

Request for Proposal for a Consultant (RFP)
January 2017

**SPECIAL AUDIT of LIBRARY SERVICE
in ALLEGHENY COUNTY**



The Allegheny Regional Asset District (District) is seeking the services of a qualified consultant (“special auditor”) to conduct a special audit/operational review of the Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA) and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) and recommend how library services should be structured as suggested in the *Report of the County-City Library Service Panel – 21st Century Library Service in Allegheny County*. Our objective is to maintain effective public library service delivery and to strengthen all libraries.

Background

The District is a special purpose unit of local government provided for in Act 77 of 1993. The District Board is charged with the responsibility of allocating one half of the 1% of the Allegheny County sales tax to governmental and non-profit entities that the Board designates as “regional assets.” All of the grants are paid out pursuant to the terms and conditions of a grant agreement. (See the District’s website radworkshere.org for more information about the District, its budget and oversight process.)

ACLA is a federated library system, made up of 46 member libraries. Each member library is an independent entity linked through the federated system. ACLA is unique among the assets funded by the District in that it is entrusted with RAD funds to be passed through and administered on behalf of its members, with the exception of CLP, based on statutory or agreed on formulas. CLP is an ACLA member that receives funding directly from the District. CLP provides library services through 19 neighborhood locations in the city, including its Main Library, the Downtown & Business Library and the Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped. With designations as the County Library for Allegheny County, the District Library Center for Allegheny County, and Statewide Resource Center for PA, CLP provides services that include countywide delivery of materials, inter-library loans, specialized collections, subject expertise and reference support, among others. ACLA supports its member libraries in several areas including: public information and advocacy on behalf of libraries and library service, continuing education opportunities for library staff and library board members, coordination of consortium purchasing, licensing and employee benefit programs, centralized marketing and promotion of libraries, grant writing and management for collaborative programs.

Jointly, ACLA and CLP operate the eiNetwork, which serves as the information technology infrastructure for libraries in Allegheny County through a high-speed network connection between all libraries and desktop support for 2,000 PCs. Through the shared catalog, all libraries are able to participate in an intra-county reserve program that allows patrons to request materials from other locations and have them delivered to a convenient library.

Although Act 77 doesn’t provide for the District to operate assets, it does give the District Board oversight responsibility. In that regard, the District requires applications, yearly comprehensive financial audits and other reports. In addition, District staff and board committees meet with assets regularly. Both ACLA and CLP are currently in compliance with all filings and reporting requirements set forth by the District.

The grant agreements with ACLA and CLP provide for the District to engage the services of a special auditor to “evaluate the status of the regional asset and recommend remedial actions to address any managerial, financial or other problems of the regional asset.”

Since 1995, RAD has allocated \$527 million to library service, over 30% of its total expenditures. Significant state and local funding also supports library budgets each year.

In 2015, ACLA had an \$11 million budget with \$6.4 million funded by the District. The balance is from a state appropriation, county government and private grants. A portion of the District funds is retained by ACLA for Mobile Library service and Administration. In 2015, CLP had a \$31 million budget with \$20 million from the District. The balance is from a state appropriation, a citywide real estate assessment and private grants. In addition, the District provides \$3 million for the eiNetwork.

Allegheny County libraries have achieved a significant level of inter-library cooperation, material sharing and efficiencies in the last twenty years. However, there are overlaps in administrative support functions with the existence of two separate central service administrations. Some overlap is a result of the state library code. In addition, there are many functions that county libraries perform independently that may inhibit library staff from focusing on direct customer service.

Scope of Work

Given the District's level of financial investment and commitment to ensure exceptional library service for everyone at a reasonable cost, the RAD Board wants the Boards of both CLP and ACLA to advance the initiatives outlined in the *21st Century Library Service in Allegheny County* report. To that end, the Board seeks an independent operational review of the library system followed by specific plans for implementation of the following recommendations presented in the *21st Century Library Service in Allegheny County* report.

RAD is seeking an independent consultant to provide a detailed plan that would do the following:

1. Establish uniform standards for the delivery of Library Services to Allegheny County residents.
 - a. Identify the improvements needed to raise service levels to meet uniform standards countywide.
 - b. Project the additional funding necessary for the delivery of uniform service levels at every library countywide while ensuring no community experiences a decline in service.
2. In order to maximize the efficiencies of centralized services, combine Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh-District Services, the Allegheny County Library Association, and eiNetwork into an integrated entity responsible for the provision of agreed upon required centralized services for all public libraries in Allegheny County, and for supporting compliance with uniform service standards.
 - a. Model financial benefits and implications as well as the optimal organizational structure of a single, combined entity or central integrated system.
3. Establish criteria that permit interested local libraries to opt into certain additional non-mandatory, centralized services or to become members of a central integrated system while permitting libraries that wish to remain autonomous the ability to do so.
4. RAD is seeking specific recommended options on how to allocate funds to accomplish the goal of a central integrated system.

Deliverables

1. A clear list of recommended implementable action items. This list should also be accompanied by an estimated timeline for implementation, benchmarks for monitoring progress and a cost analysis for each suggestion.
2. At the completion of the work, the consultant will provide a final, written report in both hard copy and electronic format.
3. The consultant can expect to make multiple presentations at the District's direction.

Submitting a Proposal

Qualified parties should submit the following no later than February 10, 2017. Proposals should be submitted to RAD Executive Director Rich Hudic at rh@radworkshere.org

1. A proposal describing your qualifications (or the qualifications of the team assigned to the project) and how the tasks would be carried out.
2. An estimate of time from the agreed upon start date to delivery of the written report. ACLA and CLP, as required by agreement, have indicated they will fully cooperate with the review, and the staff of the District will be available to assist as well. District contact: Carolyn Marks, Assistant Director, cm@radworkshere.org or (412) 227-1900 ext. 213
3. Resumes of all consultants who would be involved in the project including any prior affiliation with ACLA or CLP.
4. Names and contact people at three nonprofit/governmental agencies who have been your clients in the last 18 months and whether your firm has been under contract to the Allegheny County Library Association or Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh at any time in the last 36 months. Also, list any firm conflicts of interest that might arise as a result of associations with CLP, ACLA or RAD.
5. A fixed/maximum price cost for the review based on the scope outlined above.
6. The District seeks participation by minority and women owned businesses in its activities. Please indicate if you are certified as such or would affiliate with a certified firm for this work.