



East Central Arkansas Regional Library

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

LIBRARY CONSULTING SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2021-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN FOR LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

OVERVIEW, DEADLINES, AND GUIDELINES:

The East Central Arkansas Regional Library (ECARL) will accept proposals from qualified vendors through 12:00 Noon on Tuesday, July 6, 2021 for the following services: **LIBRARY CONSULTANT SERVICES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2021-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN FOR LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT**. Proposals may be submitted electronically to the Rev. John Paul Myrick, MLS, Regional Librarian at jpaul@ecarls.org or submitted via delivery or mail to "Strategic Plan RFP", C/O ECARLS, 410 Merriman Avenue, East, Wynne, Arkansas 72396. Proposals must be submitted by the above-referenced date/time. Proposals delivered later, even if postmarked by the deadline, shall not be considered.

Proposals shall include the following:

1. Letter of Transmittal.
2. A description of your/your firm's capacity and experience to conduct such work and provided finished plan documents for public libraries.
3. A detailed depiction of the approach or process you would take including detailed objectives.
4. A clear, concise timetable for completing the work.
5. A listing of references that we may consult on your previous work.
6. The cost for your work. Open-ended responses or "hourly rates" will not be considered. Any necessary travel will be arranged by and paid for directly by ECARL.

ABOUT ECARL:

The East Central Arkansas Regional Library is a "library system" as allowed by the Arkansas Regional Library Law serving Cross and Woodruff Counties which commenced operations January 1, 1982. It consists of four libraries scattered across 1216 square miles of the area called the "Arkansas Delta" which is a portion of the lower Mississippi River alluvial plain. The estimated population of the region is 22,952. The population, like that across most of the Arkansas Delta, has declined over the past several decades and that trend is expected to continue somewhat.

The area is predominately agricultural and rural, with portions of the area covered by bottomlands, swamps, backwaters, and riverways of the Tyronza, St. Francis, L'Anguille, Cache and White Rivers. The Cache River National Wildlife Refuge is partially within the region, and is considered a wetland of international importance. The wetlands are located along the "Mississippi Flyway", and as such, the area

is considered to provide the best location for duck hunting worldwide. Deer and quail hunting are also popular. The entire region was once considered part of the “Arkansas Big Woods”, which led to the area’s first large industry, which was timber. Farming operations became predominant in the early 20th century and continue to modern day.

Rice, corn, soybeans, wheat and milo are the predominant crops, with hundreds of farms ranging from 80 acres to thousands. The two counties are served by 4 school districts (Augusta, Cross County, McCrory and Wynne) and two local community colleges (East Arkansas Community College and Arkansas State University-Newport). Various festivals, church and school activities, and services provided by the Library round out the cultural opportunities of the communities located within the region. The largest cities are Wynne (population roughly 8,400), the county seat of Cross County and Augusta (population roughly 2,100), the county seat of Woodruff County. The ECARL headquarters is located in Wynne which is 45 miles west of Memphis, Tennessee, 45 miles south of Jonesboro, Arkansas, and roughly 110 mile east-northeast of Little Rock, the state capital. These cities offer larger cultural, shopping, healthcare and educational opportunities.

THE JOB:

The East Central Arkansas Regional Library (ECARL) is in need of a long-range plan to guide its development from the period 2021-2026 as mandated by rules set by the Arkansas State Library. Recognizing the current workload of the library professional staff, the Board has opted to obtain the services of a consultant to research, prepare, and draft a plan for the 2021-2026 period rather than have staff prepare the plan, which it did in the past planning period. The Board last contracted this work out to an external consultant in 2011-12.

The Board and Library Professional Staff seek a consultant with expertise in generating community surveys and market research and designing, creating and leading high-quality working sessions in-person and or electronically, both with the intent of creating the basis for a strategic plan. The consultant will then take the data sought, working with local officials as necessary, to draft a workable long-range plan document the library can follow to lead its development through 2026.

The role of the consultant is to support completion of a strategic plan by:

- A. Designing and facilitating the strategic planning process;
- B. With the help of local officials, developing supporting background information as needed
- C. Leading any working sessions necessary to obtain input necessary to draft a strategic plan.

Specifically, the consultant shall develop a comprehensive 5 year strategic plan for the library that includes a significant community research component. The consultant will be an experienced, professional facilitator, researcher, and writer who is extremely knowledgeable in services provided by modern public libraries in the post-COVID age. That consultant will perform the following:

- Facilitate the strategic planning process using a methodology effective for public libraries.
- Gather data through community research that focuses on library users, non-users, and stakeholders, including board and staff, to identify library needs/wants as well as ways to increase library usage and cardholder registration.

- Community Input is a key component of this planning process and may include:
 - A. Focus groups/individual interviews/public input sessions, particularly conducted electronically.
 - B. Online survey
 - C. Phone interviews
 - D. Other methods as identified by the consultant
(Please include in your proposal suggestions for handling research.)
- Facilitate planning meetings and input sessions (public, board, and staff sessions).
- Review the mission statement and facilitate revisions, and create core values statement.
- Identify service priorities, goals, objectives, and activities.
- Write and present the strategic plan that will be communicated to the library's stakeholders.
The final deliverable document shall include:
 - A. An up to date community profile and identification of community markets.
 - B. An assessment of the library's environment, including evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, quality of services, reputation, management, and budget, etc.
 - C. Specification of the mission and core values of the organization.
 - D. Clearly defined priorities, goals, and objectives that are measurable and for which the library will hold itself accountable.
 - E. Specification of a built in process of regular review, evaluation, and adjustment to the plan resulting from changes in the economic, demographic, or political climate.
- All raw and summary data is to be delivered to ECARL at the conclusion of the planning process.

DETAILS/QUESTIONS:

It is hoped that the majority of meetings, discussions, etc. can take place electronically, saving time and expenses. Arrangements for any travel required shall be made by the Library at the Library's expense.

Inquiries prior to the submission of proposals may be directed to the Regional Librarian at jpaul@ecarls.org.

Proposals will be reviewed by the ECARL Library Board of Trustees' Strategic Plan Committee. The Committee and/or the Board reserve the right to reject any and all proposals for any or no reason. Proposals from women and/or minority individuals or women/minority owned firms are encouraged. The East Central Arkansas Regional Library does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations.