



## Oshkosh Public Library

### Request for Proposal: Strategic Planning

**Deadline for Submission: Friday, March 14, 2025, 5:00 PM CST**

The Oshkosh Public Library, located in the historical downtown district of Oshkosh, Wisconsin (population 67,000), is seeking proposals from qualified firms or consultants to lead our Board of Trustees and staff through a strategic planning process built on our renewed brand identity and informed by our brand pillars. The selected consultant will work with a strategic planning team composed of trustees and key library staff to articulate a clearly communicable and actionable five-year strategic plan for 2026–2031.

#### **About Our Library**

Opened to the public in 1900, the Oshkosh Public Library has been a cornerstone of the city’s life for 125 years. Governed by a nine-member Board of Trustees, we serve the residents of Oshkosh and, as the resource library for the Winnefox Library System, the communities and rural residents of our home county of Winnebago and four adjacent counties: Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, and Waushara. Our single historic building was extensively renovated and expanded in 1996 and is likely due for an aesthetic upgrade in the next five to ten years. The building is large enough to accommodate not only the public library and its own administrative offices but also those of the Winnefox Library System and the Winnebago Area Literacy Council.

Welcoming everyone, our staff and leadership are committed to delivering services and resources that meet the evolving needs and interests of a historic community that, like many others, faces social, educational and economic challenges. In the last 20 years, statistical usage patterns have shown a slow but steady decrease in community engagement with the library.

The library's relationship with the municipality has faced challenges in the past but is on a path of improvement. As part of this progress, the library is interested in exploring opportunities for closer alignment with city functions—such as HR and finance—in ways that enhance efficiency and collaboration without disrupting library operations or governance.

#### **Looking Forward to the Future**

The recent rebranding of the Oshkosh Public Library, coupled with a complete redesign of our website, comes at a pivotal moment in our community. Our updated tagline, “Spark Your Story!”, reflects our guiding philosophy—we invite the community to visit the library (or invite us to come to





them) to explore, learn, and connect with the world and themselves. Building on our renewed brand identity, we seek a strategic plan that aligns with our brand pillars and strengthens our role as a hub for lifelong learning, engagement, and inclusion. The plan should support our key aspirations:

- Being a place where people take the first step toward their goals and interests.
- Serving as a welcoming and inclusive hub for the community.
- Offering a rich collection of resources and experiences.
- Actively engaging with and participating in community life.
- Connecting residents to Oshkosh’s rich history.
- Ensuring every community interaction reflects our brand identity and aspirations.

### **Scope of Work**

We seek an experienced professional consultant or consulting firm to lead a process that develops a vision and implementation plan for the library’s future. The strategic plan should be informed by a broad range of internal and external stakeholders and should include:

- A long-term (10-year or more) vision for the library as an increasingly vital resource, reversing statistical downtrends in engagement and positioning the library as a flagship asset for Oshkosh’s residents and businesses.
- A shorter-term five-year strategic plan that establishes clear, actionable steps toward achieving the long-term vision.
- Design and facilitation of public input sessions and data-gathering efforts involving a diverse cross-section of stakeholders, including community leaders, residents, nonprofits, educators, and business leaders.
- Measurable benchmarks for evaluating progress and impact.
- A process for regular review and adaptation of the strategic plan based on technological, community, and financial developments.





#### Deliverables:

- A comprehensive assessment of the library’s environment, including an evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, quality of services, reputation, management, budget, and external competition for public attention.
- Clearly defined priorities, goals, and measurable objectives expressed as key performance indicators or other forms of metrics, ensuring accountability and transparency.
- Recommendations for the future relationship between the Oshkosh Public Library and the Winnefox Library System. From Winnefox’s founding in 1977 until 2023, both entities shared a single director. While they remain interconnected in various ways, expert analysis is needed to clarify their relationship and provide guidance based on best practices from comparable organizations that have redefined adjacent partnerships.
- Analysis and recommendations for better strategic alignment with the municipality, exploring non-disruptive opportunities for more shared City-library functions such as HR and finance, while maintaining the library’s operational integrity and governance.
- A refined mission statement and core values that align logically and workably with the library’s brand pillars.

---

#### Proposal Content Requirements

Each proposal must include the following:

- **Cover Letter:** A brief introduction to the consultant(s) and contact information.
- **Executive Summary:** A high-level overview demonstrating an understanding of the project’s purpose and expected outcomes.
- **Key Personnel:** A list of project participants, their qualifications, and relevant experience. Identify any third-party vendors if applicable.
- **Qualifications & Experience:** Demonstrated expertise in strategic planning is required; experience with public library operations, trends, and services is preferred but not required. *The selection committee will greatly appreciate the opportunity to review examples of strategic plans previously developed, though their absence will not necessarily disqualify a proposal.*





- Work Plan: A detailed methodology, tasks, timeline, and estimated time commitment for the project.
- Exclusions or Exceptions: Identification of any aspects of the project that fall outside the consultant's expertise or would be better handled by library staff.
- Cost Schedule: A breakdown of consulting fees, supplies, travel expenses (if applicable), and costs for data gathering and analysis.
- References: Contact information for three organizations for which the consultant has provided strategic planning services, preferably including at least one public library or nonprofit organization.

#### **RFP Standards and Selection Criteria**

- No library board or staff member shall have financial interest in this proposal. Consultants must disclose any existing or prior relationships with library staff, board members, or affiliated organizations.
- The library reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to request clarification as needed.
- Selection criteria include:
  - Clarity and responsiveness of the proposal.
  - Demonstrated knowledge and experience in strategic planning.
  - Methodology and timeline.
  - Value-to-cost ratio, assessed based on the submitted cost schedule versus consultant reputation and demonstrated ability.
  - Proven success in strategic planning and satisfactory performance record.





### **Deadline for Receipt & Instructions for Submission**

Proposals must be submitted in PDF format via email by Friday, March 14, 2025, at 5:00 PM CST to:  
Darryl Eschete, Library Director  
Email: [eschete@oshkoshlibrary.org](mailto:eschete@oshkoshlibrary.org)

Please use “Strategic Plan RFP—[Consultant or Consulting Firm Name]” as the subject line.

Late submissions will not be considered.

### **Preliminary Inquiries**

Questions regarding this RFP should be submitted via email to [eschete@oshkoshlibrary.org](mailto:eschete@oshkoshlibrary.org) no later than Friday, March 7, 2025. Responses will be provided within two business days.

### **RFP and Tentative Planning Process Timeline**

- March 7, 2025: Deadline for consultant inquiries.
- March 14, 2025, 5:00 PM CST: Proposals due.
- March 20, 2025: Review of proposals by committee of library administration and Board of Trustees. Finalists may be asked to provide additional information or participate in interviews.
- March 27, 2025: Finalists’ proposals reviewed at the Board of Trustees meeting; consultant selection finalized.
- May 2025: Strategic planning process begins.
- September 2025: Final strategic plan presented to the Board of Trustees.

Thank you for your interest in the Oshkosh Public Library.

