

# Foundations and Friends Report Brief

## Data Collection Background

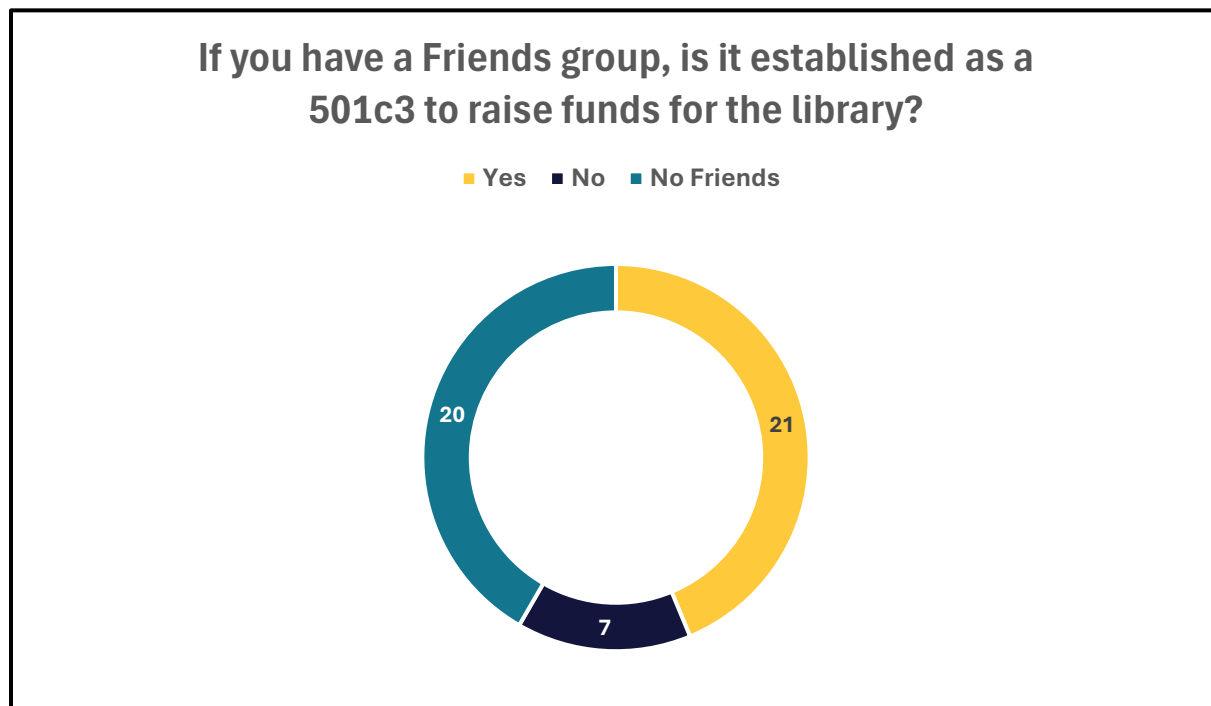
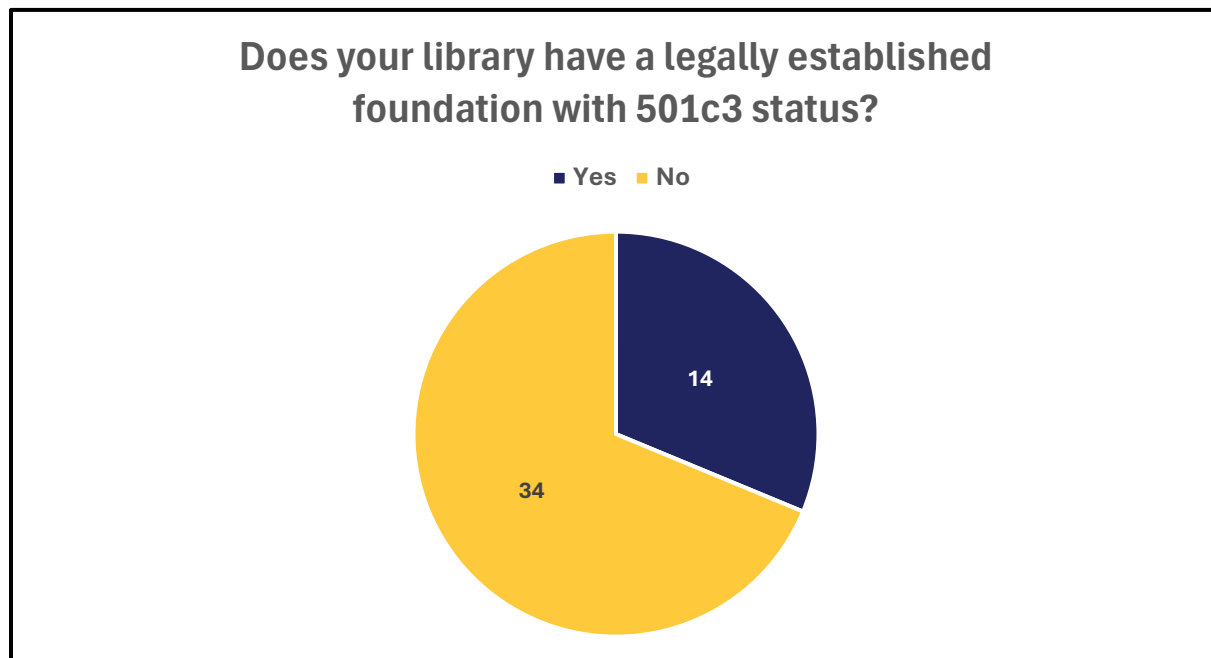
As part of the FY2024 Rhode Island Public Library Annual Survey (PLAS), the Office of Library & Information Services (OLIS) included questions<sup>1</sup> about external financial support libraries receive from library foundations and Friends groups. Friends groups are nonprofit organizations of library patrons who help to support, improve, and promote the local library through fundraising, advocacy, and volunteering. A library foundation is a separate legal entity formed for the purpose of enhancing and expanding library programs and services. Its primary function is to secure financial and in-kind donations for programs, services, collections, and capital projects. “Foundations typically differ from Friends groups in that they raise larger amounts of money through higher end fundraising such as major gifts for endowments, implementing planned giving campaigns, and sponsoring higher profile ticket events,” (United for Libraries).

The PLAS annually captures revenue and expenditure data from libraries, including any direct financial support from foundations and Friends. However, that direct financial support data is typically reported as part of an aggregate number that combines many types of non-government revenue. Any funds expended on behalf of the library by a Foundation or Friends group would not be reported. Therefore, OLIS added the questions for FY24 to take a pulse check and gain a more complete understanding of public library funding in Rhode Island.

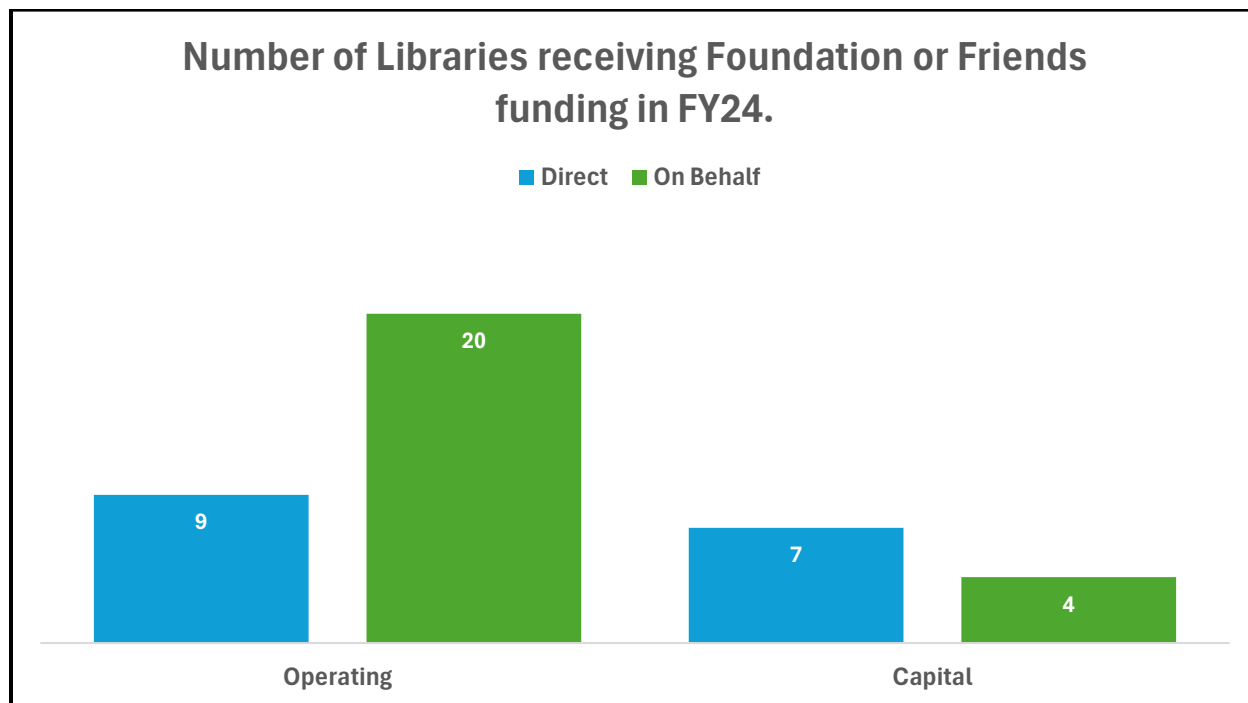
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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for full list of financial support questions asked on FY24 PLAS.

## Extent of Library Support Organizations in RI



## FY2024 Financial Support from Foundations and Friends



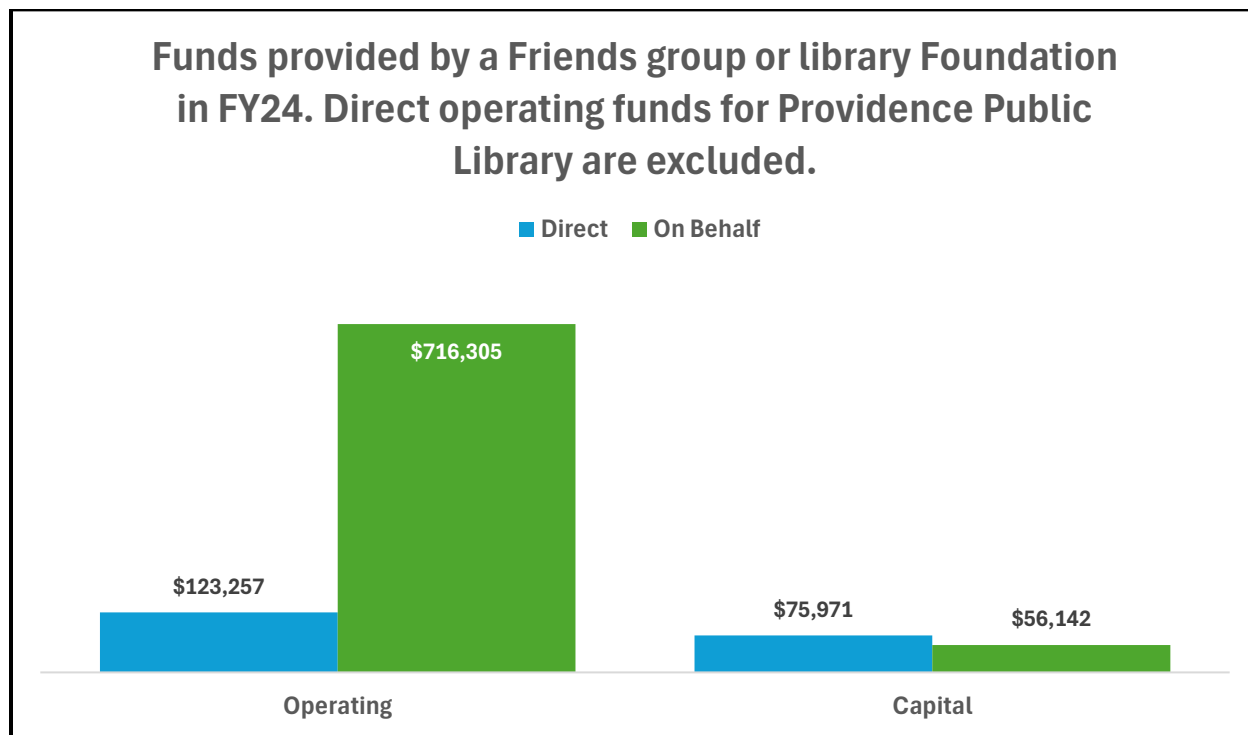
Financial support provided directly to libraries for operating costs was the second highest type of funding based on number of recipients in FY24. In total, nine (9) public libraries received \$3,725,327 directly from library foundations or Friends groups. That figure, however, is inflated due to Providence Public Library (PPL) receiving \$3,602,070, which the library reported as being more than usual. Excluding PPL from the total, libraries received \$123,257 in direct funding for operating costs, ranging from \$2,500 to \$34,936. The average amount per recipient, excluding PPL, was \$15,407.

Direct funding for capital costs was given to seven (7) public libraries, with a total distribution of \$75,971, ranging from \$3,500 to \$22,476. On average, each recipient received approximately \$10,853, providing support for facilities improvements such as replacing carpeting or updating furnishings, or significant one-time costs such as adding theft-detection gates. Financial support from library foundations or Friends groups is important for targeted improvements that are outside the scope of the operating budget.

Funds expended on behalf of public libraries for operating costs had both the highest distribution and highest number of recipients. Library foundations and Friends groups expended \$716,305 for operating costs on behalf of twenty (20) public libraries, ranging from \$150 to \$224,000, with the average amount expended per library \$35,815. These expenditures on behalf of libraries often support library programming and collection development, or enable the library to offer a specific service, such as museum passes.

Capital funds expended on behalf of libraries had the smallest number of recipients and the smallest total distribution in FY24. Library foundations and Friends group expended \$56,142 on behalf of four (4) Rhode Island public libraries. Expenditures ranged from \$3,336 to \$20,000, with an average per recipient of \$14,036. This type of expenditure typically covers capital costs such as minor facilities improvements or repairs.

In total, \$4,573,745 was provided, either directly or expended on behalf, to twenty-seven (27) Rhode Island public libraries in FY24. Leaving out funds received by Providence Public Library's directly for operating costs, the total was \$971,675. The supplemental funding from library foundations and Friends groups enabled libraries to provide services, purchase materials, offer programming, replace items in poor condition, and more, that otherwise they would not have done. Rhode Island is fortunate to have the support and generosity of these entities.



# Citations

"United for Libraries Resources for Library Foundations", American Library Association, June 9, 2009. <https://www.ala.org/united/foundations> (Accessed April 14, 2025).

Range of FY24 Foundation and Friends funding, excluding PPL. Click on image to view web version with popups.



## Appendix

### Questions from FY2024 RI Public Library Annual Survey

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- 11.16 Does your library have a legally established foundation with 501c3 status?
- 11.17 If you have a Friends group, is it established as a 501c3 to raise funds for the library?
- 11.18a How much did other entities, such as a Friends group or foundation, give directly to the library in FY24 for operating costs?
- 11.18b How does this figure compare to expenditures in other years?
- 11.18c How much did other entities, such as a Friends group or foundation, give directly to the library in FY24 for capital costs?
- 11.18d How does this figure compare to expenditures in other years?
- 11.19a How much did other entities, such as a Friends group or library foundation, expend on behalf of the library in FY24 for operating costs?
- 11.19b How does this figure compare to expenditures in other years?
- 11.19c How much did other entities, such as a Friends group or library foundation, expend on behalf of the library in FY24 for capital costs?
- 11.19d How does this figure compare to expenditures in other years?
- 11.20 Is there anything else you want to share about your board(s), Friends, or foundation?