

NOTICE TO PROVIDERS OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES (HRS 103D-304)

**CATEGORY:
TA.6) Grant Writer (Public Transit Grants and Federal
Compliance Support)**

County of Hawaii / Mass Transit Agency

June 27, 2024

Submitted by:
Essential Leap, LLC
POC: Veronica Rocha
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June 27, 2024

Mass Transit Agency
County of Hawaii
25 Aupuni Street
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

RE: Professional Services (HRS 103D-304); Category: TA.6) Grant Writer (Public Transit Grants and Federal Compliance Support)

Dear Mass Transit Agency Representative:

Essential Leap, LLC (EL) appreciates the opportunity to submit this Expression of Interest Cover Letter and attached Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) detailing our experience and performance in providing TA.6) Grant Writer (Public Transit Grants and Federal Compliance Support) services across all phases of the grant process, including researching, coaching, writing, reviewing, editing, submitting, and closing-out applications to funding opportunities in the Federal, State, local, and philanthropic/corporate arenas.

We look forward to discussing our SOQ with you and your team.

Sincerely,

Veronica Rocha

Veronica Rocha
Founder and Principal, Essential Leap, LLC
veronica.rocha@essentialleap.com

**Professional Services #DOW-2024-PROF-1-ENG,
GRANT WRITING AND PREPARATION SERVICES –
Essential Leap, LLC**

(1) The name of the firm or person, contact information including email address, the principal place of business, and location of all of its offices

Name of the Firm: Essential Leap, LLC

Contact: Veronica Rocha; veronica.rocha@essentialleap.com; (831) 840-7954

Principal Place of Business and Location of Office: 1105 Kaluanui Rd, Honolulu, HI 96825

(2) The age of the firm and its average number of employees for the past five years

Age of Firm: 5 years (founded January 2019)

Number of employees: None. Veronica Rocha is the Founder, Owner/Sole Proprietor and Principal of EL. Depending on the scope of work (SOW) and deliverable due dates, EL may leverage a cadre of talented and experienced grant writing professionals (inclusive but not limited to those listed in section D. below) which allows for the most cost-effective use of budget and highest flexibility in matching the requirements of the SOW to the most qualified professional(s).

(3) The education, training, and qualifications of key members of the firm

Background on Essential Leap

Essential Leap, LLC (EL) is a woman- and minority-owned management consulting small business providing expertise in grants fundraising, ecosystem development, business development, and policy and regulatory professional services to Hawaii, national and international entities across government, private, and non-profit sectors. EL provides expertise on climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience using a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

Veronica Rocha, Founder, Owner and Principal of Essential Leap

Veronica Rocha is the Founder and Principal of EL. Prior to founding Essential Leap, Ms. Rocha served as the Renewable Energy Branch Manager at the Hawaii State Energy Office (HSEO) where she led efforts to achieve 100% renewable energy by 2045. This included working on the development of over 10 laws and representing HSEO in over 10 regulatory proceedings on topics such as utility and distributed energy resources, community based renewable energy, grid modernization, microgrids, electrification of transportation, tax incentives, and greenhouse gas reductions. During her tenure at HSEO, she represented Governor Ige at The Solar and Wind Energy Governor's Coalition, led the State of Hawaii – Department of the Navy Renewable Energy Working Group, and was a member of the Hawaiian Island Humpback Whale Sanctuary Management Council.

Ms. Rocha served as the President of Women in Renewable Energy (WiRE) in 2018-2019 and was a finalist for the Clean Energy & Empowerment (C3E) Government Award recognizing mid-career women who have demonstrated outstanding leadership. She has been honored by Pacific Business News with "Women Who Means Business" and "40 under 40 Top Business Leader".

Prior to establishing a career in sustainability, Ms. Rocha worked in Silicon Valley in business and engineering helping Fortune and start-up companies manufacture, develop, and launch medical technologies nationally and abroad.

Education/Training: Ms. Rocha holds two degrees from Stanford University, a Master of Business Administration and a Mechanical Engineering Bachelor of Science.

Qualifications: The proposed team (EL and subcontractors) has supported the identification, ideation, proposal development, administration and post-award closeout of ~**\$600 million public and private grant awards**. EL itself has helped clients (including Municipalities) identify and successfully obtain \$64 million in grant awards to be applied towards water, infrastructure, economic and workforce development, etc.

The team's areas of expertise pertaining to grant writing and preparation services include:

- Coaching and advisory support
- Researching and identifying potential grant opportunities, including capture and assessment of grant opportunities, preparing grant summaries, creating a grant tracking tool, and providing recommendations whether or not the client should pursue the opportunity based upon its priorities and planned activities

- Writing, proofing, and submitting concept papers (or pre-applications) and grant applications and supporting documentation
- Managing the grant application process to ensure the submission deadlines are met
- Guidance on crafting a compelling proposal, and section-by-section compliance and responsiveness review of application for a variety of federal, state and private funding sources
- Grant-writing and submission
- Tracking the status of grant applications
- Working with personnel in expediting the internal processing of grant proposals;
- Maintaining positive and proactive relationships with communities, State and County agencies
- Maintaining records and documentation for grant closeout

The team has also handled post-award grants management from the grantee perspective, including tasks such as budget tracking and amendments, procurement processes, contractor invoice management, preparation for audit, and other related tasks. This experience allows the team to advise applicants on the best approaches to grant application portions such as performance measurement and grants management capabilities.

In addition to understanding the grantee perspective, the team also has a deep background in understanding the grantor perspective, including administering grant programs and overseeing review of applications. While not required within this scope of work, having a grantor perspective provides insight into understanding funding opportunities and how to best position the Department's applications.

EL may leverage a cadre of talented and experienced grant services professionals, including but not limited to:

- A. Janel Pang, Vice President, Contracts Officer and Corporate Treasurer, PICHTR - PICHTR is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit established in 1985 whose mission is threefold: (1) to accelerate technology commercialization, (2) to strengthen the safety and security of the Hawaiian Islands, and (3) to expand economic opportunities in Hawai'i and throughout the Pacific. Ms. Pang is responsible for reporting on operational matters, and directing PICHTR's technical, administrative and fiscal activities. Ms. Pang has administered over **\$250 million** in Federal grants. Ms. Pang has over 20 years of experience in managing major government, industry and non-profit contracts. Ms. Pang specializes in government cost accounting, proposal development, and project management. Ms. Pang holds a B.B.A in Accounting from the University of Portland.
(<https://pichtr.org/about/janel-pang/>)

- B. Rebecca Soon, Principal, Solutions Pacific (SP) - SP is a Native Hawaiian, woman-owned small business that has provided community-based planning services to Hawai'i organizations and public agencies since 2007. Founded as a planning organization, SP has expanded to provide technical assistance to small businesses, community-based loan funds, strategic planning, plan development for government agencies, policy development, affordable housing strategic development, and other key community and economic development programs. Ms. Soon wrote her first grant at age 16 to the Administration for Native Americans, which funded a program to support workforce development programs in native Hawaiian homestead communities. She has over 20 years of working within Hawai'i communities and closely with the City & County of Honolulu executive and legislative branches. She served for three years as the Deputy of the Department of Community Services, where she helped to oversee over **\$90 million** in annual Federal grants to the City and worked closely with the MDO offices, Budget & Fiscal Services, and Corporation Counsel to collaborate on innovative programs and funding opportunities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she helped to manage and execute **\$140 million** in CARES, HUD, and Older Americans Act funding, including in the areas of affordable housing, social services, workforce development, homelessness, and food security. Ms. Soon has a Bachelor of Business Administration, Business Law and Social Entrepreneurship from Babson College. (<https://www.sphawaii.com/>)
- C. Summer Helms, Principal, Summer H. Helms Inc. - Ms. Helms has authored over 60 grants resulting in more than \$50,000,000 in funding awarded to indigenous-serving organizations, to further their missions. With over 20 years of experience in high quality, rigorous research methods, her evaluation projects have resulted in organizational policy change, higher levels of educational attainment and increased organizational capacity to make data-based decisions. Her approach to evaluation is guided by cultural sensitivity and incorporates aspects of an indigenous framework that require the evaluator to "step into the group being evaluated, learning about their life situations, experiences and their relationship with the environment" (Native Hawaiian Education Council, 2018). (<https://www.summerhelms.com/>)
- D. Nicole Chatterton, Principal, Chatterton Sustainability Consulting - Ms. Chatterton has over 16 years of experience in sustainability related grant writing, strategy, and program design. As an environmental entrepreneur, sustainability consultant, and NGO leader, she supports clients dedicated to building robust corporate or organizational sustainability programs. She approaches her work with rigor, curiosity, and creativity. (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/nicole-c-32547b32/>)
- E. Members of the Hawaii Community Benefit Consultants (<https://hawaiiCBC.net/>)

(4) A list of recent projects and the names of up to five clients who may be contacted, including at least two for whom services have been rendered during the preceding year

EL presents the following projects and references in relation to work that it completed that is similar to that required by this Notice for Professional Services:

1. **Michael Y. Packard**, P.E., PTOE, Senior Traffic Engineer
 - Project title: County of Maui (COM) Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Application
 - Work completed: Developed grant application process to ensure the submission requirements and deadlines were met. Developed grant application narrative. As a result, the COM was awarded a \$13.4 million SS4A grant by the US Department of Transportation.
 - Dates of service: April 2023 to July 2023
 - Entity: SSFM International
 - Address: 501 Sumner Street, Suite 620, Honolulu, Hawaii 96817
 - Phone: 808-531-1308 and 808-356-1205
 - Email: mpackard@ssfm.com
2. **Dr. Tiffany Wise-West**, Sustainability + Climate Action Manager
 - Project title: Grants Technical Assistance and Advisory Services
 - Work completed: Provided review of funding priorities across various City of Santa Cruz departments and identified related potential funding sources.
 - Dates of service: January 2022 to March 2022
 - Entity: City of Santa Cruz
 - Address: 809 Center St, Room 107, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
 - Phone: 831-420-5433
 - Email: twice-west@santacruzca.gov
3. **Stuart Coleman**, Executive Director & Co-Founder
 - Project title: Workforce-4-Water
 - Work completed: In partnership with the Pacific International Center for High Technology Research (PICHTR) and WAI, wrote, submitted and was awarded a \$1 million Congressional appropriation for the Workforce-4-Water project. EL also assisted WAI (through PICHTR) on the development of a second Congressional appropriation request.
 - Dates of service: May 2021 to March 2024
 - Entity: Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations (WAI)
 - Address: 2927 Hibiscus Pl, Honolulu HI 96815 United States, Honolulu, Hawaii
 - Phone: 808-381-6220
 - Email: stuart@waicleanwater.org
4. **Clay Veka**, Vision Zero Coordinator
 - Project title: Technical Assistance on Portland's USDOT-FHWA Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Grant Application

- Work completed: Grant support services included coaching and advisory support, review and ideation of SS4A proposal concept, and guidance on crafting a compelling proposal, and section-by-section compliance and responsiveness review of application. Proposal was awarded \$20 million by the USDOT SS4A Program.
 - Dates of service: June 2022 to August 2022
 - Entity: Portland Bureau of Transportation
 - Address: 1120 SW Fifth Ave, Suite 1331, Portland, OR 97204
 - Phone: 503-823-4998
 - Email: clay.veka@portlandoregon.gov
- 5. **Brian Borguno**, Development Manager,
 - Project title: City of Santa Cruz Grant Application for the Building Forward Library Facilities Improvement Program
 - Work completed: Grant support services included coaching and advisory support, review and ideation of proposal concept, guidance on crafting a compelling proposal, proposal review and editing
 - Dates of service: Start March 2023, to end of May 2023
 - Entity: City of Santa Cruz, Economic Development Department
 - Address: 337 Locust Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
 - Phone: 831-420-5316
 - Email: bborguno@santacruzca.gov

(5) Any promotional or descriptive literature which the firm desires to submit

Please see attached resume of Veronica Rocha.

VERONICA ROCHA

SUMMARY

Founder, Owner and Principal with over a decade of experience working on local, domestic, and international climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience initiatives across public, private and nonprofit sectors utilizing a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Helped clients (including municipalities) secure over \$64 million in Federal grants.

SKILLS

- Strategic analysis and planning
- Federal and private grant writing and preparation
- Program design and implementation
- Policy and regulatory analysis and development
- Government relations, processes, and structures
- Communications
- Project management and administration

WORK

HISTORY

FOUNDER & PRINCIPAL, ESSENTIAL LEAP, LLC, HONOLULU, HI (2019-PRESENT)

Collaborate with public, private and nonprofit clients to initiate, develop and implement strategies to achieve climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience policies and objectives, including:

- Grants based fundraising, including funding needs analysis, grant funding research, and proposal development.
- Designing and operationalizing new programs from the ground-up.
- Cross-sector and interdisciplinary stakeholder consensus building and project management.
- Capacity building.
- Policy and regulatory analysis and development.

RENEWABLE ENERGY PROGRAM MANAGER, HI STATE ENERGY OFFICE, HONOLULU, HI (2012-2018)

Developed policies and programs to achieve HI's 100% renewable energy goal by 2045.

Led development of 10+ laws and 10+ regulatory interventions on utility-scale and distributed energy resources, community based renewable energy, grid modernization, microgrids, electrification of transportation, tax incentives, and greenhouse gases.

Implemented and administered \$3 million/year renewable fuels production tax credit.

Collaborated with electric utility and industry stakeholders to develop the first electric vehicle pilot time of use rates.

TECHNICAL/MANAGER ROLES IN ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY SECTORS (2001-2018)

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering (2001), Stanford University and Master of Business Administration, Stanford Graduate School of Business (2008)