



Northeast Regional Ocean Council

Request for Proposals:

**CHARACTERIZATION OF COASTAL AND MARINE RECREATIONAL
ACTIVITY IN NEW ENGLAND**

RFP Issued: March 12, 2014

Proposals Due: April 11, 2014

Northeast Regional Ocean Council Request for Proposals: CHARACTERIZATION OF COASTAL AND MARINE RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY IN NEW ENGLAND

Part 1: Scope of Work

1. **Statement of Purpose:** This Request for Proposals (RFP) seeks contractor assistance to develop products characterizing spatial patterns of coastal and marine recreational activity in New England. This RFP is to seek proposals to assist in implementing this component of the formal ocean planning process underway in New England, under the overall direction of the Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB). This project will result in scientifically-sound products developed with appropriate engagement of recreational interests in the region.

2. **Background:** Regional ocean planning in New England has been underway formally since 2012. The formal entity charged with developing a regional ocean plan, the Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB), first convened in November 2012 in Portland Maine. In its subsequent public meetings and dialogue, the RPB has completed initial tasks including:
 - a. **Development and approval of draft goals, objectives, and actions** following extensive public input, which were discussed and adopted at the RPB's meeting in January 2014;
 - b. **Continued development of the Northeast Ocean Data Portal** (www.northeastoceandata.org), an on-line source of spatial data related to human activities and natural resources in the Northeast US; and
 - c. **Continued implementation of a work plan** that includes necessary tasks to meet the region's objectives for ocean planning. This RFP relates directly to these two tasks.

See the RPB's web site at www.neoceanplanning.org for additional background information.

The work of the RPB is being directly supported by grants obtained by the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC). NROC, established by New England's Governors in 2005, is a state-federal partnership formed to implement solutions to New England's most pressing ocean and coastal issues that require a regional response. NROC member states include 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, 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 federally-recognized Tribal

representatives in New England, as well as a representative of the New England Fishery Management Council.

In general, the focus of regional ocean planning in New England 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. Thus, stakeholders already participating in regional ocean planning include people from each of the New England states (as well as New York) and represent the wide variety of people who use, recreate on, or are concerned with the health of the ocean in New England: various industries (shipping, energy, fishing, boating, aquaculture), recreational interests, environmental advocates, academia and governmental scientists, and others.

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

- 3. Objectives:** This RFP will directly support the RPB's work plan through its deliverables and engagement with the recreational community. For purposes of this RFP and the work the RPB is anticipating, the term "recreational community" includes people involved in activities such as wildlife viewing (including commercial whale watching), non-motorized boating (kayaking and canoeing), diving, surfing, events such as regattas and sailboat races, fishing derbies, and other recreational activities that occur in the near- and off-shore marine environment in New England. Previous projects, and efforts currently underway, have focused on recreational boating and recreational fishing; therefore, this RFP focuses on other recreational activities. There are two main objectives of this RFP:
 - a. Work with ocean planning staff, the RPB, and the Northeast Ocean Data Portal Team to develop spatial products describing spatial patterns of recreational activity in New England waters (generally, Gulf of Maine, Long Island and Block Island Sounds, south of Cape Cod and Islands). The end goal is to develop products that, following incorporation of input from stakeholders, will be suitable for the Northeast Ocean Data Portal and use in subsequent ocean planning activities. Because there is a recreational survey effort underway in Mid-Atlantic states (New York through Virginia) currently, familiarity with that effort, and coordination as necessary and appropriate, will be a part of this objective.
 - b. A key part of developing the spatial products will be to engage the recreational community, recognizing that particular aspects of the recreational community and the geography of the region may require specific/targeted and efficient approaches for successful engagement.

The intent is that all products developed as part of this project will be developed through a transparent process that is methodically sound, appropriate for regional ocean planning purposes, and incorporates stakeholder input. Respondents should thus describe how they would meet these principles and in so doing describe their related experience. Respondents should describe their

experience that highlights skills such as overall project management, successfully implementing similar engagement and outreach efforts, and producing similar products.

Further information on the tasks intended to meet these objectives is provided below.

Task 1: Develop and implement methodology to develop map products. Respondents should describe their approach and methodologies to develop draft products (maps) to meet Objective a above and describe the products that would be completed. Method descriptions should clearly identify intended approach, specifically describing how stakeholders would be engaged, recognizing that certain elements of recreational activity (as defined above) may require specific, targeted methods to enhance their success and to successfully engage stakeholders. For this task, respondents should describe approaches to developing products related to wildlife viewing (including commercial whale watching), non-motorized boating (kayaking and canoeing), diving, surfing, events such as regattas and sailboat races, fishing derbies, and other recreational activities that occur in the near- and off-shore marine environment in New England. Descriptions of methodologies should include descriptions of specific tasks that would be undertaken, their anticipated timing, and any associated caveats.

As part of this task, and similar to other types of projects that have been undertaken, the anticipation is that a steering committee will be necessary to help guide the project. Such a group would include ocean planning staff, members of the RPB, and representatives of recreational uses. Respondents to this RFP should describe their approach to forming and convening this work, including identification of potential candidates from the recreational community who would be part of this steering committee.

Task 2. Draft and final products. Resulting spatial products from proposed methods should be clearly described. Potential obstacles, and suggested measures to overcome these obstacles, to producing these products should be included in responses to this RFP. In general, other ocean planning projects in the Northeast have included review of draft products with specific stakeholders involved in their development. Responses to this RFP should describe how final products will be developed incorporating this approach.

In addition to the spatial products ultimately resulting from this project, additional products include a draft and final report, suitable for a general audience, describing the project; a stakeholder engagement plan as a specific component of the detailed work plan; and an accompaniment to resulting map products including caveats important to understand when reviewing any such product and descriptions of the information and methods used to develop such a product.

4. **Project Funding.** The maximum budget for this project is \$125,000. NROC reserves the right to re-allocate this funding if a satisfactory candidate for this service is not determined or the services are

no longer needed. NROC also reserves the right to conduct future competitive solicitations for projects that may arise from the work completed as part of this project.

5. **Deliverables:** Proposals should include discussion of how the proposed approaches will successfully complete the following deliverables:
 - Detailed work plan, including specifically a recreational stakeholder engagement plan
 - Monthly progress reports
 - Map products developed in coordination with ocean planning staff and the NROC data portal team, suitable for hosting on the Northeast Ocean Data Portal.
 - A draft and final report, prepared for a general audience, describing the project and details of products.

6. **Project schedule:** NROC expects that work on this project will start immediately following completion of a contract. NROC anticipates that final deliverables described in this RFP would be due by April 30, 2015. Respondents should propose and justify a schedule that they feel is appropriate.

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 Wednesday, April 2, 2014 at 1:00 pm (Eastern). Instructions to participate in this conference call will be sent to all people who express their interest via email at least 24 hours before the conference call. Emails expressing such interest should be sent to Proposal@northeastoceancouncil.org.

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 5:00 pm Wednesday, April 2, 2014. Responses will be posted to the NROC web-site on Thursday, April 3, 2014. 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 on Friday, April 11, 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 10 pages. Section dividers, cover letter, title page, and table of contents 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 by NROC and, 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 not smaller than 11 point.
- ii. The total number of pages must not exceed 10 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 (.g. senior management 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 deliverables 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. Implementation plan. Include a concise, yet detailed implementation plan for completing the deliverables described in this RFP and to ensure appropriate management of the scope, schedule, budget and overall quality of work. Include a time line 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 to produce the deliverables 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. Note that because of the requirements of the source of funding for this project, indirect costs are encouraged to be limited to a maximum of 12.5% of allowable direct costs. For purposes of this RFP, indirect costs are defined as “overhead expenses incurred by an organization but not easily tracked to a specific project. They generally include administrative or other support functions such as executive oversight, institutional communication networks, accounting, grants management, legal support, insurance, utilities, technology, rent, and facility maintenance.” For purposes of this RFP, direct costs include all of the expenses that are required for, and can be tracked directly to, this project, including but not limited to personnel, consultants/contractors, or other direct expenses such as travel, training, supplies, computers, and software.

The total budget is not to exceed \$125,000.

- 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. Description of the team’s understanding of the technical aspects of this RFP will be very helpful in this summary. In addition, 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, providing a maximum two-page description of up to two recently-completed projects is allowable 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 required to not subcontract, assign, or transfer 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 NROC members 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 NROC Executive Committee that the highest scoring bidder be awarded the project.
2. **Criteria.** NROC will use 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. Communication strategies for engaging with appropriate stakeholders during all aspects of this project will be a significant portion of this evaluation.
- 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 fishing community and with engaging appropriate external stakeholders
- c. *Cost Effectiveness* (20%). 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* (20%). 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. Because NROC is strongly urging teaming to address issues related to the geography of the project area (e.g., all of New England), this evaluation will also include an assessment of internal (within project team and between project team and NROC) communication/project management strategies which are proposed.

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.
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.