



NFWF



## **REQUEST FOR QUOTES: FACILITATOR FOR PROFESSIONAL MEETING ON SEISMIC AIRGUN ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGIES**

### **OVERVIEW**

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified facilitator to support NFWF and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) staff in preparing for and hosting an in-person or virtual/hybrid meeting. This meeting will likely occur either in Houston, Texas, or Washington, D.C. in Summer/Fall 2025. The purpose of this meeting is to pull together federal agencies and industry with aligned interests on alternative imaging technologies compared to seismic airguns. A facilitator will assist with the preparation for this meeting by conducting interviews with relevant parties, preparing an agenda, coordinating accommodations for the meeting, and facilitating the meeting.

### **MEETING PURPOSE AND OVERALL GOAL**

The NOAA Fisheries Noise Project Management Team (PMT) aims to understand how investments from Deepwater Horizon (DWH) settlement funds could best lead to increased use of alternative imaging technologies compared to seismic airguns in U.S. waters.

The overall goal of this meeting is to convene industry and federal representatives to discuss proposed processes for incorporating new technologies that may be less impactful to marine life compared to seismic airguns into permitting and operations, and how available DWH funding might be applied to bolster, catalyze and/or inform these efforts.

### **BACKGROUND**

This DWH restoration project focuses on working with industry to implement voluntary actions to reduce the impacts of anthropogenic sound on marine mammals in the Gulf. As a first step, the PMT contracted a team of scientists to conduct a risk assessment for the Gulf. The team engaged industry on potential actions that could be tested through pilot studies that would be both impactful and of interest to industry. Through this process, a pilot study with the seismic industry was proposed to promote characterization/sound source verification (SSV) of alternative technologies to promote uptake and use in the Gulf. However, upon initial conversations aimed at implementation, the PMT learned there were other limiting factors to adoption beyond acoustic data availability.

The PMT has learned:

- SSV reports on alternative seismic technologies are available, but it is unclear how this information is being used by the regulatory agencies. Before supporting more SSV reports, the PMT needs to understand the purpose of these reports and how they are incorporated into the federal process. If existing SSV reports are currently insufficient for assessment, the additional necessary testing, results, and required reporting format should be specified.
- Conversations within NOAA indicate that necessary verification data may be available but the modeling of these data for a greater understanding of relative impacts to marine mammals is the limiting factor. NOAA has identified personnel who could conduct initial

sound field modeling to help understand if any gaps remain. This is a potential pre-meeting product.

- Conversations with industry indicate that the permitting process may be a limiting factor for uptake of using alternative seismic sources. For example, alternative technologies are not evaluated for their specific impact but must instead rely on standard airgun ‘modeled impact’ for Letters of Authorization (LOAs).
- The New and Unusual Technology (NUT) permit process provides a pathway for getting initial approval of alternative technologies. The institutionalization and formalization of the permit process for a survey which incorporates a NUT, or for moving a NUT to an approved technology list, has previously been limited. Establishing a strawman for this process and outlining the potential benefits of having an ‘approved’ technology through this process is a potential meeting objective.
- Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and NOAA recently developed a process for evaluating acoustic sources including NUTs into tiers based on level of impact to marine life as in Ruppel *et al.*, 2022. Industry has requested further work on this process to outline the tiering of sources and to include incentives for lower impact acoustic sources.
- There is momentum around the idea of having a clearly communicated, standardized and transparent process for assessing alternative technologies. This meeting would be the first attempt to bring all parties together to have candid conversations about where all parties hope this streamlining effort will lead, what the expectations and possibilities are once this is established, and what beyond this standardization of the process may be needed to achieve shared goals of increasing alternative seismic technology use in US waters.

## **MEETING OBJECTIVES**

1. Shared understanding of the current standard and NUT permitting process from the perspectives of BOEM/NOAA/Industry including how it works, perceived incentives and disincentives for alternative seismic technologies, federal requirements for the permitting process and opportunities to work within it, and information these permits do and do not provide on impacts to protected species (e.g., marine mammals) and their habitats.
2. Explore new elements or changes to the permit processes outlined in #1 to reduce or remove identified barriers.
3. Socialize a straw-man process/criteria established by BOEM and NOAA Fisheries as the first draft in this effort to provide a more clearly communicated, standardized process and to understand and incentivize moving a NUT to an Approved Technology. Gain industry feedback on the straw-man and discuss possible adjustments to further address known barriers to alternative seismic technology use in the Gulf of Mexico. Identify gaps/barriers to successful implementation of this process.
4. Discuss where the DWH pilot could have the greatest impact in this space. Examine what was originally proposed and evaluate the potential benefits of that approach or viable alternative pilots that could reach the same overall goal. Are there required gaps identified that need to be filled? Barriers that could be removed? Is there a particular timing element or milestone of the above process that would impact success?

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

The purpose of the contemplated contract is to:

- Conduct pre-meeting work as necessary, including but not limited to interviews with relevant industry, federal, or other partners, researching seismic airguns and alternative technologies, and developing an understanding of their various nuances.
- Help to identify target or relevant individuals that should participate in this meeting.
- Coordinate the meeting logistics, including reserving a meeting space, reserving hotel rooms for overnight guests, coordinating refreshments or catering, etc.
- Create an agenda suited to meet the objectives outlined above.
- Facilitate a one or two-day in-person or virtual/hybrid meeting that convenes relevant stakeholders. Oversee discussions in a way that successfully works towards the objectives outlined above.
- Develop a brief meeting report that outlines key decisions and outcomes.

## SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals must be submitted under the same cover at the same time, in seven distinct and separate documents: 1) Contact Information, 2) Understanding of the Scope of Work, 3) Technical Approach, 4) Qualifications of Proposed Personnel, 5) Record of Past Performance/References, 6) Proposed Budget, and 7) Evidence of Financial Stability.

Email a Word or PDF version of your submission to Nora Ong ([nora.ong@nfwf.org](mailto:nora.ong@nfwf.org)). In the subject line, please indicate “Response to RFQ for Seismic Workshop Facilitator – [name of respondent].” Submissions must be single-spaced with a minimum 11-point font, and not to exceed the indicated page or word limits. Offerors should organize their Statement based on these sections:

1. **Contact Information:** Provide a Primary Contact Person, Entity Name, Address, Phone, E-mail, Website, and EIN or SSN.
2. **Understanding of the Scope of Work:** A statement of no more than one page demonstrating an understanding of the challenges faced and the overall objectives of the meeting. This section should include a description of how you will communicate with NFWF and program stakeholders and report on progress, results, and deliverables. Weight: 10%.
3. **Technical Approach:** A description of no more than one page of a proposed technical approach for facilitating the successful preparation and hosting of this meeting, especially in terms of the desired outcomes. Weight: 20%.
4. **Qualifications of Proposed Personnel:** Resumes or CVs of the principal investigator(s), including any subcontractors. 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: 20%.
5. **Record of Past Performance/References:** Identify at least two past clients who have received services that are similar in nature to the proposed work. Include their Names, Phone numbers and E-mail addresses. Weight: 20%.
6. **Proposed Budget:** The cost proposal must be submitted using the appropriate budget template below. The budget should be cost-effective and should maximize the value for funds requested in the offeror’s budget. The proposed budget should itemize work in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the entire funding request. Please break various tasks into separate line items. Profit/profit margin must be separately itemized in the budget. Weight: 30%.
  - a. **Quotes Greater than \$150,000**

b. **Quotes Less than \$150,000**

7. **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.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

- Meeting preparation and facilitation experience: previous experience in both helping a steering committee prepare for and facilitating workshops or similar meetings. Reviewers will be looking for a clear method for approaching participant invitations and establishing an agenda to meet objectives.
- Subject matter expertise: preference for experience with and understanding of oil and gas and seismic industries in the Gulf of Mexico, BOEM and NOAA mission and operations in the Gulf of Mexico and on underwater radiated noise. Direct experience with seismic and/or underwater noise reduction in other parts of the U.S. would also be of interest to reviewers.
- Conflict resolution: applicant must demonstrate an ability to guide discussion towards the desired outcomes of the proposed meeting.

## **SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA**

A panel of NFWF and NOAA staff will review the quotes. Offerors may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of the award. One facilitator will be selected for this award.

## **ELIGIBLE OFFERORS**

Eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations, commercial organizations, institutions of higher education, and local, state, and Tribal governments.

## **SPECIAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS & CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

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 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 a Contract with the authority responsible for collecting the 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 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://sam.gov/>.

**RFQ DEADLINES (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

Monday, April 14th	RFQ Released and Q&A Period Begins. Contractors should submit questions regarding this solicitation via email to Nora Ong, Coordinator, Regional Programs, <a href="mailto:nora.ong@nfwf.org">nora.ong@nfwf.org</a> . To provide equitable responses, NFWF will post all questions and responses so that all contractors have access to them at the same time.
Monday, April 21st	Deadline for Questions. All questions must be sent to NFWF no later than 5:00 pm Monday, April 21 <sup>st</sup> . FAQ will be posted to the site within 48 hours.
Wednesday, April 30th	<b>Deadline for Quotes. Proposals must be received electronically as an email attachment to Nora Ong, Coordinator, Regional Programs, <a href="mailto:nora.ong@nfwf.org">nora.ong@nfwf.org</a> by 5:00 pm ET Wednesday, April 30<sup>th</sup>.</b>
May 2025	Review Period

May 2025	NFWF will notify all applicants of their status
May/June 2025	Facilitator anticipated start date

**REQUESTING ORGANIZATION:**

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 1625 Eye Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20006.

**CONTACT:**

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