

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR EXECUTIVE RECRUITING SERVICES

Joliet Public Library
150 North Ottawa Street
Joliet, Illinois 60432

DUE DATE: Friday, August 14, 2026

EXECUTIVE SEARCH

The Joliet Public Library (Library) seeks qualified Executive Search Firms (Firms) to submit proposals for professional executive recruitment services for the position of Executive Director. The Board of Trustees seeks experienced candidates to oversee the operations of a large public institution with a dedicated staff in a supportive and diverse community.

This Request for Proposals is not an invitation to bid. Proposals will be evaluated based upon the relative merits of each Firm's qualifications, experience, proposed services, cost, and overall value to the Library. The Library is not required to award a contract based solely upon the lowest proposed cost.

The Library is seeking a Firm with demonstrated experience conducting successful executive-level searches. Experience recruiting senior leadership for public libraries, public sector organizations, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, cultural organizations, or other comparable community-focused institutions is highly desirable. Specific experience conducting executive searches for public libraries or library systems will be considered a significant advantage.

There is no expressed or implied obligation of the Library to reimburse responding Firms for any expenses incurred in preparing proposals or for attending any meetings, participating in interviews, presentations, negotiations, or any other activities associated with this Request for Proposals. The Library will consider the entire proposal, including but not limited to, completeness, ability to meet service needs, experience, expertise, availability of personnel, cost, and references, overall value to the Library, and any other factors the Board determines are relevant. The contract will not necessarily be awarded to the proposer submitting the lowest cost proposal.

The Library reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive informalities or irregularities, request clarification or additional information, negotiate with one or more Firms, and select the Firm determined to be in the best interests of the Library.

ELIGIBILITY

The Executive Search Firm should demonstrate substantial experience in the recruitment and

placement of senior-level and executive management positions. Firms with experience conducting searches for public libraries, public sector organizations, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, cultural organizations, or other comparable community-focused institutions are encouraged to submit proposals.

Experience conducting executive searches for public libraries or library systems is highly desirable and will be considered a significant asset in the evaluation of proposals. Firms should demonstrate a pattern of successful completion of executive recruitment campaigns for institutions or organizations of similar size, complexity, and function to the Joliet Public Library.

The successful proposing Firm will report to the Board of Trustees and should expect to work with the current Executive Director or their designated liaison.

The Firm shall disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest, including any current or recent professional relationship with any Library trustee, employee, prospective candidate, or other person participating in the selection process. The Library reserves the right to determine whether a disclosed conflict disqualifies the Firm.

The Firm shall conduct the recruitment and selection process in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local equal employment opportunity, nondiscrimination, and employment laws.

The chosen Firm will be responsible for:

- Assisting with any review and revision of the position description.
- Creating a recruitment search strategy.
- Developing and posting advertising materials and job announcements.
- Screening candidates for minimum qualifications.
- Conducting preliminary interviews.
- Providing assessment reports on candidates for the Board of Trustees.
- Recommending qualified candidates for interviews with the Board.
- Conducting professional reference checks, employment and credential verification, and other appropriate background inquiries as requested.
- Maintaining the confidentiality of applicant and candidate information except as authorized by the Library or required by law.

For full consideration, proposals must contain evidence of the Firm's experience and abilities in executive recruitment and other disciplines directly related to the proposed services. All proposals should provide profiles of consultants assigned to the project and identify the individual who will serve as the primary consultant throughout the engagement.

Proposals will be evaluated by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the following criteria:

- Completeness and quality of the proposal.
- Ability to meet requested service needs.
- Experience conducting executive searches for organizations of similar size, scope, complexity, and function.

- Experience conducting executive searches for public libraries or comparable public sector, nonprofit, educational, cultural, or community-focused organizations, with public library experience considered a significant advantage.
- Expertise and availability of key personnel.
- Proposed search methodology and approach.
- Feedback from references (minimum of three with contact information).
- Cost and overall value.
- Approach to identifying and recruiting a diverse and highly qualified candidate pool in compliance with applicable law
- Terms of any performance or replacement guarantee offered by the Firm.
- Identification and disclosure of any actual or potential conflicts of interest.
- Proposed timeline and ability to meet the Library's desired schedule.

LIBRARY BACKGROUND

Joliet is the fourth largest city in Illinois with a population of nearly 151,000. It is 40 miles southwest of Chicago. Joliet is a well-established and diverse community.

The Joliet Public Library was established in 1876 and recently celebrated its 150th anniversary. It serves community members through approximately 100 employees, two facilities, and one outreach vehicle. The Library is primarily funded by local property taxes and recently completed a \$4.5 million renovation of its Black Road building. The Daniel Burnham-designed Ottawa Street location was updated in 2022. The Library's 2026 operating budget is \$7.5 million.

The Executive Director is responsible for the daily administration of the Library's staff and services. Proposing search Firms are encouraged to review the Library's website: <https://jolietlibrary.org/>

A nine-member Board of Trustees is appointed by the mayor with the approval of the City Council. The Board of Trustees governs the Library and is responsible for establishing the budget, setting policies, and developing strategic direction.

SCOPE OF WORK & EXPECTATIONS

The Firm will work directly with the Board of Trustees. The Board has complete discretion and authority during the recruitment, interview, and selection process. The Board welcomes input and professional guidance from the Firm.

The Board shall have access to all application materials, resumes, interview notes, candidate evaluations, reference information, and other materials developed during the search, subject to applicable law. The Firm shall provide the Board with all applicants meeting the minimum qualifications together with the Firm's evaluations and recommendations. The Firm is expected to:

- Develop a candidate profile with input from the Board and chosen contributors.
- Create a comprehensive recruitment strategy, including an advertising and outreach plan.
- Work with the Board to design, edit, and finalize for publication a comprehensive job

advertisement in compliance with all applicable laws.

- Carry out highly effective recruitment, including posting the position through appropriate local, regional, and national channels.
- Utilize professional networks and targeted outreach strategies to identify qualified candidates, including passive candidates.
- Describe and implement an outreach strategy designed to produce a diverse and highly qualified applicant pool in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws.
- Screen all applicants.
- Receive and review resumes, determining candidates who meet minimum qualifications, and conduct follow-up telephone interviews to clarify each applicant's experience and qualifications.
- Prepare and present to the Board a summary of up to seven (7) of the most qualified candidates, unless fewer qualified candidates are identified, candidates with the most promising qualifications and experience.
- Assist the Board in evaluating these candidates.
- Perform appropriate reference checks, including in-depth checks to evaluate candidates' past job performance and other pertinent factors, including verification of prior employment, educational credentials, professional references, and such additional background verification as authorized by the Library and permitted by law.
- Verify employment history, professional credentials, and other material qualifications identified by the Firm or requested by the Board.
- Assist the Board in the interview and selection process. Maintain the confidentiality of all applicant information except as authorized by the Library or as otherwise required by law.
- Advise the Board of any areas, services, or important steps that may benefit the search.
- Provide a proposed search schedule identifying major tasks, deliverables, decision points, and anticipated Board involvement.
- Provide sample candidate assessment materials, interview tools, or other representative deliverables, with confidential or identifying information removed.
- All reports, candidate summaries, interview materials, assessments, and other work products prepared by the Firm shall become the property of the Library upon payment for such services. The proposal shall identify any restrictions on the Library's future employment of candidates introduced by the Firm, including any candidate ownership period or additional fees that may apply.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The Library's Board of Trustees intends to select one Firm to provide this service and reserves the right to reject any and all proposals with or without cause and without liability to any proposing Firm.

The Library may request interviews, presentations, demonstrations, or additional information from one or more Firms before making a final selection.

The Library may waive informalities or irregularities in any proposal, request clarification or supplemental information, negotiate with one or more Firms, revise the scope of services, and accept the proposal determined to be in the Library's best interests.

The Library is not obligated to select the proposal with the lowest price.

Nothing in this Request for Proposals obligates the Library to appoint any candidate presented by the selected Firm.

If the selected Firm does not execute a written, signed agreement within five business days of notification, the Board reserves the right to enter into agreement with the next most qualified Firm.

The Board reserves the right to request clarification and investigate the Executive Search Firm's ability to meet required needs.

The Board reserves the right to waive any requirements of this proposal.

The successful proposer shall be required to execute a written Professional Services Agreement in a form acceptable to the Library. Submission of a proposal constitutes the proposer's agreement to negotiate in good faith toward such an agreement.

The successful Firm shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances applicable to the services performed under the resulting agreement. The Library may cancel or amend this RFP at any time prior to execution of a written agreement without liability for any costs or expenses incurred by a proposing Firm. Any amendment will be issued in writing.

The Library reserves the right to suspend, postpone, or terminate the recruitment process at any time without awarding a contract or making a hiring decision

No proposal shall bind the Library unless and until a written agreement is approved and executed by the Library and the selected Firm.

PROPOSAL

Interested search Firms shall include in their written proposal:

Cover Letter

Include the name of the Firm, address, primary contact, and all applicable contact information.

Qualifications

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your Firm as they relate to the detailed work outlined above.

Highlight successful executive-level placements completed within the past five years.

Describe experience conducting executive searches for public libraries, public sector organizations, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, cultural organizations, or other comparable community-focused institutions. Firms with specific public library executive search experience should clearly identify that experience and provide relevant examples.

All proposers shall provide profiles and qualifications of the staff assigned to the project.

Scope of Services

Provide a detailed scope of services and a proposed outline of tasks, deliverables, and schedules. Identify the extent of Library personnel involvement deemed necessary and key decision points at each stage of the project.

The proposed schedule should identify the anticipated dates for development of the candidate profile, advertising, recruitment, initial screening, presentation of candidates, interviews, reference and background review, finalist selection, and completion of the search.

Major proposed deviations from the desired scope of services outlined above should be clearly noted and justified.

Cost

Provide the cost for services, including all fees, expenses (including anticipated advertising), reimbursable costs, and any other anticipated charges. Identify any optional services, hourly rates for work outside the proposed scope, and all assumptions upon which pricing is based.

The cost proposal shall separately identify:

1. Professional service fees.
2. Advertising and recruitment expenses.
3. Travel expenses.
4. Reimbursable expenses.
5. Optional or additional services.
6. Any other anticipated charges.

The proposal shall state whether the quoted fee is fixed or subject to adjustment and shall identify all circumstances under which additional fees or expenses may be charged. No additional service or expense shall be incurred without the Library's prior written approval.

References

Provide a list of at least three clients the Firm has contracted with within the past five years who can verify the Firm's ability to provide the requested services. Provide the name, title, and contact information for each reference.

Firms are encouraged to include references from clients for whom the Firm has conducted executive searches for public library, public sector, nonprofit, educational, cultural, or other comparable community-focused organizations.

Performance Guarantee

If your Firm offers a performance guarantee, describe the terms and conditions under which the guarantee applies.

The response should specifically identify the length of the guarantee period, whether the Firm will conduct a replacement search if the selected candidate resigns or is terminated during that period, any additional fees or expenses that would apply, and all exclusions or limitations.

The proposal should also state whether advertising costs, travel expenses, and other reimbursable expenses are included in the replacement search or will be billed separately.

Additional Services

The selected Firm is welcome to outline additional services or alternative approaches that it believes would be in the best interest of the Library.

Any proposed additional or optional service must be separately identified and priced.

Subcontractors

Proposers shall identify all subcontractors they intend to use for the proposed work. For each subcontractor listed, proposers shall indicate what products or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and what percentage of the overall scope of work they will perform.

The selected Firm shall remain fully responsible for all services performed by its subcontractors. No subcontractor may be substituted or added without the Library's prior written approval.

SCHEDULE OF SEARCH

This schedule is approximate and may be modified by the Library working in conjunction with the Firm as the search progresses.

Proposals Due: Friday, August 14, 2026

Job Posting: September 2026

Interviews: October & November 2026

Desired Conclusion: Friday, November 20, 2026

New Executive Director at the Library: January 2027

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Submissions are due by **Friday, August 14, 2026**.

Search Firms must submit a signed, electronic copy of their proposal by the deadline to:

Business Manager Dana Kutsie

Email: dkutsie@jolietlibrary.org

Proposals must be submitted in PDF format.

Firms shall direct all communications regarding this Request for Proposals solely to the Business Manager. Firms shall not contact individual trustees concerning this procurement unless authorized by the Library.

The Library may request interviews or presentations from one or more proposers before making its final selection.

Proposals may not be kept confidential and may be discussed in open meetings of the Board of Trustees of the Joliet Public Library.

Proposals submitted to the Library may constitute public records subject to disclosure under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act and may be discussed in meetings of the Board of Trustees in accordance with applicable law.