**Response to
Request for Proposals**

**Resident Preferences for the
Rockport Public Library**

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Prepared for:

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Background

Residents of the Town of Rockport, Maine are faced with a cherished library that is housed in an old building that *has structural issues and is in need of significant repair*. In addition, some residents perceive the current library building to be too small and in need of expansion. Various options in terms of design, location and cost have been discussed over the course of more than three years.

In November 2016, a proposal for a new library was voted on and failed by a margin of just 9 votes with more than 2,000 (84% turnout) people voting on it. The proposal called for a $2 million bond to build a $4 million dollar library, one-half of which would be funded by taxpayer funds and the balance by private donations. Many questions remain about why the proposal failed.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the research is to understand exactly what details the majority of Rockport residents would agree to for a new proposal to resolve the current issues with the Rockport Public Library. Specific learning (as outlined in the RFP) from the research will include, but not necessarily be limited to understanding the opinions of the majority of Rockport residents regarding:

- Basic support for constructing a new library building or not constructing a new facility;

- Preferred library size and degree of preference for several options;

- Library building project budget tolerances including preferred mix of private and public investment;

- Library design preferences and gauging importance of design;

- Voting status in November 2016 election; and

  Whether residents voted on the library proposal
  Whether voters supported or did not support the library proposal
  Reasons for voting in favor or in opposition of the library proposal or for not voting on it at all

- Specific facility features that residents desire sorted by those that are "must haves" or required and those that are "nice to have" – essentially a relative prioritization of features.

The questionnaire will include a comprehensive section of classification questions in order to allow for comparisons between demographic and geographic segments: age, income, education, marital or partner status, presence of children in household, location of primary residence in town, length of time during typical year Rockport is primary residence, and tenure living in town.

Methodology

According to the RFP, there are approximately 2,700 households and 2,800 registered voters in the Town of Rockport. Responses from as many adults, 18 years of age or older will be collected. Rockport maintains a database of mailing addresses, but few, if any email addresses are stored.

Given the contact information available and to be as fiscally responsible as possible, Portland Research Group proposes collecting data through the use of a mail and web survey (residents will take one or the other). To encourage response, Town of Rockport stock will be used for the cover letter and #10 outer envelope. Portland Research Group will be clearly identified as a third party firm managing the research in order to keep responses confidential and the analysis objective. The Portland Research Group logo will be prominent on the questionnaires and a postage paid envelope to Portland Research Group's P.O. Box will be enclosed for respondents to return their completed surveys. In addition, mailing recipients will be encouraged to complete the survey online (a survey link and PIN will be included in the cover letter) to save the Town postage and data processing costs and to make the process easier for residents.

- Cover letters will be personalized.

- Given the nature of the topic, we feel an incentive to encourage response will not be needed.

- The mailing will be sent out first class and Portland Research Group's Business Reply Envelope (BRE) permit will be used to pay for the returns.

Portland Research Group will design the questionnaire for approval by the Town of Rockport Project Team. The final draft must be approved by Rockport before being sent to residents. The questionnaire will be no longer than four 8.5" x 11" panels (we use a sheet of 11" x 16" paper and fold it in half to create the four panels. A total of up to 2 open ends (free response) and 2 other specify (questions with response categories listed but respondents have the option to add responses if needed) questions will be included.

- Portland Research Group is happy to meet with the Rockport Project Team at the beginning of the project to make sure all expectations are voices and learning objectives shared.

In addition to sending a copy of the questionnaire in the mail to residents, recipients of the mailing will also be able to complete the survey using a web survey. This saves on return postage and back end data processing. In addition, many people prefer to complete a survey electronically rather than using paper. Portland Research Group will program and host the survey. Web survey programs are thoroughly tested manually for typos, aesthetic appeal and logic, and through an automated tool that randomly generates and sends fictitious participants through the survey to make sure the logic is working correctly. In addition, web surveys are tested using several different browsers and versions of browsers to ensure compatibility through almost any means of access. Benefits of the Portland Research Group web capability include (but are not limited to):

- Developing a "skin" that incorporate the Town of Rockport logo, color scheme, look and feel, and uses the Portland Research Group logo and color scheme to emphasize third party confidentiality;

- Each question is positioned on its own page, so respondents do not have to scroll between questions. For skip patterns, respondents will automatically go to the next appropriate question;

- Embedding images, and audio and video files into the survey (probably not needed for this study, but the capability is there – we could show building design options, although that may not be practical for the mail survey but could be a draw to the web survey);

- Randomizing lists of attributes, questions and/or series of questions to avoid order bias;

- Requiring or not requiring questions to be answered;

- Allowing respondents to back-up or not;

- Assigning ranges of eligible responses to questions;

- Keeping a running total for questions that require respondents to assign points or percentages to a series of items;

- Respondents can suspend the questionnaire if they are interrupted and then come back to the place they left off; and

- Programmed for a professional look and feel from which the Portland Research Group Privacy Policy is easily accessed.

A total of approximately 2,700 survey packets will be mailed. Assuming a response rate of 25%, n=675 completed surveys will be returned. At the 95% level of confidence, a random sample of n=675 generates a maximum sampling error or confidence interval of +/- 3.77 percentage points. That is, for a reported 50% where variability is at its greatest, one can be 95% sure the results for the entire population would fall between 46.23% and 53.77%. The confidence interval tightens as the sample size increases and broadens as the sample size decreases. The larger number of observations will allow for greater flexibility to conduct meaningful analyses between subgroups[1].

- For the purposes of developing a budget estimate, we anticipate 50% of surveys being completed online.

All data processing is completed in-house. Open end and other specify responses are coded and entered with 100% verification (codes are entered independently twice and then the data sets are compared for any discrepancies. Discrepancies are resolved by reviewing the source inputs). This step also includes editing responses and cleaning (forwards and backwards) for

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[1] Portland Research Group considers a sample size of n=50 to be the minimum sample size that still retains some statistical rigor. Percentages from smaller sample sizes are viewed directional and reported as X%; Y of Z where X is the percentage, Y is the numerator and Z is the base size.

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logical responses based on skip patterns and numerical responses that do not have any parameters controlling them for reasonable ranges.

Crosstabs (crosstabulations) will be produced with one banner consisting of up to eighteen points, one of which is the total column. Additional crosstabs will be produced on an as needed basis. These tables represent the foundation of the analysis.

- Crosstabs consist of tables for each question in the questionnaire. Subgroups to be analyzed are defined as the banner points that run across the top of the tables. Responses to the questions are sorted by the defined subgroups and compared for each question. If the subgroups are mutually exclusive (respondents cannot be in both groups), testing is conducted to detect statistical differences at the 95% level of confidence.

Portland Research Group makes extensive use of charts and tables in its reports to illustrate and emphasize findings. Reports are developed in PowerPoint unless otherwise instructed. We are happy to develop the report using a Town of Rockport template or one of our own.

- An electronic file of the responses to the open end questions can be delivered if requested. Sometimes reading the individual responses can provide a level of insight and context not garnered through the coded responses.

Portland Research Group will work with the Rockport Project Team to make sure the results are properly interpreted and answer any questions that may come up as members of the Rockport Team read and use the report findings. We like to involve clients as much along the entire process as they are willing to participate to make sure expectations are met (or exceeded).

Portland Research Group Experience
Portland Research Group is a full-service marketing or market research firm that has been in business for 17 years serving local, statewide and national clients. Last year, Portland Research Group worked with the Maine State Library to measure the perceived honesty and ethical standards of librarians compared to 21 other notable professions such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, accountants, lobbyists and members of Congress. But a more pertinent example of a project we conducted was for the Portland Public Library.

Portland Research Group worked with Portland Public Library in 2011 on a Community Survey that investigated how patrons were using Portland Public Library and identified unmet needs. In addition, the research covered reactions to several new initiatives the Library was developing. A challenge of the project was to reach out to the diverse population in Portland, Maine. The final deliverables included several comprehensive reports, a live presentation of findings to the Staff and Board of Trustees and a live presentation to the general public. Being able to successfully administer the questionnaire to a broad population allowed Portland Research Group and the Team at Portland Public Library to produce research findings rich in details and insights. The survey was translated into four languages, French, Spanish, Arabic, and Somali, to ease participation among diverse populations who spoke English as a second or third language. To accommodate different age segments and lifestyles, the survey was made available through the Portland Public Library website, telephone interviews were

conducted and paper surveys were available at library branches including the one located on Peaks Island. Both adults and students were invited to participate. All of these efforts resulted in a sample size of n=695 completed interviews – and it should be noted that the interviews were long and comprehensive.

The results gave Portland Public Library the support and direction it needed to proceed with several initiatives including a new mobile library, store front libraries for a day and the use of the renovated space at the main branch. Due to the research, Portland Public Library views itself as much as a center for community activity as it does a library. The success of the project would not have been possible without the collaboration of the teams at Portland Public Library and Portland Research Group.

Project Timeline

Mail surveys are the slowest method for collecting data, usually requiring a four week period for data collection. As such, the project will likely take about 10 weeks to complete, depending on timely reviews of materials. A detailed schedule with specific dates will be developed upon project approval.

Tentative Project Schedule

Project Approval	Week One
Project Start-up Meeting	Week Two
First Draft Questionnaire	Week Two
Finalize Questionnaire	Week Four
Prepare Mailing Packets	Week Four
Program and Test Web Survey	Week Four
Data Collection	Weeks Five through Eight
Data Processing	Weeks Seven through Nine
Analysis	Weeks Nine and Ten
Report Submitted	Week Ten
Dissemination of Results	TBD

Estimated Budget

The estimated budget covers everything outlined in this proposal including printing costs for the questionnaire and postage paid reply envelopes, and outgoing and incoming postage. Adjustments to the budget estimates may be necessary once the final tally of survey responses is complete. The budget estimate for collecting n=675 responses is $9,850 +/- 10%. Portland Research Group invoices one-half of the estimated budget upon project approval and the balance when the project has been successfully completed. Travel expenses are charged as a pass-through in addition to project fees.