



North Carolina Association of Regional Councils of Government

Request for Qualifications for Legislative Advocacy Services

Due Date: March 1st, 2017

General Information

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Contacting Office Address and Point of Contact:
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Request for Qualification

The NC Association of Regional Councils of Government (NCARCOG) is requesting statements of qualifications from experienced firms or persons to perform legislative advocacy services representing the NCARCOG at the state and federal levels.

Background & Description

The successful RFQ respondent will manage the legislative advocacy efforts of the association as the chief legislative representative under the general supervision of the Executive Committee and full board.

The principals of the current firm, Ridgetop Associates, are retiring June 30, 2017. Ridgetop Associates parts with the NCARCOG on very good terms and after several years of good service and key projects including raising the profile of regional councils of governments in NC, managing the creation of a statewide comprehensive economic development strategy called NC Tomorrow, and managing two major conferences to highlight economic needs of communities and regions in NC.

There are 16 regional councils of government (COG) that comprise the NCARCOG that have worked to improve their regions for more than 50 years. COGs provide a variety of services including community & economic development, community planning, transportation planning, housing services, area agency on aging services, workforce development board services, grant writing and administration, transit system management, etc. COGs are authorized and created under NC General Statutes and are owned and controlled by the participating local governments within their regions.

Ridgetop Associates also provides administrative and management services to the NCARCOG by serving as the association's executive director, coordinating board meetings, facilitating development of NCARCOG strategies and serving as the primary point of contact of the association for partnering state agencies and organizations. However, this RFQ excludes those administrative and management services and a separate firm will provide those services. It is possible that one firm could be selected for both sets of duties though the NCARCOG seeks respondents separately to ensure the best candidates.

Executive directors from the COGs serve as the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Treasurer of the NCARCOG. Those officers also collectively serve as the Executive Committee. The executive director of one of the COGs serves as the Treasurer of the NCARCOG and handles the financial duties in coordination with the executive director of the NCARCOG.

The NCARCOG also supports the work of a board of one elected official from each of the COG boards that is called the Forum. The Forum was originally a board of county and municipal elected officials jointly formed by the NC League of Municipalities and the NC Association of County Commissioners to address matters of regional significance. Several years ago, the Forum became a stand-alone organization in close partnership with the NCARCOG. The purpose of the Forum is to address matters of regional significance and advocate for solutions that further the important mission of COGs.

Scope of Services

NCARCOG is seeking a qualified firm or person to retain to perform legislative services. Project work may include a variety of efforts to represent the NCARCOG and Forum to the N.C. General Assembly and federal government (Congress and agencies). Compensation can be adjusted each year to reflect the established program of work for that fiscal year. Routine and recurring work includes:

- Facilitation and preparation of annual legislative goals and strategies for the NCARCOG and Forum
- Development of agendas, securing guest speakers as needed, and related content for Forum meetings which currently meets 2-3 times per year (the NCARCOG Executive Director will handle the meeting logistics such as location, meals, etc.)
- Preparation of legislative updates for NCARCOG Board in coordination with the NCARCOG Executive Director and NCARCOG Executive Committee
- Organize and lead necessary follow-up actions from NCARCOG Board and Forum meetings
- Development of new legislative initiatives, with input and guidance of the NCARCOG Board and Forum, that further the objectives of the NCARCOG and Forum

- Serving as the point of contact for and maintain effective working relationships legislators and key officials

Procedure for RFQ Submittal

Submit electronic copies of Statement of Qualifications (SOQ). Submittals should include the information outlined below. SOQ should be submitted electronically by 2:00 pm on the due date:

Anthony Starr, Western Piedmont COG Executive Director and NCARCOG Treasurer, Western Piedmont Council of Governments, 1880 2nd Avenue NW, Hickory, NC 28601.

Qualification statements received after that time will not be considered.

Qualification Statements

Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) should include the following:

- **Qualifications, Experience and Capabilities:** Describe the qualification and capabilities of implementing legislative advocacy services as outlined in the scope of services. Include examples of successful legislative efforts in North Carolina. Summarize the scope of work and provide client contact information.
- **Key Staff Assigned to Project:** Provide an organization chart identifying personnel assigned to the NCARCOG, including their roles and anticipated level of involvement. Personnel identified in the proposal must be the principal staff that will work with the NCARCOG and represent the majority of hours billed. Resumes shall not exceed 3 pages in length.
- **History of Company:** Full disclosure regarding the company status, and status of parent companies, subsidiaries, affiliates, and subcontractors as potential responsible parties, including but not limited to:
 - Business Background
 - Legal name of business
 - Age of business
 - Names, addresses, and position of all persons having a financial interest in the company
 - State of formation
 - Number of employees
 - Licenses and certifications relevant to the described work
- **Professional Practice (Limited to the Project Team, all employees assigned to this project):**
 - Has your firm ever been cited by any authority for unscrupulous practice?
 - Does your firm have any past or present suits with any current or former customer? Explain as necessary
 - Has your firm, including parent company, subsidiaries, affiliates, and subcontractors, ever been or are currently disbarred from receiving Federal Funds?
 - Any certification indicating that staff assigned to this project is equipped to carry out the provisions of this proposal

- Three (3) references from clients for which the firm has provided similar services
- Other: Provide any other information that may be useful when reviewing this proposal

Consultant Selection

Proposals will be evaluated and ranked based on the selection criteria outlined below. The NCARCOG may ask the top ranked firms to attend a presentation and/or interview as part of the evaluation process. At the conclusion of the evaluation process, the firms will be ranked in priority order with the highest ranking firm being selected to negotiate a contract and scope of work with the NCARCOG. If a contract satisfactory to both parties cannot be negotiated, the NCARCOG will then enter into negotiations with the next highest ranking firm and so on until an agreement is reached.

In the event the NCARCOG elects to negotiate a contract with a selected firm, the NCARCOG reserves the right to negotiate such terms and conditions of the contract, including, but not limited to scope, role, price, and staffing which may be in the best interests of the NCARCOG.

The selected firm shall provide written proof of insurance coverage for personal injury and property damage, including comprehensive general and automobile liability and contractual liability.

Selection Criteria

NCARCOG will evaluate the qualifications based upon the following criteria:

- Experience and ability to complete the work
- Demonstrated experience including successful management and administration of similar clients
- Approach and understanding of the scope of work
- Proven track record effective legislative advocacy

Rights Reserved

The NCARCOG reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject all submissions, reissue a subsequent RFQ, terminate, restructure or amend this procurement process at any time. This RFQ is not a bid. Evaluation criteria contained herein shall be used in evaluating qualifications of interested firms or persons for selection. The NCARCOG may contact any consultant after receiving its submittal to seek clarification on any portion thereof. The NCARCOG reserves the right to request additional information from any consultant if the NCARCOG deems such information necessary to further evaluate the consultant's qualifications. The NCARCOG reserves the right to select several consultants to perform task under the contract. All RFQ material submitted to the NCARCOG becomes property of the NCARCOG and will not be returned to the vendor.