

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG

LIBRARY

**Request for Proposals
Ongoing Public Library Materials
for
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
Issued March 4, 2026**

**Proposals Will Be Received Until
2:00 PM EST April 9, 2026**



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Introduction

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library (“Library” or “CML”) is seeking proposals from qualified contractors to provide public library materials and processing services. This request for proposal (RFP) contains the general requirements, process, and instructions. To obtain the largest possible range of materials and services, the Library intends to award contract(s) to a pool of providers. The size of the pool will be determined by the number and quality of proposals received.

About

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is one of America’s leading urban public libraries. Located in Mecklenburg County, the library system serves a diverse community of over one million citizens through 21 branches and on-line services. Since our founding in 1891, and as an original Carnegie Library in 1903, our role as a provider of lifelong education and learning in this community has never been more relevant.

CML is beloved by many, with 70% of Mecklenburg County residents stating that they had visited a Library location in the last 12 months. There were over 2.6 million visitors to the various Library locations in Fiscal Year 2025.

The Library has 482 full and part-time employees, along with an extensive volunteer network that engages more than 1000 people throughout the year. For FY2026, operating expenditures totaled \$55.7 million.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is currently developing a new strategic direction for FY26-28, with a major component being the opening of a new Main Library. The iconic new Main Library will be the flagship of the system; a free, open, and accessible information hub for all as well as a destination for local, regional, and national engagement.

Mission, Vision, Values & More

Our mission is to improve lives and build a stronger community. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library envisions itself as the essential connector of a thriving community of readers, leaders, and learners. We value learning, openness, respect, inclusion, and leadership. Our brand promise is to be accessible and welcoming to all while celebrating and supporting the joy of reading and learning, fostering exploration and personal growth, and connecting individuals to each other, the community, and the world.

We believe wholeheartedly in intellectual freedom. The Library is committed to protecting the First Amendment’s guarantee of free and open access to information and ideas—a principle vital to our democracy and to each individual’s search for knowledge. We seek to provide our diverse community with a comprehensive collection of materials, services, and programs providing a wide range of knowledge and perspectives.

Scope of Work

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library operates a shared collection with centralized distribution, selection, ordering, and invoicing. All materials will be shipped to a single distribution center where our experienced staff receives, checks-in, sorts, and distributes items across the system. Contractor processing is required, including spine labels, book jackets, identification stickers, and contractor-supplied MARC records on all materials, so they are “shelf-ready” upon arrival. Additionally, some print materials for Youth require special reinforced binding.

Contract Term

Initial Term: One year beginning July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027

Contract Extension: Four, one-year extensions will be available following the initial term by mutual agreement of both parties providing there are no changes or minimal changes to pricing/discounts. Pricing/discounts and shipping terms will remain the same under this option unless otherwise noted by contractor in RFP response for renewal option years. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library recognizes that publisher prices may vary, however, CML requests that contractors honor the final pricing when orders are placed and will not be charged for publisher increases once orders are submitted and confirmed. Contractors are encouraged to offer their best and final pricing and/or discounts.

Estimated Material Volume

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library system comprises 21 public libraries across Mecklenburg County, catering to a diverse and continuously expanding population. We serve over 1.2 million citizens across 546 square miles and offer books that appeal to all members of the community. To this end, CML purchases a minimum of 150,000 printed book units annually. This RFP focuses exclusively on the procurement of print materials for FY2027, excluding digital content, magazines, newspapers, and periodicals.

Collection development services

The vendor should demonstrate proactive engagement and anticipation of publishing trends and other industry developments to consistently deliver value-added incentives, such as products, services, and events, related to librarianship, readers advisory, and successful collection development and selection. The vendor should provide evidence of their ability to add value to the collection development process beyond just providing materials.

Cataloging and records management

Contractors will ensure that all books are accurately cataloged and that the library's records are up to date. Contractor support team must have extensive experience in current library cataloging standards to ensure that purchased materials are accurately represented in the library's catalog.

Inventory Fulfillment

Supply formats of print including but not limited to the following:

- Quantities ranging from 10-100 copies of a single title, with higher copies for Best-Sellers
- Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) ordering is required.

- Contractor will have services available to CML for system profiling sessions, including all aspects of selection, ordering, binding options and processing requirements, etc.
- Print books for Adults and Youth in all paperback and hardback binding formats
- Best-selling titles & award winning titles
- “Backlist” titles
- Fiction and non-fiction titles covering all subjects and genres
- Large print materials
- Graphic novels
- Adult ready-reference materials
- Selection of books available in global languages (provide a list of all languages and an estimate of inventory available)
- Custom non-standard orders to include but not limited to “on demand” printing for out-of-print
- Books and/or printing books in a specific format required by CML.

Shelf ready processing

Provide RFID encoded tags, barcodes, mylar book jackets, and other shelf-ready processing services to ensure that all materials arrive at the library ready to be placed on the shelves and checked out by library users.

Invoicing and inventory reporting

Accurate and timely invoicing and inventory reporting is a critical component of the partnership between Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and the selected contractor. The contractor will be required to provide detailed invoices and inventory reports to help maintain accurate inventory records. To streamline the process, the contractor must be capable of consolidating individual purchase order invoices into a weekly or bi-monthly consolidated invoice.

Shipping and onsite delivery

Manage all shipping responsibilities to ensure that books are delivered on time and in good condition to the library central distribution center. Support team will proactively identify any irregularities that impact material deliveries, such as raw material shortages, and shipping delays.

Quality control measures

Contractor will have quality control measures in place to ensure the accuracy and quality of book orders. Support team checks all orders for damaged or incorrect items and promptly addresses any issues professionally.

OCLC MARC record updates

Regular OCLC MARC record updates for accurate holdings in WorldCat. This ensures that library users have access to the most up-to-date information about the WCPL’s book inventory.

Competitive Pricing

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is requesting competitive pricing and discounts for library materials and processing charges. Vendors are required to complete the attached Excel spreadsheet, which should include discounts on publisher pricing and processing costs per unit. Vendors should also provide information on any special pricing considerations, such as volume discounts, price breaks based on purchase amount or frequency, or other specific requirements. The pricing offered by vendors should be fixed and firm unless otherwise noted by the vendor. If there are any cost escalations or in the optional renewal years, the vendor should clearly specify them. Annual contract may be renewed without submitting new bid responses up to four times if there are no changes or minimal changes to pricing structures for services outlined.

“Processing” is defined as: Book covers (or spine tape depending on binding) spine labels, bar code labels, genre labels, date stamp and encoded RFID tag, and MARC records. Quality control at the contractor level is also expected.

Notice to Proposers

The successful Proposer must comply with all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and all rules and regulations promulgated thereunder. By submitting a proposal, the successful Proposer agrees to indemnify the Library from and against all claims, suits, damages, costs, losses, and expenses in any manner arising out of, or connected with, the failure of the Company, its subcontractors, agents, successors, assigns, officers, or employees to comply with the provisions of the ADA or the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder.

All proposals must be firm and not subject to increase, unless specified within the provisions of this Request for Proposals (RFP) and mutually agreed upon by the Library and the Proposer.

No special inducements will be considered that are not a part of the original proposal document.

Library Rights and Options

The Library, at its sole discretion, reserves the following rights:

- To supplement, amend, substitute, or otherwise modify this RFP at any time
- To cancel this RFP with or without the substitution of another RFP
- To take any action affecting this RFP, this RFP process, or the Services subject to this RFP that would be in the best interests of the Library
- To issue additional requests for information or clarification from Offerors or to allow corrections of errors or omissions
- To require one or more Service Providers to supplement, clarify, or provide additional information in order for the Library to evaluate the Responses submitted
- To negotiate an agreement with a Service Provider based on the information provided in response to this RFP.
- To award one or more contract(s).

Public Records

Any material submitted in response to this RFP will become a "public record" once the Proposer's document(s) is opened and the Proposer is determined to be a participant in the solicitation process and shall be subject to public disclosure consistent with Chapter 132, North Carolina Statutes. Proposers must claim any applicable exemptions to disclosure provided by law in their response to this RFP. Proposers must identify materials to be protected and must state the reasons why such exclusion from public disclosure is necessary and legal. The Library reserves the right to make all final determination(s) of the applicability of North Carolina General Statutes § 132-1.2, Confidential Information.

Trade Secrets/Confidentiality

Proposers must claim any material which qualifies as "trade secret" information under N.C.G.S. 66- 152(3) in their response to this RFP and must state the reasons why such exclusion from public disclosure is necessary and legal.

To properly designate material as trade secret under these circumstances, each Proposer must take the following precautions: (a) any trade secrets submitted by a Proposer should be submitted in a separate, sealed envelope marked "Trade Secret - Confidential and Proprietary Information - Do Not Disclose Except for the Purpose of Evaluating this Proposal," and (b) the same trade secret/confidentiality designation should be stamped on each page of the trade secret materials contained in the envelope.

Do not designate your entire proposal as a trade secret, and do not designate pricing information as a trade secret. Doing so may result in your proposal being disqualified.

In submitting a proposal, each Proposer agrees that the Library may reveal any trade secret materials contained in such response to all Library staff and Library officials involved in the selection process.

Familiarity with Laws and Ordinances

The submission of a proposal on the equipment and services requested herein shall be considered as a representation that the Proposer is familiar with all federal, state, and local laws, ordinances, rules, and regulations which affect those engaged or employed in the provision of such services, or equipment used in the provision of such services, or which in any way affects the conduct of the provision of such services; and no plea of misunderstanding will be considered on account of ignorance thereof. If the Proposer discovers any provisions in the RFP documents that are contrary to or inconsistent with any law, ordinance, or regulation, it shall be reported to the Library in writing without delay.

E-Verify Compliance

Per N.C.G.S. 143-133.3 E-verify compliance. Provider shall comply with the requirements of Article 2 of Chapter 64 of the North Carolina General Statutes (verification of work authorization). Further, if the Provider utilizes a subcontractor, the Provider shall require the subcontractor to comply with the requirements of Article 2 of Chapter 64 of the North Carolina General Statutes.

https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_143/GS_143-133.3.pdf

https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByArticle/Chapter_64/Article_2.html

Iran Divestment Act

Provider hereby certifies that it is not on the North Carolina State Treasurer's list of persons engaging in business activities in Iran, prepared pursuant to NCGS 147-86.58, nor will Provider utilize on this agreement any subcontractor on such list. This list, along with additional information about the Iran Divestment Act, is available on the Treasurer's Office site: <https://www.nctreasurer.gov/iran-divestment-act>

Divestment from Companies that Boycott Israel

Contractor hereby certifies that it is not on the North Carolina State Treasurer's list of companies engaged in a boycott of Israel in violation of NCGS 147-86.80 et. seq. and that it will not utilize on this agreement any subcontractor on said list."

Contract Required

The successful proposer will be required to enter into a written contract with the Library, setting forth the conditions specified in this RFP, as well as other standard terms and conditions. The successful vendor shall be solely liable for compliance with all specifications contained herein.

Proposal Duration

All proposals will remain in effect and shall be legally binding for at least one hundred twenty (120) days after the proposal submission due date.

Request for Proposal Process

Schedule

Date	Event
March 4, 2026	RFP Issue Date
5:00 PM EST March 17, 2026	Deadline for Submission of Written Questions. Service Providers are permitted to submit to the Library written questions, but only for purposes of clarifying this RFP. All submissions shall be submitted as outlined herein.
March 20, 2026	Response to Written Questions via Addendum
2:00 PM EST April 9, 2026	Responses are due on this date and time.
April 2026	Library review and firm selection (interviews if needed)
April/May 2026	Anticipated contract award

Proposer Questions and Inquiries

Proposer Questions and Inquiries relative to this RFP must be submitted electronically by 5:00 PM, March 17, 2026, to Walter Freeman, Library Procurement Analyst, at wfreeman@cmlibrary.org. The Library will provide written responses to all inquiries received by this date, and responses will be made available to all known recipients of this RFP and posted by March 20, 2026. Any oral responses made by any representative of the Library may not be relied upon. Any supplements or amendments to this RFP will be in writing and furnished to potential bidders.

Proposers are expressly forbidden from contacting any other Library employee or Charlotte Mecklenburg Library official regarding this Request for Proposals. Any such outside contact may result in disqualification from the request for proposal process.

Submission of Responses

Five (5) paper copies in a sealed envelope/package and one (1) electronic copy of the proposal by way of a USB drive, including all required forms, must be submitted to the attention of Walter Freeman, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, Library Administration Center, 510 Stitt Road, Charlotte, NC 28213 by 2:00pm EST on April 9, 2026. Emailed and faxed submissions will not be accepted. All risk of late arrival due to unanticipated delay – whether delivered by hand, US Postal Service, courier, or other delivery service is entirely on the submitting Proposer. It is the sole responsibility of the Proposer to have the proposal physically in the Library’s office by the specified time and date. The time of delivery will be marked on each proposal when received, and any proposal received after the proposal submission deadline will be rejected.

The Library reserves the right to reject any or all proposals. The Library reserves the right to reproduce proposals for internal use in the evaluation process.

The Library will not be obligated for the expenses of any provider arising out of preparation and/or submittal of responses to this RFP. Any and all proposals to this RFP are to be prepared at the cost and expense of the respondents, with the express understanding that there may be no claims whatsoever for the reimbursement of

any costs, damages, or expenses relating to this procurement from the Library or any other party for any reason (including the cancellation of this RFP).

Proposals must be made in the official name of the individual, firm, or corporation under which the business is conducted (showing official business address) and must be signed in ink by a person duly authorized to legally bind the business entity submitting the proposal.

All proposals should be complete and carefully worded and must convey all of the information requested by the Library. If errors or exceptions are found in the proposal, or if the proposal fails to conform to the requirements of the RFP, the Library will be the sole judge as to whether that variance is significant enough to reject the proposal. Proposals should be prepared simply and economically. All data, materials, and documentation shall be available in a clear, concise form.

Evaluation Criteria

All bids that are submitted in accordance with this RFP and which meet the requirements as outlined herein will be considered to be responsive bids. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein, any and all bids may be rejected, and the Library may negotiate with any or all bidders. The Library will award the contract to the responsive, responsible bidder(s) to ensure the best value contractor(s) is selected.

A short-list of firms may be invited to Stage 2 of the evaluation process, the Interview/Demonstration. Interview/demonstrations are an important aspect of the evaluation process that offers the Library an opportunity to see how the proposer's solution meets the critical components of the RFP. A committee will evaluate the responses and select the top proposal. The Library may elect to make a final selection without holding an interview/demonstration. Selection will be based on the criteria listed below:

- **Experience and Qualifications – 25%**
This criterion evaluation will be based on subjective factors such as the bidder's track record of successfully providing similar materials/services to other public libraries, the quality and qualifications of their key personnel, and the bidder's overall approach to meeting the needs of Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. The evaluation team will review the bidder's past performance on similar contracts, check references, and assess the bidder's proposed team and methodology to determine if they are likely to provide high-quality services to Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.
- **Inventory availability and order fulfillment – 25%**
This criterion evaluation is based on objective data such as the percentage of ordered items that were fulfilled, the speed of order processing and shipping, and the accuracy of inventory reporting. The evaluation team will compare the bidder's proposed metrics with industry standards or benchmarks to determine if their proposed inventory and order fulfillment processes are effective and efficient.
- **Cost Effectiveness – 20%**
Cost will be evaluated by comparing discounts offered to CML off publisher prices, the quality of materials, shipping and handling fees, processing fees, inventory management, and other services offered by the vendor including processing charges and incentives. Full disclosure of costs are required for proper evaluation of this criterion.
- **Collection Development Services and Online Selection Tools – 15%**
Evidence of proactive engagement by vendor to anticipate publishing trends and other industry developments and to consistently deliver value added incentives (products, services, events) relating to librarianship, readers advisory, and other areas relating to successful collection development and

selection. We will evaluate this criterion based on the vendor's online selection tools, which should be dynamic, stable, and robust. The tools should seamlessly integrate all resources needed for informed selection decisions, including real-time inventory, accurate publication data, and reviews. The vendor should also provide a direct avenue for CML to offer feedback and engage in feature requests and other developments. Additionally, the vendor must provide on-site or guided web site training to CML staff to ensure effective utilization of the online selection tools.

- **Proposal Quality and Responsiveness – 5%**
Completeness, clarity, and professionalism of the proposal.
- **Interview/Demonstration (if held) – 10%**

Award will be made at a later date pending evaluation of all proposals submitted and approval by the Library's Board of Trustees.

Rejection of the Proposal

The Library reserves the right to determine and evaluate the qualifications of the Operator's candidates and to reject any Final Proposals.

The Library retains the right to waive minor irregularities in the statement format.

Basis for rejection includes but is not limited to:

- Contains false or misleading statements.
- Not in the format described under Proposal Content.
- Unsigned proposal by authorized person
- Unsigned acknowledgement of addenda form
- Received after the due date.
- Restriction or limitation upon their use.

Proposal Format

Section A: Executive Summary

A concise overview of the proposal highlighting key points of the bid. Suggested highlights would include a summary the pricing structure and highlight any value-added services or cost-saving measures offered or outlining competitive edge.

Section B: Summary of Company

History, mission statement, and key differentiators. It should also include information on the size and scope of the company, such as the number of employees, warehouse locations, and annual revenue.

- Support team: Please provide resumes and background information for your qualified, experienced support team, including their defined roles and years of experience.
- Customer service: A track record of providing excellent customer service, including responsiveness, communication, and willingness to work collaboratively with the library's staff.

Section C: Agency Qualifications

- Inventory capacity: Please provide information about your current average inventory, including the number of unique titles and total units available for immediate shipment.
- Warehouse locations and shipping: Please provide information about your warehouse locations and shipping schedules.
- Partnerships with publishers: We require vendors to have established relationships with a diverse range of publishers to ensure a broad and varied selection of materials. Please include details of your current partnerships with publishing houses. Include in your list partnerships with any small independent publishers and/or those that publish print material in foreign languages.
- Special requests: Please describe your ability to supply special requests, such as reinforced bindings or out-of-print books.
- Technology capabilities: The ability to offer online ordering, tracking, and reporting systems, as well as the capacity to integrate with the library's current systems and technology infrastructure.

Section D: Professional References

Provide three references from similar clients you have worked with in the last three years, preferably within the public library sector and comparable in size and scope to Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

Section E: Cost of Services

Clearly list charges, fees and discounts for all services and material described in your response. Include any publisher discounting, discounts based on formats, library bindings, and editions rebound by vendor.

Proposal Authorization and Signature

This proposal must be signed by a responsible official of the offering company and notarized. By signing below as an authorized representative, the Proposer agrees to be bound by the representations, terms and conditions contained in its proposal and agrees to enter into a contract based upon the terms, representations and conditions contained in the proposal with the Library if this proposal is approved and awarded by the Library.

Firm Name

Print name of signer

Date

Authorized Signature

Street Address

City, State and Zip Code

Telephone number

Email Address

Acknowledgement of Addenda

If issued, Proposer hereby acknowledges receipt of the Addenda issued. This form shall be signed by an authorized company representative and returned with the proposal response. Provide number of the Addendum you received, and the date received.

Addendum No. _____ Dated _____
Addendum No. _____ Dated _____

Company _____

Authorized Signature _____

Print Name _____

Email Address _____

Note: Please print clearly