



Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency

NOACA

1299 Superior Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44114-3204
(216) 241-2414
www.noaca.org

Request for Proposals (RFP) for Internal Strategic Plan

Issue Date: June 20, 2023
Closing Date: July 11, 2023

NOACA is seeking a qualified consultant to facilitate development of an agency-wide Internal Strategic Plan. The deadline for submittals is **Tuesday, July 11, 2023, 5:00 PM.**

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1. NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY (NOACA)

The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is a Cleveland-based transportation and environmental planning organization that serves as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and designated areawide water quality management agency for the counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina in Ohio.

In these capacities it:

- Works with other organizations to help address northeast Ohio's transportation, air quality, and water quality needs
- Conducts metropolitan planning for various modes of transportation, including vehicles, freight, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, etc., while considering the transportation system's impact on the environment and land use
- Prepares the region's long-range transportation plan and short-range transportation improvement program, which is the region's capital budget for federally funded transportation projects
- Conducts studies that address congestion, improve safety and strengthen community livability

The vision of NOACA is as follows: NOACA will **STRENGTHEN** regional cohesion, **PRESERVE** existing infrastructure, and **BUILD** a sustainable multimodal transportation system to **SUPPORT** economic development and **ENHANCE** quality of life in Northeast Ohio.

NOACA is directed by a 48-member Board of Directors, representing the City of Cleveland and all five NOACA counties and their communities, plus transit agencies, the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS), the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA), the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), and the Ohio Turnpike Infrastructure Commission.

The NOACA region is home to 2.1 million people and over 150 units of government. The region is anchored by several urban core cities with the largest being Cleveland.

More information about NOACA is available on our website at www.noaca.org.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

NOACA is seeking proposals from qualified consultants to facilitate development of an agency-wide Internal Strategic Plan (“Plan”). The consultant will be involved in analysis and evaluation of NOACA's current position and the internal and external environment, and then develop a roadmap for future actions and initiatives. This effort is intended to provide an employee-focused internal vision that synchronizes with the agency's external strategic goals. It should result in clear direction for the agency's future, with recommendations for specific programs and policies that bring the vision to fruition.

While the details of the internal strategic planning process are to be determined and negotiated with the selected consultant, a six-step process to be considered may include:

- 1) Define the Vision
- 2) Internal assessment, e.g. SWOT analysis, and initial staff engagement (see Staff Engagement Process in 3. *Scope of Work*, Section B)
- 3) Determine priorities
- 4) Recommendations for implementation
- 5) Define responsibilities
- 6) Measure and evaluate results (what does success look like?)

3. SCOPE OF WORK

A. Objectives

The planning process should address the following topics:

- Agency Culture
 - Connection to NOACA's strategic goals
 - Solidifying an internal staff vision
 - Embrace diversity, equity and inclusion practices
 - Defining shared core values
 - Internal cooperation and support
 - Agreed upon norms
 - Performance objectives
 - Striving for excellence
 - Interpersonal relationships
 - How staff members work together; team building
 - Effective communication across/up and down staff structure
 - Support innovation and creativity
 - Work/life balance
- Human Resources
 - Staffing
 - Recruitment
 - Benefits
 - Engagement
 - Retention
 - Consideration of adding full- or part-time human resources staff position

- Review of human resources manual
- *NOACA 101* onboarding for new employees
- Reward and recognition programs
- Review of annual performance evaluation process
 - reviewing supervisor and/or director
 - 360-style reviews
 - performance reviews according to discipline or division
- Agency Structure – Staff Composition
 - Types of employees needed
 - Balance of staff resources needed to support the work
 - Plan for additional staff to address expansion of work products
 - Balance institutional/tacit knowledge and innovation
- Management
 - Establish Leadership Competencies
 - Emotional intelligence
 - Psychological safety
 - Explore leadership styles
 - Define levels of autonomy within organization
- Internal Initiatives
 - Trainings
 - Certifications
 - Applications/technology
 - Leadership
 - Career Trajectories
 - How can NOACA support
 - Career Advancement Plans
- Internal Processes and Procedures
 - Opportunities/platforms for information sharing
 - Equipment and technology resource audit
 - Cross training and documentation
 - Facility assessment/security
 - Emergency/disaster preparedness
 - Implementation of workflow management system
 - Use of metrics to inform work

B. NOACA Staff Engagement Process

The chosen consultant will work directly with NOACA's Internal Strategic Plan Steering Committee, but the planning process should solicit input on identified topics from all NOACA staff. NOACA asks that the vendor's proposal include suggested methodology for collecting staff feedback in an innovative and confidential way, ensuring that unique perspectives throughout the agency are captured. Consultant is also asked to identify other staff feedback touchpoints within the overall process (if recommended).

C. Final Deliverable

The project should culminate in an Internal Strategic Plan document explaining the process undertaken and the subsequent results and recommendations. The Plan should include, at minimum, an established staff vision and shared core values, general findings from the staff engagement process, and recommendations of strategies, programs, and/or initiatives for internal agency implementation.

4. QUALIFICATIONS

The selected vendor (or any of the selected vendor's subcontractors) cannot currently, or at the time of contracting, be listed on any federal, state, or local government jurisdiction debarment or suspension lists.

The successful vendor shall have experience in advising and proposing a systematic and structured process to guide NOACA in setting goals, defining organizational direction, and allocating resources effectively to measure and achieve those goals. Consultant or team members should have the following certifications: SHRM SCP, Lean Six Sigma. The successful vendor shall have experience advising or working with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) or similar agencies.

5. PROCUREMENT TIMELINE

NOACA's process and *estimated* timeline for the selection of a consultant are as follows:

July 11, 2023, 5:00p.m. - Deadline for RFP Submittals

Submittals must be received by NOACA by the above deadline. Proposals shall be submitted in PDF via email to procurement@mpo.noaca.org. NOACA assumes no responsibility for formatting or transmission errors. Submittals received after the deadline will not be considered. Please reference "Internal Strategic Plan" in the email subject line.

July 2023 - Consideration of Proposals

An evaluation team will select candidate vendor(s) from proposals received. This process will include review and scoring of proposals, and review of references and other information as necessary. Candidate vendors may be interviewed by the team and asked to enter into negotiations as part of the selection process. At the end of this process, NOACA will select the proposal it considers the most highly qualified, price and all other factors considered.

July/August, 2023 – Approval of Contract by NOACA Executive Director & CEO

6. REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPOSALS

A. General Instructions

NOACA will not reimburse proposers for any costs incurred prior to award and execution of a contract, including, but not limited to, the preparation and submittal of proposals or participation in the evaluation and negotiation process.

Proposals shall clearly address the evaluation criteria and information requested herein. Overly elaborate proposals and proposals containing only generalized marketing information are discouraged and may result in a lower evaluation score.

Firms included on the current Excluded Parties List System maintained by the United States General Services Administration, or on comparable lists of suspended or debarred firms maintained by the State of Ohio or jurisdictions within NOACA's service area, are not eligible for selection.

B. Requirements for Technical Proposal (Volume I)

The Technical Proposal shall include the following components:

1. A cover letter that identifies the prime consultant and all subcontractors, if applicable. The cover letter shall identify the officer or other responsible executive of the firm authorized to negotiate and agree to a contract by name, title, address, telephone, email and facsimile. This individual shall serve as NOACA's point of contact for all communications regarding this solicitation. The letter should also contain a commitment that the proposed pricing will be valid for not less than 120 days.
2. General information about the firm including location of office(s), number of years in business and areas of service expertise. Identify key management staff and a brief description of their qualifications and experience.
3. Description of the proposer's approach to the project, including a detailed scope of services that reflects understanding of the objectives of the Internal Strategic Plan project. If appropriate, the proposer shall expand on the scope of work and provide suggestions that will enhance the outcomes of the project. This section should detail the tasks needed to accomplish all objectives of the project. The project approach should highlight innovation and creativity, as appropriate. Provide a table, attached to the submission as Appendix A, that summarizes and breaks down the project's deliverables, percentage of work, and estimated time to complete. A table template is attached to this RFP as *Exhibit A*.
4. Key staff to be assigned to this project and the deliverables for which each individual will be responsible. Attach resumes that describe the education, experience and professional certifications for each key staff person. Highlight experience and education relevant to the project. NOACA reserves the right to approve or reject any staff members assigned by primary vendor to this project.
5. Description of the capacity of consultant to perform the work in a timely manner, relative to the firm's present workload and the availability of the assigned staff.

6. Listing of prior work on other projects that are similar in scope to this Internal Strategic Planning project. Examples should describe the scope of work, and demonstrate successful performance in project completion. The list of prior projects should include assignments undertaken in the past five (5) years, and also identify the duration of the project and the client. Provide contact information (name, title, organization, email, and telephone) for each client on prior work examples. NOACA may contact references as well as other resources to verify a firm's qualifications, experience, professionalism, and ability to perform the work. If any such projects were not satisfactorily completed, provide an explanation of the circumstances.
7. There is no Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Goal for this contract, but DBE certified firms are encouraged to apply, and others are encouraged to subcontract a portion of work to certified DBE firms. If a prime contractor will award, or attempt to award, a subcontract to a certified firm, the prime contractor must follow the "Good Faith Efforts" described in the Federal Code of Regulations at [40 CFR Part 33](#).
8. List of all subcontractors, identifying those certified as Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) by the State of Ohio or another relevant agency with the authority to make such certification, and the type and percentage of work to be performed by each subcontractor. Include description(s) of subcontractor(s) qualifications, identify key personnel, and provide contact person with respective email and telephone number for any subcontractor(s). NOACA reserves the right to approve or reject any subcontractors proposed by vendor for this project.

C. Requirements for Business Proposal - Volume II

The Business Proposal shall include the following components:

1. A pricing proposal. Price quotes shall not exceed the budget of ~~\$50,000~~ \$25,000. In the pricing proposal, hourly rates should reflect only the direct cost of labor, and not overhead, burden, or profit. Direct costs such as travel expenses, fixed-price payments to subcontractors or vendors, will be reimbursed at cost. NOACA will reimburse approved travel and living expenses only for travel more than 50 miles from the traveler's ordinary work location, at the rates specified in the General Services Administration's most current per diem rates for the locality involved.
2. Copies of the proposer's worker's compensation, general liability, professional liability and automobile insurance certificates.
3. If the consultant or subcontractor is DBE certified, a copy or copies of the consultant or sub-consultant's certificate(s), as applicable.
4. Completed form "Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension & Other Responsibility Matters," attached to this RFP.

The proposer may identify any proposed exceptions to NOACA's Terms and Conditions as contained in this RFP, or propose any additional terms it considers appropriate. Such proposed exceptions or additional terms must be specific, and include a clear explanation of the reasons for the exception or addition. Please note that certain terms contained herein are required by law or regulation and cannot be modified.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Experience/Qualifications (up to 30 points)

Each consultant will be evaluated in regards to their experience and qualifications appropriate to the proposed project. Scores will be based on each firm's experience on similar projects. Factors to consider include:

- i. Experience and education of project personnel
- ii. Professional certifications of project personnel
- iii. Relevant experience on projects similar to the current project, or projects that include applicable elements
- iv. Experience with Metropolitan Planning Organizations and/or similar agencies

2. Project Approach (up to 40 points)

Each consultant will be evaluated based on the approach presented in the Technical Proposal to complete the project. Factors to consider include:

- i. Demonstration of understanding the goals and objectives of the proposed project
- ii. Provision of a projected table of deliverables included in the Technical Proposal, including identification of project components that will achieve the objectives of the project
- iii. Methods and strategies to best accomplish all deliverables of the project
- iv. Creativity and innovation

3. Project Management (up to 30 points)

Each consultant will be evaluated based on presentation of a management plan that ensures services are successfully completed. Factors to consider include:

- i. Demonstration of effective past project management, resulting in the delivery of a high-quality work product
- ii. Capacity to manage the project meet deliverables according to defined timeline
- iii. Description of performance evaluation methodology that monitors for achievement of project goals and objectives throughout the duration of the project
- iv. Description of status reporting methodology, including details of both written and oral reporting
- v. Project approach that demonstrates how tasks or parts are coordinated, staffed, and completed
- vi. Identification of potential risks, and steps that can be taken to prevent or mitigate those risks

4. Project Budget and Cost

Price quotes shall not exceed the budget of ~~\$50,000~~ \$25,000. Points are not awarded for this category, but NOACA may consider cost during the evaluation process.

B. Evaluation Procedures

NOACA intends to award a contract to the vendor whose proposal, including negotiated modifications, is considered to provide the best combination of technical quality and cost. A team comprised of NOACA staff will evaluate any proposals received by the deadline. The evaluation team will first evaluate the proposals according to the technical criteria stated above. NOACA may ask vendors for clarification of their proposals; conduct interviews; or request that proposers give presentations. Such interviews may be conducted in person, by telephone or through video conference. If such interviews are held, the evaluation team will re-evaluate the proposals, at which time they may eliminate some vendors from further consideration.

NOACA may also negotiate with proposers that remain in the competitive range. Following such negotiations, NOACA may request that the remaining firms submit a Best and Final Offer, which the team will evaluate. The team may then recommend that firm for award. Award recommendation is subject to final approval by the NOACA Executive Director & CEO.

NOACA reserves the right to accept proposals other than the lowest cost offered, reject any and all proposals, or to negotiate separately with any proposer or proposers as deemed to be in NOACA's best interest. NOACA also reserves the right to waive minor informalities, irregularities or errors which do not affect the substance of the proposal, or may award on the basis of initial proposals received without discussions or negotiations with proposers. The original proposal, therefore, should represent the vendor's best effort to meet NOACA's needs at a reasonable price.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND CONDITIONS

- A. It is the policy of NOACA that Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) shall have equal opportunity to compete for this federally assisted contract, or equal opportunity to subcontract with a prime contractor to perform the requested services.

This proposal does not include a specific DBE goal. However, consultants that are DBE-certified, others that subcontract with a DBE-certified business, or others that demonstrate a good faith effort to subcontract such firms, are encouraged. This documentation must be included with the proposer's submittal. Actions which may be considered as good faith efforts are described in [Subpart C of 40 CFR Part 33](#). If a DBE-certified firm is the prime or sub-consultant, the price proposal should demonstrate the level of DBE participation as a percentage of the total contract.

- B. Consultants agree not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, age, creed, sex, sexual orientation or national origin. Such action shall include, but not be limited to, the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment or recruitment advertising, layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship. Consultants further agree to comply with all requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., 49 C.F.R. Part 21.
- C. The proposal, including price, shall be valid for at least 120 days from the date of submission.
- D. An RFP does not constitute an offer or a contract. No contract may be awarded without a resolution by the NOACA Board of Directors.
- E. NOACA reserves the right to amend, cancel or reissue the RFP or to revise the timeline at any time.

NOACA reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive minor irregularities in the proposal process. NOACA may accept any proposal if such action is believed to be in the best interest of the agency.

- F. NOACA is not liable for any cost incurred by the proposer prior to execution of a contract.
- G. The contract between the successful proposer and NOACA shall include all documents mutually entered into including the contract instrument, relevant portions of the RFP and the response to the RFP. The contract must include and be consistent with the provisions stated in the RFP, as may be modified by negotiations.
- H. The prime consultant or system provider will assume the responsibility for all services offered in the proposal regardless of whether directly performed by the prime consultant.

Further, the prime consultant will be the sole point of contact for NOACA with regard to contractual matters.

- I. The consultant project team shall be approved by NOACA. NOACA must approve any changes in the project team.
- J. Any award of contract will be to the consultant that provides the highest value relative to costs.

9. QUESTIONS

For questions regarding the RFP, please contact procurement@mpo.noaca.org. Submitting questions as early as possible provides NOACA the opportunity to respond. Questions received close to the deadline may not be addressed. All answers will be publicly posted on [NOACA's website under About>Contact Us>Doing Business with NOACA](#).

EXHIBIT A - *Example Table of Deliverables*

Deliverable	Description	% Work	Time to complete (months)
Total		100%	

CERTIFICATION REGARDING DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION & OTHER RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS

This Certification is required to be submitted to NOACA on behalf of the principal bidder/proposer and all subcontractors whose subcontracts are reasonably anticipated to exceed \$25,000 in value.

- A. The undersigned Bidder/Proposer/Subcontractor ("Attester") certifies to the best of its knowledge and belief that the Attester and/or any of its principals or subcontractors:
1. Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by any Federal department or agency;
 2. Have not, within a three-year period preceding this bid/proposal, been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain or performing a public (Federal, State or Local) transaction or contract or subcontract; violation of Federal or State antitrust statutes, or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements or receiving stolen property; and
 3. Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State or local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in Paragraph 2 above; and
 4. Have not, within a three-year period preceding this bid/proposal, had one or more public transactions (Federal, State or local) terminated for cause or default by any federal, state or local agency.

"Principals" for the purposes of this certification, means officers, directors, owners, partners, and persons having primary management or supervisory responsibilities within a business entity (e.g., general manager, plant manager, head of a subsidiary, division, or business segment, and similar positions).

This certification concerns a matter which may be within the jurisdiction of an agency of the United States and the making of a false, fictitious, or fraudulent certification may render the maker subject to prosecution under Section 1001, Title 18, United States Code.

- B. The Attester shall provide immediate written notice to NOACA's Procurement Officer if, at any time the Attester learns that its certification was erroneous when submitted or has become erroneous by reason of changed circumstances.
- C. A certification that any of the items in Paragraph A exists will not necessarily result in withholding of an award under this solicitation. However, the certification will be considered in connection with a determination of the Attester's responsibility. Failure of the Attester to furnish a certification or provide such additional information as requested by NOACA may render the Attester non-responsible, and the Attester shall not be considered for award.
- D. Nothing contained in the foregoing shall be construed to require establishment of a system of records in order to render, in good faith, the certification required by Paragraph A. The
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knowledge and information of an Attester is not required to exceed that which is normally possessed by a prudent person in the ordinary course of business dealings.

- E. The certification in Paragraph A is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when making award. If it is later determined that the Attester rendered an erroneous certification, in addition to other remedies available to NOACA, NOACA may terminate the contract resulting from this solicitation for default.

If the Attester is unable to certify to any of the statements in this certification, it shall attach an explanation to this certification.

THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFIES OR AFFIRMS THE TRUTHFULNESS AND ACCURACY OF THE CONTENTS OF THE STATEMENTS SUBMITTED ON OR WITH THIS CERTIFICATION AND UNDERSTANDS THAT THE PROVISIONS OF 31 U.S.C. SECTIONS 3801 ET. SEQ. ARE APPLICABLE THERETO.

Executed this ____ day of _____, 20__.

Name of Bidder/Proposer: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Signature of Authorized Official: _____

Printed Name of Official _____ Title of Official _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____ E-Mail _____
