



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### *Evaluating Environmental, Economic, and Social Impacts of a Regenerative Agriculture Project*

#### OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified Applicant to assist in the independent evaluation of the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the [NFWF-Danone Holistic Soil Health Management project](#) funded through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program.

#### BACKGROUND

Within its portfolio of agricultural programs, NFWF provides funding for projects that accelerate the adoption of conservation practices on private working lands. Funded projects provide technical and financial assistance that help farmers enhance wildlife habitat, soil health, water quality, and carbon sequestration while providing important social and economic benefits to agricultural producers.

Danone North America partnered with NFWF and Sustainable Environmental Consultants to accelerate implementation of innovative soil health practices on farms within Danone's dairy supply chain and to evaluate the ecological and economic benefits of this effort. This effort aligns with Danone's ongoing commitment to develop and promote regenerative agriculture models that protect soil, empower farmers, and promote animal welfare.

In 2019, the NFWF-Danone Holistic Soil Health Management project received a \$3 million NRCS-CIG award. The project is collaborating with seven dairy farms and 20 partner farms in four states to design and implement soil health management systems over three years.

This contract will support an independent evaluation of the environmental, economic, and social impact of the practices implemented on participating farms. Applicant will use and expand the existing project datasets (e.g., conservation practices, soil sampling, economic return on investment) to:

- 1) Summarize the environmental outcomes and impact of the project across various metrics, including but not limited to: farm management changes and conservation practice adoption, soil carbon, nutrients, water quality, runoff, flooding, pest resilience, weather resilience, air quality, plant available water, groundwater recharge, infiltration rates, and biodiversity.
- 2) Assess the financial impact of the project with a Partial Budget Analysis and Economic Case Study that meets or exceeds [NRCS CIG requirements](#).
- 3) Analyze and summarize the social impact of the project for participating producers and the broader producer community.
- 4) Produce a final project report for a public, online audience and all necessary accompanying technical appendices.

#### SCOPE OF WORK

NFWF seeks a qualified Applicant to conduct an independent evaluation of the environmental, economic, and social impact of the practices implemented on farms participating in the Danone Holistic Soil Health Management project. The following tasks constitute the Scope of Work for this Request for Quotations. The selected Applicant will be expected to work on all five tasks described throughout the duration of the period of performance. The Applicant should anticipate check-in calls at least once a month with NFWF and other project partners throughout the duration of the project. One or more tasks may be added or removed from the Contract Scope of Work at NFWF's discretion based on the results of the initial tasks.



Please provide time and cost proposals for each task using the [Contractor Budget Template](#) provided. A not-to-exceed cost will be negotiated upon award with the selected Applicant.

**Task 1: NFWF coordination and project management**

- Kick-off meeting to discuss the CIG project and contract deliverables with NFWF, Danone, and other partners
- Monthly check-in calls with project partners for the duration of the contract. Additional check-in calls may be scheduled.

Deliverables: Notes from kick-off meeting with summary of needs for the CIG evaluation

Schedule: Kick-off meeting within two weeks of contract start date; check-in calls at least monthly thereafter

**Task 2: Soil and Environmental Assessment**

- Review existing field soil sampling and other environmental data stored in spreadsheets following the NRCS Soils and Field Operations Template ([available here](#) for the on-farm trial soil health demonstration projects) and other collected datasets.
- Analyze and draft a written summary of environmental outcomes and the impact of the project across various metrics, including but not limited to: farm management changes and conservation practice adoption, soil carbon, nutrients, water quality, runoff, flooding, pest resilience, weather resilience, air quality, plant available water, groundwater recharge, infiltration rates, and biodiversity.
- Incorporate feedback on drafts from NFWF, Danone, and other partners to create final drafts.

Deliverables: Soils and Environmental Assessment draft and final technical report to be included as an appendix to the CIG final project report.

Schedule: Completed by April 2024

**Task 3: Financial Assessment**

- Review existing project financial data stored in spreadsheets following the Field Operations Template from NRCS.
- Review an existing analysis of financial data (a Partial Budget Analysis and an Economic Case Study adhering to [NRCS standards](#)).
- Draft a written summary of the partial budget analysis and economic case study.
- Incorporate feedback on drafts from NFWF, Danone, and other partners to create final drafts.

Deliverables: Draft and final summary of the Partial Budget Analyses for all participating farms and a written summary of the Economic case study written as a technical report to be included as an appendix to the CIG final project report.

Schedule: Completed by December 2023

#### **Task 4: Social Assessment**

- Create a written summary of existing social data on why farmers participated, why management changes were adopted, and challenges and benefits of the changes. Generate summary profiles of types of participating producers.
- Describe the impact on the broader producer community, including feed-supplying partner farms and the impact of on-farm field days.
- Incorporate feedback on drafts from NFWF, Danone, and other partners to create final drafts.

Deliverables: Draft and final social assessment technical report to be included as an appendix to the CIG final project report.

Schedule: Completed by December 2023

#### **Task 5: Final Public Report**

- Use information from previous tasks to write and design layout for a four to ten page final public report. The report should adhere to NRCS [general CIG end of project guidance](#) and follow the NRCS CIG [final report template](#). Example final reports are available online [here](#) and [here](#).
- Incorporate photos, infographics, figures, and links to create compelling visuals for the public report. The final report must be a high-quality graphic design product.
- Incorporate feedback on drafts from NFWF, Danone, and other partners to create final drafts.

Deliverables: Draft and final public report.

Schedule: Completed by May 2024

These deliverables may be expanded or refined during the contract negotiation.

#### **MISCELLANEOUS**

- NFWF staff and project partners will provide Applicant with access to Excel spreadsheets with data on participating CIG farms and farmers, and other relevant information, as available.
- Applicant shall treat all such information as CONFIDENTIAL without express permission from NFWF to share, disclose, or otherwise utilize that information for purposes beyond this project.
- All data, code, models and other information developed during this project shall be the property of NFWF, Danone, and USDA-NRCS at the conclusion of this project unless express written communication from NFWF to the Applicant indicates otherwise.

#### **REQUIRED EXPERTISE**

The successful Applicant will have significant expertise in the following areas:

- Soil organic carbon measurement practices (analysis of field soil sample results)
- Analyzing conservation outcomes of on-farm conservation practice implementation
- Analyzing cumulative impacts of holistic regenerative agriculture management systems
- Evaluating financial and social benefits of conservation practice adoption
- Dairy operations and feed supply chains
- Report writing for technical and public audiences
- Graphic design and professional report production
- Familiarity with USDA NRCS programs; experience with Conservation Innovation Grants preferred
- Adhering to Contract timelines and budgets



## CRITERIA FOR COMPETITIVE APPLICATIONS

Proposals will be evaluated and scored on the following criteria. Applicant should organize their Work Plan Narratives (as part of the Technical Proposal, see below) based on these sections:

1. **Understanding of the Scope of Work.** This section must demonstrate an understanding of the goals of the activities involved under this Contract. It should describe an approach for communicating with NFWF and reporting on progress, results, and deliverables. Weight: 10%
2. **Technical Approach.** The proposed technical approach for: 1) understanding NFWF's needs for the reports, 2) assessing soil and other environmental outcomes, 3) assessing financial impact, 4) assessing social impact, and 5) completing the final report. This section should clearly describe the proposed methods and demonstrate that they are robust and appropriate for conducting the project and address any areas of complexity or uncertainty. Weight: 25%
3. **Qualifications of Proposed Personnel.** This section should clearly describe which tasks each member of the team will conduct and how their training and experience provide the requisite experience to do so successfully. Weight: 25%
4. **Applicant's Past Performance.** The proposal should include information on the primary investigator(s)'s past performance experience. List recent (last 2-5 years) accomplishments and previous services related to the technical expertise offered. If subcontractors are to be used, information should be provided that demonstrates their past performance as well. Describe how that past performance is applicable to this evaluation. Weight: 20%
5. **Budget.** The proposed budget should itemize work in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the entire funding request. Applicants must use the [Contractor Budget Template](#). Applicants may add columns to the template for additional tasks if needed, but should not make any other changes. Weight: 20%

## ELIGIBLE APPLICANT & CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, international organizations, local and state governments, and Tribal Nations. Small and minority businesses, and women's business enterprises are strongly encouraged to apply.

By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the Applicant warrants and represents that it does not currently have any apparent or actual conflict of interest, as described herein. In the event an Applicant currently has, will have during the life of the contemplated contract, or becomes aware of an apparent or actual conflict of interest, in the event an award is made, the Applicant must notify NFWF in writing in the proposal, or in subsequent correspondence (if the issue becomes known after the submission of the proposal) of such apparent or actual conflicts of interest, including organizational conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter which might place the Applicant, the Applicant's employees, or the Applicant's subcontractor in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests, or otherwise. Conflicts of interest may also include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect financial interests, close personal relationships, positions of trust in outside organizations, consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization, or decision-making affecting the award that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the Applicant, the Applicant's employees, or



the Applicant's future subcontractors in the matter. Upon receipt of such a notice, the NFWF Contracting Officer will determine if a conflict of interest exists and, if so, if there are any possible actions to be taken by the Applicant to reduce or resolve the conflict. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies NFWF may result in the proposal not being selected for award.

By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the Applicant warrants and represents that it is eligible for award of a Contract resulting from this solicitation and that it is not subject to any of the below circumstances:

Has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an Contract with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or

Was convicted (or had an officer or agent of such corporation acting on behalf of the corporation convicted) of a felony criminal violation under any Federal or State law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or

Is listed on the General Services Administration's, government-wide System for Award Management Exclusions (SAM Exclusions), in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 C.F.R Part 180 that implement E.O.s 12549 (3 C.F.R., 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 C.F.R., 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension," or intends to enter into any subaward, contract or other Contract using funds provided by NFWF with any party listed on the SAM Exclusions in accordance with Executive Orders 12549 and 12689. The SAM Exclusions instructions can be found here: <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>

### **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Proposals must be submitted under the same cover at the same time, in three distinctly labeled and separate documents: 1) Technical Proposal, 2) Budget, and 3) Evidence of Financial Stability.

Interested parties should submit proposals electronically to NFWF (Ernest Newborn, [ernest.newborn@nfwf.org](mailto:ernest.newborn@nfwf.org)) using the requirements below:

#### **1. Technical Proposal**

- Format: Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF with a font size no smaller than 11 pt. Note: The only section of the proposal that has a page limit is the work plan narrative (maximum of 6 pages).
- Contact information: Primary contact person, company name, address, phone, email, website, UEI number, and EIN/Taxpayer ID#.
- Work Plan Narrative: Concise (**6-page limit**) description of the work plan.



# NFWF

- **Past Experience:** Summarize Applicant’s expertise and experience. List recent (last 2–5 years) accomplishments and previous services related to the technical expertise offered.
  - **Biographies:** Resumes and/or Vitae of key staff and their role in the proposed work area.
  - **References:** List two clients who have received services from the applicant that is similar in nature to the proposed work; include names, phone numbers, and email address.
  - **Example:** Provide a report on a similar topic, embedded in the technical proposal or attached separately.
2. **Budget:** The budget proposal must be submitted using the following [NFWF budget template](#).
  3. **Evidence of Financial Stability:** The applicant shall provide proof of financial stability in the form of financial statements, credit ratings, a line of credit, or other financial arrangements sufficient to demonstrate the applicant’s capability to meet the requirements of this solicitation.

## SELECTION PROCEDURE

A panel of NFWF and Danone staff will review the proposals. Applicant may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of the award. Only one award will be made for this project. If multiple institutions are involved, they should be handled through subcontracts.

## SUBMISSION DEADLINES

**April 24, 2023** Deadline for questions about the solicitation to NFWF. Applicant should submit questions regarding this solicitation **via email to Ernest Newborn ([ernest.newborn@nfwf.org](mailto:ernest.newborn@nfwf.org))**. NFWF will post all the questions and responses to all questions so that all Applicant have access to them at the same time. In order to provide equitable responses, all questions must be sent to NFWF **no later than April 24, 2023, 5:00 PM ET**.

**April 26, 2023** NFWF will post the questions submitted regarding the solicitation and responses on the NFWF website [here](#).

**May 16, 2023** Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals. Proposals must be sent electronically as **an email attachment to Ernest Newborn ([ernest.newborn@nfwf.org](mailto:ernest.newborn@nfwf.org)) by May 16, 2023, 5:00 PM ET**. Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF.

**End of June 2023** Contract award to selected Applicant

**End of May 2024** Final deliverables due.  
Interim deliverables are due at the times specified in the Scope of Work.