

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

for

Regional and Environmental Analysis Consulting Services for the State of Mississippi

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Contact:

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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. We have undergone significant internal transformation and leadership transitions throughout the organization over the course of the last two years. After a national search, our board of directors named Margaret Huang as the president and CEO effective April 20, 2020.

We have been actively refining our vision, mission and impact statements as a 21st century social justice organization and finalizing how we will monitor, evaluate and learn from our work moving forward. We are eager to launch this new chapter in our history as the year 2021 marks our 50th anniversary.

The SPLC is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements and advance the human rights of all people.

SPLC focuses on communities of color and other marginalized groups in the South with the goal of defending their rights and mobilizing efforts to win progressive policies that transform the social and political context in five Deep South states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi.). W.E.B. DuBois once said, “As the South goes, so goes the nation.” Accordingly, we are launching an RFP process to identify a qualified partner to conduct a regional and environmental analysis for the State of Mississippi, one of our key focus and investment areas moving forward. So many of the civil rights challenges that the SPLC was established to defeat have echoed his words – laws and policies that have spread from the South to other parts of the country, disenfranchising and oppressing communities of color across the United States. To effectively counter the structural racism and other forms of oppression that exist today, we are committed to changing the South in order to lead the way for the rest of the country.

Consistent with our mission, vision and strategic impact goals, the SPLC is building a new community engagement structure in each of the five states in which we operate focused on and informed by local concerns, context, strategy, solutions and collaboration. The ‘State Offices’ will add capacity to collaboratively address issues unique and proximate to each state and to drive long-term, transformational and structural change. Each state office will be led by a State Director who will guide their respective state-based strategy in collaboration with other Center leaders.

The purpose of this regional and environmental analysis is to refine our understanding of the key qualitative and quantitative drivers that are disproportionately impacting and influencing the quality of life for our most underserved and underinvested communities in Mississippi. Further, an analysis of organizational, institutional and systemic factors and actors will refine our understanding so that we can better equip our team to more effectively partner with and invest in communities across the state to demand and effectuate change so that all residents of Mississippi can thrive.

It is our intention to build upon the landscape analysis in Mississippi as a prototype for innovation in our other state based offices. Clearly, no two states in the south are alike. However, we want to learn from

this statewide work so that we can scale the most valuable lessons learned and best practices to our other offices as appropriate.

2. WHO MAY RESPOND

The SPLC seeks a diversity of partners with experience and expertise in community based research and/or community based data collection and analysis, including but not limited to, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, small businesses and firms 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. Working with large and complex, social sector organizations with offices throughout the country;
- C. Interviewing and engaging a range of SPLC representatives at all levels as well as a diverse group of Mississippi based organizations, churches, government leaders, community leaders and stakeholders, youth, elders, immigrants, etc. with respect and dignity; and
- D. Assembling an experienced, diverse team that reflects the people of Mississippi.

3. ABOUT THE SPLC

Founded in 1971, the SPLC is a 501(c)(3) organization that envisions a world in which everyone can thrive and the ideals of equity, justice, and liberation are a reality for all.

Theory of change.

We have identified four areas of work that offer the greatest opportunities to achieving our mission. While there are many urgent needs, we recognize that one organization cannot do everything very well. We choose to prioritize these areas of work in order to achieve maximum impact. With this focus in mind, we adopt the following goals:

1. Eradicating poverty
2. Decriminalizing and decarcerating Black and brown people
3. Protecting voting rights and civic engagement
4. Dismantling white nationalism and protecting democracy

We are in the process of developing strategies in service of these goals. They will include litigation, advocacy, education, research and analysis, narrative change and more.

We have more than 350 staff in 10 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 three additional offices that provide direct representation legal services to our clients in nearby immigrant detention facilities in:

- Folkston, Georgia
- Lumpkin, Georgia
- Ocilla, Georgia

4. PROPOSAL CONTENT: QUALIFICATIONS, SCOPE OF WORK, DELIVERABLES AND BUDGET

Responsive proposals must be submitted as a single PDF document, be no longer than 10 pages, and include the following.

A. Statement of Qualifications.

1. A description of the primary nature of your organization/firm's work, the size of the organization/firm including the number of employees, the location of the office(s) from which your work on this engagement is to be conducted, and how the diversity of your team creates greater value and insight in the work you produce for your clients and the communities they serve.
2. A description of your organization/firm's experience and expertise in conducting regional and environmental landscape analysis for specific states using publicly available data sets in authentic combination with community based interviews and how you have synthesized information and perspectives from a diverse group of stakeholders and potential partners to develop a cogent analysis and set of recommendations.
3. A description of the qualifications and experience of all staff who will be assigned to this engagement and where they will be geographically based. For the proposed team leader, please include their resume. The resume will not count against the maximum 10-page limit of the written proposal.

Any additional information on the experience of staff noted above, particularly in describing their cultural competencies, their understanding of racial bias and data collection, the concepts of structural and institutional racism and the impact on underserved communities will strengthen your proposal.

4. A description of the most significant engagements (maximum of 3) performed in the last five (5) years similar in scope to this RFP. Please indicate briefly the scope of work, dates of the engagement, and primary client contact information. Please include at least one (1) writing sample and/or final project deliverable related to the project. This attachment will not count against the maximum 10-page limit of the written proposal.

B. Statement of Proposed Work.

1. **Research and Data Methodology.** Detail what your approach will be for gathering and synthesizing complex information on the current state of affairs in Mississippi.
 - How might you approach gathering both quantitative and qualitative information?
 - How might you use both publicly available data sets as well as field and community based interviews?
 - How might you determine who will be interviewed?
 - How might you determine which quality of life drivers are most important to focus on in the State of Mississippi given the SPLC's interests?
2. **Work plan.** Your proposal should set forth a clear work plan that includes the following:
 - A description of how your organization/firm will gather and synthesize data as well as specific data elements that you propose to include in your analysis;
 - Proposed segmentation of the project with anticipated time frames for each segment;
 - Level of staff and number of hours to be assigned to each proposed segment of the project;

- Type and extent of analytical procedures to be used in the project;
- Approach to be taken to gain and document a more nuanced understanding of Mississippi's regional and environmental landscape (e.g. by stakeholders? counties? cities? race? immigrant communities? some other previously unexplored form? etc.); and
- Approach to communicating and modifying the scope of work once additional insights are gained.

C. Proposed Deliverables.

SPLC expects ongoing and regular communication between the project team, the chief of staff and possibly SPLC's Mississippi State Director once hired to make adjustments as necessary. At minimum, a written report is expected to:

- Analyze and synthesize the data findings, in its various forms, of the regional and environmental landscape analysis;
- Analyze and communicate, in its various forms, the community based interviews;
- Develop a cogent analysis of the findings and propose a set of initial recommendations or "playbook" based on the data and interviews; and
- Highlight potential SPLC partners who might be willing to engage in a more formal relationship moving forward.

D. Proposed Budget.

SPLC understands that unexpected changes, including the exact number of hours needed to complete the engagement, may be necessary once a contract is awarded. SPLC will cover all reasonable costs up to 15% of the agreed upon budget associated with the completion of this regional and environmental landscape analysis. It is expected that some combination of desk-based work, document and research review, key-informant interviews via Zoom, etc. will need to replace field based interviews given COVID and other safety restrictions. Based on similar engagements and your experience, please provide an estimated timeframe to complete the engagement with hourly rates of work allocated between each of the proposed team members plus any other anticipated charges to be incurred.

5. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA AND TIMELINE FOR THIS RFP

SPLC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals. Responses will be evaluated along several dimensions including, but not limited to, the following:

- A. Statement of Qualifications;
- B. References;
- C. Statement of Proposed Work;
- D. Proposed Deliverables;
- E. Proposed Budget; and
- F. Interviews.

- **March 31, 2021:** We will request Zoom interviews with the intended team lead and their proposed team for a limited number of semi-finalists
- **April 7, 2021:** We will invite a limited number of finalists to deliver a virtual presentation.
- **April 26, 2021:** We intend to award a contract the week of April 26th.
- **May 24, 2021:** We intend to commence work on this project with our new partner.
- **July 9, 2021:** We expect to complete the first phase of this project.

6. PROCESS FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

- A. ***Bidder's Conversation.*** We understand that you may need additional information about the SPLC to submit a proposal that accurately estimates the scope of work to complete this project. Please email taunya.miles@splcenter.org, to register your interest in joining the bidder conversation on **March 5**, at 3p.m. EDT. Register here:
https://splcenter-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMkcuqhpzMqHtBBEH-L43NTXe_XAT3eS3in
After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.
- B. ***Inquiries.*** Please direct all questions regarding this RFP to **taunya.miles@splcenter.org**, chief of staff, no later than 5 p.m. EDT on **March 12, 2021**.
- C. ***Closing Date.*** Proposals are due by 5 p.m. EDT on **March 19, 2021**.
- D. ***Conditions of the proposals.*** All costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFP, including costs associated with interviews or in-person visits, are the sole responsibility of the bidder and will not be reimbursed by the SPLC.
- E. ***Submission instruction.*** Proposals must be a single PDF document, no longer than 10 pages, and the file name must include your firm's name. Email your proposal to splcRFP@splcenter.org. Please **DO NOT** email submissions directly to Taunya Miles. Hard copy, U.S. mail submissions will **NOT** be accepted.