



Inland Bays Shellfish Enhancement Action Plan

Professional Meeting Facilitation Services Request for Proposals

Purpose

The Delaware Center for the Inland Bays (Center) seeks proposals for professional services to facilitate multiple stakeholder meetings. The results of those meetings will be used in the development of a shellfish enhancement action plan for restoration of native oyster populations within the Delaware Inland Bays. The requested services are for meeting facilitation, including meeting prep and synthesizing notes. Services do not include implementation, plan writing, or project conceptual designs. This is to be a fixed-price contract. **Proposals must be received via email by 4:00 pm Eastern time on May 15, 2022.** The right is reserved to accept or reject any or all proposals or parts thereof and to award the contract as is determined to serve Center's best interest.

Project Background

The Center and partners on the Center's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP, <https://www.inlandbays.org/wp-content/uploads/CIB-CCMP-FINAL.pdf>) have a shared goal of increasing eastern oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) populations in the Inland Bays (Rehoboth, Indian River, and Little Assawoman Bay). To achieve this goal, preliminary prioritization using stakeholder input and spat surveys led to the selection of three sites for the creation of pilot-scale oyster reefs in the summer of 2019. The purpose of those reefs was to gather information on challenges reefs will face within the Inland Bays (disease, spat supply, predation, poor water quality, sedimentation), as well as to trial new construction techniques that do not utilize plastic. Results from monitoring of those pilot reefs suggest that in areas with ample spat supply, reefs can be successful. The Center acquired funding to create larger reefs during the spring of 2022. During this process, it became clear that there are many factors that must be considered in selection of future reefs sites and, that alone, the Center cannot achieve the goals agreed upon within the CCMP.

Thus, the Center will pursue a collaborative planning effort that will bring together various stakeholder groups to discuss locations for future reefs, agree upon partner roles and responsibilities for implementation, funding, or monitoring, and develop a plan that will include:

- An updated suitability map of locations suitable for oyster restoration/enhancement projects in each of the three bays;
- Final selection of at least five candidate sites for future reef projects;
- Recommended practices and conceptual designs for selected sites, with permitting information, cost estimates, and quantifiable outcomes;
- Responsible parties/partners for each project and potential funding strategies;

- A plan to integrate shellfish growers and their needs into the restoration effort along with information on training needed through possible partnerships with local colleges and organizations.

Project Description

The Center seeks a contractor to facilitate three to four stakeholder meetings, two half-day workshops, and one steering committee meeting, in order to finalize selection of future project sites, achieve partner organization commitment to aid in or lead the implementation of these projects, and develop a plan to integrate and train interested members of the oyster aquaculture industry in the restoration effort.

A project steering committee and Center staff will select candidate sites, which will then be brought to the stakeholder meetings for discussion and feedback. Before stakeholder meetings, the facilitator will work with Center staff and the steering committee on how best to approach each group, what the goals for the meeting are, and assist with preparation of meeting materials. After stakeholder meetings are complete, the contractor will synthesize findings and results from the meetings.

The Center will work with the steering committee to identify stakeholder groups for meetings. The purpose of the stakeholder groups is to elicit feedback on the candidate sites, including technical, social, or permitting considerations, as well as to directly involve the aquaculture industry in this restoration process. Stakeholder groups will therefore include technical professionals, permitting agencies, legislators, and aquaculture industry professionals. At least one stakeholder meeting will also be open to members of the public.

Scope of Work

Specific tasks for the contracted facilitator are below.

Task A. Planning and Facilitating Targeted Stakeholder Meetings (September 2022 – March 2023)

The facilitation contractor will work with the steering committee and Center staff to identify how best to engage each stakeholder group and discuss any anticipated issues and how to manage them. Stakeholder meetings will be scheduled and planned in detail. Roles and responsibilities will be assigned. A web page to house project materials for meetings will be set up by the Center.

The contractor will facilitate a series of stakeholder meetings, develop written and online materials to support those meetings, and summarize the notes, results, and conclusions. A total of three to four stakeholder meetings will be held.

The following are the envisioned targeted stakeholder groups:

- Technical experts, including, but not limited to representatives from: Sussex Conservation District; NRCS; other National Estuary Programs; Univ. of Delaware; Delaware State University; consultant experts; DNREC Div. of Fish and Wildlife (including Fisheries and Enforcement); DNREC Div. of Watershed Stewardship; DNREC Coastal Programs; DNREC Div. of Parks and Recreation; US Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; The Nature Conservancy; Pew Charitable Trusts; National Wildlife Federation

- Inland Bays shellfish growers (Delaware Aquaculture Association, Delaware Shellfish Growers Forum - convened by DESG and DSU)
- Local community representatives, including e.g., legislators, municipal officials (engaged through the Association of Coastal Towns), Sussex County Economic Development, HOAs, recreational groups (boating, fishing, ecotourism)

Task B. Final Stakeholder and Public Participation Workshops (August – September 2023)

After stakeholder meetings, Center staff will amend the draft plan and chosen implementation techniques based on the feedback from those meetings. With those changes in hand, all stakeholders will be invited to review the selected sites and concept designs in two half-day workshops facilitated by the contractor.

The goals of those workshops are to:

- Ensure a mutual understanding of project goals and to present an overview of the information and issues gleaned from the previous stakeholder meetings;
- Present the draft plans and identify areas where more feedback is required;
- Obtain feedback on any remaining issues related to where and how projects are to be implemented, other approaches not previously considered, and research needs;
- Allow stakeholders to learn and appreciate other stakeholder perspectives;
- Discuss funding and implementation strategies; and
- Develop a common understanding of and commitment to next steps.

Materials explaining proposed restoration areas and tactics (based upon the targeted stakeholder meetings) and other information needed for the workshops will be prepared and made available to participants in advance via a project web page by the contractor. This will allow participants to formulate questions and provide better input at the workshops. The contractor will summarize the notes, results, and conclusions from the half day workshops.

Task C. Steering Committee Commitments (October 2023)

One last meeting will be held with the contractor, the Center, and the steering committee to formalize partner commitments, and clearly define roles and expectations for implementation.

Work is to be completed by March 30, 2024.

Project Funding and Payment for Services

This work is funded by the Delaware Water Infrastructure Advisory Council's Surface Water Matching Planning grant. Maximum costs are not to exceed \$25,000. The selected Contractor will be able to accept Net 30 terms for payment upon presentation of a monthly invoice for services. The content of monthly invoicing will reflect in detail the project stage that has been completed and line items of specific costs as agreed upon with the Center.

Selection Criteria

Eligible contractors must have demonstrated past success in facilitating large meetings, preferably of a similar nature. Proposals will be evaluated on the following factors:

- Total cost;
- Assurances of the timeliness in which the project can be completed and the team's record of past ability to complete projects on time;
- Specialized experience and competence of the proposed consultant team member(s);
- The record of past performance on similar projects, that is, the project team's ability to provide successful facilitation with diverse groups on potentially contentious issues;
- The reputation of the contractor, as determined by inquiries with previous and current clients and other references;
- Other factors, if any, specific to this effort or deemed appropriate.

The Center may require interviews from one or more proposers prior to commencement of contract negotiations. The contract resulting from this RFP will be prepared as a fixed fee for services contract, including all reimbursable expenses.

Organizations owned or controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, women, and historically black colleges and universities are encouraged to apply and identify themselves as such in their applications.

The Center reserves the right to amend and/or reissue this RFP, and to award contracts to one or more firms or to no firms at all as determined to be in its best interest.

Applicants must be familiar with relevant laws, codes, approvals, permits, and regulatory requirements of Federal, State, and local agencies.

The Center for the Inland Bays is considered a public body under state of Delaware law and thus is subject to freedom of information act requests that might pertain to this procurement.

Contract may be required to include the following language: "The contractor shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin or sex in the performance of this contract. The contractor shall carry out applicable requirements of 40 CFR part 33 in the award and administration of contracts awarded under EPA financial assistance agreements. Failure by the contractor to carry out these requirements is a material breach of this contract which may result in the termination of this contract or other legally available remedies."

Submittal Requirements

Proposals should be submitted as a single PDF document to Andrew McGowan at environment@inlandbays.org by **4 p.m. on May 15, 2022**. Proposals should be concise and include the following sections:

1. Executive summary/understanding of project requirements
2. Project schedule
4. Deliverables
5. Project team organization and brief team resumes
6. Relevant experience and/or expertise
7. Detailed pricing

8. References

If further clarification is needed please email Andrew McGowan at environment@inlandbays.org.