



Request for Proposal (RFP)

Executive Director Search Services

I. Introduction

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (Legal Services) invites qualified executive search firms to submit proposals to lead a national search for our next Executive Director. Legal Services is a nonprofit legal aid provider committed to advancing justice and equity for low-income and vulnerable individuals through high-quality civil legal services, policy advocacy, and community partnerships.

The current Executive Director will be departing in December 2027, and Legal Services seeks an experienced, mission-driven leader to guide the next chapter of our work.

II. Organizational Overview

Founded in 1956, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri serves 21 counties in Eastern Missouri through a staff of approximately 120 attorneys, advocates, and support professionals. Legal Services provides free civil legal services and holistic advocacy in areas including, but not limited to, housing stability, public benefits, domestic violence, family law, consumer protection, and access to healthcare.

Legal Services operates with an annual budget of approximately \$14 million and is governed by a Board of Directors composed of community leaders, attorneys, and individuals who are eligible for legal services.

III. Position Overview

The Executive Director is the chief executive officer of Legal Services and is responsible for overall leadership, strategic direction, financial sustainability, programmatic excellence, and external relations. The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors and works closely with senior leadership and staff.

Key responsibilities include:

- Providing visionary and inclusive leadership aligned with Legal Services' mission and values
- Leading strategic planning and organizational change
- Ensuring financial health, including fundraising and resource development
- Overseeing legal programs and ensuring high-quality, client-centered services

- Building and maintaining strong relationships with funders, partners, and community stakeholders
- Supporting and developing a diverse, high-performing staff and leadership team

IV. Scope of Search Firm Services

The selected executive search firm will be expected to provide comprehensive search services, including:

Required Deliverables

- A finalized leadership profile and position announcement
- A sourcing and outreach strategy
- Provide updates in cadence with regular search committee, staff, and board meetings.
- A screened candidate slate with written evaluations
- Structured interview guides and candidate comparison tools
- Reference checking and finalist support

Search Strategy and Planning

- Partnering with the Search Committee to refine the position profile and desired qualifications
- Hold listening sessions to gain valuable feedback with key stakeholder groups such as: current and past board members, staff, and community partners that will help develop a comprehensive position profile
- Advising on market conditions, compensation benchmarking, and recruitment strategy

Candidate Recruitment and Outreach

- Conducting a national search
- Proactively sourcing and recruiting diverse and highly qualified candidates
- Leveraging networks within nonprofit, legal services, and social justice sectors

Screening and Assessment

- Reviewing applications and conducting initial interviews
- Assessing candidates' leadership experience, management skills, and commitment to equity and justice
- Presenting a slate of qualified candidates with written evaluations and candidate scoring rubric

Selection and Hiring Support

- Coordinating finalist interviews and stakeholder engagement
- Conducting reference checks
- Supporting offer negotiation and transition planning

V. Desired Qualifications of the Search Firm

Proposals should demonstrate:

- Significant experience conducting executive-level searches for nonprofit organizations
- Specific experience with legal aid or public interest law (strongly preferred)
- A proven track record of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in executive searches
- Knowledge of best practices in nonprofit governance and leadership transitions
- Capacity to manage the search efficiently within the proposed timeline

VI. Proposal Requirements

Proposals should include the following information:

- Firm overview and relevant experience
- Description of the proposed search process and methodology
- Timeline for completion of the search
- Description of the team that will be assigned to the search, including roles and bios
- A demonstrated commitment to inclusive executive search practices that welcome candidates from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives.
- Examples of comparable executive searches conducted within the last five years
- Fee structure, including total cost and any additional expenses
- References from at least three recent clients

VII. Timeline

- RFP issued: Week of February 23, 2026
- Questions due electronically to Colleen Daum: March 9, 2026
- Responses to questions posted: March 20, 2026
- Proposals due: March 30, 2026
- Finalists selected by: April 30, 2026
- Finalist Interviews: June 4, 2026
- Firm selected: June 5, 2026
- Anticipated start of engagement: July 2026
- Anticipated start for new ED: January 1, 2028

VIII. Submission Instructions

Proposals should be submitted electronically in PDF format to:

Colleen Daum, Director of Development, ccdaum@lsem.org

No later than March 30th, 2026, at 5:00pm.

IX. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Relevant experience and qualifications
- Quality and clarity of the proposed search approach
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Cost-effectiveness and value
- References and past performance

X. Reservation of Rights

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to request additional information, and to modify or cancel this RFP at any time.