REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
Community Needs Assessment
RFP #26-01-Addendum

As of January 21, 2026, the St. Catharines Public Library (SCPL) has received in total of nineteen (19) questions and provides answers below.

1. Could you let us know what the budget is for this work? I wondered if you could share a budget range or ceiling for this contract?
2. Are you able to share a ballpark budget for this project? If available, this can help inform the way the project methodology is further scoped and refined. Please indicate if this budget is before or after tax.
3. Given the open-ended nature of this project, and the potentially high cost of undertaking all the tasks that are possible, can you provide a budget range or ceiling price that you have allocated for the project?

   Response: We are not disclosing the budget for this project. We encourage you to submit your proposals based on the scope of work outlined in the RFP, and we look forward to reviewing your recommendations and solutions.

4. Would it be possible for SCPL to issue the previously completed Central Branch detailed design and any related documentation?

   Response: Design and other related documentation will be shared with the selected vendor. The presentation from the May 2025 SCPL Board meeting is posted on myscpl.ca (https://www.myscpl.ca/media/mooh2bdk/brd_2025-05-15_regularpackageupdatedmay15.pdf).

5. Could you let us know if you have a local preference or are you open to a Canadian agency that has done similar work with clients across the United States, with some currently being the States of California, Colorado and Wyoming?

   Response: We do not have a vendor location preference. All proposals will be evaluated fairly and based on the criteria outlined in the RFP. However, in 2025, the City of St. Catharines and the St. Catharines Public Library implemented a temporary

"Canada-First" procurement policy, prioritizing Canadian-made goods for municipal purchases to support local businesses.

6. One of the objectives of the project is to evaluate awareness, perceptions and satisfaction with the library. Given that a survey of just library users will not provide a measure of overall community awareness, is a statistically representative community survey a requirement of the work? On this matter, does the City have a survey house with whom it works for regular citizen surveys?

   Response: While we recognize that a survey limited to current library users does not fully capture overall community awareness and perceptions, our preference is to rely on recognized best practices to assess awareness, perceptions, and satisfaction in a way that is proportionate to the scope and objectives of the project.

   This could include a combination of approaches such as user surveys, targeted outreach to non-users, environmental scans, focus groups, interviews, analysis of demographic and usage data, and comparisons with peer libraries. We are open to recommendations from the proponent on the most effective and practical methodology to address this objective, including how non-user perspectives might be incorporated, without necessarily requiring a full statistically representative community survey.

   With respect to the City's involvement, we are not aware of the City having a standing relationship with a survey house for regular citizen surveys that would be automatically available for this project. If a proponent believes collaboration with an external survey firm or a statistically representative survey would add significant value, this should be clearly outlined as part of the proposed approach, including scope, cost implications, and rationale.

7. Are there specific issues or background context that have given rise for the need to conduct this needs assessment?

   Response: No, there are no specific issues that prompted this needs assessment. Rather, we undertake this assessment proactively to better understand the evolving needs, priorities, and expectations of the community, and to ensure that the library's services, programs, and resources remain relevant, responsive, and aligned with community needs.

8. Is the emphasis in this work on service provision of the library system, or upon the adequacy of the space and facilities available? Or equally upon both?

   Response: The emphasis of this project is equally on both service provision and the adequacy of library locations, spaces and facilities. The intent is to undertake a

holistic assessment that considers how programs, services, collections, and delivery models interact with and are supported by proper locations, spaces and facilities.

9. Re the "benchmark against comparable library systems" task: do you have a standard set of library systems against which you compare yourselves? If not, how many such comparables would you like to see?

   Response: In practice, we tend to look to libraries of similar size as well as neighbouring systems, as comparators. Examples that are often considered include Niagara Falls, Guelph, Oshawa, Cambridge, Kingston, and Barrie.

10. On the public engagement activities:

    - How many interviews and focus groups do you require?
    - Would library staff identify focus group participants and arrange their participation, or would this be the responsibility of the consultants?
    - Regarding 'pop up engagements': how many of these do you envisage? And would library staff participate in them, or would this solely be the responsibility of the consultants?

    Response: We do not have fixed requirements for the number of interviews, focus groups, or pop-up engagements. The intent is to allow proponents to recommend an appropriate and proportionate engagement approach that aligns with the project's scope and the City's profile. Library staff will assist with focus group and pop-up engagements whenever possible.

11. We understand that this work follows from the recent development of your current strategic plan and wondered whether the purpose of the needs assessment is to clarify specific directions for actions that were identified as part of the strategic plan or whether you are looking to create updated action plans for each of the four strategic goals?

    Response: The needs assessment should not be driven by the current strategic plan. Instead, it should focus on evidence-based information that will inform future strategic and capital planning.

12. What are your desired project start and end dates?

    Response: From March/April to July/August

13. Will you require an ethics review for the community and stakeholder engagement?

Response: As a public library in Ontario, this project is classified as quality assurance and program/service evaluation, not academic research, so we don't need a formal Research Ethics Board (REB) review/approval, but we do expect the project to follow ethical best practices, including MFIPPA compliance, informed consent, and anonymity.

14. For the staff and board engagement sessions as well as the focus groups and interviews with key community stakeholders (e.g., City staff, community organizations, educators, youth, newcomers, seniors), do you prefer these to take place virtually or in-person, or a combination of both can be proposed?

    Response: We prefer in-person whenever possible and are open to a combination of both, but virtual only is unacceptable.

15. For the pop-up engagements or consultation meetings at library and community locations, how many locations do you envision these occurring at (i.e., all four physical branches and perhaps 2 additional community locations)?

    Response: All library branches and depending geographic location and availability, 3-5 community locations across the service area to ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and fair geographic representation.

16. For the analysis of demographic, geographic, and socio-economic data to assess service distribution and accessibility, do you envision this information coming from primary data collection as part of this project or will secondary data be made available from other sources (i.e., Niagara Ontario Health Team, Niagara Region Public Health) to analyze?

    Response: The library can provide our statistics but do not have a pre-compiled dataset for broader community demographics. We envision that consultant will identify and analyze secondary data from publicly available sources or other sources they have access to.

17. Collective Results takes a responsible, human-led approach to AI, viewing it as a tool to enhance, not replace, critical thinking, ethical judgment, and creative problem-solving. AI is used as a catalyst for deeper insights and more efficient decision-making, never as a shortcut. With your approval, we can use Claude AI to support qualitative analysis of interviews, surveys, and focus groups, enabling cross-validation beyond manual coding and reducing bias. All identifying information will be removed before processing, and outputs will undergo iterative human review for accuracy and quality. Collective Results uses Claude AI's private model, which contractually prohibits sharing input data to train public models. If AI is used, you will

receive full documentation of the methodology and safeguards, ensuring technology is applied responsibly while human judgment remains central. Are you comfortable with us quoting out in the proposal the use of a human-led approach to AI to support qualitative analysis?

Response: We are comfortable with you quoting a human-led approach to AI in the proposal. However, your proposal needs to clearly indicate the safeguards you mentioned, specifically: privacy, anonymization, and disclosure. We need the methodology and safeguards clearly documented in the final report if you are selected for the project to ensure transparency for our Board and the public.

18. Who is the primary audience for the final report (i.e., just Library Board and City representatives or will it also be shared with community members)?

Response: The primary audience for the final report will be the Library Board, Management, and City Council for the purposes of strategic planning, resource allocation, and budget discussion. We also require a public summary report that should be a highly visual and easy to read document, so community members can see the aggregate results of the project.

19. What level of polish and design do you envision for the final report deliverable? For example, are you looking for a simple document (e.g., in Word or PDF format) or a professionally graphic-designed report?

Response: We expect a professional, clean and detailed final report that includes library/socio-economic data analysis, contains all relevant charts, and offers suggestions/recommendations, so the Library Board and City Council are aware of service gaps, prioritization, and strategic alignment after reading the full report. The final report is expected to provide actionable items on various categories, such as spaces, programming, technology and partnership. The summary report should use infographics to share the information, tell the story, and can be used as a marketing piece.