

## **Statewide Reference Resource Center Grants, 2015**

### **Statewide Reference Resource Center: Reference Services**

*Rhode Island's Statewide Reference Resource Center (SRRC) was established by law at the Providence Public Library in 1989 to make available to everyone in Rhode Island the special resources of the Providence Public Library including materials on the shelves as well as the skills of the staff. The SRRC focused on enhancing the Library's reference collections and reference staff and training staff of the state's other libraries in their use. As Providence Public Library and the library world in general evolved, the character of the SRRC evolved as well; first incorporating new technologies as they became available, then adding online communications and resources and publicity for the SRRC's services. The last decade witnessed a substantial evolution as access to online subscription services for all Rhode Islanders and Rhode Island libraries grew to over half of the budget. At the same time, with the growth of the Library of Rhode Island network, all of the state's libraries began routinely making their resources available through other libraries; now, whoever enters a Rhode Island library virtually enters them all. The importance of the Statewide Reference Resource Center has come to lie in the online subscriptions and the skilled generalist librarians who can utilize them and provide a personal gateway to reference resources throughout the LORI network for users anywhere at any time.*

*In 2011, the General Assembly modified Title 29-6-9 to open competition for the Statewide Reference Resource funding to all Rhode Island public libraries through a solicitation from the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS). OLIS has divided this solicitation into three parts: Online Resource Licensing, Operations and Reference Services. OLIS will manage Online Resource Licensing, soliciting proposals based on recommendations of the AskRI advisory group and negotiating licenses. Grants for Reference Services and Operations may be awarded together to a single applicant who submits two proposals, or separately in response to two proposals. Proposals from a public library working in partnership with another library or consortia are welcome. Preference will be given to applicants who respond to both RFPs.*

## Request for Proposals

### Statewide Reference Resource Center: Reference Services (up to \$100,000)

#### I. Background

1. RIGL 29-6-9(b)(1) provides state funding for a statewide reference resource center (SRRC) located in a public library to be chosen biennially by the Office of Library Information Services (OLIS) from responses to a request for proposals issued by OLIS.
2. OLIS seeks a public library to provide virtual reference services to the general public and other libraries on a statewide level accessible through online sites such as AskRI and RI.gov.
3. Services are requested from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015 with an option to renew the award for an additional year at OLIS' discretion.
4. The contract for SRRC reference resources will be awarded separately from the contract award for technical operations of the SRRC. A public library may respond to requests for proposals for both services, but must respond to each request with a separate and unique proposal.

#### II. Services Required

OLIS seeks proposals for reference services to the general public through online tools such as email, chat and instant messaging. In addition, services are requested for libraries of all types. The successful bidder will provide the following:

1. Email reference services.
  - a) Librarians<sup>1</sup> will provide responses to questions received via email, conducting research as necessary to answer those questions. Librarians providing online reference should be trained in the area of reference librarianship and online service.
  - b) The service will be available a minimum total of 60 hours a week, with services available at least six days a week.
  - c) Response time should be as soon as possible, but no longer than 48 hours from the time the question is received.

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<sup>1</sup> Librarian is defined throughout as an individual who has received a master's degree in library and information services from an institution accredited by ALA.

- d) Statistics will be maintained on questions asked, question content, and question answers.
- e) Access to the reference service will be provided on AskRI, RI.gov, and potentially other websites as designated by OLIS.
- f) SRRRC Operations will develop online forms and an email address for SRRRC email reference.

2. Chat reference services.

- a) Librarians will provide responses to questions received via the chat service, conducting research as necessary to answer those questions. Librarians providing chat service should be trained in the area of reference librarianship and online service.
- b) The service will be available a minimum total of 60 hours a week, with services available at least six days a week.
- c) Response time should be immediate, with questions that require a longer research window referred to email reference service.
- d) Statistics will be maintained on questions asked, question content, and question answers.
- e) The chat service will be linked on AskRI and RI.gov, and potentially other websites as designated by OLIS.
- f) SRRRC Operations will provide the chat application, technical support, and training for SRRRC chat service.

3. Online reference resources.

- a) Develop reference tools (vetted links) for target audiences determined in consultation with OLIS. For example, job seeker resources, health resources, student resources, etc.
- b) Work with SRRRC Operations to post reference resources on AskRI.
- c) Review online reference resources on AskRI for currency, working with SRRRC Operations to keep online resources current and timely.

III. Format for Proposals

Proposals should address the following questions, incorporating the Services Required in Section II:

1. Plan of Operation.

(a) Reference Services: How does the library propose to provide the reference services requested? Include information about the library's experience with online reference services and staff expertise for providing reference services.

(b) Online Reference Resources. How does the library propose to develop online reference resources for the general public, including students of all ages? How will topics be selected?

(c) Staffing. Describe how the project will be staffed for 60 hours a week and managed. Include positions and duties. Specify whether the library will use existing staff or hire additional staff.

(d) General. Does the library currently provide online reference and chat services? How will the library integrate SRRC functions with existing services? Describe how hosting the SRRC fits in with the library's long range plan and current operations.

2. Budget.

a) Submit the budget sheet with the application. Budgeting information should also be incorporated in the narrative so that it is clear how personnel and other costs have been determined.

IV. Review of Proposals

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by an ad hoc subcommittee of the Library Board of Rhode Island. The subcommittee will review proposals and make recommendations to OLIS.

The following scale will be used to evaluate proposals:

<b>Proposal Section</b>	<b>Maximum Points</b>
Reference Services	30
Online Reference Services	10
Staffing	20
General	20
Budget	20

V. Instructions

1. Applicant must be a Rhode Island public library (a library that currently receives state grant-in-aid through its parent municipality from the RI Office of Library and Information Services and meets the Minimum Standards for RI Public Libraries).
2. Proposals from combinations or consortia of libraries are welcome; lead applicant must be a Rhode Island public library.
3. Proposals must include a narrative that addresses each of the items in Section II, Services Required, following the Format of Proposals in Section IV.
4. Some of the items under "Services Required" may be contracted, in which case all requirements of the specifications must be met by the contractor.
5. Proposals must include a completed Proposal Response Form (Parts I and II). Parts III and IV must be completed by those submitting a proposal that includes one or more partners.
6. Any questions or requests for clarification of this RFP should be sent via email to Karen Andrews (email: karen.andrews@olis.ri.gov) by April 15, 2014 at 4 pm; responses will be posted on the OLIS website by 4 pm on April 16, 2014.
7. Proposals must be delivered before 4:00 pm, Monday, April 28 by email to karen.andrews@olis.ri.gov. A hard copy of the signature page must be submitted.
8. Receipt of proposals will be acknowledged via email.