



REQUEST FOR QUOTATION

Water Market Analysis and Program Support for Water Conservation and Ecological Restoration Project Development and Implementation within the Rio Grande Project Area

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified Contractor to conduct program support activities in the first year of development and implementation of Water Conservation and Ecological Restoration Projects within the Rio Grande Project (Project) area in collaboration with the Elephant Butte Irrigation District and the State of New Mexico. Major funding is provided by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) through Cooperative Agreement R23AC00424.

The Contractor is anticipated to contribute to the following first-year activities outlined within the Cooperative Agreement: planning and implementation of demand management projects, stormwater capture projects at Project sediment dams, and off-channel storage projects.

BACKGROUND

Prolonged aridification of the Rio Grande Project area and heavy regional reliance on groundwater pumping has caused a reduction in Rio Grande Project water supply, resulting in a decrease in Rio Grande Project efficiency. During increasingly unpredictable monsoon seasons, there are significant storm events that result in flooding to farmland causing property damage, crop loss, and channel sedimentation. The areas of flooding are often in underserved, lower income communities with inadequate flood control capacity.

NFWF and partners in the Lower Rio Grande watershed in New Mexico are exploring conservation efforts that would address issues of riparian bird habitat, stormwater management, sediment management, environmental water needs and the potential for water transactions to support collaborative river management and conservation of Southwestern willow flycatcher and yellow-billed cuckoo. Developing stormwater storage capacity at existing sediment dams and building off-channel storage has the potential to slow down baseflow during monsoon events, capture stormwater to recharge the aquifer, and improve and create riparian habitat. A demand management program would reduce reliance on surface and groundwater, therefore building Rio Grande Project water supply resilience.

In September 2023, NFWF entered into a Cooperative Agreement with USBR to develop and implement projects that result in water conservation and improve or create riparian habitat within the Rio Grande Project, extending roughly from the north end of Elephant Butte Reservoir to the El Paso-Hudspeth County Line and project distribution facilities. The partnership is in its early days and seeks to develop and implement multiple multi-benefit projects that enhance Rio Grande Project water supply to ensure continued access to water for municipal and irrigation use, enhance riparian habitat, decrease flooding of adjacent lands and channel sedimentation, and implement measures to build Project resilience under prolonged drought and aridification.

Through this RFQ, the partners seek water market analysis, project development, and implementation support for the New Mexico portion of the Rio Grande Project from a Contractor for the period from March 1, 2024 through February 28, 2025. This is the period for which funding is secured, and further assistance from the Contractor will be subject to additional Cooperative Agreement funding and future competitive bidding processes.

SCOPE OF WORK



NFWF seeks a contractor to support and assist Southwest Rivers Senior Program Manager Kirstin Neff in implementation of the Rio Grande Water Conservation and Ecological Restoration Projects activities for program Year 1 with the potential to extend into year 2, subject to funding availability.

Specific responsibilities are presented in the list of contract tasks below.

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

Task 1: Support NFWF and Partners in Cooperative Agreement Implementation

- Support NFWF in scoping subgrantee strategy and developing of SOW(s).
- Support NFWF in tracking subaward budgets and creating project budget projections.
- Coordination of roles and development of team structure.
- Coordinate with USBR and NFWF Project Manager as needed.
- Support Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID) staff in implementation plan development as specified in the final Memorandum of Agreement.
- Support NFWF staff in refining program activities in collaboration with USBR and subgrantees.
- Participate in stakeholder meetings and processes as appropriate.
- Support NFWF staff and USBR in project communications.
- Support NFWF staff in completing programmatic reporting.
- Travel to New Mexico as needed for program meetings with stakeholders when safe and appropriate.
- Track New Mexico state water law and policy developments that may impact program implementation.

Task 2: Regulatory and Institutional Compliance

- Track and support regulatory and institutional compliance activities led by USBR as well as those at the state and local levels.
- Incorporate relevant compliance issues in other tasks.

Task 3: Economic analysis of potential for water transactions market within the Rio Grande Project area

- Produce a framework for a long-term demand management program (Program) in the Project area to minimize groundwater usage to enhance the Project water supply and support wildlife habitat.
- Working with partners, establish water savings and habitat goals to evaluate the success of the Program.
- Working with partners, identify and engage water users willing to lease their water rights.
- Framework report will address the potential for a water transactions market, including projected costs of different types of transactions and local economic impacts from the transfer of water or fallowing of agricultural lands.
- Support design and implementation of water transaction and fallowing program guidelines, pricing options and communication materials for use in future irrigation seasons.
- Develop strategies for adaptive management and water transactions and demand management program refinement.

Task 4: Planning and Implementation of Stormwater Capture Projects at Project Sediment Dams

Support NFWF subgrantees in designing and implementing habitat restoration activities and infrastructure improvement projects. Associated tasks may include:



- Assist partners in determining the ownership of land that potential stormwater capture projects will be implemented on and the facility sponsors.
- Assist partners in evaluating existing sediment dams for stormwater capture capacity.
- Assist partners in evaluating sites for existing wildlife habitat qualities and the potential to create or improve wildlife habitat, particularly for riparian species such as southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, and other species of concern.
- Assist partners in producing a prioritized list of stormwater capture projects, an implementation plan, and an ongoing operations and maintenance plan.
- Assist partners in modifying appropriate Project area sediment dams to capture stormwater and expand riparian wildlife habitat to the extent possible.

Task 5: Planning and Implementation of Off-Channel Storage Projects

Support NFWF subgrantees in designing and implementing habitat restoration activities and infrastructure improvement projects. Associated tasks may include:

- Assist partners in determining the ownership of land on which potential off-channel storage will be implemented.
- Assist partners in evaluating each off-channel storage project for benefits to system operations, drought resilience, and ability to provide wildlife habitat on-site and/or to manage water for benefits to wildlife habitat off-site.
- Assist partners in producing a prioritized list of off-channel storage projects, implementation plans, and maintenance plans.

Deliverables: Report on potential for water transactions; Attend coordination meetings with NFWF and USBR staff to keep program development and implementation activities on track; regular meetings with NFWF subgrantees; Review of and reporting back to NFWF staff regarding EBID Board of Directors meeting minutes and/or audio; Support refinement of programmatic budget; Coordinate regulatory compliance activities necessary for project implementation.

Table of Deliverables	
Task	Due Date
Assistance with FY24 annual programmatic reporting	10/30/2024
Deliver a report on the potential for a water transactions market within the Rio Grande Project area, including projected costs of different types of transactions and economic impacts from the transfer of water or fallowing of agricultural lands	2/28/2025
Coordinate regulatory compliance for infrastructure, habitat restoration and monitoring projects	3/31/2025

Schedule: Funding is currently available for year 1 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation and Ecological Restoration Projects Cooperative Agreement.

REQUIRED EXPERTISE

Required expertise of the team includes advanced skills in natural resources or agricultural economics and water market design. Offerors should have experience working in New Mexico’s Rio Grande watershed and



with natural resource management agencies, and should have familiarity with New Mexico water law and policy, and water infrastructure and operations. Offerors should have demonstrated ability in implementation of complex natural resource management programs through collaboration and relationship-building, and working within cross-jurisdictional relationships between local, state, and federal water management agencies. Preferred expertise includes forbearance and fallowing agreements, and water market research methods, including survey techniques.

CRITERIA FOR COMPETITIVE APPLICATIONS

Proposals will be evaluated and scored on the following criteria. Offerors 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 conducting the tasks should clearly describe the proposed methods necessary to conduct the project. The section must demonstrate that those methods are robust and appropriate for conducting the project and address any areas of complexity or uncertainty associated with conducting the project. 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: 20%
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: 25%
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 OFFERORS & CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial 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 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 (Gracie Broughton, gracie.broughton@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).



NFWF

- Contact information: Primary contact person, company name, address, phone, email, website, DUNS number, and EIN/Taxpayer ID#.
 - Work Plan Narrative: Concise (**6-page limit**) description of the work plan.
 - 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 USBR will review the 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 subcontracts.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Friday March 1, 2024 Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals.
Proposals must be sent electronically as **an email attachment to Gracie Broughton** (grace.broughton@nfwf.org) **by 5:00pm EST on March 1**.
Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF.

End of March 2024 Contract award to selected Offeror

End of March 2025 Final deliverables due.
Interim deliverables are due at the times specified in the Scope of Work.