



**SOQUEL CREEK
WATER DISTRICT**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

**FOR FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE/ WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
ASSISTANCE**

May 17, 2017

Proposals Due: Tuesday, June 20 at 4:00 p.m.

Recommended By:

Associate Manager Special Projects

Approved By:

General Manager

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE/ WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE

May 2017

A. Project Objective and Description

The Soquel Creek Water District (SqCWD) is seeking proposals from qualified professional firms to provide SqCWD with effective representation regarding drinking water and natural resources management before Congress, federal agencies, and related interest groups. Contract services for a Washington, D.C. liaison are being sought to analyze federal legislation, policies, regulations, and funding opportunities affecting SqCWD, and to develop strategies for advancing actions at the federal level that are beneficial to SqCWD and its projects and programs.

The Proposer (Consultant) should demonstrate extensive experience in federal drinking water advocacy that will promote and champion SqCWD in receiving funding and advancing legislative and policy actions and initiatives that meet the goals and objectives of SqCWD, including implementation of the SqCWD's Community Water Plan (CWP) and Strategic Plan.

The Consultant's primary focus will be to assist in the development and implementation of strategies for advancing actions at the federal level that are beneficial to the SqCWD and its water resource projects and programs with the anticipated workload to encompass the SqCWD's water resource priorities and projects. The Consultant will assist the agency in positioning itself to be competitive in the pursuit of discretionary funds and to responding to new initiatives and programs. The Consultant will provide extended "eyes and ears" on water resource issues of interest and concern to the SqCWD. The SqCWD desires assistance in identifying trends and nuances in the water resource and political arenas, and to report in a timely manner on the specifics and potential implications for the SqCWD. Furthermore, the Consultant shall possess the proven ability to work successfully with the SqCWD's Board of Directors and staff.

Performance Period

It is anticipated that the SqCWD will award a firm-fixed price contract for a term of up to five years. The SqCWD reserves the right to award to multiple firms.

B. Background

The Soquel Creek Water District (SqCWD) is recognized as a Special District providing water to approximately 40,400 customers and 15,800 service connections in the mid – Santa Cruz County area. This includes the unincorporated communities of Aptos, La Selva Beach, and Soquel and the City of Capitola. SqCWD currently relies solely on groundwater for its supply and is dedicated to providing a safe, high quality, reliable, and sustainable water supply to meet the community's present and future needs in an environmentally sensitive and economically

responsible manner. SqCWD developed a Strategic Plan in 2014 and an action oriented Community Water Plan in 2015 to protect the endangered groundwater resources, ensure water supply reliability and resiliency to customers, and prepare for climate change and other future challenges. The SqCWD is governed by a five-person Board of Directors elected to four year terms by registered voters within the District's service area. Additionally, SqCWD is a partner agency of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA), which is an 11-member board charged with meeting the CA state mandate of groundwater basin sustainability by 2040. Additional information about the SqCWD is available at <http://www.soquelcreekwater.org/>.

C. Scope of Services

The Consultant shall provide professional services, support and assistance on a regular basis including, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Identify, monitor, report and advise the SqCWD on relevant legislative and administrative activities that are pertinent to the SqCWD. This includes information on water policy, introduced legislation, amendments, policy white papers, relevant hearings and testimony, regulatory guidelines and any analysis of water policy, legislation and regulation that have a potential impact on the SqCWD and its programs.
2. Assist the SqCWD in developing and maintaining working relationships in Washington, D.C., including with local congressional representatives and staff, as well as members and staff of natural resources, environment and public works, appropriations, and other relevant committees. Coordinate meetings in Washington, D.C. and California for SqCWD board members and staff to meet with Congress members, relevant committee members, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff, Environmental Protection Agency Staff, U.S. Geological Survey staff and other relevant agencies, as needed.
3. Assist the SqCWD in securing the maximum amount of federal funding possible. Identify funding opportunities for SqCWD priority projects and communicate the importance of formula and discretionary funds for SqCWD priority projects. This includes work on the federal infrastructure and transportation act, clean water act, participation in workshops, subsequent legislative activities that determine the method by which new or existing infrastructure or natural resource program funds will be distributed, and providing information on and assistance with grant funding opportunities.
4. Assist the SqCWD with development of an annual Federal Legislative Program and advise and assist the SqCWD in developing strategies to effectively communicate the impacts of legislative, regulatory and funding actions on water resources in Soquel Creek Water District, including, but not limited to, maintenance and rehabilitation of local water infrastructure and water quality safety, natural conservancy, water conservation, recycled water, desalination, water transfers/conjunctive use, and environmental protection. Provide regular reports to the General Manager and/or designated staff on pending legislative or administrative developments and make recommendations for SqCWD action or response. Meet with SqCWD Board members twice per year and SqCWD staff monthly (via teleconference) to review and discuss the progress of the SqCWD's

legislative and drinking water resource management programs. Shall also prepare a monthly summary that includes work that was performed as well as a summary of any federal actions that are being tracked for impacts related to Soquel Creek Water District.

5. Serve as the SqCWD’s liaison to federal agencies, including but not limited to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of the Interior (including but not limited to the US Bureau of Reclamation, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Meet with congressional members, key committee and legislative staff, policymakers and federal agencies to discuss, respond to and communicate on legislative or administrative actions of potential benefit or impact to the SqCWD and its water resource interests, including issues that may impact the policies and programs of the SqCWD. Provide written responses to legislative and policy proposals (e.g., proposed rule makings) that could affect the SqCWD and water programs in the Soquel Creek Water District.
6. Provide the necessary technical, political and logistical support for SqCWD Board members or staff to participate in legislative, executive or regulatory forums as appropriate.
7. Assist staff in the coordination of strategies with other interested parties, advocacy groups, the public and private entities to advance high priority projects and programs.
8. Undertake other assignments upon which the SqCWD and Consultant mutually agree.

D. Schedule

The SqCWD intends to adhere to the following timeline, but it is subject to change at the discretion of the SqCWD. All times shown are in Pacific Time.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Date</u>
RFP Issued	May 17, 2017
Pre-Proposal Tele Conference	May 31 at 10:00 a.m.
Requests for Clarifications/Questions Due.....	June 7 at 12:00 p.m.
Addenda/Response to Clarifications/Questions Posted	June 12, 2017
Proposals Due	June 20 at 4:00 p.m.
Interviews (if required)	July 10-11, 2017
SqCWD Approval of Contract (tentative)	July 18, 2017
Contract Begins.....	August 1, 2017

E. Proposal Submittal

Interested firms must submit one electronic version of their response to melanies@soquelcreekwater.org and five (5) paper copies no later than 4:00 p.m. (PST), June 20, 2017 at the Soquel Creek Water District Office, 5180 Soquel Drive, CA. Proposals received after the date and time specified above will not be considered.

All proposals shall be limited to 10 pages, not including the transmittal letter, table of contents, or single page resumes of key personnel. Proposals should provide the requested information in a concise, well-organized manner. Proposers are encouraged to print proposals on double-sided recycled content paper, with no plastic inserts. Covers and binding are not necessary, however if provided they should be of recyclable material.

Pre-Proposal TeleConference

The SqCWD will host a pre-proposal conference by telephone on May 31 at 10:00 a.m. (PST). SqCWD staff will review the requirements for this Solicitation and be available to answer questions. Participation in the pre-proposal meeting is not mandatory, but is highly recommended. RSVP to melanies@soquelcreekwater.org or (831) 475-8501 x153 by 12:00 noon on May 25 to be sent the dial-in number. Interested parties are encouraged to submit questions prior to the meeting to melanies@soquelcreekwater.org.

Questions Concerning this RFP:

All questions and/or requests for clarification regarding this RFP must be received in writing via email, facsimile or hand delivery to the point of contact (below) no later than 12:00 noon, June 7, 2017. Questions received prior to May 31 will be answered at the Pre-Proposal Tele Conference. Responses to all questions received will be posted on the SqCWD website: <http://www.soquelcreekwater.org/work-us/rfps-and-rfqs> by 5:00 p.m. on June 12.

Contact Person

Melanie Mow Schumacher, P.E., Special Projects - Associate Manager
Phone: (831) 475-8500 x153
email: melanies@soquelcreekwater.org

Addenda to RFP

The SqCWD reserves the right to amend this RFP. Any amendments to or interpretations of the RFP shall be described in written addenda posted on the SqCWD website. All addenda issued shall become part of the RFP.

If the SqCWD determines that the addenda may require significant changes in the preparation of proposals, the deadline for submitting the proposals may be postponed by the number of days that the SqCWD determines will allow Proposers sufficient time to revise their proposals. Any new due date shall be included in the addenda.

F. Payments

The Consultant will be paid at a firm fixed price contract according to the schedule listing fees and charges that will be included as an appendix to the District's Consultant Contract for Services. Monthly payments to the consultant will be made based on the contractual agreement approved by the appropriate District representatives.

G. Proposal Format

SqCWD staff will screen all proposals submitted by the stated deadline in response to this request. The screening will determine which Proposers will be invited to an interview, if necessary. To simplify the review process and to facilitate comparative analysis, the proposal shall be organized in the following manner and shall not exceed 10 pages. The SqCWD, at its option, may require a Proposer to provide additional information and/or clarify requested information.

1. Transmittal Letter – The Transmittal Letter should introduce the firm, summarize its qualifications and should be on company letterhead clearly stating the name of the Proposer's firm, business address, and name, telephone and fax numbers, and email address for the contact person for this proposal. The letter should be signed by an official authorized to solicit business and enter into contracts for the firm.
2. Approach to Scope of Services – This section should include a narrative demonstrating the Proposer's understanding of the services required. The contents of this section are to be determined by the particular respondent, consistent with the skill set offered by the Consultant in response to the requested services. Implementation and functionality of tasks should be addressed including, but not limited to, the activities that your firm undertakes on clients' behalf to convey issues of significant concern to legislators, relevant federal agencies and interest groups.
3. Consultant's Qualifications – This section should provide information about the Proposer's company so that the SqCWD can evaluate the firm's stability and ability to support the commitments set for the in response to the RFP. Include a description of the Consultant's overall qualifications to provide the specified services and previous experience on similar or related engagements. This section should include the names and resumes of the individuals who will be performing specified services, and include the firm's organization chart that identifies the proposed team's roles and responsibilities, and reporting structure. Proposal shall include sufficient evidence that key personnel have the skills, qualifications, and experience to successfully complete the Scope of Services.

To be considered qualified for consideration of award of a contract by the SqCWD, Proposer(s) must also meet the following requirements:

- a. Possess valid proof of registration with the Secretary of the Senate and Clerk of the House of Representatives (pursuant to The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995);
 - b. Have sufficient knowledge of legislative assistance services as they relate to the SqCWD's operations;
 - c. Possess solid legislative advocacy experience, including performance on comparable government engagements for a minimum of five years.
4. Experience and References – In addition to the qualifications described above, Proposers shall describe their experience in providing the specified services for similar agencies and/or entities, including local or regional water agencies, if any. Additionally, Proposers shall provide references of at least three recent clients for whom the Consultant has performed services similar in nature and complexity to that proposed in this Request for Proposal. For each client submitted as a reference, Proposers shall furnish a brief description of the services provided, the timeframe services were provided, and client contact information.
5. Fees for Service – Provide binding cost proposals for services for each year comprising the five-year term. Include in the monthly fee: all labor, profit, administrative and overhead fees, and other direct costs, including the cost of obtaining insurance, etc. Identify any additional direct or indirect costs beyond the monthly fee, including travel expenses.

H. Consultant Selection

Qualifications

To be considered for selection and contract award, the Consultant must have the following qualifications:

- Breadth of experience and understanding of water resource management, government, the Capitol culture, and the organizations operating and competing in it.
- An understanding of the role and responsibilities of the SqCWD, an appreciation of the geographic and the institutional environment in which it operates.
- Record of satisfactorily representing the interests of local public agencies to members of Congress and federal agencies.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills, and appreciation of the time demands on SqCWD Board of Directors and the need to report to and advise them and the staff in a clear, concise and effective manner.

- No conflicts of interests, and a commitment to avoid potential conflicts that might arise from work performed for others, past associations or pending relationships.
- Possess the necessary resources to provide the specified services to the SqCWD.

The SqCWD reserves the right to investigate the qualifications of all firms and persons under consideration, to include reference checks to confirm any part of the information furnished by a Consultant.

Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Qualification of Firm/Proposed Staff: (0-40 points)
 - a. Sufficient knowledge of legislative advocacy services as they relate to the SqCWD, including technical knowledge of water resource planning activities.
 - b. Demonstrated success in achieving policy and appropriation deliverables working with the California Federal Congressional delegation, members of Congress and staff, and the staff of pertinent committees in both the House and the Senate.
 - c. Experience working with Legislators and Executive/Senior Management in relevant Federal departments and agencies.
 - d. Location of office in the Washington, D.C. area for, a minimum of two years.
 - e. Prior history of satisfactory service to other clients or employers.
2. Approach to the Scope of Services: (0-30 points)
 - a. Clear, concise, and creative representation of the proposed scope of services.
 - b. “Best Fit” assessment of the skill set offered by the Consultant and the needs desired by the SqCWD.
 - c. Prior history of serving clients or employers in the manner described in the proposed scope of services.
3. Fees for Service (0-20 points)
 This portion of the proposal will be evaluated based on reasonableness of the proposed costs. Costs will be evaluated on costs the SqCWD or other comparable public agencies have paid for similar services, and in accordance with what is considered to be the industry’s standard and customary costs for the services.
4. Compliance with Proposal Requirements and Contract Terms and Conditions (0-10 points)

Interviews

Following the review and evaluation of proposals, one or more Proposers may be invited to participate in an oral interview. Interviews, if held, are tentatively scheduled July 10-11 and will be held in at the Soquel Creek Water District or by telephone. Attendees at an interview should be restricted to those individuals who will have direct involvement with provision of the services. The SqCWD expects that at a minimum the proposed key staff will attend the oral interview. Members of the firm's management team may also attend. Upon completion of this step of the evaluation and selection process, SqCWD staff will re-rank the remaining firms in accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth above.

Completion of the Evaluation/Selection Process

Based on the findings of the evaluation committee, the SqCWD Special Projects Associate Manager or General Manager may recommend to the SqCWD Board that one or more consultants be selected to perform the work. SqCWD may accept the proposal or negotiate the terms and conditions of the Agreement with the highest-ranked firm. If negotiations are unsuccessful, the SqCWD will terminate the negotiations with that firm and may open negotiations with the next highest-ranked firm. If negotiations with this firm are also not successful, the SqCWD may repeat the negotiations process with the next highest-ranked firm or, at their sole discretion, the SqCWD may reject all remaining proposals.

I. Contract provisions

Ownership of RFP Responses

All documents, including specific responses to this RFP, submitted to the SqCWD become the property of the SqCWD. All materials submitted by Proposers are subject to public inspection under the California Public Records Act (Government Code § 6250 *et seq.*), unless exempt. After award of the contract (or if not awarded, after rejection of all proposals), all responses will be regarded as public records and will be subject to review by the public. Any language purporting to render all or portions of the proposal confidential will be regarded as non-effective and will be disregarded.

SqCWD Rights

The SqCWD reserves the right to cancel the procurement in whole or in part, at its sole discretion, at any time before the Agreement is fully executed and approved on behalf of the SqCWD.

This RFP does not commit the SqCWD to award an Agreement(s), to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of the proposal for this request, or to procure or contract for services. The SqCWD reserves the right to modify or cancel in whole or in part this RFP, to reject any and all

proposals, to accept the proposal they consider most favorable to the SqCWD's interests in their sole discretion, and to waive irregularities or informalities in any proposal or in the proposal procedures. The SqCWD further reserves the right to reject all proposals and seek new proposals when the SqCWD considers such procedure to be in their best interests.

Proposed Contract/Agreement for Services

The SqCWD anticipates entering into a five-year contract, renewable at the end of each fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds. The consultant's proposal should specify the cost breakdown and payment requirements. Actual terms and conditions will be set forth in the final agreement for the services, which will include the Scope of Services. A sample of the contract is included as Exhibit A.