**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS**

**Application for Program Evaluators**

State Education Resource Center (SERC) & SERC Foundation: Middletown

**Proposals Due: March 17, 2017**



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Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

**Overview of the Requirement**

As SERC and the SERC Foundation embark on the implementation of a comprehensive grant writing strategy, proposals to identify qualified researchers/consultant(s)/service contractor(s) to provide comprehensive evaluation services are requested. This information will be used to pre-select evaluators who will, once selected, assist project leads with all aspects of designing and conducting program evaluation efforts to support the implementation of the specific strategies identified by grant-funded programs. Specifically, this includes being a critical thought partner and offering assistance and expertise in conducting pre-assessments and analyzing current conditions to identify specific program goals and outcomes with benchmark measures to monitor throughout the implementation process. This partnership during program development and implementation is essential in providing the program evaluator(s) with the specific information they will need to successfully propose models for evaluation and consequently producing in-depth and comprehensive reports compliant with each grant’s required content and specifications. SERC and the SERC Foundation, at our sole discretion, will make multiple awards based upon the pool of qualified applicants on an as-needed basis.

**SERC & SERC Foundation: Background Information**

SERC is a quasi-public agency established to assist the State Board of Education in the provision of programs and activities that will promote educational equity and excellence. SERC provides professional development and information dissemination in the latest research and best practices to educators, service providers, and families throughout the state, as well as job-embedded technical assistance and training within schools, programs, and districts.

Established in 1969 as the Special Education Resource Center, SERC became the State Education Resource Center under a 2005 change in state statutes—signifying a belief that programs are most effective when general education and special education do not function as separate systems, but are united together. The change in name reflects the broad services and programs that SERC has been offering for many years in areas important to both *general* and *special* education to support the achievement of all learners. The agency continues to maintain the Special Education Resource Center in addition to its broader responsibilities, including early childhood education and school improvement.

SERC is known for it’s high-quality, research-based professional development to educators, service providers, families, and community members as part of its commitment to improve the achievement of Connecticut's children and youth. SERC provides professional development through statewide programming activities or, increasingly, on-site, job-embedded learning opportunities in Connecticut public schools and programs. The SERC Library has been open to all Connecticut residents since SERC’s founding and regularly disseminates published materials to educators and families.

In 2015, the SERC Foundation was created to advance SERC’s equity and social justice work through public and private partnerships. Together, SERC and the SERC Foundation are dedicated to closing the academic opportunity and achievement gaps between subgroups.

Additional information relative to SERC and the SERC Foundation is available on the SERC website: [www.ctserc.org](http://www.ctserc.org).

**Funds Available**

By responding to this RFQ, applicants agree to be available to support grant applications submitted on behalf of SERC and/or the SERC Foundation. Funds available are dependent on the scope of services needed for each grant submitted in terms of the grant’s required content and specifications. Therefore, specific budgets will be requested at the time of SERC’s or the SERC Foundation’s response to federal, state, local, or private grant Requests for Proposal (RFP) or Requests for Applications (RFA). Please see Appendix C for budget allocation and budget justification templates. For the purpose of this RFQ, please submit proposed budgets indicating hourly rates and other probable expenses using Appendix B.

**RFQ Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| RFQ Release Date on the SERC website at ctserc.org | March 13, 2017 |
| Receipt of questions | All inquiries related to this RFQ should be made in writing via email by February 24, 2017 and addressed to: RFQ@CTSERC.org |
| Answers to questions will be posted as an Addendum on the SERC website | March 3, 2017 |
| Proposal due date | March 17, 2017 |

During the period from your organization’s receipt of this Request for Qualifications and until a contract is awarded, your organization shall not contact any employee of the SERC Foundation or SERC for additional information except in writing directed to RFQ@CTSERC.org.

**Scope of Work**

In anticipation of future grant awards which may have a requirement for third-party evaluation services, SERC and the SERC Foundation are seeking qualified consultants to provide independent evaluation services on an as-needed basis. Because the total volume of future work cannot be pre-determined, multiple awards *may* be made as the result of this RFQ, at the option of SERC and the SERC Foundation. No contract award will guarantee a specific amount of business or income. Prior to commencement of work on any new grant project, one or more awarded firms may be asked to submit project-specific plans, including the proposed number of hours for completion. SERC and the SERC Foundation will reserve the right to award projects in any manner deemed to be in its own best interest.

The successful proposer(s) shall demonstrate their experience with evaluating federal, state and/or private grants and multi-partner initiatives. SERC and the SERC Foundation anticipate that the evaluator will provide services that will include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Assist SERC and the SERC Foundation with developing evaluation plans during the grant proposal period.
2. Meet with SERC and/or the SERC Foundation staff to discuss grant deliverables and outcomes and program implementation and milestones achieved.
3. Conduct interviews and/or surveys with program participants, staff, and/or community stakeholders.

Required Capacity and Expertise:

SERC and the SERC Foundation seek to contract with an applicant with the experience and capacity to implement the following:

* Evaluating programs and services in public schools
* Designing and implementing evaluation activities for grant submission, including developing instructions and training for successful administration, process for collection, analysis of data with the identification of specific improvements, and areas of challenge needing attention across multiple levels and stakeholders
* Effectively collaborating with all key stakeholders in the evaluation process
* Maintaining and analyzing longitudinal data trends
* Monitoring program progress toward required measures and outcomes
* Suggesting evaluation tools (e.g., surveys and evaluation activities) to develop required interim and/or annual reports
* Providing suggestions for the effective ongoing use of data as well as the use of data at the school level
* Partnering to develop engaging and interactive presentations that can be adapted by various stakeholders.

**Proposal Requirements**

SERC and the SERC Foundation seek to contract with an applicant with the experience and capacity to implement the skills as outlined in the scope of work. Therefore, proposals should include a description of the following:

**Evaluation Philosophy** (Not to Exceed 1 page)

Clearly and succinctly describe your model or philosophy of evaluation. This should include preferences for a quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approach as well as support for the preference. Additionally, describe your approach to collaboration including how stakeholder participation is enlisted.

**Technical Experience** (Not to Exceed 4 pages):

Clearly articulate the capacity to develop logical study design and technically competent methodology. Responders must demonstrate knowledge of existing research, policies, and practice regarding the questions and issues related to professional learning to support educational equity in schools. The response should indicate approach to program evaluation methods and include effective methods to conduct surveys and collect data on project impacts. Please identify any anticipated difficulties that may be encountered in executing program evaluation in natural settings and propose practical and sound solutions to these problems. Briefly describe several phases into which this type of work can logically be divided and performed.

**Management Experience** (Not to Exceed 3 pages):

The resource capability and program management for planning and performing the work should be presented in this section. Describe overall qualifications, relevant prior experience, command of existing research on state and national educational policy and practice, and ability to present findings in a useful manner. Short biographies of personnel performing the work must be described in this section in terms of numbers of people and their professional classification (e.g., project manager, etc.). Curriculum Vitae detailing the education and relevant experience of the key personnel proposed for this project are required (please place in Appendix D). The selected evaluator will be required to furnish the services of those identified in the proposal as key personnel. Any change in key personnel is subject to approval by SERC.

**Budget Allocation and Budget Justification**

For the purpose of this RFQ, please limit budget to staff per diem or per-hour costs (see Appendix B). Once the project has been selected, you may be requested to provide a more detailed budget using the templates in Appendix C.

**Submission Requirements**

All applications must be prepared in accordance with the specifications below. Applications should be **double-spaced** (with the exception of an Abstract page), size 12 font and **must include:**

1. Program Evaluation Description as outlined above
2. Cover page with original signatures (see Appendix A)
3. RFQ Budget (see Appendix B)
4. Budget Allocation and Justification (see Appendix C)
5. Copies of Curriculum Vitae (please place in an Appendix D)
6. Statement of nondiscrimination (please place in an Appendix E)

The address for mailing or delivery is:

Wendy Waithe Simmons, Ph.D., Director

SERC Foundation

25 Industrial Park Road

Middletown, CT 06457-1520

**Review and Selection Process**

A selection committee will review and score all proposals. The following information will be considered as part of the selection process and is listed in order of relative importance in addition to the requirements, terms, and conditions identified throughout this RFQ Document. Please note that the RFQ is not a binding agreement to purchase goods or services. Responses to an RFQ are assessed in light of the qualification review criteria.

**Selection Criteria:**

1. Qualifications and years of experience of key personnel
2. Organizational information including proven capacity to deliver the project requirements on time and on budget
3. Expertise regarding methodology for data collection as well as analysis and reporting of survey data
   1. Sample written reports are optional addendums to the proposal
4. Reasonable costs
5. A statement of nondiscrimination

**Selection Process**

As this RFQ is being used for pre-selection purposes, evaluators who meet the criteria will be shortlisted. Once it has been determined that an evaluator is needed for a given project, the review committee will refer to the submitted application from the shortlist to assess suitability for the work. A follow-up interview may be required.

**Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest exists wherever an individual could benefit directly or indirectly from access to information or from a decision over which they may have influence, and also includes a perceived conflict where someone might reasonably perceive there to be such benefit and influence. A conflict of interest occurs when a staff member or consultant attempts to promote a private or personal interest that results in an interference with the objective exercise of their job responsibilities, or gains any advantage by virtue of his/her position with SERC or the SERC Foundation. Conflicts of interest may be real, potential or perceived.

The respondent should disclose conflicts of interest, in writing, to the review committee, which will consider the nature of the respondent’s responsibilities and the degree of potential or apparent conflict.

**Freedom of Information**

SERC is a quasi-public entity and its records, including responses to this RFP, are public records. See Conn. Gen. Stat. §§1-200, et seq., and especially §1-210(b)(24). Due regard will be given to the protection of proprietary or confidential information contained in all proposals received. Conn. Gen. Stat. §1-210(b)(5). However, all materials associated with this RFP are subject to the terms of the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”) and all applicable rules, regulations and administrative decisions. If a firm is interested in preserving the confidentiality of any part of its proposal, it will not be sufficient merely to state generally that the proposal is proprietary or confidential in nature and not, therefore, subject to release to third parties. Instead, those particular sentences, paragraphs, pages or sections that a firm believes to be exempt from disclosure under FOIA must be specifically identified as such. Convincing explanation and rationale sufficient to justify each exemption consistent with Section 1-210(b) of FOIA must accompany the proposal. The rationale and explanation must be stated in terms of the reasons the materials are legally exempt from release pursuant to FOIA. Firms should not require that their entire proposal, nor the majority of the proposal, be confidential. Any submitted proposal, once execution of a contract is complete, and any completed contract will be considered public information. SERC has no obligation to initiate, prosecute or defend any legal proceeding or to seek a protective order or other similar relief to prevent disclosure of any information that is sought pursuant to a FOIA request. The respondent has the burden of establishing the availability of any FOIA exemption in any proceeding where it is an issue. In no event shall SERC have any liability for the disclosure of any documents or information in its possession which SERC believes are required to be disclosed pursuant to FOIA or other requirements of law.

**Appendix A**

**Cover Page**

Contact Information:

Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Primary Contact \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Authorizing Signatures:

Name of Signatory (please print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

**RFQ Budget**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Key Personnel\*** | **Title** | **General Responsibilities** | **Per diem Costs** |
|  |  |  |  |
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\* Please add more lines as appropriate

Proposed Indirect Rate:­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C**

**Budget Allocation**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Budget Allocation** | | **Proposal for Program Evaluation** | |
| **A. 111A-111B Personnel** |  | | **2016-2017** |
|  | Administrative | |  |
|  | Clerical | |  |
|  | Full-Time/Part-Time | |  |
| **Subtotal:** |  | |  |
| **B. 200 Benefits** | | | |
|  |  | |  |
| **Subtotal:** |  | |  |
| **C. 322 In-Service** | | | |
|  |  | |  |
| **Subtotal:** |  | |  |
| **D. 340 Other Professional Services** | | | |
|  |  | |  |
| **Subtotal:** |  | |  |
| **E. 530 Communication** | | | |
|  |  | |  |
| **Subtotal:** |  | |  |
| **F.580 Travel** | | | |
|  |  | |  |
| **Subtotal:** |  | |  |
| **G. 320 Other Purchased Services** | | | |
|  |  | |  |
| **Subtotal:** |  | |  |
| **H. 600 Administrative Supplies** | | | |
|  |  | |  |
| **Subtotal:** |  | |  |
| **I. 650 Technical Supplies** | | | |
|  |  | |  |
| **Subtotal:** |  | |  |
| **J. 700 Property/Equipment** | | | |
|  |  | |  |
| **Subtotal:** |  | |  |
|  |  | |  |
|  |  | |  |
| **Subtotal** |  | | $0.00 |
| **K. 196 Indirect (not to exceed 10%)** |  | | $0.00 |
| **Total** |  | |  |

**Budget Narrative**

| **Budget Narrative: Please provide detailed budget allocation with justification.** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CODE** | **Object** | **Allocation and Justification** | **Amount** |
| 111A | **Administrator** |  | $ |
| 111B | **Other direct service personnel** |  | $ |
| 112B | **Clerical** |  | $ |
| 322 | **In-service**  Payments for services performed by persons qualified to assist teachers and supervisors to enhance the quality of the teaching process. This category includes curriculum consultants, in-service training specialists, etc., who are not on the grantee payroll. |  |  |
| 340 | **Other Professional Services**  Stipends for any other grantee employee not fitting into objects 111B. |  | $ |
| 530 | **Communication**  Payments for services provided by persons or businesses to assist in transmitting and receiving messages or information. This category includes telephone services as well as postage machine rental and postage. |  | $ |
| 580 | **Travel**  Expenditures for transportation, meals, hotel, and other expenses associated with staff travel. Per diem payments to staff in lieu of reimbursement for subsistence (room and board) are also included. |  | $ |
| 320 | **Other Purchased Services**  All other payments for services rendered by organizations or personnel not on the GRANTEE payroll not detailed in 510, 530, 560, 580, or 590. These include: printing and binding, publication costs, and advertisement. |  | $ |
| 600 | **Administrative Supplies** |  | $ |
| 690 | **Technical Supplies** |  | $ |
| 700 | **Property/Equipment**  All items or equipment (machinery, tools, furniture, vehicles, apparatus, etc.) with a value of over $1,000 and a useful life of more than one year. |  | $ |
| 890 | **Other Objects** (Miscellaneous Expenditures)  Expenditures for goods or services not properly classified in one of the above objects. |  | $ |
| 196 | **Indirect Costs**  Costs incurred by the grantee that are not directly related to the program but are a result thereof. **[NOT TO EXCEED 10%]** |  |  |
|  | TOTAL | | $ |