Santa Barbara Unified School District

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Superintendent Search Services

Issue date: October 28, 2026
Proposal due date and time: November 30, 2026, 12:00 p.m.

1. Purpose

The Board of Trustees ("Board") of the Santa Barbara Unified School District ("District") invites proposals from qualified search firms to provide superintendent search services. The selected firm will assist the Board in conducting a comprehensive search for the District's next Superintendent. The firm's work is expected to include, at a minimum, project planning, stakeholder engagement, candidate recruitment and screening, finalist support, and assistance with contract negotiations, as described in Section 5.

2. Proposal submission

Submit a digital PDF version of the proposal no later than November 30, 2026, 12:00 p.m.

Submit proposals by email to:

William Banning, Board President
Email: wbanning@sbunified.org
CC: Joanna Powell, General Counsel
Email: joannapowell@sbunified.org
Subject line: Proposal—Superintendent Search Services

Proposals received after the deadline may be deemed nonresponsive.

3. Questions and inquiries

Questions about this Request for Proposals must be submitted to:

William Banning, Board President
Email: wbanning@sbunified.org
Phone: (858) 229-9250

4. Interviews and presentations

An ad hoc committee of the Board will review proposals and select firms for interviews. The District expects to notify firms selected for an interview by December 18, 2026. Selected firms will be invited to present their proposals and answer questions at a Board meeting on January 12, 2027, at 720 Santa Barbara St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101.

The District anticipates inviting no more than four firms to present. Each presentation may not exceed 25 minutes total, including up to 10 minutes for questions. Presentations must be made by the consultant or consultants who would be responsible for conducting the search if the firm is selected.

5. Proposal contents (address each of the following):

1. **Firm qualifications and experience**
   Describe the firm's experience conducting superintendent searches, particularly for California unified school districts of comparable size or complexity. Identify the consultants who would lead and support the search, including their roles, relevant experience, and availability.

2. **Conflicts of interest and recruitment restrictions**

   Identify any other superintendent searches the firm or proposed consultants are conducting or expect to conduct during this engagement. Disclose any relationship between the firm or proposed consultants and any likely candidate or any current or former District employee, and any compensation the firm receives from candidates. State whether the firm will agree not to recruit the District's selected Superintendent for another position during the guarantee period.

3. **Recommended process and services**
   Provide a clear description of the proposed search process, including the specific services and deliverables included. Describe the recommended steps from project launch through the Superintendent's appointment and transition.

4. **Education partner and community engagement**
   Explain how the firm would gather and report input from District educational partners and the broader community. Address, at a minimum, engagement with District employees; bargaining-unit leadership; management and confidential employees; students, parents, and guardians; and organizations affiliated with or supporting the District, including PTAs, DELAC, site councils, booster clubs, and other community educational organizations. Describe the engagement methods you recommend, how participants' input will be gathered and summarized, and how the firm will help the Board use that input in developing the candidate profile and evaluating candidates.

5. **Recruitment, screening, and finalist process**
   Describe how the firm will develop the candidate profile, recruit and assess candidates, support the Board's review and interview process, and assist with finalist communications and reference checks. Explain how you will protect candidate privacy while working within the District's applicable legal and public-meeting requirements.

6. **Proposed timeline**
   Provide a proposed schedule from the start of the engagement through the anticipated appointment and transition. Identify key milestones, the District or Board actions needed at each stage, and any assumptions that could affect the schedule. Build the schedule around the Board's regular meeting calendar and agenda posting deadlines, and plan for Board approval of the Superintendent's employment contract at a regular meeting.

7. **Fees and expenses**
   Provide a **not-to-exceed total fee** for the proposed services. Separate professional fees from reimbursable expenses and identify any expenses that are excluded, subject to approval, or capped. Explain how expenses will be documented and billed, and identify any additional costs that could arise if the search timeline or scope changes.

8. **Guarantee, if any**
   State whether the firm offers a guarantee or will conduct a replacement search if the Board's selected finalist does not remain employed by the District for at least two years. Describe the guarantee's duration, scope, conditions, exclusions, and any additional fees or expenses that would apply.

9. **Board and counsel support; contract negotiations**
   Describe how the proposed consultants will work with the Board and District counsel during finalist selection and negotiation of the Superintendent's employment contract. In particular, explain how the firm will help manage a finalist's expectations about the negotiation process, timing, compensation, benefits, and other terms without substituting for the Board or its counsel.

10. **References and Placement History**
    Complete search history. Include a list of all superintendent searches conducted by the firm in the past five years. For each search, provide the client district and the year the search concluded; the name of the superintendent placed, if any; whether that superintendent remains in the position and, if not, the length of their tenure; and whether the search ended without a placement, restarted, or triggered the firm's guarantee.

    References. Provide at least three client references for comparable superintendent searches completed within the past five years, including the client's name, the approximate date of the search, and contact information. Where possible, include Board presidents or other Board representatives who worked directly with the firm. The District may contact any client in the firm's search history, not only the references the firm identifies.

    Measures of success. Describe how the firm defines and measures a successful search, including any data it tracks on the retention and performance of the superintendents it has placed. Give one example of a placement the firm considers successful and one that did not work out as intended, and explain what the firm learned from each.

11. **Proposed agreement**
    Include a draft written agreement or contract setting out the proposed services, deliverables, schedule, fees, expenses, payment terms, and other material terms.

6. Evaluation and selection

The Board and its ad hoc committee may consider the following factors in evaluating proposals:

- Relevant experience and qualifications of the firm and proposed consultants;
- Quality and completeness of the proposed process and services;
- Approach to stakeholder and community engagement;
- Proposed timeline and ability to meet the District's needs;
- Total cost, expense controls, and clarity of pricing;
- References and record of successful engagements; and
- Quality and completeness of the proposal and presentation.

The Board or its ad hoc committee may request clarification or additional information from proposers. The District reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive minor irregularities, modify or cancel this Request for Proposals, and negotiate with one or more firms, subject to applicable law and District requirements. The District will not reimburse any costs a proposer incurs in preparing or presenting a proposal. Any award depends on the Board's approval of a written agreement with the selected firm.

7. Public records and legal requirements

Proposers should not assume that proposal materials will remain confidential. Records submitted to the District may be subject to disclosure under California's Public Records Act, subject to applicable law and any exemptions. The selected firm must coordinate its work with the Board and District counsel and comply with applicable legal requirements and District policies.