



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

**Fresno Metro Ministry in Partnership with the
Better Blackstone Community Development Corporation (Metro/BBCDC)**

**U.S. EPA Brownfield Property Assessments, Redevelopment Planning
and Community Engagement**

<https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/information-eligible-planning-activities>

RFP Release Date: May 15, 2023

RFP Response Due Date: July 1, 2023

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Purpose of this Request for Proposal

Fresno Metro Ministry in partnership with the Better Blackstone Community Development Corporation (Metro/BBCDC), through this Request for Proposal (RFP), is seeking a qualified team of consultants with brownfield environmental, redevelopment planning, and community engagement expertise to provide assessments and related project feasibility/market studies and community engagement services to further Metro/BBCDC efforts with brownfield redevelopment along the Blackstone Avenue mixed-use bus rapid transit corridor in Fresno, California. The consulting team selected should have community engagement experience with underserved communities, and design experience successfully incorporating the perspectives and needs of historically under resourced communities.

We are requesting the following approach in response to this RFP from a team of qualified consulting firms:

- A qualified consultant team will provide environmental inventory enhancements, community involvement; and grant implementation related to an awarded United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) brownfield grant, including but not limited to parcel level assessments and development feasibility studies for Hazardous Substances Brownfields and Petroleum Brownfields as

part of the US EPA Brownfields Grant Competition for Fiscal Year 2022.

The intent of this RFP is to comply with Metro/BBCDC and federal procurement requirements as updated for 2022. Metro/BBCDC is seeking qualified firms to assist with implementing a brownfield assessment grant. The successful team of consulting firms will bring experience, comprehensive technical skills, a collaborative style and, insight to a partnership with Metro/BBCDC and potential Blackstone corridor brownfield coalition members to the implement this grant in a cost-effective manner at competitive rates.

Metro/BBCDC reserve the right to waive any informalities or technicalities and to reject any and all proposals or parts thereof deemed to be unsatisfactory or not in Metro/BBCDC's best interests.

1.2 Background Information

The City of Fresno (the "City") is located near the geographic center of California within the southern portion of the Central Valley – the most productive agricultural region in the United States (US). It is the 5th most populous city in California and the 34th most populous in the US. Founded as a railway station in 1872 and incorporated in 1885, the City has seen continued growth throughout its history, including adding nearly 310,100 residents since 1980 to reach its current estimated population of 527,422. Many of the City's current urban challenges are linked to development decisions made in the 1950s-60s, including: completion of a freeway system that separated Downtown from surrounding neighborhoods and facilitated urban sprawl: conversion of Fulton Street (the Downtown's main shopping street) into a pedestrian mall; and the gradual demolition of much of Downtown's walkable mixed-use urban fabric for surface parking lots, high-speed one-way roads, and superblock office development. Such projects contributed to the decline of the Downtown and many of the City's inner neighborhoods. By 2005, a Brookings Institution study identified Fresno as having the highest rate of concentrated poverty of any large city in the US, and a population that experiences some of the highest pollution burdens for any major city in the US.

Target Area Description: Blackstone Avenue is a north-south arterial road that is the primary commercial corridor extending 8-miles north from Fresno's downtown. Over 50,000 residents and 2,100 businesses are located within the 8-square mile area extending ½-mile east and west from Blackstone Avenue. Until the current Highway 41 (a freeway) was constructed in the 1980s, Blackstone Avenue was the primary route travelers passing through Fresno enroute to Yosemite National Park or the CA coast. United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) community wide assessment (CWA) grant funding will be used to assess and advance the redevelopment of brownfield sites located within the southernmost 4.5-mile segment of Blackstone Avenue, extending from Divisadero Street to the south to Shaw Avenue to the north. This is the oldest portion of the corridor, and an area that since the 1980s has experienced substantial disinvestment resulting in many vacant, abandoned, and underused properties.

The adoption of the City's 2035 General Plan in 2014 ignited a new focus on investment within the City's

older established neighborhoods and major transit-serving corridors – in particular Blackstone Avenue. A new Citywide Development Code adopted in 2015 established a policy framework for revitalizing the Blackstone Avenue Corridor, emphasizing rehabilitation, intensification, and reuse of vacant and underutilized land throughout the Corridor. The Code also established Mixed-Use District zoning along most of the Corridor with a goal of encouraging a mix of housing, retail, office, and active public spaces in a pedestrian-oriented environment.

Inspired by these planning actions, a coalition of local businesses, neighborhood groups, and other community stakeholders, led by Fresno Metropolitan Ministry (Metro), established the Better Blackstone Association (BBA) in 2015 to help catalyze and guide transformation of the corridor through development of cross-sector constituencies for urban revitalization as well as environmental conservation and sustainable communities. To further these efforts, the Better Blackstone Community Development Corporation (BBCDC) was established in 2016. Subsequent planning efforts have focused on redevelopment of sites within three approximately 0.5 to 1.0 square mile “activity centers” (ACs) located within the southernmost (and most distressed) section of the Blackstone Avenue Corridor. From south to north, these activity centers are: 1) the Olive Avenue/Gateway Activity Center (Olive AC); 2) the Weldon/Fresno City College Activity Center (Weldon AC); and 3) the Shields Avenue/Manchester Mall Activity Center (Manchester Mall AC).

Revitalization of the Target Area, Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans:

Detailed reuse plans for a majority of parcels along the corridor were completed in 2020-21 as part of the “Better Blackstone Design Challenge” – a \$750,000 planning effort led by Metro and supported by project and community partners that created reuse plans for 400 parcels across 88 sites within the Blackstone Ave. Corridor. The Southern Blackstone Smart Mobility Strategy, co-led by Fresno Metro Ministry in partnership with the City of Fresno, was completed in 2019 and adopted by the City and details plans to reconfigure approximately the southern 3 miles of Blackstone Avenue (which lie within the Target Area) within a “complete streets” design framework, which will narrow the road from 6 lanes to 4, provide protected bike lanes in each direction, and significantly expand and aesthetically improve sidewalks and streetscapes. These improvements will enhance the interest and ability of developers to proceed with the desired affordable housing and mixed-use developments. Better Blackstone is also a key part of a larger vision for urban infill called the Fresno Opportunity Corridor. See link to Better Blackstone Design Challenge UrbanFootprint Analysis: See Fresno Opportunity Corridor (FOC) Implementation Plan: [FOC Opportunity Corridor Plan V1B](#) Also – see Better Blackstone Design Challenge UrbanFootprint Analysis and an article about the Blackstone Opportunity Corridor in the arcCA Digest: [The BBDC Scenario Results 8/30/22](#) and <http://arccadigest.org/becoming-the-blackstone-opportunity-corridor/>.

While extensive and inclusive community engagement was conducted for both the Southern Blackstone Smart Mobility Strategy and the Better Blackstone Design Challenge efforts, producing broad-based cross-sector community awareness, engagement in shaping plans and designs, and support, more will be needed to engage residents and property/business owners related to specific parcel redevelopment plans.

1.3 Type of Contract and Contract Term

Metro/BBCDC intends to award a contract to one full-service consulting firm who will develop the team that can successfully implement and achieve the goals as defined within the U.S. EPA Cooperative Agreement (CA) and Project Work Plan(s). The contract period will begin after contract approval and will be for four years. The contract period may be extended at the option of Metro/BBCDC if additional grant funds are obtained within a four-year period of time. The requested services under this RFP will be funded through EPA Grant funds for defined grant implementation activities and deliverables.

Metro/BBCDC shall not, in any event, be liable for any pre-contractual expenses incurred by the Proposers in the preparation of their proposals. Proposers shall not include any such expenses as part of their proposals. Pre-contractual expenses are defined as expenses incurred by the Proposer in:

1) preparing its proposal in response to this RFP; 2) submitting that proposal to Metro/BBCDC; 3) negotiating with Metro/BBCDC on any matter related to this RFP; or 4) any other expenses incurred by the Proposer prior to the date of execution of the proposed agreement.

1.4 Payment Procedures

Authorized payments will be made no more than monthly, for work specified and completed and in accordance with the agreed upon contract prices.

2. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

2.1 Activities Funded Under this Request for Proposals

This RFP is to solicit a consulting firm who will be expected to provide a wide range of services to the Metro/BBCDC for the implementation of the US EPA Brownfield Communitywide Assessment Grant. The successful consulting firm is expected to perform many tasks including, but not limited to, the following:

Grant implementation, if awarded and if this work is contracted to consultant:

- Conduct project work in accordance with EPA, Metro/BBCDC approved work plans.
- Prepare and maintain schedules and budgets for all assigned grant activities.
- Assist Metro/BBCDC in forming a coalition of stakeholders by acting as an expert resource and providing information about brownfield assessment and remediation.
- Work with Metro/BBCDC to facilitate community outreach activities as needed to enhance grant implementation.
- Attend meetings and provide professional expertise in discussions regarding selection of parcels to participate in grant activities, working collaboratively with

Metro/BBCDC and EPA Project Managers.

- Conduct and oversee site assessments and studies, prepare appropriate technical reports (printed and electronic formats) required by the U.S. EPA, CalEPA, and additional state and local agencies as deemed necessary for each site.
- Conduct and oversee comprehensive site investigations including sample collection and laboratory analysis.
- Provide work updates and information to all stakeholders as requested by the Project Manager.
- Evaluate cleanup options and conduct risk assessment analysis and provide cost estimates on selected sites.
- Prepare a written Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) in compliance with U.S. EPA regulations.
- Deliver to the Project Manager completed Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) reports, site investigation reports, response action plans and other environmental reports or plans required under the applicable California environmental regulations.
- Provide project management, implementation, and technical oversight in compliance with State County and City rules, regulations and guidelines.
- Offer professional advice regarding environmental issues associated with land reuse and/or redevelopment.
- Provide regulatory and financial information as needed.
- Attend meetings of the Metro/BBCDC and advisory committees as requested.
- Prepare presentations to provide information about the project's progress as requested.
- Assist with corridor-wide inventory of potential hazardous substance and petroleum brownfields sites, including working with City Staff to update relevant city and county GIS data.
- Develop preliminary budget, financing options and implementation plan for cleanup and reuse.
- Provide site reuse plans, including site/market/project feasibility studies or conceptual site designs
- Complete contaminant characterization and risk assessments as determined necessary following Phase II ESA activities (as funds allow).
- Develop comprehensive community outreach and public involvement program(s).
- Provide public and private opportunities for stakeholder participation throughout all phases of projects.

2.2 Project Budget

As part of the response to the RFP, please prepare costs and pricing proposals for coalition formation, community outreach and community involvement, environmental and related studies, and more, referencing the task outputs and deliverables matrix below for grant implementation.

Task # and Name	Task Outputs and Deliverables
1 – Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract Work Plans with timelines for consultant team members responsible for tasks and deliverables
2 – Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Engagement Strategy • Facilitate 9 Brownfields Advisory Committee (BAC) mtgs; at least 3 should be in person • 8 public meetings with: Flyers, meeting agendas, project updates, notes, sign-in sheets, fact sheets, press releases • Project updates to Metro website
3 – Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) – draft and final • Up to 6 Sampling and Analysis Plans (SAPs)
4 – ESA’s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 14 eligibility determination (ED) forms • Up to 14 Phase I ESAs • Up to 6 Phase II ESAs
5 – Inventory, Cleanup and Reuse Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory report, GIS files (w/ narrative, tables, maps, # of sites identified) and prioritization memo • Up to 4 Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives • Up to 4 Reuse Plans or Site/Market/Project Feasibility Studies or Conceptual Site Designs
6 - Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 Draft Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs) via ACRES, EPA’s Brownfields database, for Project Manager review, input, completion, internal approvals and submission • ACRES updates, per site • Draft final programmatic report and accomplishments slide deck for Project Manager review, input, completion, internal approvals and submission

2.3 Project Management

The successful consulting firm will support the project management tasks required of the Project Manager, including:

1. Evaluate potential redevelopment sites along the Blackstone Corridor Target Area.
2. Facilitate community outreach activities as needed to enhance and fulfill grant activities.
3. Define work plan tasks in conjunction with Project Manager.
4. Coordinate grant related project activities with the Project Manager and EPA.

2.4 Preparation of Contract Work Plans

Consultant’s work will be supervised and approved by the Project Manager. The contract work plans should include:

1. Scope of work organized by logical work tasks,
2. Subcontractors used by the consultant and identification of their project roles,
3. Detailed project budget for each major task and subtask, and
4. Time-phased project schedule listing major tasks, target dates, and delivery of work products.

2.5 Reporting Requirements

The following reports shall be prepared by the consultant and submitted to the Project Manager for approval:

1. Quarterly and annual financial and progress reports required by the U.S. EPA.
2. Submission or updating of information in the U.S. EPA ACRES reporting system for assessed sites.
3. Draft and final contract work plans for specific sites as deemed necessary.
4. Technical memoranda
5. Other grant related reports required by the U.S. EPA

2. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

3.1 General Expectations

Consultants are asked to submit concise qualifications describing their capacity to successfully implement grants, ability to manage projects, and their experience with similar projects. All requested information is required. These proposals should include a clear outline of how the firm would help the Metro/BBCDC as Project Manager to meet the requirements of a U.S. EPA brownfields assessment grant and provide detailed responses to the following items:

1. What would you recommend as a Community Involvement plan?
2. Grants: What would be your proposed strategy to sustain our brownfield program with outside funding beyond the present grant? What grants are available that would be relevant? What kind of timeline should the Project Manager County follow for applying for them?
3. GIS and Web-based Information Ability: The Project Manager needs to be able to go beyond what we have, to develop the technology we have available to become tools for the future of our program. Full implementation of web-based, geo-coded, environmental information may not be part of this contract, but how would you recommend the Project Manager prepare its information for such a future use.
4. Please define any and potential conflicts of interest (refer to 2 CFR 200.318 and EPA's Financial Assistance Conflict of Interest Policy and how those would be handled.
5. Please provide a timeline and/or schedule for Blackstone grant project tasks/deliverables implementation.

3.2 Proposals

Proposals should be submitted in electronic form and written form (two copies). Written proposals should be prepared on standard size paper, printed on both sides using recycled or post-consumer paper and limited to ten (10) pages, exclusive of a maximum of five (5) resumes, limited to two (2) pages each. Standard advertising brochures should not be included in the proposal. Please index and sequentially number all pages throughout or by section. The type and necessity of binders and covers will be at the Consultant's discretion. The submittal should be clear and understandable when reproduced in black and white.

The selected consultant will assume responsibility for all services offered in the proposal, including any services provided by consulting team members acting as subcontractors to the consultant. Further, the Project Manager will consider the consultant to be the sole point of contact with regard to sub-contractual matters, including payment of any and all charges resulting from the contract. The consultant is responsible for adherence by the subcontractors to all provisions of the contract.

3.3 General Process

Metro/BBDCD as Project Manager will review the consulting firm's proposals with the following criteria in mind using weighted factors as noted as (% for each criteria):

- (20%) Successful track record in implementing EPA Brownfields Communitywide Assessment or similar grants
- (10%) Expertise related to relevant project components
- (10%) Firm and staff experience related to assessing contaminated sites
- (10%) Cleanup and redevelopment planning
- (10%) Project Approach
- (10%) Ability to facilitate public outreach activities
- (10%) Demonstrated ability to provide comprehensive and innovative environmental services plus redevelopment planning
- (20%) Reasonableness of cost/price proposal based on a comparison of prices among competing offerors and other available information on market rates for consulting services

Metro/BBDCD as Project Manager reserves the right to accept or reject proposals on any basis it deems appropriate.

3.4 Terms and Conditions

By submitting a proposal, the Proposer represents that he/she has thoroughly examined and become familiar with the work required under this RFP and that he/she is capable of

performing quality work to achieve the objectives of the Metro/BBDCD as Project Manager. Selecting a company to provide consultation services for Metro/BBDCD as Project Manager requires comprehensive and accurate information from respondents to ensure that a knowledgeable, objective decision can be made.

Any exceptions to the requirements in this RFP must be included in the proposal submitted by the Proposer. Segregate such exceptions as a separate element of the proposal under the heading "Exceptions and Deviations."

Where two or more Proposers desire to submit a single proposal in response to this RFP, they should do so as a Consulting Team with one entity acting as the on a prime contractor. basis rather than as a joint venture. The Project Manager intends to contract with a single firm representing a consulting team of subcontractors.

Issuance of this RFP and receipt of proposals do not commit the Project Manager to the awarding of a contract. The Project Manager reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the proposals or portions thereof, without stated cause. The Project Manager reserves the right to re-issue any RFP; it is the Project Manager's choice whether or not to utilize the contract for this grant for future projects funded by U.S. EPA or other brownfields grants.

Upon selection of a Consultant, the Project Manager by its proper officials shall attempt to negotiate and reach a final agreement. If the Project Manager, for any reason, is unable to reach a final agreement with this selected Consultant; the Project Manager reserves the right to reject such finalist and negotiate with another consultant who has the next most viable proposal. The Project Manager may also elect to reject all proposals and re-issue a new RFP.

The Project Manager reserves the right to request clarification on any point or obtain additional information related to the RFP. Any request for clarification or other correspondence related to the RFP shall be in writing or email, and a response shall be provided from the Consultant within two business days.

The Project Manager is not bound to accept the consulting firm with the lowest cost, but may accept the one that demonstrates the best ability to meet the needs of the Project Manager. The Project Manager reserves the right to waive any formalities, defects, or irregularities in any submittal and/or response where it is in the best interests of the Project Manager. The Project Manager reserves the right to disqualify any submittal, before or after opening, upon evidence of collusion, intent to defraud or any other illegal practice on the part of the consulting firm.

3.5 Public Information

Information supplied to Metro/BBDCD as Project Manager is subject to the California Public Records Act. Such information shall become public unless it falls within one of the

exceptions in the statute, such as security information, trade secret information, or labor relations information. If the proposer believes any information which is not public will be supplied in response to this RFP, the vendor shall take reasonable steps to identify for the Project Manager what data, if any, it believes falls within the exceptions. If the data is not marked in such a way as to identify non-public data, the Project Manager will treat the information as public and release it upon request. In addition, the Project Manager reserves the right to make the final determination of whether data identified by the Consulting Firm as not public falls within the exceptions of the statute.

3.6 Time Schedule

The timeline for completion of this Request for Proposals is outlined below.

- **May 15, 2023:** Formal announcement date for RFP
- **July 1, 2023:** Deadline for submittal of proposals
- **August 1, 2023:** Proposal evaluation is completed (anticipated)
- **September 1, 2023:** Contract awarded (anticipated)

3.7 Notification of Award

The Project Manager anticipates selecting a consultant by August, 2023. Should either party fail to execute a contract within 30 days of notification of award, the Project Manager reserves the right to rescind the award and select services from another interested firm.

3.8 Number of Submittals, Deadline, Mail, and Hand Delivery Addresses

Two (2) original paper format and one (1) electronic format must be submitted by **5:00 p.m. PST on July 1, 2023**. Submit all questions relating to the RFP in writing via email to Keith Bergthold (keith@fresnometmin.org) at the addresses below. All questions and clarifications submitted to the Project Manager regarding the RFP will be answered promptly and replied to all consulting firms receiving this RFP. Any changes to this RFP will be made by the Project Manager through a written addendum. No verbal modification will be binding.

The mailing and hand delivery address is:

Keith Bergthold, Metro Strategic Advisor (and CEO of BBCDC)
Fresno Metro Ministry
3845 N. Clark Street #101
Fresno, CA 93726

Electronic communications should be delivered to: keith@fresnometmin.org

3.9 Late Submittals

Submittals received after the deadline will not be considered.

6. VENDOR REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Contracting With Disadvantaged Business Enterprises

It is U.S. EPA policy to award a fair share of contracts to disadvantaged business firms. Accordingly, affirmative steps must be taken to ensure that disadvantaged businesses are utilized when possible as sources of supplies, equipment, and services. The Project Manager will ensure, to the fullest extent possible, that at least the U.S. EPA “fair share” objectives for prime contracts and subcontracts are made available to organizations owned or controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, women, and minorities. The consultant shall agree to support the U.S. EPA’s disadvantaged business enterprise contract procurement program ensuring those businesses’ participation in subcontracts.

Affirmative steps include the following as a minimum:

1. Including qualified disadvantaged businesses on solicitation lists;
2. Ensuring that disadvantaged businesses are solicited whenever they are potential sources;
3. When economically feasible, dividing total requirements into smaller tasks or quantities so as to permit disadvantaged business participation;
4. Where the requirement permits, establishing delivery schedules which will encourage participation by disadvantaged businesses;
5. Using the services and assistance of the Small Business Administration, the Office of Minority Business Enterprise of the Department of Commerce, and the Community Services Administration as required;
6. Consultants are encouraged to procure goods and services from disadvantaged businesses.

4.2 Equal Employment Opportunity

The Consultant agrees to comply with all federal, state, and local laws, resolutions, ordinances, rules, regulations, and executive orders pertaining to unlawful discrimination on account of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual preference, disability, or age. When required by law or requested by the Project Manager, the Consultant shall furnish a written affirmative action plan.