

Incentives and Prize Policy Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA)

POLICY:

It is the mission of the Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA) to connect its members to share resources and ideas, to foster literacy, to promote public library use and to prepare for the future.

MELSA-sponsored library programs are critical tools to foster the MELSA mission. They serve an important public purpose when they are used as vehicles for delivery of a particular message or service to a specific or general clientele. When focused on identifiable client needs that correspond to the MELSA mission, MELSA-sponsored programs are active services that improve public literacy, support the educational development of children, and increase the public's skills in accessing library resources.

MELSA uses public funds to purchase and distribute small promotional items of nominal value as incentives or prizes to foster participation in and reward completion of MELSA-sponsored programming. MELSA finds that the purchase of such promotional items with public funds is a public purpose provided that the items are not meant as mere subterfuges for the transfer of public funds to private individuals.

GUIDELINES:

Use of Public Funding

In order to ensure that promotional items purchased with public funds meet the tests of "public purpose", MELSA requires that the prizes and incentives are of a nominal value and/or are clearly identified with a logo or other reflection the items' origins.

MELSA does not use public funds to purchase promotional items of value, including gifts cards.

Use of Private Funding

MELSA uses private donations and grants to purchase promotional items only as approved by the grantor or donor.

Accordingly, if any MELSA grantor proscribes the use of grant funds for the purchase of prizes or incentives for library programs, MELSA complies with any such proscription.

Conversely, if any private grantor specifically permits its grant funds to be used for purchasing prizes and incentives for library program participants, this permission negates any public purpose issue.

Distribution of Library Incentives or Prizes

MELSA may distribute promotional items through the use of drawings when the number of items available is not sufficient to provide them to all program participants who qualify and provided that participants are not required to pay a fee or make any other contribution or consideration to join or participate in the program.

For example, State Fair tickets are occasionally donated as prizes for the MELSA summer reading program. For the purpose of distributing these limited number of tickets, MELSA authorizes the drawing of names of library reading program participants from a hat or some other receptacle. Because the reading program participants do not have to pay any fee or other consideration to join the reading program or make any payment or contribution for the privilege of participating in the State Fair ticket drawing, MELSA does not consider such a drawing to be a lottery under state law. Further, MELSA concludes that this option extends to other types of library program drawings provided that participants do not have to pay fees to participate.

Employee Involvement to Receive Incentives or Prizes

It is acceptable for employees of member libraries and their family members to receive the incentives or prizes distributed in MELSA-sponsored events, if they are not directly involved in the implementation of the program, and if they wholly participate in the program. No special favor should be given to employee or their family member to receive the incentive or prize. In the event that the incentives or prizes are more than a nominal value, staff members of MELSA or MELSA libraries shall not be eligible to win.

Distribution of Prizes To Member System Libraries

MELSA also agrees that it is acceptable to distribute prizes of nominal value, such as books or puppets, to staff members participating in MELSA training workshops. These limited numbers of prizes may be purchased with public funds, but must be for use by staff within or by their member library systems.

Reimbursement for Non-Participation

In addition, if a member library system determines not to participate in a MELSA-sponsored program, it is not possible to reimburse that system for their share of the incentive/prize budget to be used for other purposes.

Adopted by MELSA Board of Trustees: May 12, 2010