ATHENS REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
For
Library Strategic Vision & Plan
Consulting Services

November 8, 2021

Proposals Due: December 20, 2021
SECTION ONE: PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Purpose
The Athens Regional Library System (ARLS) headquartered in Athens, Georgia, is seeking proposals from organizations experienced in work with libraries and with strategic planning to aid in the development and facilitation of a community-focused Strategic Vision and Plan that will serve as a management tool to guide the organization over the next 3 – 5 years. We seek a plan which will provide high quality 21st century library services to meet the growing and evolving needs of our residents.

The Plan should enable the Library to respond appropriately and effectively to changes in community demographics, technology, telecommunications development, service expectations, and other future needs.

Library System Background

The Athens Regional Library System (ARLS) provides services to over 233,000 residents across 1,302 square miles and encompasses urban, metropolitan, and rural communities. Our Headquarters is located one hour from Atlanta and an hour and a half from Augusta, Ga. Athens Regional Library System (ARLS) includes 11 library branches in five counties in northeast Georgia. We serve thirteen very different municipalities, and 5 public school districts. We employ 78 full-time equivalent staff. Each county is distinct and maintain their own budget and Board of Trustees. Four members from each county make up the governing body of the Athens Regional Library System Board of Trustees.

Current member libraries include the following: Athens-Clarke County Library, East Athens Resource Center, Lay Park Resource Center, Pinewoods Library and Learning Center, and Winterville Library (Athens-Clarke County); Lavonia-Carnegie and Royston Library (Franklin County); Madison County Library; Oconee County Library and Bogart Library (Oconee County); Oglethorpe County Library. The Athens Regional Libraries serve two significant roles: They provide access to collections, information, programs, technology, and they function as community centers in the neighborhoods where they are located. All locations attract a dedicated local population.

The ARLS operates under the authority of the Georgia Public Library Service, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, and the Official Code of Georgia (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-305). Local Advisory Boards of Trustees operate in each county, with Trustees appointed by local funding agencies. Representatives from each advisory board make up the definitive governing and policy-setting organization for the libraries, the Athens Regional Library System Board of Trustees.

Vision:
"Engaging Communities, Exceeding Expectations"

Values:
The Athens Regional Library System emphasizes a customer-centered culture. We accomplish this through the everyday practice of our organizational values. It is through our values that we provide an atmosphere and work environment that is:
• **INCLUSIVE:** We are committed to promoting library services for all our counties’ diverse populations.

• **Supportive of our COMMUNITY:** We aim to support the success of our community and to strengthen the connections we all share.

• **RESPECTFUL:** We treat every person fairly and impartially, we believe, without exception, in validating all voices and treating everyone equitably.

• **Committed to EXCELLENCE:** We strive toward the highest standards of performance, quality, and service. We act with integrity, honesty, and confidentiality.

• **WELCOMING:** We seek to connect with patrons and each other in positive ways. We celebrate the individual uniqueness of our patrons & staff. We understand that our connection with people is unique and vital.

**Library System Measurements and Statistics (2020)**

• Annual Circulation - 775,008
• Patron Visits – 593,122
• Active Cardholders – 78,093
• Program Attendance – 68,609
• Funding (all counties) - $4,200,000
• State Funding - $929,160
• Collection Size - 438,250
• Full Time Equivalent Employees – 78

**Vital Statistics by County: (2019)**

• **Clarke County**
  o Population: 128,331
  o Household Median Income: $38,623
  o Percent of Residents living in poverty: 25.7%
  o Race & Ethnicity: 28.3% Black; 11.0% Latinx; 55% White

• **Franklin County**
  o Population: 23,349
  o Household Median Income: $42,488
  o Percent of Residents living in poverty: 17.3%
  o Race & Ethnicity: 9.5% Black; 4.4% Latinx; 82.9% White

• **Madison County**
  o Population: 29,880
  o Household Median Income: $52,500
  o Percent of Residents living in poverty: 15.6%
  o Race & Ethnicity: 9.6% Black; 6.1% Latinx; 80.7% White

• **Oconee County**
  o Population: 40,280
  o Household Median Income: $90,751
  o Percent of Residents living in poverty: 5.6%
  o Race & Ethnicity: 5.2% Black; 5.7% Latinx; 83.7% White

• **Oglethorpe County**
  o Population: 15,259
  o Household Median Income: $47,120
  o Percent of Residents living in poverty: 12.8%
SECION 2 - SCOPE OF SERVICES

Athens Regional Library system is seeking a candidate with the ability to provide:

- An anonymized data-driven approach to the process (harvest and analyze library statistics, demographics, community statistics/growth projections etc.)
- Consultants with current, real-world library experience in strategic planning
- Consultants with a history that is focused on public libraries particularly
- Skill at gathering stakeholder input (expert interviewer/facilitator)

The selected provider will work with staff and the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) to facilitate the strategic planning process using a methodology effective for public libraries:

- Develop and lead a collaborative strategic visioning and planning project.
- Conduct an initial kick-off meeting or conference call to confirm mutual understanding of the work plan submitted as part of the proposal and allow for revisions based on new consensus.
- Facilitate the bi-weekly or monthly SPC meetings (can be done virtually).
- Design an effective method for gathering data and input from library users, non-users, staff, community stakeholders, community leaders, etc. to identify needs in the coming years. This can include a variety of activities including online surveys, paper surveys, telephone surveys, interviews, focus groups, community meetings, etc.
- Analyze information and data gathered to identify service gaps, needs and opportunities.
- Guide the SPC in the development of regional goals and objectives that will address such gaps, needs and opportunities, while allowing local counties the ability to determine annual tactical plans specific to their unique communities.
- Guide the SPC in the prioritization of service goals & objectives and possible initiatives, activities.
- Guide the SPC in the development of strategies to meet identified goals and objectives, including measurements that can be used to demonstrate success. Strategies should include some specific action items or tactics to achieve objectives.
- Ensure that goals, objectives, and strategies identified in the plan are attainable and sustainable within the financial and resource constraints of ARLS.
- Develop a vision and strategy document that outlines goals & objectives, and ideas, including a new mission statement to be validated by the SPC and particular stakeholder groups.
- Provide an initial, mid-term and final presentation to the ARLS Board of Trustees (can be virtual).
- Provide a final strategic plan document in both print and electronic format by July
- Work in partnership with library staff to develop a plan for marketing the final product both internally and externally.

Responses to this RFP should conform to the following:

- A brief cover letter describing the firm and or individual submitting the RFP.
- Executive summary of RFP to include highlights that convey consultant’s understanding of the purpose and expected outcomes of the project. Not to exceed one page in length.
- A more detailed work plan that includes a description of methodologies, tasks, activities, timeline, etc. that you feel are necessary for completing ARLS Strategic Plan.
• Comments related to the RFP - including objections, omissions or changes to the Scope of Work that you might want to recommend based on your experience and expertise.
• Resumes of key personnel working on this project.
• Draft contract.
• A Schedule of Costs for providing services described, including supplies, associated travel expenses, information gathering, etc.
• Contact information/references for three similar public library strategic planning projects completed within the last five years.
• Full contact information and signature of company officer empowered to bind the contract.
• Signed State of Georgia Contractor's Affidavit (included).

ARLS anticipates having a completed Strategic Plan to be presented and approved by the Board of Trustees by their July 2022 meeting.

SECTION 3 - SUBMITTAL & SELECTION PROCESS

This RFP will be posted to ARLS's website www.athenslibrary.org and will be sent to the Library Consultants Directory at www.libraryconsultants.org.

Questions concerning the RFP should be submitted in writing or email to:

Valerie Bell, Director
Athens Regional Library System
2025 Baxter Street
Athens, GA 30606
Fax: 706.613.3660
vbell@athenslibrary.org (must have RFP-Strategic Plan Inquiry in Subject Line)

Deadline for submission of questions is 5 p.m. EST November 29, 2021. Responses will be emailed no later than 5 p.m. EST, November 29, 2021. All questions and answers will be posted to www.athenslibrary.org.

Deadline for Submission of RFP is December 20, 2021. Responses may be submitted via email (must have RFP-Strategic Plan in Subject Line) by 5:00 p.m. EST to vbell@athenslibrary.org or delivered to the library by 5:00 pm December 20th.

Valerie Bell, Executive Director
Athens Regional Library
2025 Baxter Street
Athens, Ga 30606
Selection Criteria

- ARLS will evaluate the proposals as follows:
  - Demonstrated understanding and approach to the Scope of Work.
  - Relevant and positive experience and success in public library planning.
  - Responses from direct and indirect references.
  - Qualifications of project staff.
  - Cost to complete process
  - Ability to meet/adhere to proposed timetable.
- The highest ranked vendor(s) may be asked to make a formal presentation or submit to a telephone or Skype interview.

Miscellaneous

- ARLS reserves the right to select a planning consultant based directly on the proposal or to negotiate further with one or more respondents. ARLS reserves the right to reject any and all proposals.
- ARLS will not reimburse costs of preparing any proposals.
- No library board member or staff member shall have a financial interest in any of the respondent firms.

The library director will notify consultants chosen for further consideration within 23 days of proposal deadline and will notify respondents in writing or by phone of the outcome of their proposal within 30 days of the final selection.
CONTRACTOR AFFIDAVIT & AGREEMENT UNDER O.C.G.A. § 13-10-91(b)(1)
(effective July 1, 2013)

By executing this affidavit, the undersigned contractor verifies its compliance with O.C.G.A. § 13-10-91, as amended, stating affirmatively that the individual, firm or corporation which is engaged in the physical performance of services on behalf of The Athens Regional Library System, has registered with, is authorized to use, and uses the federal work authorization program commonly known as E-Verify, or any subsequent replacement program, in accordance with the provisions and deadlines established in O.C.G.A. § 13-10-91, as amended.

Furthermore, the undersigned will continue to use the federal work authorization program throughout the contract period and the undersigned contractor will contract for the physical performance of services in satisfaction of such contract only with subcontractors who present an affidavit to the contractor with the information required by O.C.G.A. § 13-10-91(b). Contractor hereby attests that its federal work authorization user identification number and date of authorization are as follows:

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<th>Federal Work Authorization User Identification Number</th>
<th>Date of Authorization (Month/Day/Year)</th>
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Name of Contractor: ________________________________

Name of Project: ________________________________

Name of Public Employer: __The Athens Regional Library System________

I hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on ____, __________, 20__ in ______________________________, ____________________________.

______________________________
Signature of Authorized Officer or Agent

______________________________
Printed Name and Title of Authorized Officer or Agent

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN BEFORE ME ON THIS THE
_____ DAY OF ____________, 20__

______________________________
Notary Public
My Commission Expires: ____________
Question & Responses Received 11/19/21

Question:
We see in the RFP that you want a plan presented to and approved by the Board by their July 2022 meeting. Is there any flexibility with that timeline? Specifically, is it possible to present the draft plan in July, make any recommended changes, and then present for approval in August?

Answer:
Yes, the time frame can be extended up to three months.

Question:
Has the Strategic Planning Committee been set? How many members and what are their positions? Staff? Community members? Board members?

Answer:
The committee is still being formed. It will be composed of a Board member from each county (5 counties), staff, a member from our Friends and Foundation. We estimate between 12 - 15 members.

Question:
What is the anticipated budget for the project?

Answer:
We will evaluate the budgets submitted along with the proposals.