



Legislation Text

File #: 22-0525, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED CONTRACT

Department(s): Department of Resource Management

Vendor: Student Conservation Association, Chicago, Illinois

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

Good(s) or Service(s): Chicago Conservation Corps young adult gap year program

Contract Value: Not to exceed \$465,000.00 (\$415,000.00 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): #74000011523 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): Districtwide

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 feature environmental education and soft skills trainings to prepare participants 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 Student Conservation Association's mission is to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of the environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land. The organization provides opportunities for thousands of young people to explore career pathways to green careers, strengthen

their leadership and basic jobs skills, and deepen their sense of responsibility to others and to the planet. This six (6) month program will engage approximately seven (7) young adult participants annually in hands-on conservation activities including, but not limited to, invasive species removal, assistance with prescribed burns, and seed collecting along with exploration of conservation careers and post-secondary education opportunities in environmental fields. This program will serve as a critical steppingstone program for young adults ages 18 to 23 years who have successfully graduated from conservation corps high school programs and who are not currently pursuing full-time secondary education. There is a recognized lack of conservation programs for this demographic and this program serves to help address this challenge of supporting young adults who are interested in conservation as a possible career path.

This proposal leverages \$46,581.82 in direct partner match contributed by the Student Conservation Association. Total program costs are not to exceed \$465,000.00, 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.