COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

Questions & Answers

to

RFP No. 902105

### for

**As-Needed Environmental Consulting Services**

**Networking/Bidders Conference Held on March 23, 2022**

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| **This County of Alameda, General Services Agency (GSA), RFP Questions & Answers (Q&A) has been electronically issued to potential bidders via e-mail. E-mail addresses used are those in the County’s Small Local Emerging Business (SLEB) Vendor Database or from other sources. If you have registered or are certified as a SLEB, please ensure that the complete and accurate e-mail address is noted and kept updated in the SLEB Vendor Database. This RFP Q&A will also be posted on the GSA Contracting Opportunities website located at** [**Alameda County Current Contracting Opportunities**](https://gsa.acgov.org/do-business-with-us/contracting-opportunities/)**.**  |

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Thank you for your participation and interest in the County of Alameda Request for Proposal (RFP) for As-Needed Environmental Consulting Services.

All the questions are taken verbatim from written questions emailed by potential Bidders. In the answers of these questions, the County of Alameda shall be noted as “County”. The Questions and Answers are the final stance of the County. Please consider this document in preparation of your bid response.

**Questions and Answers:**

1. Who is the current contractor?
	1. **The incumbents for the current contract are Terracon Consultants Inc., Vista Environmental Consulting Inc., EFI Global Inc., ACC Environmental Consultants, Sensible Environmental Solutions Inc.**
2. What has been the total dollar spent to date on the expiring contracts.
	1. **The County has spent a total of $1,072,440 on the current contract of five years to date .**
3. Please provide a copy of the current contractor’s proposal
	1. **Please submit a public record request online at** [**Alameda County Public Records Request**](https://gsa.acgov.org/about-gsa/contact-us/public-records-request/)**.**
4. How many contractors will be selected?
	1. **Per page 5 of the RFP, Section A. (INTENT) it states:**

***The County intends to award a three-year (3) (with the option to renew for two (2) years) to a pool of up to six (6) Bidders selected as the most responsible Bidders whose response conforms to the RFP and meets the County’s requirements.***

1. The County’s requirement for “full time” workers is not taking into consideration the affects of COVID lockdows and the fact that staff has been laid off and new staff has been added witin the last year, moreover many staff are working part time remotely. Please remove this requirement as it is unreasonably limiting bidders, as well as alienating COVID lockdown affected workers?
	1. **The requirements in the RFP related to “full-time” workers will remain as it is currently described** **in order to provide consistent coverage of emergencies. There is no prohibition on remote work.**
2. In the evaualtion section, COST, which is suppose to be totally objective the County has included “Reasonableness, Realism, and Affordanbility” which effectively have no meaning and are totally subjective, please remove these evaluation criteria.
	1. **The objective of the cost analysis is a separate evaluation factor to ensure that the final agreed-to price is fair and reasonable. An evaluation of the cost analysis is used to evaluate the reasonableness, realism, and affordability of the proposed pricing to determine that the overall cost offered is fair, reasonable, realistic, and affordable to the County. The language will remain as it is currently described.**
3. Under BIDDER Minimum Qualifications section, please remove the following requirment “Bidder shall have and maintain throughout the contract term at least two full time, local, in-house, non-subcontracted staff members” as we are planning to use local resources as subcontractors to support this contract, the County’s current requirement effectively is excluding local qualified certified professional that may not have the resources to submit on this proposal and depend on primes such as ourselves to subcontract them.
	1. **The language in the RFP related to BIDDER Minimum Qualifications will remain as it is currently described.**
4. On page 3 of the Bid Response Packet, what is the Alameda County Supplier Identification Number? Is this the Bidder ID number that was provided upon registration to the EZ Sourcing Supplier Portal?
	1. **Alameda County Supplier Identification Number is the unique number assigned to a vendor that is already doing business with the County. This number should be submitted in a Bidder Information Sheet if applicable. If a Bidder has never done business with the County before, the Alameda County Supplier Identification Number is unknown and not applicable in this instance.**
5. The Bid Form provided is requesting for unit costs for a CAC, CSST and a CDPH I/A over a three year period. The Bid Form indicates the quantities provided are estimates only. Please clarify if the unit costs that are to be provided by the vendor on the Bid Form must be guaranteed for the duration of the contract or if these are for comparison purposes only and rates for all services as defined within the RFP will be negotiated if selected as one of the six vendors?

**A9) Yes, unit costs provided by Bidder on the Bid Form will remain firm for the term of any contract that may be awarded as a result of this RFP, and will be used for evaluation. The County reserves the right to accept or negotiate all pricing during the negotiation stage and prior to contract execution.**

1. On the Bid Form how are we to take into consideration a senior level or project level CAC, CSST and / or a CDPH I/A who have higher hourly rates than that of a staff level or field technician?
	1. **Bidders are to determine the appropriate rate for the designations on the Bid Form. Bidders should consider putting the different levels (i.e. senior-level or project level) on the Time and Material Rate Sheet when submitting their proposal. If a Bidder is making any clarifications, or taking exceptions to policies or specifications of this RFP and associate Bid Documents, these must be submitted in the Exceptions and Clarifications form of the Exhibit A - Bid Response Packet. Please note that the County is under no obligation to accept any exceptions or clarifications and any such exceptions and clarifications may be a basis for bid disqualification.**
2. How are the unit costs on the Bid Form for a CAC, CSST and a CDPH I/A going to be evaluated for awarding purposes on the retainer contract? Are these the only rates that will be considered for the duration of the contract?
	1. **For the cost evaluation information, please refer to Section H. Evaluation Criteria/Selection Committee on pages 13 – 18 of the RFP document. In addition to the Bid Form, Bidders shall provide a complete sheet with time and materials rates. Rates for regular and overtime shifts are to be included as well as typical laboratory analysis costs of environmental samples. Include rates for different turnaround times in the laboratory analysis costs. This information will not be used in the evaluation, however, the quotations stated on the time and materials rate sheet must be valid for the duration of any agreement resulting from this RFP.** **The Bid Form takes precedence in case of a discrepancy between the Bid Form and Time and Materials Rate Sheet. Please refer to Addendum No. 1.**
3. The RFQ also states that the County in certain instances, may request proposals to be provided in lump sum or shift rate pricing on certain projects. How does this information get incorporated with the Bid Sheet for evaluation?
	1. **The requests for proposals for individual projects that will be issued to the pool of selected contractors is different and separate from the information Bidders need to provide on the Bid Form for the RFP. Please refer to page 8 of the Exhibit A – Bid Response Packet for instructions on the Bid Form.**
4. On page 23 of the RFP, letter f. indicates: “The County is soliciting a total price for this project. The price quoted shall be the total cost the County will pay for this project including all taxes (excluding Sales and Use taxes) and all other charges.” Can you please clarify how a total price is to be provided since this is a three-year retainer and no specific project(s) are provided for bidding purposes? If applicable, where would this cost be provided within the response packet?
	1. **This paragraph in Section N. (PRICING) Item 5.f. refers to the Bid Form.**
5. On page 9 of Exhibit A, Bid Response Packet, it indicates: “This quotation must be valid for the duration of any agreement resulting from this RFP.” For our Time and Materials Rate Sheet is the vendor to provide separate rate sheets if the rates are to change each year? We ask, as many of the local laboratories that are used for these contracts typically have yearly rate increases with which we have no control over**.**
	1. **Contractors shall provide one time and materials rate sheet that will be valid for the anticipated three-year term of the contract. The time and materials rate sheet shall include laboratory costs for the three-year term.**
6. Is there a mark-up cap for laboratory sub-consultant fees?
	1. **Contractors shall include typical laboratory costs and turnaround times on their time and materials rate sheet. Costs (including laboratory costs) on the time and materials rate sheet shall be all-inclusive and should include all taxes, fees, etc, and a maximum of a 15% mark-up.**
7. For references for the Bid Response Packet, can we use County contact(s) as current or former references?
	1. **Per page 14 of the Exhibit A – Bid Response Packet, Bidders are not restricted to providing County contract(s) as a reference. Services or goods provided by Bidder to the references should have similar scope, volume, and requirements to those outlined in these specifications, terms, and conditions. However, in case references from the County user department are provided and the County in its sole discretion determines that it is a conflict of interest, the County has the right to request the Bidder to provide another reference.**
8. 1. In Section (I)(D)(1)(c)(2), Bidder Minimum Qualifications, it indicates the firm shall have and maintain…at least “two full time, local, in-house, non-subcontracted staff members that hold the following” “NIOSH 582 course”, or equivalent, and who are “current participants in the AIHA PAT Program and they must have read slides in at least the most recent quarter of the program prior to the RFP Submission deadline.”

a. This requirement will be unduly difficult for small businesses, emerging businesses, etc. to comply with since “two full time, non-subcontracted staff members” must hold the coursework AND participate in the PAT program.

i. Can local laboratories be utilized to fulfill this requirement given there are multiple accredited and certified laboratories in the immediate area surrounding Alameda County?

**A) No.** **The requirement is there for when the County needs to have clearances immediately due to time constraints in a government setting where essential services can’t be interrupted.**

b. Projects requiring immediate clearances (e.g., 3rd shift prior to staff returning to work) typically do not build in the time to reasonably sample (~2-hrs) and analyze the samples. When reasonable timelines are put into the schedule, then the use of independent laboratories becomes apparent.

i. Given the NIOSH 7400 method counts all fibers and is not specific for asbestos, has the County of Alameda (in past projects with onsite analyses) ever failed a clearance?

**A)** **Please submit a public record request online at** [**Alameda County Public Records Request**](https://gsa.acgov.org/about-gsa/contact-us/public-records-request/)**.**

ii. If so, was additional re-analyses performed (e.g., 7402) to confirm the asbestos-specific concentration?

1. **Please submit a public record request online at** [**Alameda County Public Records Request**](https://gsa.acgov.org/about-gsa/contact-us/public-records-request/)**.**

iii. Has the County of Alameda ever challenged a consultant’s results of in-field analyses or asked for QC documentation as to the accuracy or precision of a consultants reported results?

**A) Please submit a public record request online at** [**Alameda County Public Records Request**](https://gsa.acgov.org/about-gsa/contact-us/public-records-request/)**.**

c. Participation in AIHA PAT rounds do not score an individual analyst but the “firm” or “laboratory.”

i. Can it be clarified how a firm is to show participation of each analyst in the PAT rounds for each analyst?

**A) Although individuals are not necessarily evaluated on their own in the AIHA PAT rounds, one or more individuals do read slides for each “firm” or “laboratory” that is submitting results for the program. Individuals that are participating in the program for their “firm” or “laboratory” will be required to submit evidence of their participation and results of their slide readings to the County to demonstrate they meet the requirements of the RFP at the time of bid.**

ii. Or is individual participation in the Asbestos Analyst Registry (AAR) required? (Note the AAR is an individual participation, not a laboratory participation).

**A) Participation in the Asbestos Analyst Registry is not a requirement of the RFP.**

d. While AIHA PAT rounds are part of a QA/QC program, they are not proof of validity by itself.

i. Why not require full AIHA accreditation (IHPAT) for these services? Note: In the past, AIHA did not provide IHPAT accreditation for the NIOSH 7400 method but has since at least 2016.

**A) The qualifications and requirements of the RFP are sufficient to meet the County’s needs for these services.**

e. In recognizing Alameda County’s desire for small firms, emerging firms, etc., full accreditation under AIHA IHPAT for the NIOSH 7400 method is cost prohibitive as most projects (and clients) do not require onsite analyses and the volume of analyses presumed for this contract will not meet the quantity justified for the accreditation expenses.

i. Can Alameda County clarify why an emerging or small business need this minimum qualification when multiple laboratories in the area provide these services (even on weekends)?

**A) The qualifications in the RFP related to PAT rounds has been essentially the same for two previous RFPs spanning at least 10 years. SLEB vendors have met the qualification over the past 10 years. The qualifications and requirements of the RFP are sufficient to meet the County’s needs for these services.** **The requirement is there for when the County needs to have clearances immediately due to time constraints in a government setting where essential services can’t be interrupted.**

f. Can it be clarified if the NIOSH 7400 method is to be performed onsite, that ALL criteria and conditions in the method are to be adhered to by consultants? [This includes Sample Preparation, Calibration and Quality Control, Measurement, and Calculations and Reporting of Results.]

**A) No. The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**

i. Can it be clarified that the individual analyzing the sample is to include their coefficient of variation (CV) for the analyses with each set of reported results?

 **A) No. The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**

ii. Is the person analyzing the slide to provide the 95% confidence interval (which uses the CV in its calculation) or simply provide the CV value for the Alameda County PM to use in the calculation of the 95% CI?

1. **The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**

iii. Will a report without the analyst’s current CV be acceptable to the County of Alameda?

**A) The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**

g. If participation in the AIHA PAT rounds will remain, it is reasonable for Alameda County to ask for other QA/QC procedures detailed within the method itself including the calibration and quality control sections of the method (reference page 7 to 9 of the most current version). This would include providing verification of at the time of RFP submission for the following. Will the County of Alameda require submission of verification of the following with the bid as indicated for similar minimum qualifications (i.e., PAT rounds, licensing, references, etc.)?

**A) The County will require the Bidder to submit the qualifications and requirements described in the RFP.**

i. 10(b) – Phase shift detection limit using the HSE/NPL slide (~$1,000 slide). Typical frequency of this quality check is each time a microscope is moved.

**A) The County will require the Bidder to submit the qualifications and requirements described in the RFP. The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**

ii. 10(c) – Documentation of the graticule area each time a microscope is moved and as analyst change.

**A) The County will require the Bidder to submit the qualifications and requirements described in the RFP. The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**

iii. 12 – “Document” the precision for each microscopist for replicate fiber counts by

1. 12(a), As “part of the [laboratory] quality assurance program a set of reference slides to be used daily” and in 3-differing ranges

1. **The County will require the Bidder to submit the qualifications and requirements described in the RFP. The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**

2. 12(b), “from blind repeat counts on reference slides, estimate the “intra- and inter-microscopist precision” and “maintain control charts for each of these data files”

**A) The County will require the Bidder to submit the qualifications and requirements described in the RFP. The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**

3. 14, Perform blind recounts by the same microscopist on 10% of filters counted. (Note pass/fail criteria on acceptance/rejection of analyses in this section)

1. **The County will require the Bidder to submit the qualifications and requirements described in the RFP. The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**

4. 17, “…shall implement an interlaboratory quality assurance program that as a minimum includes participation of at least two other independent laboratories…”

1. **The County will require the Bidder to submit the qualifications and requirements described in the RFP. The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**

h. Per the Calculation and Reporting of Results section (24), is the analyst to provide and report the “intra- and interlaboratory relative standard deviations with each set of results?”

1. **The County will require the Bidder to submit the qualifications and requirements described in the RFP. The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**
2. If the County of Alameda keeps the PAT round criteria as a “minimum requirement” and given the questions above, can the County of Alameda indicate which parts of the NIOSH 7400 method are not required for this contract (e.g., control charts for inter and intra-analyst comparisons to generate CVs to establish pass/fail criteria on precision)?
	1. **The County will require the Contractor to submit the qualifications and requirements described in the RFP. The County will not comment on potential specific requirements of hypothetical projects for this RFP.**
3. If the County of Alameda does reduce any of the requirements within the method, can these method modifications be documented as not performing any of the QA/QC procedures outlined in the method will result in wide ranges of analytical fees by respondents. [That is, Just Analyzing (no QA/QC) = really cheap fees, whereas, Analyzing + QC (verified and documented) = not cheap unless a high-volume equivalent to a laboratory’s volume of samples).
	1. **The requirements of the RFP will remain as they are currently described.**