REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS:
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT NATIONAL COHORT
STRATEGIC ADVISORY SERVICES
FOR ANTI-DISPLACEMENT AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH INITIATIVE

Grounded Solutions Network seeks a consultant to advise the organization on community engagement strategies to be implemented in support of its “ForEveryoneHome” initiative in Indianapolis, Indiana, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and San Antonio, Texas. The initiative targets cities where rising prices and changing demographics place communities of color at risk of displacement. Working with teams of municipal and community leaders in each city, ForEveryoneHome will catalyze action around a local inclusive housing agenda.

We have separately issued a request for qualifications for local community engagement consultants in each of our ForEveryoneHome cities to design and implement local engagement strategies. Those strategies will invite participants to understand local housing challenges through a racial equity lens, and ensure authentic and meaningful participation by communities of color in the policymaking process. By hiring different consultants across each of our sites, we intend to create a “learning laboratory” in which we test and develop a variety of engagement strategies and practices that can become models for future rounds of the ForEveryoneHome initiative. In this Request for Qualifications, we seek a national or generalist consultant who can work as a thought partner with us across the three locations, helping us to review and strengthen the strategies that our local consultants devise and propose, and derive “lessons learned” as the initiative proceeds.

Background:
Grounded Solutions Network cultivates communities that are equitable, inclusive, and rich in opportunity by advancing affordable housing solutions that last for generations. Often affordable housing receives significant attention from local policymakers only when housing costs reach crisis levels for the cities’ middle- and upper-income earners, and well after rising prices have displaced low-income communities of color from city neighborhoods where they have long resided. We created the ForEveryoneHome program to change this pattern. This 18-month initiative targets three mixed-market cities for policy intervention in the hope of “getting ahead of the curve” on community change, catalyzing action to protect affordability and diversity before displacement pressures become too great.

The initiative guides teams of local government leaders and community members through a structured process designed to yield policy change. That process includes technical assistance, peer learning and community engagement components, as well as the application of a racial equity lens throughout:

- **Technical assistance.** Our housing policy consulting will begin with a *needs assessment* to understand the ways that current city policy is influencing the housing and development environment in the city, particularly as it relates to displacement prevention and inclusive
growth. We will then draft an *Inclusive Growth and Displacement Prevention Agenda* that recommends policy changes to respond to the challenges and conditions identified in the needs assessment. Finally, we will take a high-priority strategy from the Inclusive Growth and Displacement Prevention Agenda and develop it in detail, producing an *implementable policy* ready to present to city council.

- **Peer learning.** Teams from each of the three ForEveryoneHome cities will meet regularly as a cohort throughout the program to share experiences, strategize together, and gain support and insight from each other. We will also convene two in-person “learning tours,” in which the teams gather in a central location to learn from experienced practitioners and workshop their most pressing challenges together.

- **Community engagement.** We believe the low-income communities of color who are most likely to benefit from an inclusive growth and anti-displacement strategy must be involved in shaping it. Accordingly, the program requires that participating teams consist of both local government leaders and community members who are trusted voices on the housing challenges faced by low-income communities of color in their cities. We have established a consensus-based decision-making process to equalize power dynamics within the teams. Teams will also pursue a variety of other community engagement strategies to ensure broader input into the needs assessment, agenda-setting and policy development phases of the initiative.

- **Racial Equity Lens.** Overlaying all three components above is a commitment to applying a racial equity lens to our work. This means approaching our work with the acknowledgment that housing is not, and never has been, a race-neutral endeavor in the United States. We will help each team tell the City’s housing story, focusing in particular on the legacy of individual and institutional racial bias that has shaped who lives where and the people who have benefited and suffered due to past practices. The goal is to elevate an often neglected local history and to recognize its importance in the development of inclusive housing policies aimed at dismantling the legacy of disadvantage this history has yielded. Team participants will work collectively to ensure that this history informs any new policies each city pursues.

In May, 2019, following a national call for applications, Grounded Solutions Network selected teams from Indianapolis, San Antonio and Winston-Salem to form the inaugural class of the ForEveryoneHome program.

Further information on the ForEveryoneHome program, including a project timeline, is available on the [ForEveryoneHome website](#).

**Scope of Work**

To help us carry out our community engagement and racial equity commitments in ForEveryoneHome, Grounded Solutions Network anticipates hiring separate community engagement consultants to work in each of our selected cities, plus a national or generalist consultant to work across all three sites. This Request for Qualifications is for the national or generalist community engagement consultant.
The goal of this work is to empower community members – and particularly those most impacted by displacement prevention and inclusive growth strategies – to own the policy changes that emerge from the ForEveryoneHome process. To that end, engagement strategies should reflect and advance the following principles:

- Honor the wisdom, voice and experience of residents.
- Treat participants with integrity and respect
- Be transparent about motives and power dynamics
- Share decision-making and initiative leadership
- Engage in continuous reflection and willingness to change course

We encourage applicants to review the Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities prepared by PolicyLink and the Kirwan institute for more details on these principles and the kind of engagement process we hope to establish.

The National Community Engagement Consultant will:

- Advise Grounded Solutions Network on strategies and approaches to strengthen local community engagement plans. Such plans should:
  - Identify leaders, groups and communities with an interest in shaping an inclusive growth and displacement prevention agenda;
  - Effectively engage identified leaders, groups and communities in the policy-making process. The plans should include specific engagement strategies for each phase of the initiative (needs assessment, agenda-setting and policy drafting).
  - Achieve meaningful participation by communities of color at risk of displacement, and those who are trusted voices on the housing issues facing such communities.
  - Be sensitive to the history of harms experienced by many people of color at both the individual and societal level, and employ strategies and practices that allow for community healing.
  - Encourage community participants and ForEveryoneHome team members to apply a racial equity lens to our work in each phase of the initiative.
  - Build on rather than duplicate or undermine existing or past community engagement activities and infrastructure.
  - Reflect local norms and address local difficulties in conducting meaningful community engagement (“engagement fatigue”, mistrust, etc.);
  - Guide Grounded Solutions staff on how and when to interface with advocates and community members beyond the core participants in the program.
- Serve as an on-call support, resource and advisor throughout the implementation of the community engagement plans for periodic consultation as questions or issues arise.
- Participate in an ongoing assessment of the public engagement plans, and suggest changes as necessary to improve effectiveness.
- Participate in a final evaluation of the effectiveness of the public engagement process employed for the local community, and identify opportunities for improvement in future engagements.
We anticipate that the National Community Engagement Consultant may need to spend 40-60 hours on this work over the course of the initiative.

**Qualifications**
Respondents should possess the following minimum qualifications:
- Expertise in community engagement, facilitation, communications strategy, and event planning.
- Outstanding written, oral/public and visual communication skills.
- Ability to work effectively in close collaboration with diverse constituents including in group or committee settings.

We seek respondents with the following preferred qualifications:
- Experience with engagement strategies that effectively reach hard-to-reach populations, including low-income communities of color.
- A strong understanding of housing and development policy and its connection to racial equity.
- Experience in structuring and leading community engagement processes around sensitive or controversial topics.

**Submittal Requirements**
Prospective contractors should submit the following information via email to Matt Weber at mweber@groundedsolutions.org by 5:00 pm PST on Friday, June 28, 2019. Submittals should include the following information:

1. **A cover letter** describing the contractor’s qualifications for the position. The letter should identify two community engagement efforts with which the contractor has been involved, the challenges presented in each, the successes achieved, and the lessons learned for future engagements.
2. **Resume.**
3. **References.** Provide the name, phone number and email address of two references familiar with the quality of your community engagement work.
4. **Project Approach/Management:** Prepare a one- or two-page document that identifies the values and principles that guide your approach to this kind of community engagement work, and identify some strategies and activities that you have used in the past to effectively put these values and principles in practice. Please also address how you might approach this advisory role and your role in reviewing the proposals of the local community engagement consultants.

Submittals and questions concerning this RFQ should be directed to Matt Weber at mweber@groundedsolutions.org, or by phone at (503) 493-1000, Ext. 17.

**Selection Process**
We will review submissions on a rolling basis as they are submitted and begin interviews as soon as possible. We anticipate retaining a consultant by mid-July at the latest. Criteria for selection will include but not be limited to the following:
- Relevant experience, expertise and qualifications
• Reference check and performance on similar projects
• Project management approach and process

All consultants who submit a qualification package will be notified when a final selection has been determined.

Grounded Solutions Network is committed to maintaining and growing a diverse team, and is an anti-racist organization committed to doing business in keeping with core values of relevance, equity, diversity and inclusion. Applications from Minority Business Enterprises, Women’s Business Enterprises, Veteran’s Business Enterprises, and Disability Owned Business Enterprises are strongly encouraged.