

Mobile Bay NEP Process for Contractor Selection for Watershed Management Planning

To hire a qualified environmental planning, engineering, natural resource planning, or other similar firm to develop a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan, the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) uses a Request for Qualifications process for selection. This is a summary of what a WMP and a Statement of Qualifications is expected to include.

Funding has been secured to prepare WMPs for each tidally-influenced 12-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) in coastal Alabama to provide a roadmap for restoring or conserving watersheds and improving their water and habitat quality. Each WMP should chart a conceptual course for improving or protecting the things (determined in our Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan) people most value about living along the Alabama coast, including:

- **Water quality** – Identify actions to reduce point and non-point source pollution (including stormwater runoff and associated trash, nutrients, pathogens, and sedimentation) and remediate past effects of environmental degradation to reduce pollutant loads into Mobile Bay, Mississippi Sound and the Gulf of Mexico.
- **Fish** – Identify actions to reduce the incidence and impacts of invasive flora and fauna and improve habitats necessary to support healthy populations of fish and shellfish.
- **Environmental health and resiliency** – Identify vulnerabilities in the watershed from increased sea level rise, storm surge, temperature increases, and precipitation and improve watershed resiliency through adaptation strategies.
- **Access** – Characterize existing opportunities for public access, recreation, and ecotourism and identify potential sites to expand access to open spaces and waters within the watershed.
- **Culture and Heritage** – Characterize customary uses of biological resources and identify actions to preserve culture, heritage and traditional ecological knowledge of the watershed
- **Shorelines** – Assess shoreline conditions and identify strategic areas for shoreline stabilization and fishery enhancements.

In addition to addressing the six values, WMPs should provide a strategy for conserving and restoring the coastal habitat types identified in the CCMP as most threatened by anthropogenic stressors: **freshwater wetlands; rivers, streams and riparian buffers; and intertidal marshes and flats**. These habitat types, and the ecosystem services they provide, are related to many, if not all, of the six identified values.

We will use an **RFQ process**, rather than a more traditional RFP, to ensure sustained collaboration between the selected contractor, municipal and county officials, local stakeholders, and the MBNEP to successfully achieve the stated, wide range of planning needs.

Statements responding to the RFQ should delineate how the project team will address the following objectives in the development of the WMP. These objectives conform to the **EPA's nine key elements of watershed planning**:

- Build partnerships, including identification of key stakeholders and solicitation of community input and concerns (Element 1).
- Characterize the watershed, including creation of a natural and cultural resource inventory, identification of causes and sources of impairments, identification of data gaps, and estimation of pollutant loads (Element 2).
- Set goals and identify solutions including determination of pollutant reduction loads needed and management measures necessary to achieve goals (Elements 2 and 3).

- Design implementation program including implementation schedule, interim milestones, criteria to measure progress, monitoring component, outreach/education program, and identification of technical and financial assistance needed to implement the program (Element 4 through 9).

Each Statement of Qualification should include a complete response to the requirements in the order presented below, and should provide a straightforward representation of the Respondent's capability to satisfy the intent and requirements of the RFQ without redundancies or conflicting statements:

- Cover Letter** acknowledging receipt of any and all issued statements to the RFQ with an introduction of the Respondent's Project Team (including the lead and any key team members critical for consideration by the Evaluating Team) with relevant certifications. It should include a general statement of approach, distinguishing why the Respondent is the most suitable choice, and statements that 1.) the Project Team is willing to develop the WMP in a timely manner and 2.) the Respondent firm is not in arrears in payment of any obligation due and owing to the State of Alabama nor will it become so during the term of the agreement, 3.) the proposing Respondent will negotiate in good faith with MBNEP, and 4.) MBNEP has unrestricted rights to use the contents of the Statement.
- Conceptual Approach and Methodology** including a narrative articulating the Respondent's methods and approach of engaging both partners and area stakeholders to create a feasible WMP and conceptual implementation strategy that advances the intent of the RFP along with a project schedule that includes major planning milestones.

The narrative must include, at a minimum, a conceptual approach for:

- watershed characterization (including assessment of climate change vulnerabilities,
- stakeholder outreach and engagement,
- prescription of management measures,
- regulatory evaluation and adaptation,
- long-term financing;
- prioritization and scheduling implementation activities, and
- monitoring and evaluation of success.

- Experience and Background** should be described including the following information about the project team:

- Project Team's experience in experience relevant to watershed and community-scale engineering and planning projects (including public/private developments) relative to storm water management, site preparation, stream modification and diversion, or environmental restoration.
- Demonstrate the ability and experience of key individuals on the Project Team to complete projects of the scale and complexity envisioned in this RFQ on budget and on schedule.
- Provide up to three examples of projects that incorporated LID concepts or cultural preservation and public access into implementation activities.
- Describe key Project Team member's involvement in above projects including project conception and financing, through the design and implementation phase, and leading to project completion.
- Provide details of any experience specific to target watershed and surrounding communities.
- Relate how past projects have successfully engaged diverse communities of stakeholders and engendered community ownership of the project.
- Provide names, phone numbers, role in process, and time period of involvement of references for at least two completed projects for which the Project Team acted as Consultant and that may be considered comparable to project targeted by RFQ.

- Identify with specificity any other relevant organizational, consulting, or other available resources that will be committed to the project.

D. Project Team/Level of Participation. Given the complex nature of the Project, the Evaluation Team and MBNEP must understand the roles of key Project Team members, their availability to complete specific Project tasks in a timely manner, and the overall organization and decision-making process of the Project Team.

- Identify key Project Team members with responsibility for leading main project tasks, including the percentage of time each is expected to commit through the duration of the planning process.
- Include an organization chart of the Project Team showing lines of communication, clearly defined roles, availability and decision-making hierarchy.

Example Timeline:

Solicitation Issue/Advertising Date:	Wednesday, Week One
Pre-Submittal Conference	Tuesday, Week Three
Statement Receipt Closing Date	Wednesday, Week Five
Short List Notification	Friday, Week Six
Short List Interviews	Thursday, Week 8
Award/Exclusive Negotiating Right	Monday, Week 9
Delivery of Final Project	One-year post-award