



Request for Proposals Technical Support for Quality Assurance Project Plan Coordination and Review

Issued: November 24, 2020

Respond By: 8 p.m. ET/5 p.m. PT on Friday, January 8, 2021

Contact: Suzanne Simon, National Estuary Program Coastal Watersheds Grant Program Director, ssimon@estuaries.org, (413) 695-8922

Purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP): Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) seeks a qualified environmental consultant to assist in coordination and technical review of Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) for grant recipients of the National Estuary Program Coastal Watersheds Grant Program. The goal of this contract is to ensure that grantees receive all necessary QAPP approvals for funded projects as expeditiously as possible, while maintaining full compliance with all relevant U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) QAPP requirements.

Notes to Prospective Bidders:

- This contract covers QAPP coordination and review only; the contractor is not responsible for QAPP development or submittal, which are the responsibility of grantees.
- RAE's selection of a contractor under this RFP will not preclude that contractor from separately contracting with grantees or partners, on work or projects funded.
- Where the contractor is hired by a grantee for QAPP development or other work, the contractor must maintain clear separation of billing, to ensure that this contract is not billed for work directly supporting the grantee.

Background:

The National Estuary Program (NEP) Coastal Watersheds Grant (CWG) Program is a newly created, nationally-competitive grants program designed to support projects that address urgent and challenging issues threatening the well-being of coastal and estuarine areas within determined estuaries of national significance. RAE will be administering the NEP CWG Program in cooperation with and funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) via Cooperative Agreement 83967501. RAE will establish and manage the subawards in compliance with 2 CFR 200.331 and the terms of EPA Cooperative Agreement 83967501.

RAE issued its 2020 CWG Grants RFP in May 2020, and a competitive application process is underway. We expect to complete the selection of proposals for funding by mid-December 2020, and to complete grant awards and contracts by January 31, 2021.

Grants are expected to range from \$75,000 to \$250,000. RAE expects to fund between five and fifteen projects. There will be additional rounds of grants awarded in the next few years, so a similar number of projects will be chosen again for each future round. Projects are expected to be quite diverse and all related to the improvement of estuarine conditions. The NEP CWG RFP contains additional details and is available [here](#).

In accordance with EPA rules, all funded projects that collect or utilize environmental data, water-quality models, or similar tools and information for decision-making will require approval of a QAPP by EPA headquarters prior to beginning work. Draft QAPPs must be submitted at least 60 days prior to beginning data collection or use in order to provide sufficient time for review.

RAE expects that most of the projects funded under the CWG Program will require development of a QAPP. **Grant recipients are individually responsible for development of approved QAPPs.** However, RAE will provide coordination and review to ensure that all CWG grants meet QAPP requirements, and that the process of QAPP development is timely, orderly, and efficient for EPA, grantees, and RAE. The contractor selected through this RFP will provide critical support to RAE in advising grantees in QAPP development, and in coordinating QAPP submittal and finalization by EPA Headquarters.

Prospective bidders should review information on the CWG Program, including the 2020 RFP, at <https://estuaries.org/initiatives/watershedgrants/>. EPA guidance on QAPP requirements is available at: www.epa.gov/quality/epa-qar-5-epa-requirements-quality-assurance-project-plans.

Period of Performance: The selected contractor will begin work on February 1, 2021 and should be able to devote significant resources to the work through early summer 2021, or upon approval of all necessary QAPPs. We do not expect significant work to be needed again until award of the 2021 grants round in fall 2021, at which point the contractor will again be expected to devote significant resources to this work. The period of performance for the entire contract is expected to be February 1, 2021 through January 31, 2023.

Future Grant Rounds / Contract Extension: This RFP covers the 2020 and 2021 grant rounds only. RAE may extend this contract to cover future grant rounds, by mutual agreement with the selected contractor and EPA at additional cost.

Bidder Qualifications: The selected contractor will demonstrate substantial experience developing and coordinating QAPPs for diverse environmental projects, and in securing approval of QAPPs by EPA Headquarters.

Scope of Work: Bidders should provide a proposed scope of work. RAE anticipates the scope of work to be similar to the following and bidders may modify this scope in developing proposals:

Task 1: Project Management: The selected contractor will participate in a virtual project kick-off meeting upon award of the contract and will communicate with RAE as needed throughout the project. The contractor will assist RAE in providing oversight and coordination of the development, submittal, and finalization of all grantee QAPPs, to ensure expeditious approval of QAPPs and full compliance with EPA requirements. The contractor should specify one point of contact to ensure efficient communications with RAE.

Task 2: Review Grantees' Full Proposals: Contractor will review the full project proposals selected for award of 2020 and 2021 in order to become familiar with the scope of projects requiring QAPPs.

Task 3: Develop QAPP Template: Develop draft and final templates for use by grantees and grantees' consultants in developing QAPPs. The variety of project types to be funded under this program limits our ability to have a "one size fits all" template; nevertheless the template should establish a reasonable consistency among grantees' QAPPs in order to expedite QAPP development and review.

Task 4: Consult with Grantees: The contractor should plan on at least one conference call or virtual meeting with all grantees to outline QAPP coordination, and at least one phone call with each grantee or grantee's consultant in order to discuss the approach to meeting QAPP requirements for each funded project.

Task 5: Review Grantee QAPPs: Contractor shall review each QAPP prepared under the 2020 and 2021 rounds and provide comments as necessary to grantees or grantees' consultants.

Task 6: Track Submittals and Approvals: Contractor shall maintain a shared list or spreadsheet with RAE in order to track submittal and approval of all QAPPs, and to allow RAE to stay informed regarding progress of all QAPPs under the program.

Task 7: Technical Support: Where needed, contractor will provide additional technical support to grantees and RAE to resolve outstanding issues and to facilitate approval by EPA headquarters. Toward this end, the contractor will communicate with grantees, grantees' consultants, and RAE as needed.

Budget: Initial budget not to exceed \$18,000 over the two-year period of the contract.

Cost Structure: Hourly on a not-to-exceed (NTE) basis. Contractor will provide cost estimates for all tasks in advance; RAE will approve NTE costs prior to task execution.

Contract Modifications: RAE reserves the right to modify or revise any aspect of this contract, by mutual agreement with the contractor; or to cancel uncompleted portions of the work with prior notice.

Selection Process and Criteria: RAE will select from among submitted proposals based on the following criteria:

- **25%: Firm and Personnel Qualifications** – Contractor demonstrates experience in development of QAPPs for diverse environmental projects in accordance with EPA guidelines.
- **25%: Technical Approach** – Contractor provides a straightforward, realistic, and efficient process for meeting RAE and CWG Program goals.
- **25% – Schedule, Availability, and Capacity** – Contractor presents an aggressive but realistic schedule to complete the work; demonstrates capacity to devote ample time and personnel during the key periods described previously.
- **25%: Best Value** – Contractor hourly rates and cost estimates provide RAE with an assurance of good value to complete the work.

Format of Proposals: Proposals should consist of a single PDF document of **no more than 10 pages** emailed to Suzanne Simon at ssimon@estuaries.org.

Content of the proposals should be as follows:

- 1. Firm Identification and Contact Information**
- 2. Firm and Personnel Qualifications:** Include experience of firm in similar projects; identify lead personnel for this work; and provide brief statement of qualifications.
- 3. Technical Proposal:** Outline process approach to work: scope, tasks, and deliverables.
- 4. Proposed Schedule and Statement of Capacity.**
- 5. Cost Estimate:** Estimate costs by year; include hourly rates, expected hourly breakdown by task, and any other anticipated costs.
- 6. References:** provide three recent client references, with telephone numbers and email addresses.
- 7. Procurement Preferences:** Whenever possible and reasonable, RAE will utilize goods or services that are “green” (recyclable, renewable, eco-friendly) and/or provided by minority-owned firms or women’s business enterprises. Please indicate whether or to what degree your firm meets these goals.

Please direct questions and responses to:

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