

Issue Date: February 9, 2024

**MERCED SUBBASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
No. 2024-001
For
Multibenefit Land Repurposing Project**

Notice is hereby given that submissions will be received at the Merced Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (MSGSA) for performing all work necessary in accordance with the “REQUIREMENTS” and other related documents provided herein. Please carefully read and follow the instructions.

Email submissions shall be clearly marked with the Request for Proposals Number in the Subject line and forwarded to:

Merced Subbasin GSA
C/O Merced County Community and Economic Development Department
2222 "M" Street Merced, California 95340
Attn: Lacey McBride
Email: Lacey.McBride@countyofmerced.com
Phone: (209) 385-7654

Any Respondent, who wishes their submission to be considered, is responsible for making certain that their proposal is received by the Merced Subbasin GSA by the closing deadline. Paper submissions may also be mailed to the address listed above.

CLOSING DEADLINE DATE: 4:00 P.M., Friday March 15, 2024

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EXHIBITS:	
1 – Professional Services Agreement	
2 – Merced Subbasin GSA MRLP Round 2 Grant Application	
3 – Department of Conservation Round 2 MLRP Guidelines	

SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST

All items are required. This checklist is provided to assist you in ensuring you submit a complete submission.

- A. Cover Letter
- B. Respondent's Qualifications
- C. Proposed Respondent Team
- D. Proposed Scope of Work
- E. Budget
- F. References
- G. Signature Sheet (Attachment A)
- H. Subcontractor List (Attachment B)

SECTION 1

INTENT OF THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is soliciting for a firm or team to provide project management and plan development and implementation services to assist the Merced Subbasin GSA in implementing their Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP). Activities are to include the development of a Multibenefit Land Repurposing Plan and implementation of multibenefit land repurposing projects through a California Department of Conservation awarded MLRP block grant award.

The successful Respondent will be expected to execute the Professional Services Agreement included with this RFP as Exhibit 1.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The Merced Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (MSGSA) is soliciting written responses (submittals) through this RFP from qualified firms to provide professional services in developing a MLRP Plan for the Merced Subbasin GSA's jurisdiction and implementing the Plan including activities of outreach, project implementation and monitoring.

It is the intent of the MSGSA to enter into an agreement with a qualified firm or team to provide the professional services described herein. The total fees paid to the consultant will be dependent upon time and materials related to the professional services performed.

This RFP describes the Respondents qualifications to be evaluated, outlines the MSGSA's expectations, explains the review and selection process, and lists the submittal date for the Proposals.

1.2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Merced Subbasin GSA is located on the eastern side of Merced County in the San Joaquin Valley, one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. The GSA is a joint powers agreement between seven public agencies (Merced County, Mariposa County, Amsterdam Water District, Le Grand-Athlone Water District, Stevinson Water District, Merquin County Water District, Plainsburg Irrigation District) and two mutual water companies (Lone Tree Mutual Water Company, Sandy Mush Mutual Water Company). The majority of water users in the GSA's jurisdiction are groundwater users, with some surface water rights and purchases. The MSGSA coordinates with two other

GSA's in the Merced Groundwater Subbasin to implement the Merced Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

The Merced Subbasin GSA was awarded a \$8.89 million block grant from the California Department of Conservation in summer 2023 and recently executed the grant agreement with the Department of Conservation and agreements with their identified MLRP Partners. The MLRP seeks to increase regional capacity to repurpose agricultural land to reduce reliance on groundwater while providing community health, economic wellbeing, water supply, habitat, renewable energy, and climate benefits. The MSGSA's vision for multi-benefit land repurposing is to promote basin-scale coordinated efforts to build local capacity to repurpose agricultural land from higher to lower (or zero) groundwater use land uses, to address both overall groundwater overdraft in the MSGSA jurisdictional area as well as specific groundwater "hotspots" where sustainability indicators (e.g., land subsidence) are most troublesome. The MSGSA's proposed MLRP is unique in that it envisions two main programmatic components, long-term land repurposing for groundwater sustainability and a wildlife habitat corridor. MSGSA identified Partners to collaborate and contribute to this Program including: River Partners, Great Valley Seed Co., East Merced Resource Conservation District, SocioEnvironmental and Economic Development Strategies, Merced Wildlife Refuge, Sandy Mush Mutual Water Company, La Paloma Mutual Water Company and UC Merced as a collaborator.

1.3. CONTRACT TERM

The Contract term shall be for a period of approximately three years, through June 30, 2027, and may be extended at the discretion of the Board. The contract term coincides with the term of the California Department of Conservation (DOC) MLRP grant award.

1.4. INTERVIEWS

Interviews may be held to allow MSGSA staff and representatives to discuss the Respondents' submissions. Those Respondents that have been deemed most qualified may be asked to make a presentation to the evaluation committee in support of their submissions. Interviews may be in person in Merced County or virtual. Location and dates will be determined after the close of the RFP.

1.5. SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

To the extent achievable, the following schedule shall govern the review, evaluation and award of the submission. The MSGSA reserves the right to modify the dates below in accordance with its review process.

<u>Activity Estimated Schedule</u>	<u>Date</u>
a. Availability of the Request for Proposals	02/09/24
b. Deadline for submission of interpretation and/or written questions	02/23/24
c. Response to written questions provided on website	03/01/24
d. Closing date for the Request for Proposals	03/15/24
e. Interviews (if needed)	TBD
f. Award date	04/11/24
g. Contract to commence	April 2024

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SECTION 2

REQUIREMENTS

2.1. SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of work assumes close coordination and communication with MSGSA staff and MLRP Partners in implementing the MSGSA's MRLP. The selected Respondent will provide project management services including coordinating and overseeing the tasks of Plan Development, Project Implementation, Outreach, Monitoring and grant management. Completion of each of the tasks will be done in partnership with the MSGSA's MLRP Partners who have expertise in each of the tasks. The selected Respondent will assist in coordinating the operation and general administration of the program including further development of budget, schedule, planning and oversight for each of the tasks. The selected Respondent will be expected to participate in meetings with MSGSA staff and Governing Board, the Partners, monthly meetings with DOC and the Statewide Support Entity. Grant management may include reports to DOC, assistance in compiling and submitting invoices and other grant administration tasks.

The MSGSA MLRP includes the tasks described below, which align with the MRLP grant scope.

Task 1: Development of a MLRP Plan

Collaborate with Partners, DOC and the Statewide Support Entity to develop a Multibenefit Agricultural Land Repurposing Plan that identifies and prioritizes long-term land repurposing projects for groundwater sustainability and supports the development of a wildlife habitat corridor in a manner that is consistent with the goals of DOC's MLRP and the Merced Subbasin GSP, prioritizes projects providing meaningful benefits to disadvantaged communities and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFR), seeks and attains broad regional support from stakeholders, protects the economic viability of agriculture, and builds off of existing initiatives. Engage stakeholders through a series of workshops to inform the plan.

- 1.1: Identify, describe and prioritize individual projects
- 1.2: Identify and involve DACs and SDFRs in project planning
- 1.3: Estimate project benefits to SGMA sustainability indicators and DACs/SDFRs
- 1.4: Assess economic planning and adaptive management strategies
- 1.5: Outline a plan for stakeholder coordination, outreach and monitoring

1.6: Include scalable and transferable processes for project assessment to enable an ongoing “pipeline” of implementable projects

1.7: Seek innovative ways to incorporate additional land repurposing projects within the Subbasin outside of the MSGSA area, as appropriate

Task 2: Project Development and Permitting

Complete project development and permitting for projects prioritized in the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Plan. Engage stakeholders, including DACs/SDFRs, to obtain support for project technical design and legal/administrative elements, and to maximize project benefits.

2.1: Permitting, including Environmental Impact Reports (EIR) for CEQA and other permits on a per project basis.

2.2: Project development

2.3: Cultivation/production of native plant species seed stocks.

Task 3: Project Implementation

Implement projects in accordance with the Plan utilizing the primary implementation strategies, including transitioning irrigated land to dryland farming or non-irrigated rangeland, transitioning to less water intensive crops, providing incentive payments to landowners to implement land repurposing strategies, creating or restoring habitat, and developing recharge infrastructure. Use performance measures established in conjunction with the Statewide Support Entity to assess project success and facilitate strategies.

Task 4: Outreach, Education, Training

Pursue outreach and education initiative targeting (a) landowners, (b) DACs and SDFRs, and (c) regional entities. Present and solicit feedback on MSGSA MLRP vision, need for land repurposing and benefits that can accrue from land repurposing approaches in an adaptive and inclusive manner.

Task 5: Monitoring

Utilize performance metrics (e.g., volume of water saved relative to the baseline condition, acres of habitat created) for implemented projects to monitor and quantify project benefits. Involve the community in monitoring through citizen science.

Submittals should briefly describe the Respondent's understanding and approach to this scope of work. Respondents are encouraged to provide alternative ideas, programs, formats, and suggestions throughout the submission, based on previous experience.

2.2. RESPONDENT QUALIFICATIONS

The selected Respondent shall have experience providing support in agricultural land repurposing, demand reduction, or planning and implementation of multibenefit projects. Understanding of SGMA compliance and development of land use planning documents and implementation related to permitting and California Environmental Quality Act is expected. Additionally, the Respondent shall have experience in coordinating large planning documents with multiple Partners and stakeholders, in addition to presenting at public meetings detailed planning documents, projects with multiple benefits and monitoring strategies and results.

2.3. LICENSES AND PERMITS

Respondent will ensure that firm and employees (if applicable) have necessary licenses and permits required by the laws of the United States, the State of California, the County and all other appropriate governmental agencies. Firm agrees to maintain these licenses and permits in effect for the duration of the Contract. Firm shall notify MSGSA immediately of loss or suspension of any such licenses and permits.

SECTION 3

PROPOSED SOLUTION

3.1. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Respondent's Proposal shall be clear, accurate, comprehensive, and as concise as possible and shall include the Signature Page (see Attachment A) and Subcontractor List (See attachment B) followed by:

- A. Cover Letter (no longer than 1 page)**
The cover letter should convey a clear understanding of the requirements and objectives, and why the Respondent is uniquely qualified to be awarded a contract. An officer authorized to contractually bind the firm and to negotiate a contract with MSGSA shall sign the letter.
- B. Respondent's Qualifications**
Summary of overall qualifications and experience of the Respondent. Include project experience in the following areas or any additional areas that may be pertinent: agricultural land use repurposing, planning and implementation of multi-benefit projects that include recharge or demand reduction strategies, SGMA compliance consulting, development of land use planning documents, and implementation of related permitting and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance strategies.
- C. Proposed Respondent Team**
A description of the project team, including any subcontractors, and resumes for the project manager and key staff, and their anticipated roles. Also, include an organizational chart depicting how the team would be organized, and how the team would interact with other MLRP Partners and team members assigned to proposed tasks.
- D. Proposed Scope of Work**
A description of the proposed scope of work showing a detailed process and schedule of tasks for preparing the desired products. Identify tasks to be performed by subcontractors, if any.
- E. Budget**
Identify the not to exceed cost estimate for the work with a task level breakdown based on the estimated hours, rates, extensions, and direct costs, as well as other costs or expenses that would be charged in conjunction with the work.

F. References

The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three (3) clients who have contracted with the Respondent for services similar to those described in this RFP within the last three years.

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SECTION 4

SELECTION PROCESS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

4.1. BASIS OF SELECTION

The Respondent selected will be those whose submissions demonstrate to be the most qualified, responsive, and advantageous to the MSGSA. The MSGSA will make its selection in the best interests of the MSGSA after all factors have been evaluated.

THE MSGSA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL SUBMISSIONS OR ANY PART THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY INFORMALITIES IN THE SUBMISSION AND MINOR IRREGULARITIES, TECHNICAL DEFECT OR CLERICAL ERRORS, TO MAKE AN AWARD ON THE BASIS OF SUITABILITY, QUALITY OF SERVICE(S) TO BE SUPPLIED, THEIR CONFORMITY WITH THE SPECIFICATIONS AND FOR THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THEY ARE REQUIRED, AND NOT BE CONFINED TO COST ALONE.

False, incomplete, or non-responsive statements in connection with the submission may be deemed sufficient cause for rejection. The MSGSA shall be the sole judge in making such determination.

The MSGSA reserves the right to cancel or discontinue with the submission process and reject any or all submissions in the event it determines that there is no longer a requirement for the furnishing of such items, materials, equipment and/or services, funding is no longer available for this submission, or it is otherwise in the MSGSA's best interest to cancel the submission process.

Once the submissions for the RFP have been received, the submissions will be reviewed and evaluated. Those Respondents that have been deemed most qualified may be asked to make a presentation to the evaluation committee in support of their submissions.

The evaluation committee will assess the consistency of the RFP submission with information provided during the presentation; consider the technical knowledge in answering questions and explaining how the firm is best suited to the work; and assess appropriate experience and staff.

4.2. EVALUATION COMMITTEE

All submissions will be evaluated by a MSGSA Evaluation Committee. The Committee may be composed of staff and other parties that may have expertise or experience in multibenefit land repurposing, demand reduction strategies, and grant management. The Committee will select Respondent in accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth in this RFP. The evaluation of the submissions shall be within the sole judgment and discretion of the Committee.

The Committee will evaluate each submission meeting the qualification requirements set forth in this RFP. Respondents should bear in mind that any submission that is unrealistic in terms of the technical or schedule commitments will be deemed reflective of an inherent lack of technical competence or indicative of a failure to comprehend the complexity and risk of the MSGSA's requirements as set forth in this RFP.

4.3. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The basic information that each section should contain is specified below, these specifications should be considered as minimum requirements. Much of the material needed to present a comprehensive submission can be placed into one (1) of the sections listed. However, other criteria may be added to further support the evaluation process whenever such additional criteria are deemed appropriate in considering the nature of the goods and/or services being solicited.

Each of the Evaluation Criteria below will be used in ranking and determining the quality of Respondents' submittal. The evaluation process may include a two-stage approach including an initial evaluation of the written submission and preliminary scoring to develop a short list of Respondents that may continue to the final stage of oral presentation and interview and reference checks. Scores may be updated after oral presentations have taken place.

The evaluation process is as follows:

1. After the period has closed for receipt of submissions, each submission is examined by MSGSA staff to determine compliance with the RFP format requirements and grounds for rejection. This is not a public review.
2. Submissions cannot be changed by the Respondent after the time and date designated for receipt.
3. Submissions that meet the format requirements are submitted to the Evaluation Committee, which evaluates each submission and assigns points.
4. The Committee may conduct interviews and then re-score the submissions.
5. All Respondents are notified of the results.
6. Contents of materials that will be scored are listed below.

Project Narrative (100% in total)

- **Comprehension and responsiveness of proposal (40%)**
- **Qualifications of firm/team (15%)**
- **Project specific experience (25%)**
- **Budget (20%)**

SECTION 5

GSA NOTICES

5.1. All Respondents should note the following:

- a) All work performed for the MSGSA, including all documents associated with the project, shall become the exclusive property of the MSGSA.
- b) Any and all costs, including travel, incurred by any Respondent arising from development and delivery of a response to this RFP shall be borne by the Respondent without reimbursement by MSGSA.
- c) The selected Respondent shall remain an independent contractor, working under their own supervision and direction and is not a representative or employee of the MSGSA. The selected Respondent agrees to file tax returns and pay all applicable taxes on amounts paid pursuant to this Contract.
- d) The successful Respondent must be prepared to begin work promptly following execution of the Contract and is expected to complete the project in its entirety.
- e) The MSGSA reserves the right to request additional information from Respondents that have submitted a response to this RFP and to enter into negotiations with more than one Respondent should a contract be awarded. The MSGSA reserves the right to award more than one contract if it is in the best interest of the GSA.

DEFINITIONS

Respondent - A person, partnership, firm, corporation, or joint venture submitting a bid submission for the purpose of obtaining a MSGSA Contract.

Closing Date/Time - The day and time the Request for Submission must be received by the MSGSA.

Contract - Comprises the Request for Proposals (RFP), any addenda thereto, the bid proposal, the Professional Services Agreement and the purchase order if appropriate. The Contract constitutes the entire agreement between the MSGSA and the awarded Respondent.

Contractor - The Respondent or Vendor awarded the Contract derived from this Bid or RFP.

Deliverable - The physical evidence such as documentation, certification of completion, hardware/software delivery, etc. which shows that a specific work has been completed as specified in the Scope of Work.

Evaluation Committee - A committee established to review and evaluate submissions to determine the Contract award. The committee includes representatives and staff of the MSGSA.

Formal Date of Award - Effective date the MSGSA Governing Board takes formal action to award the subject RFP to the most responsive Respondent.

Goals/Tasks - A discrete unit of work to be performed.

Joint Ventures - Two or more corporations or entities that form a temporary union for the purpose of the RFP.

May – Indicates something that is not mandatory but permissible.

MSGSA - Merced Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Must/Shall – Indicates a mandatory requirement. A submission that fails to meet a mandatory requirement will be deemed non-responsive and not be considered for award.

Notice of Intent to Award - Letter sent by MSGSA to all participating Respondents advising them of the date the MSGSA Governing Board will hear and possibly take action in awarding the Contract to the apparent successful Respondent as recommended by the Evaluation Committee.

Objectives/Sub-Tasks - Detailed activities that comprise the actual performance of the Goal/Task. The total of all Goals/Tasks and Objectives/Sub-Tasks makes up the “Scope of Work”.

Prime Contractor - The Respondent who is awarded the Contract and designated as the legal entity. The Prime Contractor will hereafter also be known as the Contractor. Any subcontracting, Joint Ventures, or other legal arrangements made by the Contractor during this project are the sole responsibility of the Contractor.

Submission Deadline - The closing date associated with this submission.

Scope of Work - The mutually agreed to document which describe tasks, dependencies, the sequence and timing of events, deliverables, and responsible parties associated with the various phases of the submission.

Subcontractors - Any person, entity or organization, to which Contractor or MSGSA has delegated any of its obligations hereunder.

Tasks – A discrete unit of work to be done

ATTACHMENT A

SIGNATURE PAGE

(RESPONDENT TO COMPLETE AND PLACE IN FRONT OF SUBMISSION)

INDIVIDUAL/COMPANY _____

ADDRESS _____
(P.O. Box/Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

CONTACT PERSON: _____

TITLE: _____

TELEPHONE NO. _____ FAX NO. _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

The undersigned hereby certifies that he/she is a duly authorized official of their organization and has the authority to sign on behalf of the organization and assures that all statements made in the submission are true, agrees to furnish the item(s) and/or service(s) stipulated in this Request for Proposals at the price stated herein, and will comply with all terms and conditions set forth, unless otherwise stipulated.

“I certify that I have read the contents of the Request for Proposal (RFP) and will comply with all requirements, unless otherwise noted by exception herein, as of the date and time of close of this RFP”.

Authorized Representative - Name Title

Signature Date

Taxpayer Identification No.: _____



ATTACHMENT B

SUBCONTRACTOR LIST

SUBCONTRACTOR NO: 1 - COMPANY NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT PERSON: _____ **TITLE:** _____

E-MAIL: _____ **TELEPHONE NUMBER:** _____

AMT. OF CONTRACT: _____ **DATE AND TYPE OF SERVICE** _____

SUBCONTRACTOR NO: 2 - COMPANY NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT PERSON: _____ **TITLE:** _____

E-MAIL: _____ **TELEPHONE NUMBER:** _____

AMT. OF CONTRACT: _____ **DATE AND TYPE OF SERVICE** _____

SUBCONTRACTOR NO: 3 - COMPANY NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT PERSON: _____ **TITLE:** _____

E-MAIL: _____ **TELEPHONE NUMBER:** _____

AMT. OF CONTRACT: _____ **DATE AND TYPE OF SERVICE** _____

THIS PAGE MUST BE COMPLETED AND RETURNED WITH SUBMISSION

