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The City of Coachella is Conducting a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for City Attorney Services

City of Coachella, California

Details

Q&A

E-Bid

Changes

Reference No.

2026-001

Due Date

20 July 2026 at 0:00:00 GMT-7

Questions Due

06/07/2026

Opening Date

20/07/2026

Time Remaining

31 Days

Basic Info

Release Date

17/06/2026

Type

Request for Qualifications

Department(s)

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Categories

Attorney and Legal Service

Contact Info

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Description

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

Full-Service City Attorney Services

City of Coachella | Coachella, CA | RFQ No. 2026-001

SCOPE OF WORK / SPECIFICATIONS

1. Background and Purpose

The City of Coachella is soliciting Statements of Qualifications (SOQ) from qualified law firms or individual attorneys licensed to practice law in the State of California to provide comprehensive, full-service City Attorney legal services. The City Attorney serves as the chief legal advisor to the City Council, City Manager, all City departments, boards, commissions, and committees. The selected firm or attorney will be responsible for providing a broad range of municipal legal services as further described herein.

The City currently has a population of approximately 46,000 and operates under a Council-Manager form of government. The City's annual operating budget is approximately \$47 million. This solicitation is intended to identify the most qualified provider capable of meeting the City's legal needs in a professional, timely, and cost-effective manner.

2. Scope of Services

The selected firm or attorney (hereinafter referred to as "Provider") shall provide the following full-service legal services on behalf of the City of Coachella:

2.1 General Legal Counsel and Advisory Services

The Provider shall serve as the primary legal advisor to the City Council, City Manager, department directors, and all City boards, commissions, and advisory committees. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Providing timely written and oral legal opinions on matters of municipal law, including but not limited to constitutional law, administrative law, land use and zoning, public finance, open meetings law, public records law, employment law, contract law, and intergovernmental relations.
- Advising the City Council and staff on the legal implications of proposed policies, ordinances, resolutions, and administrative actions prior to adoption or implementation.
- Reviewing and interpreting existing City ordinances, resolutions, contracts, and other legal instruments upon request.
- Advising on compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and court decisions that may affect City operations or policy.
- Providing legal guidance on matters related to the California Open Meetings Act and Public Records Act, including training City staff and officials on compliance obligations.

2.2 Attendance at City Council and Committee Meetings

The Provider shall be available to attend all regularly scheduled and special City Council meetings, as well as meetings of City boards, commissions, and committees as directed by the City Manager or City Council. Specific responsibilities include:

- Attending all regular and special City Council meetings in person (or via approved remote means when authorized) to provide real-time legal counsel.
- Advising the presiding officer and Council members on procedural and legal matters during meetings, including parliamentary procedure, conflict of interest, and open meeting requirements.
- Attending Planning Commission and other board or committee meetings as requested or required by law.
- Preparing or reviewing legal notices, agendas, and supporting documentation for meetings as needed.

2.3 Drafting and Review of Legal Documents

The Provider shall be responsible for drafting, reviewing, and approving all legal documents on behalf of the City, including but not limited to:

- Drafting and reviewing ordinances, resolutions, proclamations, and other legislative instruments for legal sufficiency, clarity, and compliance with applicable law.
- Drafting, reviewing, and negotiating contracts, agreements, memoranda of understanding (MOUs), interlocal agreements, development agreements, and other legal instruments to which the City is a party.
- Reviewing and approving all City contracts prior to execution to ensure legal adequacy and protection of the City's interests.
- Drafting and reviewing grant agreements, easements, deeds, right-of-way documents, and real property instruments.
- Preparing legal notices, public hearing notices, and other required publications in accordance with applicable law.

2.4 Litigation and Legal Representation

The Provider shall represent the City of Coachella in all legal proceedings, including but not limited to:

- Representing the City in civil litigation matters in state and federal courts, including trial and appellate proceedings, unless specialized outside counsel is retained with City approval.
- Defending the City against claims, lawsuits, and administrative proceedings filed by third parties, including employment-related claims, civil rights claims, tort claims, and land use appeals.
- Prosecuting code enforcement actions, nuisance abatement proceedings, and other enforcement actions on behalf of the City as applicable.
- Coordinating with the City's insurance carrier and risk management personnel on claims and litigation matters.
- Providing representation before state and federal administrative agencies, including but not limited to California Department of Labor, California Ethics Commission, and other regulatory bodies.
- Advising on and managing the City's exposure to legal liability, including recommending settlement when appropriate and in the City's best interest.
- Coordinating and supervising outside or specialized legal counsel retained for specific matters, including monitoring billing and performance.

2.5 Municipal Code and Ordinance Maintenance

The Provider shall assist the City in maintaining and updating its Municipal Code, including:

- Reviewing the City's existing Municipal Code for consistency, legal sufficiency, and compliance with current state and federal law.
- Drafting code amendments as directed by the City Council or City Manager.
- Coordinating with the City's official code publisher (if applicable) to ensure timely codification of adopted ordinances.
- Advising on the repeal, amendment, or consolidation of outdated or conflicting code provisions.

2.6 Land Use, Planning, and Zoning

The Provider shall provide legal support for all land use, planning, and zoning matters, including:

- Advising the Planning Commission and City Council on legal requirements related to zoning, subdivision, annexation, and development review.
- Reviewing and drafting zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and development standards.
- Representing the City in land use appeals and related litigation.
- Advising on compliance with state planning and zoning enabling legislation, environmental review requirements, and federal land use laws.

2.7 Public Finance and Procurement

The Provider shall provide legal counsel on public finance and procurement matters, including:

- Advising on the issuance of municipal bonds, certificates of obligation, tax notes, and other debt instruments in compliance with applicable law.
- Reviewing and approving bond documents, official statements, and related financing agreements.
- Advising on compliance with California competitive bidding laws, procurement regulations, and public purchasing requirements.
- Reviewing solicitation documents, bid specifications, and contract awards for legal sufficiency.
- Advising on grant compliance, federal funding requirements, and related legal obligations.

2.8 Employment and Labor Law

The Provider shall advise the City on all employment and labor law matters, including:

- Advising on compliance with federal and state employment laws, including the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and applicable state employment statutes.
- Advising on personnel policies, employee handbooks, disciplinary procedures, and termination actions.
- Representing the City in employment-related administrative proceedings and litigation.
- Advising on civil service rules, collective bargaining agreements (if applicable), and labor relations matters.
- Providing guidance on workplace investigations, harassment and discrimination complaints, and related HR matters.

2.9 Ethics and Conflict of Interest

The Provider shall advise City officials and staff on ethics and conflict of interest matters, including:

- Advising elected and appointed officials on compliance with applicable ethics laws, financial disclosure requirements, and conflict of interest statutes.
- Providing guidance on recusal obligations and the appearance of impropriety.
- Coordinating with the California Ethics Commission or equivalent body as needed.

2.10 Training and Legal Education

The Provider shall provide periodic legal training and education to City staff and officials, including:

- Conducting annual or as-needed training sessions for City Council members, department directors, and staff on topics such as open meetings law, public records, ethics, procurement compliance, and other relevant areas of municipal law.
- Providing written legal updates and summaries of significant legislative changes or court decisions affecting municipal operations.

3. Staffing and Availability

The Provider shall designate a primary attorney to serve as the City Attorney who will be the principal point of contact for all City legal matters. The designated City Attorney shall:

- Be licensed and in good standing with the California State Bar.
- Have demonstrated experience in municipal law and government representation.
- Be reasonably available during normal business hours (Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM) and available for urgent matters outside of normal business hours as needed.
- Notify the City in writing of any proposed changes to the designated City Attorney or key personnel assigned to the City's account, and obtain City approval prior to such changes.

The Provider may utilize associate attorneys, paralegals, or support staff to assist in the delivery of services; however, the designated City Attorney shall maintain supervisory responsibility over all work product delivered to the City.

4. Reporting and Communication

- The Provider shall report directly to the City Manager for day-to-day operational matters and to the City Council for policy-level legal matters, consistent with the City's form of government.
- The Provider shall maintain open and timely communication with City staff and officials, responding to routine inquiries within [2] business days and urgent matters within [24] hours or as soon as practicable.
- The Provider shall submit monthly activity reports summarizing legal matters handled, hours expended, and the status of pending litigation and significant legal issues.
- All work product, correspondence, and legal files pertaining to City matters shall be considered the property of the City of Coachella and shall be maintained in an organized and accessible manner.

5. Compensation and Fee Structure

Respondents shall submit a proposed fee structure as part of their SOQ, which may include:

- A monthly or annual retainer fee covering routine legal services, meeting attendance, and general counsel functions.
- Hourly rates for services beyond the scope of the retainer, including litigation, specialized research, and extraordinary matters.
- Hourly rates for associate attorneys, paralegals, and other support staff.
- Reimbursable expense policies (e.g., travel, filing fees, court costs).

The City reserves the right to negotiate the final fee arrangement with the top-ranked respondent. The proposed fee structure will be evaluated as part of the overall qualifications review but will not be the sole determining factor in selection.

6. Term of Agreement

The term of the agreement shall be at the discretion of the City Council, subject to mutual agreement, satisfactory performance, and annual appropriation of funds by the City Council. The City reserves the right to terminate the agreement at any time with an expectation that transition services will be provided.

7. Insurance Requirements

The selected Provider shall maintain, at a minimum, the following insurance coverage throughout the term of the agreement:

- General Liability: \$1,000,000 per occurrence (bodily injury, personal injury, property damage). If a general aggregate limit form is used, the aggregate must either apply separately to the agreement/location or be double the occurrence limit.

- Automobile Liability: \$1,000,000 per accident

- Workers' Compensation: statutory limits under the CA Labor Code

- Employer's Liability: \$1,000,000 per accident for bodily injury or disease

The City of Coachella shall be named as an additional insured on all applicable policies. Certificates of insurance shall be provided prior to contract execution and upon renewal.

8. Minimum Qualifications

To be considered responsive, respondents must demonstrate the following minimum qualifications:

- The firm or individual attorney must be licensed and in good standing with the California State Bar at the time of submission and throughout the term of any resulting agreement.

- The designated City Attorney must have a minimum of [5] years of experience practicing municipal law or representing governmental entities in California.

- The firm or individual must have demonstrated experience providing legal services to a municipality, county, special district, or other governmental entity of comparable size and complexity to the City of Coachella.

- The firm or individual must not have any unresolved disciplinary actions, sanctions, or bar complaints that would materially affect their ability to represent the City.

9. Submittal Requirements

Respondents shall submit a complete Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) that includes the following:

1. Cover Letter – A brief letter of introduction signed by an authorized representative of the firm or individual attorney.
2. Firm/Individual Overview – Description of the firm's size, structure, office location(s), and areas of legal practice.
3. Qualifications and Experience – Detailed description of the firm's or attorney's experience in municipal law, including a list of current and past governmental clients, types of services provided, and duration of representation.
4. Key Personnel – Resumes or professional biographies for the proposed City Attorney and any other attorneys or staff who would be assigned to the City's account, including bar admission dates, areas of expertise, and relevant experience.
5. References – A minimum of THREE (3) professional references from current or former governmental clients, including contact name, title, agency name, phone number, and email address.
6. Litigation History – A summary of significant litigation matters handled on behalf of governmental clients within the past FIVE [5] years.
7. Proposed Fee Structure – A detailed fee proposal as described in Section 5 above.
8. Conflict of Interest Disclosure – A disclosure of any known or potential conflicts of interest with the City of Coachella, its officials, or its business interests.
9. Certifications and Attestations – Signed certifications as required by the City of Coachella, including non-collusion, debarment, and any applicable state-required certifications.
10. Confidentiality and Attorney-Client Privilege -- The Provider shall maintain strict confidentiality of all City matters and shall not disclose any privileged communications, legal strategies, or confidential

City information to any third party without prior written authorization from the City, except as required by law or applicable rules of professional conduct.

11. Compliance with Rules of Professional Conduct -- The Provider shall at all times comply with the California Rules of Professional Conduct governing the practice of law, including rules related to conflicts of interest, confidentiality, competence, and communication with clients.

EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of submitted Statements of Qualifications will be conducted in two (2) distinct phases as described below. Advancement from Phase 1 to Phase 2 is at the sole discretion of the City of Coachella based on the results of the Phase 1 written evaluation. The City reserves the right to shortlist a maximum of THREE (3) respondents for advancement to Phase 2.

PHASE 1 — Written Statement of Qualifications Review

Conducted by: Procurement Evaluation Committee

Total Available Points: 100

Phase 1 consists of a comprehensive review and scoring of each respondent's written SOQ submission by a designated evaluation committee comprised of City staff and/or subject matter advisors. The following criteria and point allocations will be used:

#	Evaluation Criterion	Description	Maximum Points
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| 1 | Qualifications and Experience of the Firm/Individual | Depth and breadth of experience in municipal law and government representation, including the number of years practicing in this area and the complexity of matters handled on behalf of governmental clients. | 25 |

| 2 | Qualifications and Experience of Key Personnel | Credentials, experience, and demonstrated expertise of the proposed City Attorney and supporting staff who will be directly assigned to [AGENCY NAME], including bar admission history and relevant practice areas. | 20 |

| 3 | Relevant Governmental Client Experience | Demonstrated experience representing municipalities, counties, or other governmental entities of comparable size and scope to [AGENCY NAME], including familiarity with [STATE] municipal law and local government operations. | 20 |

| 4 | Proposed Approach and Understanding of Scope | Demonstrated understanding of the City's legal needs and a clear, well-organized approach to delivering the required services, including availability, responsiveness, communication practices, and staffing plan. | 15 |

| 5 | References | Quality and relevance of professional references from current or former governmental clients, including feedback obtained during reference checks conducted by City staff. | 10 |

| 6 | Proposed Fee Structure | Reasonableness, competitiveness, and transparency of the proposed fee arrangement, including retainer, hourly rates for all personnel levels, and reimbursable expense policies. | 10 |

| 7 | Conflict of Interest / Independence | Absence of conflicts of interest or demonstrated ability to manage and mitigate any disclosed conflicts in a manner consistent with applicable rules of professional conduct. | Pass/Fail |

Phase 1 Total: 100 Points

Respondents who achieve a minimum threshold score of 75 points during Phase 1 will be eligible for consideration for advancement to Phase 2. The City reserves the right to advance fewer respondents than the stated maximum if an insufficient number of respondents meet the minimum threshold.

PHASE 2 — City Council Interview and Presentation

Conducted by: City of Coachella City Council

Total Available Points: 100

This phase represents 100% of the final selection score.

Shortlisted respondents advancing from Phase 1 will be invited to participate in a formal interview and presentation before the full City of Coachella City Council. Phase 2 is weighted at 100% of the final selection determination, meaning the City Council's interview scores will serve as the sole basis for the final ranking and selection recommendation.

Interview Format

- Each respondent will be allotted approximately 30 to 45 minutes for their interview, which will include a 15 to 20-minute presentation followed by a question-and-answer session with the City Council.
- Interviews will be scheduled on at a date TO BE DETERMINED and held at the City of Coachella City Hall, 1515 6th Street, Coachella, CA 92236, or at such other location as designated by the City.
- All key personnel proposed to serve on the City's account, including the designated City Attorney, must be present in person for the interview. Remote participation will not be permitted unless expressly authorized by the City in advance.
- Respondents should be prepared to address their firm's qualifications, proposed approach to City Attorney services, relevant experience, availability, and any other topics the City Council deems relevant.

- All respondents will be asked a consistent set of core questions to ensure fairness and comparability across interviews. The City Council may also ask follow-up or clarifying questions specific to each respondent's SOQ submission.

Phase 2 Scoring Criteria

Each City Council member will independently score each respondent using the following criteria. Individual scores will be averaged to produce a composite score for each respondent.

#	Evaluation Criterion	Description	Maximum Points
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1	Demonstrated Knowledge of Municipal Law	The respondent demonstrates a thorough and current understanding of municipal law, including [STATE]-specific statutes, case law, and regulatory requirements relevant to City operations.	20
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2	Communication and Presentation Skills	The respondent communicates clearly, professionally, and confidently. Legal concepts are explained in a manner accessible to elected officials and non-legal staff. The respondent listens actively and responds directly to questions.	20
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3	Fit with City Needs and Culture	The respondent demonstrates an understanding of [AGENCY NAME]'s specific legal needs, community context, and organizational culture. The respondent articulates a service philosophy consistent with the City's values and expectations.	20
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4	Proposed Approach to Service Delivery	The respondent presents a clear and practical plan for delivering City Attorney services, including how they will manage workload, ensure availability, handle conflicts, and coordinate with City staff and the City Council.	20
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5	Relevant Experience and Past Performance	The respondent provides specific, concrete examples of experience handling legal matters comparable to those faced by [AGENCY NAME], including litigation, land use, employment law, public finance, and general municipal counsel work.	20
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Phase 2 Total: 100 Points

Final Selection

The respondent receiving the highest composite score from the City Council during Phase 2 interviews will be recommended for selection as the City's legal services provider. In the event of a tie, the City reserves the right to conduct additional deliberations or request supplemental information to break the tie.

Following selection, City of Coachella Procurement staff will initiate contract negotiations with the top-ranked respondent. If negotiations are unsuccessful, the City reserves the right to proceed to the next highest-ranked respondent.

The final contract award is subject to approval by the City of Coachella City Council in accordance with the City's procurement policies and applicable law.

Summary of Two-Phase Evaluation Structure

Phase	Conducted By	Purpose	Weight
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Phase 1	Procurement Evaluation Committee	Written SOQ Review and Shortlisting	Shortlisting Only
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Phase 2	City Council	In-Person Interview and Presentation	100% of Final Score
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