

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

*for*

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consultants

**Issued:** September 9, 2019

**Due:** 5 p.m. EDT on October 4, 2019

**Deadline Extended:** 5 p.m. EDT on October 9, 2019

**Contact:**

Lecia J. Brooks

Chief Workplace Transformation Officer

[lecia.brooks@splcenter.org](mailto:lecia.brooks@splcenter.org)

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

## 1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is a national civil rights organization with offices in five states and the District of Columbia. Over the last several years, our organization has grown substantially, with staff nearly doubling in size. In March 2019, our longtime president and CEO resigned. On April 2, 2019, the SPLC Board of Directors named Karen Baynes-Dunning the interim president and CEO. We recently launched a national search for a permanent president and CEO, led by Koya Leadership Partners. That search and the work outlined in this Request for Proposals (RFP) will happen concurrently under the direction of Baynes-Dunning who will serve in the role until a permanent president and CEO is hired in 2020. We believe our work is too vital to delay taking action.

As we approach our 50th anniversary in 2021, we are launching an organizational re-visioning process to imagine a bold and audacious future. We will engage in honest conversations about our role in the social justice and civil rights movements, and how our approach to the work and our theories of change must adapt to the rapidly changing landscape of our democracy.

Not only do we intend to become a 21st century social justice and civil rights organization doing vital work in the communities we serve, we also seek to become a model for other organizations that are grappling with the best ways to incorporate the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into their internal workplace cultures. To that end, in May 2019, a DEI Work Group of 26 staff members was formed by democratic election to serve as an advisory body to senior leadership.

To do this work honestly and with integrity, we must hold ourselves to the highest standards. The SPLC has begun the hard work of identifying and eradicating white supremacist, heteronormative, and misogynistic culture within the organization. We recognize that we are not alone in this journey nationally and are seeking the partnership of expert consultants to help us translate DEI values and principles into our daily practice.

Accordingly, we have initiated a RFP process to identify a qualified vendor to help us:

1. ***Transform our organizational culture.*** We must intentionally create spaces for formal and informal conversations and organizational work models that proactively address diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging not as tertiary issues but as central to our work given our organization's and our nation's history. We must be open to creative models that allow us to do our work with new tools, structures and understanding.

2. **Create a common language.** We need to be “*singing the same song at the same time*” when it comes to actualizing the work of DEI. And we mustn’t be afraid to acknowledge that there are different definitions and degrees of understanding of DEI throughout our organization. We need clarity moving forward and a shared statement of DEI values and principles that will be the lens through which we continuously improve our work.
3. **Create a continuous learning culture.** We want to create an environment in which continuous learning opportunities and feedback loops are the norm on a broad range of topics, and that our people are exposed to cutting-edge thought leaders beyond their areas of expertise and comfort zones. We must lean into new and creative ways to measure our progress to ensure that we are living and practicing our DEI value and principles throughout our organization and our work.

## 2. WHO MAY RESPOND

The SPLC seeks a diversity of vendors, including but not limited to, businesses owned by women and people of color. In addition, we seek partners who have deep respect for and demonstrated expertise in:

- A. The diverse and complex communities we represent and serve;
- B. Advancing DEI principles and practices within communities and workplaces experiencing significant organizational and cultural changes;
- C. Working with large, social sector organizations with offices throughout the country;
- D. Addressing the dismantling of white supremacist culture;
- E. Offering a diverse and experienced team of facilitators for on- and off-site trainings who are patient with people with different learning styles; and
- F. Offering an inclusive, welcoming and expansive definition of diversity that addresses the intersections of identity (e.g. intersectionality, etc.)

## 3. ABOUT THE SPLC

Founded in 1971, the SPLC is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry through its three program departments:

- A. **Legal.** The legal department advocates on behalf of victims of discrimination and exploitation to bring about systemic reforms through high-impact lawsuits, limited direct representation, public education and advocacy. It has six focus areas: Children’s Rights, Criminal Justice Reform, Economic Justice, Immigrant Justice, LGBTQ Rights/Special Litigation and Voting Rights. Our work is primarily focused in the Southeastern states. In recent years, we have increased our legislative work in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi.
- B. **Intelligence Project (IP).** In the 1980s and 1990s, we broke new ground suing white supremacist groups, including the Ku Klux Klan. An outgrowth of that work was IP, which tracks and exposes the activities of hate groups. Each year, IP produces a census of active hate groups in the U.S. and almost daily publishes web-based content about hate and extremism. We also monitor the activity of antigovernment extremist groups. Our investigations and research are widely used by lawmakers, corporations, and the media.
- C. **Teaching Tolerance (TT).** TT’s mission is to help teachers and schools educate children and youth to be active participants in a diverse democracy. TT provides free resources and professional development to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. Educators use its materials to supplement the curriculum, to inform their practices, and to create civil and inclusive school communities where children are respected, valued, and welcome participants.

The aforementioned work is done in close collaboration and support with the following departments:

- Administration/Finance
- Civil Rights Memorial Center
- Communications
- Creative
- Development/Marketing
- Digital
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Security

Our operating budget this fiscal year is approximately \$85 million. We have more than 360 staff in 11 offices. Seven of the offices contain staff from multiple departments:

- Decatur, Georgia
- Jackson, Mississippi
- Miami, Florida
- Montgomery, Alabama (national headquarters)
- New Orleans, Louisiana
- Tallahassee, Florida
- Washington, D.C.

There are four additional offices that provide direct representation legal services to our clients in nearby immigrant detention facilities in:

- Alexandria, Louisiana
- Folkston, Georgia
- Lumpkin, Georgia
- Ocilla, Georgia

#### **4. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES**

We envision a thorough process that uses human-centered design principles and builds a shared DEI foundation for our organization at a moment of internal change. Underpinned by an anti-racism/anti-oppression framework, the proposal should include:

##### **A. Description of Your Organization**

1. Describe the general nature of your work and how the diversity of your team creates greater value, insights, and viewpoints in the work you produce for your clients.
2. Provide examples of similar work, along with contact information for organizations you have served.
3. Describe the qualifications and experience of staff who will be assigned to this project. Provide additional information on the proposed project manager/director, including their CV.

4. Tell us about a situation where you were failing to meet the client's expectations in developing a shared definition of racism, why that happened, what you learned and how you were able to successfully change course.

## **B. Statement of Proposed Work**

1. **Methodology:** Detail what your approach will be for gathering data on the current state of the SPLC and how you will continue to gather information once the contract is awarded.
2. **Work plan:** Propose how you would phase this project, propose a timeline, and estimate how many hours will be needed to complete this project.
3. **Budget and deliverables:** Provide a detailed budget, description of the specific deliverables that will be produced and estimated delivery dates.

Minimal deliverables the SPLC expects:

- Partner with the chief workplace transformation officer to create a new team and infrastructure of professional staff and systems to ensure DEI practices across our organization are implemented in close coordination with the Human Resources Department and our DEI Working Group.
- Design and facilitate discussions across our organization to create a DEI framework, as well as a common language, that clearly articulates a set of values, principles and definitions that will guide our work internally and externally.
- Design and facilitate a set of organization-wide, continuous learning opportunities for all staff and board that reflects a broad range of self-awareness ranging from introductory level to advanced DEI trainings and train-the-trainer models that intentionally builds leadership at all levels of our organization. Topics should include, and not be limited to diversity, equity and inclusion; creating a racial equity lens in all of our work; and disrupting white supremacist, misogynistic and heteronormative cultures.
- Provide resources and develop analytic tools and dashboards, etc. to measure our progress quarterly and annually to continuously improve and to hold ourselves accountable for ongoing learning, training and engagement.
- Provide consultative services to staff, board and related consultants to shape the development of our new organizational strategic plan<sup>1</sup> and prioritized policies and procedures including, but not limited to, wage and compensation structures.<sup>2</sup>
- An assessment, one year after contract commencement, of how well the SPLC is meeting its DEI goals and recommendations for course corrections.

The vendor will not be able to subcontract any of the work without the explicit, written pre-approval by the SPLC.

We understand that you may need additional information about the SPLC to provide a proposal that accurately estimates the scope of work to complete this project. Please join the bidder conversation on September 19, 2019 at 4pm EDT. Register here: [zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_q3SzcnsaQvyJ1KLrgtQy\\_w](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_q3SzcnsaQvyJ1KLrgtQy_w)

---

<sup>1</sup> An RFP was released on July 17, 2019, to assist us with strategic planning. We anticipate the vendor that is awarded the contract will work closely with the consultant who is awarded the DEI contract.

<sup>2</sup> An RFP was released on July 25, 2019, to assist us with proposing changes to our wage and compensation structure. We anticipate the vendor that is awarded the contract will work closely with the consultant who is awarded this DEI contract.

## 5. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA AND TIMELINE FOR THIS RFP

Responses will be evaluated along several dimensions:

- A. Vendor qualifications;
- B. Understanding, expertise and practice of diversity, equity and inclusion;
- C. Work plan and methodology;
- D. Budget; and
- E. References.

We may request one-hour phone and/or video interviews with the intended project manager and their proposed team for a limited number of semi-finalists. We will then invite finalists to make an in-person presentation between October 28 and November 1. We intend to award contracts during the week of November 11, 2019.

## 6. PROCESS FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

- A. **Closing date.** Proposals are due by 5 p.m. EDT on October 4, 2019.
- B. **Inquiries.** Please direct all questions regarding this RFP to Lecia Brooks, chief workplace transformation officer, no later than 3 p.m. EDT on September 27, 2019: [lecia.brooks@splcenter.org](mailto:lecia.brooks@splcenter.org)
- C. **Conditions of the proposals.** All costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFP, including costs associated with in-person visits or interviews, are the sole responsibility of the bidder and will not be reimbursed by the SPLC.
- D. **Submission instructions.** Proposals must be a single PDF document, no longer than 10 pages, and the file name must include your organization's name. Email them to [splcRFP@splcenter.org](mailto:splcRFP@splcenter.org). Please do not email submissions directly to Lecia Brooks. Hard copy, mail submissions will NOT be accepted.