

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**



**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS APPLICATION  
TO PREQUALIFY GRANT ADMINISTRATORS FOR  
AS NEEDED GRANT WRITING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES**

**For**

**Texas Community Development Block Grant Program**

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**Texas Department of Agriculture  
Stephen F. Austin Building  
1700 North Congress Avenue  
Austin, Texas 78701**

**RFQ: TxCDBG - 2020**

**Application Due Date: January 24, 2020  
5:00 P.M. (Central Time)**

**Posting Date: December 20, 2019**

Refer Inquiries to: Michelle Phares  
[cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov](mailto:cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov)

All responses to this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) shall become the property of the TDA upon receipt.

All responses must be delivered to TDA as required by the instructions within this request. Any addenda to or clarification of this RFQ shall be issued in writing by TDA. TDA shall not be legally bound by an addenda or interpretation of this RFQ that is not in writing.

Respondents understand and agree that no public disclosures or news releases pertaining to this RFQ or any findings based on information provided or obtained through this RFQ shall be made without prior written approval of TDA.

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## **1.0 Overview**

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) seeks to preapprove a pool of grant administrators from which local governments may solicit proposals for preparation of applications and subsequent administration services if a Texas Community Development Block Grant Program (TxCDBG) grant is awarded. This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) preapproval process is Phase One of a two-phase process for selection of a grant administrator. TDA is requesting prequalification applications from interested individuals and firms to be preapproved for grant writing and administrative services to assist communities in proposed projects to be financed with TxCDBG funds. Administrators approved through this RFQ process will be eligible to provide services to communities that may choose to participate in TxCDBG Programs.

Preapproval of a grant administrator indicates that the application was complete and timely and does not include an evaluation of the quality of services offered by the administrator.

The 2020 List of Administrators must be used for any administrative services contracts awarded after the release date of the Approved Vendor List.

Phase Two is the final grant administrator selection process. Participation in the Phase Two streamlined request for proposals (RFP) process will be limited to only those administrators that have submitted a complete application in response to this RFQ and that have been approved by TDA. Any resulting contracts for grant administrative services between a local government and a grant administrator may not exceed \$50,000 or 16% of total construction and acquisition costs, whichever is less. Actual budgets and tasks may be negotiated after the grant administrator has been selected by a participating local government.

## **2.0 General Instructions and Standard Submittal Requirements**

### **2.1 Policies**

2.1.1 No specific work is associated with this RFQ. The Phase Two solicitation will be conducted by the local governments seeking a grant award, and the actual extent of services required under any contract resulting from a Phase Two solicitation is not known.

2.1.2 No individual or firm is assured of obtaining any work as a result of prequalification approval. No contract or grant will be entered into as a result of this RFQ.

### **2.2 Submittal Instructions**

2.2.1 All submittals shall become the property of TDA and will not be returned.

2.2.2 Submittals will be subject to the Texas Public Information Act (PIA), Texas Government Code, Chapter 552. Applications and other submitted information shall be presumed to be subject to disclosure unless a specific exception to disclosure under the PIA applies.

**ALL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED TO TDA WILL BE POSTED ON THE TDA WEBSITE WITH THE APPROVED VENDOR LIST.**

If it is necessary for a respondent to include proprietary or otherwise confidential information in its Application for Prequalification or other submitted information, the respondent must clearly label that proprietary or confidential information and identify the specific exception to disclosure in the PIA. Merely making a blanket claim that the entire submittal is protected from disclosure because it contains some proprietary information is not acceptable and shall make the entire submittal subject to release under the PIA. In order to initiate the process of seeking an Attorney General opinion on the release of proprietary or confidential information, the specific provisions of the submittal that are considered by the respondent to be proprietary or confidential must be clearly labeled as described below. Any information which is not clearly identified as proprietary or confidential shall be deemed to be subject to disclosure pursuant to the PIA. Subject to the PIA, respondents may protect trade and confidential information from public release. Trade secrets or other confidential information, submitted as part of an Application for Prequalification, shall be clearly marked at each page it appears. Such marking shall be in boldface type at least **14-point font**.

- 2.2.3 TDA reserves the right to reject any and all submittals on the basis of being unresponsive to these guidelines or for failure to disclose requested information.
- 2.2.4 TDA will not be liable or responsible for any costs incurred by respondents in the preparation or submittal of applications.
- 2.2.5 Questions and requests for clarification on this RFQ must be submitted in writing to the Point of Contact listed below no later than January 10, 2020, 5:00 P.M. (Central Time). No verbal inquiries will be addressed.

**Point of Contact:** Michelle Phares  
[cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov](mailto:cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov)

- 2.2.6 TDA will post responses to inquiries on TDA's website no later than January 17, 2020. It is the responsibility of interested parties to periodically check for updates to the RFQ prior to submitting an Application for Prequalification.
- 2.2.7 Communication with TDA or TxCDBG staff, the evaluation team, or others associated with this RFQ is prohibited, except as permitted by the Point of Contact listed above. *Failure to comply with these requirements may result in disqualification of an application.*

## **2.3 Submittal Format and Content**

- 2.3.1 All application submittals must be submitted in accordance with the instructions outlined in this RFQ to receive consideration. Submittals should provide straightforward, concise information that satisfies the requirements noted in this RFQ. Color displays and the like are discouraged. Emphasis should be placed on

brevity, conformity to TDA's instructions, and completeness and clarity of content.

- 2.3.2 Application for Prequalification. Please read before completing the application. In order to expedite the review time of prequalification applications, all applications must conform to the following requirements.
- a. Applications must contain the individual or firm's name, business address, email address, phone number and contact name for correspondence purposes.
  - b. Applications must have the required Authorized Signature from an officer, owner or other authorized representative.
  - c. Applicants must have been cleared (not suspended or debarred) with the System for Award Management (SAM). Applications must include the printout(s) of the verification page with the date included.
  - d. Applications must be submitted in the original format. The documents must not be password protected by the respondent.
  - e. Applications must be submitted in PDF format (scanned copy with signature).
- 2.3.3 Submittal methods: CD, DVD, thumb drive, or electronic mail (email). No printed submittals. Facsimile (fax) transmission of SOQs is not an acceptable method of responding to this RFQ and will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- 2.3.4 Deliver submittals to:
- By mail: Texas Department of Agriculture  
Texas Community Development Block Grant Program  
Attn: Suzanne Barnard, Director for CDBG Programs  
P.O. Box 12847  
Austin, Texas 78711
- Hand delivery: Texas Department of Agriculture  
Stephen F. Austin Bldg.  
1700 N. Congress Ave, 11th Floor, Room 1102G  
Austin, Texas 78701
- By email: [cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov](mailto:cdbgapps@texasagriculture.gov)
- 2.3.5 Mail and hand delivery submittals: Submittals must be in a sealed envelope clearly marked with the respondent's name and "Application Submittal for TxCDBG Grant Administrative Services, 2020 RFQ".
- 2.3.6 Respondents mailing their application submittals should allow normal delivery time to ensure receipt of their submittals by TDA. TDA shall not be responsible for mail not received, deliveries not made, or application submittals not received by the date and time set forth in Section 2.4 Schedule of Events.
- 2.3.7 Email submittals: The email subject line must contain the respondent's name and "Application Submittal for TxCDBG Grant Administrative Services, 2020 RFQ". The respondent is solely responsible for ensuring that its complete electronic submission is sent to, and actually received by, TDA in a timely manner and at the

proper destination server.

Respondent may send the completed application as an email attachment. There is a 10MB maximum size limit per email and may result in sending multiple emails for submission of the complete document. In such event, each email subject line must include part numbers (e.g., “Part 1 of 2”).

**With the exception of SAM verification documentation, TDA will not accept or publish any attachments to the Application. Do not reference attachments in the application or the application may be deemed incomplete.** Any additional information necessary may be provided to communities during the Phase 2 process.

TDA takes no responsibility for electronic submittals that are captured, blocked, filtered, quarantined or otherwise prevented from reaching the proper destination server by any TDA anti-virus or other security software.

## 2.4 Schedule of Events

2.4.1 TDA will consider only those submittals **received** by the deadline in the schedule of events below. Late submittals will not be considered.

<b>SCHEDULE OF EVENTS</b>	<b>DATE*</b>
RFQ issued	<i>December 20, 2019</i>
Deadline for submission of written inquiries	<i>January 10, 2020</i> <b>no later than 5:00 P.M. (Central Time)</b>
TDA response to inquiries	<i>January 17, 2020</i>
<b>APPLICATION SUBMISSION DEADLINE</b>	<i>January 24, 2020</i> <b>no later than 5:00 P.M. (Central Time)</b>
Evaluation period	<i>January 27, 2020 – February 7, 2020</i>
Approved Vendor List posted on TDA website (estimated)	<i>February 10, 2020</i>
Letter of Approval (estimated)	<i>February 14, 2020</i>

*\* It should be noted that these dates may vary slightly as conditions require.*

2.4.2 Application submittals may be modified or withdrawn at any time prior to the Application Submission Deadline. No changes will be allowed after the deadline.

## 2.5 Conflict of Interest

2.5.1 The respondent must disclose any existing or potential conflicts of interest. Respondents shall disclose all contractual or informal business arrangements/agreements, including but not limited to, fee arrangements and consulting agreements between it and TDA, TDA's staff, or any entity that provides services to TDA. The respondent must disclose all relationships with any other Texas state agencies.

**2.5.2 Failure to provide all requested information, or the inclusion of false or misleading information, shall be sufficient cause for the rejection of a prequalification application.**

2.5.3 The respondent shall make full disclosure of any former employee or retiree of TDA (separated from the agency within the last three years) who is an agent, consultant, contractor, or employee of the respondent or the intent to employ or subcontract with an individual who is a former employee or retiree of TDA. Within the first twelve months of leaving employment at TDA, a former employee or retiree selected by the respondent for employment or subcontracting shall not perform services on a project or fill a position that the former employee or retiree worked on while employed at TDA.

2.5.4 If the circumstances certified by the respondent change or additional information is obtained subsequent to submission of a prequalification application, the respondent agrees that it is under a continuing duty to supplement its prequalification application under this provision and that the duty to disclose any conflicts of interest is an ongoing obligation throughout the term of any contract resulting from this RFQ. The respondent shall submit updated information in writing as soon as reasonably possible upon learning of any change to its affirmation contained in its prequalification application.

### **3.0 Selection Process**

#### **3.1 Evaluation of Submittals**

Application submittals will be reviewed by members of an evaluation team. Respondents meeting the minimum criteria specified in section 3.2 below will be added to the Approved Vendor List for Grant Administrative Services for the 2020 TxCDBG grant cycle following approval by TDA.

**Applications submitted must be complete (all questions answered on the application form with no blanks).** Incomplete applications are considered a failure to provide all requested information and shall be sufficient cause for the rejection of a prequalification application.

#### **3.2 Minimum Criteria for Prequalification Approval**

The respondent must address all of the following to demonstrate that it has the necessary facilities, ability, and resources to provide the services specified herein in a satisfactory manner. Evaluation of the respondent's qualifications shall include:

- a. Ability, capacity, skill and other necessary resources to perform the work or provide the service required;
- b. Ability to carry out all aspects of grant related activities and provide necessary technical assistance to implement and administer a grant contract;
- c. Ability to perform the work or provide the service promptly or within the time specified;

- d. Demonstrated experience, competence and training of personnel with respect to grant writing and administration, and related work;
- e. Availability of adequate personnel to undertake the project and accessibility to clients throughout the life of the project;
- f. Quality of performance of previous contracts or services; and
- g. Character, integrity, reputation, judgment, experience and efficiency of the firm and key personnel.

### **3.3 Additional Selection Criteria**

In addition to the minimum criteria identified above, the respondent must provide the following which may be considered by local governments in the Phase Two RFP process for selection of a grant administrator.

- a. The date of respondent's most recent TxCDBG Administrator certification;
- b. Demonstrated experience with the TxCDBG Program;
- c. Past record of performance with TxCDBG contracts with respect to such factors as accessibility to clients, quality of work, and ability to meet schedules;
- d. Reasonableness of cost;
- e. Ability to devote the needed time to a project based on current workload;
- f. Geographic availability of personnel;
- g. Certified or self-identified small-, minority- or woman- owned business; and
- h. Employment and economic opportunities provided by the grant administrator to low and very low income (Section 3) residents and businesses.

### **3.4 Letter of Approval**

A letter of approval shall be sent to all respondents that are approved by TDA. The letter shall include a statement indicating the effective dates during which the vendor may bid for applicable projects. No grant award or contract shall result from this RFQ.

### **4.0 Scope of Services**

#### **4.1 Basic Services**

- 4.1.1 The individual or firm selected shall be required to provide professional administrative and management services whose level and scope will be determined by the local government participating in the TxCDBG program.
- 4.1.2 Grant writing services may include, but not be limited to:
  - a. Preparation and submittal of all completed grant forms by the appropriate deadline;
  - b. Determination of low-to-moderate income beneficiaries; and
  - c. Coordination with preliminary engineering report.
- 4.1.3 Administrative services may include, but not be limited to:
  - a. Provision of general advice and technical assistance on regulatory matters and implementing project activities included in the approved grant application in



- conformance with TxCDBG program requirements;
- b. Assistance in the procurement process such as preparing notices and solicitation of bids for engineering, construction activities, or other grant-related services;
- c. Assistance in meeting financial, administrative, and bookkeeping requirements of the TxCDBG program, including review of invoices received for payment, preparation of grant fund drawdown requests and retention of all pertinent records and documents sufficient to reflect all charges submitted;
- d. Assistance in meeting record keeping requirements of the TxCDBG program, including the establishment and maintenance of an acceptable filing system;
- e. Assistance in contract administration and monitoring requirements of the TxCDBG program, including enforcement of compliance requirements;
- f. Assistance in the environmental review process for the proposed project, including preparing and submitting necessary documentation to the appropriate agency for clearance or approval, and preparing Request for Release of Funds and required certifications and submitting them to TDA;
- g. Assistance in meeting all special condition requirements stipulated in the grant contract;
- h. Act as a liaison between the local government, construction contractors, and TDA to ensure an efficient, smoothly managed program;
- i. Furnish necessary forms and submit all required reports as outlined in the grant contract;
- j. Prepare and submit any program amendments, including re-assessments of environmental clearances, as necessary during the duration of the project; and
- k. Prepare and coordinate the submission of appropriate documents for TxCDBG contract close-out and completion.

## **4.2 Possible Other Services**

4.2.1 The individual or firm selected may be required to provide other administrative services whose level and scope will be determined by the local government participating in the 2020 TxCDBG grant cycle.

4.2.2 Possible additional services may include, but not be limited to:

- a. Assistance in developing, implementing and documenting new activities to affirmatively further fair housing during the grant term;
- b. Provide guidance regarding real property acquisition activities and assistance in meeting real property acquisition/URA requirements, including preparation of correspondence to property owners, and preparation and submission of required reports to TDA;
- c. In conjunction with the local government, promote services to ensure community awareness and encourage participation of eligible applicants (housing rehabilitation project);
- d. Determine eligibility of applicants;
- e. Develop, process and qualify applications from families for housing rehabilitation assistance;
- f. Prepare loan/grant documents on qualified applicants and submit completed loan/grant document package to the local government for review and approval;

- g. Process approved loans/grants to closing;
- h. Perform all necessary code enforcement responsibilities for qualified applicant families, including rehabilitation evaluations, prepare work write-ups and necessary plans to accomplish that work (housing rehabilitation project);
- i. Provide guidance regarding federal labor standards and assistance in meeting Davis-Bacon Act and related federal labor laws;
- j. Provide guidance regarding lead-based paint requirements and assistance in meeting related laws and regulations;
- k. Provide guidance and assistance regarding Texas Commission on Environmental Quality regulations relating to on-site sewer facility installations; and
- l. Monitor the work of authorized contractors and subcontractors.

### **4.3 Budgets**

4.3.1 Grant writing – A fee to be negotiated, based on the application type and number of activities, between the local government and the grant administrator. TxCDBG may not be used to pay for or reimburse grant writing fees.

4.3.2 Grant administration – The local government may budget up to the maximum percentage or amount available for administration as permitted by TDA, the TxCDBG program and the grant contract, or as negotiated if TDA does not provide funds for General Administration.

Note: Administrative costs may not be more than 16% of the TxCDBG grant funds budgeted for combined construction and acquisition/relocation activities. Any costs in excess of the TxCDBG budgeted amount must be paid with local government or other funds, and the local government may claim these costs as match to meet a TxCDBG contract's match requirements if applicable.

4.3.3 Other costs – As negotiated