



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTANT TO DEVELOP STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT, MARKET ANALYSIS, AND STRATEGIC PLAN TO INCREASE LOCAL HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS AND SUCCESS

PROPOSALS DUE MAY 18, 2021, 11:59PM MST

About the Yuma Multiversity Campus Corporation (YMVC)

In June of 2019, a group representing elected officials, institutions of higher education, and the private sector came together to form the Yuma Multiversity Steering and Advisory Board, with a vision to expand on the incredible work and pace set by Arizona Western College and all three state universities to make higher education more accessible to people in the Greater Yuma area. YMVC is governed by a seven-member board of directors that represent the private sector, higher education, and elected officials. The Chairman of the organization is Douglas Nicholls, who also presently serves as Mayor for the City of Yuma.

With seed investment from two foundations, in 2020 the Board hired Jim Schuessler as President/CEO with the directive to establish a non-profit corporation, coordinate with the college and universities, build community support, and proceed with the planning and execution of the next steps necessary to achieve the mission of the organization.

YMVC has been recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3); elected officers, and has ratified its mission statement:

The Yuma Multiversity Campus Corporation is a collaborative organization bridging higher education, industry, and prospective talent to provide the means to achieve the skilled careers of today and the future.

The specific purposes of the corporation shall be to develop and maintain infrastructure and/or programming to 1) assist institutions of higher learning, businesses, and entrepreneurs; 2) improve the economic well-being of the residents and businesses in the region with a vision of helping to create a strong, stable, growing, and diversified economy to achieve success in the worldwide economy; 3) ensure a quality physical environment; 4) develop a competitive and dynamic workforce; 5) achieve a comprehensive, innovative and proactive infrastructure; 6) foster education and preparation for the workplace of the future; 7) nurture flexible and engaged community partnerships; and 8) champion best workforce development practices.

The Yuma Multiversity Campus Corporation (YMVC) will serve Yuma County, a traditionally rural and lower income region, by bringing together higher education, businesses, and other stakeholders to collaborate on increasing access to and affordability of higher education while also increasing successful education outcomes. Yuma County has a high unemployment rate, a low per-capita income, and a history of low to moderate educational attainment. The YMVC seeks to reverse these trends. It is also expected that increased automation will eliminate many existing jobs, creating both an opportunity and the need to retrain some members of the labor force. Overall, higher education amenities have not grown in Greater Yuma at a rate matching either the population growth or the economic opportunity available in the region.



Historically many Yuma County residents participate in post-secondary education but often do not complete a certificate or degree. Many residents lack the level of education necessary to qualify for skilled positions with area employers. An important component of this project will be to identify the barriers to certificate and degree completion and provide strategies to improve student completion success.

As an oasis located in the heart of an international megaregion composed of four states (Arizona, California, Sonora, and Baja California), Yuma County is the 3rd largest metropolitan area in Arizona with a population of 212,128. Yuma County is the Southwest's premier agricultural hub thanks to its location, sunny weather, and senior Colorado River water rights. Agriculture accounts for \$3.2 billion of Yuma's \$7.8 billion gross domestic product. The economy enjoys diverse economic drivers through military and government services (\$1.7 billion), retail services (\$700 million), tourism (\$670 million), healthcare (\$500 million), professional services (\$450 million), and manufacturing (\$300 million). Yuma is home to two elite military installations: Marine Corps Air Station Yuma and Yuma Army Proving Ground that conduct extensive aviation operations and department of defense testing which attract talent from around the globe. These installations offer significant private sector employment opportunities, most requiring advanced skills that are often filled by out-of-area applicants.

Request for Proposals

YMVC, working under a Memorandum of Understanding with Greater Yuma Economic Development Corporation, has been tasked with seeking proposals from interested, qualified and experienced professional planning firms or individual consultants. The proposed services will provide strategic planning and facilitation to guide YMVC through a data-driven, participatory planning process to create an ambitious but achievable five-year Strategic Plan for YMVC. The primary deliverable of this contract and process will be a written organizational strategic plan document that presents the planning process, research, analysis, opportunities and strategies along with an implementation plan that will guide YMVC for the next five years.

The Plan should be based on a Strategic Assessment of the Greater Yuma area and include an analysis of key market drivers for the Yuma economy and its current and future employers. The Plan will provide specific goals, strategies, and tactics and identify resources necessary for implementation but also include flexibility to allow YMVC to respond to unforeseen opportunities and challenges. Greater Yuma is defined as the four-state international region including Southwest Arizona, California's Imperial Valley, and both Sonora and Baja California, Mexico.

Scope of Work

YMVC seeks the consultant's recommendations regarding an effective process to produce both a Market Analysis and Strategic Assessment that will serve to form a Strategic Plan and recommendations regarding the Plan's implementation and support structure. YMVC expects the process to include at least the following elements:

- Work sessions with YMVC to define and shape the planning process.
- Interviews with YMVC Board and staff.
- Focus groups with individuals and organizations involved in YMVC's mission.
- Regional meetings to provide an opportunity for community input.
- One-on-one interviews with key external leaders and primary employers.
- Electronic survey of stakeholders and employers.



- Research to determine the present and future demand for skilled workforce in the Greater Yuma region.
- Work sessions with YMVC Board and staff to discuss findings and potential elements of the Assessment and Analysis.
- Research to validate key assumptions underlying the Analysis, Assessment, and Plan.
- Conduct a situational analysis of the YMVC organization to identify and assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and obstacles to the mission and purpose of YMVC.
- Leveraging strengths and opportunities, Strategic Plan will include recommendations of employment attraction opportunities, educational attainment required, and higher education best practices to expand the region's potential with high tech and high wage opportunities.
- Recommendations to support the local advancement of higher education in a post COVID-19 world.
- Recommendations to support workforce development in a diverse and multi-lingual region.
- In collaboration with prospective skilled talent, higher education, and regional employers, identify the barriers to certificate and degree completion and recommend strategies for success, particularly at a time that many prospective students are considering delaying or cancelling their post-secondary education plans due to COVID-19. Make every effort to achieve buy-in from each collaborative participant in the development of the final Strategic Plan.
- Preparation of a Strategic Plan document including writing, editing, and layout of the document with opportunities to incorporate suggestions of YMVC Board and staff.
- At a minimum, provided the following deliverables: 1. A draft Strategic Plan document; 2. An executive summary of the draft Strategic Plan; and 3. A recommended package of material suitable for public distribution and outreach, a final Strategic Assessment, Market Analysis and Strategic Plan document.
- Additional or different elements of the Analysis and Assessment process recommended by the consultant and agreed to by YMVC.
- Presentation of the final version of the Strategic Plan to the YMVC Board, key stakeholders, and the public.

Qualifications

YMVC seeks a consultant with demonstrated experience of successfully developing strategic plans for not-for-profit, governmental, and/or philanthropic organizations. The consultant should be familiar with some or all of the areas of economic development, workforce preparedness, agriculture, military and government services. The consultant should also have experience working with organizations that serve rural and economically distressed communities, particularly in international border regions.

The consultant will also possess the following qualifications:

- Experience gathering and utilizing both qualitative and quantitative information to inform the strategic planning process.
- Experience in the development of successful workforce development strategies in a diverse and multi-cultural region.
- Understanding of considerations arising from YMVC's specific origins and organizational structure, as well as the newly-formed Arizona Innovation Alliance (AIA).
- Strong facilitation skills.
- Ability to solicit input from individuals from various sectors.



- Willingness to constructively challenge key stakeholders.
- Knowledge and skills with marketing, communications, and branding.

Proposal

Proposals must include the following:

- 1) Cover Letter: a cover letter introducing the company and the individual who will be the primary contact person.
- 2) Workplan: Provide a detailed description of the activities to be conducted by the consultant in order to complete the requested scope of work, including:
 - Specific activities to be conducted.
 - A timeline for the activities at each stage.
 - Milestones and deliverables tied to those activities.
- 3) Consultant qualifications and roles: Describe the consultant's qualifications to conduct the RFP scope of work activities, including expertise, knowledge, and experience conducting similar or related work.
- 4) Previous work product: Include a description of at least two examples of written work similar to the scope of work requested by this RFP, including references of individuals or organizations who can address comparable strategic planning done by the consultant.
- 5) Statement that consultant is registered to conduct business in the State of Arizona.
- 6) The proposer must not be barred from receiving federal funding. To be considered responsive, all submissions must include a statement indicating that the respondent is not on the US General Services Administration's System for Award Management's (SAM's) list of excluded entities.
- 7) Personnel: A description of the firm's organization and staff qualifications, with detailed information about the key personnel, whether employees of the consultant or contractors, that the consultant expects to be directly involved in the strategic planning process and descriptions of their roles and qualifications. If a group or affiliation of consultants will conduct the strategic planning process, indicate which consultant will have primary responsibility for implementation of the work and activities each consultant will conduct.
- 8) Budget/cost proposal: Include a detailed budget for the entire project and each major component of the project, including any travel expenses.

Timeline

- 4/29/2021 — RFP issued
- 5/11/2021 — Final date for questions related to RFP
- 5/18/2021 — Deadline for submission (see below for details)
- 6/1/2021 — Finalists selected
- 6/8/2021 — Interviews with finalists either electronically or in person in Yuma, AZ
- 6/10/2021 — Selection of consultant by YMVC Board
- 6/17/2021 — Contract execution with GYEDC
- 6/21/2021 — Project begins
- 2/7/2022 — Strategic Plan complete



Proposal Evaluation

Each of the proposals timely submitted and received will be evaluated and determined if the proposal meets the stated requirements. YMVC will select the proposal that will deliver the highest quality deliverables at the best value. The decision will be made through a competitive process that includes a number of factors such as:

- Qualifications of consultant
- Demonstrated understanding of the objectives of this strategic planning process
- A workplan that details project activities, milestones, and deliverables
- Budget that includes detail regarding costs anticipated for each stage of the workplan
- Background in producing assessments, analyses, and strategic planning, especially in diverse international border communities and regions
- Background in subject areas relevant to YMVC’s work
- Background and experience working with rural and/or economically distressed communities
- Quality of writing and prior strategic plans provided as samples, including outreach efforts.
- Demonstrated ability to use technology and solicit input from stakeholders
- Creativity and innovation
- Cost effectiveness of proposal

Proposals will be scored as follows:

Technical Proposal: - Project Approach/Methodology - Proposed Work Plan	20 points max 20 points max	40 Total Points
Management Proposal: - Firm Relevant Experience - Qualifications/Experience of Proposed Key Staff	20 points max 15 points max	35 Total Points
Proposed Cost		25 Total Points
TOTAL		100 Points

Submission

Complete written proposals are due no later than 11:59 p.m. Arizona time on 5/18/2021. Proposals received after this deadline will not be accepted or considered. Proposals must be submitted by e-mail in PDF format to Jim@YumaMultiversity.com. Submission by mail, fax, or any method other than e-mail to the address above will not be accepted or considered.

It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that YMVC received the submission.

Inquiries

Inquiries and questions concerning this solicitation must be submitted in writing to Jim Schuessler, President/CEO, Jim@YumaMultiversity.com. Answers will be provided in writing to the requestor, or



provided in amendment(s) to the solicitation. The final date to submit questions is 5/11/2021, at 11:59 p.m. Arizona time.

Additional Information

1. All costs incurred in responding to this RFP are the responsibility of the respondent and will not be reimbursed by YMVC.
2. YMVC, working in collaboration with GYEDC, will negotiate a written contract with the candidate selected to conduct this strategic planning process. The consultant chosen will contract with GYEDC.
3. YMVC reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any and all responses received in response to this RFP without providing a detailed explanation for decisions. A contract for the accepted response will be based upon the factors described in this RFP.
4. If the bidder deems any material submitted to be proprietary or confidential, that must be indicated in the relevant section(s) of the response.

Conflict of Interest

The proposer must disclose, in an exhibit to the proposal, any possible conflicts of interest that may result from the award of the Contract or the services provided under the Contract. Except as otherwise disclosed in the proposal, the proposer affirms that to the best of its knowledge there exists no actual or potential conflict between the proposer, the proposer's project manager(s) or its family's business or financial interests ("Interests") and the services provided under the Contract. In the event of any change in either Interests or the services provided under the Contract, the proposer will inform YMVC regarding possible conflicts of interest, which may arise as a result of such change and agrees that all conflicts shall be resolved to YMVC's satisfaction or the proposer may be disqualified from consideration under this RFP. As used in this Section, "conflict of interest" shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Giving or offering a gratuity, kickback, money, gift, or anything of value to a YMVC official, officer, or employee with the intent of receiving a contract from YMVC or favorable treatment under a contract;
2. Having or acquiring at any point during the RFP process or during the term of the Contract, any contractual, financial, business or other interest, direct or indirect, that would conflict in any manner or degree with proposer's performance of its duties and responsibilities to YMVC under the Contract or otherwise create the appearance of impropriety with respect to the award or performance of the Contract; or
3. Currently in possession of or accepting during the RFP process or the term of the Contract anything of value based on an understanding that the actions of the proposer or its affiliates or interests on behalf of YMVC will be influenced.

FAQ's

Question #1 **What is the estimated budget for the project?**

Answer #1 *The budget for the independent consultant was set at \$95,000. While total project value is an important consideration, comprehensive achievement of the scope of work outlined in this RFP, including an actionable Strategic Plan, is paramount*



Question #2 What information has been gathered during the pandemic from employers on the education and training needs of employers?

Answer #2 The answer to the question will be a part of the deliverable for this Assessment, Analysis, and Plan project developed through the third-party consultant.

Question #3 Does the YMVC Board of Directors hold regular meetings? If so, when was the last meeting?

Answer #3 The YMVC Board of Directors meets at least quarterly. The most recent meeting was March 18; the next meeting is scheduled for April 13.

Question #4 Have there been discussions on an actual physical location for the Multiversity or is this to be determined through the planning process?

Answer #4 There have been planning discussions centered on property located on the south side of Yuma's downtown core. The five-year Plan may suggest the need for brick-and-mortar development depending on the data derived from the Analysis and Study coupled with the inspiration of best practices.

Question #5 Have Arizona universities held discussions regarding increasing local higher education access and attainment?

Answer #5 In February, Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) announced the Arizona Innovation Alliance (AIA), a tri-university partnership to enhance public higher education in Arizona, is launching a new project to support student success and increase educational opportunities in Yuma.

Question #6 Have representatives from Marine Corps Air Station Yuma (MCAS-Y) and Yuma Army Proving Ground (YPG) participated in engaging the Multiversity concept to date?

Answer #6 Representatives for MCAS-Y and YPG have been involved in discussions regarding Phase 1 of the project since February, 2020. They are also expected to participate in Phase 2. Leveraging the assets of having these government installations would be optimal for portions of the Strategic Plan. These installations would be among the potential benefactors for the outcomes of the Strategic Plan.

Question #7 Are there other Multiversity models that YMVC is interested in exploring further? If so, what are they?

Answer #7 That is among the answers sought through execution of this project; best practices. Greater Yuma's industry sectors are well established; the winning proposal will not only provide a plan for development of our local labor force for the jobs available today, it will also provide us with a workforce development plan to attract new and high wage-providing industries to Yuma County.



Question #8 Are exhibits available demonstrating workforce planning and higher education initiatives?

Answer #8 Attachment A includes:

- *Yuma County Workforce Development 4-year Plan 2020-2023*
- *Information on the Arizona Innovation Initiative (AIA)*
- *Greater Yuma Economic Development Corporation's Economic Development Trends and Six Pillars for Economic Success*
- *Achieve 60 Arizona's Public Service Promise/Achieve 60 AZ*

Question #9 Is data available that demonstrates Yuma County's population trends with any correlation to higher education?

Answer #9 Attachment B includes:

- *Yuma County population trends as compared to all USA counties*
- *Yuma MSA population and demographic comparison*
- *Tale of Two Counties; comparison of another Arizona county that is also remote, has a smaller population, and a full-time four-year university*

Question #10 Have previous employer surveys been completed?

Answer #1- Attachment C includes:

- *Summary of Business Retention and Expansion surveys executed by GYEDC for 2016, 2017, 2018*
- *Overview of primary employer issues and concerns*