



SOLICITATION

Contract to Provide Field Liaison Support in the Delaware River Watershed

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified Contractor to provide technical assistance as a “field liaison” to support applicants and grantees of the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund (DWCF) to restore the fish and wildlife habitats and water quality of the Delaware River and its tributaries. This support will help to advance the goals of the DWCF, increase the number and scale of qualified proposals to the program, and support the adaptive management of grantees in the face of project challenges. The contractor will provide support for one year (with the option to renew for up to one additional year) and report to Stephanie Heidbreder, Director of NFWF’s Delaware River Programs.

BACKGROUND

The Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund is a program that NFWF administers in partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). The purpose of the program is to conserve and restore natural areas, corridors and waterways on public and private lands that support native fish, wildlife and plants, and to contribute to the vitality of the communities in the Delaware River watershed. Priority strategies for on-the-ground implementation include sustaining and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat; improving and maintaining water quality for fish, wildlife and people; sustaining and enhancing water management to benefit fish and wildlife; and improving outdoor recreational opportunities within the Delaware River watershed.

There is a need for effective field support to assist potential grantees in developing proposals that are aligned with NFWF and USFWS’s priorities, to support best practices for grant implementation, and to help establish and nurture networks among grantees to facilitate shared learning. Offerors should highlight if they have a particular expertise in a certain region of the Delaware River Watershed or on particular aspects of conservation and restoration to strategically improve fish and wildlife habitat, grow partner capacity, build networks, and improve project efficiency and focus on a basin-wide scale.

QUALIFICATIONS

To assist in the successful implementation of the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund Program, this RFP is seeking one qualified organization or entity to serve as an independent contractor to NFWF with the following experience:

- Three to five years’ experience working directly to support conservation and restoration related programs or initiatives, and particular expertise in planning, designing, implementing, or evaluating projects that improve habitat for fish and wildlife and water quality is preferred.
- Specific expertise and demonstrated experience in the development and implementation of successful conservation and restoration projects, programs, and partnerships in the areas of watershed restoration, species and habitat conservation, climate resilience, and engagement of historically underserved communities in locally led environmental programming related to the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund program goals.

- Experience working in a variety of jurisdictions within the Delaware River Watershed advising federal, state, local, territorial, or Tribal government agencies.
- Specific experience working with or engaging diverse stakeholder groups, underserved communities, and/or Tribal communities especially as it pertains to capacity building.
- Specific experience providing technical support to organizations to develop project ideas and troubleshoot implementation barriers.
- Strong public speaking and meeting facilitation experience, including specific experience designing and implementing effective engagement and outreach approaches, convening practitioners, and translating complex information for a variety of audiences with different skill and competency levels.
- Understanding of federal grant requirements, including terms and conditions associated with federal funding sources.
- Strong project management skills, including the ability to flexibly manage and adapt to changing project needs.

SCOPE OF WORK

The purpose and estimated associated capacity needs of the contemplated contract are:

Task 1 (25% of time*): Identify and grow opportunities for new DWCF applicants – Conduct outreach to key stakeholder groups and assist potential applicants in priority geographies to help them understand NFWF funding priorities, develop restoration project concepts, identify potential partnerships, and identify funding opportunities for matching funds. Support outreach to new and existing grantees to help them advance next phases of pipeline projects for future grant cycles. Assist prospective applicants and current NFWF grantees in establishing, strengthening, and sustaining projects and regional-scale partnerships and collaborative approaches to advance NFWF’s [Delaware River Watershed Business Plan](#), [Delaware River Basin Restoration Program Framework](#), and other relevant watershed or regional plans and initiatives including but not limited to: [USFWS Standards of Excellence](#); [TNC’s Delaware River Basin Restoration Roadmap](#).

Task 2 (25% of time*): Troubleshoot challenges with applicants and grantees – Provide technical assistance to applicants and grantees to help them troubleshoot potential challenges with project design and implementation (e.g., provide technical assistance and guidance on the development of project ideas, budgets, and application materials; support onboarding of new grantees to NFWF grant management systems and requirements, etc.). Assist grantees in accessing technical support to meet program requirements for outcome tracking and federal compliance.

Task 3: (15% of time*) Support DWCF Proposal Review – Assist in reviewing select grant proposals for annual funding opportunities. Written review is anticipated for approximately 20-25 proposals (~10 pages, not including attachments, such as engineering and design documents) per year.

Task 4 (25% of time*): Conduct Site Visits - Occasionally conduct post-award site visits to troubleshoot potential challenges with project implementation; conduct pre-project monitoring assessments; and collect photo documentation. Connect with grantees regarding post-project monitoring assessments; obtain lessons learned or NFWF program feedback; provide guidance regarding projects’ long-term maintenance and stewardship plans, and scope potential next phases of projects with grantees.

Task 5: (10% of time*) Promote peer-learning and regional-scale collaboration – Assist prospective applicants and current NFWF grantees in establishing, strengthening, and sustaining regional partnerships and collaborative approaches to advance NFWF and USFWS’ goals under the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund. Facilitate peer-to-peer learning and collaborative initiatives among applicants, grantees and other partners through workshops, webinars and through other priority conferences and events. Support efforts to distill lessons learned and capture success stories from previous grants by reviewing project reports and assessments, engaging grantees, conducting site visits, and summarizing project case studies or other products, among other activities.

**Estimated level of effort needs, subject to change prior to contracting*

Deliverables –

- Verbal progress reports through regular meetings with program staff
- Quarterly reports on outreach, engagement, and oversight activities
- Final report summarizing lessons learned at contract completion
- Comprehensive written reviews of grant proposals during the review period

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

CRITERIA FOR COMPETITIVE APPLICATIONS

Proposals will be evaluated and scored on the following criteria. Offerors should organize their Statement based on these sections:

1. **Understanding of the Scope of Work.** A statement of **no more than one page** demonstrating an understanding of the challenges faced by the program with which the offeror purports to work, including a comprehension of the geography, communities, partners, and their dynamics. This section should include a description of how you will communicate with NFWF and program stakeholders and report on progress, results, and deliverables. Weight: 25%
2. **Technical Approach.** The proposed technical approach of **no more than one page** should clearly describe a proposed technical approach for facilitating the success of grant investments and overall program strategy and improvement. Weight: 25%
3. **Qualifications of Proposed Personnel.** The section should clearly describe which evaluation tasks each member of the team will conduct and how their training and experience provide the requisite experience to do so successfully. Resumes and/or Vitae of the principal investigator(s), including any subcontractors, describing relevant professional experience in the following areas: (a) experience working with federal, state, and local governmental agencies, national and local NGOs involved with conservation; (b) any experience with Foundations and grants management; (c) experience working with or engaging diverse stakeholder groups, underserved communities, and/or Tribal communities (d) experience working directly to support conservation and restoration related programs or initiatives, and particular expertise in planning, designing, implementing, or evaluating projects that improve water quality, and habitat for fish and wildlife. There is **no page limit** associated with this element of the Statement of Qualifications. Weight: 20%

4. **Contractor's Past Performance.** The Statement of Qualifications should identify at least three past engagements conducting similar work for NFWF or other organizations, identifying the offeror's quality of work, timeliness, and cost control. The statement should also include communication experience writing reports, conducting webinars, and delivering presentations to different types of audiences. The cumulative statement of past performances **should not exceed 1 page**. The Statement should include names, email addresses, and telephone numbers of points of contact for the referenced engagements. If the offeror anticipates retaining subcontractors for this task, information should be provided that demonstrates their past performance as well. Weight: 15%
5. **Budget.** The proposed budget should itemize work in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the entire funding request. You must use the linked [Contractor Budget Template](#). You may add columns to the template for additional tasks if needed but should not make any other changes. Please include the proposed budget for equipment purchase in the proposal separate from the Contractor Budget Template. Weight: 15%

ELIGIBLE OFFERORS & CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

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

By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the offeror warrants and represents that it does not currently have any apparent or actual conflict of interest, as described herein. In the event an offeror 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 offeror 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 contractor, the contractor's employees, or the contractor's subcontractors 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 offeror, the offeror's employees, or the offeror'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 offeror 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 Offeror 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 (Erin Lewis, erin.lewis@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.
- Contact information: Primary contact person, company name, address, phone, email, website, DUNS number, and EIN/Taxpayer ID#.
- Narrative: Concise description of the understanding of the scope of work, technical approach, and a summary of the 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 three clients who have received services from the applicant that are similar in nature to the proposed work; include names, phone numbers, and email address.

2. Budget: The budget proposal must be submitted using the following NFWF [Contractor Budget Template](#).

3. Evidence of Financial Stability: The applicant shall provide with the RFP response, 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 RFP.



SELECTION PROCEDURE

A panel of NFWF and USFWS staff will review the full proposals. Offerors 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 sub-awards and sub-contracts.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

- September 25, 2023** Request for Proposals (RFP) released. Q&A period begins. All questions of general interest will be answered publicly and must be received by October 6, 2023.
- October 6, 2023** Deadline for questions about the solicitation to NFWF. Offerors should submit questions regarding this solicitation via email to Erin Lewis (Erin.Lewis@nfwf.org). NFWF will post all the questions and responses to all questions so that all offerors have access to them at the same time. In order to provide equitable responses, all questions must be received by NFWF **no later than 5:00 PM on October 6, 2023**.
- October 11, 2023** NFWF will post the questions submitted regarding the solicitation and responses on the NFWF website.
- November 22, 2023** Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals. Proposals must be received electronically as an email attachment to Erin Lewis (Erin.Lewis@nfwf.org) by 5:00PM on November 22, 2023. Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF with a font size no smaller than 11pt.
- December 19, 2023** NFWF will notify all RFP offerors of their status and select offerors will be either invited to interview or to complete a scope of work.
- January 2, 2024** Contractors' anticipated start date