



Legislation Text

File #: 22-0524, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED CONTRACT

Department(s): Department of Resource Management

Vendor: Friends of the Forest Preserves, Chicago, Illinois

Request: Authorization for the Forest Preserves of Cook County (the "Forest Preserves") to enter into and execute

Good(s) or Service(s): Forest Preserves Experience Program

Contract Value: Not to exceed \$1,170,000.00 (\$1,120,000.00 grant funding received through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 ("ARPA"), plus up to \$50,000.00 contingency)

Contract Period: 1/1/2023 - 12/31/2024

Estimated Fiscal Impact: FY 2023 \$25,000.00, FY 2024 \$25,000.00

Accounts: ARPA Conservation Corps 51032.521444; Professional Services 51031.520840; and all future Co-Op Programs and Professional Services accounts

Contract Number(s): #74000011530 issued under RFP #22-31-116

Concurrences: The Chief Financial Officer has approved this item. Final agreement is subject to legal review and approval.

The contract-specific Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise goal for this contract was set to zero.

District(s): 4, 5, 6, 17

Summary: The Forest Preserves issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking firm(s) to co-facilitate job training and employment programs that utilize a Conservation Corps model, with financial support provided by federal stimulus funds allocated to Cook County through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to assist the region in its recovery from the economic and health effects caused by COVID-19. Conservation Corps programs must provide participants with paid, field-based ecological restoration experiences that train participants to restore the land as directed. Programs for high school participants must include environmental education and soft skills trainings to prepare youth for future employment in any field of study. This RFP partners with Cook County's Bureau of Economic Development to expand and create corps programs that benefit people who are of low income, who have suffered from historical disenfranchisement, and whose communities are disproportionately impacted by environmental justice issues. A total of three (3) responses were received for this project, all of whom were found to be responsive and subsequently awarded a portion of the overall funding available. Proposals were evaluated on their experience and expertise with similar projects, proposed approach, cost proposal, and capacity to perform all aspects of the work.

The Forest Preserves Experience program is a summer youth employment program that will provide conservation and job skills training to high-school youth, ages 15 to 19, from south and west suburban Cook County whose families are clients of the Housing Authority of Cook County. This five (5) week program will engage approximately seventy-two (72) youth

participants and sixteen (16) adult field leaders annually in hands-on conservation activities including, but not limited to, invasive species removal and shoreline clean-up along the Forest Preserves' many lakes and waterways. Participants will gain environmental awareness and basic job skills training supplemented by hands-on nature-based enrichment activities. The program will promote enjoyment and appreciation for nature and teaches participants how healthy forest preserves contribute to their community and quality of life.

This proposal leverages at least \$170,000.00 in direct partner match from a variety of sources including the Forest Preserves Foundation and Housing Authority of Cook County. Total program costs are not to exceed \$1,170,000.00, of which the Forest Preserves is requesting authority to contribute up to \$50,000.00 direct match to allow for additional flexibility, if needed. Conservation Corps programs advance the goals of the Next Century Conservation Plan by mobilizing people to heal and nurture the lands through a paid conservation corps model.