



Request for Proposals (RFP) Nonprofit Strategic Planning Consultant

Issued by: ACLU of Pennsylvania (ACLU-PA)

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Proposal Due Date: December 13, 2025

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Introduction

The ACLU of Pennsylvania (ACLU-PA) seeks proposals from experienced strategic planning consultants or consulting firms to design and facilitate an inclusive strategic planning process that will culminate in a clear, actionable plan for the organization's next three years (2026–2030).

The consultant will work closely with the ACLU-PA's board of directors, executive director, staff, and key partners to guide a participatory process that reflects our mission and values, responds to the evolving civil rights landscape, and strengthens our organizational effectiveness and sustainability.

About the ACLU of Pennsylvania

A state affiliate of the national ACLU, the ACLU-PA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works to defend and advance individual rights and liberties guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and the laws of the United States and Pennsylvania. The ACLU-PA uses litigation, advocacy, organizing, and communications strategies to advocate for a range of civil rights and civil liberties, including immigrants' rights, racial justice, abortion rights, TLGBQ+ rights, voting rights, privacy, and criminal legal reform.

The ACLU-PA comprises two separate corporate entities: the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania (the "Union") and the ACLU Foundation of Pennsylvania (the "Foundation"). The Union is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit corporation, and ACLU membership dues fund its lobbying work. The ACLU Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, primarily supported by tax-exempt gifts from individuals and by foundation grants. The Foundation funds support litigation and public education efforts. The ACLU-PA has three offices across the state (Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, and Philadelphia), 40 employees, a 25-member board, several volunteer chapters, over 60,000 members and donors, hundreds of volunteers, and an \$8 million combined operating budget, along with substantial reserves.

Background

The ACLU of Pennsylvania is launching a strategic planning process to guide the organization's direction for 2026–2030. Our [previous strategic plan](#), adopted in 2021 and concluded in 2024, provided a strong foundation

for growth and impact. However, over the past 18 months, ACLU-PA has experienced significant changes, including a new executive director, a new president of the board of directors, unionization of the staff, and major shifts in the political and judicial landscape at both the state and national levels. At the same time, we remain focused on strengthening our financial sustainability through careful scenario planning and a continued commitment to fiscal responsibility.

Scope of Work Requested

Project Design and Management

- Guide and assist a Strategic Planning Committee composed of equal numbers of board and staff members.
- Design a participatory planning process that gathers meaningful input from staff, board, and other key stakeholders with a goal of 100% staff participation and at least 80% board participation in the process.
- Maintain ongoing communication with the Strategic Planning Committee throughout the project.
- Create a detailed timeline.
- Develop an initial draft of the strategic plan, gather and incorporate feedback from key stakeholders, and produce revised versions for subsequent and final reviews.
- Consultant may not use ACLU-PA data or any confidential information of the ACLU-PA for the purpose of artificial intelligence (AI) training, use, development, or distribution. Such uses are expressly prohibited unless agreed to in writing by the ACLU-PA. Consultant's use of AI in connection with the services must be expressly authorized in writing by the ACLU-PA.

Organizational Assessment

- Conduct an internal and external environmental scan, including key trends in the policy, funding, and political landscapes.
- Review relevant documents (strategic plans, annual reports, financial statements, program data, etc.).
- Identify organizational strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats to inform strategic direction.
- Review organizational and staffing structures.
- Examine our engagement model, which currently includes members, volunteers, and local chapters statewide.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Design and facilitate an inclusive engagement process that gathers meaningful input from:
 - Board members
 - Staff at all levels
 - Organizational partners
 - Funders and donors
 - Members, volunteers, and local chapter leaders
- Use surveys, 1:1 interviews, and/or focus groups to ensure that diverse perspectives inform the plan.
- Facilitate an in-person staff retreat (date and location to be determined).

Mission, Vision, and Values Review

- Facilitate conversations to reaffirm or refine the organization’s mission, vision, core values, and theory of change.
- Ensure alignment with Authentic Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (“ABIDE”) commitment.

Strategic Priorities and Goals

- Use shared criteria such as impact, equity, capacity, feasibility, short- and long-term projected needs, and funding alignment to identify 3–5 strategic priority areas, including issue and operational priorities, not necessarily ranked.
- Develop clear goals, strategies, metrics, and time horizons for each priority area.
- Review of growth mode: expanding, stabilizing, or shrinking.
- Analysis of current and projected legal, political, demographic, and funding environments.
- Facilitate discussion of resource implications, including staffing and funding needs.
- Lead an assessment of multiple financial scenarios for a five-year period.

Implementation and Evaluation Framework

- Develop an implementation roadmap with phased actions, owners, and metrics.
- Provide recommendations for aligning internal systems and structures with the new strategic plan.
- Support presentation and adoption of the final strategic plan at the September 2026 board meeting.
- Create tools or dashboards for monitoring progress and accountability.
- Create a process for deciding when a pivot may be necessary.

Although not limited to these, possible areas and challenges to address in the plan include:

- Building power through multiple means, including mobilizing and engaging members and supporters.
- Addressing the erosion of legal and constitutional limits on governmental authority.
- Increasing diversity among members, supporters, and volunteers.
- Developing organizational responses to emerging issues such as artificial intelligence and other technology-related civil liberties concerns.
- Evaluating the historical and current chapter and volunteer structure for alignment with current and future needs.
- Planning for multiple financial scenarios while maintaining a balanced budget.
- Assessing and refining electoral and advocacy strategies.
- Strengthening integrated advocacy across departments.
- Review of internal staffing structure.
- Evaluation processes of board and staff leadership.

Primary Deliverables

- Two final versions of the strategic plan, one for internal use and one public-facing version.
- Executive summary.
- Process report summarizing participation, methods, and key engagement data.
- Slide deck for use in staff and board presentations.
- Presentation materials for use with funders and potential funders.
- Presentation of the final strategic plan for adoption at the September 2026 board meeting.
- Implementation roadmap and dashboard with phased actions, accountable owners, metrics, and tracking tools.

Consultant Qualifications

Proposals should demonstrate:

- A strong understanding of nonprofit organizational dynamics and strategic planning challenges.
- A proven approach to inclusive stakeholder engagement and participatory facilitation.
- Expertise in centering and integrating ABIDE principles throughout planning and implementation.
- Evidence of successful projects with organizations of similar size, scope, and mission, which may include sample work plans, timelines, strategic plans, and implementation frameworks.
- A statement outlining the consulting team's internal commitment to ABIDE and how it is operationalized in practice.

Proposal Requirements

Proposals should include the following:

- Cover letter: Summarize your interest, qualifications, and understanding of the ACLU-PA mission.
- Approach & methodology: Describe your proposed process, including how you ensure equity, inclusion, and broad stakeholder engagement.
- Timeline: Outline your proposed schedule that aligns with the target completion date.
- Team qualifications: Bios and roles of the consultant(s) who will lead the project.
- Relevant experience and expertise: Brief descriptions of similar strategic planning projects, particularly for civil rights, advocacy, or justice-focused nonprofits.
- Budget proposal: Itemized costs with total estimated budget.
- References: Contact information for at least three organizations you have supported with comparable work.
- Other information: Any other relevant information you think we should know about your organization and/or your ability to complete the project.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Understanding of and alignment with civil rights and social justice missions
- Demonstrated experience facilitating strategic planning processes for comparable organizations
- Inclusive and equity-centered methodology
- Qualifications and experience of consultant team

- Strength of proposed timeline and work plan
- Cost-effectiveness

Additionally:

- ACLU-PA values and actively seeks consultants who demonstrate a deep commitment to racial equity, inclusion, and civil liberties.
- Preference will be given to proposals from consulting firms with a team of multiple staff members.
- The strategic planning process will require a combination of remote, hybrid, and in-person meetings.
- ACLU-PA is an equal opportunity employer and contractor; minority- and women-owned consulting firms are strongly encouraged to apply.

Budget

\$70,000-\$90,000, inclusive of all consultant fees, materials, and travel expenses.

Timeline

Milestone	Target Date
RFP released	November 17, 2025
Deadline for submitting proposals	December 15, 2025 at noon
Virtual interviews with finalists	January 12-16, 2026 (tentative)
Consultant selected and notified	January 23, 2026
Contract executed	January 30, 2026
Project kick-off	February 10-13, 2026
Stakeholder engagement phase	February–May 2026
Draft plan presented for feedback	June-August 2026
Final plan approved by board	September 12 or 13, 2026

Submission Instructions

Please submit your proposal electronically in PDF format to:

Mike Lee, Executive Director

Email: strategicplan@aclupa.org

Subject Line: Strategic Planning Consultant RFP

All proposals must be received by **noon EST on Monday, December 15, 2025.**

Late submissions will not be considered.

Finalists will be interviewed virtually.

Questions

Questions regarding this RFP may be submitted via email to strategicplan@aclupa.org no later than **December 3, 2025**.