

Request for Information

Statewide Reference Resource Center Grant, 2017

1. Introduction

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 as well as training staff of other libraries in the state on the use of these resources. The advent of new technologies and the internet presented new opportunities for information access, and the character of the SRRC evolved as online services and databases replaced physical resources. The last decade witnessed a substantial metamorphosis of the SRRC, as access to online subscription services grew to over half of the budget allocated to the SRRC. At the same time, the growth of the Library of Rhode Island network enabled all of the state's libraries to routinely make their physical resources available to other libraries, thereby lessening the traditional obligations placed on the SRRC. The SRRC has now transformed into an online reference center, providing libraries and all Rhode Islanders with free, direct access to informational databases and other online subscription services.

In 2011, the General Assembly modified Section 29-6-9 of the RI General Laws to open competition for SRRC funding to all Rhode Island public libraries through a solicitation from the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS).

Based on expectations that the SRRC will continue to evolve as a digital resource, OLIS is now requesting information from libraries that are interested in coordinating and supporting the services of the SRRC as outlined in this solicitation. Additionally, OLIS is interested in soliciting creative approaches of how to grow both the scope and use of the SRRC in the digital age.

2. Agency Background

OLIS is Rhode Island's state library agency and has the statutory authority and responsibility to administer state and federal funding. OLIS provides support and services to libraries of all types, coordinating library services statewide to ensure that all Rhode Islanders have free access to superior library services that meet their needs for education, work, and personal growth and fulfillment. The agency facilitates resource sharing and interlibrary cooperation through the Library of Rhode Island (LORI), a multi-type network of over 200 libraries. OLIS also provides direct library service to the visually impaired, and provides online access to state government information.

OLIS is part of the Executive Branch of state government, located in the Office of Digital Excellence in the Department of Administration. The Library Board of Rhode Island, appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, advises OLIS on the establishment of priorities and policies to fulfill its mission.

3. Executive Summary

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 solicitation issued by OLIS.

The SRRC is a virtual reference center that includes information databases and educational subscription services for the general public, schools and libraries via AskRI.org and directly through websites managed by libraries throughout Rhode Island. Electronic resources contracts are negotiated and procured by OLIS while maintenance, access, outreach and promotion have been traditionally provided by the SRRC.

The SRRC has been further obligated to provide limited reference services via AskRI.org, specifically the ability for individuals to request information through email, online chat and other virtual conduits.

Services under this RFI are requested from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017 with an option to renew the award for an additional year at the discretion of OLIS.

4. Project Overview

In 2016, the SRRC via AskRI.org provided access to online electronic resources provided by AtoZdatabases, EBSCO, ProQuest's HeritageQuest, Learning Express, Mango Languages, Tutor.com, and World Book. The resources to be included in 2017 may vary depending on funding availability. Resources provided by third party vendors are negotiated and funded by OLIS. Once procured, these resources are made available via the SRRC to the general public on the AskRI.org website and to libraries and other select partners via geographic or similar authentication methods.

The primary function of the SRRC will be to ensure seamless 24/7 access to these resources for all Rhode Islanders. Technical support for libraries via email and phone should be available no less than 40 hours per week, Monday thru Friday.

While OLIS is open to alternative goals and the creative execution of service delivery, it is the *general* expectation that the host library for the SRRC will also:

- Provide ongoing training of local library personnel on the use of the available resources and to increase resource awareness within the library community
- Promote the use and value of the resources
- Coordinate workshops with vendors on select products and provide general introductions to AskRI.org at library conferences, workshops and selected events
- Provide personnel resources to accommodate public reference requests via email, online chat and other virtual conduits
- Market the AskRI.org brand and AskRI services to the general public
- Identify potential new resources and conduits to access existing SRRC services
- Track general AskRI.org usage and consolidate and review user metrics of third party resources
- Solicit patron and library user feedback
- Work with OLIS to identify issues and outcomes, and assist in determining future directions for the delivery and growth of SRRC services

5. RFI Requirements Process

OLIS is seeking information from public libraries to identify potential hosts for the SRRC and their vision for its operation. Responses to this RFI will be evaluated as outlined in Section 11; the results of that evaluation will determine whether OLIS issues a Request for Proposals or a Request for Quote.

6. Requirements

Libraries seeking to host the SRRC must be free public libraries that qualify for state aid to libraries under RIGL 29-6-3. The Project Director or Assistant Project Director must be a professional librarian (MLS). The project team must include an individual or individuals with experience in electronic resources, including authentication methods, and a professional librarian (MLS) with experience in reference librarianship. The library must demonstrate the capacity to execute projects on a statewide level.

7. Approach

Public libraries interested in responding to this RFI must address the following questions:

- 1) What is your experience in providing support for online resources?
- 2) What is your experience in creating and operating an online portal for electronic reference resources?
- 3) What is your experience in promoting online resources?
- 4) What is your experience in coordinating and providing workshops on the use of electronic resources?
- 5) What is your capacity and approach for answering approximately 1200 chat and email reference questions per year (100 per month)?
- 6) What is your vision for the SRRC (AskRI) both within the timeframe of this solicitation and beyond?
- 7) What is your experience in executing statewide projects or comparable?

8. Documentation

The current Statewide Reference Resource Center portal (AskRI.org) can be viewed at www.askri.org

Statistics and information on past awards are available on the Office of Library and Information Services website at www.olis.ri.gov/grants/srrc/

9. Response Format

Responses must be submitted to OLIS and include Appendix I, Library Information, and clear answers to the questions in Section 7, Approach. Each answer must be numbered and total response to all questions excluding Appendix I should not exceed three pages.

10. Timeline

Release RFI	June 3, 2016
Closure date for responses	June 17, 2016
Review of responses completed	June 20, 2016
Notification of eligible applicants	June 20, 2016
RFP / RFQ issued	June 20, 2016
Responses to RFP / RFQ due	July 1, 2016
Review of proposals completed	July 8, 2016
Notice of award	July 11, 2016
Contract start date	No later than August 1, 2016; OLIS may negotiate an earlier start date with the selected library

11. Evaluation

Responses will be evaluated by the Office of Library and Information to determine the qualifications and capacity of interested libraries.

12. Questions and Contact Information

Questions should be directed in writing to:

Karen Mellor, Chief of Library Services
karen.mellor@olis.ri.gov

Questions must be received by June 10 at 4 pm ; all questions and answers will be posted on the OLIS website by Monday, June 13 at 12 pm.

Responses should be submitted electronically to:

Karen Andrews
karen.andrews@olis.ri.gov

This Request for Information is issued by:

Office of Library and Information Services
Rhode Island Department of Administration
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908

Appendix I: Library Information

All responses must be typed. Enter data in the highlighted boxes.

Part I: Applicant Information

Library Name	
Library Director	
Contact	
Contact Title	
Contact Email	
Library Annual Operating Budget	
Total Librarian FTE (institution)	
Total Library Operating Hours (week)	

Part II: Certifications and Assurances

The library named above certifies and assures that:

- It is a public library in the State of Rhode Island and qualifies for state grant-in-aid as determined by the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS). The library will continue to operate as a public library for the duration of the grant award.
- This response is submitted for all services as described in the Request for Information. Any alternative approaches are clearly labeled as such.
- All information submitted is true and accurate as of the time of submittal.

Library Director

Date