

**Southern Maryland Regional Library Association
Public Library Community Survey**

2026

Responses to Bidder Inquiries

No.	Question	Response
1	This RFP primarily refers to a survey, but on page 5, it also references Community focus groups, and Interviews with key stakeholders as well as other data collection and research. Can you confirm whether you are looking for a fuller scope of services or just the survey?	The goal is not a survey in the strictest sense, but an assessment of community needs and perceptions related to the public libraries using a variety of relevant methods.
2	Are the member libraries available to help promote the survey to their communities?	Yes, SMRLA will coordinate promotions with its partner libraries.
3	One place says that questions must be submitted by May 18, and others say July 20. Can you confirm the correct date?	The correct date is July 20. The RFP has been updated to reflect the date.
4	Have you determined a budget for this project?	There is no established budget for this project.
5	Are the assessment results to be used for SMRLA's benefit or for the benefit of the three public libraries?	The results will be used to identify opportunities benefiting the three public libraries. SMRLA is leading the project as the regional resource center.
6	Will SMRLA be the public-facing organization for the assessment?	No. SMRLA approaches public outreach as a "back-end" facilitator for the public libraries. Each library has its own branding and community presence that we wish to preserve.
7	Will the three public libraries help in promotions and outreach for this project?	Yes, there will be opportunities for the public libraries to help promote the community assessment through their outreach channels.

8	The minimum qualifications state the Respondent must be licensed to do business in the state of Maryland. Does the respondent have to be licensed in Maryland before submitting a proposal, or can it be licensed by the award date?	The RFP originally noted that “As of January 1, 2026, both the Respondent’s company and its key personnel meet all of the following minimum qualifications...” which includes “The Respondent is licensed to do business in the state of Maryland.” We have updated the first phrase to: “As of the anticipated contract award date of Monday, September 21, 2026 ...”
9	Will public library staff members or directors be a part of the project team?	Public library staff may assist in limited ways, but SMRLA is leading the project. The project team is made up of SMRLA staff.
10	For the final deliverables, are the results expected to be presented by county or regionally?	SMRLA anticipates results may be a combination of regional data and trends along with county-specific details, and should be presented as such.
11	Are there results from any past survey efforts or other internal data SMRLA can share to help with the assessment?	SMRLA does not have recent survey data to provide but can provide patron data and library usage trends as appropriate.
12	Is SMRLA open to proposals that present optional services? For example, there could be options where the libraries and the consultant have different levels of involvement in promoting the assessment in the community.	Yes, SMRLA is open to considering options that are clearly stated and provide comparative pricing.
13	You mentioned the assessment will inform SMRLA’s strategic plan initiatives. Is the strategic planning process ongoing? Was it conducted with a consultant?	SMRLA’s FY26-30 Strategic Plan is complete and can be found on our website . The plan was developed with a consultant.
14	Can SMRLA share strategic plan data with the successful consultant?	Yes, SMRLA has stakeholder feedback and other data it can share to inform the community assessment process.
15	Does SMRLA have community profile data that can be shared?	Yes, SMRLA has demographic data and patron data it can share.
16	The RFP proscribes the structure in which proposals are to be laid out.	Yes. Submissions should align as closely as possible to the RFP requirements so the

	Should respondents submit their proposals using that structure, even if their documents may differ?	SMRLA team can accurately compare all submissions.
17	Will SMRLA staff be able to support the community assessment process through, for example, inputting survey responses or organizing focus groups?	SMRLA may have limited ability to support the assessment process. The successful respondent should expect to conduct the bulk of work on the project.
18	Can you explain why some specific audiences were identified in the RFP?	The audiences cited in the RFP are examples and not meant to be a full representation of those to be engaged in the community assessment.
19	Does SMRLA have a target response rate for community surveys?	No. The surveys should reach a representative cross section of residents and yield statistically valid results.
20	Would SMRLA accept a respondent that is licensed in Washington, D.C. but not in Maryland?	No. Successful respondents must be licensed in the state of Maryland.
21	Do you have a project end date in mind? The RFP lists the anticipated contract award date as September 21, and is there a date that the entire project needs to be wrapped up by?	We prefer to complete the project within our current fiscal year ending June 30, 2027.
22	The Q&A document says that “The surveys should reach a representative cross section of residents and yield statistically valid results.” Can you provide more information on what the term “statistically valid” means to SMRLA?	We recognize a statistically valid survey may be expensive and, therefore, true statistical validity is not our goal. Rather, the focus is on a survey that is reliable and well segmented to allow us to draw reasonable conclusions. As stated in Question 12 above, SMRLA is open to proposals with options if respondents offer tiered services related to survey methodology.
23	How long is this project intended to last?	We prefer to complete the project within our current fiscal year ending June 30, 2027.
24	Regarding question 6 of the questionnaire “Provide a complete balance sheet or annual report (verified by a certified public accountant) for the last three years of operation.” Is it sufficient to pull a	A complete balance sheet for the last three years from accounting software is sufficient.

	complete balance sheet for the last three years from accounting software? If not, how would you like the respondent to show that it's been verified by a CPA?	
25	Are there any dependent timelines or milestones (ex. related projects, funding cycles, board meetings) that should be considered when writing our proposal?	We seek completion within our current fiscal year ending June 30, 2027. The SMRLA board of trustees and the boards of trustees for its three partner libraries meet regularly and, therefore, should be able to accommodate final report presentations.
26	The RFP states that the survey should reach a "representative cross section" of residents. Does SMRLA intend this to mean broad and inclusive participation from the identified counties, demographic groups, library users, and non-users?	Yes, SMRLA seeks participation that reasonably represents the tri-county community.
27	Alternatively, does SMRLA expect a statistically representative sample capable of supporting population-level estimates and significance testing among subgroups?	As noted in question 22 above, SMRLA recognizes the costs involved in reaching statistical validity and is more inclined toward a less scientifically rigorous approach that will allow us to draw reasonable conclusions. SMRLA is open to proposals offering a range of services if the respondent is capable.
28	The RFP states that the survey should reach a representative cross section of residents including students. Would SMRLA like data from children below the age of 18?	No, data from residents age 18 and above will suffice.
29	Gathering data from children under the age of 18 may require IRB approval. Will SMRLA financially and logistically support or handle IRB approval, or should the proposal build that into the budget?	See question 28 above.
30	Gathering data from children younger than 18 years old will require parental consent. Will SMRLA support getting parental consent?	See question 28 above.

31	Does SMRLA have existing relationships with organizations in the community (like schools, churches, community centers, etc.) that could be leveraged to reach communities who either cannot access or do not use the libraries? If not, would SMRLA aid in establishing those relationships and should we build that relationship-building into the proposal timeline and budget?	Respondents should expect to conduct outreach to underserved communities. SMRLA can aid in a limited capacity through relationships established by its three partner libraries.
32	Is SMRLA open to a virtual presentation of the final report to SMRLA's Board of Trustees and Board of Trustees for its three partner libraries, or is in-person preferred? Is the intention for one joint final presentation or individual presentations with each Board?	SMRLA's board meets virtually and we would accept a virtual presentation for that board. Our partner libraries have differing meeting formats. SMRLA can coordinate one regional presentation for its three partner libraries if preferred, or we can work with each individual library to schedule county-specific presentations.
33	To confirm, the entire work plan (question 7) should be less than two pages? And/or does the language “the steps the Respondent will take to <i>begin</i> providing” mean that we should just discuss the first steps of the project?	We recognize there may not be enough information during the RFP process to develop a full work plan for the project. Our goal is to determine, as best as possible, the capability of respondents to provide services. Respondents' descriptions of the recommended plan should demonstrate that capability.
34	For question 6, we cannot provide balance sheets/annual reports that will be less than two years. As a nonprofit, we <i>can</i> provide our annual audits or we can provide a link to our public-facing webpage that has the audits available.	A link to posted audits is acceptable for question 6.