

Q&A

Basics

Why are we issuing this RFP?

On December 21, 2022, City Council passed an ordinance that created a Reparations Task Force. According to the ordinance, the Task Force is responsible for completing three phases of work. **Phase 1** of that work is to “research and document the City of Boston’s role in and historical ties to the African slave trade and the institutions and legacies of slavery.” The Reparations Task Force and the City of Boston hope to have scholars and experts to support Phase 1, and this RFP is the best way to find the best researchers to do that. You can read the ordinance at boston.gov/reparations.

Haven’t a bunch of people already written about the history and legacy of slavery in Boston?

Yes, definitely. We’re not just interested in chronicling what we know—we want to discover what we don’t. **That’s why we’re asking researchers to not only do a comprehensive review of what’s been written, but also produce original research for each time period we’re seeking to cover.** For those who have dedicated their lives to this kind of work – we would love for you to apply!

A comprehensive historical document of this kind is important because it grounds us all in a shared understanding of our history, and a clear reference from which we can collectively build pathways for reconciliation and repair in Boston. It can also serve as a source of truth for the historical and present harms – these will directly inform how the Task Force builds recommendations for local reparations.

That being said, there’s already amazing work happening in the City and in the community. We hope that instead of redoing work that’s already been done, we can all work together to create opportunities for all our residents to engage with this history in a variety of ways.

What’s the timeline for this request? How long will it take to write the report?

The deadline to submit applications for the report is November 6th, 2023 at 3pm. We hope to have selected research partners by December. Each of the contracts (there are 6 total, one for each of the time periods below) will be for six months, with the option to extend for an additional six months. That means the report could be finished anywhere from June to December 2024.

Where do I go to apply for the RFP online?

Applicants should navigate to the City of Boston Supplier Portal (<https://procurement.boston.gov/psp/prdsp/SUPPLIER/ERP/h/?tab=DEFAULT>) to submit their application online. More information on submitting included below!

Scope of Work

Will those contracted via this RFP provide services for Phases 1 *and* 2 of the Reparations Task Force's work?

We are asking for proposals from researchers to provide research and writing services to support the completion of the Phase 1 report – the full accounting of the City's role in the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the history and legacy of slavery in Boston. The services we are seeking do not directly concern Phase 2.

What do we know about the report?

We're leaving specific details of what each section of the report will cover to the researchers we end up awarding contracts to, but the RFP outlines a basic structure for the report. We've divided the task of researching and writing the document into six sections, in chronological order: **(1)** 1620-1690, **(2)** 1690-1750, **(3)** 1750-1800, **(4)** 1800-1860, **(5)** 1860-1940, **(6)** 1940-Present.

For *each of these time periods*, we're asking researchers to accomplish two tasks:

- 1. Research and write a historical narrative based on original research and primary sources that speak to Boston's role in and historical ties to the history and legacy of slavery.** *Primary sources* are documents that were created during the original time that research is based on – for example, for an essay based on the 1740s a primary source might be a journal entry written by someone in January of 1743. Through original research, researchers can illuminate new stories about our history and give new insight to questions we're grappling with in the present.
- 2. Research and write a comprehensive literature review of the City of Boston's role in and historical ties to the history and legacy of slavery.** This is an opportunity for researchers to illuminate major historical events and themes relevant to Boston and the history and legacy of slavery.

We're also asking that for each proposal, proposers submit a previously written work of peer-reviewed and/or academic writing, to ensure candidates can demonstrate experience with rigorous historical research and writing.

What if I'm already working on a project with a similar subject matter?

If you are already working on a project of a related or similar subject matter and would like to use material, research, etc. from that project for your proposed project, you absolutely can use that for your proposal submission. While we are certainly looking for partners to do unique historical work for the unit(s) of study awarded, that work need not be siloed from ongoing projects — and if awarded a contract, we look forward to understanding how to integrate work while still maintaining the integrity of the projects as separate endeavors.

Can proposers write proposals for additional forms of media beyond a written project for the scope of work?

As it stands, the core obligation of the Task Force is to deliver a written” report” documenting the City of Boston’s role in and historical ties to the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the history and legacy of slavery. The RFP has been issued for researchers to provide research and writing services to that end—so, for the purposes of this RFP, while we may welcome other forms of media as demonstrated experience within the field/subject matter, a proposal will be expected to, at the very least, present a full vision for fulfilling the research and writing services for the relevant unit of study. That being said, there may be opportunities beyond the core written work to extend the report beyond just the writing across other forms of media, and we would welcome proposals that can articulate a vision for how the required research or written work can extend into other forms of media.

Submitting proposals

How should I submit my proposal? Are there any requirements?

Full instructions on how to submit your proposal can be found on pages 22-25 of the RFP.

If you plan to submit the proposal online, you can navigate to the following link on how to use Boston’s supplier portal for step-by-step instructions on how to register on the portal: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/procurement/how-use-supplier-portal>. Upon logging in under your account, look for EV00013090 AND RFP - Research Partners for History of Slavery. Submit your materials according to the instructions on the proposal. **The Technical Proposal must be submitted independently from the Price Proposal.** In the section of EV00013090 labeled "Step 2: Enter Line Bid Responses," please enter each bid amount under the corresponding line for each unit of study that you are bidding on. Please note there are 6 price lines in the bid event, one for each time period. For example, one is “1620-1690 Historical research services to support the Reparations Task Force in producing a report on the history and legacy of slavery in Boston”

Vendors submitting a hard copy must submit a complete Technical Proposal in a sealed envelope along with one (1) digital copy (thumb drive), and a Price Proposal in a separate sealed envelope along with one (1) digital copy (thumb drive).

The envelopes should be clearly marked as follows:

City of Boston History of Slavery Academic Research Services RFP

RFP Number: RFP EV00013090

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

Submitted by: [Name of Vendor]

[Date Submitted]

City of Boston History of Slavery Academic Research Services RFP

RFP Number: RFP EV00013090

PRICE PROPOSAL

Submitted by: [Name of Vendor] [Date Submitted]

and delivered or mailed to:

Ajay Singh

Policy Advisor

Office of Mayor Michelle Wu

Mayor's Office, City Hall Room 500

1 City Hall Square Boston, MA 02201

Evaluating and awarding contracts

How will evaluation work? Who will be evaluating proposals?

The City will mobilize a multi-prong system to ensure that decisions on contracts are made both according to 30B and in order to ensure the most advantageous proposals in each unit of study are identified. In-house fact checkers will review each proposal for content relevance and accuracy. Based on the number of applications received, proposers may also receive request for a remote interview, all of which will be conducted in the same format.

The City will also compose an Evaluation Committee with a combination of Reparations Task Force members involved in writing the RFP and City staff across departments with relevant content expertise. The committee will use a rubric entirely based on the comparative evaluation criteria included in the RFP to rate a set number of proposals. Proposals will then be compared

against other proposals within their relevant unit of study — proposals will *not* be compared with proposals outside of their respective unit of study. Based on the aggregate outcomes from the review process, the committee will independently choose the most advantageous proposal in each unit of study.

Will there be multiple awardees chosen in each unit of study? Will there be opportunities for collaboration within units of study?

The manner in which the evaluation committee chooses to award a contract for a unit of study entirely depend upon the applications received in that unit of study. As it stands, the evaluation committee will seek to award the most advantageous proposal within each unit of study. Any awarding of multiple contracts within a unit of study would be subject to the caliber of applications, the availability of funds to ensure equitable compensation for services provided, and a number of other factors, all determined and assessed by the evaluation committee.

How will interviews work?

If conducted, interviews will take place within the first two weeks of review. All interviews will be remote, and will be conducted by a subset of the evaluation committee. Proposers will be asked the same set of questions across interviews, to ensure standardization of evaluation of interview performance.

How should we approach the price proposal?

Proposers should write the total cost of the service they will render, including the labor required to perform the research and writing services, which are central to the RFP. We encourage proposers to provide the full price required to ensure all members of the team represented by the proposal (even if the team is composed of a single individual) are sufficiently compensated for services. Of course, proposers should also provide a thorough accounting of other resources/expenses that the proposer will need to access to deliver services (such as access to archives, travel expenses, etc.).

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact reparations@boston.gov! Looking forward to hearing from you.