

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**



**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS APPLICATION  
TO PREQUALIFY PLANNING SERVICES  
PROVIDERS FOR  
AS NEEDED PLANNING SERVICES**

**For**

**Texas Community Development Block Grant Program**

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**Texas Department of Agriculture  
Stephen F. Austin Building  
1700 North Congress Avenue  
Austin, Texas 78701**

**RFQ: TxCDBG - 2020**

**Application Due Date: January 24, 2020  
5:00 P.M. (Central Time)**

**Posting Date: December 20, 2019**

Refer Inquiries to: Michelle Phares  
[cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov](mailto:cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov)

All responses to this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) shall become the property of the TDA upon receipt.

All responses must be delivered to TDA as required by the instructions within this request. Any addenda to or clarification of this RFQ shall be issued in writing by TDA. TDA shall not be legally bound by an addenda or interpretation of this RFQ that is not in writing.

Respondents understand and agree that no public disclosures or news releases pertaining to this RFQ or any findings based on information provided or obtained through this RFQ shall be made without prior written approval of TDA.

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## **1.0 Overview**

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) seeks to preapprove a pool of planning services providers from which local governments may solicit proposals for planning services if a Texas Community Development Block Grant Program (TxCDBG) grant for planning activities is awarded. This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) preapproval process is Phase One of a two-phase process for selection of a planning services provider. TDA is requesting prequalification applications from interested individuals and firms to be preapproved for planning services to assist communities in proposed planning projects to be financed with TxCDBG funds. Planning professionals approved through this RFQ process will be eligible to provide services to communities that may choose to participate in TxCDBG Planning programs.

Preapproval of a planning service provider indicates that the application was complete and timely and does not include an evaluation of the quality of services offered by the planner.

In preparation for upcoming 2020 application cycles, planners may have already been selected using the procurement methods outlined in Section B of the TxCDBG Implementation Manual. The 2020 List of Planning Services Providers must be used for any planning services contracts awarded after the release date of the Approved Vendor List, unless the planning services contract is expected to exceed \$50,000. In the event a planning services contract award will exceed \$50,000, the community may not use this preapproval RFQ procurement process, and must conduct a full competitive procurement in accordance with all applicable procurement regulations and requirements. TDA reserves the right to require updated RFQ application submittals in the future to ensure accurate information.

Phase Two is the final planning services selection process. Participation in the Phase Two streamlined request for proposals (RFP) process will be limited to only those planners that have submitted a complete application in response to this RFQ and that have been approved by TDA. Detailed budgets and tasks may be determined after the planning services provider has been selected by a participating local government.

## **2.0 General Instructions and Standard Submittal Requirements**

### **2.1 Policies**

2.1.1 No specific work is associated with this RFQ. The Phase Two solicitation will be conducted by the local governments seeking a grant award, and the actual extent of services required under any contract resulting from a Phase Two solicitation is not known.

2.1.2 No individual or firm is assured of obtaining any work as a result of prequalification approval. No contract or grant will be entered into as a result of this RFQ.

### **2.2 Submittal Instructions**

2.2.1 All submittals shall become the property of TDA and will not be returned.

2.2.2 Submittals will be subject to the Texas Public Information Act (PIA), Texas

Government Code, Chapter 552. Applications and other submitted information shall be presumed to be subject to disclosure unless a specific exception to disclosure under the PIA applies.

**ALL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED TO TDA WILL BE POSTED ON THE TDA WEBSITE WITH THE APPROVED VENDOR LIST.**

If it is necessary for a respondent to include proprietary or otherwise confidential information in its Application for Prequalification or other submitted information, the respondent must clearly label that proprietary or confidential information and identify the specific exception to disclosure in the PIA. Merely making a blanket claim that the entire submittal is protected from disclosure because it contains some proprietary information is not acceptable and shall make the entire submittal subject to release under the PIA. In order to initiate the process of seeking an Attorney General opinion on the release of proprietary or confidential information, the specific provisions of the submittal that are considered by the respondent to be proprietary or confidential must be clearly labeled as described below. Any information which is not clearly identified as proprietary or confidential shall be deemed to be subject to disclosure pursuant to the PIA. Subject to the PIA, respondents may protect trade and confidential information from public release. Trade secrets or other confidential information, submitted as part of an Application for Prequalification, shall be clearly marked at each page it appears. Such marking shall be in boldface type at least **14-point font**.

- 2.2.3 TDA reserves the right to reject any and all submittals on the basis of being unresponsive to these guidelines or for failure to disclose requested information.
- 2.2.4 TDA will not be liable or responsible for any costs incurred by respondents in the preparation or submittal of applications.
- 2.2.5 Questions and requests for clarification on this RFQ must be submitted in writing to the Point of Contact listed below no later than January 10, 2020, 5:00 P.M. (Central Time). No verbal inquiries will be addressed.

**Point of Contact:** Michelle Phares  
[cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov](mailto:cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov)

- 2.2.6 TDA will post responses to inquiries on TDA's website no later than January 17, 2020. It is the responsibility of interested parties to periodically check for updates to the RFQ prior to submitting an Application for Prequalification.
- 2.2.7 Communication with TDA or TxCDBG staff, the evaluation team, or others associated with this RFQ is prohibited, except as permitted by the Point of Contact listed above. *Failure to comply with these requirements may result in disqualification of an application.*

## 2.3 Submittal Format and Content

- 2.3.1 All application submittals must be submitted in accordance with the instructions outlined in this RFQ to receive consideration. Submittals should provide straightforward, concise information that satisfies the requirements noted in this RFQ. Color displays and the like are discouraged. Emphasis should be placed on brevity, conformity to TDA’s instructions, and completeness and clarity of content.
- 2.3.2 Application for Prequalification. Please read before completing the application. In order to expedite the review time of prequalification applications, all applications must conform to the following requirements.
- a. Applications must contain the individual or firm’s name, business address, email address, phone number and contact name for correspondence purposes.
  - b. Applications must have the required Authorized Signature from an officer, owner or other authorized representative.
  - c. Applicants must have been cleared (not suspended or debarred) with the System for Award Management (SAM). Applications must include the printout(s) of the verification page with the date included.
  - d. Applications must be submitted in the original format. The documents must not be password protected by the respondent.
  - e. Applications must be submitted in PDF format (scanned copy with signature).
- 2.3.3 Submittal methods: CD, DVD, thumb drive, or electronic mail (email). No printed submittals. Facsimile (fax) transmission of SOQs is not an acceptable method of responding to this RFQ and will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- 2.3.4 Deliver submittals to:
- By mail: Texas Department of Agriculture  
Texas Community Development Block Grant Program  
Attn: Suzanne Barnard, Director for CDBG Programs  
P.O. Box 12847  
Austin, Texas 78711
- Hand delivery: Texas Department of Agriculture  
Stephen F. Austin Bldg.  
1700 N. Congress Ave, 11th Floor, Room 1102G  
Austin, Texas 78701
- By email: [cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov](mailto:cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov)
- 2.3.5 Mail and hand delivery submittals: Submittals must be in a sealed envelope clearly marked with the respondent’s name and “Application Submittal for Tx CDBG Planning Services, 2020 RFQ”.
- 2.3.6 Respondents mailing their application submittals should allow normal delivery time to ensure receipt of their submittals by TDA. TDA shall not be responsible for

mail not received, deliveries not made, or application submittals not received by the date and time set forth in Section 2.4 Schedule of Events.

- 2.3.7 Email submittals: The email subject line must contain the respondent’s name and “Application Submittal for TxCDBG Planning Services, 2020 RFQ”. The respondent is solely responsible for ensuring that its complete electronic submission is sent to, and actually received by, TDA in a timely manner and at the proper destination server.

Respondent may send the completed application as an email attachment. There is a 10MB maximum size limit per email and may result in sending multiple emails for submission of the complete document. In such event, each email subject line must include part numbers (e.g., “Part 1 of 2”).

**With the exception of SAM verification documentation, TDA will not accept or publish any attachments to the Application. Do not reference attachments in the application or the application may be deemed incomplete.** Any additional information necessary may be provided to communities during the Phase 2 process.

TDA takes no responsibility for electronic submittals that are captured, blocked, filtered, quarantined or otherwise prevented from reaching the proper destination server by any TDA anti-virus or other security software.

## 2.4 Schedule of Events

- 2.4.1 TDA will consider only those submittals **received** by the deadline in the schedule of events below. Late submittals will not be considered.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS	DATE*
RFQ issued	<i>December 20, 2019</i>
Deadline for submission of written inquiries	<i>January 10, 2020</i> <b>no later than 5:00 P.M. (Central Time)</b>
TDA response to inquiries	<i>January 17, 2020</i>
<b>APPLICATION SUBMISSION DEADLINE</b>	<i>January 24, 2020</i> <b>no later than 5:00 P.M. (Central Time)</b>
Evaluation period	<i>January 27, 2020 – February 7, 2020</i>
Approved Vendor List posted on TDA website (estimated)	<i>February 3, 2020</i>
Letter of Approval (estimated)	<i>February 7, 2020</i>

*\* It should be noted that these dates may vary slightly as conditions require.*

- 2.4.2 Application submittals may be modified or withdrawn at any time prior to the Application Submission Deadline. No changes will be allowed after the deadline.

## 2.5 Conflict of Interest

2.5.1 The respondent must disclose any existing or potential conflicts of interest. Respondents shall disclose all contractual or informal business arrangements/agreements, including but not limited to, fee arrangements and consulting agreements between it and TDA, TDA's staff, or any entity that provides services to TDA. The respondent must disclose all relationships with any other Texas state agencies.

**2.5.2 Failure to provide all requested information, or the inclusion of false or misleading information, shall be sufficient cause for the rejection of a prequalification application.**

2.5.3 The respondent shall make full disclosure of any former employee or retiree of TDA (separated from the agency within the last three years) who is an agent, consultant, contractor, or employee of the respondent or the intent to employ or subcontract with an individual who is a former employee or retiree of TDA. Within the first twelve months of leaving employment at TDA, a former employee or retiree selected by the respondent for employment or subcontracting shall not perform services on a project or fill a position that the former employee or retiree worked on while employed at TDA.

2.5.4 If the circumstances certified by the respondent change or additional information is obtained subsequent to submission of a prequalification application, the respondent agrees that it is under a continuing duty to supplement its prequalification application under this provision and that the duty to disclose any conflicts of interest is an ongoing obligation throughout the term of any contract resulting from this RFQ. The respondent shall submit updated information in writing as soon as reasonably possible upon learning of any change to its affirmation contained in its prequalification application.

## 3.0 Selection Process

### 3.1 Evaluation of Submittals

Application submittals will be reviewed by members of an evaluation team. Respondents meeting the minimum criteria specified in section 3.2 below will be added to the Approved Vendor List for Planning Services for the 2020 TxCDBG grant cycle following approval by TDA.

**Applications submitted must be complete (all questions answered on the application form with no blanks).** Incomplete applications are considered a failure to provide all requested information and shall be sufficient cause for the rejection of a prequalification application.

### 3.2 Minimum Criteria for Prequalification Approval

The respondent must address all of the following to demonstrate that it has the necessary facilities, ability, and resources to provide the services specified herein in a satisfactory manner. Evaluation of the respondent's qualifications shall include:

- a. Ability, capacity, skill and other necessary resources to perform the work or provide the service required;
- b. Ability to carry out all aspects of planning grant related activities and provide necessary technical assistance to conduct planning activities.
- c. Ability to perform the work or provide the service promptly or within the time specified;
- d. Demonstrated experience, competence and training of personnel with respect to planning services and related work;
- e. Availability of adequate personnel to undertake the project and accessibility to clients throughout the life of the project;
- f. Quality of performance of previous contracts or services; and
- g. Character, integrity, reputation, judgment, experience and efficiency of the firm and key personnel.

### 3.3 Additional Selection Criteria

In addition to the minimum criteria identified above, the respondent must provide the following which may be considered by local governments in the Phase Two RFP process for selection of a planning services provider.

- a. The date of respondent's most recent TxCDBG Administration certification;  
*Note: TxCDBG planning grants require a designated point of contact knowledgeable about the program for limited administrative tasks and program requirements – this point of contact may be the planner, local staff member, or other qualified individual or firm. Planners who were not TxCDBG Certified Administrators in 2019 may choose to become certified to serve in this role for TxCDBG planning activity grants through a streamlined Planning Administrator Certification Program, which will be offered in Spring of 2020. However, this streamlined certification only qualifies planning services providers to administer TxCDBG planning activity grants (Planning and Capacity Building Fund, Colonia Fund – Planning grants, and similar programs if offered by TDA) and is not transferable to other TxCDBG grant programs. To administer programs other than planning grants, a full TxCDBG Administrator certification is required.*
- b. Demonstrated experience with the TxCDBG Program;
- c. Past record of performance with TxCDBG contracts with respect to such factors as accessibility to clients, quality of work, and ability to meet schedules;
- d. Reasonableness of cost;
- e. Ability to devote the needed time to a project based on current workload;
- f. Geographic availability of personnel;
- g. Certified or self-identified small-, minority- or woman- owned business; and
- h. Employment and economic opportunities provided by the grant administrator to low and very low income (Section 3) residents and businesses.

### 3.4 Letter of Approval

A letter of approval shall be sent to all respondents that are approved by TDA. The letter shall include a statement indicating the effective dates during which the vendor may bid for applicable projects. No grant award or contract shall result from this RFQ.



## 4.0 Scope of Services

### 4.1 Planning Services

- 4.1.1 The individual or firm selected shall be required to provide planning services whose level and scope will be determined by the local government participating in the TxCDBG program.
- 4.1.2 Planning services may include, but not be limited to:
- a. Preparation and submittal of all planning and administrative deliverables by the appropriate deadline;
  - b. Provision of general advice and technical assistance on planning matters and implementing project activities included in the approved grant application in conformance with TxCDBG program requirements;
  - c. Planning activities which consist of all costs of data gathering, studies, analysis, and preparation of plans and the identification of actions that will implement such plans, including, but not limited to:
    - i. Comprehensive plans;
    - ii. Community Development Plans;
    - iii. Functional Plans, in areas such as:
      - o Housing, including the development of a consolidated plan;
      - o Land use and urban environmental design;
      - o Open space and recreation;
      - o Energy use and conservation; and
      - o Floodplain and wetlands management (see application guide for limitations).
    - iv. Economic Development Plans, such as:
      - o Strategic development and redevelopment planning;
      - o Inventory & analysis of current local economy conditions;
      - o SWOT or risk analysis, community goal setting, identification local and outside resources; and
      - o Action or implementation plans, including development of specific projects for community to undertake;
    - v. Other plans and studies, such as:
      - o Small area and neighborhood plans;
      - o Capital improvements programs;
      - o Individual project plans (excluding engineering and design costs - see application guide for limitations);
      - o General environmental and historic preservation studies (see application guide for limitations);
      - o Strategies and action programs to implement plans, including development of codes, ordinances and regulations;
      - o Support of clearinghouse functions, such as those specified in

Executive Order 12372; and

- o Assessment of Fair Housing.

- 4.1.3 Policy-planning-management-capacity building activities which enable the recipient to:
- a. Determine its needs;
  - b. Set long-term goals and short-term objectives;
  - c. Devise programs and activities to meet these goals and objectives;
  - d. Evaluate the progress of such programs and activities in accomplishing these goals and objectives; and
  - e. Carry out management, coordination and monitoring of activities necessary for effective planning implementation, but excluding the costs necessary to implement such plans.

## **4.2 Possible Other Services**

4.2.1 The individual or firm selected may be required to provide other additional services whose level and scope will be determined by the local government participating in the 2020 TxCDBG grant cycle.

4.2.2 Possible additional services may include, but not be limited to:

- a. Assist in preparing and submitting the application for TxCDBG funding;
- b. Assist in meeting all requirements stipulated in the grant contract;
- c. Act as a liaison between the local government and TDA to ensure an efficient, smoothly managed program;
- d. Prepare and submit all required reports and program documentation as outlined in the grant contract; and
- e. Assist in developing, implementing and documenting activities to affirmatively further fair housing during the grant term.

## **4.3 Budgets**

4.3.1 Grant Writing (planning) – A fee to be negotiated, based on the application type and number of activities, between the local government and the planning services provider. TxCDBG funding may not be used to pay for or reimburse grant writing fees.

4.3.2 Planning Services – As negotiated, based on the type and number of activities, between the local government and the planning services provider. TDA does not provide funds for General Administration for planning grants.

4.3.3 Other costs – As negotiated