Library, Archives and Public Records (LAPR) Workforce Stabilization

Description of issue and how recommending the agency's request furthers the agency's mandates:

The Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records (LAPR), a division of the Arizona Secretary of State's Office (the Office), is responsible for preserving Arizona's documentary history, ensuring public access to government information, administering statewide records management programs, supporting Arizona's public libraries, providing accessible library services to individuals with visual and physical disabilities, and administering approximately $3.8 million annually in federal library grant funding. These responsibilities are established in statute and serve every state agency, local government, library, researcher, educator, and citizen throughout Arizona.

LAPR fulfills these responsibilities through six operating branches: the Arizona State Archives, Records Management, Arizona Talking Book Library, E-rate Program, Library Development, and the State of Arizona Research Library. Together, these programs preserve Arizona's historical records, provide public access to government information, administer statewide library development grants, support records retention across state government, expand broadband access for libraries, and ensure that Arizonans have access to educational and historical resources regardless of physical ability or geographic location.

LAPR's greatest challenge is no longer technology or facilities — it is workforce retention. Persistent vacancies and employee turnover have placed increasing pressure on remaining staff, lengthened recruitment timelines, and reduced the LAPR's ability to efficiently deliver its statutory responsibilities.

The primary driver of this attrition is compensation.

LAPR employees have not received either agency-specific or statewide salary adjustments since 2020. At the same time, market salaries for comparable positions have increased substantially. Most professional positions within LAPR require a master's degree in library and information science, public history, archives administration, or comparable advanced education and specialized certifications. Despite these qualifications, LAPR employees earn approximately 20 to 40 percent less than comparable positions in organizations such as the City of Phoenix and the Maricopa County Library District, making recruitment and long-term retention increasingly difficult.

Figure 1 LAPR staff earn an average of 20-40% less than competitors

The consequences extend well beyond staffing levels.

Every vacancy requires remaining employees to absorb additional responsibilities while maintaining statutory services. Recruiting and training highly specialized librarians, archivists, and records professionals requires significant time and resources. LAPR estimates that each vacant position costs the state approximately $75,000 in recruitment, onboarding, lost productivity, and institutional knowledge, excluding the indirect costs associated with employee burnout, declining morale, and additional turnover.

Staffing shortages also place important federal funding at risk. LAPR administers approximately $3.8 million annually in federal funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Continued receipt of these funds depends upon the state meeting required maintenance-of-effort and matching requirements while maintaining sufficient staffing to administer federal grant programs. Investing in competitive salaries protects Arizona's ability to leverage millions of dollars in federal funding while ensuring continued delivery of library services statewide.

Recognizing current fiscal constraints, the Office proposes a phased, four-year approach to increasing compensation rather than seeking the full adjustment in a single fiscal year. This gradual implementation provides LAPR with the resources necessary to improve recruitment and retention while allowing the state to spread the investment over multiple budget cycles.

Proposal: Appropriate an additional $2 million from the state General Fund, annualized over four years, starting with $500,000 in FY2028, to increase LAPR salaries by 20 percent and fill long-term vacancies. This investment will ensure a decrease in employee turnover by offering competitive salaries and sustainable funding to fill vacancies.

In FY2027, state-funded LAPR staff salaries + ERE were calculated at $2,489,229.40.

A 20 percent increase across all positions would require an additional $497,845.88 in state funds for the first year, increasing over the next three years as vacant positions are refilled at competitive rates.

Alternatives considered and reasons for rejection: The Office has explored non-state funding sources. Federal funding makes up approximately one-third of LAPR's annual budget. When fully staffed, LAPR uses federal funds to support as many as 12 full-time employees, but competitive federal grants are not a sustainable funding model for an agency mandated with the long-term preservation of Arizona's state history.

Federal grant guidelines prohibit the supplanting of state funds, and the state must meet match and maintenance-of-effort requirements to continue receiving federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Without adequate state support for staff to administer these funds, Arizonans stand to lose access to official government resources, publications and information. Since 2020, LAPR has administered more than $20 million in federal funds to support library services in Arizona while using state funds primarily to support current staff salaries and rent for the LAPR facilities, including the Polly Rosenbaum State Archives and History Building.

Impact of not funding this fiscal year: Without the requested funding, the State Library will continue to experience high staff turnover with the high average cost of that turnover at $75,000 per person. Loss of staff and slower recruitment times may lead to cuts or disruptions to statutorily mandated services, including access to public records, archival material, and government documents.

Statutory reference: A.R.S. Title 41, Chapter 1, Article 2.1

Equipment to be purchased: N/A

Classification of new positions: *N/A*

Annualization: LAPR is requesting an additional $2 million over four years, beginning with $500,000 in FY2028, $1 million in FY2029, $1.5 million in FY2030, finally reaching $2 million in FY2031, and continuing annually thereafter to sustain the desired outcome of staff retention.