

Request For Proposals
RFP #22-02
Town of Arlington
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Division
Community Equity Audit

Responses Due:

Thursday February 17, 2022
Late responses will be rejected

Deliver Complete Responses To:

Town Manager
Town Manager's/Purchasing Dept.
Town Hall Annex 2nd floor 730
Massachusetts Avenue Arlington,
MA 02476

For Further Information Please Contact:

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Proposals are invited and will be received by the Town Manager, Town of Arlington, Massachusetts on or before **Thursday, February 17, 2022 1:00 PM**, the Town Manager's Office/Purchasing Department, Town Hall Annex, 730 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington MA 02476-4908.

One hard copy of technical proposal and one electronic copy shall be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "Bid #22-02 Community Equity Audit -- Technical Proposal" and one (1) copy of the price proposal in a sealed envelope marked "Bid # 22-02 Community Equity Audit- Price Proposal"

Overview

The Town of Arlington (hereinafter referred to as "the Town") strives to provide the services it offers to all residents effectively and efficiently, while maintaining a commitment to disseminate public information transparently, accessibly, and accurately. The Town has also adopted the following statement: *Arlington values equity, diversity, and inclusion. We are committed to building a community where everyone is heard, respected, and protected.* This commitment is a strong step in the right direction to building a more equitable Arlington. The demographics across the Town have changed, increasing diversity, but with this comes a need to adapt to the changing community.

The Town, acting through its Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) of Health and Human Services, seeks proposals from consultants/organizations to perform a community equity audit, and provide recommendations for improved equitable practices within the Town.

The Town of Arlington, MA is soliciting quotes from qualified, independent firms, consultants, organizations with expertise in conducting community equity audits. Per Chapter 30B of the Massachusetts General Laws, we are requesting written quotations from a minimum of three applicants who customarily provide the service that we are requesting.

The Town of Arlington reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive any minor informality in the proposal process, and accept the proposal deemed to be in the best interest of the Town of Arlington.

This work is funded by the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and available American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Background

In 2019 the Town of Arlington joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a national network of governments working to achieve racial equity; embarked on the Race, Equity And Leadership (REAL) Training Program with the National League of Cities (NLC), and hired a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator, now Director position. The Town has three well-established commissions, made up of appointed volunteers that give attention to matters of diversity and inclusion; The Human Rights Commission, Disability Commission, and LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission. Over the last two years, training and educational opportunities have continued for employees, alongside community programs focused on racial and social justice.

Envision Arlington conducts the annual Town Survey, to which the Diversity Task Group (DTG) has contributed questions in the last few years. In 2021 the questionnaire focused on issues of diversity and safety in the town. Incorporating such questions was an effort to engage community members in a different way. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, remote meetings and virtual events have expanded accessibility to some, and allowed for increased participation. Employees and consultants are making use of virtual spaces, to hold more open forums and focus groups for feedback on projects and plans. But we are aware that not all community members are engaging in this virtual way.

While the Town has close to 100 boards and commissions, a number of external community groups exist, and communications and collaboration across the many groups has proven to be a challenge. Additionally, a newly established Civic Engagement Group, also a part of Envision Arlington, is starting to explore ways in which community members can become more civically engaged, understanding that many of the community members who are on boards or commissions are also involved in Town Meeting and often attend other public meetings.

The Town recognizes its limitations in outreach and communications, and that not all community members' needs are being met, and not all concerns are being voiced, and is looking to take the next strategic step in advancing equity efforts for all. That next step involves hiring a qualified outside consultant or organization to conduct a town wide community equity audit. The audit's

purpose is to understand the barriers to access for community members, to identify language and communication needs for residents, and identify how to foster community engagement.

The following Scope of Work describes the extent of services to be provided by the Consultant. This outline is not necessarily all-inclusive, and the Consultant will include in the proposal any tasks or alternatives and services deemed necessary to satisfactorily complete the project.

Scope of Work

The Town of Arlington is seeking proposals from qualified consultant(s)/organizations that have previous experience conducting equity audits. Previous work with municipalities is preferred, but applicants with ample experience in the field will be considered. The audit is a detailed study of the Town's culture, values, diversity, community offerings, communication methods, and relevant policies and procedures, and root causes which might inhibit community engagement, to identify opportunities for improvements in becoming a more equitable town and better serving all residents. The audit will look at practices and programs throughout the Town that directly or indirectly impact residents relative to their race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, nation original, or other socio-culturally significant factors. The consultant/organization would then report their findings and make appropriate recommendations and suggestions and a strategic plan to implement changes to advance equity and inclusion within the community.

Project is estimated at 10 to 12 months, and should not exceed \$100,000. Bidders are welcome and encouraged to submit alternative strategies that they feel are more productive to the Project Goals.

Project Goals

- Provide an evaluation of Arlington's services and programs available to all community members, to determine barriers to access, and areas where inequities exist
 - Barriers may include lack of translation services, service information was not provided in an accessible way, etc.
- Provide a community climate assessment, to report how inclusive, equitable and diverse the Town feels/presents based on feedback from Town leadership, employees, residents, business owners, essentially all who identify as community members
 - This is to gage the overall environment experienced by community members
- Make use of the school district equity audit that will be taking place (depending on timeline, and what is available)
- Provide a current cost estimate for improvements to communications services, and language/translation services
- Provide a strategic plan and specific recommendations for improving language access and translation services, engagement and communications strategies

Specific Objectives:

Community Climate Assessment

- Consultant shall facilitate, and provide options and recommendations regarding the engagement practices for this assessment
 - May include but is not limited to coordination and distribution of a questionnaire/ survey that would assess climate, hold a full open forum (virtual or in person) to allow for larger discussion about climate
- Engage Town employees, Select Board Members, Town Meeting Members, and members of Town-appointed Committees and Commissions to gain insights and develop an understanding of the current environment and culture from those who are within the organization
- Engage and conduct small groups with community members, focusing on those who are not necessarily involved in Town government
 - These groups should span all facets of town life including religious institutions, formal and informal ethnic/cultural groups, businesses, immigrant community, residents living in affordable housing, residents who do not speak English or ESL, etc.
 - A detailed report on the perceived environment, sense of inclusion and belonging, and common themes that emerge should be provided
- Specifically survey the Town leadership and governing body's readiness to address institutional racism and equity- this means Select Board, Town Meeting Members
- Provide a number of opportunities, both virtual and in person, for participation in these groups. Varying dates and times are important to ensure inclusion of as many community members as possible

Evaluation of Services and Programs

- Review the Town's current community outreach and engagement practices and efforts, and if there are differences for non-English speakers
 - Identify strengths, challenges, limitations, effectiveness, and recommendations for improvement and an outreach plan
- Review APS school language information, and assess language access needs of community members who are not involved with the school district, including review of all languages spoken by residents, and recommendations on how to reach them
- Review Town policies, practices and procedures
 - Includes current strategies and practices, and core documents within the municipality that directly impact equitable access to Town services and programs, thus promoting equity or creating inequity
 - Submit recommendations for improvements and changes based on best practices
- Identify areas of community data that should be tracked
- Document all findings, recommendations and plans in a final report

Other Suggested Items

- Based on the Project Goals and objectives listed above, the consultant can propose additional items if they feel the full scope has not been captured

Deliverables

- The selected consultant will be required to coordinate and facilitate focus groups with all stakeholders, both virtual and in person
- The selected consultant will be required to attend and present at one Arlington Select Board meeting, when the audit is complete
- Progress reports will be requested
- The selected consultant will provide a final report that includes documentation of all findings, recommendations, and a strategic plan for how to implement the recommendations and changes. Each part of the deliverables should be submitted in electronic format and on a USB-compatible hard drive and contain a Microsoft Word-compatible version, and a searchable PDF version. All images, tables and graphs used in the final version should be in Microsoft Excel compatible format. All materials will become the property of the Town of Arlington

Project Timeline

The Town of Arlington will solicit bids from consultants/organizations beginning in January 2022.

The Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Director of Human Resources, and other members of the DEI Team will review the proposals and interview selected consultants. The winning bid will be referred to the Town Manager's Office/Purchasing Department to finalize the contract. The work of the community equity audit is scheduled to begin April 2022.

Proposal Submission Requirements

Project Cost

- Please identify the cost for each task in the Scope of Work
 - Includes number of staff needed to complete each task, and the total cost
- Additional costs/charges (i.e. travel expenses), must be defined in the proposal
- Final summary of costs, broken down by task, by staff person, components, optional work, taxes, etc.
- Acknowledge meeting insurance requirements set forth in accompanying professional services agreement

Approach and Timeline

- A work plan describing strategies, roles, responsibilities and methodologies of how the Scope of Work items will be completed
- Description of the plan for meeting with all community stakeholders, whose feedback will inform the climate assessment
- Detailed description of the deliverables and outcomes
- Timeline for all plans
 - Detailed timeframe for completion of the project
 - Timeframe will be part of the contractual agreement

Experience

- Provide documentation of experience providing requested services. Examples include audits or assessments that are relevant to diversity, racial equity, inclusion, belonging, culture
- Showcase experience in the municipal sector, if applicable. Preference will be given to respondents who have developed plans for other municipalities
- Brief biographies, professional training summaries of the proposed team members
- Sample list of past and current municipal clients
- At least three (3) business references, including contact information: names, addresses, and phone numbers plus a description of the type of work you performed for them.

Communication

- Please provide as detailed as possible, a written summary identifying the types of information, data, and assistance expected from the Town of Arlington in order to complete this project
- Collaboratively work with the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and other members of the DEI Team, throughout the process and keep them informed about what is occurring at each audit stage
- Complete a written summary of findings, make recommendations and suggestions, and include a strategic plan for publication

Project Schedule

- The project is expected to start in April 2022, and a reasonable timeline to complete the project should be prepared. The Consultant is not expected to present at Town Meeting.
- The project shall have a desired completion date of no later than 12 months from the written Notice To Proceed, given by the Town of Arlington. It is preferable that the community equity audit is complete by March, 2023.

Qualifications

The proposing consultant/organization must meet the following requirements:

- The team must have at least four (4) years of experience in conducting community-based assessments, that involve engagement and policy, practice and procedural reviews
- Team members working on this project must be available for meetings, during daytime or evenings, with the Town, as required
- Team must have previous experience with similar projects, including work in the public sector, non-profit sector or with a school district
- The volume of the proposer's current projects and projected workload must not adversely affect its ability to immediately initiate work and to follow through with the project in a timely and professional manner. The consultant and all team members must be capable of devoting a significant amount of time to this project in order to complete the work within the schedule outlined in this RFP.

Comparative Evaluation Criteria

The Town will award the contract to the consultant/organization offering the most advantageous response to this RFP, taking into consideration all evaluation criteria. The selection process will include an evaluation procedure based on the criteria identified below. Finalists will be required to appear for an interview.

1. Proposer's depth of experience with similar projects, and prior experience working with public contracts, equity audits, climate assessments, strategic plans and best practices in diversity, equity and inclusion.

Highly Advantageous: The Proposer has four (4) or more years of experience in conducting successful equity audits, within the public sector, educational institutions, or other non-profit organizations, and during the past four (4) years has concluded at least three (3) successful equity audits in the public sector, educational institutions or other non-profit organizations, one (1) of which must have been for a client/community of similar size and demographics as Arlington.

Advantageous: The Proposer has at least three (3) years of experience in successful equity audits and has concluded at least two (2) successful equity audits with clients in the public sector.

Not Advantageous: The Proposer has fewer than three (3) years of experience, but more than one (1) year consulting on projects of similar size and scope. The proposer can demonstrate the completion of one (1) successful equity audit with a similar sized client.

Unacceptable: The Proposer has fewer than two (2) years of experience in equity audits, and consulting on projects of similar size and scope to this project. The Proposer has not concluded any successful equity audit and cannot demonstrate successful completion of similar projects.

2. Evaluation of the proposed plan, approach to the project is desirable, and demonstrates understanding of all project components and community outreach needs.

Highly Advantageous: The proposal contains a clear, creative and comprehensive plan that addresses all the components in the Scope of Work, including Project Goals and Specific Objectives, as stated in the RFP.

Advantageous: The proposal contains a clear plan that addresses most of the components in the Scope of Work, including Project Goals and Specific Objectives, as stated in the RFP.

Not Advantageous: The proposal does not contain a clear plan to address many of the components stated in the Scope of work and RFP.

Unacceptable: The proposal does not contain any plan to address the components in the Scope of Work, including Project Goals and Specific Objectives, as stated in the RFP.

3. Credibility and strength of client references. The Proposer shall demonstrate prior client satisfaction with working relationship, project management capabilities, and technical expertise in developing similar projects.

Highly Advantageous: More than three clients who consider your services satisfactory or better.

Advantageous: Three clients who consider your services satisfactory or better.

Not Advantageous: Three or more clients not all of whom consider your services satisfactory or better.

Unacceptable: Fewer than three clients who consider your services satisfactory or better, or three or more clients who consider your services unsatisfactory.

4. Proposer demonstrates ability to meet project budget and schedule.

Highly Advantageous: All of the Proposer's references indicate that the projects were completed within the proposed budget and on schedule, or with minimal to insignificant delays.

Advantageous: One of the Proposer's references indicates that the project was not completed within the proposed budget attributable to the Proposer or with substantial delays attributable to the Proposer, and no current project or project completed in the last three years experienced substantial delays.

Not Advantageous: Two of the Proposer's references indicate that the project was not completed within budget attributable to the Proposer or was completed with substantial delays attributable to the Proposer, and no current project or project completed in the last year experienced substantial delays attributable to the Proposer.

Unacceptable: More than two of the Proposer's references indicate that the project was not completed within budget attributable to the Proposer or was completed with substantial delays attributable to the Proposer.

Submittal Requirements

Interested qualified consultants/organizations must submit responses addressing the objectives, scope and schedule described in this RFP. Responses must include, at a minimum, the following:

1. General description of the consultant's/team's experience.
2. Description, with examples, of the consultant's/team's experience in working with clients in the public sector, educational institutions and/or other non-profit organizations, to conduct an equity audit.
3. A detailed scope of services for the proposed work, including the consultant's/team's general approach to such work, evidence of understanding of the goals and objectives of the project, and methodology for accomplishing the tasks as listed in this RFP.
4. An outline of the schedule for completion of tasks (timeline) as presented in the consultant's/team's approach to the scope of services.
5. Description of or resumes for the assigned staffs' experience, educational background, availability, and chain of responsibility, including the name and title of the principal and project manager assigned to the project, names of all subconsultants, and resumes of all personnel to be associated with the project.
6. At least three (3) references, including name, title, agency, address, description of project, project cost, and telephone number and the email address for clients with similar projects completed by the Consultant within the last four years (including dates).

CERTIFICATE OF NON-COLLUSION

The undersigned certifies under penalties of perjury that this bid or proposal has been made and submitted in good faith and without collusion or fraud with any other person. As used in this certification, the word "person" shall mean any natural person, business, partnership, corporation, union, committee, club or other organization, entity, or group of individuals.

(Signature of individual submitting bid or proposal)

(Name of individual submitting bid or proposal)

Name of Business

Date

Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 62C, Section 49A, I certify under the penalties of perjury that I have complied with all laws of the commonwealth relating to taxes, reporting of employees and contractors, and withholding and remitting child support.

Social Security Number or
Federal Identification Number

Signature of Individual or Responsible
Corporate Officer and Title

**NON-COLLUSION FORMS
MUST BE SIGNED AND
SUBMITTED WITH BID**