REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR INCIDENT RESPONSE, RECOVERY, AND CYBERSECURITY CAPACITY BUILDING SERVICES
Marina Coast Water District

Who can apply and references

#	Question	Answer
1	**Can a solo consultant or a firm outside California apply? Will location affect evaluation? Must staff be based in the U.S. or be U.S. citizens if they can work during District hours?**	The RFP does not require a California office or a minimum team size. Proposals will be reviewed using the criteria in Section 26. Experience with California public agencies is desirable under Section 20. Show how your team will complete all the work on time and meet the contract requirements. The separate question about working from Canada is addressed below. The RFP states no U.S. citizenship requirement. Citizenship, where staff work, and where District information can be accessed are separate questions. Any added personnel or data access restrictions still need District review. Proposers should state where the work will be performed and how they will meet the District's schedule. *RFP §§ 1, 18, 20, 22.1–22.4 and 32–33.*
2	**Can the three references and project examples come from work by named key staff at past employers, teaming partners or subconsultants? Must any be contracts held by the proposing firm?**	Yes. Relevant work that the firm's principal or proposed key staff did for a past employer can count as a project example under Section 22.3 and as a reference under Section 22.10. Name the organization and explain who did the work and what their role was. Work by a named subconsultant can also count under either section if it relates to the work they would do for the District. The same rules apply to every proposer, and at least three references are still required. Only share project details and reference information you're allowed to disclose. Sharing that information must comply with any nondisclosure agreement or other confidentiality obligation that applies to the past work. Identify the original contracting firm, client, dates, scope and each person's contribution. The client reference must be able to verify the work. The three references may be drawn from the qualifying experience described above. *RFP §§ 20, 22.2–22.4, 22.10, 26 and 32.*
3	**Can a reference provide only an email address if they prefer email contact?**	Please provide both a telephone number and an email address, as Section 22.10 requires. You may note that the reference prefers email contact. Any exception for an email-only reference still needs District approval. *RFP § 22.10.*

4	**Can a Canadian firm be awarded the contract and perform all work virtually from Canada? Can it access District information there? Do grant, data access or insurance conditions affect this, and will Finance accept Form W-8BEN-E instead of Form W-9?**	This project may involve sensitive information about the District's water and wastewater systems. The District has not approved access to that information from outside the United States. We're reviewing the grant terms and our security requirements. We'll share any limits on where the work can be done or where District information can be accessed, stored, or processed in a written addendum for all proposers. Finance will separately confirm which tax forms it needs. Eligibility to perform the work from Canada and any related insurance conditions remain under review. *RFP §§ 1, 28, 30, 33–34 and Attachment B.*

Funding pricing and grant records

#	Question	Answer
5	**Does the consultant need to find funding, matching funds, or other financial support? Who handles the funding?**	The District will handle project funding and any grant match. The consultant's role is to complete the work within the contract amount and provide the records the District needs for the grant. No fundraising or contribution toward a match is included in this scope. *RFP §§ 7–19, 21 and 34.*
6	**Which tasks should get the most effort within the $22,358 cap? Can we combine sessions or deliverables?**	Focus the work on a usable incident response and recovery plan and helping staff learn to use it. Build that learning into the working sessions, playbook reviews, training and tabletop. You may combine related sessions and documents if every required task and final work product is covered. Show the hours and cost by task. The RFP sets no required percentage of effort for each task. *RFP §§ 1, 4, 17, 21, 22.6, 22.9, 26 and 36.*
7	**Should we quote a fixed fee or actual hours up to a cap? Are milestone invoices allowed, and who approves work for payment?**	Include the rates, hours, task costs and total required by Section 22.11. State whether you propose a fixed fee or billing for actual hours up to the agreed cap, and describe any proposed milestone invoices. The District still needs to confirm the billing method, invoice schedule and person authorized to accept work for payment. Attachment A paragraph 9 provides for final payment within 30 days after District acceptance unless otherwise specified. All costs must fit within $22,358. *RFP §§ 21–22.11, 28 and 33 and Attachment A ¶¶ 8–9.*
8	**Can the consultant bill actual travel costs separately if the total stays within the contract cap? Can the proposed price be based on another firm's rate?**	No. Include all travel costs in your proposed price. The District will not reimburse travel separately. The total, including travel, must stay within the $22,358 not-to-exceed amount. Provide your own actual proposed rates and task costs. The RFP provides no process for setting your rate by undercutting another firm's rate. *RFP §§ 21, 22.11 and 26 and Attachment A ¶¶ 9 and 11.*

9	**What grant clauses, certifications, registrations and records are required? Is SAM.gov registration required? Can the District provide the terms before proposals are due, and when is the paperwork due?**	SAM.gov registration is not required. Before award, the top-ranked proposer must show that it is not suspended or debarred. The District will accept either a signed statement from the firm or a SAM.gov Exclusions search result showing no exclusions. Before signing the contract, the selected firm must certify that it will follow the applicable requirements of 2 CFR Part 200, agree to the required federal contract terms, and acknowledge that project records may be audited or disclosed as required by law. During the project, the consultant must provide invoices, training and exercise records, and other records the District requests under Section 34. The consultant must keep the project records for at least three years after final payment and make them available for audit. The District still needs to confirm the complete set of grant clauses and when it will provide them to all proposers before the proposal deadline. *RFP §§ 22 and 33–34.*

Existing plans audit findings and systems

#	Question	Answer
10	**What incident response, business continuity or disaster recovery plans, SOPs, playbooks, escalation steps, inventories and prior tabletop materials already exist? How current are they, and what can be shared at kickoff? Should the plan align with AWIA and cyber insurance requirements?**	The District has a draft incident response plan. At kickoff, we can share the draft and any related policies and procedures that are available and approved for sharing. The consultant will update the draft to cover newer cybersecurity threats, including attacks that use AI. The District and the consultant can decide during the project where it makes sense for the America's Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA) Emergency Response Plan to refer to the updated cybersecurity plan. We will confirm which recovery procedures, system inventories and other records are available, along with their dates, at kickoff. The consultant should identify missing or outdated information during the readiness review. The count and condition of current SOPs and playbooks, any separate business continuity or disaster recovery plan, and prior tabletop materials still need to be confirmed. Use and update suitable materials where practical. The final work must include the required playbooks. If the District has cyber insurance, include its applicable notification and response steps after the District provides them. *RFP §§ 7.1–7.2, 8, 22.11 and 29.*

11	**When will audit and penetration test results be available? Will draft or final results be ready for the November 25–December 7 review? How will they be shared, and what happens if findings arrive after drafts are prepared?**	Yes. The District can share the cybersecurity audit and penetration testing report with the selected consultant for the November 25–December 7 review. We'll confirm whether the draft or final version is ready and share it through a secure method approved by the District. If more findings arrive after the drafts are prepared, review them with the IT Administrator and include relevant changes in the final plan and playbooks where practical. Flag any effect on the work, cost or schedule promptly. The RFP does not provide an automatic extension for late findings. *RFP §§ 2, 5, 7.2, 13, 15, 29–30 and Attachment B.*
12	**Who supports SCADA and OT- District staff, an integrator, or another security provider? How much technical detail is expected? Will vendors help develop and validate playbooks or join the tabletop, and does an outside partner monitor or audit the environment?**	Include enough detail for staff to recognize and report a possible SCADA incident, reach the right people, understand who can make decisions, and coordinate safe containment and recovery with Operations and existing vendors. Use available District information to make the steps specific and usable. Vendor and SCADA staff participation still needs to be confirmed. This work does not authorize production changes or testing of SCADA systems. The District still needs to confirm its support and monitoring arrangements, any outside OT security partner's role, and which vendors can join the working sessions or tabletop. *RFP §§ 6, 7.2, 8–10, 13 and 29.*
13	**Which logging, alerting, EDR, SIEM or monitoring tools are in use? Which tools should staff learn to use during this project?**	The District still needs to confirm which tools and product names can be shared with proposers. The selected consultant will review the available tools and logs with IT and use them to teach incident recognition, evidence collection, documentation and escalation. Agree on the demonstrations and staff training needs during kickoff. *RFP §§ 6, 11–12 and 29.*
14	**If direct system access is unavailable, can District staff demonstrate approved logs or sanitized examples? Which platforms may be used to exchange and store project information?**	Proposed approach for District approval. District staff may lead a walkthrough using approved logs or sanitized examples if it meets the training objectives. The IT Administrator will confirm the demonstration method and any system access. Use only District-approved methods for exchanging and storing information. The approved platform list still needs to be confirmed. *RFP §§ 6, 11, 29–30 and Attachment B §§ 4–6.*

Required work training and exercise tools

#	Question	Answer
15	**For pricing, should we allow for five playbooks, one formal training session, one tabletop and debrief, and a separate final knowledge-transfer session? How many shifts or repeat sessions are required?**	Yes. Price approximately five core playbooks, one formal training session, one tabletop with a follow-up discussion and report, and a separate final knowledge-transfer session. Include the interviews, working sessions, readiness review, plan and other required work as well. The RFP specifies no number of shifts or repeated training sessions. Identify any assumption about repeat sessions so the District can confirm it. *RFP §§ 4, 9, 12–14, 17–19 and 22.6.*
16	**Can we bid on just the tabletop exercise? Can District staff run it with an AI tool? Can the consultant use an outside tool to help lead it, record staff discussions, or create a report?**	The main proposal must cover the full scope. A tabletop specialist can take part as a named subconsultant. The consultant must lead and document the exercise and the follow-up discussion. The selected consultant can use an outside tool to help with the tabletop exercise. Before using it, tell the District what the tool is, who makes or provides it, and how it protects District information. If it records or transcribes staff discussions or creates a report, explain what it captures, where the information is stored, who can access it, and how long it's kept. Get written approval from the District before recording staff discussions or sharing confidential District information with the tool. The consultant is still responsible for leading the exercise and checking the final report for accuracy. *RFP §§ 13–14, 17–18, 22.8, 30–32 and Attachment B §§ 6 and 8.*
17	**Can AI help draft materials using nonconfidential inputs? Do the restrictions also cover enterprise AI tools with contracts that prohibit training on customer data?**	The District has a draft AI policy and has yet to adopt it. If the consultant wants to use AI to help write materials, please check with the District first. Tell us which tool you plan to use, what you'll put into it, and what the provider can do with that information. We want to understand who can see the material, whether the provider keeps or reuses it, and who owns the drafts the tool produces. Use only nonconfidential material. The consultant is responsible for checking the draft for errors and bias before sharing it with the District. An enterprise license or a no-training contract does not by itself provide District approval. Identify the tool, the information it would receive, storage and access arrangements, retention, ownership and the provider's terms. Any proposed use involving confidential District information needs separate written District approval and review against the NDA. *RFP §§ 30–31 and Attachment B §§ 2, 6 and 8.*

Meeting format staff and schedule

#	Question	Answer
18	**May kickoff, interviews, readiness and SCADA review, working sessions, training, the tabletop, after-action discussion and final handoff all be virtual? Is an on-site visit preferred or mandatory? Should travel be optional, and will remote proposals and virtual selection interviews be treated equally? Who provides a facility if a session is in person?**	All project sessions can be held online. The readiness review can be planned around document review and virtual interviews. An on-site visit is not a stated requirement. Proposals will be assessed under the same published evaluation criteria in Section 26. Any proposed in-person activity must identify its purpose, location, days and costs. Include travel in the proposed total within the $22,358 cap. Optional costs cannot be added above that cap. The District still needs to confirm whether it prefers any in-person activity, whether it would provide a facility, and whether selection interviews will be virtual. *RFP §§ 7, 12–14, 18–19, 21, 22.7, 22.11 and 28.*
19	**How large are the security and incident response teams? How many people, departments and shifts should we plan for at each session? How often can staff meet, and how much time is available for training, working sessions and reviews?**	For planning, allow for 3–5 District staff per interview or working session and 6–10 for each of the staff training and tabletop sessions. These are estimates. The IT Administrator and department heads will be the main contacts. Plan to include Operations staff who oversee SCADA in the sessions that cover SCADA. We still need to confirm who from Operations can attend and whether the outside SCADA integrator will join. The RFP sets no fixed staff-hour allowance. State the session lengths, number of meetings and staff roles your approach needs. We will confirm staff time and attendance at kickoff. The District still needs to confirm the current security and incident response team size, the full list of functions and departments, any shift coverage, and how often staff can meet. *RFP §§ 7.1–7.2, 9, 12–13 and 29.*

20	**Will staff be available for kickoff and working sessions November 24–December 4, including Thanksgiving week, and for December training and year-end revisions? Which dates are constrained, who approves exercise materials, and how will late reviews or approvals affect the December 30 deadline? Is that deadline tied to the grant period?**	The IT Administrator and department heads will review the drafts from Monday, December 14, through Wednesday, December 16. Please allow three business days for review. The IT Administrator will collect the department heads' feedback and send one set of District comments by December 16. Please schedule District reviews and meetings on weekdays and leave out Christmas Day, December 25. Staff availability on Christmas Eve, December 24, is still to be confirmed. The final deadline is December 30, 2026. Training on December 17 and the tabletop on December 18 are target dates. Attendance on December 18 and the year-end dates still needs to be confirmed. If a review is delayed, notify the IT Administrator promptly and agree on any meeting or task changes needed to keep the work moving. December 30 remains the required completion date unless the District approves a written change. Thanksgiving is November 26. Availability during November 24–27, including the day after Thanksgiving, still needs confirmation. The District also needs to name the person who will approve exercise materials and confirm whether December 30 is a grant deadline. Regardless of that funding question, December 30 is the completion date stated in the RFP. *RFP §§ 17–18, 22.7, 25 and 29.*

Final acceptance and contract paperwork

#	Question	Answer
21	**How will the District judge staff learning, knowledge transfer and final work? Who confirms acceptance for payment?**	The District will check that all required work is complete, District comments have been addressed, and the plan and playbooks are usable by staff. Training and the tabletop should show that staff understand their roles, reporting and escalation steps, communications, and recovery priorities. The final handoff must explain how staff can maintain and update the plan. Provide the exercise findings, corrective actions, reusable training materials and final editable documents, with the final plan also in PDF. Agree on how to document these results at kickoff. The District still needs to identify the person authorized to confirm acceptance for payment. *RFP §§ 12–19, 29, 31 and 36.*

22	**Which of Attachment A paragraphs 4–6 will apply? Can paragraph 4 be No and the MEC wording in paragraph 6 be removed or treated as inapplicable for remote or office work? If MEC terms apply, what locations or activities create that exposure? Will hired and non-owned auto coverage or a no-vehicle exception be accepted? Can a single-member LLC with no employees or no California staff qualify for a workers' compensation exception? Is separate cyber liability or technology errors and omissions coverage required?**	If all work is performed remotely, the District can mark paragraph 4 "No" and treat the munitions and explosives of concern (MEC) wording in paragraph 6 as inapplicable. The District can also waive the auto liability requirement if no vehicles will be used for District work. If the proposal includes on-site work or vehicle use, list the locations and activities so the District can confirm which MEC terms and auto coverage apply, including whether hired and non-owned auto coverage is acceptable. Cyber liability coverage is required even if all work is remote. The District still needs to confirm whether separate technology errors and omissions coverage is required and whether a workers' compensation exception applies.
23	**Should the blanks on Attachment A pages 26–27 be filled in and the PSA and NDA signed with the proposal? Are insurance certificates or banking details required now, or after selection? Can vendor setup begin early?**	Submit the information required by Section 22 and clearly list any requested contract exceptions. The RFP does not require proposers to fill in or sign Attachment A, sign the NDA, or provide insurance certificates or banking details with the proposal. The selected consultant will work with the District to complete the agreement and any required NDA. Provide the required insurance documents before work begins. Finance will coordinate tax and banking information through its approved vendor setup process after selection. Any request to start setup earlier still needs District confirmation. *RFP §§ 22, 30 and 33 and Attachments A and B.*