

**Southern Maryland Regional Library Association
Request for Proposal for Strategic Plan Development
2024**

Responses to Bidder Inquiries

No.	Question	Response
1	Has your organization worked with a consultant on this type of project or other projects in the past?	Yes—SMRLA’s current strategic plan is available to view on our website.
2	What is the budget for this project?	Up to \$100,000
3	Do you prefer to work with a consultant based in Maryland?	The request for proposals states: “...As a state funded entity, SMRLA reserves the right to award the contract to a responsive, responsible Maryland-based firm that does not attain the highest proposal score, provided the vendor meets the criteria outlined in the RFP. A Maryland-based firm is defined as a company headquartered in Maryland.”
4	If you have time, would it be possible to schedule a brief call to discuss these questions and for me to learn more? If so when’s good for you?	A pre-bid conference will be held on Thursday, October 24 at 12 p.m. via Microsoft Teams. Please visit https://smrla.org/rfp/ for the log in credentials on Friday, October 4.
5	How do you see the SMRLA’s strategic planning efforts connecting with individual county library strategic planning efforts, such as those developed by Calvert and St. Mary’s?	SMRLA works closely with our public library partners but we are four distinct libraries. We hope our selected consultant will help us make connections where appropriate between SMRLA’s strategic planning strategy and our public library partners.
6	How do you envision the 2023 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan and the associated cross-functional Implementation Team being incorporated, if at all, into the SMRLA Strategic Plan Development process?	It is expected that SMRLA’s EDI plan will be incorporated into our strategic planning process. Some members of the Implementation Team are also members of the Strategic Planning Committee leading our search for a consultant. Ultimately it is expected that all SMRLA staff will be given an opportunity for input into our strategic plan.
7	Is there an incumbent for this work or similar strategic planning efforts? If so, can you provide the name of the incumbent? Are they eligible to submit a response for this RFP?	Our current strategic plan was developed by The Ivy Group, Ltd. They are eligible to submit a response for this RFP.

8	Are you willing to accept an electronic proposal submission?	As outlined in our request for proposals , “Respondents shall submit one paper copy and one copy in digital format (e.g., CD, DVD, flash drive, etc.)”
9	For the pre-bid conference on October 24 at 12 p.m., is that 12 p.m. ET?	Yes.
10	Will you send the link and log in information for the pre-bid conference to me and others who sent questions, or do we need to look at the RFP site to get this information?	Please visit https://smrla.org/rfp/ for the log in credentials on Wednesday, October 23.
11	Are there stakeholder groups that will require in-person engagement?	Yes, the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association staff will require at least one opportunity for in-person engagement.
12	During the strategic planning period, are there currently scheduled meetings or gatherings of Southern Maryland Regional Library Association stakeholders that could be utilized for input into the strategic plan?	While the regional library staff meet regularly with our stakeholders, we would prefer to keep those meetings available for our internal business. We are happy to coordinate scheduling with our stakeholders with our selected consultant.
13	What will be the makeup of the Strategic Planning Committee?	The Strategic Planning Committee consists of the following: one regional library association Board of Trustees member; CEO; Information Technology Specialist III; Learning & Development Facilitator; Data Analyst; Administrative Services Manager; Library Services Manager; Strategic Communications Specialist; and Catalog Librarian II.
14	Item 2 on the proposed questionnaire states, “the length of time the company has been providing organizational workflow analysis and related services as described in this RFP.” Can you please clarify how organizational workflow analysis relates to the statement of work on pages 2 and 3?	This has been amended to state: the length of time the company has been providing strategic planning services and related services as described in this RFP.
15	Would you please clarify what is intended by a “transition plan” in this item in the proposal questionnaire? “Provide a recommended transition plan that describes the steps the Respondent will	This has been amended to state: Provide a recommended plan that describes the steps the Respondent will take to begin providing the services described in this RFP.

	take to begin providing the services described in this RFP.”																					
16	<p>The RFP has a list of requirements divided into sections as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>SECTION</th> <th>TITLE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>A.</td> <td>Cover Letter</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B.</td> <td>Table of Contents</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C.</td> <td>Attachments Checklist</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D.</td> <td>Minimum Qualifications</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E.</td> <td>Proposal Questionnaire</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F.</td> <td>Respondent References</td> </tr> <tr> <td>G.</td> <td>Authorization Agreement</td> </tr> <tr> <td>H.</td> <td>Fee Proposal</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I.</td> <td>Certifications</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>According to this, there appears there isn't any section for the specific proposal we would do, meaning our framework, methodology, approach etc. Or should that part of the proposal be included in a "subsection" after Section B of the previous list? Or, is it meant to be that our proposal is the result of answering the questions in section E?</p>	SECTION	TITLE	A.	Cover Letter	B.	Table of Contents	C.	Attachments Checklist	D.	Minimum Qualifications	E.	Proposal Questionnaire	F.	Respondent References	G.	Authorization Agreement	H.	Fee Proposal	I.	Certifications	Your proposal would be the result of answering the questions in Section E.
SECTION	TITLE																					
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17	May we submit optional services that would augment our core plan of work, all within the stated budget?	Yes.																				
18	Can you confirm that the pre-bid conference date on the website (October 24) supersedes the date listed in the RFP (October 2)?	Yes, the pre-bid conference date is October 24. The date was revised in the RFP earlier and the current posted version is accurate.																				
19	The RFP references other “public library partners” and “SMRLA’s Board, public library customers and other stakeholders.” Can you provide more information about the other stakeholders and whether they consist of multiple groups or a single group? Can you share your expectations for their involvement? Can you also share more details specifically about the other public library partners? Are these other libraries, local government, the State Library Resource Center or others?	Please view the following websites for more information about our public library partners: Calvert Library ; Charles County Public Library ; and St. Mary’s County Library . We are four distinct library organizations. We are seeking a consultant who will get to know SMRLA and determine the appropriate level of engagement from our partners.																				

20	Can you elaborate on your expectations regarding “cultivating resources to assist SMRLA’s partner libraries in gathering and interpreting data about their communities.”	This is referring to evaluating relevant community data to help inform our strategic plan.
21	Do you have expectations about the duration of the strategic planning process?	No; we are leaving it up to our consultant to come up with a reasonable timeline.
22	Can you tell us whether there are aspects of the previous strategic planning process that you want to ensure are incorporated into this engagement?	What is specified in our request for proposals are the aspects that we would like incorporated.
23	Are there any priorities from the current strategic plan that you anticipate needing to carry forward into this planning process?	As libraries are quickly evolving organizations, we are looking forward to working with our consultant to determine near-term priorities which may or may not be different from what is in our current plan.
24	Can you share the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan and, if possible, the implementation framework?	The EDI Plan has been posted to our website at Current Requests for Proposals – Southern Maryland Regional Library Association (smrla.org)
25	In the Statement of Work section, you ask for “data-driven recommendations based upon an analysis of the needs of the region in the next 1-5 years.” Are there any specific data categories you are interested in? For example, broadband access, public transportation options, or population trends in relation to bookmobile services?	The Strategic Planning Committee has not identified specific data categories.
26	In the RFP checklist for the application, point #6 says "Provide a complete balance sheet or annual report (verified by a certified public accountant) for the last three years of operation." Is that a requirement for the application?	Yes, this is a requirement for the application.
27	We work with InCorp Services, Inc. as our registered agent in each state that we have a client. Maryland registration is in process but will be completed by the proposal deadline. Can we still submit?	According to Attachment B, Minimum Qualifications: As of September 30, 2024, both the Respondent’s company and its key personnel meet all of the following minimum qualifications. The document then goes on to list those qualifications. If you meet those requirements, please submit your proposal. As noted on Attachment B, failure to satisfy any of the

		minimum qualifications may result in the immediate rejection of the proposal.
28	Our firm is likely to be entering into a consulting agreement with one of your partner libraries in support of a strategic planning process. Would that preclude us from submitting a proposal to SMRLA to support the development of your new strategic plan?	Without seeing your proposal, we are unable to determine if there would be a conflict of interest or not.
29	In the Proposal Questionnaire, question #7 says “Provide a recommended plan that describes the steps the Respondent will take to begin providing the services described in this RFP.” In what time frame are you looking to have services provided?	The RFP asks bidders to demonstrate how they will go about developing the strategic plan. We expect a specific timeframe will be established once work begins.
30	In the Proposal Questionnaire, question #6 says “Provide a complete balance sheet or annual report (verified by a certified public accountant) for the last three years of operation.” Can you elaborate on the need for these requirements?	SMRLA is funded by the state of Maryland, and we are required to conduct due diligence to ensure we engage with a reputable company that has a history of providing this type of service.
31	Why do you feel this is an opportune time for SMRLA to be doing a new strategic planning process?	We are required to have a current strategic plan and our current plan runs through fiscal year 2026. We also have a new EDI plan to consider and the makeup of our board of trustees has changed.
32	Can you share any preferred milestones that are part of the planning process?	We don't have specific expectations for milestones. Our primary goal is to ensure all stakeholders have been engaged and the final product meets our needs. Milestones may be established as we work through the process.
33	Can you confirm that we have the correct submission deadline for proposals? The current RFP lists the proposal submission deadline as Thursday, November 7, but a prior email (sent in August), gives the deadline as Monday, November 4.	The most current documents are available on our website at: Current Requests for Proposals – Southern Maryland Regional Library Association . The November 7 deadline is correct.