this application in full and agree with its contents. The Submitting Agency meets the membership requirements of my LLSAP, and I affirm its commitment to go live within 18 months.

LLSAP Director signature:

_____

Project Director Approval

The following boxes must be checked by the Project Director in order to be considered for funding.

☐ I confirm that I am authorized to submit this application, that I have read and understand the Program Overview and completed all checklist steps, and that this application is complete.

☐ I confirm the intent of the Submitting Agency to go online with an LLSAP within 18 months of receipt of grant funds and to remain a member of the LLSAP for at least five years.