

Request for Qualifications:

**NOAA Office of Response and Restoration North Atlantic Regional Collaboration Team Plan
for Engagement with Underserved and Overburdened Urban Coastal Communities**

Issue Date: Tuesday, September 4, 2024

Due Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2024

The University of New Hampshire (UNH) [Coastal Response Research Center \(CRRC\)](#) is soliciting proposals for Technical Support for creating a plan to improve [NOAA Office of Response and Restoration \(OR&R\)](#) engagement and collaboration with underserved and overburdened coastal communities in urban areas of the North Atlantic region (defined here as Maine through Virginia). The plan will provide guidance to OR&R staff to support increased equity in how each of its divisions serves the public in the North Atlantic region. Anyone wishing to submit a proposal (the Proposer) must comply with the requirements contained in this Request for Qualifications (RFQ). Any interpretations, corrections or changes to this RFQ will be made as addenda. Addenda will be posted and available on the CRRC website.

The purpose of this project is to provide technically sound, science-based support to CRRC as part of its Five-Year Grant from NOAA OR&R. An RFQ/RFP process will be used to select the successful Proposer that will be issued a subaward under UNH's prime award from OR&R. The selection process will consist of two phases. During Phase 1 RFQ, Proposers will submit qualifications to be considered; specifically addressing their ability to meet the technical

requirements listed in this RFQ. Only those Proposers that respond to the Phase 1 RFQ on or before the October 15, 2024, deadline and successfully meet the qualifications criteria (Section 7: Performance Metrics) will be included in Phase 2 RFP selection process. The Phase 1 RFQ pre-qualification step will streamline the process, ensuring that only those Proposers that have the unique and specific technical expertise/experience required for this project are considered further. The Phase 2 Request for Proposals (RFP) will evaluate the ability of each of the Proposers pre-qualified in the Phase 1 RFQ to perform the work detailed in this document within the available time and budget.

1. BACKGROUND

NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) is a center of expertise in developing scientific solutions to keep the coasts clean from threats of oil, chemicals, and marine debris. OR&R has five divisions: [Emergency Response](#) (ERD), [Assessment and Restoration](#) (ARD), [Marine Debris](#) (MDD), Business Operations, and the [Disaster Preparedness Program](#) (DPP). Collectively, OR&R provides comprehensive solutions to marine and coastal pollution. OR&R's mission is to protect and restore U.S. ocean and coastal resources from threats of oil, chemicals, marine debris, and natural and anthropogenic disasters to benefit the environment, public, and economy. To fulfill its mission, OR&R:

- Provides scientific and technical support to prepare for and respond to oil and chemical releases and to protect and restore marine and coastal ecosystems.
- Assesses injuries and determines damages resulting from injuries to natural resources related to these releases.
- Coordinates, strengthens, and promotes marine debris activities within NOAA and among its partners and the public including research, reduction, and prevention of debris in the marine environment.
- Works with communities to address critical local and regional coastal challenges.

OR&R's goals over the next four years are to: (1) Meet the demands of pollution and weather-related threats and impacts in the face of coastal change, (2) make equity intentional in the delivery of its services, (3) Strengthen engagement with constituents to effectively communicate and

advance our mission to better meet the needs of coastal communities, and (4) develop a more skilled, diverse, and inclusive workforce to support and implement its mission.

[Overburdened communities](#) frequently consist of minority, low-income, Tribal, or Indigenous populations that potentially experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks due to exposures or cumulative impacts or greater vulnerability to environmental hazards and are often underserved. This plan will focus on developing sustainable processes to better engage underserved and overburdened urban communities located along the metropolitan coastal areas in the Mid-Atlantic and New England.

The overarching guiding principle for communications in [OR&R's 2024-2028 OR&R Strategic Plan](#) is to:

Promote environmental stewardship, enhance environmental literacy, foster productive partnerships, emphasize equity in service delivery, and communicate OR&R's work and expertise in ways that advance support for its mission and the public good.

[NOAA's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#) also emphasizes the need to prioritize under-resourced and overburdened communities.

Overburdened urban communities are disproportionately adversely impacted by natural disasters and releases of hazardous substances and oil. The intent of this RFQ is to identify an entity that can write a plan to improve OR&R's regional engagement and service in these typically underserved areas.

2. OBJECTIVE / SCOPE

The objective of the proposed project is to develop a strategic engagement plan for underserved and overburdened urban coastal communities in the North Atlantic region that would provide regional OR&R staff with guidance to improve communication and collaboration with them.

Guidance on best practices for improving engagement with underserved and overburdened urban coastal communities in the North Atlantic region would improve the regional staff's abilities to meet OR&R's goals—specifically improving equity in the delivery of services and strengthening engagement with the diverse constituents to better meet their needs. While there is great interest and understanding by staff to prioritize engagement with underserved and overburdened coastal communities, they do not have experience in this area and seek tools to improve their success. The plan requested in this RFQ should provide guidance and suggest practices for OR&R's North Atlantic regional staff.

3. ANTICIPATED RFQ SCHEDULE:

- A. Release of RFQ: **Tuesday, September 4, 2024**
- B. Phase 1 RFQ Electronic Submissions Deadline: **Tuesday, October 22, 2024**
- C. Notification of Phase 1 RFQ Selection Process: **Monday, November 4, 2024**
- D. Phase 2 RFP Electronic Submission Deadline: **Monday, November 25, 2024**
- E. Notification of Phase 2 RFP Selection: **Monday, December 20, 2024**

CRRC, at its sole discretion, may modify this schedule, as it deems appropriate.

Phase 1 RFQ packages will be submitted electronically by emailing the proposal as an attachment to a secure UNH data storage site at:

https://universitysystemnh-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/kathym_usnh_edu/Erf9qWK5Q8IGk_de_QvGXDYB3PhmveNaaSKEXgy0DTbnqQ

Late submissions will not be considered. One hard copy of the Phase 1 RFQ and 2 RFP packages must also be submitted to Kathy Mandsager (220 Gregg Hall, 35 Colovos Rd, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824) no more than 72 hours after the electronic copy submission deadlines. Failure to meet the deadlines will disqualify a proposal/package.

All packages must be submitted in Adobe Acrobat (pdf) format in one continuous file. Electronic and hard copies must be identical. Do not password protect or otherwise encrypt electronic

proposal submissions. The font must be Times New Roman 12 pt. single-spaced with all 1-inch margins.

A panel consisting of the UNH and NOAA CRRC co-directors and relevant NOAA staff will evaluate submission packages.

The Phase 1 RFQ submission is designed to determine the Proposer's qualifications to meet the metrics listed in the "Criteria" Section (Section 7) of this RFQ. Specifically, Phase 1 RFQ must demonstrate the Proposer's ability to successfully conduct the project. See "Phase 1 RFQ Proposal Requirements" (Section 12) for the contents of the Phase 1 RFQ submission.

If a Proposer demonstrates the ability to meet the metrics in the Phase 1 RFQ submission criteria, a Phase 2 RFP proposal will be requested by CRRC. The Phase 2 RFP proposal will include a detailed project narrative regarding the scope of work, a detailed budget (not to exceed the available funding), and a detailed schedule. The Phase 2 proposal will also be reviewed by a panel. Interviews with the Proposers, via video conferencing (e.g., Zoom), may be conducted during the Phase 2 RFP.

Phase 2 RFP proposals will only be accepted from those Proposers selected by the panel to submit.

All questions regarding this RFQ should be submitted in writing via email to nancy.kinner@unh.edu.

Written and email communications must be from the Proposer's authorized principal investigator.

4. PROJECT TASKS

Task 1: Solicit Guidance from OR&R Regional Staff

Meet with North Atlantic regional staff from the four technical OR&R divisions (ARD, ERD, MDD, and DPP) as well as members of the OR&R Communications and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) teams, to better understand our office and divisional goals, services, communication products, engagement needs, and how OR&R staff can prioritize the needs of

historically underserved and overburdened urban coastal constituencies. Develop an approach for implementing Tasks 2 and 3 based on these discussions and present the approach in a project plan.

Task 2: Develop a Strategic Engagement Plan for Underserved and Overburdened Urban Coastal Communities in the North Atlantic Region

Create an engagement plan that includes the following elements:

- A series of specific communications practices and efforts that might be easily undertaken by staff to improve engagement with underserved and overburdened urban coastal communities including, as appropriate, advice on language use, and a breakdown of practices by OR&R division (e.g., practices that DPP might consider for improving equitable hurricane evacuation guidance, practices that could help ARD gain local perspectives on lost uses resulting from releases of chemicals and oil to natural resources that are most important to overburdened communities). Estimated costs and associated timelines must be included with these recommendations.
- Identify locations where OR&R, or individual OR&R divisions, could specifically focus efforts. It is possible that a deeper connection with 2-4 underserved and overburdened urban coastal communities may be a beneficial approach to improving and growing engagement experience.
- Provide best management practices or guidance on how OR&R North Atlantic regional staff can engage with and learn from underserved and overburdened urban coastal communities.
- Identify existing or potential partners for OR&R North Atlantic regional staff such as other federal, state, and local agencies, educators, non-profit organizations, and community advocates beyond those which OR&R already partners coordinates.
- Suggestions or scenario examples for how the above recommendations can be incorporated within existing workloads of OR&R North Atlantic regional staff or what additional resources might be needed.
- A timeline for implementation of the plan.

Suggested modifications on the draft plan will be provided by the OR&R Steering Committee, other regional OR&R representatives, and the OR&R Communications Team.

Task 3: Develop Draft Engagement Products

Based on information collected in Tasks 1 and 2, develop drafts of specific communication and engagement products for underserved and overburdened urban coastal communities.

Reporting and Presenting Results

Reports will be expected at the completion of each Task. The results will also be presented through a webinar aimed at OR&R staff.

5. DELIVERABLES

Schedule and Distribution of Deliverables:

Deliverable	Reviewed by	Due Date
Task 1 Project Plan (draft and final)	CRRC and NOAA leads	Within 3 months of the award
Task 2 Draft Report	CRRC and NOAA leads	Within 8 months of completion of Task 1
Task 3 Draft Materials	CRRC and NOAA leads	Within 2 months from completion of Task 2
Final Report (draft final and final) and presentation to NOAA OR&R	CRRC and NOAA leads	Within 1 month of completion of Task 3

6. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The period of performance for the proposed project shall be 14 months after the contract is signed, pending funding availability.

7. METRICS FOR SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE BY PROPOSERS

Criteria	Score
a) Ability to gain an understanding of the different needs and goals of the various OR&R divisions with respect to enhancing engagement with underserved and overburdened urban coastal communities.	15
b) Ability to develop a strategic community engagement plan for OR&R staff within the divisions to enhance their ability to engage underserved and overburdened urban coastal communities to meet NOAA and OR&R goals with respect to community outreach and collaboration.	15
c) Previous experience engaging with and learning from underserved and overburdened urban coastal communities, preferably in the North Atlantic region, and ability of the project personnel to successfully conduct the proposed work.	30
d) Ability to create draft engagement products to enhance OR&R's ability to engage underserved and overburdened urban coastal communities.	20
e) Ability to produce a useful, thorough, and professionally written final report and presentation.	10
f) Ability to complete all activities according to the performance schedule and budget	10
TOTAL POINTS	100

8. TRAVEL

Travel expenses are expected to be minimal for the proposed project with most meetings conducted virtually. The necessity of in-person meetings should be justified by the Proposer and cost estimates provided.

9. INVOICES/PROGRESS REPORTING

Invoices will be submitted no more frequently than monthly, but no less frequently than quarterly to UNH CRRC. Invoices will be itemized by element of cost and include progress achieved, anticipated activities, issues, and resolution of issues anticipated.

Original invoices (via pdf email) will be submitted to: kathy.mandsager@unh.edu

10. CONFLICT OF INTEREST CERTIFICATION

As prescribed in 48 CFR 3452.209-70, the Proposer, will be required to certify that, to the best of their knowledge and belief, there are no relevant facts or circumstances that could give rise to an organizational or personal conflict of interest, for the organization or any of its staff, and that the Proposer has disclosed all such relevant information if such a conflict of interest appears to exist to a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts. The Proposer agrees to require any proposed subcontractors to provide the same certification. The conflict-of-interest certificate reads as follows:

Conflict of Interest Certification.

The offeror, [insert name of offeror], hereby certifies that, to the best of its knowledge and belief, there are no present or currently planned interests (financial, contractual, organizational, or otherwise) relating to the work to be performed under the sub-agreement resulting from this Request for Proposal that would create any actual or potential conflict of interest (or apparent conflicts of interest) (including conflicts of interest for immediate family members: spouses, parents, children) that would impinge on its ability to render impartial, technically sound, and objective assistance or advice or result in it being given an unfair competitive advantage. In this clause, the term “potential conflict” means reasonably foreseeable conflict of interest. The offeror further certifies that it has and will continue to exercise due diligence in identifying and removing or mitigating, to the University's satisfaction, such conflict of interest (or apparent conflict of interest).

Offeror's Name:

Signature:

Title:

Date:

11. BUDGET

The total budget for this scope of work shall be determined based on the proposals received and their ability to meet the project objectives, not to exceed \$75,000.

12. PHASE 1 RFQ PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Submit the following information and documentation:

A. Experience and Background

- i. Submit a narrative (not to exceed 3 pages) documenting the Proposer's overall background and experience relative to the proposed project, including any relevant project experience. Awards, publications, or other recognition received by the Proposer relative to work on similar projects should be included.
- ii. Submit an overview of the proposed approach (not to exceed 2 pages) to address the project Tasks (Section 4: Project Tasks)
- iii. A list should be provided of the key personnel, including the principal investigator, who are proposed for work on this project, to include any subcontractors.
- iv. Include resumes for each of these individuals' detailing qualifications, experience, work history, education and any related licenses or certifications.

B. Approach to Project Management (not to exceed 2 pages)

- i. Provide a description of the Proposer's approach to managing this project.
- ii. Provide a narrative that demonstrates a knowledge and understanding of the work required for conducting this project.
- iii. Explain how the Proposer plans to address the logistics required to lead the project and coordinate with NOAA.
- iv. Explain how the Proposer will organize and conduct meetings and general communications.

C. Projects of Similar Scope

List projects (not to exceed five) that the Proposer has done of a similar nature to the project.

Provide the following information:

- i. Project sponsor and contact information
- ii. Sponsor's project officer

- iii. Sponsor's project date (start/end)
- iv. Sponsor's project title
- v. Project status (started, % complete)
- vi. Scope of project (no more than 150 words)
- vii. List of any reports or publications associated with the project

D. Organization Structure (not to exceed one page)

- i. Submit a list of Proposer staffing resources by discipline and the number of personnel within each discipline.
- ii. If Proposer staffing resources include subcontractors, submit the name of the entities who will perform each activity.
- iii. Provide a narrative that clearly defines responsibilities, contractual relationships and roles of all individuals in the organizational diagram.
- iv. Provide a narrative of the Principal Investigator's recent, current, and projected workloads at the time of submission and provide a statement of Proposer's commitment of personnel and other resources and equipment to the project.
- v. Provide a narrative of all key personnel's recent, current, and projected workloads at the time of submission and provide a statement of the availability for this project.

E. Statement of Financial Capability

- i. Provide a statement of the Proposer's financial and legal capability (e.g., insurance) for conducting this project.
- ii. Statement of assuring public access to project resources, outcomes, and final report.
- iii. Provide a narrative of the Proposer's access to the required equipment, logistical resources and data analysis/management tools, as appropriate.

F. Statement on Estimation of Project Costs

- Provide preliminary budget estimates with total direct, facility, and administrative costs for Tasks 1-3 associated with this project, including total estimated personnel and management costs.

13. CRRC AND UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE RESERVE THEIR RIGHTS TO:

- Disregard all non-conforming proposals.

- Reject any and all proposals that fail to satisfy the requirements and specifications in this RFQ.
- Accept the proposal that is the best overall proposal, based on the selection criteria listed in the RFQ.
- Waive minor irregularities in any proposal.
- Issue addenda or otherwise revise the requirements in this RFQ.
- Reject all proposals, with or without cause.
- Issue requests for new proposals.
- Cancel this RFQ.

Note: Either party may terminate this subaward with 30 days written notice. Notwithstanding, if the awarding agency terminates the federal award, Pass Through Entity (PTE) (UNH) will terminate in accordance with awarding agency requirements. Notice of termination shall be directed to the appropriate authorized official. PTE (UNH) shall pay subrecipient for termination costs as allowable under Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR 200, or 45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, as applicable.

14. SUBCONTRACTORS

It is not anticipated that the Proposer will use subcontractors for this project. If Proposer plans to use subcontractors, this information shall be disclosed, justified, and included within the Proposer's budget as part of the proposal. Such information shall be subject to review, acceptance and approval of the CRRC/UNH, prior to any award.

CRRC/UNH reserves the right to approve or disapprove of any subcontractor candidate in its best interest and to require the Proposer to replace the subcontractor with one that meets CRRC/UNH approval.

The Proposer shall ensure that their proposed subcontractor performs in accordance with the terms and conditions of the project. The Proposer shall be fully responsible for Proposer's subcontractors' performance and shall be liable for the Proposer's subcontractors' non-performance, acts and omissions.

15. PHASE 2 RFP PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Only those Proposers that respond to Phase 1 RFQ on or before the Tuesday, October 15, 2024, deadline and meet the qualifications criteria will be included in Phase 2 RFP. Upon notification of acceptance, the Phase 2 RFP submission deadline will be Monday, November 25, 2024. Specific details on Phase 2 RFP submissions will be provided to those Proposers that have been selected to participate.

CONTACT:

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