

Request for Qualifications: Strategic Planning Consultant Services

Five-Year Strategic Plan: April 2027 – March 2031

Issued by: Akron-Summit County Public Library (ASCPL)

Issue Date	July 6, 2026
Qualifications Due	August 3, 2026
Submission Method	Email
Primary Contact	Michelle Alleman, Executive Director
Email	malleman@akronlibrary.org

IMPORTANT NOTICE: All communications regarding this RFQ must be directed only to the Primary Contact. Unauthorized contact with Library staff, trustees, or representatives may result in disqualification.

1. Overview

Akron-Summit County Public Library (ASCPL) seeks proposals from qualified consultants to prepare for, facilitate, and develop a strategic plan that includes goals and measurable objectives to meet community needs in a cost-effective manner for the next five years. Additionally, the process should identify potential long-term goals that may need to be addressed beyond the five-year time frame. The plan should also address the implications of the proposed goals for the library’s collections, technology, and staffing. This process will examine our community’s growth patterns and demographics and identify the need for service with respect to future trends and technologies. The process also will include an assessment of the needs of the community, including current library users and non-users, as well as other stakeholders such as local government entities, schools, businesses, and community organizations. The development of the strategic plan will support the Library’s core services, as well as identify community needs that the Library is well- and uniquely-suited to fill; and will be based on community outcomes, the positive changes in Akron and Summit County that the Library hopes to influence.

2. Library History and Background

ASCPL was founded in 1874 as the Akron Public Library. One hundred years later, the Library became the Akron-Summit County Public Library, incorporating suburban branch libraries into the system. Although the communities of Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, Hudson, Peninsula, Stow-Munroe Falls, and Twinsburg are served by independent public

libraries, anyone living, working, or attending school in Ohio is eligible to register for a free ASCPL card. The Library's legally defined services population is more than 380,000. In 2025, ASCPL had over 305,000 cardholders and over 4.6 million items circulated. Visits to ASCPL locations exceeded 1.3 million.

Currently, ASCPL consists of approximately 330 employees who work at Main Library in downtown Akron, on one of 3 Mobile Services vehicles, or at one of eighteen branches located both in Akron and in other Summit County communities. ASCPL is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees who serve four- or seven-year renewable terms. Library trustees are appointed by either the Summit County Executive with approval of the Summit County Council or by the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas. Funding for ASCPL operations comes from the State of Ohio Public Library Fund (approximately 47% of revenue) and from a 1.9-mil local operating levy (approximately 50% of revenue) that was approved in May 2021 with 76% of voters approving. A 1-mil capital bond issue was approved in May 2025 with 68% of voters approving to make capital repairs and improvements to all 19 ASCPL locations. More information is available at www.akronlibrary.org

As a largely tax-funded organization, ASCPL must demonstrate fiscal responsibility and transparent stewardship. At the same time, ASCPL seeks to proactively adapt services and delivery models to meet changing community needs and future conditions.

3. Project Description

The selected consultant will partner with Library leadership and a designated planning committee to design and facilitate an inclusive process that results in a clear, actionable plan usable for decision-making, accountability, and communication of community value. The plan will provide goals and objectives that will contribute to positive changes in the community and will reinforce the Library's role as an essential community asset. The Library expects the completed plan to emerge from a process that includes conversation with and involvement by Library staff, trustees, and members of the public. The plan should enable the Library to respond promptly and effectively to societal change, technological development, emerging role expectations, and other changes, while also maintaining and improving core library services. The plan should demonstrate awareness of trends in the Library industry, but ultimately be true to the interests and needs of residents of the Library's communities.

4. Scope of Work

ASCPL is seeking a professional consultant to collaborate and communicate effectively with the Strategic Planning Committee (APC) or designated members at all points of the process. The SPC will consist of the Executive Director, Deputy Director, Development Director, HR Director, and Marketing & Communications Director. The SPC will:

- Review proposals and select the strategic planning consultant/firm
- Work with the selected firm to craft the process

- Individually or in small groups, provide data, help to coordinate focus group members, and otherwise ensure the firm has what is needed to complete the work.

The Executive Director will be the primary contact for the firm with the support of Executive Assistant Sara Schwendeman.

The consultant will:

- Guide and facilitate review and any needed revision of the Library's mission, vision, and core values.
- Facilitate the strategic planning process using a methodology effective for a public library, including but not limited to SWOT and PEST analyses.
- Utilize effective methods for data gathering and presentation, which should include surveys and focus groups to identify needs over the next five-year period. Focus group meetings or other informational gathering meetings should be held with staff, users, non-users, community leaders, and Library Trustees.
- Assist in the identification of community needs.
- Facilitate meetings of the SPC and attend any subcommittee meetings, including an environmental scan subcommittee.
- Assist in the identification of goals and objectives.
- Assist in identifying gaps where current library operations are insufficient to meet the identified community needs. This includes identifying conditions in the community that reveal areas in which the Library can have a positive impact.
- Facilitate the development of a strategic plan document that adheres to the Library's mission, vision, and core values, and outlines goals and objectives for a five-year period.

Through this process, ASCPL expects to have a strategic plan in place no later than April 1, 2026 that will guide the activity and use of resources over the next five years. The process should ensure input from a wide range of stakeholders, and the plan should reflect the input and idea generation.

The consultant will assist the SPC and its individual members with:

- Determining the type of data to be collected, and the appropriate measurement standards to ensure its usefulness in decision-making.
- Identifying groups and/or individuals that should provide input in addition of the staff and Library Trustees.
- Collecting, reviewing, and analyzing data and opinions and making recommendations based on the data and opinions.
- Developing a statement of community needs.
- Determining current use and projected future demand as affected by:
 - Community needs and the opportunities they offer.
 - Changes in technology.
 - Trends affecting the future of public libraries in general.

- Community organizations that either supplement or complement library services.
- Writing goals and objectives that respond to community needs.
- Identifying strategies to build organizational capacity for addressing community needs.
- Addressing the financial implications of proposed recommendations.

The consultant will be required to:

- Contribute substantively both orally and in writing to the decision-making process.
- Facilitate planning meetings and information/opinion gathering sessions, including an initial planning meeting at which there will be a discussion of roles and responsibilities, the work to be completed, and the project timetable for completion.
- Meet with groups and stakeholders, including but not limited to staff, trustees, government officials, and community leaders.
- Work closely with designated staff on tasks related to the strategic planning project, including but not limited to writing the final document.

5. Project Timeline

It is anticipated that the project will begin in September 2026 and be completed by the end of March 2027.

August 3, 2026	Proposals due no later than 12pm EST
August 2026	Interviews
By August 31, 2026	Project awarded to successful respondent
September – October 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plan meetings with Library Administration and Strategic Planning Committee ● Information gathering and analysis ● Review current mission, vision, and core values
November – December 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus groups with identified stakeholders ● Committee and subcommittee work
January – February 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify desired outcomes ● Develop goals and objectives
March 2027	Write plan document
March 25, 2027	Plan presented to Board of Trustees for approval
April 2027	Plan takes effect and is communicated to community at large

NOTE: This timeline should be considered a draft. The Library reserves the right to deviate from this schedule.

6. Selection Process

Comparison of proposals will require evaluation of multiple factors including price, quality and completeness of the proposals, references, and interviews. The following qualifications will be considered by the Library:

- The ability, capacity, and skill of the respondent to perform the contract or provide the service required.
- Whether the respondent can perform the contract or provide the service promptly, or within the time specified, without delay or interference.
- The character, integrity, reputation, judgment, and efficiency of the respondent.
- The respondent's record of experience with strategic planning consulting, with public libraries, and with facilitating work groups, both employee and public.
- The quality of the proposal including its completeness, organization, attention to the project description, and proposed work plan.
- The quality of performance of previous contracts or services.

7. Proposal Requirements

In order to fully respond to this RFP, each proposal must include:

- A **cover letter** providing a description of the respondent, including the name and address of the vendor submitting the proposal, and the name, address, telephone number, and email address of the person who will serve as the vendor's principal contact.
- An **executive summary** of the highlights of the proposal which should not exceed one page in length and which summarizes the benefits of the proposal to the Akron-Summit County Public Library.
- A **summary of qualifications** for the respondent which includes recent and relevant experience. Specifically, please include experience with similar work in public libraries over the last five (5) years.
- A **list of key personnel** who would be associated with the proposal. For each person listed, include the relationship with the respondent, including current job title and employment history with the respondent. Include the type of length of any relevant experience.
- A **description of the process** to be used to meet the requirements of this RFP.
- A **work plan** that includes a description of the methodology, timeline, and estimate of the amount of time and cost for each component of the project, and the amount of data required to provide statistically valid information for this population. The timeline should demonstrate that the work will be completed within no more than two hundred forty (240) days of the execution of a signed contract. Alternate timelines may be considered with appropriate rationale as it pertains to the gathering of information and Library Board deadlines.
- References** of a minimum of three (3) previous clients in the area of strategic planning in the last 36 months and permission to contact them. For each reference,

include the company name, contact name, contact phone number, the type of work done, and the scope of the project.

- **Pricing** by phase and/or project component, including optional aspects of the proposal. Include all supplies, travel time, mileage, and other costs associated with the project (i.e. telephone vs. mailer vs. online survey; survey vs. focus groups. Progress payments will be allowed over the term of the work.
- Any possible optional **alternates** for gathering data, including the rationale for need, the desired benefit, and a description of the proposed instrument.
- The completed and signed **Proposal Form** included at the end of this RFP.
- **Five (5) complete copies** of the proposal on paper and **one electronic copy**.

NOTE: A proposal missing any component of the deliverables listed above may be disqualified.