



## REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

### ***Contractor to Support Regulatory Compliance for Multi-Benefit Watershed Projects in the Rio Grande Project Drought Resilience Efforts Initiative***

#### **OVERVIEW**

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified Contractor to assist in the development and completion of regulatory compliance for Rio Grande Project Drought Resilience Efforts (DRE) Initiative project grants under the Southwest Rivers Program. The DRE Initiative is comprised of multi-benefit projects designed to enhance water supply of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Rio Grande Project (Project) in the Lower Rio Grande basin of New Mexico to help ensure continued access to water for municipal and irrigation use, enhance habitat, decrease flooding of adjacent lands and channel sedimentation, and implement measures to build Project resilience under prolonged drought and aridification. Efforts under the DRE Initiative support the Lower Rio Grande Focal Area of NFWF's Southwest Rivers Business Plan, which can be obtained on NFWF's website, [linked here](#).

#### **BACKGROUND**

While the DRE Initiative includes a variety of goals, the scope of work under this contract is in support of the supplemental water projects described in U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) Cooperative Agreement R23AC00424, specifically development of multi-benefit watershed health projects to address riparian habitat for threatened and endangered species, stormwater and sediment management, and long-term water management in the face of drought. NFWF, USBR, and the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) solicited project proposals and have identified 5-7 distinct projects for which environmental and cultural compliance will be needed for project implementation. NFWF and USBR are seeking proposals from environmental consultants with expertise developing environmental and cultural resource compliance documents and obtaining requisite permits from federal and state government regulatory agencies, including water rights permitting through the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer (NMOSE). Projects are expected to be identified by July 2026 and initial project information will be available to the selected consultant upon selection. The target year for completing all compliance for all selected projects is 2027.

Program goals to be addressed through this contract include:

- Provision of infrastructure improvements within the Lower Rio Grande to facilitate water conservation, aquifer recharge, stormwater and sediment management, and water delivery to habitat sites.
- Restoration and enhancement of habitat within the Lower Rio Grande to benefit southwestern willow flycatcher and yellow-billed cuckoo.

#### **SCOPE OF WORK**

The contractor will support NFWF, USBR, NMISC and their grantees in completing necessary compliance activities in advance of implementation of the awarded projects in 2026 and 2027. The selected contractor will expeditiously develop and submit appropriate levels of documentation to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), sections 404 and 401 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and any other necessary federal or State regulatory frameworks necessary for project implementation. The selected contractor will ensure that pertinent information described in the project description is analyzed for project level impacts in the relevant compliance



documentation, and that all content from both the project information and compliance documentation is consistent. Endangered Species Act compliance may already provided by the Final Biological and Conference Opinion for Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Non-Federal Water Management and Maintenance Activities on the Middle Rio Grande, New Mexico (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Dec 2, 2016) or the Final Biological Opinion on effects of actions associated with the proposed continuation of the Rio Grande Project Operating Agreement and storage of San Juan-Chama Project water in Elephant Butte Reservoir, New Mexico (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sep 22, 2016).

Offerors should include with their proposal a budget that assumes they will supply all labor, materials, transportation, equipment, and expertise necessary to complete NEPA, CWA, NHPA, and any other necessary federal or State regulatory compliance documents and obtain requisite permits to enable implementation of all 5-7 projects by the end of calendar year 2027. Cost proposals should provide a level of detail sufficient for amendment (scaling back) if some permits are not necessary.

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

**Task 1. Review project descriptions and design documents for each project and identify necessary federal and State permits and/or clearances required to implement the project**

Description: Using project information provided by NFWF grantees, list and estimate level of effort required for all federal and State permits and/or clearances needed to bring grantee projects to implementation stage.

Deliverable:

- List of required permits and/or clearances required for each project and an estimate of the level of effort required to complete compliance documentation (ex. for NEPA, is a categorical exclusion likely or will a full Environmental Assessment be needed?).

**Task 2. Coordinate with NFWF grantees and appropriate regulatory agency staff to identify information needed to complete compliance documentation for each project**

Description: Lead coordination with appropriate federal and State agency contacts to establish compliance documentation requirements and agency review timelines. If additional information is needed from NFWF grantees to complete required compliance documentation, coordinate with NFWF grantees to collect the information in a timely fashion.

Deliverables:

- Compliance documentation requirements and review timelines for each agency for each project.
- Solicitation of necessary information from NFWF grantees.

**Task 3. Prepare appropriate compliance documentation and submit it to relevant federal and State agencies for each project**

Description: Using information provided by NFWF and grantees, complete all required compliance documentation for submission to and review by relevant federal and State regulatory agencies.



Deliverable:

- Submitted compliance documentation for each agency for each project.

**Task 4. Track compliance review processes with agencies to acquire necessary permits and approvals for implementation of NFWF grantee projects**

Description: Track compliance review processes with agencies and respond to further agency requests as needed until compliance review is complete and all necessary permits and approvals are in place to allow NFWF grantee projects to be implemented.

Deliverable:

- Final compliance approval and/or permits necessary for NFWF grantee project implementation for all projects.

**NFWF-Provided Information:** The following list of documents or references will be provided by NFWF to be used in the performance of this contract.

- Project descriptions and design documents for all projects needing compliance support.
- Access to NFWF grantees implementing projects to ensure complete provision of necessary project information.
- NFWF will also provide examples of recent USBR EAs and FONSI's at the Contract Kick-off Meeting, to be used as general templates for NEPA Compliance structure and level of content.

**Schedule:** All tasks should be completed by December 31, 2027 to allow time for construction activities to be planned prior to Project implementation from 2027-2029.

**REQUIRED EXPERTISE AND PROPOSED STAFF**

Required expertise of the team includes development of environmental and cultural compliance documents for in-channel water and sediment management projects, riparian habitat restoration projects, and water rights administration projects and the processes by which permitting for such projects is completed. Offerors should have experience working in New Mexico's Lower Rio Grande watershed and with the Bureau of Reclamation, and should have familiarity with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), sections 404 and 401 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and New Mexico Office of the State Engineer water rights permitting processes. Offerors should have a firm grasp on State of New Mexico requirements for survey and reporting under NMAC 4.10.15. The team must meet the Standards of the Secretary of Interior and all team leads must be on the SHPO list of qualified archaeologists. Offerors should have demonstrated ability in completion of environmental and cultural compliance documentation and receipt of permits for in-channel and floodplain projects.

**CRITERIA FOR COMPETITIVE APPLICATIONS**

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



1. **Understanding of the Scope of Work.** The Scope of Work must demonstrate an understanding of the goals of the activities involved. 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%
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: 20%
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. **Contractor's Past Performance.** The proposal should include information on the primary investigator(s)'s past performance experience in the requested field. 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. You must use attached Contractor Budget Template. You may add columns to the template for additional tasks if needed, but should not make any other changes. If applicable, please include the proposed budget for equipment purchase in the proposal separate from the Contractor Budget Template. Weight: 30%

#### **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.

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 Rocky Mountain Regional Programs Manager Emma Wigger ([Emma.Wigger@nfwf.org](mailto:Emma.Wigger@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 (10-page limit) description of the work plan and a summary of the applicant's expertise and experience, organized by the Criteria for Competitive Applications.
- 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.



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 staff, NMISC staff, and USBR staff 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.

### COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS

NFWF is committed to operating in full compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. We continuously monitor legal and regulatory developments to ensure our policies, procedures, and operations align with current federal directives. We encourage all applicants to do the same.

The ability and extent to which NFWF is able to make awards is contingent upon receipt of funds from federal agencies and/or other funding partners. Final funding decisions will be made based on the applications received and the level and timing of funding received by NFWF.

### Compliance with American Security Drones Act (ASDA)

Pursuant to the American Security Drone Act (ASDA), effective December 22, 2025, applicants proposing activities funded in whole or in part with federal funds may not use, operate, or purchase any drone or uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) included on the Covered Foreign Entities (CFE) List. This prohibition applies to both new purchases and continued use of existing UAS, including certain widely used commercial platforms, such as DJI and Autel. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all proposed and existing UAS used in connection with federally funded activities comply with applicable federal law and are not included on the CFE List. Noncompliance may affect eligibility for funding.

### SUBMISSION DEADLINES

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| <b>June 18, 2026</b> | Deadline for questions about the solicitation to NFWF. Offerors should submit questions regarding this solicitation via email to <a href="mailto:Emma.Wigger@nfwf.org">Emma.Wigger@nfwf.org</a> . 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 sent to NFWF <b>no later than 5:00 PM MST Thursday, June 18, 2026</b> |
| <b>June 22, 2026</b> | NFWF will post the questions submitted regarding the solicitation and responses on the NFWF website on the RFQ <a href="#">webpage</a> .  |
| <b>June 26, 2026</b> | Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals. Proposals must be sent electronically as an email attachment to <a href="mailto:Emma.Wigger@nfwf.org">Emma.Wigger@nfwf.org</a> by <b>5:00 PM MST Friday, June 26, 2026</b> . Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF.  |



NFWF

**July-August 2026**

Contract award to selected Offeror

**December 31, 2027**

Deliverables Due