



DATE: August 14, 2024

SUBJECT: Letter of Clarification

RE: Hotel Restaurant Design Services RFQ

TO: All Prospective Respondents

Houston First Holdings LLC (“HFH”) issues this Letter of Clarification regarding the referenced Hotel Restaurant Design Services RFQ to answer questions received in the manner set forth below:

Question 1: Are you looking for a proposal through Schematic Design or a proposal for full services through construction?

Answer: At this stage of the process, HFH is looking for Statements of Qualification only. Initial work to be performed by the Respondent selected will consist of conceptual design.

Question 2: Is there an overall design schedule including design, construction pricing and permitting?

Answer: Not at this time.

Question 3: Should we assume to include the extra 2,000 sf in the lobby for proposal purposes?

Answer: The manner and extent to which additional lobby space will be utilized will be determined by HFH subsequent to selection of the Respondent selected.

Question 4: Can you clarify the branding scope – just name and logo and brand guidelines to start – or will there be separate brands?

Answer: Except to the limited extent provided in the RFQ, no further branding scope is available at this time. The scope of such services will be developed in cooperation with the Respondent selected.

Question 5: Would you like FFE Selections to be included in the submittal?

Answer: Fixtures, furniture and equipment selections do not need to be included in the Statement of Qualifications.

Question 6: Is there a floorplan of the restaurant and the additional 2,000 square feet being considered for expansion?

Answer: Yes, the floorplan can be provided to the Respondent selected.

Question 7: Does this project include any exterior or storefront work?

Answer: While it cannot be ruled out entirely, exterior/storefront work is not anticipated at this time.

Question 8: Do you anticipate architects incorporating subconsultants in our proposal, or are you simply looking for recommended team members at this stage?

Answer: Essential personnel should be included in the Statement of Qualifications. To the extent known to be part of the team, Respondents may note any probable subconsultants.

Question 9: What is the approximate area of the existing kitchen?

Answer: 3,000 square feet.

Question 10: Will the kitchen be servicing both the new restaurant and hotel functions?

Answer: It will service the new restaurant and new grab n' go market and continue to service the lobby bar and in-room dining.

Question 11: Will the proposed restaurant bar be operating independent of the existing lobby bar?

Answer: Yes.

Question 12: Should our Statement of Qualifications include a general contractor or is it the intent that final drawings will be sent out to bid?

Answer: Construction services are not part of this RFQ. A general contractor will be engaged directly by HFH.

Question 13: The design features call to include a flexible, dual or multi-use space area. Can you elaborate on what this multi-use area would be within a restaurant?

Answer: Flexible space to host large parties/events but also go back to smaller seating when needed.

Question 14: When would a decision be made on selection on of the team?

Answer: The decision timeline will depend on the volume of responses received. Conceptual design work is expected to begin this year.

Question 15: The RFQ states construction is not expected to commence until calendar year 2025. Would this be towards 3rd or 4th quarter 2025?

Answer: The construction schedule has not been determined.

Question 16: Is a list of invited proposing firms/companies available?

Answer: There is no list of invitees. The RFQ is available online and open to all potential respondents.

Question 17: Will HFH conduct a market study to determine specific food-and-beverage requirements?

Answer: A market study of the kind has not been contemplated at this stage of the process.

Question 18: Will there be an operator – separate from the hotel ownership – to operate the new restaurant?

Answer: No.

Question 19: Will the scope of design work under brand visioning include menu design concepts for the redesigned restaurant?

Answer: Yes, in coordination with HFH based on the approved design.

Question 20: Will a Hilton executive chef be included in the development of a new menu?

Answer: Yes.

Question 21: What is the size of the existing back-of-house kitchen?

Answer: Approximately 3,000 square feet.

Question 22: Is there only one existing kitchen – the one intended to be remodeled – that is part of the envisioned new restaurant?

Answer: Yes.

Question 23: Is it the intention that the new restaurant menu be served to the hotel guests?

Answer: Yes, as well as conventioners, those attending local events (Toyota Center, Minute Maid, Discovery Green, etc.) and residents.

Question 24: Are pre-construction services by a general contractor or estimator intended to be integral to the design team and therefore part of the requested design team qualifications?

Answer: No. General contractor services will be engaged separately by HFH.

Question 25: What is the construction and fixtures, furnishing and accessories project budget?

Answer: The construction budget for 2025 is under development currently and will be informed by the scope of the approved design.

Question 26: What will the design review process entail?

Answer: Subsequent to selection in accordance with the criteria set forth in the RFQ, HFH expects to engage the design team to commence conceptual design work. The process is expected to be collaborative.

Question 27: Will this be a celebrity chef driven restaurant experience?

Answer: No.

Question 28: For the iconic signage and design package, should we include a branding and graphic design consultant? If so, are you currently working with such a consultant, and should we consider adding them to our team?

Answer: Respondents are welcome to include such a consultant as part of their team. HFH cannot recommend any specific firm.

Question 29: Will there be a full set of existing conditions documents for all disciplines and will they be in Revit or AutoCAD format?

Answer: To the extent available, additional plans, documents and other project/facility details will be shared with the Respondent selected.

Question 30: Do completed mixed-use or restaurant procurement projects count towards the hospitality project requirements?

Answer: Respondents are asked (under the SOQ Format/Experience criterion) to identify their most relevant experience.

Question 31: Could you please specify which existing restaurant space you are looking to transform?

Answer: Please refer to the Overview section of the RFQ. Additional detail regarding the project site will be shared with the Respondent selected.

Question 32: We are considering a high-level concept presentation. Is there any particular format or key elements you would like us to include in our proposals?

Answer: No. At this stage of the process, HFH is looking for Statements of Qualification only. Respondents are asked to please follow the SOQ Format section of the RFQ.

Question 33: Do you foresee the need for an IT consultant in relation to infrastructure or security for this project?

Answer: No.

Question 34: Will back-of-house be included in the interior design scope?

Answer: Yes, to the extent required by the resulting design. HFH expects existing equipment may need to be replaced due to age, efficiency, and concept.

Question 35: What is the current seat count?

Answer: Approximately 268 seats, including two private rooms and the bar area.

Question 36: What is the required seat count for the new design?

Answer: HFH expects 225–250, including bar seating.

Question 37: Will a food program be provided?

Answer: Yes, if necessary. Need to understand the question better.

Question 38: We are a state of Texas certified HUB, but not currently MBE with the City of Houston. Does this certification meet your diversity requirements?

Answer: Texas-certified Historically Underutilized Businesses with a local presence in the Greater Houston area are recognized under the Diversity Program. As noted in the RFQ, while Respondents are asked to note if they are certified as a diversity participant in their submittal, such certification shall not lessen or otherwise alter the requirement to use good faith efforts to award subcontracts to diversity participants.

Question 39: Regarding diversity goals, is it expected that participation be exclusive to Houston and the surrounding area?

Answer: Businesses certified by one of the approved agencies under the Diversity Program must have a local presence in the Greater Houston area.

Question 40: Our Texas HUB is currently in process. Could you please advise how best to communicate our status to meet your diversity requirements?

Answer: As noted in the RFQ, while Respondents are asked to note if they are certified as a diversity participant in their submittal, such certification shall not lessen or otherwise alter the requirement to use good faith efforts to award subcontracts to diversity participants. There is no form or required means of documenting diversity certification that is in process, but not complete. A brief statement noting the certifying entity, current status and anticipated approval timeframe, if known, will suffice.

Question 41: could you clarify whether the project execution will be handled through an AIA contract or a consultant agreement?

Answer: The Design Services Agreement is available online at www.houstonfirst.com/do-business.

Question 42: Will HFH agree to remove references to the “term” and Houston First Corporation from the Design Services Agreement?

Answer: No. As noted in the RFQ, Houston First Corporation is the sole managing member of HFH.

Question 43: Will HFH agree to include alternative dispute resolution provisions in the Design Services Agreement?

Answer: No.

Question 44: Will HFH agree to indemnify the contractor in the Design Services Agreement or cap the liability of the contractor at a fixed amount?

Answer: No. Note that Houston First Corporation, the sole managing member of HFH, is a local government corporation created by the City of Houston.

Question 45: Would HFH consider replacing references to “Contractor” and “Work” in the Design Services Agreement with “Architect” and “Services”?

Answer: Upon request from the Respondent selected, HFH is amenable to using terms other than “Contractor” and “Work,” as long as Design Services Agreement is not altered otherwise, including the definitions.

Question 46: Can the Hilton Design Standards be shared with the Respondent selected?

Answer: Yes.

Question 47: Are you looking for a full team, or can we bid on select services?

Answer: HFH is looking for Statements of Qualification only. While all potential subconsultants do not need to be identified at this time, all essential personnel should be included (See Question 8).

Question 48: Will interviews be held in person or remotely?

Answer: As noted in the RFQ, interviews may or may not be conducted with top-ranked firms. While it has not been determined, such meetings are usually conducted in person.

Letters of Clarification become a part of the RFQ automatically upon issuance and supersede any previous specifications and/or provisions in conflict therewith. By submitting their SOQ, Respondents are deemed to have received all Letters of Clarification and to have incorporated them into their submittal.