

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Strategic Plan

The Pennsylvania Integrated Library System

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Summary and Background

The Pennsylvania Integrated Library System (PaILS) seeks a consultant to assist with the preparation of a strategic plan.

PaILS is a consortium of over 180 libraries in Pennsylvania. It was established in 2011 and manages a shared Integrated Library System named SPARK. SPARK runs on the open-source Evergreen ILS software. PaILS is operated by an independent 501(c)3 non-profit corporation with a nine-person Board comprised of members of the Pennsylvania library community. It has three staff members, an Executive Director, a Program Manager, and a Support & Documentation Specialist. Funding is a mix of federal LSTA funds allocated through the Pennsylvania Office of Commonwealth Libraries, and membership fees. PaILS manages all aspects of the SPARK ILS including hosting, migrations, support, training, administration, and enhanced content. Many technical and administrative portions of this work are outsourced to partner firms.

PaILS Mission

PaILS provides access to information resources by offering a collaborative, high quality, open-source integrated library system that is equitable, cost-effective, and promotes resource sharing among libraries statewide.

PaILS Vision

PaILS offers Pennsylvanians a sustainable network of integrated library services and access to a community of libraries and information resources across the Commonwealth.

Additional resources about [PaILS](#):

Current members: <https://sparkpa.org/pails-members/>

At-a-glance info sheet: <https://sparkpa.org/pails-2024-at-a-glance/>

Purpose of the Plan

While the themes identified in the 2017 strategic plan (capacity, community and collaboration) continue to be touchstones for the organization, a great deal has changed for both PaLLS and the library automation industry in the last 8 years. PaLLS is facing uncertainty around the availability of public funding, both for its own services and for its clients. Please see [PaLLS strategic plan 2017](#) and [PaLLS strategic priorities 2025](#) for more details.

This strategic plan should be designed to provide PaLLS with responses to changing conditions over the next 3-5 years. Considerations will need to include the changing needs of libraries and the role of library automation in the library ecosystem; changing availability of public funding for libraries and library consortia; and the changing needs of PaLLS and its infrastructure as the organization adapts to the external environment and the expectations of current and future members.

Desired Qualifications

The Consultant must have familiarity with such topics as: library governance and funding models, library automation software and current trends in library automation and open-source library software. The consultant should also have previous experience working with libraries, library systems and/or consortia of various sizes and have access to research and other information pertaining to similar statewide and library technology consortia. Please note any experience that the Consultant has with Pennsylvania libraries and library systems.

Evaluation of Proposals

The PaLLS board will evaluate proposals based on several criteria, including previous experience working with libraries and consortia; creating scenario-based plans; cost; and ability to schedule the project within the desired timeframe.

Project Scope

The Consultant shall:

1. Recommend, develop, execute and manage the strategic planning process which would include at a minimum:
 - a. an environmental scan which would include (but not be limited to):
 - i. input from relevant stakeholders as well as other entities which may affect the ability of PaLLS to achieve its goals. Stakeholders should include PaLLS staff, PaLLS Board Members, staff and administration in member libraries, Office of Commonwealth Libraries, other Pennsylvania library networks, key Pennsylvania libraries that are not members, and other stakeholders.
 - ii. Insights from data gathered about similar types of organizations in other states

- b. an assessment of PaILS's current infrastructure which would include (but not be limited to):
 - i. Staffing complement
 - ii. Financial health
 - iii. Membership model (pricing, benefits and growth potential)
 - iv. Technical infrastructure
 - v. Business processes
 - vi. Board operations
 - c. a scenario-based analysis of organizational responses to changing funding conditions (federal, state and membership growth)
 2. Lead the PaILS board/staff through:
 - a. the review and possible revision of the organization's Vision Statement
 - b. the review and possible revision of the organization's Mission Statement
 3. Provide the PaILS board/staff with an analysis of the data generated by the environmental scan and the internal assessment.
 4. Lead the PaILS board/staff through the development of strategic priorities/goals along with measurable objectives.

Proposed Timeline

- RFP released – October 15, 2025
- Proposals due – November 25, 2025
- Contract awarded in December 2025
- Project Begins: January 2026
- Opportunities to meet with PaILS board: April 15 and July 8 board meetings; annual board retreat September 8-9, 2026
- Final Report Delivered by: October 31, 2026

Proposal Requirements

1. Proposal must be submitted in PDF format via email to pails@sparkpa.org
2. Deadline: November 25, 2025
3. Specific proposal contents:
 - a. Name of firm
 - b. Name and contact information for the consultant(s)
 - c. Description of experience and qualifications
 - d. Indication of availability during proposed timeline
 - e. Statement of work: brief response on approach to the project scope
 - f. Cost proposal
 - g. At least three references, preferably from libraries or membership nonprofits
 - h. One or more sample work products from previous strategic planning processes