



Request for Qualifications: State of the Nonprofit Community Study

October 21, 2026

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Purpose

Sonoma Community Foundation is seeking one or more qualified consultants, firms, or consultant teams to help create and implement a study on the state of Sonoma County's nonprofit ecosystem and to develop actionable recommendations to strengthen the resilience of the local nonprofit sector.

Applicants may offer services for the full scope of work or one or more individual service areas. The Foundation may award one or more contracts based on applicants' qualifications, the needs of the project, and the available budget. Final responsibilities, schedules, and compensation will be established through each selected consultant's negotiated scope of work.

Additionally, the Foundation will establish a list of pre-qualified consultants that will be available by request to Sonoma County nonprofit organizations interested in potential contracting opportunities. Local nonprofits occasionally approach the Foundation looking for leads on consultants that can support them with a specific need. Inclusion in the list of pre-qualified consultants does not guarantee a contract or funding.

Background

Sonoma Community Foundation is the hub of philanthropy in Sonoma County. We utilize our local knowledge, leveraged resources, and over 40 years of experience serving Sonoma County to benefit all who live here.

The Foundation is committed to supporting the resilience of Sonoma County's nonprofit ecosystem, which includes the organizations, people, relationships, and resources that support community well-being. It includes nonprofits and community-led groups; their staff, boards, volunteers, and the communities they serve; and the funders, donors, government agencies, and partners that help shape their work.

A healthy ecosystem equips nonprofits to meet community needs, especially those of residents facing the greatest barriers, and to innovate and catalyze meaningful change that improves quality of life for all. This requires stable organizations, supported staff, leadership that reflects the community, equitable access to resources, and strong partnerships.

Over the next year, the Foundation is leading a study on our local nonprofit community with the goal of educating, inspiring, and guiding people in Sonoma County to increase wellbeing, resilience, and effectiveness in the local nonprofit sector. The study focuses on three aspects of the nonprofit sector:

1. A **landscape analysis** of Sonoma County's nonprofit ecosystem
2. An analysis of nonprofit **leadership**, including the conditions affecting wellbeing, succession planning, and BIPOC representation in leadership roles
3. An assessment of needs, emerging best practices, and opportunities related to enhancing organizational and sector **operational resilience**

The Foundation will publish findings in phases over the course of a year, generating multiple opportunities for learning, discussion, and action. Each publication will be accompanied by a gathering to support community-driven interpretation of findings and development of further inquiry and recommendations. The study will produce **actionable recommendations** usable by its key audiences - nonprofits, donors and funders, policymakers, and community stakeholders.

Scope of Services

The Foundation seeks one or more qualified consultants, firms, or consultant teams with experience in research, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement. Applicants may submit qualifications for the full scope of work or for one or more individual services areas. The Foundation encourages responses from both full-scope applicants and specialized consultants.

The Foundation has already engaged in several community conversations to solicit ideas, questions, and feedback on the study's purpose and framework. This engagement provides a strong foundation for the study design and has generated a robust question bank that can help inform the research approach and instruments. Relevant materials will be made available to the selected consultant(s).

Shared Process Commitments Applicable to All Consultants

A. Equity-Centered Process. The consultant or team of consultants will work with the Foundation to ensure that all services areas reflect an equity-centered approach. Consultants will support in identifying and engaging relevant stakeholders, surfacing equity gaps and opportunities to integrate racial and language justice across the project. The process will be multilingual – at minimum in

English and Spanish – with other languages supported as needed. Applicants are not expected to provide language access services directly. The Foundation may assist with coordinating translation and interpretation services as needed. Applicants may identify any relevant language capabilities they would bring to the work.

B. Alignment. Sonoma Community Foundation will manage the overall process and coordinate work across service areas. The Foundation will work with each consultant to develop work plans for their specific service areas while developing and maintaining an overall project plan, schedule, and process for monitoring progress. The Foundation will convene consultants for the different services areas at the outset to establish alignment and at regular intervals, as needed, to facilitate ongoing coordination.

Services Areas

A: Landscape Analysis

The consultant selected for this service area will be primarily focused on the development of a point-in-time snapshot of Sonoma County’s nonprofit landscape using secondary data sources.

Responsibilities include:

- Supporting the Foundation and partners in defining the scope, objectives, and work plan associated with the nonprofit landscape analysis. Collecting, analyzing, and interpreting IRS Form 990, Candid, and other relevant publicly available data sets.
- Contributing to the design and facilitation of feedback sessions.
- Refining data analysis and interpretation through the integration of participant feedback. Producing high-quality, accessible written materials, infographics, and data visualizations that can be adapted for various audiences and media (print, web, etc.). Graphic design is not required.

B: Leadership and Operational Resilience

The consultant selected for this service area will implement a participatory process to collect primary data, analyze and interpret findings, and develop recommendations.

Responsibilities include:

- Supporting the Foundation and partners in defining the scope, objectives, and specific work plan associated with the leadership and operational resilience elements of the project.
- Facilitating the participation of stakeholders in the development of data collection methods and instruments, data analysis and interpretation, and recommendations development.
- Designing the data collection instruments, which will include, at minimum, focus group protocols and a sector survey for nonprofit leadership and staff. The consultant may propose additional data collection approaches during the work planning processes.

- Developing and implementing a plan to collect a broad and representative sample of survey responses, monitor response quality, and analyze results.
- Designing and leading engagement activities, including focus groups and workshops, to support participatory data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
- Coordinating engagement event logistics, which may include scheduling, meeting space, materials, food, interpretation, and childcare.
- Producing high-quality, accessible written materials, infographics, and data visualizations that can be adapted for various audiences and media (print, web, etc.). Graphic design is not required.

C: Final Synthesis and Recommendations

The consultant selected for this service area will be primarily focused on synthesizing findings across all study components and conducting additional research and engagement to refine and finalize recommendations.

Responsibilities include:

- Synthesizing findings across all study components, including highlighting key themes and priorities.
- Conducting desktop research to develop and refine recommendations.
- Designing and leading engagement activities, such as design workshops, small group discussions, and key informant interviews to develop and refine recommendations.
- Coordinating engagement event logistics, which may include scheduling, meeting space, materials, food, interpretation, and childcare.
- Producing high-quality, accessible written materials, infographics, and data visualizations that can be adapted for various audiences and media (print, web, etc.). Graphic design is not required.

Desired Qualifications

Through this RFQ process, Sonoma Community Foundation seeks to identify a consultant or to establish a consultant team that collectively fulfills the qualifications necessary to effectively execute this work:

- **Nonprofit sector expertise:** Demonstrated knowledge of nonprofit structures, finances, governance, workforce trends, and operational challenges, ideally in Sonoma County or a comparable regional ecosystem.
- **Quantitative research and data analysis:** Experience acquiring, cleaning, linking, analyzing, and interpreting IRS Form 990, Candid, labor-market, demographic, and other administrative or secondary datasets.
- **Survey research:** Ability to design accessible and culturally responsive surveys, develop sampling and outreach strategies, monitor response quality, and analyze results.

- **Qualitative research:** Skill in developing interview and focus-group protocols, facilitating key-informant interviews and group discussions, coding findings, and integrating qualitative and quantitative evidence.
- **Participatory research practice:** Ability and experience developing research questions, methods, tools, and analyzing data through collaborative processes that involve those affected by the research.
- **Equity-centered research practice:** Demonstrated ability to examine racial equity and BIPOC leadership representation with cultural humility, protect participant dignity, and avoid extractive research practices.
- **Community engagement and facilitation:** Experience engaging nonprofit leaders, staff, funders, government partners, and community members and facilitating inclusive public discussions and design workshops.
- **Research ethics and data stewardship:** Capacity to obtain informed consent, protect confidentiality, securely manage sensitive data, and establish clear data-use and retention practices.
- **Project management:** Ability to coordinate multiple research streams, partners, deliverables, and public events while meeting the proposed publication schedule.
- **Clear analysis and communication:** Strong report writing, data visualization, presentation, and plain-language communication skills for briefs tailored to nonprofits, funders, government, and the broader community.
- **Action-oriented synthesis:** Experience translating evidence and community input into practical, feasible, and audience-specific recommendations.

Project Term

Work is expected to begin following contracting. The study and required deliverables are expected to be completed in phases over the course of 12 months.

Sonoma Community Foundation aims to share findings from the Landscape Analysis at our annual Coffee and Community event in spring 2027. Other deliverables – the Nonprofit Leadership, Operational Resilience, and Final Synthesis and Recommendations - are expected to be completed before winter 2027. The specific timeline will be determined in partnership with the selected consultants. Contract may be extended by mutual written agreement.

Submission Instructions

Please submit your proposal electronically to Jeanette Pantoja, Community Partnerships Lead, at jpantoja@sonomacf.org **by 5:00 PM on November 18, 2026**. Proposals should be clearly marked “Proposer Name_RFQ_Nonprofit Study.” Late or incomplete submissions will not be considered.

All submissions must include:

Applicant Information

Please provide the name of a primary contact, business name, address, telephone number, email address, and website, if applicable.

Services Proposed

Identify the service area or areas for which you are applying:

- A. Landscape Analysis
- B. Leadership and Operational Resilience
- C. Final Synthesis and Recommendations
- D. Full Scope — All Service Areas

Knowledge and Experience

Describe your relevant knowledge and experience for each proposed service area. Include one or more examples of comparable work, identifying your role and the results or deliverables. Include resumes and identify the qualifications of any staff and/or subcontractors assigned to the proposed services.

As applicable, include experience with community-engaged research and planning; philanthropic and nonprofit services and systems; multilingual and inclusive processes; and coordination with committees, partners, or other consultants. Also, if applicable, indicate experience working within Sonoma County and provide evidence to demonstrate your understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities within Sonoma County.

Applicants proposing multiple service areas may address experience overall but should clearly identify how experiences relate to specific proposed areas.

Capacity and Availability

Describe your capacity and availability to begin work following contracting and to complete the assigned work within the anticipated 12-month period. Include the ability to attend in-person and virtual meetings and to travel within Sonoma County as needed. Identify any scheduling, capacity, or travel limitations.

In addition, the Foundation plans to schedule conversations in early December to refine our consultant selections. Please indicate your availability and any scheduling constraints during this time frame.

Cost Proposal

Provide your hourly rates or other proposed billing structure and an estimated total cost or cost range for the proposed services. Applicants proposing multiple service areas may provide a total project estimate, estimates by service area, or both. Identify anticipated reimbursable expenses, including travel, and any assumptions or conditions affecting the estimate.

Final services, deliverables, timelines, and compensation will be established through each selected consultant's negotiated scope of work.

References

Provide contact information for at least two professional references who can speak to your performance on comparable work completed within the past five years. For each reference, identify the relevant project and your role. Other individuals familiar with your work may also be contacted.

Evaluation Criteria

Submissions will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. **Knowledge and Experience:** Relevance and depth of experience performing comparable services, including community-engaged research, work in relevant systems, and the qualifications of assigned personnel and subcontractors.
2. **Capacity and Availability:** Ability to work on a schedule compatible with the Foundation and availability to travel within Sonoma County. Capacity and availability to begin work following contracting and complete the assigned work within the anticipated 12-month period.
3. **Cost:** Competitive and reasonable cost for the proposed services.
4. **References:** Positive and relevant references from previous clients.

Timeline

- **RFQ Released:** Wednesday, October 21, 2026
- **Submissions Due:** Wednesday, November 18, 2026, by 5:00 PM
- **Virtual Interviews** (if needed): Week of November 30th or December 7th, 2026
- **Notification of Selection or Non-Selection:** By December 20, 2026

Questions

Please direct any questions to Jeanette Pantoja, Community Partnerships Lead, at jpantoja@sonomacf.org.