Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Design-Build Services for Marie Selby Botanical Gardens Shoreline Restoration at Downtown Sarasota and Historic Spanish Point Campuses

Introduction

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens (Selby Gardens) has faced significant shoreline erosion and storm surge impacts from recent hurricanes, including Hurricanes Helene and Milton. These events exposed critical vulnerabilities across both its Downtown Sarasota and Historic Spanish Point campuses, placing valuable historical and ecological assets—including archaeological sites, pioneer-era structures, and rare botanical collections—at heightened risk.

In response, Selby Gardens is seeking Statements of Qualifications (SOQs) from qualified design-build teams to lead the planning, permitting, construction, and post-construction phases of a comprehensive shoreline resiliency initiative. This effort will emphasize nature-based and hybrid coastal infrastructure solutions tailored to the site's unique environmental and cultural context.

Both campuses continue to experience shoreline retreat and loss of natural buffering capacity due to a combination of sea level rise, wave energy, and increasingly frequent severe weather events. These conditions have contributed to runoff, habitat degradation, and ongoing threats to nationally significant natural and cultural resources.

To address these challenges, Selby Gardens proposes a hybrid shoreline stabilization approach that combines traditional engineering techniques with living shoreline strategies. Key features of the project will include the installation of reef modules or comparable wave attenuation structures to reduce wave energy and encourage sand accumulation. These elements will create protected areas for the planting and/or establishment of native coastal vegetation—such as salt-tolerant grasses and mangroves—and support benthic and estuarine habitat development, including oyster recruitment and seagrass colonization. Specific designs will reflect the unique challenges of each campus.

Additionally, Selby Gardens intends to replace a deteriorating seawall at the Historic Spanish Point campus with a nature-integrated design that will protect critical infrastructure—namely access roads and utilities—while enhancing habitat value through biologically supportive features.

Together, these interventions—reef structures, native plantings, oyster and marine habitat features, and ecologically enhanced shoreline infrastructure—will form a resilient living shoreline system that improves storm protection, mitigates erosion, restores biodiversity, and safeguards Selby's historic and environmental legacy. This project is intended to serve as a model for nature-based coastal resilience and a beacon for visitors, researchers, and policymakers committed to sustainable shoreline restoration.

Selby Botanical Gardens – Downtown Sarasota Campus

Selby Botanical Gardens – Historic Spanish Point Campus

About Selby Gardens

Founded in 1973 and nestled along the shores of Sarasota Bay, Selby Gardens is a globally recognized institution dedicated to the conservation and study of epiphytes. With a mission to 'inspire and nurture appreciation and understanding of plants, especially epiphytes, and to foster environmental stewardship,' Selby Gardens combines botanical science, education, and immersive visitor experiences across its two historic campuses.

Home to the world's most comprehensive collection of epiphytic orchids and bromeliads, Selby Gardens serves as an international center for research and conservation. Its grounds include bayfront gardens, preserved archaeological sites, pioneer-era buildings, and vibrant ecosystems. As a cultural and scientific leader, Selby Gardens embraces its role in advancing climate resilience and ecological restoration in urban coastal settings.

Project Purpose and Scope

The proposed project will serve as a high-visibility demonstration of best-in-class coastal resilience and nature-based engineering. Selby Gardens proposes implementing a comprehensive living shoreline effort that includes approximately 3,000 linear feet of shoreline restoration across both campuses. The scope will include the installation of reef modules or similar breakwater structures—potentially up to 40 units—designed to attenuate wave energy, promote sediment deposition, and support oyster and benthic habitat establishment. Behind these structures, native plantings such as Spartina grasses and mangroves will stabilize the shoreline, enhance biodiversity, and improve water quality. Additionally, Selby Gardens proposes to replace approximately 120 linear feet of damaged seawall at the Historic Spanish Point campus with an ecologically enhanced, nature-integrated seawall.

While Selby Gardens has secured initial funding to support this effort, the final project scope, footprint, and phasing may be expanded significantly based on the availability of future funding or partnership opportunities. Respondents should anticipate that the scope of work may evolve and that early-phase work will emphasize conceptual design, feasibility evaluation, and regulatory coordination to position the project for successful expansion and implementation.

Selby Gardens is therefore seeking a fully integrated, turn-key design-build team capable of delivering the full continuum of services outlined in this RFQ—from conceptual and regulatory coordination through final construction, monitoring, and reporting

Selby Gardens envisions this project as a global model for sustainable shoreline restoration—one that will attract visitors, educators, scientists, and policymakers from around the world. Interpretive signage, educational tours, and real-time monitoring may be incorporated to expand the project's outreach and legacy.

Anticipated services under this contract may include but are not limited to the following:

Pre-Planning & Grant Compliance

- Review and interpretation of all project funding requirements (state, federal, private grants)
- Coordination with Selby Gardens and funders to ensure eligible expenses
- Development of project work plans aligned with grant scopes and performance metrics

Site Evaluation & Baseline Assessments

- Desktop review of site characteristics, GIS mapping, and data gathering
- Site reconnaissance and condition assessment of:
  - Shoreline erosion and wave energy exposure
  - Existing seawall infrastructure (Historic Spanish Point)
  - Natural habitat presence (oysters, seagrasses, mangroves)
- Geotechnical investigations
- Topographic and bathymetric surveys
- Benthic and seagrass habitat surveys
- Cultural resource coordination with agencies and stakeholders

Conceptual & Preliminary Design

- Development of preliminary design concepts for:
  - Living shoreline restoration zones (offshore reef structures, near-shore plantings, riparian and upland grading)
  - Nature-based seawall retrofit (~120 LF)
- Stakeholder and Selby Gardens design input workshops
- Cost estimation and feasibility analysis
- Climate adaptation and sea level rise scenario modeling

Environmental Permitting

- Preparation and submission of permit applications to:
  - Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)
  - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
  - Local City and County
- Coordination with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) if needed
- Public notice or hearing support, if required
- Response to Requests for Additional Information (RAIs)

Final Engineering Design & Construction Documentation

- 30%, 60%, 90%, and Final (100%) design development
- Hydraulic/hydrologic modeling and shoreline stabilization calculations
- Detailed plans and technical specifications for:
  - Reef modules or breakwater systems (~40 structures estimated)
  - Seagrass, Spartina, and mangrove planting zones (~3,000 LF)

    - Enhanced seawall design with ecological features
- Construction sequencing plan
- Erosion, sedimentation, and turbidity control plan
- Staging and access logistics planning

Construction Phase Services

- Construction mobilization and logistics oversight
- Fabrication and installation of reef modules
- Site grading and substrate preparation
- Installation of native vegetation and planting
- Seawall removal and replacement with enhanced design
- Erosion control and turbidity barrier installation
- Coordination of barge, crane, and excavation operations
- Marine species protection measures (e.g., manatee and sea turtle BMPs)

Construction Engineering Inspection (CEI) & Project Oversight

- On-site observation of all construction activities
- Submittal review and change order documentation
- Progress reporting and photographic documentation
- Coordination with grant administrators
- Final punch list and construction closeout

Post-Construction Monitoring & Reporting

- Performance monitoring (e.g., vegetation survival, reef stability)
- Water quality sampling (if applicable)
- Oyster recruitment and benthic habitat surveys
- As-built documentation (CAD/GIS formats)
- Permit compliance reporting (FDEP/USACE)
- Final grant reporting and reimbursement package development

Optional Tasks / Future Phases (As Funding Allows)

- Expansion of shoreline restoration to additional zones
- Enhanced public outreach, signage, and interpretive elements
- Installation of live-feed monitoring or data sensors
- Educational partnerships or demonstration curriculum development

Contract Structure

The selected team will enter into a multi-year, task order-based contract for design-build services. The initial term shall be five (5) years, with the option for up to three (3) additional one-year renewals.

Selby Gardens anticipates the continued pursuit of supplemental state, federal, and private funding sources to enhance and expand this shoreline restoration initiative. As such, this contract is intended to serve as the long-term vehicle for both the current scope and future expansions

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

The evaluation scoring matrix is as follows: **Selby Gardens will utilize a two-phase selection process. Phase 1 will evaluate qualifications and experience only. Shortlisted firms will then be invited to participate in Phase 2, which will include a technical proposal, approach, understanding of project goals, and pricing. Final selection will be based on best value.**

Phase 1 Evaluation Criteria	Points
Qualifications and experience of key personnel	40
Relevant project experience in coastal restoration	40
References and past performance	10
Clarity and quality of submittal	10

Submittal Instructions

One (1) electronic copy of your Statement of Qualifications (PDF format) must be submitted via email to: jmccarthy@selby.org. The subject line should read: RFQ – Selby Gardens Living Shoreline Project.

The submission shall include a cover letter from the project lead, and no more than 50 pages of supporting documentation related to the experience and competencies of the project lead, each sub-contractor and consultant. Supporting documentation shall reference experience related to local, state and federal coastal permitting. Two on-site meetings will be held to familiarize the proposers with the specific needs of the two project sites. Following these on-site meetings, there will be a period for questions from the submitting entities. All attendees at the pre-submittal meetings will be provided answers to the questions presented. All RFQ submissions must be received by 5pm EST on Friday, February 20th, 2026.

Pricing

Phase 2. No pricing is required or will be considered during the initial qualifications evaluation. Shortlisted firms will be required to submit an hourly rate schedule for listed roles likely to be required during design, permitting, and construction.

This includes:

- Project Manager
- Environmental Scientist / Ecologist
- Civil Engineer
- CAD Technician
- Construction Superintendent
- General Laborer
- Barge Operator
- Other Heavy Equipment Operator
- Monitoring / CEI Technician
- Grant Manager

Schedule

January 13th, 2026	Request for Qualifications published
January 22, 2026	Pre-Meeting option 1 on both campuses (1534 Mound Street) 10:00am
January 27, 2026	Pre-Meeting option 2 on both campuses (1534 Mound Street) 10:00am
February 5, 2026	Questions from submitters due to Selby Gardens
February 12, 2026	Replies to questions provided by Selby Gardens to submitters via email
February 26, 2026	Statement of Qualifications due by 5pm EST via email

For questions related to this project, please email John McCarthy at jmccarthy@selby.org