



NROC
Northeast Regional
Ocean Council

Request for Proposals:

**TO DEVELOP PRODUCTS CHARACTERIZING MARINE LIFE
DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE AND TRENDS**

RFP Issued:

February 20, 2014

Proposals Due:

March 27, 2014

Northeast Regional Ocean Council Request for Proposals: TO DEVELOP PRODUCTS CHARACTERIZING MARINE LIFE DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE AND TRENDS

Part 1: Scope of Work

- 1. Statement of Purpose:** The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) is seeking proposals for contractor assistance to develop spatial data products and other information characterizing marine mammal, sea turtle, bird, and fish distribution and abundance for use in regional ocean planning. NROC is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) on behalf of the Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB), which is the formal entity (pursuant to the National Ocean Policy) with the responsibility of developing a regional ocean plan for New England. Work conducted under the contract stemming from this RFP will directly support regional ocean planning activities and RPB decisions in New England.

The RPB has established “Healthy Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems” as one of its three overarching goals for regional ocean planning in New England and has developed objectives, actions and specific tasks aimed at achieving these goals (www.neoceanplanning.org). Characterizing the region’s ecosystem, economy and cultural resources is the first objective under this goal, and work performed resulting from this RFP will be a main component of this objective. The RPB has also established “Effective Decision Making” and “Compatibility Among Past, Current and Future Ocean Uses” as its two other overarching goals. Products characterizing marine life in the region may also be applied toward achieving objectives for each of these goals.

To assist with guiding its work in achieving these objectives, the RPB has formed an internal Natural Resources Work Group that includes federal and state agency and tribal representatives. The work group is initially focusing on developing products that integrate existing data, models and other information characterizing marine life distribution and abundance spatially and temporally, and the scientific uncertainty of these products. These products will be integrated into the Northeast Ocean Data Portal, serve as key elements of a regional baseline assessment for ocean planning, and provide the foundation for additional assessments as determined by the RPB.

The intent of this RFP is to hire a single contract team to support all aspects of product development characterizing marine mammal, sea turtle, bird, and fish distribution and abundance at a regional scale. This product development includes the integration of available data and models into spatial representations and other information products that contain measures of scientific uncertainty and

include historical data to indicate change over time; development of a written assessment that can be incorporated into a characterization of the region's ecosystem and economy; and support for the engagement of the public in the development of those products. For the purposes of this RFP, "products" resulting from this work are broadly defined and may include, but are not limited to spatial and non-spatial data; derived map products, data animations, infographics and other visualizations; models, model output, and other simulations; and all associated documentation. In addition, the contractor will assist with the integration of these products into the Northeast Ocean Data Portal (www.northeastoceandata.org) and will likely participate in efforts to use and/or further develop these products in additional assessments requested by the RPB.

2. **Background:** Executive Order 13547 "Stewardship of the Ocean, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes" provides for the establishment of Regional Planning Bodies to develop coastal and marine spatial plans that are consistent with and build on existing federal and state decision making processes. The Northeast RPB, composed of federal, state, tribal, and New England Fishery Management Council representatives, first convened in November 2012 in Portland, Maine. In its subsequent public meetings and dialogue, the RPB has completed the following main initial tasks as a foundation for its ongoing planning efforts:
 - a. **Development of goals and objectives**, which were the subject of a series of public meetings during a comment period in May-July 2013, again in the fall of 2013, and adopted at the January 2014 RPB meeting;
 - b. **Identification of basic principles for regional ocean planning in New England**, including statements of purpose regarding the need to conduct a transparent, open process that is inclusive of stakeholders; and
 - c. **Agreement on moving forward with** tasks necessary to meet the region's objectives for ocean planning, including the work envisioned under this RFP.

The work of the RPB is being directly supported by grants for regional ocean planning obtained by the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC). NROC, established by New England's Governors in 2005, is a state-federal partnership formed to identify solutions to New England's most pressing ocean and coastal issues that require a regional response. NROC member states are Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont. Federal agencies, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of the Interior (U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Homeland Security (U.S. Coast Guard), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, have been full members of NROC since its inception. Individuals representing the New England states and federal agencies are in many cases members of both NROC and the RPB. The RPB also includes representatives from each

of the federally-recognized tribes in New England, as well as a representative of the New England Fishery Management Council.

The general geographic focus of the RPB's work is on estuarine and marine waters from Long Island Sound north around the waters south of Rhode Island and Massachusetts and through the Gulf of Maine. Stakeholders participating in this regional ocean planning effort come from each of the New England states and the state of New York. Collectively, they reflect the wide variety of people who use, recreate on, or are concerned with the productivity and health of New England's ocean waters and resources. This group includes people from various industries, such as shipping, energy, fishing, boating, and aquaculture, recreational interests, and environmental advocacy groups, as well as academic and government scientists and others.

For more information on the RPB and other activities underway in support of regional ocean planning, see on-line information available at www.neoceanplanning.org.

- 3. Objective:** The primary objective of this RFP is to develop regional spatial data products and other information characterizing marine mammal, sea turtle, bird, and fish distribution and abundance for use in ocean planning and related activities. This objective includes reviewing existing data and models and integrating existing or newly derived products into the Northeast Ocean Data Portal (www.northeastoceandata.org). These products should include assessments of temporal change or trends, including consideration of all available historic data, as well as the scientific uncertainty associated with the results. The contractor will be asked to support the engagement of the public, including regional scientific and technical experts, in the development and review of these products and will work with ocean planning staff, the RPB, and other contractors to determine how to utilize these products to support emerging ocean planning needs. The contractor will also provide all data, underlying assumptions, methods, and a write up for inclusion in a regional baseline assessment.

It is expected that this work will be completed by integrating available data and models into specific products to support ocean planning needs. No new data collection, monitoring or wildlife surveys will be required. As such, this work builds on prior work by NROC, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Northeast Sea Grant Consortium, George Lapointe Consulting, and a regional technical committee to identify potential data sources and develop options for potential products that would serve ocean planning needs. An overview of those findings is provided below for guidance purposes. However, the contractor will be asked to build on this work by identifying any additional data sources, including historical data sources, and, importantly, by working with the RPB and the public to identify, develop, and review products that are suitable for ocean planning needs. Therefore, responses to this RFP should not rely solely on this summary; respondents are encouraged to submit their own ideas and potential approaches.

Summary of options for developing marine life distribution and abundance products:

- a. Products characterizing *marine mammal and sea turtle* distribution and abundance should consider integrating data from the following sources:
 - Ocean Biogeographic Information System Spatial Ecological Analysis of Megavertebrate Populations (OBIS-SEAMAP)
 - Cetacean Density and Distribution Mapping Group (CetMap)
 - Atlantic Marine Assessment Program for Protected Species (AMAPPS)
 - Duke University Cetacean Models
 - Northeast Right Whale Consortium Database
 - Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies Database
 - Whale Center of New England Database
 - Massachusetts Clean Energy Center Surveys
 - Passive Acoustic Monitoring Programs
 - Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Strandings
 - Fisheries Observer Programs

- b. Options for *marine mammal and sea turtle* distribution and abundance products include:
 - Utilize, modify and test existing density products from or derived from CetMap and the Duke University Cetacean Models for use in the Northeast
 - Combine products derived from CetMap and the Duke University Models with data from other sources listed above
 - Develop new regional products using sightings data from any of the sources listed above and, if possible, compare them to model output
 - Consider approaches for integrating passive acoustic data with sightings data from shipboard and aerial surveys
 - Produce a “data richness map” indicating relative availability and quality of marine mammal and sea turtle data

- c. Products characterizing *bird* distribution and abundance should consider integrating data from the following sources:
 - NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NOAA-NCCOS) Predictive Models of Marine Bird Occurrence and Abundance
 - AMAPPS
 - Recent surveys conducted by USFWS
 - Recent surveys conducted by States to inform energy siting offshore Rhode Island and Massachusetts
 - USGS/BOEM Avian Compendium
 - Saltmarsh Habitat and Avian Research Project (SHARP)

- Natural Heritage Program
- d. Options for *bird* distribution and abundance products include:
- Utilize, modify and test existing density products from the NOAA-NCCOS predictive models for use in characterizing offshore occurrence in the Northeast
 - Develop products from recent offshore surveys and compare to predictive model results
 - Develop products from SHARP and the Natural Heritage Program characterizing coastal habitat and populations
- e. Products characterizing *fish* distribution and abundance should consider integrating data from the following sources:
- NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) winter, spring, and fall bottom trawl surveys
 - Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) nearshore trawl surveys, including the ME/NH Inshore Trawl Component and the Southern New England / Mid-Atlantic Inshore Trawl Component
 - State inshore trawl surveys, including the Massachusetts Bottom Trawl Survey, Rhode Island Trawl Survey, and the Connecticut Long Island Sound Trawl Survey
 - Products developed for the Northeast Fishery Management Council’s habitat amendment process
 - Other sources that capture fisheries that are not well represented by trawl surveys
- f. Options for *fish* distribution and abundance products include:
- Develop bubble plots or other products that spatially represent the relative distribution and abundance of individual species or species groupings at any one location and differentiate between data sources (trawl surveys)
 - Develop species richness, diversity and/or total biomass products
 - Derive products from those developed for the Northeast Fishery Management Council’s habitat amendment process
- g. Options for characterizing *scientific uncertainty* Include:
- Produce maps of “data richness” indicating the relative amount and the quality of data available about a species in any particular location
 - Develop maps, graphics or other information that simply communicate underlying measures of scientific uncertainty
 - Include information or develop products that characterize underlying survey effort, timing and data collection methods
 - Develop tools, animations, or other products for each species that enable consideration of seasonal and temporal variability

- Increasingly incorporate spatially explicit models into decision making as model accuracy and resolution improve
- h. Options for considering the *effects of changing environmental conditions (including but not limited to climate change)* include:
- Produce updated range extension maps, for species with sufficient data, that indicate the northern and southern boundaries of species occurrence and habitat
 - Develop climate envelope models that describe the potential geographic shift of species habitat and range due to the effects of climate change

In addition to the guidance provided above, potential respondents should review the Northeast Ocean Data Portal to understand how data products are currently being developed and presented, including access to data and documentation (metadata). As most marine life products on the data portal are from either The Nature Conservancy’s Northwest Atlantic Marine Ecoregional Assessment or the Ecosystem Assessment Program at the National Marine Fisheries Service’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center, potential respondents are encouraged to review these efforts for examples of regional products. Respondents are also encouraged to review similar recent assessments, such as products developed for the Rhode Island Special Area Management Plan, the Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan (MA Ocean Plan), including recent efforts to update the MA Ocean Plan with new marine life and habitat data, the New York Offshore Atlantic Ocean Study, and An Ecological Characterization of Stellwagen Bank Marine Sanctuary. It is expected that work conducted under this RFP will integrate, update and expand on those efforts by considering recent data collection, model development, and regional ocean planning needs. It is also expected that regional products will be coordinated with existing state and federal planning efforts already underway in the northeast.

Potential respondents should note that work conducted under this RFP will be closely coordinated with ongoing and planned regional ocean planning activities as envisioned in the “Framework for Ocean Planning in the Northeast United States” (<http://neooceanplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/NE-Regional-Ocean-Planning-Framework-February-2014.pdf>). While ocean planning staff will be primarily responsible for ensuring coordination among ocean planning activities, the contractor hired through this RFP will be expected to interact with other contractors including those supporting public engagement and RPB meetings, developing the Northeast Ocean Data Portal, and compiling a baseline assessment. Contractors supporting public engagement and RPB meetings have already been identified and will assist in the planning and execution of public events related to this work. Contractors and other partners already developing the Northeast Ocean Data Portal are working on a wide range of relevant data products, including those characterizing other aspects of marine life and habitat that are not included in this RFP. These other datasets include, but are not limited to corals, plankton, near shore shellfish habitat, eelgrass, and

bats. NROC and the RPB expect to hire a separate contractor to compile a baseline assessment, likely through a separate RFP that will be issued shortly. The baseline assessment will be a compilation of all available data and information, including information from ongoing ocean planning projects, into a written characterization of the region's ecosystem and economy. As such, the contractor hired to develop products characterizing marine life distribution and abundance through this RFP will be expected to interact with other contractors and contribute to the baseline assessment. Lastly, NROC and the RPB will be considering additional assessments that will utilize products developed through this RFP and through other efforts. The contractor hired through this RFP will likely participate in ongoing discussions about potential additional assessments to support ocean planning goals.

NROC encourages respondents to propose a technical approach and potential products for characterizing the distribution, abundance, trends and associated uncertainty for marine mammals, sea turtles, birds, and fish species. Respondents should indicate their familiarity with the data sources listed above and their limitations, provide the rationale for the proposed technical approach and products, and describe how this approach will be coordinated with ongoing efforts in the region and potential similar efforts in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Ultimately, project coordination and the identification of final products will be conducted with ocean planning staff and in consultation with the RPB and the public at key points over the course of the project. Therefore, team structure, expertise, and project management will be important considerations in evaluating proposals and would preferably include:

- A single, senior level point of contact responsible for project and budget management, who has demonstrated experience managing diverse teams, tracking progress, and ensuring deadlines are met. This individual would preferably have experience managing teams in the development of complex natural resource assessments, an understanding of the diverse data sources listed above, and the techniques necessary to integrate these data into spatial and other products available on a public website.
- Specific scientific expertise for marine mammals, sea turtles, birds, and fish, including an in-depth understanding of existing data sources and their practical limitations and implications for management purposes, the methods used to collect those data, and the biology and habitat characteristics of each species.
- Expertise using ArcGIS, MatLab, and other spatial and statistical packages to analyze data and develop integrated spatial data products.
- Individuals capable of conducting research into existing data and models, documenting meetings with scientists about existing and potential products, and supporting engagement of the public in the development and review of methods.
- Individuals with expertise in data visualization and graphic design, particularly for natural resource related information.

NROC suggests the following tasks to develop products, but also welcomes creativity in responses to this RFP. Proposals should provide detailed information about how each task will be conducted, documented, summarized, and managed. Proposals should also describe the experience of the team, particularly related to the expertise requested above. Lastly, proposals should include a detailed budget and a timeline for each task that provides an itemized explanation of the estimated work hours needed to complete the task, the basis for and assumptions underlying each estimate, and the justification for proposing such a timeline.

Task 1: Set up and manage expert committee(s), identify potential focal species, and support ongoing meetings with internal RPB work groups

The contractor, in coordination with ocean planning staff, will set up one or more committees that supplement and broaden the team's expertise and that will provide the contractor and staff with guidance on the development of options, methods, and products for marine mammals, sea turtles, birds, and fish. The proposal should recommend the number of committee(s), their focus, potential candidates, an approach for setting up and managing the committee(s), and how the contractor intends to use any such committee(s) throughout the project. Since any committee(s) will likely be made up of scientists from throughout the region and because progress will need to be made quickly, consideration should be given to the most effective ways of ensuring participation, including the size of the committee(s), stipends, travel support, virtual versus in-person meetings, and other options. Ultimately, expert committee(s) composition and management will be decided in consultation with staff and internal RPB work groups.

In addition, the contractor will meet with the committee(s) and internal work groups to develop an initial list of potential focal species. Previous guidance has suggested the consideration of focal species in order to narrow the scope and increase the relevance of this work. This initial list will likely be more inclusive, with the intent of identifying the range of options and seeding initial RPB/public discussions.

The contractor will also be expected to attend and support meetings with any expert committee(s) and internal work groups throughout the course of the project.

Final deliverables for this task will include a list of initial candidates for one or more expert committees that will support the contractor (if not included in the proposal), a commitment among final candidates to serve on an expert committee, and a range of potential focal species for which products might be developed. Deliverables also include documentation of all meetings with the expert committee(s) and internal work groups throughout the course of the project, including meeting agendas and summaries.

Suggested Timeline: Within the first two months, the contractor will conduct initial meetings with any expert committee(s) and internal work groups, develop a list of initial focal species, and document other outcomes. It is expected that the contractor will continue to support meetings with any committee(s) and internal work groups throughout the project.

Task 2: Review and acquire existing models and data

The primary objective of this task is for the contractor to research the status of existing data sources and acquire available data, metadata and products for consideration of potential products for regional ocean planning. The contractor will start with the data sources listed above, document their status and the status of any related derived products, and acquire available data and model output. In addition, the contractor will identify any additional candidate data sources that may not have been previously identified.

Deliverables under this task include a short summary documenting the status of each data source or any related project that might provide data or products that should be considered in the development of regional products. In addition, the contractor will provide NROC with all data and models in the format that they have been acquired, including all documentation.

Suggested timeline: This task will be completed in the first two months of the contract.

Task 3: Develop initial options for developing regional products and integrating them into the data portal

The purpose of this task is to develop initial options and methods for developing regional data products. This will likely include a range of options, from integrating or slightly modifying existing products for use in the data portal, to developing new data products from available sources. As stated above, “products” are broadly defined and should characterize the distribution, abundance, and trends for focal species identified in collaboration with any expert committee(s) and RPB work groups. For each option, the contractor will provide proposed methods, consider spatial, temporal, and quality standards for input data, propose a timeline for development and review, and identify any challenges associated with developing the product. Where possible, the contractor will develop or provide sample products to demonstrate each option.

Deliverables include a written summary of initial options for developing regional marine life distribution and abundance products, including changes and potential trends, and measures of scientific uncertainty. In addition, the contractor will be asked to provide samples of potential draft products to be used in demonstrating potential outcomes to the RPB and the public.

Suggested timeline: This task will be completed in the first two months of the contract.

Task 4: Review initial methods/options with public during workshops/meetings

The purpose of this task is to review initial options and proposed methods with the RPB, agency staff, and the public during public workshops, meetings, and/or during an RPB meeting. The contractor will inform the development of the meeting agenda, identify potential outcomes, and provide all materials related to potential marine life product development, including all materials developed in tasks 1-3. The contractor will also be expected to develop and give presentations, support meeting sessions as necessary, and review meeting summaries. Meeting logistics, including location, invitations, facilitation, and documentation will be provided by NROC's public engagement contractor.

Deliverables for this task include all meeting materials, including presentations and demonstration products.

Suggested timeline: This task will be completed in the first two months of the contract.

Task 5: Revise methods and develop initial draft products

The contractor will be expected to revise options and methods based on technical and public input, and review those revised options with RPB work groups and any expert committee(s). The contractor will then develop initial draft products, where possible, and make them available for review by the RPB and the public, including via presentations and/or draft webpages on the data portal or another website. For this task, the contractor can expect to have some technical and web development support through other NROC contractors working on the data portal. However, this support will primarily be through the use and modification of existing data portal technology and the integration of any data and webpages onto data portal servers. Additional technical expertise will likely be required to develop draft products, and dependent on the format of these products, integrate them onto draft webpages. Products should include suggested cartography and/or visualization, so that these aspects can be evaluated by the RPB and the public.

Deliverables include a written summary of revised options and methods for developing draft products, documentation of meetings with RPB work groups and expert committees, and draft products as selected by the RPB work groups, staff and the contractor and as described above.

Suggested timeline: This task will be completed in months three through six of the contract. NROC recognizes that some draft products may not be feasibly developed in this timeframe. The intent is to advance draft product development and make all products and revised methods available to coincide with planned public and RPB meetings in Fall 2014.

Task 6: Review draft products with public

The purpose of this task is to review draft products and revised methods with the RPB and the public during workshops, public meetings, and/or an RPB meeting in the Fall of 2014. The contractor will be primarily responsible for the presentation of draft products, including making products available in advance of any public meetings. In addition, the contractor will provide input into meeting agendas, participate in and support meeting sessions as necessary, and review meeting minutes. As with previous meetings, NROC's public engagement contractor will be primarily responsible for meeting logistics, including location, invitations, facilitation, and documentation.

Deliverables for this task include meeting materials, including draft products and presentations to be made available in advance.

Suggested timeline: This task will be completed in months six and seven of the contract.

Task 7: Develop interim and final products

The contractor will develop interim and final products based on RPB and public feedback about draft products and methods during tasks 1-6. Additional public and RPB input will likely be necessary during development of interim and final products; respondents should consider the use of expert committee(s) and public workshops during this task. Final products include all spatial data products and other information developed through the course of this project. In addition, the contractor will develop a chapter or chapters that will be incorporated into a written baseline assessment for regional ocean planning. Finally, the contractor will produce a final report summarizing work conducted, including an overview of final products, methods, public feedback, and importantly, identifying any future science priorities that would improve marine life distribution and abundance products.

Deliverables for this task include all final products as defined through the course of the project and including chapter(s) for a baseline assessment, a final project report, and all input data and metadata in formats as agreed to with NROC.

Suggested timeline: This task will be completed in months seven through twelve of the contract.

Task 8: Participate in ongoing efforts to utilize products in additional assessments and contribute to a regional ocean planning science plan

During and after final product development, the contractor will participate in ongoing discussions about how to use final products in additional assessments for ocean planning (such as potentially identifying areas of ecological importance). The contractor will also contribute to a regional ocean planning science plan by identifying priority data or knowledge gaps that should be addressed to improve marine life products and any additional assessments. The contractor will also recommend

future marine life products that will build on emerging science and benefit from a longer timeline, including specific suggestions for how to incorporate future products into regional ocean planning.

Suggested timeline: This task will be completed in months seven through fifteen of the contract.

4. **Project Funding.** The overall budget for this project is a maximum of \$350,000. NROC anticipates a single award to a contract team providing all the experience and products requested in this RFP. NROC reserves the right to make more than one award to accomplish components of this work if necessary. NROC also reserves the right to re-allocate the entire budget or portions of this funding if a satisfactory candidate(s) for all of these services are not determined or the services are no longer needed.
5. **Deliverables:** Proposals should include a detailed work plan, including a description of proposed approaches and methods to be used to complete all tasks and develop products. Deliverables for each task are generally outlined above. While the above tasks focus on the process and timeline for developing products, proposals should include additional details as necessary that are specific to the proposed approach and development of products for each of the categories: marine mammals, sea turtles, birds, and fish.

The contractor shall provide all draft and final data products and other deliverables in the native format of the software used for the integration, analysis and development. The contractor will communicate with and coordinate with ocean planning staff and data managers working on the Northeast Ocean Data Portal to ensure the deliverable formats are readable, complete and properly documented. Where practical, the ESRI File Geodatabase format would be preferable. Products currently hosted in the www.northeastoceandata.org site implement the basic specifications for coordinate reference systems, datums, units, syntax, structure and documentation that should be strongly considered. The contractor shall also provide, where appropriate, the presentation and cartographic styles necessary to accurately and effectively communicate the meaning of each data product to the intended audience.

6. **Project schedule:** NROC expects that work on this project will start immediately following completion of a contract, on or before May 1, 2014, and will extend through July of 2015. A suggested timeline that is coordinated with other ocean planning milestones has been provided for each task above. NROC welcomes creativity in responses and therefore proposals should include a detailed timeline that considers the general guidance provided in this RFP, the specific approaches that are proposed, and justification for any variation in the overall timeline or within specific tasks.

Part 2: Proposal Preparation and Submittal

The following sections describe the procedures and content for submitting proposals.

1. **Pre-submittal conference call.** NROC will host a pre-submission conference call to allow potential respondents to ask clarifying questions on March 12, 2014 at 1:00 pm EST. Instructions to participate in this conference call will be sent to all people who express their interest via email to the contact below at least 24 hours before the conference call.
2. **RFP clarification.** Questions and requests for clarifications regarding this solicitation should be sent to the email contact below. The deadline for submitting such an email is March 11, 2014 at 5:00 pm EST. Responses to questions and clarifications submitted in writing or made during the pre-submittal conference call will be posted to www.neoceanplanning.org on March 13, 2014, by 5:00 pm EST. Questions should be sent to:

Proposal@northeastoceancouncil.org

John Weber, Ocean Planning Director

Northeast Regional Ocean Council

3. **Submittal requirements.** For review purposes, NROC requires responses to this RFP to be delivered electronically, via email as an Adobe™ .pdf file, to Proposal@northeastoceancouncil.org. Proposals must be received by email no later than 5:00 pm EST on March 27, 2014, and shall plainly identify the subject of the proposal and the name, phone, email, and address of the bidder.

It is the bidder's responsibility to ensure that NROC receives the proposals prior to the specified closing date. Proposals received after the specified closing date will not be considered.

4. **Content requirements.** Proposals must be clear, succinct and shall not exceed 15 pages. Section dividers, cover letter, title page, table of contents, and citations do not count in the overall page count of the proposal. Exclusions to the page limitation may include relevant work samples and/or resumes, as described below, provided in appendices. Each bidder is required to describe how they will provide the deliverables described above as part of their proposal. Information provided will be evaluated and scored; missing elements will adversely impact a proposal's overall score.

a. General requirements:

- i. Single-spaced pages when printed on 8.5" x 11" paper with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left and right) with font no smaller than 11 point.
- ii. The total number of pages must not exceed 15 pages (not including appendices).
- iii. The proposal must be submitted as an Adobe™ .pdf document with all pages numbered and clearly identifying the name of the bidder.

b. Proposal organization and content:

- i. Cover letter. Provide a cover letter indicating your organization's commitment to implementing this initiative (e.g. senior management, contracting office approval, etc.). Also, include appropriate point of contact information, including the person's name, title, address, phone number and email address.
- ii. Table of contents. Identify page numbers of main sections, including any appendices.
- iii. Executive summary. Summarize the proposal's approach to completing the tasks required by this RFP and highlight any competitive advantages or unique approaches of your proposal, cost-effectiveness measures, and particular skills offered by the project team.
- iv. Work plan. Include a detailed work plan describing the proposed approach for completing the tasks described in this RFP, including references to relevant work and example products, where possible. Describe how each task will be managed to ensure adherence to project schedule, budget, and a high standard of overall quality of work. Include a timeline showing implementation, starting from contract execution, including all major tasks and their sequence, inter-relationships and dependencies between tasks and key milestones and deliverables.
- v. Detailed budget. Provide an itemized budget for the tasks described in this RFP. Include all costs related to personnel (identify estimated hours and rate), administrative overhead, travel, materials, equipment, and any other anticipated expenditures required to complete the work described in this RFP. In this budget description, describe leveraging of existing work, funding, or other in-kind services.
- vi. Team structure and qualifications. Please provide the following:
 - Project team organization chart, including a brief description of the role of each team member.
 - Summary of the experience, skill or unique attribute of each team member. Including a maximum two-page resume for each team member is allowable in a "resumes" appendix.
 - Summary of related, successful projects that illustrate the capabilities and qualifications of the project team. In addition, provide a maximum two-page description of at least two recently-completed projects in a "related experience" appendix. Include references that NROC may contact for these projects.

Proposals must identify any tasks which will be assigned to subcontractors and associated budget details include in part v above. The successful bidder will be prohibited from subcontracting, assigning, or transferring any listed responsibilities without prior review and consent of NROC.

Part 3: Evaluation of Proposals

This section summarizes the general process and criteria NROC intends to use to evaluate proposals.

1. **General review process.** The NROC Ocean Planning Director will collect and assemble all proposals received by the RFP deadline. An evaluation team comprised of RPB members (and/or their staff designees) and the NROC Ocean Planning Director will be convened to evaluate and score all proposals, using the criteria below. Upon completion of the scoring process, the evaluation team will recommend to the RPB co-leads and the NROC Executive Committee that the highest scoring bidder be awarded the project.
2. **Criteria.** NROC will score all proposals according to the following criteria:
 - a. *Approach (30%).* Bidders will be evaluated on the detail, clarity, and soundness of their approach to this project, including strategies for overcoming any potential obstacles, creativity, and cost effectiveness. Creativity in approach to accomplishing the tasks in this RFP is urged.
 - b. *Qualifications and experience of project team (30%).* NROC will evaluate a project team members' combination of education, training, and record of achievement and experience related to the tasks described in this RFP. Specific attention will also be focused on an assessment of a project team's direct experience with the subject matter.
 - c. *Cost Effectiveness (10%).* Bidders will be evaluated on the budget submitted with their responses to this RFP. Any leveraging of existing work, funding, or other in-kind services, will be a significant portion of this evaluation.
 - d. *Project Management (30%).* Bidders will be evaluated on their ability to complete the project within the schedule provided, track record of project management, and proposed project management strategies for this project.

Part 4. General Provisions

The following general provisions apply to this RFP and subsequent actions taken by NROC.

1. Response to this RFP does not commit NROC to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred during the preparation of the proposal.
2. NROC reserves the right to reject any or all of the proposals for completing this work. NROC also reserves the right to cancel or reissue the RFP at any time.

3. NROC reserves the right to eliminate the need for the selected bidders to complete one or more tasks, pending the outcome of preceding related tasks or issues, and/or the availability of project partners to complete that task.
4. NROC reserves the right to modify the final scope of work and deliverables prior to finalizing a contractual agreement with the selected bidder(s).
5. Subsequent procurement, if any, will be in accordance with an executed contract. This RFP and any response may, at NROC's discretion, become part of the executed contract.
6. All entities participating in this RFP process will be notified of acceptance or rejection. NROC reserves the right not to disclose reasons for the rejection. NROC is not obligated to accept the proposal with the lowest cost.
7. No publicity or media release about this RFP, response to this RFP, discussion of any kind related to this RFP, or the award of any contract related to the bid document, may be released without NROC's prior approval.
8. All materials submitted by bidders become the property of NROC. NROC will retain copies of all proposals for historical records and documentation, but to the maximum extent practicable, will not disclose or make available any information contained in the proposals to outside parties.
9. Each bidder agrees to comply with all federal regulations including those pertaining to non-discrimination in hiring and employment practices.
10. NROC owns all rights to deliverables and, within the bounds of acceptable practice as determined by limitations placed upon data used in this project by data providers, intends that products resulting from this project will be made publically available.