

Request for Proposals Community Outreach Consultant

Proposals will only be accepted electronically, via email. Proposals are due via email on or before **Friday, August 25, 2023 at 5:00 PM PST** to:

Sonoma County Library
c/o Erika Thibault, Library Director
email: ethibault@sonomalibrary.org
Phone: (707) 867-8188

Introduction

The Sonoma County Library is inviting all interested and qualified consultants and firms to submit proposals to develop and implement strategic advice and planning for a Library Public Outreach Plan and Public Funding Feasibility Assessment. Other elements of this work include surveying users and stakeholders, and providing a one-year plan to identify funding sources to maintain and enhance library services and programs.

The purpose of the engagement effort is to position the Library to identify and respond to the needs and interests of the community that it serves, to engage Library staff in the planning process, and to raise awareness of existing and potential Library services and resources, as the Library prepares for the likelihood of a ballot initiative in November 2024 that would extend its current sales tax allocation.

The consultant will work with a diverse established team of library staff, volunteers and consultants with expertise in marketing, communications, public affairs, public relations, public education, and fund development, and will fill a crucial role in helping to coordinate and guide these efforts, in order to present a unified and consistent message to the community, with a focus on public education and information about the value public libraries provide to the community.

About Sonoma County Library

Sonoma County Library is an independent countywide agency comprised of 12 regional libraries, 2 community libraries, an administrative and support center, and mobile library services. Sonoma County Library is a Joint Powers Authority comprised of the unincorporated areas of Sonoma County and nine cities, with an 11-member Library Commission that serves as its sole governing body. The Library Director is responsible for strategic and operational oversight of the library.

Our mission is to bring information, ideas, and people together to build a stronger community.

Sonoma County Library serves 487,000 residents countywide, has over 300+ employees, and has an operating budget of \$51.3 million, of which 60% comes from property tax, and 40% comes from the Measure Y Sales tax, which expires in 2026 unless it is renewed by voters.

In November 2016, 72% of Sonoma County voters approved Measure Y, a one-eighth of a cent sales tax to support the Sonoma County Library system. Measure Y funds are used to increase hours, increase access, expand collections, expand programs and services, and maintain library facilities. Measure Y funding expires in 2026.

The Measure Y Oversight Committee was created to oversee and monitor library expenditures to ensure compliance with the ordinance and intentions of the voters. Committee members are appointed by their corresponding library commissioners and operate independently of the Commission. The committee meets several times a year and prepares an annual report; the report typically states that sales tax funds are being used in accordance with the voters' intent.

Scope of Work

Sonoma County Library is seeking a professional consultant to:

- Work closely with the Library's existing marketing, public relations, public affairs and fund development efforts, to improve and enhance community communications, education, and information.
- Review current community engagement activities, analyze efficacy, and make recommendations for improvement.
- Incorporate recommendations from the Reimagining Plan into all public and community outreach.
- Develop a library public outreach and education plan with strategic outreach recommendations, that integrates, complements, amplifies and supports existing efforts.
- Help the Library create relationships through local "community partnerships"—such as with school districts, colleges, civic and social organizations, business and agricultural groups—to help market the Library and increase the user base.
- Draft communications collaterals to support implementation of the public outreach plan.
- Coordinate and streamline outreach communications to multiple local communities, constituencies, and the media. Includes helping staff develop email newsletter, flyers, and outreach-based marketing collateral.
- Develop and implement an advertising and education campaign to reach more potential Library users and increase library card holders.
- Design and implement staff and stakeholder message training, including support for a speakers' bureau to amplify the library message.
- Conceive and produce informational mailings that help the community understand how the Library uses tax dollars to provide service.
- Oversee or conduct a community survey/opinion research through a designated opinion research subcontractor.
- Independently analyze survey results and assess public funding viability.
- Provide input into and develop balloting materials as appropriate.
- Present recommendation(s) to the Library Commission to support informed decisions on any potential new funding source(s).

Proposal Requirements

To be considered, proposals must include:

- Cover letter including a brief description of the firm or individual, as well as the name and contact information of the principal.
- Executive summary of the proposal, including purpose, outcomes, and key points on the timeline.
- List of any personnel involved in the process and their role and prior experience.
- Summary of the facilitator's qualifications and experience developing and implementing communications plans for public agencies.
- Project plan that includes a description of the methodology, tasks, timeline, key dates.

- Recommended communication and media relations activities that support the Library's needs as listed in the project scope.
- Schedule of costs to complete the project. All costs associated with the project should be listed. Additional sheets may be attached.
- References of contact information of 3 or more current or previous clients for whom comparable work was completed.
- Samples of 2 or more executed strategic plans and related contact information (may overlap with above).
- Additional documentation or information as the facilitator deems fit to assist Sonoma County Library in the selection process, including any exclusions, exceptions, or recommendations.

Selection Criteria

Proposals are due on Friday, August 25, 2023 by 5:00 p.m. Proposals will be evaluated by Sonoma County Library staff during the week of August 28th, and if needed, interviews will be scheduled September 4th through the 8th. Please reserve these dates, as there will be no alternate interview dates.

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Relevant experience and success in community communications planning facilitation.
- Schedule of costs to complete the project. All costs associated with the project should be listed.
- Demonstrated ability to meet deadlines and operate within budget.
- Prior experience working with both public and staff committees.
- Demonstrable facilitation and qualitative/quantitative integration skills.
- Relevant experience in Sonoma County, with other libraries, government agencies, and work on revenue ballot measures generally.
- Who is SCL's primary contact for this work and what is their experience?
- List two references

Proposed Timeline

The project will begin by September 11, 2023 and will be completed in August 2024. The successful proposal will include a project management plan that can achieve a fully implemented community communications plan by July 2024. A copy of the Library's Professional Services Agreement, which will be used for this project, is attached.

Contact

Thank you for your interest. If you have questions about this RFP, please contact:

Erika Thibault, Library Director
 Sonoma County Library
 6135 State Farm Dr.
 Rohnert Park, CA 94928
ethibault@sonomalibrary.org
 (707) 867-8188