

**Whatcom County**  
**DRAFT SCOPE**  
**Professional Services for COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review**

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Whatcom County Council (County) invites consultants to submit a proposal for a review of the countywide pandemic response.

**Project Background**

On March 10, 2020, Whatcom County Council (as the Health Board) voted to recommend activation of Whatcom Unified Command (WUC) in order to provide an integrated, coordinated, multi-jurisdictional response to the threat of COVID-19 locally. Due to the nature of the emergency being global, the county could not rely on neighboring communities for support and had to rely on its own internal County-sources resources. The County believes it is prudent to anticipate a range of future widespread national and/or global emergencies for which it needs to prepare to manage without assistance for some period of time, including but not limited to severe weather, cyber security attack, a catastrophic loss of the power or telecommunications grid. The WUC was deactivated effective August 1, 2021, and this review is to cover the time period of WUC operations.

The global pandemic tested county preparedness, structures, and processes for dealing with disasters, and an opportunity exists to reflect on the County's response to the public emergency, to evaluate the systems in place to respond to the event, and identify opportunities to improve and be even better prepared for the next global emergency. Whatcom County Council adopted Ordinance 2021-045 (see Exhibit A) on July 13, 2021, establishing an independent commission to review our community's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, this review aims to identify opportunities for better emergency preparedness, which includes the development of plans, resources, and capabilities to manage and recover from the effects of a variety of potential future emergencies of a regional/national/global scale.

**Description of Services**

The services to be provided may include, but not be limited to:

**Phase 1: Data Gathering**

The Phase 1 Data Gathering will include a comprehensive, independent review of the initial pandemic response. To minimize the impact to staff responsible for our ongoing response the review should be limited to the period from January 1, 2020, to July 31 2021, and include the following areas of interest:

- Roles and responsibilities of county and local leaders (as per codes), including the County Health Board and Unified Command.
- Evaluate expanding the designated senior county emergency advisory positions (i.e. manufacturing, logistics, telecommunications, messaging/marketing/promotion) and the community sectors represented.
- Evaluate policy related to open communications to businesses and the public
- Communications within emergency management and to the public
- Emergency coordination among government leaders (County Health Board /Council, Executive, Health Department, Whatcom Unified Command, local jurisdictions)
- Expertise of staff working on pandemic response and how positions are filled
- Evaluate logistics related to the fulfillment of supplies including:
  - personal protective equipment for emergency response, local businesses, and medical facilities
  - food distribution
  - medical supplies
  - emergency shelters
- Alternative communications plans in the event most/all traditional methods become unavailable
- Availability of data to inform decision-making during the event
- Application of guidance from policy documents (e.g. Emergency Management Plan and others)
- Comparison of Whatcom County's response with other similar counties
- Track case rates and hospitalizations against WUC activities to identify progress made

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The Consultant will:

1. Gather information and data on the aforementioned topics.
  - (a) ***Receive all available data and reports, including Situation Reports, the results of any internal post-pandemic reviews completed (Sheriff's Office, Health Department, and others).***
  - (a) ***Review and consider guidance provided to pandemic response staff in plans and reports, including the Emergency Management Plan, NIMS Training, and others.***
2. Collect feedback from County leadership and staff as well as other agencies via interviews and/or surveys
3. Review Phase 1 Data Report with County Leadership (Council/Executive/Sheriff)

**Phase 2: Preliminary Recommendations**

During Phase 2, the consultant will evaluate information collected in Phase 1 Data Gathering and identify preliminary recommendations for improvements to the pandemic response as well as celebrate successes. Recommendations will consider not only the potential future event of another pandemic, but also emergency response procedures related to other potential future global emergencies (e.g. cybersecurity event, etc.). The Phase 2 Preliminary Recommendations may include but not be limited to the following:

1. Recommendations for code changes or regulations
2. Summary of programmatic and staffing (e.g. expertise) needs to better prepare for the next event
3. Recommended changes to decision-making structures (i.e. County Health Board, Executive/Health Department, Public Health Advisory Board, Whatcom Unified Command, etc.)
4. Identify best practices from other jurisdictions to address gaps and needs in our local pandemic response
5. Specific edits for incorporation into the Whatcom County Emergency Management Plan and any other County guiding documents.
6. Presentation of preliminary recommendations to County Leadership (Council/Executive/Sheriff).

**Phase 3: Final Report**

During the Phase 3 Final Report, the consultant will compile information from the previous two phases into a report document and presentation. This will include:

1. Final report with summary information from Phase 1 and Phase 2.
  - a. Full report with an executive summary, table of contents, appendices of data, chart of recommendations, and a 1-2-page highlights document for quick reference
2. A presentation of the final report to county leadership (Council/Executive/Sheriff)
3. A PDF document for posting online
4. 5 printed copies of the complete final report with appendices

**Project Timeline**

The County anticipates selecting the consultant and awarding the contract in December, 2021. Phase 1 (Data Gathering) would take place in from December, 2020 through February, 2022. Phase 2 (Preliminary Recommendations) would be underway in March and April, 2022. Phase 3 (Draft Findings and Report) would take place in April, with final work completed by the end of May, 2022.

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**Proposal Submittal Requirements**

Consultants that submit proposals in response to this RFP must have the capability of providing the services described in the Description of Services section above. Joint ventures or sub-consultants may be used. To be complete, the proposal must provide all the information requested in this RFP in the order that it is requested. Information must be organized and presented in the same order and sequence as presented below to facilitate the review by the RFP selection team. A response of “see enclosed brochure” will not be considered adequate. Proposals must contain the following sections in no more than twelve (12) single sided pages:

1. Executive Summary / Cover Letter (2 pages)
2. Consultant Overview and Information (2 pages)
3. Qualifications of Staff Assigned to the Project (3 pages)
5. Project Approach/Scope (2 pages)
6. Project Schedule (1 page)
7. Cost Estimate for Scope of Work (1 page)
8. List of Client References (1 page)

**Executive Summary / Cover Letter (2 pages)**

A cover letter shall be addressed to Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, Whatcom County. The letter should communicate the Contractor’s particular strengths and why the Contractor should be chosen to provide the requested services. The letter must be signed by an individual who is authorized to commit the Contractor to a binding agreement.

**Consultant Overview and Information (2 pages)**

1. Provide name of consultant/firm and the principal place of business, number of years in business, size of firm, and the name, email address, and telephone number of the primary contact assigned to the project.
2. Provide a brief history and description of the consultant/firm. Include general information regarding organizational structure, size, capabilities, and the consultant/firm’s qualifications and experience.
3. Provide a description of the consultant’s/firm’s approach to this type of project including:
  - a. Consultant/Firm’s qualifications and ability to undertake this project
  - b. Methods and techniques the consultant/firm will employ
  - c. Experience with other public entities
  - d. Knowledge of, and experience in performance evaluations and recommendations
  - e. Description of similar projects performed
  - f. Description of project management experience
  - g. Description of procedures related to quality assurance

**Qualifications of Staff Assigned to this Project (3 pages)**

1. Include resumes for key personnel providing services, including those focused-on interviews, data collection, data evaluation, and surveys.
2. Identify the roles and tasks personnel will perform, including percentage of their time dedicated to this project.

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3. Describe the experience of the lead consultant in working with clients of similar characteristics as Whatcom County.
4. Provide any additional information that specifically addresses the consultant's/firm's unique qualifications for the project.

Project Approach/Scope (2 pages)

Provide a description of the consultant's/firm's project approach and include a well-developed scope with descriptions of activities. Specifically call out any changes or additions to the work described in this RFP.

Project Schedule (1 page)

Provide a schedule for the study, keeping in mind that the County Council has identified a goal of no later than May 31, 2022 for completion of the project. Present the schedule in the form of a chart that breaks out the project into Phases and shows the approximate times when key activities will occur and their general sequence.

Cost Estimate for Scope of Work (1 page)

The budget proposal should be presented in a table format, showing line items for each phase of work identified, a brief description of services in each phase, and specifics line items for public engagement. The information should be presented in an easy to read table format. Extra lines should be added to the table as needed, such as to list the various consultants participating in each phase element. Provide a relevant narrative to explain the need for any items that are not immediately apparent in the budget table. Costs should be all inclusive of staff time, travel, and incidental expenses.

List of Client References (1 page)

Provide at least three (3) client references, outside of Whatcom County staff, who may be contacted and for whom similar work has been completed in the past five years. References should be entities for which your firm has performed similar projects in the public sector. Provide a contact name, title, organization, email, and telephone number, as well as a brief statement about previous work with the client.

**Evaluation and Selection**

The selection of a consultant for this project will be made from the qualified consultants responding to this Request for Proposals (RFP). All firms responding will be evaluated, scored, and ranked. The top two (2) or three (3) evaluated proposers will be invited for an interview with Whatcom County to select the most qualified.

Consultants will be evaluated and ranked based on the following criteria:

1. Overall qualifications and experience of the consultant (30 points)
2. Approach to the project (30 points)
3. Ability to meet the County's needs (20 points)
4. Completeness of the submitted proposal (10 points)
5. Proposed cost (10 points)

Total number of points possible = 100

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EXHIBIT A: ORDINANCE 2021-