

Green Trust Alliance

Request for Qualifications

**Design and Consulting on Habitat Restoration Design,
Financing, and Budgeting for Pending Federal Grant
Applications and Conservation Projects Valued \$300,000
to \$3,000,000 in Total Project Cost**

Issue Date

June 27, 2024

Submission Deadline

July 5, 2024; 3:00pm EST

Email to:

kirk@greentrustalliance.org

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1. Overview

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this RFQ is to identify federally and state of Maryland designated small business entities, and teams thereof, to assist in building applications and proposals for (and if awarded, implementation of) Federal grants, awards, and contracts to design and build natural resiliency and restoration projects in Green Trust Alliance's (GTA's) Tier 1 Conservation Focus Areas (Baltimore Beltway, Washington D.C. Metro Beltway, Middle and Lower Potomac Watersheds in Maryland and NOVA, and the Hudson-Raritan Estuary in NJ). Particular focus are resilience, restoration, acquisition/preservation, and mitigation opportunities in GTA's Tier 1 Conservation Focus Areas. Specifically, the selected implementation partner(s) will pursue and manage projects that arise from public and competitive solicitations from current GTA funders such as the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Chesapeake Bay Trust, New Jersey Wetland Council, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

GTA is seeking to competitively qualify between 1-5 implementation partners including firms or teams with "full delivery" expertise in the design, engineering, fund raising, financing, permitting, implementation, maintenance, monitoring and long-term management of nature-based solutions providing ecosystem and community resilience in Maryland. This includes direct work experience in low income and disadvantaged communities. The selected firm(s) or team(s) will assist with the completion of federal grants and (if those grants are awarded) the implementation of the proposed projects.

This public and competitive qualification offering is focused on conservation projects and transactions with a "total project value" of \$300,000 to \$3,000,000.

1.2 Background

GTA is a conservation focused public charity and nationally accredited land trust focused on large-scale projects and initiatives that accelerate and drive forward conservation efforts, outdoor public access, and conserved corridors in the Mid-Atlantic Region. GTA works with a diverse array of public and private funders to advance and implement conservation and preservation projects that are often thought by the environmental community to be too complex or too large to be undertaken. In order to succeed in this space, GTA relies on the expertise and staffing of uniquely qualified consulting firms that have demonstrated success, innovation, and tenacity in delivering large scale conservation.

GTA seeks an implementation partner to assist us in the funding, coordination, development, management and implementation of large scale, nature based and ecosystem resilience projects under \$3,000,000 in total project cost/value. The successful respondent(s) must have capacity, experience, expertise and financial strength to implement multiple projects simultaneously under one or more programs including the management and administration of grant based funding if contracts are ultimately awarded. Multiple written agreements are envisioned. Construction of the projects need not be performed by respondents to this RFP.

2. Request for Qualifications

2.1 Inquiries

All inquiries related to this RFQ are to be directed, in writing, to Kirk Mantay, Executive Director of Green Trust Alliance, at kirk@greentrustalliance.org. Information obtained from any other source is not official and should not be relied upon.

2.2 Closing Date

All submissions must be made electronically to kirk@greentrustalliance.org, in PDF format, by 3:00 PM on Friday July 5, 2024. Hard copies will not be accepted. Responses must include a cover page clearly marked with the name, address, phone number, and email of the respondent.

2.3 Late Responses

Late responses will not be accepted and will be returned to the responder with a letter of explanation.

2.4 Review and Selection

Qualifications will be reviewed by GTA staff and board members. The reviewer(s) will check responses against the selection criteria listed below. Response not meeting the selection criteria will not be considered. Responses meeting the criteria may be contacted for subsequent interview(s) prior to final selection.

The goal of all GTA contracting and procurement is to ensure the best use of public funds to serve the public good by fulfilling GTA's mission while adhering to public standards of professional and ethical behavior. GTA is committed to ensuring that all funds entrusted to us are appropriately allocated using fair, ethical, equitable, responsible, and transparent practices that demonstrate integrity.

These values guide all GTA conduct and decision making related to procurements, bids, estimates, agreements, contracts, and other forms of formal commitments.

2.5 Acceptance of Responses

This RFQ is not a binding agreement to purchase goods or services. Responses to an RFQ are assessed in light of the qualification review criteria. Depending upon the volume of responses, and in GTAs sole discretion, we may develop a shortlist of responders for subsequent interviews prior to making a final selection or make a final selection.

3. Services

Qualified respondents will be expected to perform the following tasks, with the precise scope to be detailed in a subsequent written contract(s).

3.1 Grant Proposals

- Identify opportunities for nature-based solutions, including restoration, conservation and resilience projects as needed or requested by federal funder(s), DoD or GTA.
- Meet regularly to plan for, shape and discuss future project and funding opportunities and provide proposal status updates.
- Secure proprietary, legal access to privately owned or public property for purposes of implementing nature-based solutions including where applicable post construction and long-term management terms of environmental construction and restoration access during the grant period.
- Actively coordinate with public agency landowners regarding the use of their land for environmental construction and restoration projects.
- Prepare schematic project designs of proposed nature-based solutions including but not limited to wetlands, living shorelines, stormwater management, streams and other nature-based resiliency features that are considered permissible and constructable.
- Prepare fixed price, full delivery pricing and budgeting, including design, insurance, financial assurances management, overhead, and stewardship costs.
- Develop a strategy and cost for ensuring the long term stewardship of the project site and its ecological values.
- Actively coordinate with regulators, government officials, communities and other stakeholders who will play important roles in project permitting.
- Assist GTA in the writing, editing, and development of necessary content for each grant proposal.

3.2 Funded Design and Implementation Process

- Implement funded projects on a fixed price, full delivery basis assuming all project based risk and financial liability.
- Capacity to assume all project-based costs and work under “pay for performance” models.
- Actively coordinate with regulators, government officials, community and other stakeholders who will play important roles in project permitting.
- Complete final construction and permit drawings that reflect the primary goals, objectives, and metrics of the submitted and funded proposal.
- Secure all required permits and entitlements need to authorize construction.
- Complete the project under the approved budget limited to the available funds.
- Furnish all required expertise, services and materials needed to implement the project.
- Oversee and complete the construction including required close out activities in coordination with GTA staff.
- Complete the permit-required Maintenance and Monitoring, secure final MM sign off from applicable regulatory agencies prepare and submit performance reports to regulatory agencies or to GTA staff for review and submittal.

4. Qualifications and Evaluation Criteria

Responding firms must have the following qualifications:

- Status as designated federal small business entity.
- Status as a designated Maryland small business entity.
- Staffed office location within the 30 miles of the City of Baltimore.
- Recent (since July 1, 2021) direct experience in fully delivering compensatory mitigation, public access improvement, or nature-based resilience projects in Baltimore City or Baltimore County.

The ideal firm or team will have the following technical and performance qualifications:

- Demonstrated experience in fully delivering nature based resilience or compensatory mitigation to the Department of Defense.
- Demonstrated experience in the design, permitting, budgeting, implementation, and stewardship of large-scale (above \$2.5 million value) conservation projects in Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey, with particular emphasis on standalone conservation and/or mitigation projects with a land protection component in GTA's Tier 1 geography.
- Demonstrated experience in fully delivering federal flood risk reduction, ecosystem restoration, community resilience, compensatory mitigation, stormwater management and compensatory mitigation bank development and operation projects.
- Demonstrated history and continued willingness to direct project and subcontractor costs through source evaluations, Sykes Act / Best Buy Practices, and market pricing.
- Adequate basis of insurance, assets, and/or bonding to pursue multiple projects of the type described above, simultaneously.
- Demonstrated experience implementing full delivery contracts for the types of projects described above.
- Demonstrated experience successfully executing such large-scale full delivery projects for federal funders, including Departments of Interior, Defense, and Energy.
- Ability to accept payment on a reimbursement basis that must remain flexible due to unpredictable timing of federal payments.
- Ability to subcontract or source MBE/WBE including providing subcontracting plans that adhere to federal regulations.

5. Submission Requirements

Please include:

- A. A narrative describing the qualifications of your firm or team, responding specifically to the evaluation criteria listed above.
- B. Examples of similar past projects.
- C. Resumes of key team members and firm profiles.
- D. Approximate anticipated cost for "typical" grant application tasks (note: exact scope and fee to be mutually agreed upon after selection and grant funding).
- E. Explicit disclosure of any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest (see below).

6. Equal Opportunity

GTA will not discriminate in its procurement with regard to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, age, disability or any other characteristic protected by law.

MBE/WBE goals are not set by GTA, rather they are established by individual grant and funding opportunities, and GTA pledges to comply with these requirements if they arise. Therefore for the purposes of responding to this RFQ, there are *currently* no statutorily required MBE/WBE goals.

GTA does reserve the right to select, from among a pool of qualified proposals, the one that best provides an opportunity to further its mission.

7. Conflict of Interest

It is not uncommon for conservation entities and their leadership in GTA's service area to have personal or professional relationships with entities that may create an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest. The majority of such conflicts can be easily dealt with via proactive disclosure.

GTA takes seriously its role to avoid actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest. The respondent should disclose any such conflicts, in writing. The reviewer(s) will consider the nature of the respondent's responsibilities and the degree of potential conflict in deciding the course of action that is required to remedy the conflict.

8. Limitations

GTA reserves the right to select the respondent of its choosing, to reject all responses, or to terminate this request at any time. GTA may issue a new request, extend the deadline, or make other good faith efforts to expand the applicant pool if the market appears to be limited. In the event that the selected firm or team fails to perform adequately during the grant application phase, or grantor rules require it, GTA reserves the right to choose another procurement vehicle for subsequent project phases.

Neither this request, nor any proposals provided in response, constitute a contract between GTA and the respondent. Selection by GTA does not guarantee that the parties will successfully execute a contract, and final scope and fee may vary.

Applicants who are not successful may request a meeting to debrief about the selection process. GTA documents created or used for the selection process are considered draft internal materials, and internal materials will not be made available.

Proposals that are late, or otherwise not fully responsive or responsible to the requirements listed herein, will be disqualified before the GTA staff review is finalized, and are thus not considered "not successful" proposals.