



October 9, 2025

Request for Qualifications (RFQ): Strategic Planning Partner

Date Issued: October 9, 2025

Responses Due: October 17, 2025 (By 5 p.m. PDT)

Purpose of This RFQ

The [Downtown Seattle Association](#) (DSA) is seeking qualifications from experienced firms or individuals to partner with DSA in leading a comprehensive strategic planning process in 2026.

This RFQ is the first step in a two-phase selection process:

1. RFQ (Request for Qualifications) – to identify highly qualified firms based on demonstrated experience and fit.
2. RFP (Request for Proposals) – to be issued to a shortlist of qualified firms for detailed proposals and pricing.

The goal of this RFQ is to assess each firm's qualifications, experience and approach to strategic planning in complex urban and civic environments. Selected firms will be invited to respond to a full RFP anticipated for initial release by **Friday, October 24, 2025**.

About the Downtown Seattle Association (downtownseattle.org/about)

The Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) serves as the voice, steward and champion of downtown Seattle.

Our mission is to create a healthy and vibrant downtown for all by fostering a safe and thriving center city through advocacy, programs and services, partnerships and placemaking initiatives.

DSA's core focus areas include:

- Metropolitan Improvement District (MID): Cleaning Services; Community, Safety & Hospitality and Public Realm Operations.
- Research & Economic Reporting: Economic analysis and downtown vitality dashboards.
- Advocacy & Policy: Transportation, economic competitiveness and public investment.
- Placemaking & Public Spaces: Public art, events, partnerships and activation of DSA-managed spaces.
- Membership Services: Engagement with corporate, nonprofit and residential members.
- Commute Seattle: Transportation demand management and mobility programs for downtown employers.

Over the past decade, DSA has guided downtown's evolution through economic, demographic and behavioral shifts. With major changes underway in commuting, retail, mobility and urban living patterns, DSA is preparing to develop a new multi-year strategic plan that aligns the organization's vision, capacity and action for sustained downtown impact.

Project Context and Goals

The forthcoming strategic plan will:

- Build upon DSA's prior strategic plan while addressing new downtown realities.
- Reassess post-pandemic shifts in office use, retail, housing and mobility.
- Reimagine downtown's long-term trajectory (5-10 years).
- Align DSA's resources, structure and partnerships with future needs.

The selected strategic planning partner will be expected to guide DSA through:

- Visioning and scenario planning for downtown's future.
- Environmental scanning, benchmarking and data-driven insights.
- Stakeholder engagement and facilitated collaboration.
- Development of a clear, actionable plan with measurable goals.

Requested Qualifications

Please limit responses to **no more than 6 pages** (including an optional appendix). DSA is seeking concise submissions allowing for comparison of qualifications and approach within a compact review period. RFQ responses should include:

1. Firm Overview

- Firm name, address, website and primary contact information.
- Brief description of firm structure, size and years in operation.
- Core areas of expertise and distinguishing qualifications.

2. Relevant Experience

Provide examples of comparable strategic planning projects, especially those involving:

- Urban or downtown development organizations.
- Membership-based nonprofits or business improvement districts.
- Public-private or civic partnerships.

For each example, include:

- Brief project description and objectives.
- Outcomes and impact.
- Client organization and point of contact (reference optional at this stage).

3. Approach and Methodology (Summary Level)

- Overview of your approach to strategic planning in complex, multi-stakeholder environments.
- Methods for stakeholder engagement, facilitation, and consensus-building.
- Approach to integrating data, benchmarking, and environmental scanning.
- How your process connects visioning and implementation, balancing ambition with practicality.

4. Project Team

- Identify lead consultant(s) and key team members. Please include titles, roles, and relevant project experience.
- Highlight past collaboration on similar strategic or organizational planning efforts.

5. Organizational Alignment

- Describe how your firm's philosophy, experience and values align with DSA's mission and downtown context.
- Share any initial insights or perspectives you bring regarding urban revitalization, civic collaboration or equity.

6. Typical Budget Range

Provide a general indication of your fee range and hard costs for a comparable strategic planning effort. (Detailed budgets will not be required until the RFP stage.)

Submission Instructions

- **Deadline: Friday, October 17, 2025, at 5 p.m. PDT**
- **Format:** PDF (emailed or downloadable link), maximum 6 pages (to include optional appendix)
- **Send responses to:**
 - Matt Gurney, Chief Operating Officer – mattg@downtownseattle.org
 - Emily Bailor, Chief of Staff – emilyb@downtownseattle.org
- **Email subject line:** "DSA Strategic Planning RFQ Submission – [Firm Name]"

There will be no formal Q&A session at this stage of the process. Please send any material questions to the contacts listed directly above.