

# Request for Proposals: Coalition Development and Facilitation

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Coalition for National Learning

Issued by: OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc.

10/30/2013

## Introduction

OCLC Online Computer Library Services, Inc. received a new grant funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) on October 1, 2013. OCLC seeks to retain qualified consulting assistance to support the goals and deliverables of this grant, entitled “Coalition for National Learning.” The selected party will help develop, convene and facilitate a broadly inclusive coalition on the topic of continuing education (CE) in libraries and museums.

Although the coalition is just beginning implementation, the idea emerged at a summit held in June 2013, when OCLC and the IMLS jointly convened representative “CE Influencers.” Discussion at the summit included the goals of CE, key audiences and their needs, and possibilities for reducing redundancies across CE development and implementation. Summit attendees from across the nation agreed there was a need for ongoing conversation with representatives from organizations that hold the potential to influence CE nationally, leading to a joint, coordinated strategy for sustainable and effective CE for library, museum, and other knowledge workers. The Coalition for National Learning was funded by IMLS to address this need, building on the CE Summit momentum. Grant activities will occur during October 1, 2013 – March 15, 2015. The outcome of this project will be a published strategy for continuing education (CE) in libraries and museums that is co-developed by leading CE influencers. The strategy will:

- Demonstrate support for a “nation of learners” and champion the formation of libraries and museums as learning organizations
- Provide direction toward the efficient management of CE investments across the nation; ensuring long-term sustainability of CE for providers
- Build coordination and cooperation amongst organizations well-positioned to lead and influence CE for libraries and museums
- Guide future work; provide a framework for well-designed programs and initiatives that support the joint strategy

Consulting assistance is critical to achieve our end goal and maximize the success and effectiveness of the coalition’s work. The selected party will consult with OCLC and IMLS to identify founding members of the coalition; establish and manage member expectations; balance power among coalition members; convene and provide lead facilitation of coalition members to reach agreement on vision, roles, and tactics; and drive the project toward accomplishment of producing a joint strategy over a period of 17 months.

In a report prepared by TCC Group for the California endowment, coalition development research is summarized to identify several stages in a coalition lifecycle.<sup>1</sup> Using that framework, consultant engagement on this project falls in the first four stages of coalition development. The selected party will help mobilize the coalition, establish structure, build capacity for action, and create an action plan.

Consultation may also include business strategy assessment and advice for sustainable national business models to deliver CE across many organizations.

**The due date for this Request for Proposals is Thursday, November 14, 2013.**

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<sup>1</sup> What makes an effective coalition? Evidence-based indicators of Success. By Jared Raynor, TCC Group, funded by the California Endowment. March 2011.

## Organizational Summary

Founded in 1967, OCLC is a nonprofit, membership, computer library service and research organization dedicated to the public purposes of furthering access to the world's information and reducing information costs. More than 72,000 libraries in 170 countries and territories around the world have used OCLC services for cataloging, reference, resource sharing, eContent, preservation, library management and Web services. OCLC and its worldwide member libraries cooperatively produce and maintain WorldCat, making it the world's largest and richest database of bibliographic information. OCLC is headquartered in Dublin, Ohio, USA and has over 1200 employees worldwide. For more information, visit <http://www.oclc.org/>.

## Funder Summary

The Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) envisions a democratic society where communities and individuals thrive with broad public access to knowledge, cultural heritage, and lifelong learning. The mission of IMLS is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. IMLS provides leadership through research, policy development, and grant making. IMLS supports the full range of libraries, including public, academic, research, special and tribal; and the full range of museums including art, history, science and technology, children's museums, historical societies, tribal museums, planetariums, botanic gardens and zoos. For more information, visit <http://www.imls.gov>

## IMLS Strategic Goals:

1. IMLS places the learner at the center and supports engaging experiences in libraries and museums that prepare people to be full participants in their local communities and our global society.
2. IMLS promotes museums and libraries as strong community anchors that enhance civic engagement, cultural opportunities, and economic vitality.
3. IMLS supports exemplary stewardship of museum and library collections and promotes the use of technology to facilitate discovery of knowledge and cultural heritage.
4. IMLS advises the President and Congress on plans, policies, and activities to sustain and increase public access to information and ideas.
5. IMLS achieves excellence in public management and performs as a model organization through strategic alignment of IMLS resources and prioritization of programmatic activities, maximizing value for the American public.

## Description of Project

Working with OCLC and IMLS, the selected consultant will facilitate focused coalition building with organizations and individuals that can influence national continuing education. The coalition will also be designed to achieve an adequate balance of power favorable to the objective (and not the interests of any one organization). Specifically, the coalition will consider:

- Models. Look at other industries or similar coalitions for CE standards, examples of coordination and collaboration of CE.
- Goals and objectives for coordinating CE nationally. Seek to identify priorities for learning

for staff and end-users, strategies for learner success, and key challenges and opportunities inherent in delivering CE nationally.

- Content, formats and/or methods. Consider working definitions of CE “quality” and “standards,” subjects and formats appropriate to multi-layers of delivery, evaluation methods, and the logistics of establishing a national asset database for CE.
- The players along the value chain, including key organizations and their leaders, as well as investors in national CE. Assess available assets, tools, and data to understand strategies for well-coordinated program design (current and future opportunities for national learning initiatives), and provide better support for those leading CE efforts and for library staff as learners.
- Ways to work better together. Define primary roles and functions of those working to design and deploy CE nationally, examine possible business models for sustainability of CE nationally, recognize the key challenges and barriers to coordinated efforts, and seek opportunities for collaboration and coordination.

The coalition will develop a joint strategy for approaching CE nationally that meets these criteria:

- Oriented to individual and community outcomes
- Sustainable
- Makes efficient use of key assets/attributes of coalition members and networks.

The selected consultant will manage the overall outcomes for the coalition, in consultation with Seattle-based project staff at OCLC and Washington, D.C.-based project funders at IMLS. Administrative and logistical support will be provided by OCLC.

Potential coalition members have already begun expressing strong interest in joining the coalition. Coalition members will come from all over the nation, and will represent libraries and museums of many types, including public, private, and academic institutions.

Coalition members will convene in person up to two times, in small groups of no more than 20 members. Up to 10 coalition members will receive a small stipend for their time to engage more intensively in coalition development over a period of nine months. Grant funds are also available to cover travel expenses for some, but not all, coalition members to attend in-person convenings. While the coalition is intended to be broadly inclusive, grant funds for travel and stipends are limited. Activities, findings, and the coalition’s online project environment (Basecamp) will be open to anyone in the field who is interested.

## Proposed schedule

November 14, 2013	RFP Responses due
November 22, 2013	Consultant selected and engaged
December 6, 2013	Coalition member criteria and roles confirmed
December 13, 2013	Founding coalition members identified and invited
January 31, 2014	First in-person convening of coalition members
September 30, 2014	Coalition has developed joint strategy and documented shared plan to coordinate proposals and programs
January 31, 2015	Coalition is transitioned to self-facilitation and management

## Description of Services

OCLC is seeking a third-party consultant to provide services in the development and facilitation of the Coalition for National Learning. The consultant will be responsible for coalition development, facilitation, supporting convenings and other work related to establishing shared vision, purpose, and plans for continuing education nationally.

## Consultant Responsibilities

Project duration is November 2013 – February 2015. The project has three general phases of work; each phase is described below. In RFP submission, respondents will be asked to indicate availability, expertise, proposed work plan, and budget estimate corresponding to each phase of work. Respondents who bring strong qualifications for phases one and two, but do not offer business strategy consultation expertise (phase three) will be equally considered and are strongly encouraged to submit an RFP. We recognize that coalition-building and business strategy expertise may or may not be found in a single consultant.

### **Phase One: Establish and Launch Coalition**

#### ***November 2013- January 2014***

- Conduct initial literature review and/or original research to inform discussions and recommendations;
- Confirm criteria for inclusion in founders' group;
- Establish founder, member, and consulting needs and roles, supported by memorandum of understanding;
- Support IMLS and OCLC to invite founding members;
- Lead engagement, community-building and convening preparation by coalition members in online environment (existing Basecamp site);
- Ensure appropriate and timely first and second year goals/objectives are established for coalition;
- Set and manage expectations for all coalition members.

#### ***Major Phase One Milestones:***

- Founding coalition members identified and invited (by December 6, 2013).
- Serve as a facilitator for in-person coalition convening (by January 31, 2014).

### **Phase Two: Develop a Joint, Open Strategy by Coalition Members**

#### ***January 2014 – December 2014***

- Achieve agreement from diverse coalition members on CE strategy and coalition member roles;
- Guide creation of shared vision and purpose for deploying CE nationally;
- Document a shared plan to coordinate national proposals and programs for most effective, and cost-effective deployment of CE nationally, including:
  - Roles for cooperating organizations
  - Program and proposal coordination with project deadlines;
- Provide leadership for continued coalition discussions through an existing, online environment hosted by OCLC and dedicated as a supportive space for CE influencers

(May include follow-on contact with participants through online assessments, discussions, and live programming);

- Work with OCLC to support third-party evaluator to identify and implement a comprehensive evaluation framework. Provide interviews, documents, and data to contribute to evaluator's final report;
- *[Note: Respondent will facilitate second in-person coalition convening during Phase Two; RFP responses should clearly recommend ideal timing.]*

***Major Phase Two Milestones:***

- Joint strategy developed by coalition members (by September 30, 2014).
- Coalition documents a shared plan to coordinate proposals and programs (by September 30, 2014).

**Phase Three: Provide business strategy consultation and advice**

*April 2014 – March 2015*

- Recognize the business implications that emerge through coalition discussions, and provide perspectives regarding future sustainable business models for CE nationally;
- Assist coalition to address areas of potential “competition” between CE providers in order to elevate the goal of sustainable business models for CE nationally.

**Type of Contract**

This contract will be paid based on time and expenses.

**Qualifications**

RFP submission guidelines request that respondents supply information about relevant qualifications the respondent brings. Some necessary skills and qualifications are listed below; respondents should indicate any other relevant qualifications not listed below.

Required:

- Proven facilitation experience;
- Exceptional written, organizational, and communication skills;
- Strong problem-solving and conflict resolution skills;
- Previous experience developing and leading a broad national coalition strongly preferred;
- Interpersonal skills and ability to work well with strategic stake-holders;
- Demonstrated ability to work with multiple stakeholders to complete fast-paced, complex projects on time.

Desired:

- Training experience or experience with the development or delivery of continuing education, libraries, or education sectors desired.

## RFP Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated by staff members of OCLC in consultation with IMLS. Responses will be evaluated based on consultant availability to begin immediately; technical expertise; past successful experience leading complex national coalitions or similar efforts; overall budget; and effectiveness of project design to achieve coalition goals. Respondents are instructed not to contact IMLS regarding this RFP.

While project staff are based in Seattle, geographic location of qualified candidates will not impact selection.

As stated previously, respondents who bring strong qualifications for phases one and two, but do not offer business strategy consultation expertise (phase three) will be equally considered and are strongly encouraged to submit an RFP. We recognize that coalition-building and business strategy expertise may or may not be found in a single consultant.

Although the final deadline is November 14, 2013, responses will be reviewed as they are received. Final selection will be made by November 22, 2013 and all respondents will be notified.

## RFP Submission Guidelines

**Submissions:** Proposals should be submitted electronically to OCLC Project Coordinators Anna Shelton ([sheltona@oclc.org](mailto:sheltona@oclc.org)) and Megan Knapp ([knappm@oclc.org](mailto:knappm@oclc.org)) by no later than 5 pm PST on Thursday, November 14, 2013.

### All responses must include:

1. Contact information. Name, address, email, and phone number of the consulting firm.
2. Form of organization. Whether firm is a partnership, corporation, or sole proprietorship, where it is organized, and the names of principals, officers, and directors of the firm.
3. Key personnel. Names of key personnel who would perform the project, their respective titles, experience, and periods of service with the firm,
4. Project list. List of relevant projects completed by the firm.
5. References. Names, email addresses, and telephone numbers of persons whom the agency can call for references regarding the firm's past performance, preferably on similar projects.
6. For each phase of the project (Phases One, Two, and Three):
  - a. Statement of availability of key personnel to undertake the project phase.
  - b. Statement of qualifications by the firm for the proposed project phase.
  - c. Proposed budget for project phase.
  - d. Proposed work plan for project phase.

## Background

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) introduced its 2012 strategic plan to create “a nation of learners,” which would culminate in “a democratic society where communities and individuals thrive with broad public access to knowledge, cultural heritage, and lifelong learning.” To that end, the IMLS aims to leverage libraries and museums in their unique position to “prepare people to be full participants in their local communities and our global society.”<sup>2</sup>

IMLS notes that their vision will be achieved through “training and development of library and museum leadership to meet the needs of diverse publics in a rapidly changing environment.” We propose this as a broad definition for “continuing education” (CE), and use the term to refer to all professional development activities, from informal, self-directed learning to formal training programs, delivered through a variety of methods and formats.

National, lifelong learning cannot be realized without ongoing, effective continuing education for those in public education roles. In January 2012, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Global Libraries program reported the outcomes of their stakeholder engagement survey.<sup>3</sup> More than 3,000 public library representatives noted that “trained librarians” were critical to the role and success of the future public library. When asked to make “only one recommendation” for Global Libraries future funding priority, “training for staff” in leadership, advocacy, technology, and general skills, topped the list. In the May/June 2013 issue of *Public Libraries*, three library directors concur on the significance of training staff, echoing the comment by Nanci Milone Hill, director of the M.G. Parker Memorial Library (MA):

*“...a trained library staff is perhaps the most important advantage that we have to offer.”<sup>4</sup>*

A particular emphasis on preparing library staff for rapid change surfaced in other surveys of the field. In a July 2012 survey where OCLC asked state library continuing education coordinators to prioritize library staff’s current need for training, “how to adapt to change in the job and profession” was ranked first, with 66% of all respondents indicating it as a high priority.<sup>5</sup> The same year, WebJunction, a continuing education program for public libraries, found that their members also ranked “how to adapt to change in my job and profession” as a top five priority. In a risk assessment involving 15 members of the Association of Research Libraries, human resource related risks, representing “uncertainties about adequate preparation, adaptability, capacity for leadership in face of change” were the second highest risk area, after those related to “a reduced sense of library relevance.”<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps because of this great need, investments in continuing education are already significant. According to a recent IMLS analysis of State Program Reports, between FY2008 and 2010, \$9.8M of LSTA Grants to States funds supported continuing education for library staff, trustees, and volunteers.

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<sup>2</sup> Creating a Nation of Learners: Strategic Plan 2012-2016. Institute of Museum and Library Services: <http://www.imls.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/StrategicPlan2012-16.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Stakeholder Engagement Survey Results: [http://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/Stakeholder\\_Engagement\\_Survey\\_Results.html](http://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/Stakeholder_Engagement_Survey_Results.html)

<sup>4</sup> Training and Retaining Staff. Nanci Milone Hill. *Public Libraries*. Vol 52, No 3. May/June 2013.

<sup>5</sup> CE Coordinators Survey Summary 2012: [http://www.webjunction.org/documents/webjunction/CE\\_Coordinator\\_Survey\\_Summary.html](http://www.webjunction.org/documents/webjunction/CE_Coordinator_Survey_Summary.html)

<sup>6</sup> Michalko, James, Constance Malpas and Arnold Arcolio 2010. *Research Libraries, Risk and Systemic Change*. Report produced by OCLC Research. Published online at: <http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2010/2010-03.pdf>.

On average, 30 states administered statewide services or subgrants that directly supported professional development. Similarly, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation invested \$4.1M for five years of operations support for WebJunction.org, a continuing education resource for public library staff. If contributions from the Gates Foundation, IMLS discretionary grants programs, library and cultural institution member associations and cooperatives/consortia, and state and local library investments were all factored, the total investment would be substantial.

Yet, these investments are at risk, and are not coordinated towards a single purpose or goal. Ongoing support for CE is challenged by dwindling federal, state and local resources. Barbie Keiser notes in the May/June 2012 issue of *Online* that “Professional development remains a key priority for information professionals. However, obtaining continuing education is increasingly a personal responsibility, unsupported by employers.”<sup>7</sup> In times of austerity, when it is perhaps most needed, continuing education is increasingly underfunded at the local level. Just as their services are in higher demand, CE providers struggle to coordinate and partner with other providers, and to stay financially viable (evidenced in the sudden disappearance in 2012 of LE@D courses once available from the University of North Texas).

These factors point to a particular, and urgent, opportunity: to reaffirm the core purpose of CE, and to develop a joint strategy for fulfilling that purpose cost-effectively. Quality of content and effectiveness of methodology should be paramount. Redundancies in content and service should be identified and reduced, if not eliminated. Programs should be well-coordinated with assets inside and outside the library and museum fields, and made available across library and cultural institution boundaries (size, geography, type). Investments could then be focused, and programs more impactful. CE providers, if coordinated, might even advance their ability to make national CE sustainable for the long-term. Working together, we can ensure that library and museum staff are equipped to lead their communities to a vibrant future.

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<sup>7</sup> Keiser, Barbie E, *Online*. Vol. 36 Issue 3, p20-27. May/Jun2012.