

Mississippi Aquarium
135 Courthouse Road
PO Box 1100
Gulfport, MS 39502

I. INVITATION

Mississippi Aquarium (MSAQ) is soliciting proposals from qualified CPA firms to perform audit and tax services for two related entities. This Request for Proposal contains background information related to the request and specific information that must be included in proposal submission. Proposals will be received until May 1, 2020 at 5:00 P.M., Central Time, and must be submitted through one of the following methods:

In Person or by Mail: Mississippi Aquarium
135 Courthouse Road
Gulfport, MS 39507
Attention: Jaimie Kirby

As PDF by Email: jkirby@msaquarium.org

II. DESCRIPTION

Mississippi Aquarium and Mississippi Aquarium Foundation are both 501(c)3 Mississippi Nonprofits. Mississippi Aquarium is currently in the pre-opening phase of business, with an anticipated opening date during 2020. Mississippi Aquarium will be a premiere institution delivering an awe-inspiring entertainment experience which supports animal research and conservation, inspires learning and instills a passion for the aquatic world. This world-class facility will be the window to the waters of Mississippi, the Gulf Coast and beyond, fostering a sense of appreciation by encouraging guests to explore majestic environments and play an active role in research and conservation efforts. Mississippi Aquarium Foundation is a separate entity responsible for the fundraising efforts to benefit Mississippi Aquarium.

Copies of current financials and past audits are available upon request.

III. SCOPE OF AUDIT SERVICES

The successful firm will assume responsibility as an independent auditor for the audit of general purpose financial statements and the audit of funds in compliance with State and Federal laws. Other services may include Agreed Upon Procedures and/or Internal Control Compliance. The services are to be performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), the standards set forth for financial audits in the General Accounting Office (GAO), the provisions of the federal Single Audit Act Amendments, and the Office of the Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-133, *Audits of States, Local Governments and Non-Profit Organizations (when applicable.)*

MSAQ requests a statement of qualifications to perform the following services:

- A. Conduct an annual combined audit of the financial statements of Mississippi Aquarium (MSAQ) and Mississippi Aquarium Foundation (MSAQF), as well as separate tax returns for each entity.
 - a. File for an extension for Fiscal Year 2019.
- B. Deliverables of the following to MSAQ:
 - a. Auditor's reports on financial statements and supplementary data and compliance report.
 - b. Audited financial statements and schedules.
 - c. Auditor's report on internal accounting and administrative controls based on a study and evaluation made as part of an examination of the financial statements and the additional tests required when applicable.
 - d. Findings and recommendations; non-compliance.
- C. Presentation of the audit report to Mississippi Aquarium and Mississippi Aquarium Foundation Board of Directors.
- D. Prepare tax filings for both entities.
- E. Provide ongoing assistance with accounting or tax related questions during the regular scope of work.
- F. Retain working papers at firm's expense, for a minimum of seven (7) years, unless the firm is notified in writing by MSAQ.

IV. RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS

Written proposals should contain the following minimum information:

- A. Background of the company, to include:
 - a. Name of firm, address, and phone number
 - b. Name and email address of contact person
 - c. Date of the response
 - d. Location of principal place of business
 - e. The place of performance of the proposed contract
 - f. Date of incorporation
- B. Detailed Qualifications
 - a. Independence – affirmative statement that is independent as defined by GAO Government Auditing Standards, as amended.
 - b. License to Practice – affirmative statement that firm and all assigned key professional staff are properly licensed to practice by Mississippi State Board of Accountancy.
 - c. Qualifications and Experience – state the size of the firm, size of the firm's governmental audit staff, and location of the office from which the work will be performed.
 - i. Firm is required to submit a copy of the report on its most recent external quality control review, including the related letter of comments and the response.
 - ii. State experience providing auditing and tax services to companies in the non-profit sector, as well as associations of comparable size.
 - iii. Identify three (3) contracts under which services similar in scope, size, or discipline were performed.

- iv. Identify three (3) largest clients your firm has lost in the past three years including the reasoning.
 - v. Identify the Partner, Manager, and Accountant in-charge who will be assigned and provide biographies/resumes for each.
 - C. Audit Service Fees – Estimate the total cost to complete the 2019 audits for MSAQ and MSAQF.
 - D. Professional Insurance
 - a. Please provide a copy of the firm’s valid Professional Liability, Errors & Omissions Liability Insurance, and Workers Compensation Insurance certificates. *If selected, each policy must be endorsed to reflect a thirty (30) day written notice of cancellation in favor of MSAQ.*

V. TYPE OF CONTRACT, TERM, AND EXTENSION

MSAQ anticipates awarding a contract for audit services for fiscal year ending December 31, 2019, and two (2) subsequent years, for a total of (3) years, subject to annual renewal.

VI. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposal will be accepted per the instructions noted above (Email, Mail, or In Person) until **5:00 p.m. Friday, May 1, 2020.**

MSAQ reserves the right to accept, reject, or negotiate any and all responses at its sole discretion, and to waive any informalities or irregularities.

Questions pertaining to this request should be directed to jkirby@msaorium.org.