

REQUEST FOR SCHOOL UNIFICATION CONSULTANT STATEMENTS OF QUALIFICATION

The Sonoma County Office of Education (“SCOE”) and the Sonoma County Committee on School District Organization (“County Committee”) collaboratively invite statements of qualification (“SOQ”) from qualified consultants (individuals or firms) to provide services to assist SCOE and the County Committee respond to requests for the analysis of the feasibility of school district unification(s) and/or reorganization(s). Consultant may also be selected to provide assistance with preliminary evaluation of the conditions for approval of district reorganization pursuant to Education Code § 35753.

A School District Unification Consultant will be selected over two phases beginning with this Request for Qualifications (“RFQ”) phase followed by a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) phase issued to consultants short-listed from the RFQ.

Please carefully read all instructions, specifications, terms and conditions. Failure to comply with the instructions, specifications, terms and conditions of this RFQ may result in the SOQ being declared non-responsive and rejected.

All requests for clarification or exceptions to instructions, terms and conditions, specifications, requirements, scopes, insurances, RFQ preparation, etc. contained herein must be made in writing and addressed by email only to

Mary Downey
Deputy Superintendent
Mdowney@scoe.org
707-524-2631

and submitted no later than the date indicated in the Schedule of Activity for the submittal of questions.

If appropriate, in SCOE’s sole judgment, one or more written addenda may be issued which shall thereafter become part of this RFQ. No oral representations shall be binding upon SCOE unless reduced to a written addendum issued prior to the RFQ closing date and time. SCOE is responsible only for that which is expressly stated in the solicitation document and any authorized addenda thereto. Each respondent, by submitting a SOQ represents that they have read and completely understand the RFQ documents. Any and all costs incurred by the respondent in preparation, transmittal or presentation of any material submitted in response to the RFQ shall be borne solely by the respondent.

All SOQ’s must be received by SCOE on or before **Friday, May 21, 2021 at 5:00 pm** and must be submitted electronically to Mdowney@scoe.org with the subject line “SCHOOL UNIFICATION CONSULTANT SOQ”.

This is not a formal request for bids or proposals nor an offer by SCOE to contract with any

party responding to this request. SCOE reserves the right to reject any and all SOQs or any portions thereof. Selection and qualification under this RFQ is not a guarantee of a future contract for services, and SCOE may seek to requalify consultants at a later date, if it best serves the interest of SCOE.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITY
(subject to change)

Activities	Estimated Dates
Issue RFQ	April 26, 2021
Final day to submit questions to SCOE	May 14, 2021
Final RFQ addendum issued (if required)	May 18, 2021
SOQs Due	May 21, 2021
Written Evaluation/Scoring	TBD
Notify Qualified Firms to Schedule Interview	TBD
Interviews (at SCOE's discretion)	TBD
Notify Shortlisted Firms	June 9, 2021
Issue RFP(s) to Shortlisted Firms	June 14, 2021
RFP Responses Due	July 19, 2021
Interviews (at SCOE's discretion)	TBD
RFP Award Recommendation	TBD
Approval of Recommendation	TBD
Finalize Contract	TBD

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

SONOMA COUNTY

Sonoma County is divided into 40 school districts for kindergarten through twelfth-grade (K-12) educational services. There are 31 elementary, 3 high schools, and 6 unified school districts. Unified districts operate both elementary and secondary schools for the students residing within their boundaries.

The county's school districts vary in size, serving both rural and urban areas. The smallest district in the county, Kashia, is located in a rural area and has about 11 students. The largest district, Santa Rosa City School District, enrolls over 16,000 students and is the County's most populous school district.

Enrollment in Sonoma County public schools grew rapidly during the 1990s, but has been decreasing since 2001. Some districts have seen large declines in enrollment over the years, while others have experienced significant growth. These shifts are largely due to the county's changing demographics and the availability of housing for families with school-age children.

SCOE OVERVIEW

The mission of the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) is to foster student success through service to students, schools, and the community.

SCOE is a partner to the county's 40 districts, providing services and oversight that help them serve roughly 68,000 students. SCOE does not have or create policies directing district behavior. Each district sets its own policies. Here are some of the key programs SCOE offers:

- Service and support to help districts meet legal mandates, operate cost-effectively and raise student achievement.
- Fiscal oversight to districts.
- Schools and services for special education and alternative education students who are not enrolled at district sites.
- College and Career Readiness Services helps districts prepare their students for college and career.
- Professional development for teachers and administrators.

COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD

Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D., is the elected Superintendent of Schools and serves as SCOE's chief administrative officer. The separately elected members of the Sonoma County Board of Education work with the Superintendent to oversee county education initiatives.

SONOMA COUNTY COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION

The Sonoma County Committee on School District Organization (County Committee) is responsible for overseeing the reorganization of school districts in the county. It is also authorized to:

- Create, abolish, or rearrange trustee areas
- Increase or decrease the number of governing board members
- Determine alternative methods of electing governing board members
- Establish or abolish common governing boards
- Rearrange trustee areas based on the federal decennial census

The County Committee may initiate, coordinate, facilitate, or arbitrate the reorganization of school districts. This may include formulating plans, responding to petitions, conducting public hearings, developing and releasing information, and analyzing proposals related to the organization of Sonoma County school districts.

The County Committee is subject to the legal requirements of the California Education Code and State Board of Education policies and regulations, but has latitude to address each local situation in its own context. The California Department of Education (CDE) provides a Handbook for School District Organization, which details the duties, responsibilities, and processes that must be followed.

FEASIBILITY STUDY REQUESTS

SCOE has received requests for unification or partial unification feasibility studies from two school districts in Sonoma County:

- Santa Rosa City School District
- West Sonoma County Union High School District.

SCOE's preference is to enter into a single contract with one consultant for both studies, however, multiple RFPs may be issued to the short-listed candidates.

SCOE expressly reserves the right to modify the following unification study component list, but anticipates that, at a minimum, a unification study will include analysis of the following items:

- Business Operations
 - Eligibility benefits: pros and cons related to state supplemental and concentration funds per district vs. per unified configuration
 - CTE 9-12 funds per unified configuration
 - 7-8 grade supplement funds - gains vs. loss per unified configuration
 - Total dollar value per pupil, unified vs. district
 - Tax obligation conversion vs. individual district voter-approved parcel taxes and facility bond obligations per unified vs. old district

- Status of bond oversight committees
- Deferred maintenance obligations per district facility inspection reports
- Debt and liability obligations per district unified configuration
- Transfer property/equipment ownership
- Charter school impacts on the unified district tax role
- Charter school authorizer status
- Transportation funding vs. district funding
- Five-year declining enrollment cohort district vs. unified: sustainability of individual district vs. unified per configuration.
- Enrollment Cohort study

- Impact on General Educational program benefits K-12:
 - Federal Entitlement Programs
 - Studies cited related to academic continuum utilizing state assessments
 - Federal Entitlement Program. Per district - Title I, II, III
 - Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) benefits of unified district vs. individual districts
 - Cite research studies re: education benefits of K-12 unified vs. multiple feeder districts
 - Special Education
 - Projected impact of deficit, unified vs. individual district
 - Service capabilities

- Human Resources
 - Salary + benefits adjustments per unification configuration
 - Contract process steps with the new unified district
 - Employment status: date of hire transfers
 - Administrative staffing ratio/teacher staffing ratio per unification configuration (plus or minus FTEs)
 - Unified vs. individual district contract obligations
 - Maintenance and conditions of collective bargaining agreement until unified takes over
 - Credential issues: unified vs. district (related to staffing)
 - Retiree Health benefit obligation unified vs. district = cost and percent

- Governance and Demographics
 - Government structure per CA Voting Rights Act: Trustee Areas
 - Socio-economic diversity evaluation
 - Geographical compactness
 - Equality of resources distribution
 - CEQA requirements
 - Thompson Configuration impacts on elementary with unified (most beneficial grouping)

- County Committee Conditions: For each scenario review, preliminarily evaluate whether the following conditions may be substantially met
 - The reorganized districts will be adequate in terms of number of pupils enrolled.
 - The school districts are each organized on the basis of a substantial community identity.
 - The proposal will result in an equitable division of property and facilities of the original district or districts.
 - The reorganization of the school districts will preserve each affected district's ability to educate pupils in an integrated environment and will not promote racial or ethnic discrimination or segregation.
 - Any increase in costs to the state as a result of the proposed reorganization will be insignificant and otherwise incidental to the reorganization.
 - The proposed reorganization will continue to promote sound education performance and will not significantly disrupt the educational programs in the affected districts.
 - Any increase in school facilities costs as a result of the proposed reorganization will be insignificant and otherwise incidental to the reorganization.
 - The proposed reorganization is primarily designed for purposes other than to significantly increase property values.
 - The proposed reorganization will continue to promote sound fiscal management and not cause a substantial negative effect on the fiscal status of the affected districts.

PROCESS

Consultant selection will include two phases, beginning with a Request for Qualification (“RFQ”) phase followed by a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) phase issued to teams short-listed from the RFQ Phase.

Phase I RFQ

The primary purpose of this RFQ is to qualify and select a short list of highly qualified consultants, who will then be requested to participate in the Phase II RFP. In the RFQ, respondents are asked to provide their background, experience, basic project approach to address SCOE’s objectives and identify key personnel to demonstrate their ability to provide the experience, capacity and resources necessary to successfully conduct school district unification and/or partial unification feasibility studies. Only those consultants short-listed will move forward and participate in the Phase II RFP.

Phase II RFP

Informed by the RFQ process and prior to releasing the RFP, SCOE will make a determination whether it will require short-listed consultants to propose on both studies, or if consultants may pursue either the Santa Rosa City School District or West Sonoma County Union High School District independently.

Phase II will consist of an RFP process in which the short-listed consultants will be requested to submit fully developed proposals for the feasibility analysis and report. Further detail will be provided during the RFP phase with regards to the exact submittal requirements for the RFP.

Late Statements

SOQs arriving after the specified date and time will not be considered.

Evaluation and Award

SOQs will be evaluated as noted in the Evaluation and Selection Criteria section of the RFQ. Inclusion in the prequalified pool (as determined by the evaluation committee’s careful consideration of the SOQ) is not a guarantee of work. Consultants who are not selected by SCOE will be notified in writing. Nothing herein shall obligate SCOE to award a contract to any responding consultant.

Waiver of Irregularities

SCOE retains the right, in its sole discretion, to waive any minor irregularities in SOQs that do not comply with the strict requirements of this RFQ, and SCOE reserves the right to ultimately award a contract to a consultant submitting any such non-compliant SOQ at SCOE’s sole discretion.

Qualification/Inspection/Interviews

SCOE reserves the right to reject SOQs where evidence or evaluation indicates an inability to perform the assigned tasks. SCOE, through the process described herein, reserves the right to interview any or all responding consultants in either Phase I and/or Phase II and to award a

contract without conducting interviews.

Public Nature of Proposal Material

All correspondence with SCOE including responses to this RFQ will become the exclusive property of SCOE and may become public records pursuant to the California Public Records Act (Cal. Government Code section 6250 et seq.) unless an exception to the Act is applicable.

Therefore, any proposal which contains language purporting to render all or significant portions of the proposal “confidential,” “trade secret,” or “proprietary,” or fails to provide the exemption information required as described below will be considered a public record in its entirety subject to the procedures set forth in Section 3 below.

1. Do not mark your entire RFQ as “confidential.”
2. SCOE will not disclose any part of any proposal before it announces a recommendation for award because there is a substantial public interest in not disclosing proposals during the evaluation process. After the announcement of a recommended award, all proposals received in response to this RFQ and/or any future RFP will be subject to public disclosure. If you believe that there is any portion of your proposal which is exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act, you must mark it as such and state the specific provision in the Public Records Act which provides the exemption as well as the factual basis for claiming the exemption. For example, if you submit trade secret information, you must plainly mark the information as “Trade Secret” and refer to the appropriate section of the Public Records Act which provides the exemption as well as the factual basis for claiming the exemption.
3. Although the California Public Records Act recognizes that certain confidential trade secret information may be protected from disclosure, SCOE may not be in a position to establish that the information that a consultant submits is a trade secret. If a request is made for information marked “confidential,” “trade secret,” or “proprietary,” SCOE will provide the consultants who submitted the information with reasonable notice to seek protection from disclosure by a court of competent jurisdiction. SCOE is not obligated to expend any funds or effort in vindicating a consultant’s claim of confidentiality with regard to materials submitted to SCOE in response to this RFQ.

ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

1. Insurance and Indemnification: The selected consultant shall provide insurance and certain indemnifications as required by SCOE. The RFP(s) will provide further requirements and will require certain submittals regarding Insurance and Indemnification.
2. Non-Discrimination: The consultant and any other sub-consultants included as members of the team shall not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of sex, race, creed, color, national origin, religion, age, preference, or non-job related handicap or disability. Failure to comply with these provisions shall be considered cause for disqualification.
3. Conflict of Interest: Pursuant to Government Code section 1090, SCOE employees are prohibited from participating in the selection process when they have a financial or business relationship with any private entity seeking to enter into a contract with SCOE, and SCOE requires compliance with all laws regarding political contributions, conflicts of interest or unlawful activities.
4. Proposal Requirements: All materials submitted to SCOE in response to this RFQ will remain property of SCOE unless otherwise noted within this document. Each SOQ should include the information listed in the Submission Requirements.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Respondents are requested to provide the following items in their SOQ. Please compose responses with the following headers (1 through 5) clearly indicated. Note that certain sections contain page limits though there is no page limitation on the aggregate response.

1. Contact Information and Cover Letter of Interest

Provide a brief cover letter of interest. This letter shall include: the legal name of the firm/individual responding as the consultant; street address; and the name, email address, and telephone number of the principal contact for the firm for the purpose of this RFQ. It must be signed by an authorized official of the consultant.

2. Organization and Background

Provide a general overview of the firm including:

History and number of years in business

- a. Location of office(s) that will perform the work (if firm has multiple offices)
- b. Organization Chart for the firm
- c. Bios, qualifications, and role of key people anticipated to perform work, if selected, under a contract with SCOE

3. Relevant Experience

Provide a description and references of the most recent relevant projects (including examples of the analysis and reports) directly performed by your firm. Provide past examples, if any, which involved consideration of school district unification or partial unification.

4. Work Approach (up to 10 pages)

Provide a narrative addressing your overall proposed approach to a school district unification or partial unification feasibility analysis and report.

5. Other Relevant Information (up to 2 pages)

Please provide any information that you feel would help SCOE understand your submittal. This is your opportunity to share with us anything that we did not ask about that that you believe positively portrays your firm and your team.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SCORING

The following is the evaluation criteria with point values assigned to each. These weighted factors will be used in the evaluation of the SOQs.

Submission Requirements #1 & #2 Firm Organization and Background	15
Submission Requirement #3 Relevant Experience	30
Submission Requirement #4 Project Approach	20
Submission Requirement #5 Other Relevant Information	15
TOTAL	80

Per the Schedule of Activity on Page Three of this document, respondents will be notified on **June 9, 2021**, if they have been short-listed. The short-listed consultants will receive RFP(s).