



Request for Qualifications (RFQ)
for
Planning, Environmental and Project
Support
Consulting Services
Due:
Friday, November 7, 2025
Before
4:00 p.m.

Proposal Contact:
Jonnie Lan
Acting Planning Manager
City of Merced
678 West 18th Street
Merced CA 95340
209-358-4768
LanJ@cityofmerced.gov

I. Introduction

The City of Merced is requesting qualified consulting firms to respond to this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for planning and environmental consulting services of various residential, commercial, public, and industrial projects ("project" sometimes herein referred to).

II. About the City

The City of Merced is a distinctive community in the heart of the Central Valley with a population of just under 100,000 residents. The City is located in Merced County, approximately 56 miles north of the City of Fresno. Known as the "Gateway to Yosemite" and serving as a regional hub for education, culture, and business, the City offers a growing, vibrant atmosphere with new amenities, cultural events, and recreational options, alongside its traditional agricultural roots. The City features a revitalized downtown, numerous parks, a bicycle transportation network, and is home to UC Merced and Merced College both of which provide educational and economic opportunities.

III. Purpose and Project Overview

The City is issuing this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to establish an On-Call Consultant List for Planning, Environmental, and Project Support Services. The selected firm(s) will assist City staff in carrying out a full range of planning, environmental, and project support services, including but not limited to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance.

Under the direction of the Development Services Department's Planning and Housing Divisions, the consultant(s) will support the City's planning functions and environmental review processes as needed. All services must be performed by qualified professionals with appropriate education, certifications, and/or licenses relevant to their field of expertise.

The City is seeking consultants who can demonstrate the capacity to deliver timely, cost-effective services while maintaining a high standard of customer service to both City staff and project applicants. The resulting On-Call Consultant List will serve as a resource to the Development Services Department for a variety of current and long-range planning and federally funded infrastructure and affordable housing projects.

IV. Scope of Services

The City of Merced seeks to establish an On-Call Consultant List for Planning and Environmental Services. The consultant(s) selected through this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process will be placed on a pre-qualified list to provide services on an as-needed basis under the direction of the Development Services Department.

This On-Call Consultant List will streamline the selection of qualified firms for future projects that require specialized planning and environmental expertise. Being placed on the list does not guarantee any minimum amount of work or compensation. Rather, as needs arise, the City will issue project-specific scopes of work to one or more firms on the list based on expertise, availability, and project relevance.

- **Project Assignment Process**

Once the On-Call Consultant List is established:

- The City will issue a written request for services, outlining the specific scope of work for a given project or task.
- Selected consultant(s) will be invited to submit a **project-specific proposal**, which will include a scope of work, detailed cost breakdown (including hourly rates and estimated hours), staffing plan, and schedule.
- Upon review and approval of the proposal, a Professional Services Agreement will be executed for that specific project. A sample of the Professional Services Agreement is attached for reference.

- **General Scope of Services**

Consultants may be requested to perform a range of planning and environmental services, including but not limited to those listed below. These categories represent general service areas and may be further refined or expanded in a project-specific scope of work issued by the City.

A. Planning Services

1. Current Planning

- Review and process discretionary and ministerial planning applications, including but not limited to Conditional Use Permits, Variances, Site Plan Reviews, Parcel Maps, and Subdivision Maps.
- Analyze projects for consistency with the General Plan, Zoning Code, Subdivision Map Act, Specific Plans, and applicable design guidelines.
- Prepare staff reports, resolutions, and environmental documents in compliance with CEQA or NEPA.
- Attend and present at public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council. Occasionally at other City Committee's and Commissions as needed.

- Provide qualified planning staff to support City operations on an as-needed basis, potentially including in-office assistance with application processing, and general planning tasks.

2. Advanced Planning Services

- Provide support for long-range planning projects, including General Plan updates, zoning code amendments, and implementation of recent state and federal housing laws and regulations.
- Conduct research and policy analysis related to land use, housing, sustainability, economic development, public infrastructure, and transportation.
- Draft zoning code amendments and specific plans.
- Support public outreach and stakeholder engagement through workshops, surveys, and community events.
- Prepare visual and written materials to support planning initiatives, including marketing and educational collateral.
- Provide GIS mapping, spatial analysis, and demographic data analysis as needed.
- Monitor and report on state, federal, and regional legislation affecting local planning policies and practices.

B. Environmental Services

1. CEQA Services

- Prepare, draft and/or peer review CEQA documents, decisions, notices, or agreements including but not limited to:
 - Categorical Exemptions (CE)
 - Initial Studies and Mitigated Negative Declarations (IS/MND)
 - Environmental Impact Reports (EIR)
- Prepare notices (NOE, NOP, NOA, NOC) and assist with public review, filing, and adoption processes.
- Provide mitigation monitoring and reporting services, including Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Programs (MMRPs).
- Conduct impact assessments across all CEQA topics, including but not limited to:
 - Aesthetics
 - Air quality and greenhouse gases

- Biological resources
- Cultural and tribal cultural resources
- Geology and soils
- Hazards and hazardous materials
- Hydrology and water quality
- Land use and planning
- Noise and vibration
- Population and housing
- Transportation (including VMT)
- Utilities and service systems

2. NEPA Services

- Prepare, draft and/or peer review NEPA documents, decisions, notices, or agreements, including but not limited to:
 - Environmental Assessments (EA)
 - Environmental Impact Statements (EIS)
 - Findings of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
 - Findings of Significant Impact (FOSI)
 - Floodplain decision reports and assessments
 - Floodplain notices
 - Notice of Intent to Request Release of Funds
 - Federal Register Notices
 - Section 106 Review
 - Others not listed or anticipated
- Knowledge of and access to the HUD Environmental Review Online System (HEROS).
- Coordinate with regional, state, and federal agencies such as but is not limited to HUD, Caltrans, EPA, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- Coordination with California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), National Park Service's Tribal Historic Preservation Program (THPO), Housing Division staff, and project proponents for historic preservation determinations.
- Assist in preparing supporting documentation for federally funded projects (e.g., HOME, CDBG, SAFETEA-LU).

3. Technical Studies and Specialized Environmental Support

- Prepare supporting technical studies and analysis, including but not limited to:
 - Air Quality and GHG modeling (CalEEMod, etc.)
 - Noise and vibration studies
 - Traffic studies, including SB 743-compliant Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis
 - Biological, soil, and wetland assessments
 - Cultural and historic resource surveys and studies
 - Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)
 - Pedestrian/on-site survey, as needed

4. Tribal Consultation

- Provide CEQA/NEPA support in fulfilling Tribal Consultation requirements pursuant to:
 - AB 52 (Tribal Cultural Resources under CEQA)
 - SB 18 (Traditional Tribal Cultural Places and Sacred Sites)Section 106
- Assist with identifying and notifying traditionally and culturally affiliated California Native American Tribes.
- Coordinate consultation meetings between the City and tribal representatives.
- Provide technical support in documenting the consultation process and incorporating tribal input into environmental documents.
- Prepare or review cultural resource assessments and mitigation strategies that address tribal concerns.
- Provide technical and other support to project proponent(s) and the City in the event historic and/or archeological artifacts and/or remains are discovered at project site.

C. Marketing and Graphic Support for Planning Functions

Assist City staff in the preparation and design of visually engaging planning related materials, including brochures, flyers, handouts, fact sheets, infographics, and community outreach materials. These materials may be used to communicate zoning regulations, development processes,

upcoming planning initiatives, or public meeting announcements. Consultants may be asked to:

- Develop content and layouts for printed and digital materials.
- Create maps, diagrams, and charts to clearly explain complex planning concepts.
- Provide branding and visual consistency for planning documents and outreach campaigns.
- Support marketing of specific planning efforts (e.g., General Plan updates, zoning amendments, housing projects, or community workshops).
- Translate materials into multiple languages, as needed, to reach diverse communities.

D. Transportation Planning

1. Transportation Planning Support

- Review development applications and provide transportation-related input, including, but not limited to, assessment of circulation, design, driveway spacing, transit, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, and accessibility.
- Conduct transportation planning studies in support of specific plans, zoning updates, and General Plan amendments.
- Support the preparation of, review and/or provide technical support to the transportation chapters of CEQA/NEPA environmental documents.
- Assist with planning for multimodal transportation networks, including active transportation and complete streets strategies.
- Support the preparation of grant applications related to transportation funding programs (e.g., ATP, SB 1, TCEP).
- Coordinate with State/Federal agencies to obtain any required permits to support transportation related infrastructure.

2. Parking and Mobility Analysis

- Review and prepare parking studies, including demand analyses, shared parking strategies, and parking utilization surveys.

- Conduct parking ratio analyses to evaluate or recommend parking requirements based on land use type, location, and development intensity.
- Recommend updates to the City's auto and bicycle parking standards, including tailored standards for mixed-use, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development
- Analyze parking impacts from proposed developments and identify mitigation strategies, if needed.

3. Traffic and Circulation Analysis

- Conduct Level of Service (LOS) and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analyses in compliance with SB 743 and CEQA Guidelines.
- Evaluate intersection operations, queuing, and overall traffic impacts associated with new development.
- Provide recommendations for signalization, traffic calming, or street design improvements based on study results.
- Prepare or review Traffic Impact Analyses (TIAs), Traffic Management Plans (TMP), and queuing studies.
- Collaborate with Public Works or Engineering Departments as needed on transportation infrastructure planning and traffic mitigation strategies.

E. Architectural and Landscape Design Services

1. Architectural Design Support

- Review development proposals for architectural consistency with adopted design guidelines, specific plans, and zoning regulations.
- Provide written design evaluations and recommendations related to form, massing, façade articulation, materiality, and compatibility with surrounding development.
- Assist with the development or update of architectural design guidelines and objective design standards for residential, commercial, mixed-use, or industrial projects.
- Support the creation of objective design standards in compliance with state housing laws (e.g., SB 330, SB 35, SB 9).
- Prepare visual renderings or diagrams to illustrate design concepts or clarify guidelines for applicants, staff, and decision-makers.
- Attend public meetings to present design findings and respond to questions related to architectural quality or code consistency.

2. Landscape Architecture Support

- Prepare objective landscape standards for development and City related Capital Improvement Projects. Review landscape plans for conformance with City standards, design guidelines, and water efficiency requirements (e.g., MWELO).
- Recommend best practices for landscaping in new development, including drought-tolerant planting, stormwater integration, and pedestrian-scaled design.
 - Assist in updating landscape design standards and integrating them into zoning or specific plan documents.
 - Support site plan review for compatibility of landscape design with architectural and site circulation elements.
 - Prepare conceptual landscape designs or streetscape studies as needed to guide policy updates or capital improvement projects.

F. Client Directed Services

Those services that maybe solicited within the arts, licenses or certifications of the disciplines offered by the responding firms. This would give the City the opportunity to utilize services not yet determined, but necessary because of a specific project need. If a firm is able to provide support for such services, the City may solicit use of the firm's spectrum of services not otherwise defined herein.

V. Submittal Content and Procedures

The following minimum information shall be provided in each proposal and will be utilized in evaluating each proposal. To expedite the evaluation of proposals, submittals shall include:

1. Consultant's Prior Experience and Qualifications

Provide the following for three (3) relevant projects or on-call service engagements completed within the past three (3) years:

- Name of the public agency or City
- Project title or type of on-call service
- Brief executive summary describing the scope of work
- Description of your firm's role and responsibilities
- Dates of service or project completion
- Key staff involved
- Web link to the project (if available)

- Examples of complex NEPA and CEQA assessments and other documents.

2. References

Provide three (3) client references applicable to the scope of services and with whom the consultant has worked during the previous three (3) years. Include contact names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.

3. Organizational Chart

Identify all team members, their titles, and responsibilities for the project.

4. Team Member Resumes

Provide a resume for each team member.

5. Methodology Overview and Approach

Provide a detailed description of the approach and methodology to be used to accomplish the variety of services of this RFQ. As part of the submittal package, firms shall provide a Methodology Overview and Approach that describes their understanding of on-call consulting work in a municipal context and outlines how they intend to successfully deliver a wide range of planning and environmental services to the City.

Given the broad scope of services covered under this RFQ, consultants are encouraged to demonstrate their capacity to manage and deliver multidisciplinary work. Firms may include subconsultants as part of their proposed team; however, the primary consultant will be the only entity contracted by the City and will be fully responsible for the performance, coordination, and quality of all work, including services provided by any subconsultants. Consultants are encouraged to demonstrate:

- A clear understanding of the diverse and evolving needs of municipal planning and environmental services.
- A flexible and scalable project management approach that can be tailored to assignments of varying size and complexity.
- The ability to integrate multidisciplinary teams, including in-house staff or subconsultants.
- Strategies for maintaining regular communication with City staff and ensuring timely delivery of high-quality, legally defensible work products.

- Familiarity with City processes, public agency coordination, and community engagement best practices.
- A commitment to responsiveness, transparency, and excellent customer service when interfacing with the public, applicants, and City representatives.

The methodology section should not exceed three (3) pages and should clearly demonstrate the firm's capacity to serve as an extension of City staff, providing expertise in a professional and collaborative manner.

VI. Evaluation and Selection Process

It is the intent of the City to establish an On-Call List for Planning, Environmental, and Project Support Services composed of consultants who offer the best overall value, expertise, knowledge and benefit to the City. All proposals submitted will be reviewed, evaluated, and scored by an Evaluation Committee, which will include Staff from the Development Services Department and other designated City Staff (as needed), based on the following criteria:

Qualifications and experience	20%
Understanding the Scope of Services	20%
Methodology Overview and Approach	20%
RFQ quality and acceptance of the City's Agreement	20%
Fee Schedule	20%

Firms may propose on one or all of the disciplines they deem appropriate. If their specialty is only in transportation planning or environmental, then the firm may submit the above information for the purpose of supporting the City in that discipline.

Firms whose proposals are selected by the City may be invited to enter negotiations for the purpose of executing a Professional Services Agreement (PSA) based on the proposed scope of work. Final scope and cost will be determined through negotiations with the selected firm(s) and shall be subject to approval by the City.

The City reserves the right to request additional information or clarification from any proposer to facilitate a thorough evaluation of the submittal in accordance with the criteria set forth in this RFQ.

At the City's discretion, interviews may be required with key personnel proposed to perform services under this contract. Interviews may be conducted at City offices, video conference call or, if requested by the City, at the consultant's place of business.

The City reserves the right to award contracts to multiple firms whose proposals are deemed to best meet the City's needs and provide the most value. The City may

accept or reject any proposal, or any part thereof, and reserves the right to waive any minor irregularities or informalities in the proposals received. Thereafter, these firms may be required to coordinate with each other and the City to accomplish the intended goals.

The selection to be on the On-Call List does not guarantee the award of work. It only establishes the consultant as eligible to be considered for future assignments. Project specific work will be authorized at the sole discretion of the City based on qualifications, availability, and the City's best interests.

VII. Professional Services Agreement

The selected consultants will be required to enter into a Professional Services Agreement with the City of Merced which includes the City's standard Terms and Conditions including insurance requirements. Both documents are attached at the end of this RFQ.

VIII. Submission of Response

The submittal will only be accepted as an electronic file. The electronic file of the complete proposal shall be in a readable and searchable PDF format.

All responses must be received by the City no later than **Friday, November 7, 2025, before 4:00 p.m.**

All proposals must be received in paper form (provide 5 hard copies) via mail or courier at:

Merced Civic Center
ATTN: Jonnie Lan, Acting Planning Manager
678 W. 18th Street
Merced, CA 95340

The City's official time stamp of submission will be based on when the City receives the package from the consultant, courier, or mail carrier, and will serve as the final determination of timely receipt.

The deadline to submit questions regarding this RFQ is **Friday, October 24, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.** Questions received after this deadline will not be considered. All questions shall be submitted via email and the subject line must include: "**RFQ On-Call Question.**" Only responses provided through a formal written addendum shall be considered binding. Oral statements, interpretations, or clarifications will have no legal or contractual effect. All questions regarding this RFQ must be submitted by e-mail to: City of Merced Development Services Department- planningweb@cityofmerced.gov

All interpretations, clarifications, and responses to questions deemed necessary to supplement or explain the intent of this RFQ will be provided in the form of a written addendum to be emailed to consultants no later than **Friday, October 31, 2025, at**

4:00 p.m. Addenda will be posted on the City's website at:
<https://www.cityofmerced.gov/business-and-development/bid-opportunities>

The schedule below outlines key dates for the selection of the On-Call Consultant List. The City of Merced reserves the right to modify these dates at its discretion in the best interest of the City.

RFQ Questions Due	Friday, October 24, 2025, at 4:00 PM
Addenda to be posted	Friday, October 31, 2025, at 5:00 PM
RFQ Due to City of Merced	Friday, November 7, 2025, at 4:00 PM
Advise Consultants of Selections	Friday, December 5, 2025, by 5:00 PM