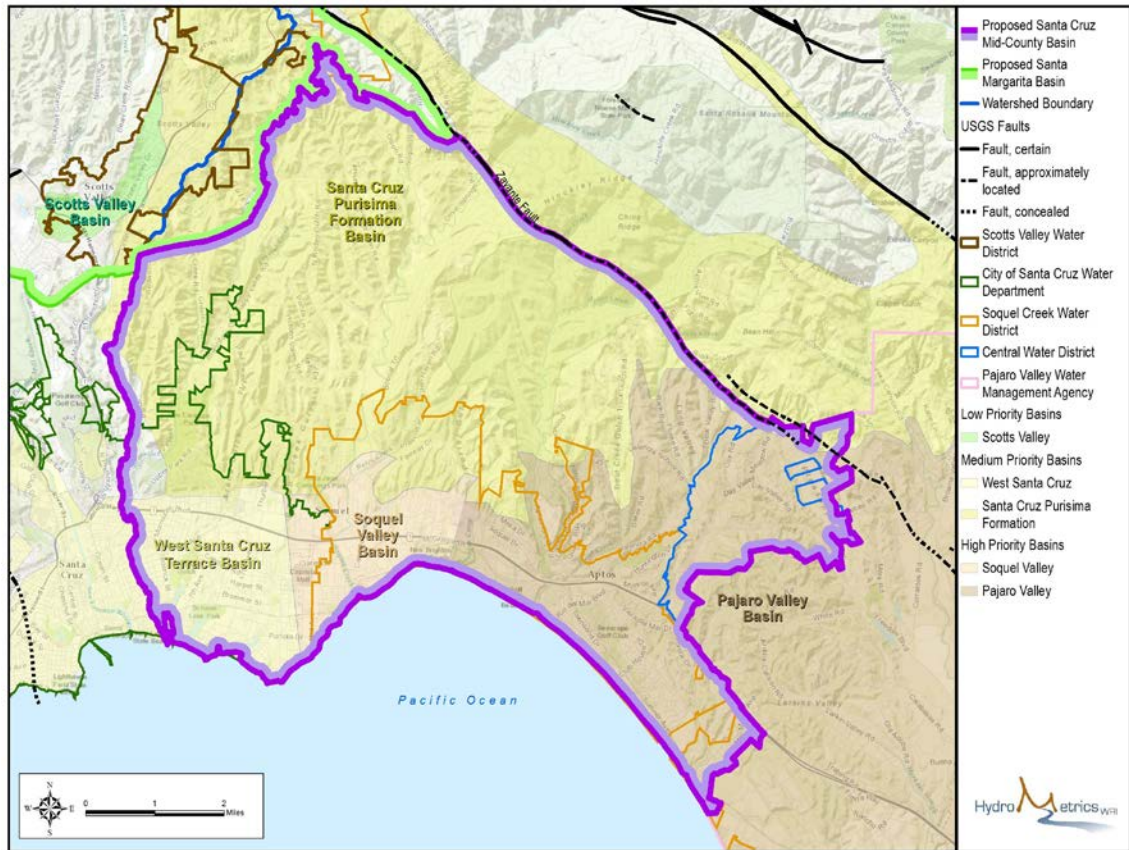


Request for Qualifications
for
Facilitation Services
for the
Santa Cruz Mid-County
Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee



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Qualifications Due: 4:00 p.m., June 30, 2017

I. Request for Qualifications

The Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA) is soliciting Statements of Qualifications (SOQ) from individuals or firms with expertise in citizen's advisory committee process planning, design and facilitation.

The MGA has not yet determined the extent or type of process planning, design or facilitation services that will be employed and will consider suggested options or proposals made as part of the SOQ submittals as well as considering approaches described in SOQs based on responder's experience elsewhere.

II. Background – Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee

A. Requirement for Groundwater Sustainability Plan

California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) became law on January 1, 2015. SGMA required the State Department of Water Resources (DWR) to assess groundwater basins into High, Medium, Low and Very Low priority classifications. DWR's Basin classifications are based on a variety of criteria, including the local population's dependence on groundwater and local groundwater levels. All basins classified as medium and high priority must prepare a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) by 2022. High priority basins that are also classified in critical overdraft must complete their GSPs by January 31, 2020. GSPs will replace groundwater management plans that were required under AB3030. Groundwater Management Plans had some of the features of a GSP, but did not include State mandated sustainability indicators or mandatory deadlines to reach sustainable groundwater management goals. In contrast, SGMA requires medium and high priority basins to make measurable progress toward sustainability, to report that progress annually, and to achieve ongoing sustainability. Basins in critical overdraft must achieve sustainability by 2040. The Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin is a high priority basin in critical overdraft.

B. Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee

During the work of the Soquel-Aptos Groundwater Management Committee's Groundwater Sustainability Agency Formation Subcommittee (GSA Formation Subcommittee), the Subcommittee considered several possible approaches to meeting the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act's (SGMA) requirement for broad stakeholder engagement in the development and implementation of GSPs.

The agencies that formed the MGA Board purposefully included three positions on the Board as a first step to meeting the SGMA's requirements for stakeholder involvement. However, the GSA Formation Subcommittee recognized that even with those Board slots, it would be desirable to expand the engagement of stakeholders in the GSP development process.

Under a grant provided by the State Water Resources Control Board, resources from the California State University and Sacramento's Center for Collaborative Policy were made

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available to the SAGMC to create a Community Engagement Plan¹. As part of the GSA Formation Subcommittee's process, it considered a range of options of broadening engagement of stakeholders in the development of the GSP. The recommendation included in the Community Engagement Plan was to create an advisory committee with expanded representation of key interests as well as MGA Board members. This committee would be tasked with working with staff and consultants to develop the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) and provide the Board with recommendations on how to address key policy issues that will need to be covered by the plan.

After considering the range of relevant stakeholders and interests that it would be desirable to include in a committee to advise the Board on the GSP, the MGA Working Group recommends that the Board create a committee of 13 individuals representing the following interests:

Interest Group	Number of Seats
MGA Member Agencies	4
MGA Board Member Private Well Owners Representative	1
Institutional User	1
Agricultural User	1
Business Interest	1
Environmental Interest	1
Small Water System Management	1
Water Utility Rate Payer	1
Representatives of the Community At Large	2
Total	13

These particular interests were chosen for inclusion in the GSP Advisory Committee by the MGA Working Group because they cover the key user groups and interests. Tribal and state or federal fish and wildlife agencies were not included because the MGA Working Group provided for their involvement on an as needed basis through the use of short term working groups that would operate during the planning process.

As a committee that is advisory to the MGA Board, the GSP Advisory Committee would be subject to the (State of California) Brown Act, and all meetings would be publically noticed and open to the public.

C. Draft Committee Charge

The Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee will provide guidance to staff and the MGA Board for the creation of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. The Committee will analyze and provide recommendations to the MGA Board on key policy issues that will form the Plan. Final Plan recommendations are due at the MGA's July 2019 Board Meeting.

Committee members will represent diverse interest groups within the Basin. They will deliberate based on scientific data to understand current and projected basin conditions. The Committee

¹ The Final Community Engagement Plan for the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin is available for review on the Mid-County Groundwater Basin's website at:
http://www.midcountygroundwater.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Final%20Community%20Engagement%20Plan%202-19-16_v2.pdf

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will work collaboratively in an open and public process to ensure community concerns are addressed in the Plan.

The Committee will recommend strategies to the MGA Board to achieve a sustainable groundwater basin by 2040:

- Evaluate scientific information and recommendations on the impacts to the Basin, and assess various management approaches to reach sustainability,
- Consider the effect of changing climate and sea level on groundwater conditions,
- Establish objectives and thresholds for State mandated sustainability indicators,
- Analyze options and recommend supplemental water supply alternatives to meet projected demand,
- Promote public education about Plan decisions and the Basin's sustainability, and
- Recommend approaches to funding projects and allocation of project costs.

The Advisory Committee will be tasked to work with staff and consultants to develop the Plan. They will provide the MGA Board with recommendations on how to address key policy issues required by the State's legal mandate. The Committee will make periodic reports to the MGA Board for input and feedback. They will report on key milestones in the development of the Plan, including: groundwater pumping impacts, key alternatives to reach groundwater sustainability, thresholds and measurable objectives for each sustainability indicator, possible program funding strategies, and recommendations for Plan implementation.

D. Schedule

The MGA Board expects to appoint members to the GSP Advisory Committee at its September 15, 2017 meeting and the Committee's process would be initiated immediately following appointment. The GSP Advisory Committee's work would need to be completed by June 30, 2019.

III. RFQ Process

A. Process

Parties interested in being considered to provide facilitation services are requested to submit their SOQs on or before 4:00 p.m., June 30, 2017. SOQs will be evaluated by an Evaluation Committee comprised of MGA member agency staff and MGA Board members using the criteria established in Section V. The top rated firm will be asked to prepare a proposal for the purpose of negotiating a contract. Where no clear winner is determined, semi-finalists may be asked for supplemental information and may be invited to interview with the Evaluation Committee. During the interview, semi-finalists may be asked to:

- Make an oral presentation, and/or
- Respond to pre-established questions.

All responsive firms will be given equal opportunity to provide any requested additional information to the Agency. Any interviews will be scheduled on a mutually agreed upon date and will be at no cost to the Agency. The Evaluation Committee will use all available information to rank the semi-finalists in order of their ability to best meet the needs of the Agency.

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B. Timeline

The tentative timeline for the selection process is as follows.

June 13, 2017 ----- Optional RFQ Q&A session with MGA staff
June 30, 2017 ----- SOQs Due
July 12, 2017----- Evaluation of SOQs complete and start negotiation with top rated firm
August 25, 2017----- Award of Contract

C. Information Disclosure to Third Parties

SOQs are a matter of public record and are open to inspection under the California Public Records Act. If any respondent claims any part of its SOQ is exempt from disclosure and copying, they shall so indicate in the transmittal letter. By responding to this RFQ, respondents waive any challenge to the Agency's decision in this regard.

If any SOQ contains confidential information, the respondent shall clearly label and stamp the specific portions that are to be kept confidential. The respondent is urged to identify the truly confidential portions of the SOQ and not simply mark all or substantially all response as confidential. Notwithstanding the foregoing, respondents recognize that the Agency will not be responsible or liable in any way for losses that the respondents may suffer from the disclosure of information or materials to third parties.

D. MGA Rights and Options

The MGA, at its sole discretion, reserves the following rights:

1. To reject any, or all SOQs or information received pursuant to this RFQ;
2. To supplement, amend, substitute or otherwise modify this RFQ at any time by means of written addendum;
3. To cancel this RFQ with or without the substitution of another RFQ or prequalification process;
4. To request additional information;
5. To verify the qualifications and experience of each respondent;
6. To require one or more respondents to supplement, clarify or provide additional information in order for the Agency to evaluate SOQs submitted;
7. To hire multiple contractors to perform the necessary duties and range of services if it is determined to be in the best interests of the Agency; and
8. To waive any minor defect or technicality in any SOQ received.

E. Questions/Clarification Request

The respondent shall, in the SOQ, identify the Project Manager and key staff. The Project Manager shall be the primary contact for the Agency.

For the MGA, the primary contact is:
Darcelle Pruitt

During the SOQ process, interested parties shall direct all questions via email to the MGA's primary contact listed above.

IV. Submittal of SOQs

The SOQs shall provide the information requested and be organized into sections as follows:

- Cover Letter
- Company Qualifications
- Key Project Staff Experience and Qualifications
- Client References

In preparing SOQ responses, consultants may want to consider directly responding to the following questions, which will assist evaluators in considering the range of potential services that may ultimately be included in any contract:

- What experience have you had in only working behind-the-scenes in the planning and design of a collaborative process? How would you describe your effectiveness in this type of situation versus one in which you are working on both process planning and design and process facilitation in which you have more of a relationship-with-the-principals?
- How might the planning steps be different for a process in which your role is limited to behind the scenes process planning and design versus those that would occur if your role included both process planning and design and interaction with the committee?
- What are the critical success factors for assuring an effective process, especially given that the planning process is expected to take 20 months?
- What experiences do you have in collaborating with technical consultants during a process, and what are key factors that need to be attended to in order to make this relationship work most effectively?

A. Cover Letter

The SOQs shall include a letter of transmittal attesting to its accuracy, signed by an individual authorized to execute binding legal documents on behalf of the proposing firm or joint venture. The cover letter shall provide the name, address, email, telephone and facsimile numbers of the proposed Project Manger, serving as the primary contact for the company.

B. Company Qualifications

The SOQs shall describe examples of previous work involving citizen's advisory committee process planning, design and facilitation efforts for topics involving both significant technical information and public policy issues as well as a diverse committee with members having varying interests and backgrounds. The examples must clearly demonstrate that the respondent has the experience, skill and expertise necessary to plan for and support the committee in successfully completing its work. Preference will be given to respondents that have experience working with groups on issues related to water or impact based financial assessments.

C. Key Project Staff Experience and Qualifications

The SOQ must include a listing of the key personnel (including subconsultants when applicable) performing the work including a description of their background, qualifications, and recent similar experience and responsibility. Clearly specify the individual designated as the Project Manager.

D. Client References

Client references, including contact person and current telephone numbers. References should focus on projects in which the personnel listed in Item C had responsibilities.

V. **Evaluation Criteria and Selection**

The MGA will evaluate each respondent's experience and expertise with citizen's advisory committee process planning, design and facilitation. Firms will be evaluated on the information presented in the SOQ. Final selection may be based on the SOQ as well as any supplemental information or interviews conducted. Evaluation factors used to select the semi-finalists shall include the following:

1. Qualifications as they relate to this project (50%).
 - a. Firm's range of experience on similar projects and with the full range of duties that may be included in a contract.
 - b. Qualifications of proposed key personnel on similar projects and with the full range of duties that may be included in a contract.
 - c. Communication skills.
2. Apparent ability to provide the required services in a timely matter (25%).
 - a. Accessibility of staff.
 - b. Flexibility and readiness to complete specified work.
3. Firm's reputation for successful completion of similar efforts, integrity and competence (25%).

On Tuesday, June 13, 2017 the MGA will hold a question and answer conference call with prospective Project Managers at 10:30 AM Pacific Time. To participate in the question and answer session, please contact Darcelle Pruitt at dpruitt@cfsc.org no later than Monday, June 12, 2017. She will provide call-in information to all participants.

Contract negotiations will begin immediately with the first choice candidate after the evaluation process. If an agreement on scope and cost is not reached within ten (10) working days, the next highest ranked candidate will be contacted and negotiations with that candidate will begin. This process will continue until an agreement is reached or it is decided to re-advertise.

If a clear choice is not evident, interviews will be scheduled with those semi-finalists of exceptional rating.

VI. **Response Format**

Five (5) copies of the Statement of Qualifications and as well as an electronic copy shall be submitted to Darcelle Pruitt by the stated deadline. Statements of Qualifications shall be no longer than 20 individual sheets in length (proposal may be printed on both sides of sheet), including resumes and attachments. Firms are encouraged to use a double-sided format and recycled paper when possible.

Parties interested in being considered for this project are requested to submit their Statements of Qualifications **by 4:00 p.m., June 30, 2017** to:

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Darcelle Pruitt, Senior Planner

Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency
C/O Soquel Creek Water District
Attention Darcell Pruitt
5980 Soquel Drive,
Soquel, CA 95073

Submit electronic copies to: dpruitt@cfsc.org

The MGA reserves the right to determine the extent, duration and limit of consultant's services. Such services shall be described in an overall work program to be developed by the consultant and approved by the MGA promptly upon notification of selection. Any deviation from the scope and general work-hour duration of the work program must be approved beforehand in writing by the MGA.