Request for Proposals:  
Strategic Planning Consultant

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION:  
Name: Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Inc.  
Address: 6 Herndon Avenue  
Annapolis, MD 21403  
Contact: Alison Prost, Vice President, Environmental Protection & Restoration

ISSUE DATE: August 11, 2023

SUMMARY OF NEED: Chesapeake Bay Fundation (CBF) is seeking proposals from an experienced and engaging consultant to assist with the design, execution, and implementation of a multi-phased process for the development of our next five-year strategic plan (2026 - 2030).

BACKGROUND
For more than five decades, efforts have been underway to restore the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams. What began as a movement by people recognizing that the Bay’s health was failing has grown into a remarkable, science-based collaborative effort experts consider the global model for ecosystem restoration. With support across geographies, ideologies, and political parties, considerable progress has been made.

Even as the watershed’s population has grown by half, pollution has been reduced significantly. Fish and crab populations are generally improving compared to when restoration efforts began. And over the long term, underwater dead zones are shrinking. The Bay is proving remarkably resilient, and it’s responding to what we’re doing on land to reduce pollution. But it’s still under extreme stress, we have a long way to go, and we need to be clear-eyed about the challenges. Far too much pollution, particularly from agriculture and urban/suburban polluted runoff, is still getting into the Bay and its rivers and streams. Climate change is a major threat, adding even more stress to the system and our communities. Environmental injustices and toxic legacy pollution must also be addressed.

As the Bay movement stares down another missed deadline in a string of missed deadlines, there is growing recognition that creating a vibrant watershed for future generations requires a new paradigm in our approaches and expectations. Together, we must build on what has worked, learn from what hasn’t, incorporate the latest science, and inspire a renewed movement for a watershed where humans and nature thrive together. This is our moment in time.

OPPORTUNITY
For the past decade, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) has positioned its messaging and communications; policy and programmatic goals; and capital campaigns around the Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint. Looming deadlines for the Blueprint, the conclusion of our most recent five-year capital campaign combined with new leadership and staff across many positions within CBF coincides with the end of our current strategic plan. This presents a tremendous opportunity to push CBF forward as a leading 21st Century organization and to chart a course toward the next iteration of Bay-saving beyond
As we look to reimagine and re-inspire efforts to save the Bay, CBF seeks an experienced individual or firm to help us chart that course through the development of our next five-year strategic plan.

**THE PROJECT:** CBF’s next strategic plan should have a solid foundation of a shared vision, lead to measurable goals that can effectively guide our ongoing and future work, fully embody principles of equity and inclusion, and provide a cohesive roadmap for our next five years. We want to place equity, transparency, inclusiveness, vision, and practicality at the forefront of an inclusive and thorough process to develop the strategic plan. Once CBF hires a strategic planning consultant, CBF will work with the consultant to design and establish a Strategic Planning team that will be comprised of a limited number of board members and staff and others recommended by the consultant. Additionally, the planning process will involve and engage several stakeholder groups including but not limited to CBF staff members, CBF’s leadership team, CBF’s current and former board members, CBF members, community members, partner organizations, relevant decision makers, and funders.

CBF intends for this strategic planning process to take place in the three phases outlined below. The work of phase one shall inform phases two and three. We anticipate needing to take an agile and adaptive approach to the process. We welcome proposals with a scope of work that covers one or more of the phases.

The planning process is expected to kick off in late September 2023. We anticipate that the new plan will be complete by December 2024 and take effect in 2025.

**SCOPE OF WORK:**

**Phase 1: Evaluate, Modernize, and Articulate CBF’s Vision and Mission**

An important starting place for the strategic planning process will be to better understand and uplift CBF’s critical and best role in advancing a healthy, equitable and vibrant Chesapeake Bay region. Building upon that understanding, we must evaluate, modernize, and articulate a clear organizational vision and mission. Some key questions to help guide phase one include:

1. What is CBF’s shared vision and mission?
2. What can we bring to the table that no one else can?
3. How do we define success?

**Phase 1: Activities, Outcomes, and Deliverables:**

Activities:

- Complete a landscape analysis to identify other entities working in this space defining each group’s role and unique value proposition.
- Identify CBF’s current role in this space and unique value proposition through activities such as conducting stakeholder research that engages environmental groups and funders in the Chesapeake Bay region whose missions overlap with CBF’s work. This research should: seek stakeholders’ perspectives of CBF’s role in achieving shared environmental goals and a diverse cross-section of audiences, including underrepresented communities in current and future environmental programs; identify CBF’s role in advancing these goals over the next 5 years and beyond; and outline how CBF can align organizational goals with existing funding sources and opportunities.
- Facilitate CBF staff and board through workshops and/or surveys to solicit feedback that defines, or reaffirms, CBF’s mission, vision, and goals.
• Working with CBF’s leadership, identify strategic goals as they relate to CBF’s programs, operations, and culture, and how they each feed into the overarching goal.

Outcomes:
• Consensus around, willingness to transform, and adoption of the refined mission, vision, goals, and related programs.
• Team alignment on strategic goals and metrics of success for CBF as an organization.

Deliverables:
• A vision and mission to carry CBF forward for the next five years.
• Strengthen our regional impact and forecasting future organizational needs.

Phase 2: Develop CBF’s 2025-2030 Strategic Plan
The strategic plan should develop clarity around current and potential focus areas, program implementation, geographic scope of work, and primary audiences. The plan should define CBF’s core value-add to Bay restoration efforts and reaffirm impact and goals. The plan should incorporate DEIJ goals into our internal and external-facing work as well as define CBF’s approach to strategic partnerships, and advocacy. The plan should update goals and objectives for the organization while also serving as a guide to the development of annual and departmental workplans.

The plan should also outline the business and operational goals that support the overall mission and vision of CBF. This includes new philanthropic goals and strategies, and business practices.

Phase 2: Activities, Deliverables and Outcomes
Activities and Deliverables:
• Facilitate meetings with staff and board members, with leadership by the Strategic Planning team.
• Create and distribute agendas, workplans, and meeting notes/summaries.
• Create and oversee pre-meeting exercises for staff aimed to tackle some of the work virtually and synthesize results of meetings for feedback/discussion of staff and board.
• Provide guidance and best practices to leadership as we navigate complex decisions around organizational growth and structure.
• Write the final plan, allowing for two rounds of input/revisions.
• A strategic planning document that includes CBF’s mission, vision, and definition of success.
• The 5-year plan should articulate how to achieve the successes and goals that we defined in phase 1.
• CBF’s leadership team will be instrumental in informing the content of the strategic plan, however, we anticipate leaning on the consultant(s) to understand our mission and vision enough to connect our dots and translate our vision into achievable objectives.
• A final presentation to the entire board and staff at CBF that summarizes the key outcomes of the strategic planning process, including the proposed pathway for achieving success.
• Budget assessment and prospectus to present to third-party foundations for support of the new five-year strategic plan.

Outcomes:
• A strategic plan that includes actionable operational guidelines on the systems, processes, and structure for CBF to be successful, function as a fully integrated team, and always operate in a way that aligns with our vision, mission, and goals.
The strategic plan that results should clearly articulate the niche or roles filled by CBF relative to other groups and funders working on similar issues in the region. By identifying the specific roles that CBF can fill to have the greatest impact and weave equity into all of the goals to best engage with diverse audiences.

The strategic plan will help to guide CBF’s program development, partnership strategies, and philanthropic approaches.

**Phase 3: Design a Strategic Plan Evaluation and Decision-making Framework**

After the creation of a strategic plan in phase 2, we want to develop a plan for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the strategic plan. This should include qualitative and quantitative metrics of progress toward achieving CBF’s goals. We also want to create a decision-support tool that we can return to while implementing the strategic plan. We want this tool to help us answer the big questions of how to portion our time and energy to stay focused while also staying innovative and flexible.

**Phase 3: Activities, Deliverables and Outcomes:**

- Create a complementary document that provides a decision-support matrix for leadership to implement the strategic plan. The tool should assist leadership in staying focused and aligned with the mission throughout operations and offerings implementation while meeting financial goals. Outcomes
- A support tool to monitor the strategic plan annually throughout the five-year period.

**THE SCHEDULE:**

We request that your proposal be delivered electronically to CBF staff member Danielle Hodgkin, dhodgkin@cbf.org.

It is the intent of CBF to make a selection no later than September 8, 2023. We will notify you once a decision for award of bid is made.

The schedule requires that the selected entity(s) complete all three phases by June 30, 2025.

**MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS:**

Because of the integrated phases of this strategic planning process, we are hoping to identify a single consultant or consulting team to complete two or more of the phases. We do not expect any single consultant to meet 100% of these qualifications and encourage you to submit a proposal if this work looks exciting to you.

- Experience in facilitation and consensus building. We want you to be able to ask questions that spark conversations, listen to the perspectives shared, and connect the dots that lead to both actionable outcomes and consensus. We believe that this skill is critical to aligning on a unified vision and defining our understanding of success throughout all aspects of CBF.
- Experience with strategic planning in mid-size, non-profit organizations with complex budgets and organizational structure.
- Experience establishing and measuring metrics for success at operational and programmatic levels.
■ Excellent written and verbal communication skills that can help facilitate better participation during the iterative process but also create final concise and easily digestible materials of the activity outcomes.
■ Expertise and experience in developing a strategic plan that includes clear milestones and activities for achieving the vision.
■ Possesses an understanding of environmental issues and policies.
   Experience in the principles of DEIJ and developing equitable practices.
■ Expertise and experience in building strategies that recognize the intersection of operations, budgeting, staffing, and offerings when building strategies and goals.

INTERVIEWS:

CBF may opt to conduct interviews with RFP respondents before making a final decision.

MINORITY PARTICIPATION:

CBF actively encourages proposals from Small, Women and Minority Owned (SWAM) Businesses. Please note if you are a Small, Women or Minority Owned Business and if you are certified by the State/Commonwealth/DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS:

Alison Prost, Vice President, Environmental Protection and Restoration
Aprost@cbf.org

BID RESPONSE FORM:

Please complete the following Information for your response:

1. The name and full contact information of your company and, if applicable, any other entity comprising your team: [Attach resumes of individuals involved.]

2. List and describe three projects completed within the previous five years that are relevant to this project. If the relevance is not immediately obvious, please describe briefly the relationship as you see it: [Attach additional information as appropriate.]

3. List three client references and their contact information for whom you or your team members have completed work similar to that described in this RFP:

4. Include basic information and history about the business entity, financial information, technical capability, and any other information you feel is important for us to know.

5. Fee Proposal, detailed to the greatest extent possible – cost for service: hourly rates (if applicable), typical direct out of pocket costs such as travel reimbursement, copies, mailings etc.…. and any other anticipated expenses that you foresee.

6. Additional information, such as you/your team member’s particular experiences, training, and/or academic background(s) that may make you uniquely qualified for this project.
A successful applicant may need to provide proof of insurance based on the services or product provided.

The undersigned certifies that the information submitted above is true and accurate. The undersigned certifies that the person, firm, association, co-partnership or corporation herein named, has not, either directly or indirectly, entered into any agreement, participated in any collusion, or otherwise taken any action in restraint of free competitive bidding in the preparation and submission of a proposal to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation for consideration in the award of a contract.

The undersigned further certifies that the firm, association, or corporation or any person in a controlling capacity associated therewith or any position involving the administration of federal funds; is not currently under suspension, debarment, voluntary exclusion, or determination of ineligibility by any federal agency; has not been suspended, debarred voluntarily excluded, or determined ineligible by any federal agency within the past three years; does not have a proposed debarment pending; and has not been indicted, convicted, or had a civil judgment rendered against said person, firm, association, or corporation by a court of competent jurisdiction on any manner involving fraud or official misconduct within the last three years.

I further acknowledge that by signing this page of the proposal, I am deemed to have agreed to the provisions of the affidavit.

_____________________________________________________________________________________
(Name of Firm)

_____________________________________________________________________________________
(Authorized Signature) (Title)

_____________________________________________________________________________________
(Please print Name)

_____________________________________________________________________________________
(Date)
FAQs - Chesapeake Bay Foundation’s RFP for Strategic Planning Consultants

1. **Does CBF have a budget for this engagement?** CBF’s budget for this engagement ranges from $100,000 to $145,000. This is an all-in budget and includes all travel and necessary expenses that may occur as part of the engagement.

2. **Can you please explain the expected timeline?**
   - Engagement to begin in September 2023
   - In-person kick off with CBF’s Board of Trustees at a Board Meeting on October 20th at CBF’s Brock Environmental Center in Virginia Beach.
   - Draft Strategic Plan for September 2024 Board of Trustees Executive Committee Meeting
   - Draft Strategic Plan ready for approval at January 2025 Board of Trustee Meeting.
   - Budget and develop work plans for FY26 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026) using the newly developed strategic plan in the second and third quarter of FY25.
   - Phase III of the RFP would be done no later than June 30, 2025, so that implementation of the new strategic plan begins in July 2025 for FY26

3. **What is the basis for evaluation of the proposals?**
   CBF uses a scorecard system for evaluation of RFP proposals. The categories for the scorecard system are:
   - Understanding of Requirements
   - Methodology and Approach
   - Project Timeline
   - Team Qualifications
   - Budget and Cost
   - Past Performance and References
   - Overall Quality and Presentation

4. **Is CBF considering proposals from firms of all sizes and locations?**
   Yes, CBF encourages firms of all sizes and locations to submit a proposal. There is an expectation that the firm selected will meet in-person with leadership, board members, staff, and stakeholders during the engagement period.

5. **Organizations across the US are now working to address historical inequities and are pursuing strategies that incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Can you share any background on work that has been done to date in this area?**
   CBF’s Vice President of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice, Carmera Thomas-Wilhite, leads CBF’s DEIJ efforts. Our top priorities related to DEIJ are:
   - Recruit and retain a staff, board, and membership that reflect the diversity of people living within the Chesapeake Bay region.
   - Strengthen and broaden the diversity of our partnerships.
   - Celebrate and value the diversity of staff.
   - Fight to ensure that everyone has equal access to clean water, clean air, and safer environment.

   You can learn more about our efforts [here](#).
6. **Can you provide information about the types of stakeholders CBF hopes to engage during this strategic planning process?**
   CBF wants to engage both internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders including senior leadership, members of CBF’s Board of Trustees and CBF Staff. External stakeholders include environmental partners, both non-profit and government agencies. We are open to the method of engagement but want to ensure that information gathering meetings happen with key stakeholders.

7. **Are you seeking a scope of work proposal for this project, or just the materials you’ve outlined in the RFP?**
   CBF encourages you to submit any materials that help us better understand your method and strategies for developing an effective strategic plan for the organization. It would be helpful if you could outline the approach or methodology you would use to accomplish the three phases of work outlined in the RFP.