



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) Executive Search Firm Services: Executive Director, Evanston Public Library

Section 1: Introduction

About Evanston Evanston, Illinois is a diverse and civically engaged community located on the shores of Lake Michigan, directly north of Chicago. Home to Northwestern University, the Endeavor Health System, and a nationally recognized school system, Evanston boasts a thriving downtown and an award-winning public library.

About Evanston Public Library (EPL) Evanston Public Library's mission is to connect our diverse community through learning, discovery, and shared experiences, providing equitable access to resources, fostering personal growth, and creating inclusive spaces where everyone can belong, learn, and connect. Our vision is to ignite limitless possibilities, inspire bold ideas, and empower every person to build a connected, inclusive community.

EPL is governed by an independent and engaged Board of Trustees and serves the community through two permanent physical locations: the Main Branch in downtown Evanston and the Robert Crown branch on the city's west side. The Library operates with an approximate budget of \$9 million, relying on the support of over 100 employees and more than 200 volunteers.

EPL is guided by its Core Values: Inclusivity & Belonging, Lifelong Learning, Equitable Access, Community Wellbeing, and Sustainability. The library also fully endorses and embraces the American Library Association's Equity of Access Statement and Freedom to Read Statement.

Purpose of this RFP EPL seeks proposals from qualified executive search firms with demonstrated public library executive search expertise to recruit and support the placement of a permanent Executive Director.

ED Role Parameters for Recruiting:

- **Location:** Full-time, in-person, based in Evanston, IL at the Main Branch.
- **Role:** Full-time permanent position.

Important: This procurement is for a search firm. The firm's role is to run a fair, equity-oriented, effective search and present a strong finalist slate.

Section 2: Strong Candidates

A. Executive Director Candidate Profile

The ideal candidate is a **visionary and operationally disciplined leader**. They are a creative change agent, comfortable navigating complex environments and translating data-driven insights into systemic progress.

Key attributes of this profile include:

- Someone who can direct long-range planning while successfully implementing the current core priorities to ensure inclusive growth.
- A leader who builds deep trust with the Board, staff, and city officials, navigating challenging dialogues with transparency and empathy.
- An executive capable of managing a \$9M budget and complex facilities, ensuring that library spaces remain safe, welcoming, and community-centered.
- A people leader who prioritizes team development and equitable hiring to build long-term organizational capacity.

B. Background and Core Skills/Competencies

- Master's degree in Library Science.
- Three (3) or more years of Library administration and supervisory experience, plus five (5) or more years of increasingly responsible experience in a library setting.
- 2+ years of experience engaging with the public .
- Previous experience working with staff represented by collective bargaining agreements.
- Demonstrated experience working effectively with an economically and ethnically diverse staff and community.
- Skills in problem-solving, collaborative management, budgeting, fundraising, and financial management.

Section 3: Scope of Work

The search firm will work with the EPL Board of Trustees, led by the Board President and search committee, to support all aspects of the ED search.

A. Launch and Alignment

- Confirm the role profile, align on screening criteria, and develop a written Search Plan with a sourcing strategy and communications plan.
- Review and edit existing materials into an opportunity guide.

B. Sourcing and Recruitment

- Advertise the opportunity, actively source potential candidates, and recommend a diverse slate of qualified candidates within the expected compensation range.

C. Screening and Assessment

- Conduct structured screenings aligned to competencies and provide candidate briefs (strengths, risks, fit).
- Conduct credential, background, and reference checks.

D. Selection Support & Interview Logistics

- Support the Board through all phases of selection.
- Support the Board in making and negotiating offer(s) until acceptance.

E. Assessment and Evaluation Practices

- Provide standardized interview guides and evaluation scorecards.

Section 4: Term of Contract & Guarantees

- **Contract Term:** From contract execution through candidate acceptance and the completion of the hiring process.
- **Guarantee:** The firm must assume they will run the process until someone is hired, and provide options for a service guarantee to re-run the process if the hired candidate stays in the role for less than one year.
- **The Board reserves the right** to cancel the RFP at any time and to check references.

Section 5: Proposal Contents

Proposals should be concise but complete and include:

1. **Organizational Description:** Firm background, ownership, and project staff. Approach to structuring evidence based practices using competency models for equitable outcomes and risk reduction.
2. **Relevant Experience:** Evidence of successful executive searches (ED/CEO level) with at least 3 brief case examples. Case examples must include: the name of the library or community and the full timeline to making the placement. Priority will be given for case examples where the firm shares evidence of a successful public library executive search (ED/CEO level) and/or the firm placed an executive leader in a staff environment represented by collective bargaining agreements.

3. **Recruitment Approach:** Sourcing strategy, screening methodology, and confidentiality management.
4. **Equity, Fairness, and Evidence-Based Practices:** evidence based practices for bias mitigation, and transparency.
5. **Budget & Fees:** Fee(s), terms, anticipated expenses (advertising, travel), guarantees, and any optional add-ons.

Section 6: Selection Process / Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by EPL's Board-designated reviewers.

Step 1: Pass/Fail Gate Firms must demonstrate executive search experience, provide a clear fee structure, and 3 case examples.

Step 2: Weighted Scoring Matrix (100 Points Total)

- Public Library Executive Search Track Record (20 points)
- Search Methodology & Rigor (15 points)
- Equity, Fairness, Transparency Practices (15 points)
- Project Team Strength & Execution Plan (15 points)
- Candidate Quality Approach (15 points)
- Fees, Terms, and Value (15 points)
- References & Reputation/Risk Profile (5 points)

Section 7: Submission

Completed proposals should be sent via email to: librarydirectorsearch@cityofevanston.org

Submissions are due by the end of the day on July 10.

Subject line: "RFP - Executive Director Search Firm [Firm Name]"