



The Library Trustee's RFP Cookbook

Recipes for Writing a Request that Works for You

Placework

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THE LIBRARY TRUSTEE'S RFP COOKBOOK
NHLTA CONFERENCE - 5.27.2026

Placework
ARCHITECTURE • PLANNING

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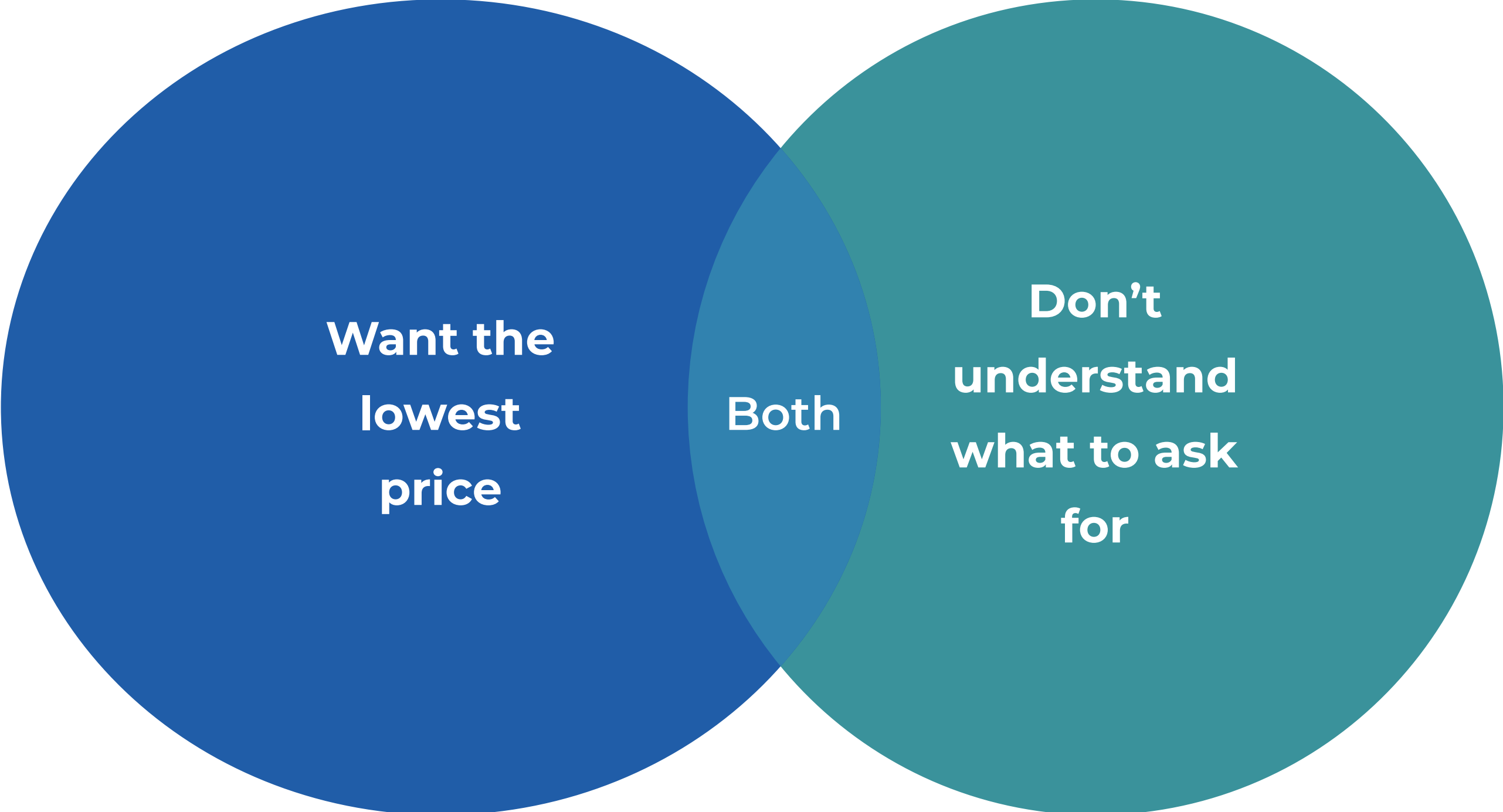
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When libraries send out design service RFPs,
they often...





REMEMBER:

proposal ≠ bid

the goal of any RFP process is to solicit multiple level proposals for evaluation in a systematic way. final scope can be negotiated

Disclaimer:

This presentation is intended to highlight best practices when soliciting professional design services, from the perspective of the design professional. Placework makes no representation of legal expertise or other specialized knowledge pertaining to public procurement requirements. We recommend consultation with relevant professionals when undertaking a procurement process.



what brings
you here
today?

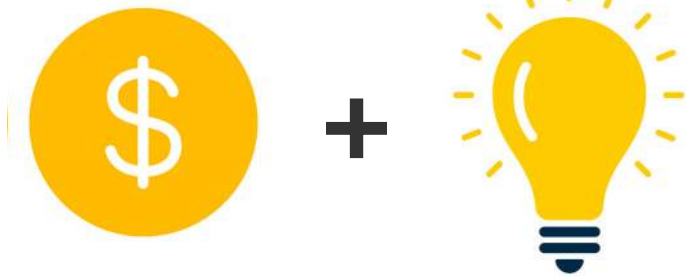




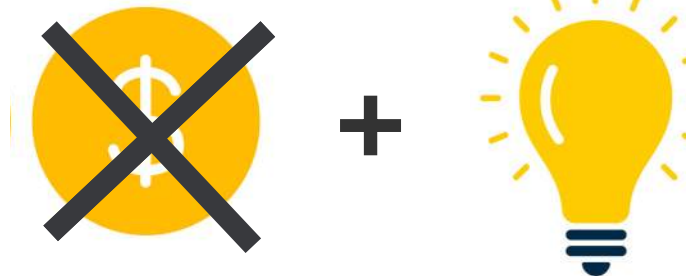
NUTRITION FACTS

WHAT IS A REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL?

When



Design → Build



**Clarify scope
to understand cost**



Create a concept

When



+



Design → Build

**Full Architectural
Services**

When



+



Clarify scope to
understand cost

Feasibility Study

When



+

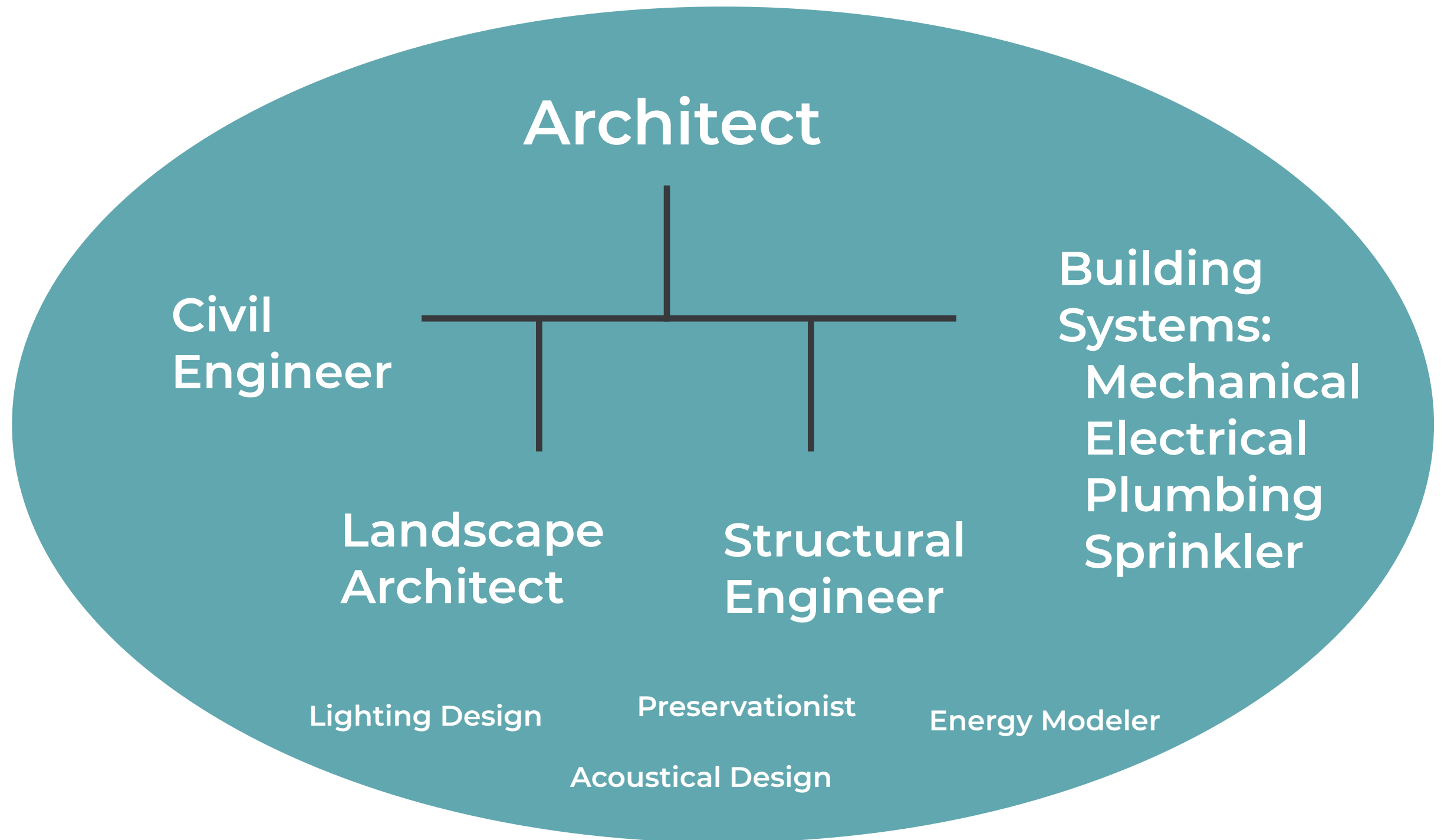


Create a concept

Concept Design

Who

Design Team



Why

COMPLIANCE

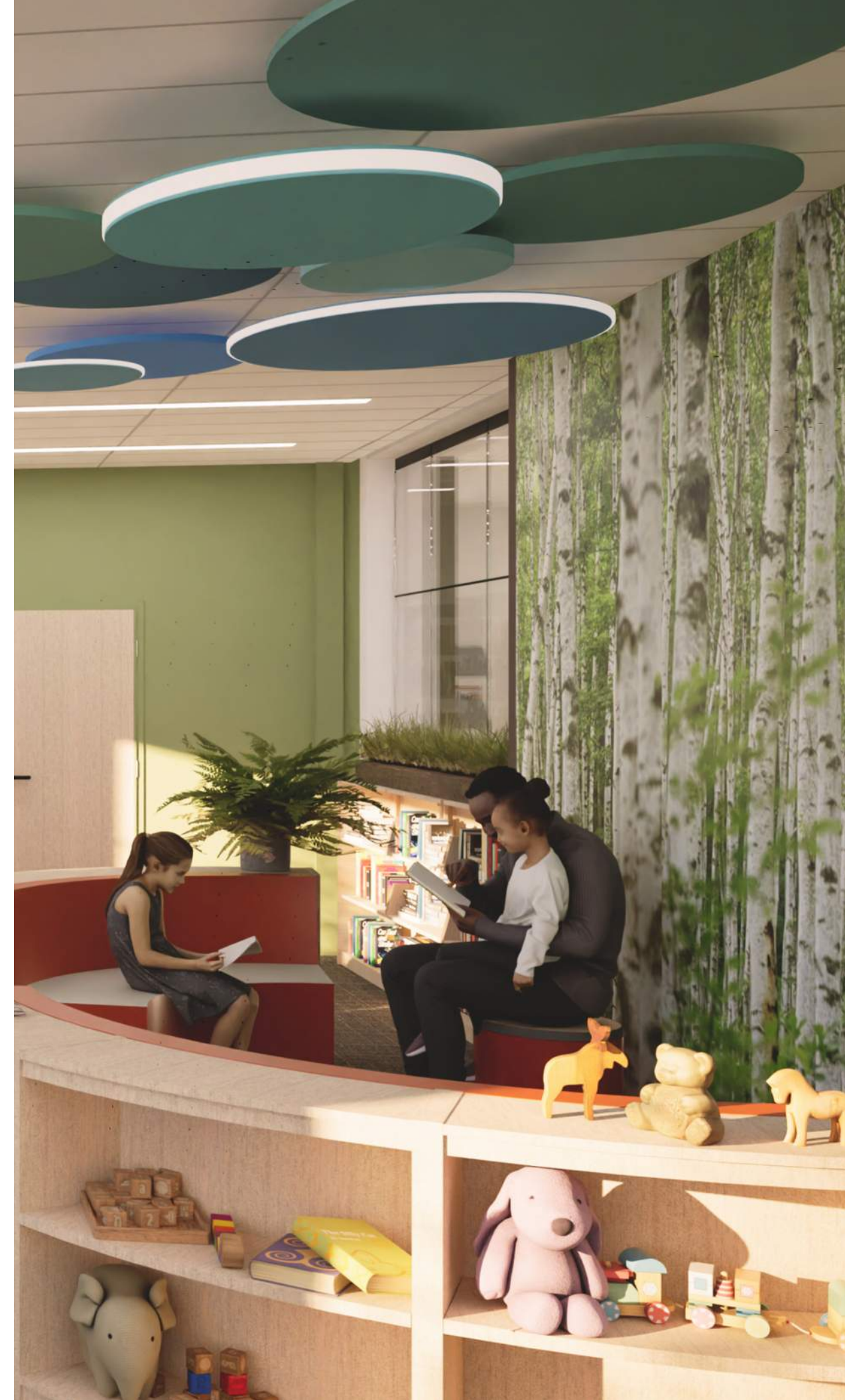
- * Building + Life Safety Code
- * ADA Accessibility

COST

- * Efficient Space Planning
- * Energy Efficiency
- * Material Durability
- * Climate Resilience

HEALTH

- * Healthy Materials
- * Air Quality
- * Biophilia



Why



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How

**RFP - Request for
Proposal**

vs.

**RFQ - Request for
Qualifications**

How

RFP - Request for Proposal

Fee for a well-defined, specific scope of work.

How

RFQ - Request for Qualifications

Information about
experience, ethos, and
references.

Fee to be negotiated.

Where?

Public Procurement

Limited Invitation

What?



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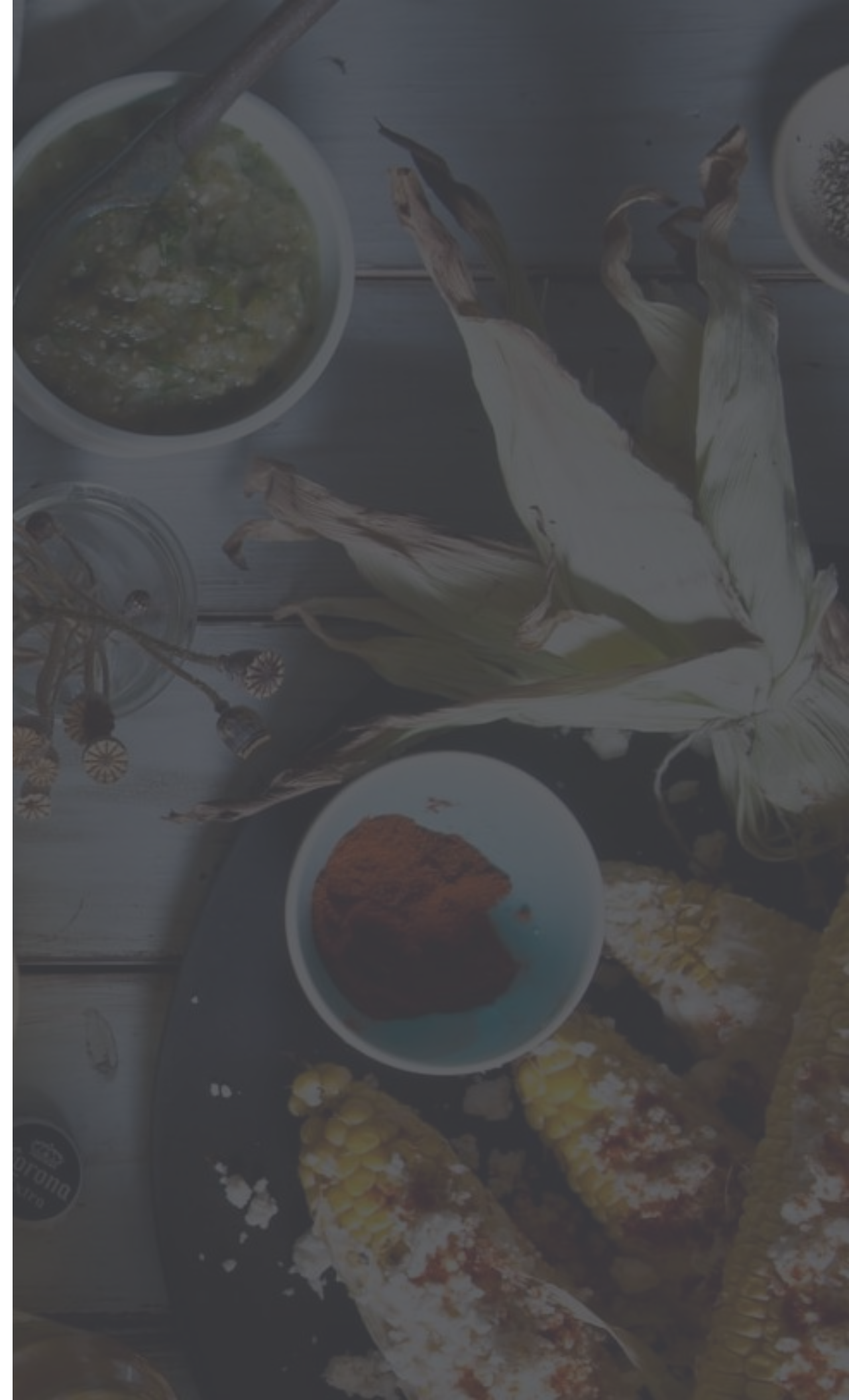
A top-down view of a wooden table set with various Mexican dishes. In the center is a large plate with white rice, a grilled chicken skewer, and a tortilla topped with salsa and cilantro. To the left is a bowl of fried tortilla chips. To the right is a bowl of green salsa and a bowl of red salsa. In the bottom right corner, there are several ears of corn on the cob. A Corona beer bottle is visible in the bottom center. The text "INGREDIENTS" is overlaid in the center, with "THE MAKINGS OF A SUCCESSFUL REQUEST" below it.

INGREDIENTS

THE MAKINGS OF A SUCCESSFUL REQUEST

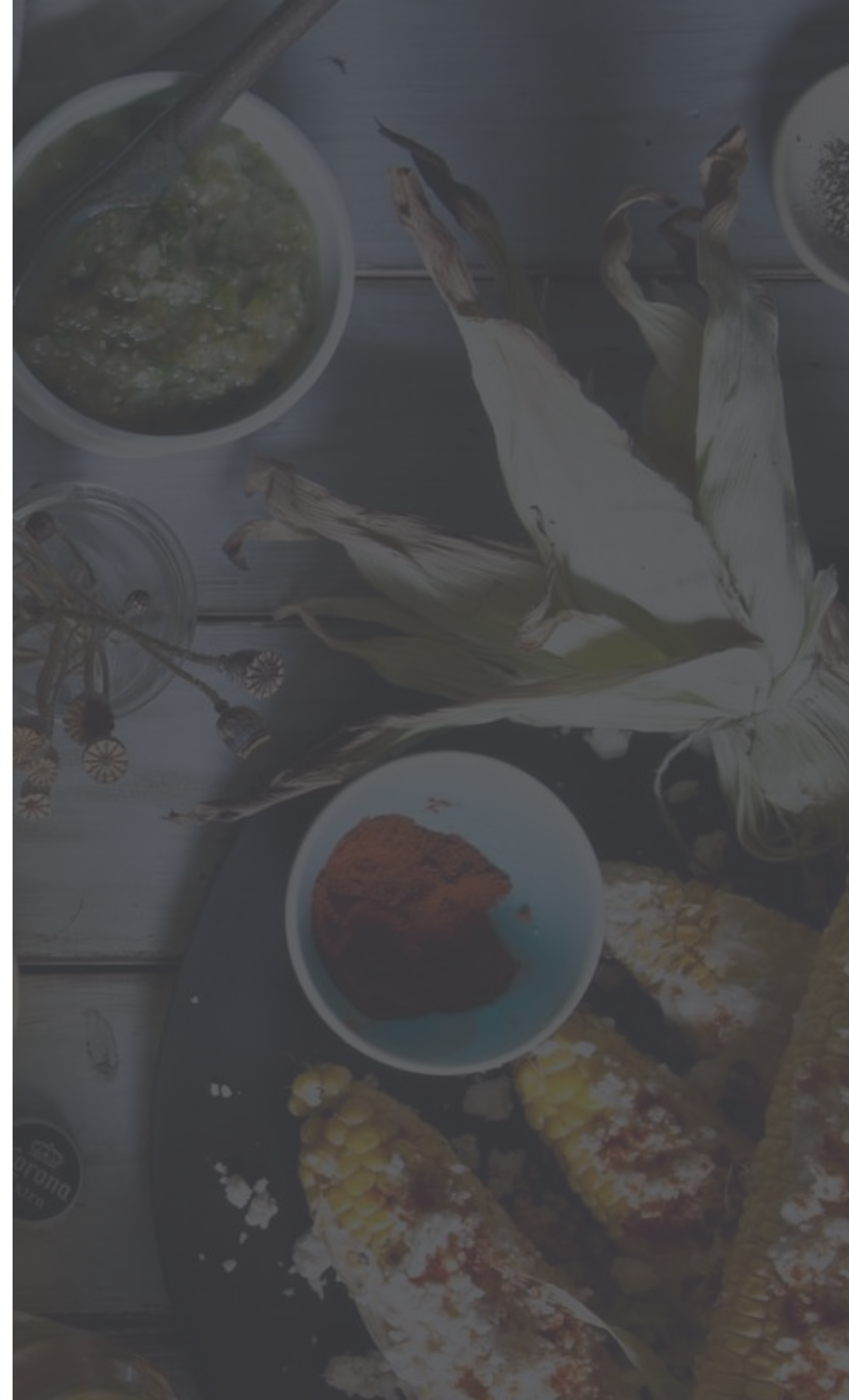
Overview

- Project summary
- History and prior efforts
- Goals of the request
- Identify key players



Scope & Goals

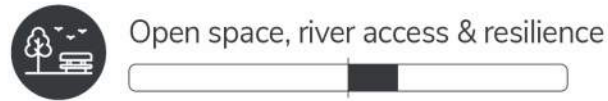
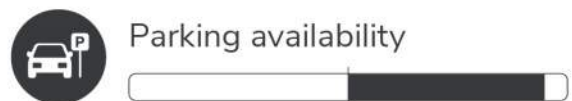
- Distinguish consultant scope vs. project scope
- Desired outcomes
- Project timeline
- The successful project will...



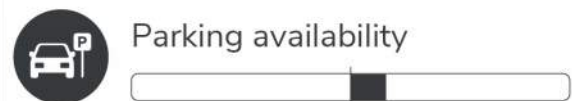


Public Projects

Parking Lot Repair

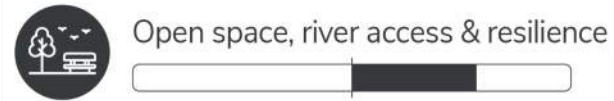
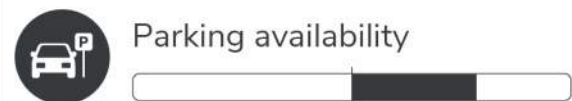


Riverfront Park

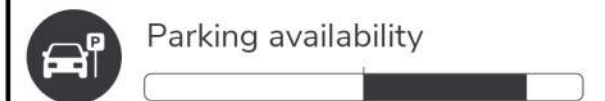


Public / Private Partnership

Intermediate Redevelopment

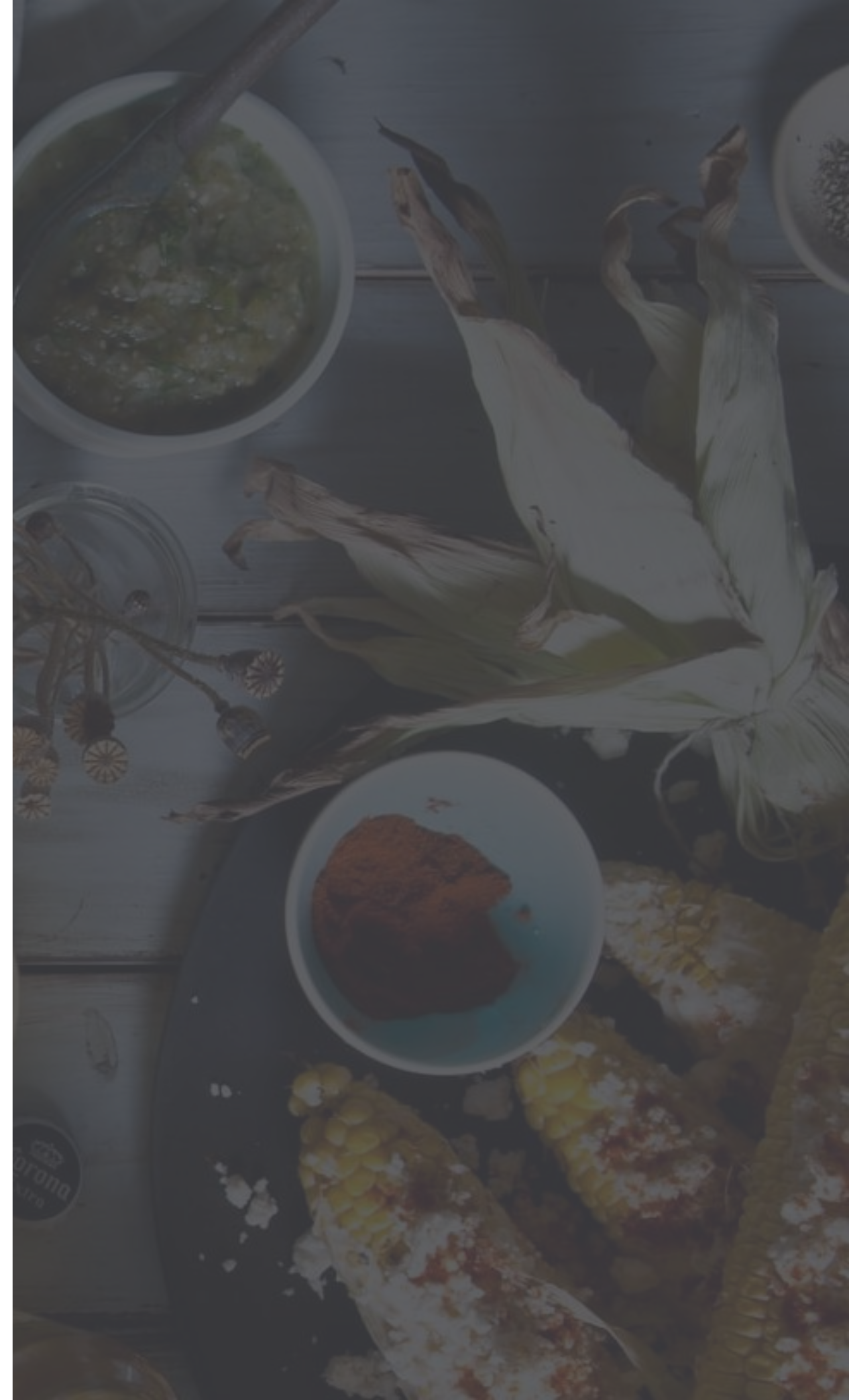


Full Redevelopment



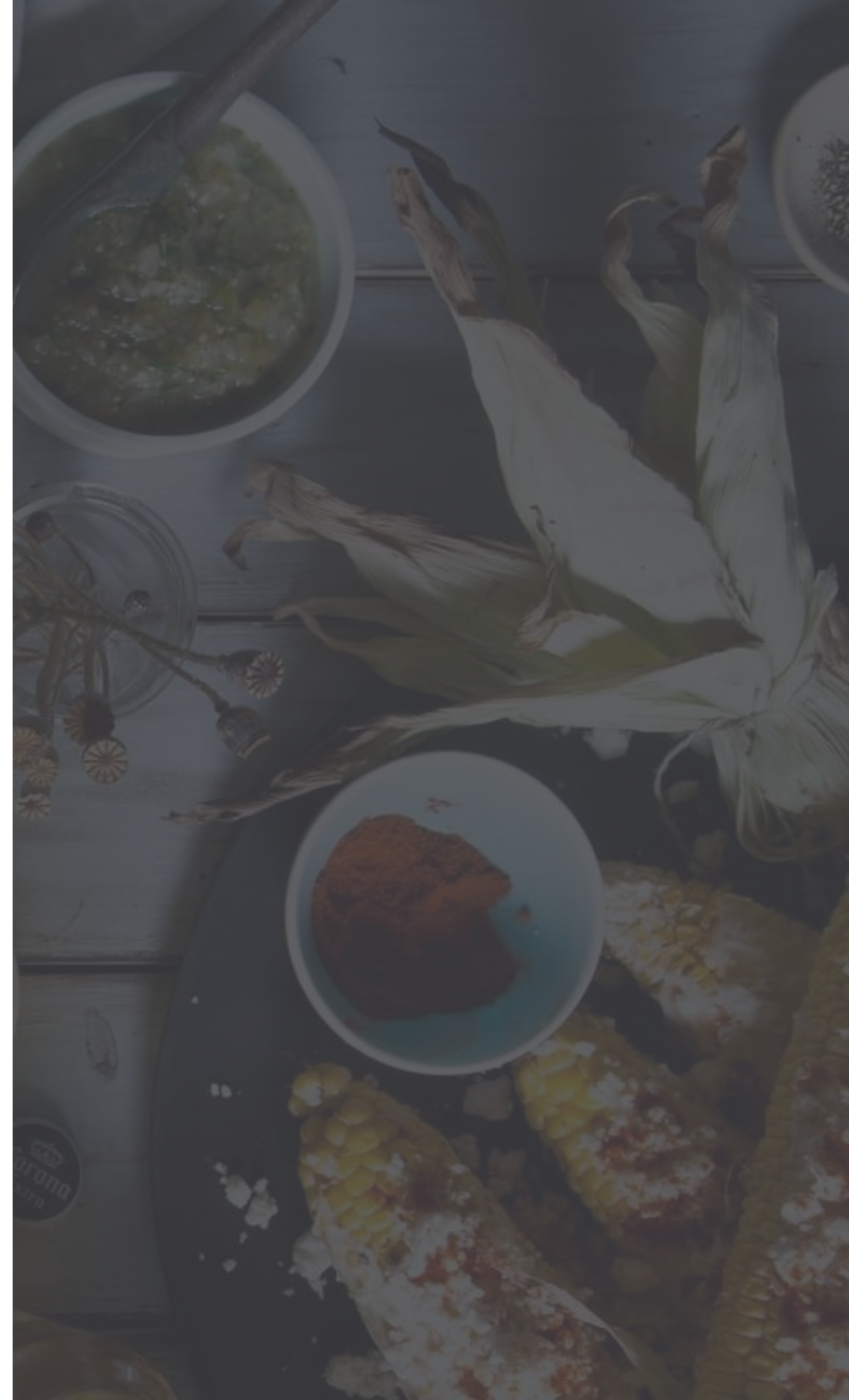
RFP Instructions

- Response procedures
- Selection timeline
- Response formatting
- Process for Q&A
- Include specific funding, approval or other deadlines



Budget

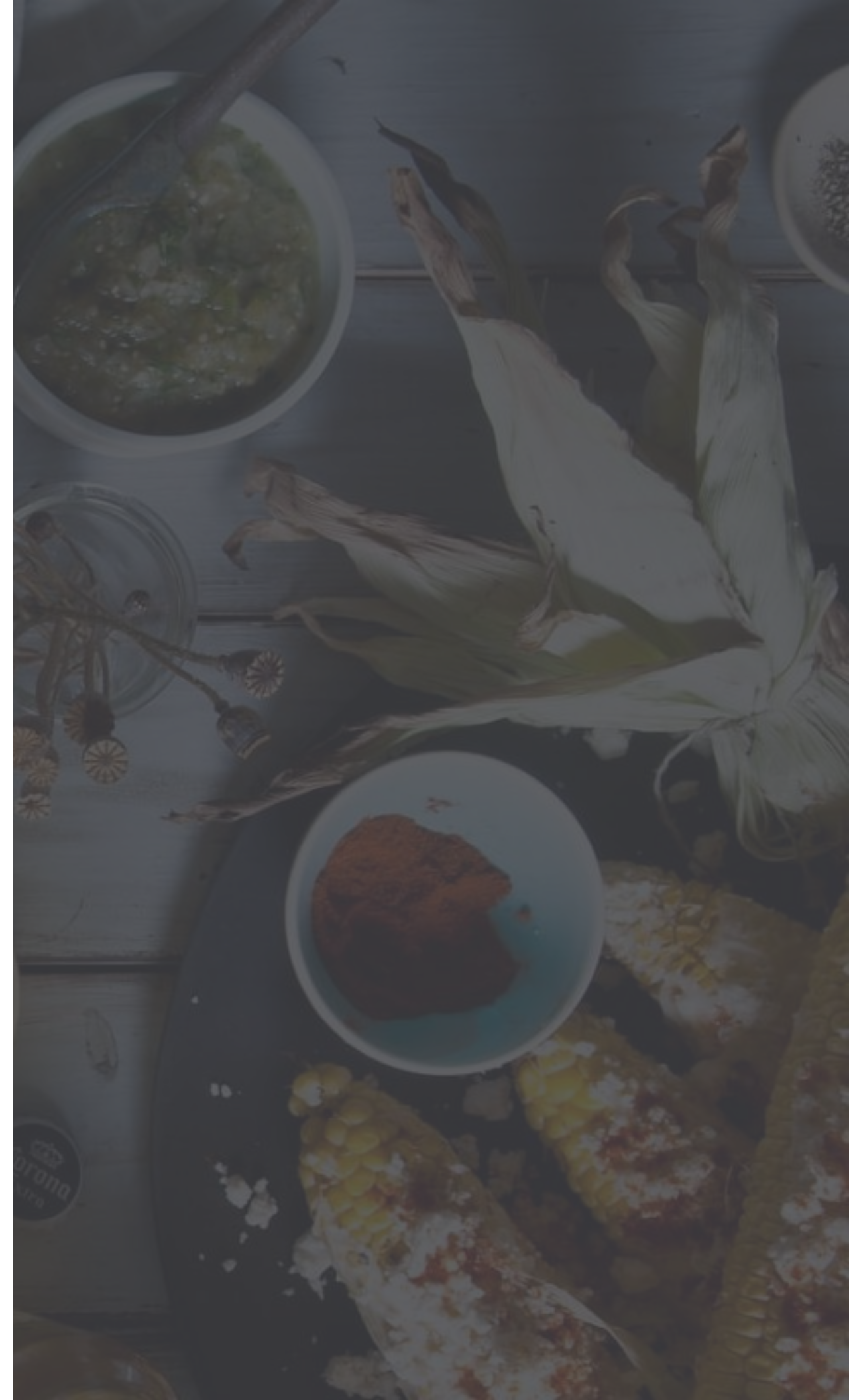
- Design budget
- Construction budget
- Clear expectations save time
- An RFP response is a *proposal*, not a bid





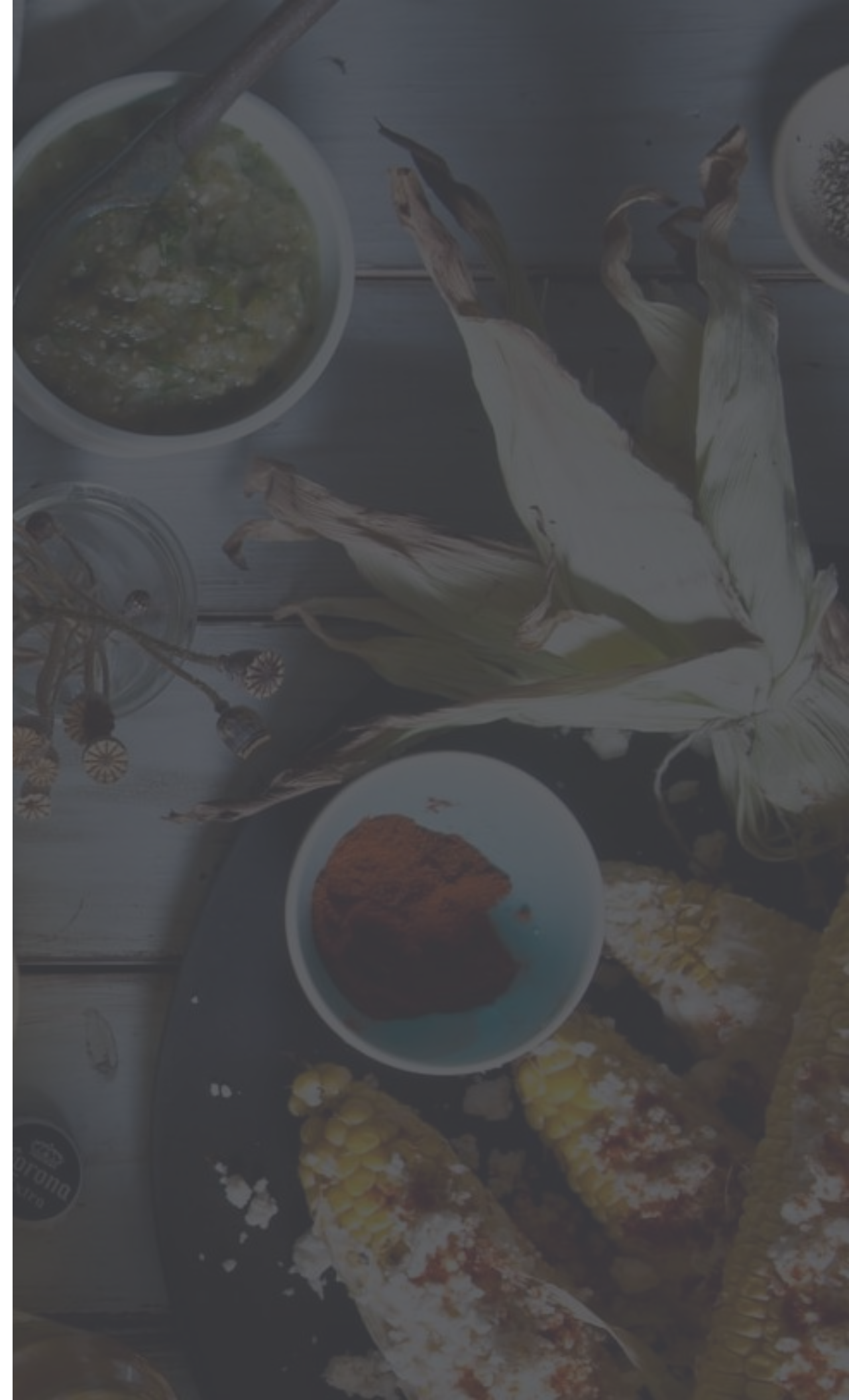
Submission Requirements

- Qualifications
 - Team
 - Experience
- Approach
 - Project understanding
 - Schedule
 - Scope of work
- Format, page limit
- Fee & assumptions



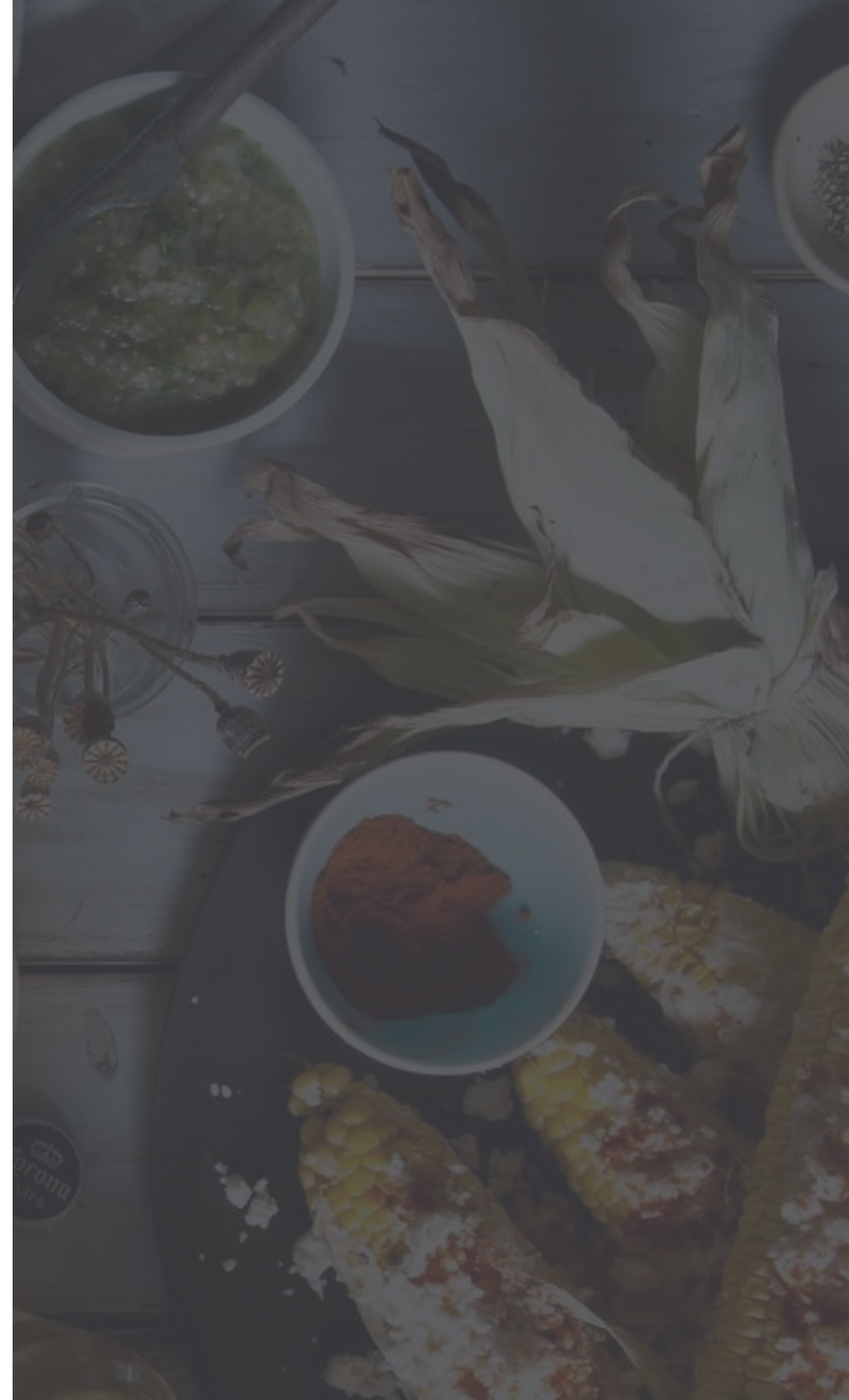
Evaluation Criteria

- Define any prescriptive scoring system
- Tie to submission requirements
- Disqualification criteria, if any
- The successful proposal will...



Contract Terms

- Form of agreement / contract
- Insurance requirements
- Pertinent terms and conditions





INSTRUCTIONS

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

1. Be clear and direct.
2. Define desired outcomes even if the project scope is unknown.
3. Avoid an overly prescriptive proposal structure.
4. Allow space (and time) for creativity in responses.
5. Share the budget!
6. Crib from past examples judiciously.
7. Remember that most professional services proposals are negotiable.
8. The RFP process will be indicative of the project process.

RESOURCES

American Library Association

> Library Technology Reports - RFP Topics

AIA Contracts

> AIA Contract Family for Professional Design Services

NH Municipal Association

Leverage Town / City Management Expertise

Using the Web / AI

> Always verify!

QUESTIONS



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Want to learn more?

