Native Seeds/SEARCH (NS/S) is a non-profit that conserves and promotes the food and farming traditions of the desert Southwest. Our collection of dryland open-pollinated seeds has cultural roots in over 50 indigenous and other communities. Specifically, the collection includes many varieties of corn, beans, squash, and other food and fiber plants traditionally grown by farmers of the Southwest. Each year we regenerate a portion of the seed collection for conservation needs and to distribute to the public.

Position Summary: The purpose of this consultancy is to assist NS/S in developing a strategy and plan to improve the health of corn varieties within the collection, specifically addressing issues of fusarium and inbreeding depression, and increase the quantity of healthy corn. The consultancy will require access to the NS/S database, CURATE, and the seedbank in order to assess and provide recommendations on priorities for the 600 corn accessions. The consultant will work directly with the Seedbank Collection Manager.

Outcome and Objective: The expected outcome is a strategy to improve the health and quantity of corn varieties and an actionable plan with recommendations and priority areas based on data from the NS/S Curate database.

Deliverables:

- An assessment of approximately 35 uncategorized corn accessions to correctly classify by race or type
- An assessment of the approximately 245 concerning corn varieties in the collection and creation of the following:
  - A list of accessions that might be combined to create new healthier accessions
  - A list of accessions that would require additional collections
  - A list of accessions that should be deaccessioned for health or population size reasons
  - A list prioritizing the accessions that need the most attention for health reasons
- A plan with field protocols on identifying and mitigating seed borne disease and inbreeding depression.
- Based on above assessments, a strategy prioritizing actions to improve the health of the corn collection, including recommendations for grow out strategies, including frequency and need for partners or acreage.
Native Seeds/SEARCH seeks to find, protect, and preserve the seeds of the people of the Greater Southwest so that these arid adapted crops may benefit all peoples and nourish a changing world.

**Desired qualifications:**

- Masters or PhD in plant genetics, plant breeding, or plant pathology, or equivalent experience
- Research experience with maize preferred
- Familiarity with SQL database
- Cultural sensitivity and knowledge of the diverse Southwest communities and cultures represented in the NS/S seedbank
- Familiarity with Southwest heritage crops and experience growing corn
- Detail oriented, organized and able to meet deadlines

**Timeline and application process:** Candidates should submit their CVs and a cover letter outlining their experience and how they propose to accomplish the stated objective. Additionally, candidates should include their daily rate based on previous and/or existing rates. We expect this work to be completed in 15 - 30 days. Applications are due by **December 31, 2021** and we hope this work will begin around the end of January 2022. Please submit applications to sjoy@nativeseeds.org