

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Focus Group Research Services

1. About CIRM

The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) is a state agency created by California voters to accelerate stem cell and gene therapies for people with unmet medical needs. Since 2004, Californians have entrusted CIRM with \$8.5 billion to accelerate promising discoveries through clinical trials, train a regenerative medicine workforce, strengthen the state's biotechnology economy, and expand access to transformative treatments. Today, CIRM is pioneering new models of therapy development and accelerating medical breakthroughs that change lives — in California and around the world. For more information, visit www.cirm.ca.gov.

2. Objectives

CIRM is seeking a qualified research firm to conduct comprehensive focus group research across California to better understand public attitudes toward:

- Cell and gene therapy
- The value and role of research funding
- Trust, concerns, perceptions, the value, and levels of understanding of research studies, including participation in studies, across diverse communities

Insights from this research will inform CIRM's public education, outreach strategies, and communication planning.

The primary objectives are:

- Gain qualitative insights from Californians across multiple regions and demographic groups
- Ensure inclusion of diverse communities, including racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity
- Conduct **at least one Spanish-language focus group**
- Provide actionable findings to guide communication, messaging, and community engagement
- Improve CIRM's understanding of statewide sentiment toward emerging therapies and public investment in science

3. Scope of Services Required

The research firm will provide the following deliverables.

A. Research Design and Planning

- Develop a comprehensive research plan, including methodology, recruitment criteria, and discussion guides
- Recommend appropriate geographic locations representing regions such as:
 - Northern California
 - Southern California
 - Central Valley
 - Inland Empire
 - Rural communities

B. Recruitment and Diversity Requirements

- Ensure representation from underserved or medically vulnerable communities
- Recruit participants that reflect California's demographic diversity, including:
 - At least one Spanish-language group
 - At least one group with lower-income or under-resourced communities
 - At least one group with participants from rural regions

C. Facilitation and Execution

- Provide professional moderation (including bilingual moderators where needed)
- Provide technology, facilities, recording, and virtual tools if remote sessions are recommended
- Ensure sessions are accessible and culturally appropriate

D. Analysis and Reporting

- Provide detailed analysis of themes, attitudes, misconceptions, and opportunities
- Deliver a full final report including:
 - Executive summary
 - Recommendations for messaging relevant for different demographic groups in California
 - Suggestions for how to better reach diverse groups with information about CIRM
 - Participant demographic breakdown
 - Verbatim quotes (anonymized)
- Provide a presentation of findings to CIRM leadership and communications team

E. Project Management and Check-ins

- Conduct regular check-in meetings
- Provide ongoing updates on recruitment, scheduling, and progress

4. Cost Proposal

Total available budget for this engagement is **\$60,000** for all services described above. Budget should include:

- Recruitment
- Moderation
- Translation and interpretation (as applicable)
- Facility or virtual platform costs
- Analysis and reporting
- Travel, if applicable
- Any additional fees or costs

5. Qualifications Required

As evidenced by the nature of the tasks listed above, CIRM expects to have a close working relationship with awarded firm and requires the firm to demonstrate a high degree of experience, and proficiency in the required duties.

The following minimum qualifications and experience are required:

- At least five years of experience conducting qualitative research and focus groups
- Demonstrated success conducting research with diverse communities
- Experience in healthcare, science communication, public policy, or related fields
- Capacity to conduct multilingual research, including Spanish

Preference is given to firms based in California.

6. Reporting and Evaluation

The selected firm will provide regular performance updates, and deliverables will be evaluated based on:

- Research quality
- Participant diversity
- Clarity of reporting

- Timeliness of deliverables

7. Submission Requirements

Provide the following:

A. Qualifications and experience of firm.

Discuss how your firm's overall experience demonstrates your firm's ability to successfully complete the scope of services and details described in Section 3. Provide a detailed list of focus group projects you have provided to clients over the past five years, highlighting your firm's unique services and accomplishments.

In addition, please include:

- Detailed description of the proposed approach to achieving the objectives and deliverables outlined.
- Strategies and tactics that will be employed.
- Summary of prior success in carrying out focus groups to guide communications and outreach strategies.

B. Qualification of staff.

Identify the staff members who will provide the services required by the proposal, including years and type of experience for each person. Experience should include number of years at current firm as well as all relevant prior service.

C. Sample comparable projects.

Provide a brief list and description of comparable clients and their public sentiment projects which your firm successfully completed within the last three years. Please attach samples of sentiment surveys and focus groups and their outcomes.

D. References from past clients

Please provide at least three references from past clients.

E. Timelines

Please provide a detailed timeline for the proposed work.

F. Cost proposal

The proposal should include the information on costs outlined in deliverables section, with a breakdown for each service outlined in this scope of work.

8. How to Submit Proposal

Please submit your proposal in a PDF document, with signature. Do not attach a zip file, as they are not a permissible attachment per our email exchange.

All proposals must be emailed to businessservices@cirm.ca.gov and received by July 31, 2026, at 5:00 PM (PST).

9. Selection Process

The purpose of the proposal evaluation process is twofold:

(1) to assess the responses for compliance with the RFP's minimum qualifications, content and format requirements; and (2) to identify firms that have the highest probability of satisfactorily performing the services requested by CIRM at the best value. The evaluation process will be conducted in a comprehensive and impartial manner as set forth herein.

Proposals will undergo an evaluation process conducted by CIRM. In evaluating the proposals, CIRM will consider the perceived quality of the response, including the firm's proposed scope of services, cost proposal, timeline, references, experience and qualifications. Evaluation will include consideration of the following factors:

- Relevant experience and ability. Evaluation will include review of the firm's overall experience, as well as the firm's relevant experience. A factor under consideration will be whether the firm's experience demonstrates its ability to successfully complete the requirements herein.
- Responsiveness to project requirements. Evaluation will include consideration of responsiveness to client needs and requirements on previous projects, and the quality of the relationships maintained throughout the duration of these efforts. Attentiveness to and compliance with RFP instructions and other aspects of the selection process will be taken as an indication of responsiveness.
- Qualifications of proposed personnel. Evaluation will include the particular experience, capabilities, and availability of specific personnel who will be available to provide services to CIRM.
- Value. Range of services to be delivered within the proposed budget

10. Key Action Dates

- RFP release: June 26, 2026
- Questions due: July 06, 2026
- CIRM response due: July 13, 2026

- Proposal deadline: July 31, 2026
- Contract award: September 25
- Engagement period: **September 25 – June 30, 2027**

11. Contract Terms

CIRM's standard contract terms are attached, and the selected firm will be expected to comply with its terms, including insurance requirements. Please review the contract terms before submitting your proposal.

CIRM expects the chosen firm will be able to start as soon as possible after an agreement is executed. CIRM anticipates entering into an agreement with an initial expiration date of 30 June 2027. All agreements will contain a cancellation clause at CIRM's election per CIRM's standard Consulting Agreement.

12. Additional Information

- A proposal may be rejected if it is conditional or incomplete, or if it contains any alterations of form or other irregularities of any kind. CIRM may waive any immaterial deviation in a proposal. CIRM's waiver of an immaterial deviation shall in no way modify the RFP document or excuse the proposer from full compliance with all requirements if awarded the contract.
- CIRM may reject any or all proposals.
- Costs incurred for developing proposals and in anticipation of award of the agreement are entirely the responsibility of the proposer and shall not be charged to CIRM.
- A proposer may withdraw its proposal by submitting a written withdrawal request to CIRM, signed by the proposer or an authorized agent. Proposals may not be withdrawn without cause subsequent to proposal submission deadline.
- A proposer may not modify a proposal after its submission. If the submission deadline has not passed, a proposer may withdraw its original proposal and submit a new proposal. Proposal modifications offered in any other manner, oral or written, will not be considered.
- CIRM may modify the RFP prior to the date fixed for submission of proposals by posting the modified RFP on its website. If you are preparing a proposal, you should check the CIRM website for modifications to the RFP.
- CIRM will not consider more than one proposal from an individual, firm, partnership, corporation or association, under the same or different names.
- No oral understanding or agreement shall be binding on either party.

13. Public Release of Proposals

All documents submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of CIRM and will be regarded as public records under the California Public Records Act (Government Code Section 6250 et seq.) and subject to review by the public. Exhibit D to this RFP (Notice Regarding Public Release of Proposals) contains important details about the California Public Records Act and requirements for submitting any information in support of your proposal that you believe may legally be withheld from public disclosure. In order for your proposal to be considered, you must review and sign Exhibit D and return it to CIRM, along with your proposal.

Attachments:

Exhibit A: RFP Master Service Agreement

Exhibit B: Budget and Payment

Exhibit C: Terms and Conditions

Exhibit D: Notice Regarding Public Release of Proposals (signature required)

Exhibit E: STD 204, Payee Data Record