

Request for Proposals

Laboratory Measurements of Soil Samples

Overview

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified contractor to perform laboratory analyses of soil samples pulled from fields that were enrolled and cover cropped as part the [Farmers for Soil Health \(FSH\)](#) program, a USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart project (Award NR233A750004G003).

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.

In 2023, NFWF received a \$95 million award from USDA under the Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities program. Administered by NFWF, Farmers for Soil Health is a farmer-led partnership of the Soy Checkoff, Pork Checkoff, and National Corn Growers Association. Farmers for Soil Health aims to accelerate long-term cover crop adoption by providing financial incentives and developing a marketplace platform that quantifies, verifies, and facilitates the sale of ecosystem benefits. In its targeted 20-state geography¹, FSH supports and expands technical assistance, enrollment, and education programs.

In addition to driving cover crop implementation, FSH is committed to analyzing the associated environmental benefits. NFWF is simultaneously seeking a soil sampling contractor to sample cropland soils in enrolled fields across the 20-state Farmers for Soil Health project geography. The selected contractor will collect samples from 600-800 sampling locations² in Spring 2025 after enrollees' first year of cover cropping. The selected contractor will resample these same 600-800 locations using GPS coordinates in Spring 2027, after three consecutive years of cover cropping. At each sampling location, five individual samples will be collected:

- Two bulk density samples collected using a 7.5 cm-diameter core (0-15 cm and 15-30 cm depths)
- Two soil health and carbon samples collected as composites using a push probe (0-15 cm and 15-30 cm depths), following Soil Health Institute's [Sampling SOP](#)
- One composite sample of intact aggregates collected [via shovel slices](#) (1 sample at 0-7.5 cm depth)

The soil sampling contractor will ship samples to the laboratory analysis contractor in batches, ensuring the integrity of the samples prior to and during shipping. Delivery of laboratory analysis results for each batch would be expected within one month of receipt of samples.

¹ The following 20 states are eligible to participate in the Farmers for Soil Health Climate Smart Commodities Partnership: Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

² We anticipate that there will be 600-800 sampling locations distributed across 300-400 fields.

Request

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation requests proposals to perform laboratory analyses on soil samples, providing reports on the following metrics³:

1. Total carbon and nitrogen via [dry combustion](#);
2. Inorganic carbon on select samples via [modified pressure calcimeter](#);
3. Aggregate stability via [slaking image analysis](#);
4. 24-hour carbon mineralization potential via [alkaline trap or gas analysis](#);
5. Oven-dry weight of samples for calculation of bulk density (680 cm³ core volume);
6. Particle size analysis via [hydrometer with wet sieved sands](#); and
7. Soil pH via 1:1 soil-water slurry.

Samples will be shipped in batches as collected, and data delivery for each batch would be expected within one month of receipt of samples.

Criteria for Competitive Applications

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 soil sampling analysis. The proposal must specifically address the following:
 - a. Detailed steps, timeline, and budget for each of the items above.
 - b. Use of QR codes for sample tracking.
 - c. Example .xlsx or .csv data delivery file.
 - d. Expenses related to processing soils from Fire Ant Quarantine Zones if located in a non-quarantined location.
 - e. Documentation of current APHIS permits if not located in USDA Fire And Quarantine Zone.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 [Contract 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.

³ Laboratory contractors should refer to [Soil Health Institute's Standard Measurement Methods](#) for additional detail.

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

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), including "FSH Soil Lab Proposal" in the subject line, using the requirements

below:

1. **Technical Proposal**
 - a. **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).
 - b. **Contact Information:** Primary contact person, company name, address, phone, email, website, UEI number, and EIN/Taxpayer ID#.
 - c. **Work Plan Narrative:** Concise (**6-page limit**) description of work plan.
 - d. **Past Experience:** Summarize Applicant’s expertise and experience. List recent (last 2-5 years) accomplishments and previous services related to the technical expertise offered.
 - e. **Biographies:** Resumes and/or Vitae of key staff and their role in the proposed work are.
 - f. **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 addresses.
 - g. **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 Farmers for Soil Health partners 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

August 9, 2024	Deadline for questions about solicitation to NFWF. Applicant should submit questions regarding this solicitation via email to Ernest Newborn (ernest.newborn@nfwf.org). NFWF will post all the questions and responses to all questions so that all Applicants have access to them at the same time. In order to provide equitable responses, all questions must be sent to NFWF no later than August 9, 2024.
August 14, 2024	NFWF will post the questions submitted regarding the solicitation and responses on the NFWF website here.
September 4, 2024	Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals. Proposals must be sent electronically as an email attachment to Ernest Newborn (ernest.newborn@nfwf.org) by September 4, 2024, 5:00 PM ET. Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF.
Late September – Early October	NFWF will interview finalists to gather additional information.
Early November 2024	Contract award to selected Applicant

