



REQUEST FOR SERVICES:
Community Engagement
for the
Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project
at Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve
City and County of Los Angeles

Released

April 1, 2022

Proposal Deadline: April 15, 2022, at 5:00 pm

- Completed proposals should be submitted via email to megan.cooper@scc.ca.gov
- If you have any questions, please email megan.cooper@scc.ca.gov
- Incomplete proposals or those received after the deadline will not be considered
- All applicants will be notified by April 27, 2022

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Figure 1: Regional Map

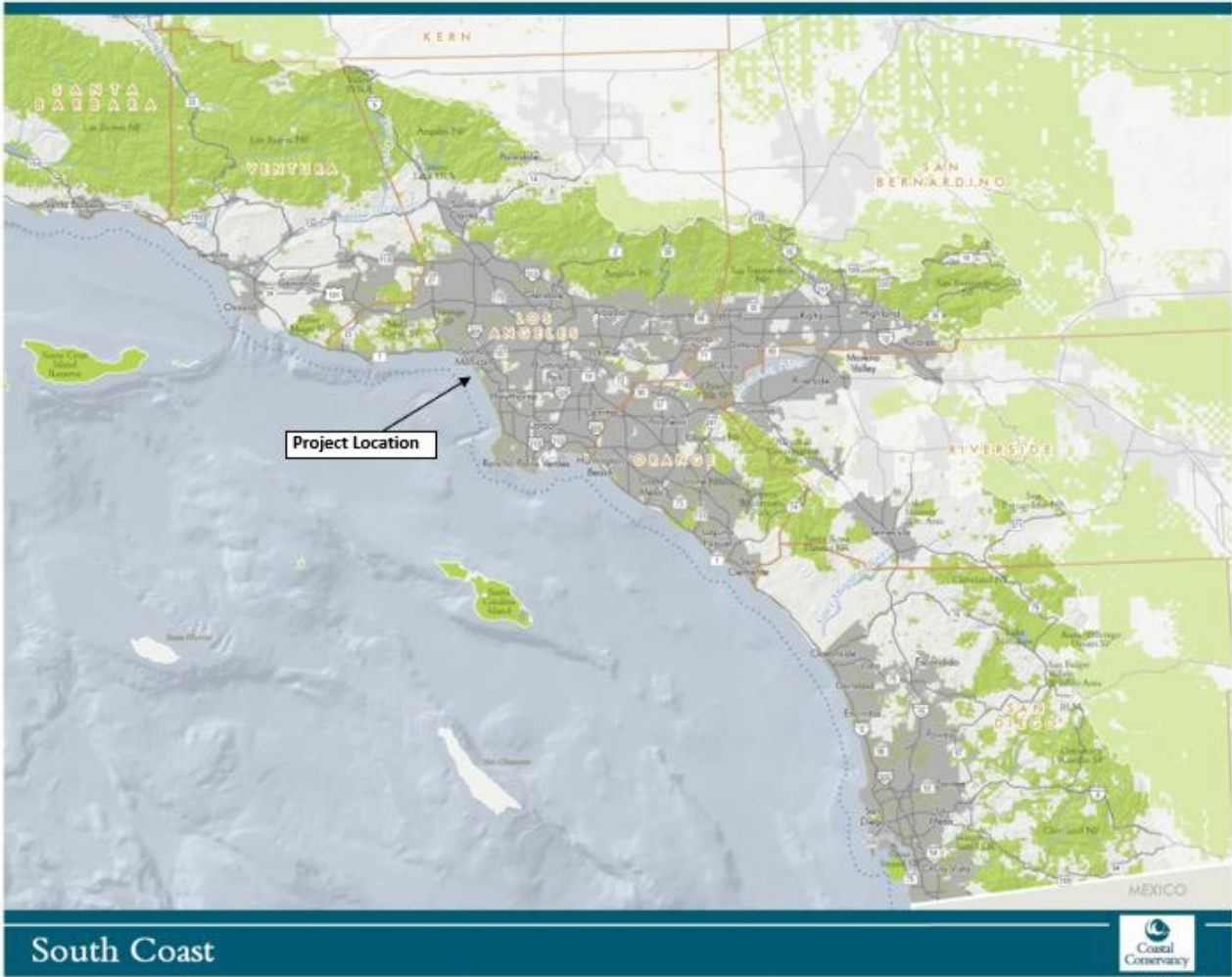


Figure 2: Watershed Map

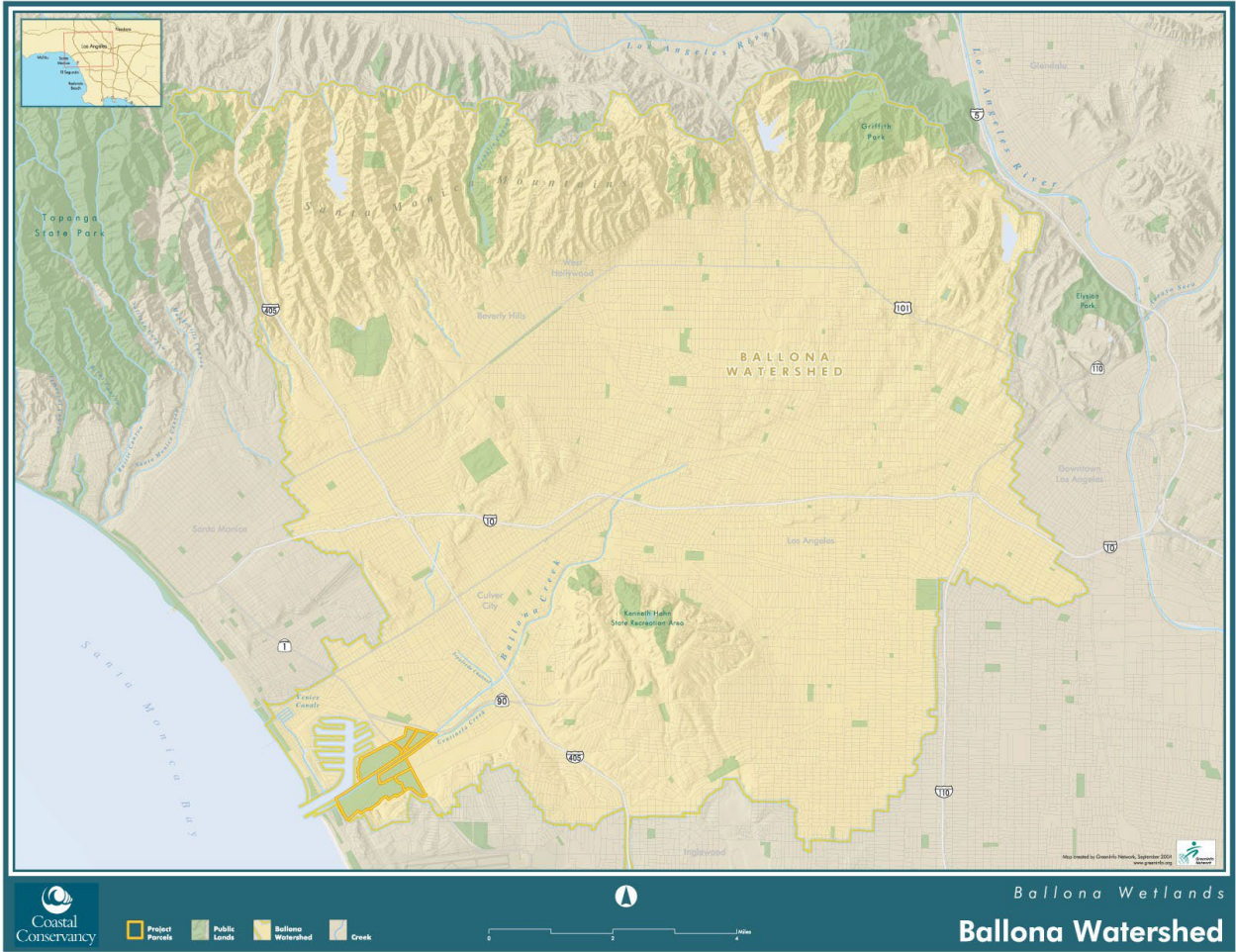


Figure 3: Site Map



I. Introduction

The California State Coastal Conservancy (Conservancy) requests the services of an expert in participatory community engagement to develop and implement robust community engagement for the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project (Project), located in the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve in the City of Los Angeles (Figure 1). The selected Contractor will help the Conservancy, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (the landowner and Project lead) incorporate the priorities and concerns of interested stakeholders into the project's design, engineering, and permitting. Conservancy staff will select a Contractor (or team) based on responses to this Request for Services (RFS).

The Conservancy is seeking to hire a Consultant from a certified California Small Business or Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE) to do this work (Government Code § 14838.5; Public Contracting Code §§ 10335.5(c)(6), 10340(b)(6)). Small Businesses are those with 100 or fewer employees and average annual gross receipts of \$15 million or less over the last three tax years. DVBEs must be at least 51% owned by one or more disabled veterans, with daily business operations managed by one or more disabled veterans. For full eligibility requirements and to apply for these free certifications, visit:

<https://www.dgs.ca.gov/PD/Services/Page-Content/Procurement-Division-Services-List-Folder/Certify-or-Re-apply-as-Small-Business-Disabled-Veteran-Business-Enterprise>. You can find a video detailing how to complete the online application here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMAcwe4B9P8>.

The maximum budget for this contract will be \$250,000.

This RFS is organized into five sections as follows:

- Section I: Introduction
- Section II: Background
- Section III: Scope of Services
- Section IV: RFS Requirements, Process, and Schedule
- Section V: Information to be Included in Submittal

A. Deadline

Submittals must be received by 12:00 pm (noon) on April 15, 2022.

An electronic copy, in PDF format and less than 20 Mb in size, of the submittal should be emailed to Megan Cooper, the South Coast Regional Manager at State Coastal Conservancy, Megan.Cooper@scc.ca.gov.

An acknowledgment that the Conservancy has received the submittal will be sent by email by 5:00 pm on the same day. If your submittal is not acknowledged by then, please call Megan Cooper at 510-286-4162.

II. Project Background

A. Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project Overview

The Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve (Reserve) is the largest coastal wetland complex in Los Angeles County. The Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project (“Project”) will enhance and establish native coastal wetlands and upland habitat on 566 of the Reserve’s 577 acres south of Marina del Rey and east of Playa del Rey, restoring ecological function to currently degraded wetlands and providing a critical buffer against the effects of sea-level rise. The Project's objectives focus on restoring wetland and other ecological functions within the Reserve, maintaining existing levels of flood risk management provided by the Ballona Creek channel and levee system and restoring and improving public access for compatible recreational and educational opportunities within the Reserve. The Project is led by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and supported by the Conservancy (collectively the “Project Team”). More information about the Project, including the certified EIR, can be found at this website: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/5/Ballona-EIR>. The final EIR for the project was certified on December 30, 2020, and now DFW is beginning work on the final design, engineering, and permitting phase of the Project. The Conservancy approved funding for final design and engineering on May 27, 2021 (see link below). The final design and engineering phase includes new studies, modeling, engineering, design, and permit applications. The level of design contained in the EIR is considered “30% design” and during the final design and engineering phase DFW will refine the designs to a level of “90% design”.

Through this RFS, the Conservancy is seeking input on the Project design so that the concerns, perspectives, and priorities of community members who have historically lacked access to the Ballona Wetlands and/or the planning and decision-making process for the Project can be considered in the final design and permit applications along with the input of stakeholders who have been involved throughout the early planning process.

B. Resources for Project and Site Information

- Information about the Project, including the draft and final EIR, can be found at this link: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/5/Ballona-EIR>.
- The Conservancy's staff recommendation for funding the project's final design, engineering, and permitting can be found here: [May 27 – Sacramento/Teleconference](#).
- The recording of the Conservancy's May 27, 2021 Board meeting, at which the funding for the final design and engineering of the Project was approved, can be found here: [Recording of May 27 Meeting – Part 1](#); [Recording of May 27 Meeting – Part 2](#). The public testimony on the Project can be heard on these recordings.
- The list of necessary permits can be found at the following link: https://scc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/sccbb/2021/2105/20210527Board05_Ballona_Wetlands_Ex7.pdf

C. Community Engagement History

An extensive planning and public process for the restoration of the Ballona Reserve began in 2004. DFW, the Conservancy, The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation (The Bay Foundation), the US Army Corps of Engineers, and many others spent many years working with the public, scientists, and other agencies to develop the Project. The Project team along with the Bay Foundation, and others held or attended more than 40 public meetings between 2004 and 2012. In 2006, the Conservancy established a Science Advisory Committee composed of nationally recognized experts. Seven Science Advisory Committee meetings were held between 2006 and 2012, all of them open to the public. In 2006, the project team held a Saturday design charrette with more than 100 members of the public in facilitated discussion with the Science Advisory Committee to develop alternative project concepts. The Bay Foundation made more than 60 public presentations about the project and hosted four onsite open-house events.

Despite the strong early engagement with community members near Ballona Wetlands, the Project team did an inadequate job involving community members from the broader Los Angeles region. Many residents of underserved communities surrounding the Ballona Wetlands and throughout the Ballona Creek Watershed, including neighborhoods such as Inglewood, Hawthorne, Ladera Heights, and Culver City, have been historically disenfranchised from accessing the Reserve and participating in the decision-making process.

There have been more than forty years of intense conflict about land use at the Ballona Reserve. Several development proposals and regulatory approvals resulted in litigation. People are very passionate about Ballona, but do not agree about how it should be used or enhanced. Some organizations active at the Ballona Reserve have filed numerous lawsuits regarding Ballona. DFW, the Conservancy, the Fish and Game Commission, and the Santa Monica Bay Commission have been sued at least eight separate times regarding Ballona. There is current litigation against the Conservancy regarding its prior grants and expenditures of Proposition 12 funds for Ballona.

III. Scope of Services

The purpose of this RFS is to evaluate the Contractor's approach, experience, and skills and select a suitable Contractor to carry out the following work. The Conservancy will enter into a contract for services with the successful applicant. The contract will be awarded without discrimination based on color, race, national origin, ethnic group identification, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, color, genetic information, or disability.

A. Contract Scope

Implementation of the Project requires a strong partnership among DFW and the various Project stakeholders – including Tribes, local, State and Federal government agencies, neighboring landowners, community members, and community-based organizations (CBOs).

The Conservancy is seeking a Contractor with strong experience in underserved community engagement and justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion work to develop and implement a community engagement process for the Project. The Contractor will engage community groups, new community partners, residents, and organizations from around Los Angeles that reflect the diversity and demographics of the County. The purpose of this contract will be to gather input to refine the proposed project design and engineering and provide input to ensure that equity considerations are included in the public access elements. Broad community engagement is essential to ensure that the Project creates open space that is welcoming and accessible.

B. Tasks and Deliverables

The Conservancy seeks Contractor proposals that include the following suggested phases, tasks, and concepts. While these are the suggested tasks, we welcome alternative tasks as recommended by the Contractor that will lead to a more successful community engagement effort.

Phase I: Plan

1. Review key documents and materials collected to date
 - The Contractor must gain a comprehensive understanding of the Project by understanding previous discussions, analyses and other work by the Project Team and other stakeholders. To accomplish this, the Contractor should review key background documents, including the EIR, comment letters, and associated studies and reports.
 - The Contractor should interview key stakeholders and should contact CBOs and other stakeholders to discuss opportunities to partner in a participatory engagement process around the Project.
 - The Contractor should identify potential philanthropic or community partners that may be helpful in supporting these efforts and gain an understanding of potential state and federal funding for community amenities.
2. Create a Participatory Community Engagement Plan
 - The Conservancy will draw on the Contractor's expertise with participatory community engagement and work with the Contractor to co-create a Participatory Community Engagement Plan ("Plan").
 - The Plan will lay out the approach, methods, structure, and timeline for bringing interested stakeholders and communities to the table to provide input on the design and engineering of the Project.
 - The Plan will include community-specific engagement strategies.

Phase II: Outreach

The first step in the Plan will be to inform Los Angeles communities about the Project. This outreach will include communities that have not been engaged or had access to the Project planning to this point. The Contractor will identify the key communities and stakeholders to include in Project outreach. Possible interested stakeholders include the following:

- Residents of neighborhoods in the Ballona Creek Watershed such as Inglewood, Ladera Heights, Culver City, Baldwin Hills, Hollywood, Downtown, Playa del Rey, Marina de Rey, and others
- Cyclists and pedestrians who use the Ballona Creek bike path
- Potential trail and access users at Ballona Wetlands
- Educational groups
- Birders and outdoor enthusiasts
- Tribal groups (note that tribal groups will have a separate engagement process as well)
- Environmental justice groups
- Scientific experts

Outreach to communities and stakeholders should inform individuals and organizations about all aspects of the Project. Possible outreach methods could include bi-lingual webinars, social media, tabling, attendance at existing community/neighborhood meetings, and community-specific informational meetings.

Phase III: Engage

The Contractor will work with the Project Team to implement robust, inclusive participatory engagement, as defined in the Plan, that will result in recommendations to the Project Team on the design, engineering, and permitting of the Project.

The Contractor's role may include:

- a) Designing, planning and facilitating committees, working groups and/or other means to elicit and incorporate meaningful community input into the long-term strategy for restoration of the Ballona Wetlands;
- b) Sub-contracting with community groups to financially support their participation and the participation of the community members;
- c) Developing and facilitating stakeholder working groups;
- d) Preparing and disseminating written materials in English, Spanish, and other languages as needed;
- e) Contacting local leaders for engagement;
- f) Facilitating virtual or in-person meetings;
- g) Holding one-on-one or small group meetings with key local community leaders;
- h) Leading multi-stakeholder negotiations or mediations as needed; and

- i) Supporting the Project Team in external communications on the Project.

Phase IV: Integrate

The final Phase of the Contractor's scope will be to integrate the community's feedback from Phases I-III into the design, engineering, and permitting of the Project. The Contractor will coordinate directly with DFW to develop pathways to integrate the community feedback into the Project.

The Contractor's role may include:

- a) Develop and implement a process to provide input from the community groups to the Project team throughout the engagement process,
- b) Develop visualizations, maps, written feedback, and other means of communication to share community feedback with the Project team,
- c) Prepare a written report with the outcomes of community outreach that can be integrated into the design and engineering recommendations for the Project.

C. Contract Budget

The maximum budget amount for the contract is \$250,000 and is negotiable within that maximum amount. This includes the amount for the subcontracts.

IV. Request for Services Requirements, Process, and Schedule

This section outlines the requirements that must be met by the Contractor to be considered for the proposed contract, the RFS process, and the schedule for Contractor selection. Detailed information on the required form and content of the submittal is provided in Section V.

A. General Requirements

1. Potential Contractors should have significant, established experience in community engagement in Southern California.
2. The Contractor shall be able to furnish all necessary labor, facilities, and materials to perform the tasks listed above. If needed, the Contractor may subcontract portions of this work to deliver the requested services.
3. The Contractor will be available to meet with the Conservancy and other key stakeholders regularly and will keep the Conservancy apprised of progress.
4. The Contractor and any key staff must have demonstrated organizational skills and a proven track record of delivering work products on time and within budget.
5. The Contractor and any key staff must have excellent interpersonal, written, and oral communications skills.
6. The Contractor will be paid in arrears and have 10% withheld from each invoice. The

Contractor will be paid for its actual time and expenses up to the amount provided for each task in the final project budget. The Contractor should anticipate that ten percent (10%) will be withheld on each task until all work for that task is completed to the satisfaction of the Conservancy. The Conservancy must also approve all interim work products before payment. Each invoice shall include a progress report summarizing accomplishments related to each task.

B. Contractor Selection Process

The Contractor selection process consists of submitting a proposal, an initial ranking of proposals, an invitation to an interview for the top-ranked firms, and the final selection of the Contractor. The Contractor selection committee will consist of up to three Conservancy staff and two outside reviewers. The selection committee will rank the proposals based on the Proposal Ranking Criteria below. The final ranking will be based on a combination of the written submittal and an interview.

The Conservancy may request supplemental information during the selection process. If supplemental information is requested, all submitters will be notified of the request and will have the opportunity to submit the requested information.

C. Proposal Ranking Criteria

1. Contractor Qualifications, including:

- Specialized qualifications for the services to be performed;
- Experience with similar projects;
- The Contractor's management approach includes staying on schedule and within budget.

2. Approach and Project Understanding, including:

- The appropriateness of the proposed project approach and philosophy;
- The Contractor's ability to develop a project approach that will support the Conservancy and DFW in their goal of informing the final design and engineering of the Project; and
- The clarity and completeness of the written submittal.

3. Project Team, including:

- Education and experience of any key personnel;
- Project team members have worked together on similar projects; and
- Key staff is dedicating the appropriate amount of time to the project tasks.

4. Project Cost

5. Other Considerations:

- *Community engagement experience*: Preference will be given to a Contractor that has

demonstrated experience engaging with Southern California communities.

- *Southern California Office*: Preference will be given to firms that do business and have an office located in Southern California.
- *A commitment of Project Manager*: The Contractor will appoint a project manager who will be responsible for all aspects of the work contracted for and who will report and be in close communication with the Conservancy project manager.

D. Schedule

| TASK | DATE |
|---|----------------|
| Release Request for Services | April 1, 2022 |
| Written Submittal Due | April 15, 2022 |
| Evaluation and ranking by Conservancy selection committee | April 18, 2022 |
| Notify applicants of invitation to interview | April 21, 2022 |
| Conduct Interviews | April 25, 2022 |
| Notify applicants of the selected firm | April 27, 2022 |
| Finalize and Execute Contract | May 2, 2022 |
| Begin Work | May 5, 2022 |

E. Requirements for Deliverables

- Deliverables must be provided in electronic format. All drafts and final documents must be provided in PDF format to be easily shared and in Word, if requested. All text will be printed single-spaced, double-sided, no smaller than size 12 font, using a conventional report (11-inch by 8.5-inch) format, except for any large plan (11-inch by 17-inch) format pages. Final major deliverables must be provided in hard copy in addition to electronic format. All hardcopy documents must be printed on recycled paper.
- Project maps, graphics, and drawings will be delivered in hard copy and PDF format.
- Some drawings and other figures may be presented in the large poster format for public display.
- Deliverables will be quality checked by the Contractor and reviewed by technical and copy editors to ensure concise and understandable. Final drafts and final

versions shall be reviewed and approved by the Conservancy staff.

V. Information to be Included in Submittal

A. **Qualifications** (up to 3 pages)

Describe your firm's qualifications as they apply to this RFS. This section should include a brief overview of your firm (or team if multiple Contractors are working together), including relevant experience and areas of expertise. Include your firm's unique qualifications to perform on this project.

B. **Approach and Project Understanding** (up to 6 pages)

Describe the proposed project's approach, methods, and timing outline the major tasks and deliverables. The Contractor should propose an approach to engage communities to inform the Project final design, engineering, and permitting. If you do not agree with the proposed Scope of Services in Section III of this RFS, please explain why and propose a new scope. Indicate how the Conservancy and DFW will be kept informed of progress and how the Conservancy will obtain feedback. Please describe your:

- Scope of work, based on the tasks described in Section III of this RFS – Scope of Services, and your understanding of the project. Modify the proposed Scope of Services if needed and explain why.
- The Scope should include key milestones, meetings, deliverables, and schedules.
- Understanding of the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project.
- Understanding of the concerns and issues raised by community members that should be addressed during the final design and phase of the Project.
- Process for assuring the project cost is within the scope and budget and completed on time.

C. **Budget** (up to 1 page)

Provide a proposed budget to implement the work you described in the Approach and Project Understanding section above. Provide relevant information such as hourly rates, hours per staff person, number of meetings, stipends to meeting participants, and other proposed costs.

D. **Project Team** (up to 3 pages)

Include an organizational chart with the names and titles of the key staff proposed for this project and the percentage of each staff member working on the project. Specify whether/which team members have worked together on similar projects in the past and provide a brief listing of the projects. Indicate the length of time any key staff has been with the firm.

D. **Resumes** (up to 4 pages)

Brief resumes for up to four key staff proposed for this project. Include information about

relevant previous projects and technical/managerial skills. Resumes should only be provided for key staff. Individual resumes must be no more than 1 page in length.

E. Examples of Relevant Project Work (up to 4 pages)

Examples of relevant project work for the Contractor should be limited to 1 page per project, with no more than four projects included. The project descriptions must contain the following information:

- Amount of contract to Contractor;
- Project description/background;
- A specific description of the role for the Contractor on the project;
- Names of staff who worked on the project and their roles; and
- Client name and contact information.

F. References

Contact information for three references substantiates the Contractor's ability to meet project deadlines and deliver products on time and within budget.

Please note that all submittals will be considered public documents subject to public disclosure pursuant to the Public Records Act.