



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Executive Search Services Chief Executive Officer Recruitment

Solicitation No. 200-RFP-26-01

Seattle Social Housing Developer

RFP Issued: Monday, July 27, 2026

I. BACKGROUND

Seattle Social Housing Developer (SSHD) is an independent Public Development Authority created through Seattle Initiative 135 to develop, acquire, own, and steward permanently affordable social housing. SSHD seeks an executive search firm to recruit its next Chief Executive Officer. The CEO will lead a first-in-the-nation social housing organization. This role requires expertise in affordable housing, public finance, political leadership, coalition building, and institution building.

II. SUMMARY OF SERVICES

The selected firm will design and execute a national executive search, refine the CEO position profile, benchmark executive compensation, recruit diverse and highly qualified candidates, assess leadership competencies, facilitate interviews, complete reference and background checks, and support final negotiations and onboarding.

SSHD intends to execute a Professional Services Agreement with the selected proposer. The final scope, fees, and contract terms are subject to negotiation.

III. PROCESS FOR SELECTION

SSHD intends to award a contract to the proposer whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to SSHD based upon the published evaluation criteria, interviews (if conducted), reference checks, negotiations, and overall best value. Selection will not be based solely on cost. SSHD reserves the right to request clarifications, conduct discussions, negotiate with one or more proposers, and cancel or reissue this solicitation if it is determined to be in the best interest of SSHD.

IV. FEE STRUCTURE

Provide a fixed-fee proposal identifying all professional fees, anticipated reimbursable expenses, optional services, hourly rates (if applicable), assumptions, and any costs associated with a replacement search under the placement guarantee.

Proposals should include a proposed payment schedule tied to project milestones (e.g., project initiation, presentation of the initial candidate slate, and successful placement) and should identify any caps or pre-approval thresholds applicable to reimbursable expenses.

V. SCOPE OF EXECUTIVE SEARCH SERVICES

The selected Executive Search Firm ("Consultant") shall provide comprehensive executive recruitment services from project initiation through successful placement and onboarding of the Chief Executive Officer. The Consultant will serve as a strategic advisor to the CEO Hiring Committee and Board of Directors throughout the recruitment process and will be expected to proactively identify, recruit, evaluate, and present highly qualified candidates capable of leading one of the nation's first municipally created social housing organizations.

The Consultant shall perform, at a minimum, the following services.

Phase 1 — Project Initiation and Search Strategy

The Consultant shall facilitate a comprehensive project kickoff to establish a shared understanding of SSHD's mission, strategic priorities, governance structure, and leadership expectations.

Services shall include, but not be limited to:

- Conducting kickoff meetings with the CEO Hiring Committee, Board leadership, and designated SSHD staff.
- Reviewing SSHD's Charter, bylaws, strategic plan, organizational structure, and current operating environment.
- Gaining an understanding of SSHD's social housing model, resident governance structure, public accountability requirements, and long-term organizational objectives.
- Identifying organizational opportunities, challenges, and leadership priorities that should inform the recruitment strategy.
- Developing a detailed Executive Search Work Plan, including key milestones, deliverables, communication protocols, and anticipated timeline.
- Recommending strategies to ensure a confidential, equitable, and nationally competitive recruitment process.

Deliverables

- Executive Search Project Plan
- Recruitment Strategy
- Detailed Project Schedule
- Communication Plan
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Phase 2 — Position Development and Market Analysis

Working collaboratively with the CEO Hiring Committee, the Consultant shall refine the executive leadership profile and develop recruitment materials designed to attract highly qualified candidates.

Services shall include:

- Reviewing and recommending revisions to the Chief Executive Officer Position Description.
- Developing a comprehensive Executive Leadership Profile identifying the experience, competencies, leadership characteristics, and personal attributes desired in the successful candidate.
- Preparing professional recruitment and marketing materials that accurately communicate SSHD's mission, strategic priorities, organizational culture, and leadership opportunity.
- Providing recommendations regarding salary range, executive benefits, relocation assistance, and other compensation considerations necessary to attract exceptional executive talent.

Deliverables

- Updated CEO Position Description

- Executive Leadership Profile
- Recruitment Brochure
- Recruitment Marketing Materials

Phase 3 — Executive Recruitment and Candidate Outreach

The Consultant shall conduct an active national executive search utilizing direct recruitment, professional networks, targeted outreach, and strategic marketing. SSHD expects the selected Consultant to recruit exceptional passive candidates and not rely solely upon applicants responding to public advertisements.

The Consultant shall:

- Develop and execute a comprehensive national recruitment campaign.
- Conduct targeted outreach to executive leaders who may not be actively seeking employment.
- Advertise the opportunity through appropriate national, regional, and industry-specific networks.
- Utilize professional associations, executive networks, and personal outreach to recruit highly qualified candidates.
- Implement strategies designed to recruit a diverse and highly qualified candidate pool.

Candidate recruitment should include executives from, but not be limited to:

- Public Development Authorities
- Housing Authorities
- Affordable Housing Developers
- Public Real Estate Organizations
- Municipal Government
- Economic Development Organizations
- Infrastructure and Public Utilities
- Community Development Corporations
- Mission-Driven Private Sector Organizations
- Other organizations with demonstrated expertise in complex public leadership

The Consultant shall provide regular written progress reports summarizing recruitment activities, market feedback, candidate pipeline development, and emerging issues requiring Hiring Committee consideration.

Deliverables

- National Recruitment Strategy
- Candidate Outreach Reports
- Weekly or Biweekly Progress Reports
- 15–30 Qualified & Vetted Candidates

Phase 4 — Candidate Evaluation and Assessment

The Consultant shall conduct a rigorous evaluation of all serious candidates using structured interviews, leadership assessments, reference reviews, and competency-based evaluation techniques.

Candidate evaluations shall assess demonstrated experience in:

Executive Leadership

- Strategic leadership
- Organizational management
- Executive decision-making
- Organizational culture development
- Building and leading executive teams

Housing and Real Estate Leadership

- Affordable housing
- Real estate development
- Asset management
- Capital planning
- Complex public finance

Political Leadership and Government Relations

Because SSHD operates within a highly visible public environment and relies upon strong governmental partnerships, particular emphasis shall be placed on evaluating candidates' demonstrated ability to:

- Successfully navigate complex political environments.
- Build trusted relationships with elected officials and governmental agencies.
- Secure public funding, legislative appropriations, voter-approved funding, or other governmental resources.
- Build coalitions among diverse stakeholder groups.
- Lead organizations through public scrutiny and political change.
- Protect organizational credibility while advancing strategic priorities.

Institutional Leadership

Candidates shall also be evaluated for demonstrated success in:

- Building enduring public institutions.
- Leading organizational transformation.
- Managing organizational growth.
- Establishing governance systems.
- Developing organizational infrastructure.
- Building public trust.

The Consultant shall prepare written candidate assessment reports summarizing each finalist's strengths, leadership style, areas for development, and overall alignment with SSHD's strategic priorities.

Deliverables

- Candidate Evaluation Matrix
- Semi-Finalist Recommendations

- Finalist Assessment Reports
- Leadership Assessment Summaries
- Professional Reference Reports

Phase 5 — Board Support, Selection, and Executive Transition

The Consultant shall support the CEO Hiring Committee and Board of Directors through final interviews, candidate selection, negotiation, and executive transition.

Services shall include:

- Developing interview questions and evaluation tools.
- Facilitating finalist interviews.
- Supporting consensus-building among members of the Hiring Committee.
- Coordinating finalist reference and background investigations.
- Advising SSHD regarding executive compensation negotiations.
- Assisting with preparation of the employment agreement, if requested.
- Supporting the successful candidate through the acceptance process.
- Providing onboarding recommendations to facilitate a successful executive transition.

The selected Consultant shall provide a minimum twelve (12) month placement guarantee. Should the selected CEO voluntarily separate from employment or be terminated for performance-related reasons during the guarantee period, the Consultant shall conduct a replacement search at no additional professional fee, excluding mutually agreed upon advertising or direct reimbursable expenses. The twelve (12) month guarantee period shall commence on the CEO's official start date, unless otherwise specified in the Professional Services Agreement.

Deliverables

- Interview Guides
- Interview Evaluation Tools
- Final Recommendation Memorandum
- Negotiation Support
- Transition Recommendations
- Placement Guarantee Documentation

VI. DESIRED CEO PROFILE

The Seattle Social Housing Developer ("SSHD") is seeking a transformational Chief Executive Officer capable of leading one of the nation's first municipally created social housing organizations through its next phase of growth and institutional development.

The Board recognizes that this role requires more than traditional affordable housing or real estate development experience. The successful candidate must possess the executive leadership skills necessary to build and sustain a complex public institution operating at the intersection of housing development, public policy, government relations, finance, and community engagement.

The successful candidate will demonstrate a proven track record of building high-performing organizations, navigating politically complex environments, securing sustainable funding, and earning the confidence of governing boards, elected officials, residents, employees, and community partners.

The Board is seeking an executive who can successfully balance operational excellence with visionary leadership while positioning SSHD for long-term institutional success. Although no candidate is expected to possess every qualification listed below, SSHD seeks an executive whose experience most closely aligns with the following leadership competencies.

Executive search firms responding to this solicitation are expected to demonstrate a clear understanding of this leadership profile and describe how their recruitment strategy, candidate outreach, assessment methodology, and evaluation process will identify candidates possessing these competencies. SSHD will evaluate proposers, in part, on their demonstrated understanding of the unique leadership requirements of this position and their ability to recruit executives who meet these expectations.

Executive Leadership

The successful candidate will have demonstrated executive leadership experience managing a complex organization with responsibility for strategic planning, organizational performance, financial stewardship, organizational culture, and executive decision-making. The CEO should possess a proven ability to:

- Develop and execute long-term organizational strategy.
- Build, mentor, and retain high-performing executive leadership teams.
- Foster an organizational culture grounded in accountability, collaboration, transparency, and continuous improvement.
- Lead organizations through periods of significant growth, organizational change, and increased public visibility.
- Balance competing priorities while maintaining focus on mission, operational excellence, and long-term sustainability.

Affordable Housing and Real Estate Leadership

The successful candidate should possess substantial knowledge of affordable housing, real estate development, acquisition, asset management, and long-term portfolio stewardship. Ideal candidates will demonstrate experience with:

- Affordable housing finance and development.
- Property acquisition and due diligence.
- Public-private development partnerships.
- Capital planning and long-term asset management.
- Portfolio growth and organizational scaling.
- Complex real estate transactions involving multiple stakeholders.

While direct experience in social housing is desirable, SSHD welcomes candidates who have successfully led comparable mission-driven organizations with complex real estate portfolios.

Political Acumen and Government Relations

The Board considers political leadership to be one of the most critical competencies for the next Chief Executive Officer. Because SSHD's long-term success depends upon maintaining productive relationships

with governmental partners and securing sustainable public investment, the CEO must possess exceptional political judgment and the ability to navigate complex public environments with credibility, diplomacy, and professionalism. The successful candidate should demonstrate experience:

- Building trusted relationships with elected officials at the local, regional, state, and federal levels.
- Successfully navigating changing political environments while maintaining organizational credibility.
- Building consensus among stakeholders with differing priorities and perspectives.
- Representing organizations before legislative bodies, governing boards, public agencies, and community organizations.
- Managing public controversy with professionalism, transparency, and sound judgment.
- Understanding how governmental decision-making affects long-term organizational sustainability.
- Developing strategic partnerships that advance both organizational and public policy objectives.

The Board seeks a leader who understands that effective political leadership is rooted in trust, integrity, collaboration, and long-term relationship building rather than short-term advocacy.

Public Finance and Resource Development

The successful candidate should possess a demonstrated record of securing significant public or mission-driven funding and developing innovative financing strategies. Experience should include one or more of the following:

- Legislative appropriations.
- Public financing initiatives.
- Bond financing.
- Voter-approved revenue measures.
- Federal or state funding programs.
- Philanthropic partnerships.
- Complex capital campaigns.
- Multi-source public financing strategies.

The CEO should understand how to build diversified funding models capable of supporting long-term organizational growth while responsibly stewarding public resources. Because SSHD's long-term success depends upon establishing durable and sustainable funding beyond its initial capitalization, the Board seeks a leader who has successfully positioned organizations for long-term financial sustainability through strategic partnerships, public investment, and innovative financing.

Seattle Civic Leadership and Community Partnerships

SSHD operates within a uniquely collaborative civic environment that requires trusted relationships across government, labor, business, philanthropy, nonprofit organizations, and resident communities. The successful CEO should demonstrate the ability to quickly establish credibility and trusted relationships throughout Seattle's civic and governmental landscape. Preferred candidates will possess experience:

- Working collaboratively with city and regional governments.
- Building productive relationships with labor organizations.
- Partnering with community-based organizations.

- Engaging philanthropic and business leaders.
- Collaborating with public agencies and institutional partners.
- Building broad coalitions that advance shared public objectives.

Existing relationships within Seattle's housing, governmental, labor, philanthropic, and civic sectors are strongly preferred. Candidates without direct Seattle experience should demonstrate a proven history of successfully establishing trusted partnerships and navigating complex governmental environments in comparable communities.

Institutional Leadership

The next CEO will play a critical role in transforming SSHD from an emerging Public Development Authority into a durable, high-performing public institution. The Board seeks a leader who has successfully built organizational infrastructure, established governance systems, and strengthened institutional capacity. Candidates should demonstrate experience:

- Building organizational legitimacy and public confidence.
- Leading organizations through periods of rapid growth.
- Developing executive leadership teams.
- Implementing governance and accountability systems.
- Strengthening organizational culture.
- Creating resilient institutions capable of long-term success.

The successful candidate will recognize that institutional credibility is built through consistent performance, sound governance, transparent decision-making, and meaningful stakeholder engagement.

Commitment to Resident-Centered Governance

SSHD's mission is grounded in the belief that residents should play a meaningful role in shaping the communities in which they live. The successful CEO must demonstrate a genuine commitment to resident engagement, public accountability, equity, and shared governance. The ideal candidate will have experience:

- Working collaboratively with resident leaders and community stakeholders.
- Supporting governance structures that encourage meaningful resident participation.
- Balancing operational excellence with community engagement.
- Building organizational cultures that value transparency, inclusion, and continuous learning.
- Leading organizations that place residents, customers, or community members at the center of decision-making.

The Board seeks a leader who embraces SSHD's vision of creating permanently affordable social housing that is financially sustainable, publicly accountable, and responsive to the needs and voices of its residents.

What Will Differentiate the Successful Candidate

While technical expertise in affordable housing and real estate development is important, SSHD is ultimately seeking a leader who can build and sustain a new public institution. The most competitive candidates will demonstrate the ability to:

- Inspire confidence among residents, employees, elected officials, and the broader community.

- Build durable partnerships across government, labor, philanthropy, business, and community organizations.
- Secure long-term public investment and diversify funding sources.
- Navigate complex political environments with integrity, sound judgment, and strategic vision.
- Scale a mission-driven organization while maintaining operational excellence and public accountability.
- Champion the social housing model and articulate a compelling vision for its long-term success in Seattle.

SSHD is seeking a leader who not only possesses exceptional executive qualifications but also demonstrates the vision, credibility, political acumen, and institution-building experience necessary to establish SSHD as a nationally recognized model for publicly owned, permanently affordable social housing.

VII. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals shall not exceed 5 pages (excluding resumes and required attachments) and shall be submitted in PDF format via email no later than the Proposals Due date identified in Section IX.

Include:

1. Cover Letter
2. Firm Qualifications
3. Project Team
4. Recruitment Methodology
5. Five comparable CEO searches
6. Diversity recruitment strategy
7. Sample candidate assessment report
8. References
9. Fee proposal
10. Twelve-month placement guarantee

VIII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Firms will be scored on the following criteria, for a total of 100 possible points:

Evaluation Criteria	Points
Executive Search Experience	20
Public Sector & Housing Experience	20
Recruitment Methodology — sourcing & pipeline development (8), diversity recruitment strategy (6), timeline/process/screening (6)	20
Understanding of SSHD Mission and Political Environment	20

Evaluation Criteria	Points
Project Team	10
Cost	10
Total	100

Diversity recruitment strategy will be evaluated based on the firm's specific plan and track record for building a broad, diverse pipeline through targeted outreach — not on the composition of any resulting candidate slate.

SSHD is an Equal Opportunity contracting agency and encourages proposals from firms of all sizes and ownership structures, including minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, and disadvantaged business enterprises.

IX. TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Milestone	Date
RFP Issued	Monday, 7/27/2026
Questions Due	Friday, 7/31/2026
Answers/Addendum Posted	Monday, 8/3/2026
Proposals Due	Monday, 8/10/2026
Interviews	Week of 8/17/2026
Notice of Intent to Award	Friday, 8/21/2026
Contract Execution	Friday, 8/28/2026

SSHD reserves the right to modify the procurement schedule at any time by issuing a written addendum.

X. PROTEST PROCEDURES

Any proposer wishing to protest the solicitation or intended award shall submit a written protest to SSHD within five (5) business days of the event giving rise to the protest. The protest must identify the specific grounds for the protest and the relief requested. Protests will be reviewed by outside legal counsel, which shall issue a written decision within 7 business days of receipt. SSHD may, in its discretion, stay the award process pending resolution of a timely protest.

XI. OTHER INFORMATION

Proposers shall disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest involving SSHD Board members, employees, consultants, or contractors. Failure to disclose may result in disqualification or contract termination.

The selected consultant shall maintain strict confidentiality throughout the recruitment process and shall not disclose candidate identities except as authorized by SSHD.

By submitting a proposal, the proposer certifies that neither the firm nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in public contracting.

Proposers shall disclose any lobbying, political consulting, campaign consulting, or other professional relationships with SSHD Board members, employees, elected officials, or Initiative 135 organizations that could create an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation may become public records subject to the Washington Public Records Act. Proposers should clearly identify any information they believe to be exempt from disclosure and provide the legal basis for such exemption. SSHD does not guarantee that any information will be withheld from disclosure.

Prior to contract execution, the selected consultant shall provide evidence of insurance meeting SSHD's minimum insurance requirements, including commercial general liability, professional liability (errors and omissions), workers' compensation, and automobile liability, as applicable.

For a period of twenty-four (24) months following completion of the engagement, the selected Consultant shall not directly solicit for employment any SSHD Board member or employee identified or engaged through this search, without SSHD's prior written consent.

The selected Consultant shall implement reasonable administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to protect the confidentiality and security of candidate personal information, including background check and reference data, and shall dispose of such records in accordance with applicable law upon SSHD's request.

Proposers shall disclose any current or recent (within the preceding twelve months) executive search engagements for organizations that could reasonably be considered competitors of, or otherwise create a conflict with, SSHD's interests in this search.

All candidate lists, recruitment materials, and work product developed under this engagement shall become the property of SSHD upon completion or termination of the engagement, subject to applicable confidentiality obligations.

Questions shall be submitted to **solicitations@seattlesocialhousing.org**. SSHD reserves the right to modify the schedule, reject proposals, or negotiate with the highest-ranked proposer.