



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
PLAY & LEARN DESIGN GUIDE AND
SUN RAY LIBRARY PLAY & LEARN DEMONSTRATION SITE

SAINT PAUL PUBLIC LIBRARY
90 WEST FOURTH STREET
SAINT PAUL, MN 55102

APRIL 16, 2025

1. SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

About the RFP:

Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL) is currently accepting proposals to support Play & Learn work as part of the [Transforming Libraries](#) initiative. This work consists of the following:

- Create a Play & Learn Design Guide that can be applied to all SPPL Play & Learn spaces.
- Design, build, and install a demonstration Play & Learn site at the Sun Ray Library (2105 Wilson Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55119).

About SPPL:

SPPL operates 13 libraries in neighborhoods throughout the city of Saint Paul. Facilities vary in size, operating hours, staffing levels, and services. SPPL has an annual budget of approximately \$27 million dollars comprised of both general and special revenue funds. SPPL serves all residents of Saint Paul. 2020 Census data shows that 13.4% of Saint Paul residents are age nine or younger. 45.7% of Saint Paul residents identify as BIPOC, and 51.3% identify as White.

- The library serves a population of approximately 307,000 residents, with approximately 70,000 active cardholders.
- In 2024, SPPL had nearly 1.3 million visits.
- Children's programming is consistently offered at all of our locations and draws robust audiences. In 2024, SPPL hosted 914 early learning programs with 22,800 attendees.

It is SPPL's mission to welcome all people to connect, learn, participate, and grow. SPPL's vision is a city that works for all, where libraries bring people together to experience hope and unlock new possibilities.

SPPL Values:

We believe in connection.

- Libraries help people connect to information, resources, and each other. The library is open and welcoming, where all people can find comfortable, joyful access to space, technology, materials, and support.

We believe in innovation.

- Libraries must continually transform to serve community needs – today and in the future. Every day, the library finds new ways to cultivate empathy and unlock potential, igniting collective curiosity through creative exploration and discovery.

We believe in resilience.

- The library is a place for quiet reflection and boisterous activity, for likeness and for difference. It is a brave space for public participation: to exchange ideas and build human relationships, power, and community. As part of the foundation of a city's social infrastructure, libraries are essential to community resilience.

We believe in the power of belonging.

- Libraries are a safe place where all people can see themselves actively reflected, supported, and celebrated. The library acknowledges and rejects racism, white supremacy and hate of all kinds, and is committing to a public future that delivers truth, fairness, dignity, respect, and healing so all library users can thrive.

About Play & Learn at SPPL:

SPPL's vision for play is that all children in Saint Paul have access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate play experiences at the library. There are few community play spaces that are free, open throughout the day, temperature controlled, safe and developmentally appropriate for children of multiple ages. Research shows that reduced access to green space, playgrounds and safe play areas disproportionately impacts youth of color, demonstrating that access to play is an equity issue. Saint Paul's richly diverse communities include large populations of children of color and by investing in freely available play spaces, SPPL plays a key role in supporting learning opportunities for all families.

Experiential Goals

When children and families visit Play & Learn spaces at SPPL, we want them to experience the following:

- Strong sense of welcome and belonging – Feeling welcomed into the space and knowing youth and families are valued library patrons.
- Reflective of diverse experiences – Spaces visibly reflect the diversity of Saint Paul's communities.
- Creative, imaginative, child-directed play – Users have opportunities to be creative and imaginative in their play. Children can self-identify how they play and use open-ended materials to achieve their goals
- New learning experiences – Libraries have frequent repeat visitors; some children and families visit the same library multiple times a week. Families should have opportunities to learn and experience the space in new ways. Spaces must be flexible.
- Comfortable, safe atmosphere – All users, from infants to adults, should have comfortable places to sit or spend time. Items in the space should be safe for children to handle. There should be toys or other play items appropriate for a variety of ages.
- Connections to literacy – Collections are accessible and easy to browse. Families can find the materials they are looking for.
- Desire to return – Families want to return and continue playing, exploring the space and checking out materials.

2. PROJECT PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this project is as follows:

Research shows that children learn best through play, and that play builds essential social, emotional, academic and life skills. SPPL's branch locations all have children's spaces. These spaces include books and materials as well as toys and other play-based activities. They are mostly indoors, though some locations have reading gardens or outdoor spaces that may be considered as an extension of Play & Learn spaces. For the last several years SPPL has invested modest funding to improve some of these spaces, making them more engaging and providing increased opportunities for young children to engage in play-based learning.

As part of the Transforming Libraries initiative, SPPL is investing in significant updates to play spaces in all library locations. All spaces will feature design, furnishings, art and materials that engage children and families in a welcoming, attractive, play-rich library environment. The majority of these spaces are indoors, but some small outdoor space may be considered as within scope at specified locations. These spaces are an essential library service for young children and their families. By enhancing all Play & Learn spaces across Saint Paul, more children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally friendly opportunities to learn and grow.

Project Description:

Create a Play & Learn Design Guide

The Play & Learn Design Guide will be used by SPPL and its project partners in construction and updating of SPPL's Play & Learn spaces. The guide will also serve as a tool for staff to successfully maintain spaces up to SPPL's standards. The Play & Learn Design Guide will develop standards for how SPPL can ensure all Play & Learn spaces adhere to consistent planning, engagement and maintenance strategies, aesthetics and design and furnishings.

Design, Build, and Install Demonstration Space

Design, build, and install a demonstration Play & Learn space at the Sun Ray Library in accordance with Design Guide standards. The Design Guide should be 75% complete prior to beginning Part Two. As such, the Play & Learn work at Sun Ray may help refine or adjust elements of the Design Guide based on learning and experience. Sun Ray has a small outdoor reading garden that may be considered as in-scope for this project, depending on budget projections.

3. PROJECT SCOPE

The Play & Learn Design Guide will develop standards for how SPPL can ensure all Play & Learn spaces adhere to the following (including but not limited to):

Aesthetics and Design

- Consistent, cohesive brand-approved aesthetics and space quality while honoring unique branch characteristics
- Flexible design that allows for a variety of activities including free play, socializing, and occasional programs. This includes custom play structures that allow for flexibility and storage of various play items and themes.
- Creative, innovative approach to play with opportunities for infants, toddlers and preschoolers to engage successfully in the space
- Fosters a level of active play appropriate for an indoor environment
- Integrates local public art as part of space
- Incorporates items appropriate for a reading garden or other small outdoor space
- Prioritizes natural, organic materials and connections to the natural world
- Design is not overly reliant on themes and supports frequent adjustments to items and learning content

Furnishings

- Shelving for youth materials (may include picture books, early readers, etc.) that is browsable and incorporated into the play space
- High-quality, sturdy furnishings and materials that stand up to heavy use
- Incorporate Play & Learn concepts with SPPL's Interior Design Guidelines, Brand Identity, and Facilities Plan, including color palette, furniture ideas, finishes, connect with natural and organic elements, shelving recommendations for making collects easier to browse
- Selection of items that may be used for outdoor engagement or play

Planning and Maintenance

- Community engagement plan to inform space design and elements. "Community" includes patrons, staff, and community members, partners or organizations
- Longevity – spaces will not look or feel outdated within a few years
- Menu of choices for an installation piece (light wall, LiteBrite panels, etc.) for each location.
- Safety standards that ensure space is safe for children of all ages, including infants
- Maintenance plan that identifies best practices for long-term support of an attractive, high-quality Play & Learn space
- Recommendations or options for storage and organization of play items

The design, build and installation of the Sun Ray Library Play & Learn space will include the following:

- Execution of a community engagement plan that informs design and plans for the space.
- Full design of Play & Learn space, including, but not limited to:
 - New carpet, lighting, furnishings, space layout, etc.
 - Incorporating shelving of applicable collections

- Incorporating artwork from a local artist as a prominent visual piece of the space (this could be a structure, interactive element, sculpture, mural or other visual art piece.)
- Custom build of play items or structures identified for the space
- Full installation of Play & Learn items for a final space ready to be used by the public
- Maintenance plan that supports long-term success for the space

The selected contractor is expected to:

- Visit at least six SPPL locations to gain a sense of the variety of spaces across the system
- Ground all work in most current research about child development and pedagogy
- Secure all permits and licenses as part of the project

4. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Respondents are not asked to submit specific plans or designs for the Play & Learn Design Guide and Sun Ray Library Play & Learn space. Instead, interested parties should focus on sharing their approach to space design as well as previous work samples that they feel best represents their ability to support the work described above. Specifically, interested parties should submit a proposal through the City of Saint Paul's bidding portal that includes the following:

- Written documentation that addresses each Tab below. Inclusion of photos or other visuals to support your answers is welcome.
- Three to five examples of past work that demonstrate your ability to support this project. At least one work example should be a design guide.
- Contact information for three references that can speak to previous work, ideally from projects completed within the last five years.

Tab 1 – Company Information

- Name of Company
- Complete address
- Contact person
- Telephone number
- Fax number
- Website
- Email Address

Tab 2 – Understanding of Play: Speak to the importance of play and ways that children ages 0-5 can be supported in open-ended, flexible, creative play. How do you ensure you are incorporating current research and best practices into your work?

Tab 3 – Creative, Flexible, Appealing Design: How do you ensure spaces are creative, flexible, appealing and successfully address the client’s particular needs? Please include your approach to the following:

- Designs that are engaging, attractive and child-centric.
- Spaces feel vibrant without over-stimulating and are connected to elements of the natural world.
- Spaces are not overly reliant on themes and do not look dated within several years.
- Items and elements have some degree of flexibility to allow for a variety of use cases and movement within the space.
- Furnishings are comfortable for children and adults.
- Collections are appropriately integrated into the space to support browsing and reading.

Tab 4 – Cost (To be submitted in a separate file from the rest of the proposal): Responders will be evaluated on the cost of their solution(s) based on the work to be performed in accordance with the scope of this project. Costs. All costs to be charged to the City including estimated reimbursable expenses. To be submitted separately.

Tab 5 - Organizational Experience: Indicate your experience creating design guides AND experience with design, build and installation of play areas and experiences in libraries and other children's spaces such as children’s museums. Experience should include designing, building and installing durable, accessible and safe spaces.

Tab 6 – Community Engagement: Provide examples of strategies for engaging community in influencing design elements and choices, especially strategies for getting and using feedback from children and families.

Tab 7 – Cultural Relevancy: Indicate how you incorporate DEI practices into your work, including project teams, vendors, and designs.

5. REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL AND PROJECT TIMELINE

Pre-Proposal Meeting

There will be an optional Pre-Proposal virtual meeting to get more information on the project and answer any questions from potential respondents. Interested parties should click the link below to attend the meeting. Those not available during this time, should submit their questions through the City of Saint Paul’s bidding portal before the deadline.

Pre-Proposal Meeting

Wednesday, April 30, 2025, from 1pm -2pm CST

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 299 065 436 194
Passcode: kd3iG3NS

Dial in by phone:

[+1 612-315-7905](tel:+16123157905)

Phone conference ID: 568 266 769#

Project Timeline:

- RFP Release Date: Wednesday April 16, 2025, 3:00pm CST
- Pre-Proposal virtual meeting: Wednesday April 30, 2025, 1:00 pm CST
- Questions Due Date: Wednesday May 7, 2025, 3:00pm CST
- Addenda Due Date: Wednesday, May 14, 2025
- Proposal Due Date: Friday May 23, 2025, 3:00pm CST
- Interview (if needed): June 2025
- Desired project implementation tentatively July 2025
- Play & Learn Design Guide and demonstration space complete tentatively by Winter 2026

6. BUDGET

Proposals should include estimated costs to complete the following.

Play & Learn Design Guide

Play & Learn space at Sun Ray Library

- Space design services
- Custom play equipment
- Construction
- Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment
- Installation

7. RESPONDER QUALIFICATIONS

Successful responding organizations will have:

- Experience creating design guides that apply across an organization
- Experience creating innovative, flexible, creative play spaces in high-traffic settings that see frequent repeat visitors
- Understanding of safety and accessibility practices in public spaces
- Commitment to EDI practices
- Commitment to using most recent research in play to support designs

8. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

The City of Saint Paul will evaluate all proposals based on the following criteria. To ensure consideration for this Request for Proposal, your proposal should be complete and include all of the following criteria:

Tab - 2 Understanding of Play: Responders will be evaluated on their ability to support open-ended, creative, flexible play and use current research and best practices to inform their work.	10
Tab - 3 Creative, Flexible, Appealing Design: Responders will be evaluated on their ability to support each of the bulleted items in Tab 2.	15
Tab – 5 Organizational Experience: Responders will be evaluated on their experience creating design guides and completing design, build and installation of children’s spaces.	19
Tab – 6 Community Engagement: Responders will be evaluated on their strategies for community engagement and how those strategies successfully engage children and families.	11
Tab 7 - Cultural Relevancy: Responders will be evaluated on how they incorporate DEI strategies into various areas of work.	15
Technical Score = 70% of the evaluation Highest Score is (Sum of 2, 3, 5-7)	70
Tab 4 - Cost = 30% of the evaluation	30
Final Total – Tech Score + Cost Score	100
<i>Optional: Interview = 15% of Evaluation</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Optional Final Score</i>	<i>115</i>

Optional:

Following a review of the proposals, if needed, an interview may be given to the highest scoring proposals after the evaluation of qualifications by the selection committee. If needed, the shortlisted Respondents will be required to participate in an interview period. The City may interview all critical team members of the respondent’s team. All proposed team members must be available for interviews on the agreed upon date. At the City of Saint Paul’s discretion, substitutes, proxies, phone interviews, or electronic interviews may be allowed.

The City of Saint Paul may also request to interview additional personnel. The City of Saint Paul may request additional information prior to interviews.

The interview phase may include a Respondent presentation. The interview itself will follow a question-and-answer format.

A staff committee will review the proposals against the criteria in this RFP and score proposals.

The City reserves the right to ask for additional information or clarification of the submission from any or all proposers.

The final contract award will be conditioned upon the successful proposer's complying with all terms and conditions, mutual agreement about the final work plan, and completion of a contract agreeable to all parties.

9. PUBLIC INFORMATION

Data submitted by a business to the City in response to a Request for Proposals are private or nonpublic until the responses are opened. Once the responses are opened, the name of the responder is read and becomes public. All other data in a responder's response to a Request for Proposals are private or nonpublic data until completion of the evaluation process. "Completion of the evaluation process" means that the City has completed negotiating the contract with the selected vendor. After the City has completed the evaluation process, all remaining data submitted by all responders are public with the exception of trade secret data as defined and classified in Minn. Stat. § 13.37. A statement by a responder that submitted data are copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the data contained in the response. Proposals submitted in response to an RFP become the property of the City and will not be returned.

If all responses to a Request for Proposals are rejected prior to the completion of the evaluation process, all data, other than that made public at the response opening, remain private or nonpublic until a re-issuance of the Request for Proposals results in completion of the evaluation process or a determination is made to abandon the purchase. If the rejection occurs after the completion of the evaluation process, the data remains public. If a re-issuance of an RFP does not occur within one year of the proposal opening date, the remaining data become public.

10. Proposal Rejections

This Request for Proposal (RFP) does not obligate the City of Saint Paul to award a contract or complete the proposed project and each reserves the right to cancel this RFP if it is considered to be in its best interest. Proposals must be clear and concise. Proposals that are difficult to follow or that do not conform to the RFP format or binding specifications may be rejected. Responding Vendors must include the required information called for in this RFP. City of Saint Paul reserves

the right to reject a proposal if required information is not provided or is not organized as directed.

The City of Saint Paul also reserves the right to waive minor informalities and reserves the right to:

1. Reject any and all proposals received in response to this RFP;
2. Select a proposal for contract negotiation other than the one with the lowest cost;
3. Negotiate any aspect of the proposal with any Vendor;
4. Terminate negotiations and select the next most responsive Vendor for contract negotiations;
5. Terminate negotiations and prepare and release a new RFP;
6. Terminate negotiations and take such action as deemed appropriate.

Any decision to cancel or reject any and all proposals is in The City of Saint Paul's sole discretion. The City of Saint Paul also reserves the right to change the evaluation criteria or any other provision in this RFP by posting notice of the change(s) on the www.stpaulbids.com. Vendors should check the site daily for updates (e.g. amendments, responses to questions) and are expected to review information on the site carefully before submitting a final proposal. Such changes or updates above constitutes written notice to each Vendor.