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# Understanding the Solicitation & Evaluation Process for Professional Service Procurements

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# Procurement Responsibility

- Contract Management Department has delegated authority to oversee and manage capital program procurements for construction-related services for the City of Austin
  
- Contract Procurement includes:
  - Construction Procurement
    - Invitation for Bids
    - Job Order Contracting
    - Small Business Construction Program
  - Alternative Delivery Procurement
  - Professional Services Procurement
    - Scope Specific
    - Rotation List

# Professional Services Procurement

- State Law (Chapter 2254 of the Government Code otherwise known as the Professional Services Procurement Act) governs the selection of providers of “Professional Services” including:
  - Architectural/Engineering
  - Surveying
  - Landscape Architecture
  - Comprehensive Planning
  - Commissioning

# Qualifications Based Selection (QBS)

- QBS is recommended best practice to comply with Chapter 2254 (Professional Services Act)
- Process that helps you select the highest qualified A/E firm on the basis of demonstrated competence and qualifications in relation to the scope and particular needs of your project.
- The Process is:
  - Straightforward
  - Easy to implement
  - Objective and fair
  - well-documented and defensible

# RFQ Scope Specific

- Request for Qualifications relevant to specific project description and need
- Statements of Qualifications (SOQs) evaluated on experience and qualifications
- Selection based on “most highly qualified”
- Selected firm and alternate resulting from rankings is presented to Council
- Council authorizes staff to negotiate and execute an agreement with the selected firm
- If agreement cannot be met, negotiations will cease and negotiations will begin with alternate firm

# RFQ Rotation List

- Request for Qualifications relevant general scope of services and need
- SOQs evaluated on experience and qualifications
- Selection based on “most highly qualified” firms
- List of recommended firms is presented to council
- Council authorizes staff to negotiate and execute agreements with the recommended firms
- Firms contracted for a specified time period
- Work assignments made by established methodology

# RFQ Evaluation & Selection Process

- Phase I: Evaluation Panel reviews and scores statements of qualifications (SOQs) from Firms
- Phase II: Based on scores, selected firms are interviewed by Panel
- Phase III: Staff recommends to Council most highly qualified Firm

# Phase I Milestones

- Evaluation Kick-Off Meeting:
  - Facilitated by CMD
    - Scope Overview
    - Confidentiality Guidelines
    - Review of Criteria Items
      - Scoring Guidelines Provided
    - Tips on How to Evaluate
  
- Final Evaluation
  - Facilitated by CMD
    - Ranking of firms
    - Discussion of rankings and anomalies
    - Final Rankings and Scores

# Phase II Milestones

- Interview Process – 15 Points Total
  - Facilitated by CMD
  - Two step process: Presentation and Q/A
    - Short-listed firms are sent interview letters
      - Presentation
      - Topics to Discuss
      - Key Personnel
      - Overview of Process
      - Time allocation
    - Firms are ranked for discussion
    - Firms are scored based on presentation & Q/A
  - Interview Scores are combined with SOQ Evaluation to determine top ranked firm
  - Recommendation for Council Action

# COA Timeline

- RFQ Preparation ~ 2–3 weeks
- RFQ Solicitation Period ~ 4 weeks
- Responsiveness / Compliance ~ 2 weeks
- Evaluation Period ~ on average 2–3 weeks
- Interviews (optional) ~ 2 weeks
- Council ~ 5 weeks
- Contract Negotiations & Execution ~ 4–6 weeks

Total: 20 – 24 weeks or 5–6 months!

# RFQ –Key Considerations

- COA Anti-Lobbying Ordinance
  - No-Contact Period for active solicitations (from issuance of RFQ to Contract Execution)
  - All solicitation questions must go through the CMD Authorized Contact Person
  
- Maintain integrity of process
  - Avoid conflicts of interest
  - Maintain confidentiality

# Evaluation Matrix and Criteria

- Consideration Item 1: MBE/WBE Procurement Program
  - Scope Specific & Rotation List – YES or NO
  
- Consideration Item 2: Turned In All Required Documents
  - Scope Specific & Rotation List – YES or NO
  
- Consideration Item 3a: Team Structure
  - Scope Specific – 10 Points Max
  - Rotation List – 10 Points Max
  
- Consideration Item 3b: Project Approach
  - Scope Specific – 20 Points Max
  - Rotation List – Not Applicable

# Evaluation Matrix and Criteria

- **Consideration Item 4: Experience of Key Personnel**
  - Scope Specific – 20 Points Max
  - Rotation List – 25 Points Max
  
- **Consideration Item 5: Prime Firm's Comparable Project Experience**
  - Scope Specific – 15 Points Max
  - Rotation List – 25 Points Max
  
- **Consideration Item 6: Major Scopes of Work**
  - Scope Specific – 15 Points Max
  - Rotation List – 20 Points Max

# Evaluation Matrix and Criteria

- Consideration Item 7: Team's Experience with Austin Issues
  - Scope Specific – 10 Points Max
  - Rotation List – 10 Points Max
  
- Consideration Item 8: City of Austin's Experience with Prime Firm
  - Scope Specific – 10 Points Max
  - Rotation List – 10 Points Max
  
- Consideration Item 9: Interviews
  - Scope Specific – 15 Points Max
  - Rotation List – No Interviews Conducted

# Evaluation Panel

Evaluation Panels are created following these criteria guidelines:

- Technical expertise related to scope
- Diversity in ethnicity and gender
- Cross-section of departments using consultant
- No supervisor/employee relationships
- Ethics in the Consultant Selection Process course

# Evaluation Panel

The review and approval process consists of:

- CMD Contract Relations Consultants and Project Manager work together to develop proposed panel
- First Review and Approval – Contract Procurement DM
- Second Review and Approval – CMD Assistant Director
- Third and Final Review and Approval –
  - Director of CMD
  - Director of SMBR
  - Directors of Impacted Departments

# Evaluation Panel

Evaluation Panels are required to maintain confidentiality:

- Sign a Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement as each evaluation panel convenes
- Responsible for protecting the submittals and guaranteeing non-disclosure of any information or materials contained in the submittals
- Any calls or concerns regarding the SOQs or the solicitation are to be referred immediately to CPD for appropriate action

# SMBR Role

- Reviews RFQ Scope of work prior to issuance
- Establishes appropriate MBE/WBE goals
- Presents MBE/WBE information at pre-response
- Reviews for approval all Compliance Plans
  - Receives copies of Statements of Qualifications
  - Firms with non-compliant compliance plans not reviewed
- SMBR has a voice on all evaluation panel meetings, including interviews, if applicable
  - SMBR to provide critical information related to MBE/WBE participation to panel members

# QBS Enhancement Project

## ➤ Project Objectives:

- Seek Enhancements to existing process
- Seek Efficiency for consultant community
- Identify factors that impact the results of an evaluation
- Enhance the trust in the City's QBS process

## ➤ Enhance Team:

- CMD Staff
- SMBR Staff
- Public Works Staff
- Capital Planning Office

# QBS Enhancements –Enhancements

- Reviewed Local Business Presence as a Scored Item
  - 1993 AG opinion – LBP cannot be scored for QBS
  - Item was included as part of “Team’s Exp. With Austin Issues”
    - “Efficiencies derived from Local Office”
- Strengthen SMBR’s Role in Evaluation Process
  - SMBR representative serves as an advisor and observer
  - Role instills a greater sense of trust from the outside
  - Demonstrates City’s commitment to MBE/WBE program

# QBS Enhancements –No Change

- MBE/WBE Participation as a Scored Item
  - Current process much stronger
  - Scored item is a violation of State Law – 2254
- Small Business Outreach as a Scored Item
  - Scored item is a violation of State Law – 2254
- Point Consideration for Being a Small Business
  - Scored item is a violation of State Law – 2254

# Questions?