# **REQUEST FOR STATEMENTS OF INTEREST**

# **FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT**

# **Federal Awarding Agency:**

# U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,

# Engineer Research and Development Center

# 3909 Halls Ferry Road

# Vicksburg, MS 39180-6199

# **Funding Opportunity No:** W81EWF-20-SOI-0015

# **CFDA No:** 12.630

# **Statutory Authority:** 10 USC 2358

# **Project Title:** Landscape Pattern – Ridge, Slough, Tree Island Mosaics

# **Announcement Type**: Initial announcement

# **Issue Date:** 23 March 2020

# **Statement of Interest/Qualifications Due Date**: 23 April 2020, 1600 hrs, Central

# **Full Application Package Due Date, if Invited**: 13 May 2020, 1600 hrs, Central

# **Estimated Award Ceiling:** Approximately $91,690.00 is expected to be available to support this project for one (1) year.

# **Estimated Total Program Funding (optional)**:Additional funding may be available for work in subsequent fiscal years up to 4 years at $91,690.00 per year for a total of $458,450.00 over 5 years.

# **Expected Number of Awards:** The government may issue more than 1 award from this announcement.

###### **Section I: Funding Opportunity Description**

**Background:**

The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2000 authorized the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) as a framework for modifications and operational changes to the Central and Southern Florida Project needed to restore the South Florida ecosystem. Provisions within WRDA 2000 provided for specific authorization for an adaptive assessment and monitoring program. The CERP Monitoring and Assessment Plan (MAP) was developed as a framework for measuring and understanding system responses to CERP, determining how well CERP is meeting its goals and objectives, and identifying opportunities for improving the performance of CERP where needed.

Throughout the current managed system, the pre-drainage, patterned mosaic of sawgrass ridges, sloughs and tree islands in the Greater Everglades wetlands ecosystem has been substantially altered or reduced largely as the result of human alterations to the historic ecological processes that sustained the landscape patterns. The general goals of CERP restoration are to stem, and possibly reverse this degradation of the ridge and slough and tree island landscape through redirecting flows now released unused to the ocean and the gulf into these critical habitats. The MAP presented an overarching monitoring framework for guiding restoration efforts throughout the entire process and requires not only a comprehensive assessment of the current state of the ecosystem and assessment of restoration endpoints (targets), but ongoing monitoring and evaluation throughout the process that will aid the implementing agencies in optimizing operational procedures and project designs. This project integrates with on-going ridge and slough work to provide a complete integrated assessment of the ridge, slough, and tree island system. Full implementation of this monitoring design will not only enable a holistic assessment of the current ecosystem but will provide the data needed for adaptive management and evaluation model validation.

**Brief Description of Anticipated Work:**

This project should be designed to address the needs identified in the Greater Everglades wetlands performance measures: (1) Wetland Landscape Patterns – Ridge-Slough Community Sustainability; and (2) Wetland Landscape Patterns - Marl Prairie Cape Sable Sparrow Habitat. Specifically, the project will address the Greater Everglades Wetland Landscape and Plant Community Dynamics hypotheses: (1) ridge and slough micro-topography in relation to organic soil accretion and loss; (2) ridge and slough landscape pattern in relation to microtopography; and (3) plant community dynamics along elevation gradients as water depths and thus hydroperiods change.

The objectives of the proposed work include:

Objective 1: To determine extant reference conditions for each of the performance measures listed above (including variability of those measures in time and space).

Objective 2: To establish present status of landscape performance measures throughout the central Everglades, particularly in areas of historic ridge-slough landscape patterning, identify spatial and temporal trends of those performance measures, and quantify their relationships to the present hydrologic regime.

Objective 3: To detect unanticipated changes in ecosystem structure and processes that result from hydrologic management or manipulation, CERP restoration activities, or climatic variation

Objective 4: To provide data in support of scientific studies of inter-relationships among vegetation, microtopography, and hydrologic regime that may provide insight into the causes of unanticipated ecosystem responses.

**Public Benefit:**

This project will play a critical role in building the knowledge base for understanding landscape patterns in the Everglades. This project is part of the scientific assessments for improving CERP's ability to restore, preserve and protect the South Florida ecosystem while providing for the region's other water-related needs. The results of this project will be used by RECOVER to apply a system-wide perspective to the planning and implementation of the CERP, and communicate and coordinate the results of these evaluations and assessments to managers, decision makers and the public. Recreational benefits provided include outdoor recreation opportunities and improved access to Everglades marshes for tourists and Floridians.

###### **Section II: Award Information**

Responses to this Request for Statements of Interest will be used to identify potential investigators for studies to be sponsored by the Jacksonville District and the Engineer Research and Development Center to provide information related to landscape patterns in the Everglades. The estimated level of funding for FY20 is approximately $91,690.00. Additional funds of $91,690.00/year for four additional years may be available, providing the potential funding of $458,450.00 over five years to the successful Recipient/Awardee. Depending on findings in the early years of this effort, funding needs may increase above the anticipated $91,690.00/year in subsequent years of this project; however, total funding will not exceed $658,450.00 over the life of this cooperative agreement.

**Government Involvement:**

The USACE will participate in study site selections, design, and work plan development. USACE will participate in field data collection efforts as appropriate, will review quarterly status reports, and will provide input to data interpretation for final reports, as well as review annual and final reports. USACE will incorporate the data and analysis into a system-wide database that assesses and evaluates ecosystem restoration efforts in central and southern Florida. Scientific and technical information generated from the project will be utilized to evaluate project/restoration performance and system responses to be used in the development of assessment reports describing and interpreting those responses.

###### **Section III: Eligibility Information**

* 1. Eligible Applicants – This opportunity is restricted to non-federal partners of the South Florida Caribbean CESU Unit.
  2. Cost Sharing – This action will be 100% funded by USACE.

###### **Section IV: Application and Submission Information – Two Phase Process**

###### **Phase I: Submission of a Statement of Interest/Qualifications.**

1. Materials Requested for Statement of Interest/Qualifications:
   1. Please provide the following via e-mail attachment to: [Melissa.A.Keen@usace.army.mil](mailto:Melissa.A.Keen@usace.army.mil)

(Maximum length: 2 pages, single-spaced 12 pt. font).

1. Name, Organization and Contact Information

2. Brief Statement of Qualifications (including):

* + - * Biographical Sketch,
      * Relevant past projects and clients with brief descriptions of these projects,
      * Staff, faculty or students available to work on this project and their areas of expertise,
      * Any brief description of capabilities to successfully complete the project you may wish to add (e.g. equipment, laboratory facilities, greenhouse facilities, field facilities, etc.).

Note: A proposed budget is NOT requested at this time.

The administrative point of contact is Melissa Keen, 601-634-4880; [melissa.a.keen@usace.army.mil](mailto:melissa.a.keen@usace.army.mil)

1. Statement of Interest/Qualifications shall be submitted NO LATER THAN 23 April 2020, 1600 hrs, Central

Based on a review of the Statements of Interest received, an investigator or investigators will be invited to move to Phase II which is to prepare a full study proposal. Statements will be evaluated based on the investigator’s specific experience and capabilities in areas related to the study requirements.

**Phase II: Submission of a complete application package to include a full technical proposal including budget, if invited.**

1. Address to Request Application Package

The complete funding opportunity announcement, application forms, and instructions are available for download at Grants.gov.

The administrative point of contact is Melissa Keen, 601-634-4880; [melissa.a.keen@usace.army.mil](mailto:melissa.a.keen@usace.army.mil)

1. Content and Form of Application Submission

All mandatory forms and any applicable optional forms must be completed in accordance with the instructions on the forms and the additional instructions below.

* 1. SF 424 R&R - Application for Federal Assistance
  2. Full Technical Proposal – Discussion of the nature and scope of the research and technical approach. Additional information on prior work in this area, descriptions of available equipment, data and facilities, and resumes of personnel who will be participating in this effort should also be included.
  3. Cost Proposal/Budget – Clear, concise, and accurate cost proposals reflect the offeror’s financial plan for accomplishing the effort contained in the technical proposal. As part of its cost proposal, the offeror shall submit cost element breakdowns in sufficient detail so that a reasonableness determination can be made. The SF 424 Research & Related Budget Form can be used as a guide. The cost breakdown should include the following, if applicable:

1. Direct Labor: Direct labor should be detailed by level of effort (i.e. numbers of hours, etc.) of each labor category and the applicable labor rate. The source of labor rates shall be identified and verified. If rates are estimated, please provide the historical based used and clearly identify all escalation applied to derive the proposed rates.
2. Fringe Benefit Rates: The source of fringe benefit rate shall be identified and verified.
3. Travel: Travel costs must include a purpose and breakdown per trip to include destination, number of travelers, and duration.
4. Materials/Equipment: List all material/equipment items by type and kind with associated costs and advise if the costs are based on vendor quotes and/or engineering estimates; provide copies of vendor quotes and/or catalog pricing data.
5. Subrecipient costs: Submit all subrecipient proposals and analyses. Provide the method of selection used to determine the subrecipient.
6. Tuition: Provide details and verification for any tuition amounts proposed.
7. Indirect Costs: Currently the negotiated indirect rate for awards through the CESU is 17.5%.
8. Any other proposed costs: The source should be identified and verified.
9. Application package shall be submitted NO LATER THAN 13 May 2020, 1600 hrs, Central
10. Submission Instructions

Applications may be submitted by mail, e-mail, or Grants.gov. Choose ONE of the following submission methods:

* 1. E-mail:

Format all documents to print on Letter (8 ½ x 11”) paper. E-mail proposal to melissa.a.keen@usace.army.mil

* 1. Grants.gov: <https://www.grants.gov/>:

Applicants are not required to submit proposals through Grants.gov. However, if applications are submitted via the internet, applicants are responsible for ensuring that their Grants.gov proposal submission is received in its entirety.

All applicants choosing to use Grants.gov to submit proposals must be registered and have and account with Grants.gov. It may take up to three weeks to complete Grants.gov registration. For more information on registration, go to [<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants.html>.](http://www.grants.gov/ForApplicants)

###### **Section V: Application Review Information**

1. **Peer or Scientific Review Criteria:** In accordance with DoDGARs 22.315(c), an impartial peer review will be conducted. Subject to funding availability, all proposals will be reviewed using the criteria listed below (technical and cost/price). All proposals will be evaluated under the following two criteria which are of descending importance.

a. **Technical (items i. and ii. are of equal importance):**

i. Technical merits of proposed R&D.

ii. Potential relationship of proposed R&D to DoD missions.

b. **Cost/Price:** Overall realism of the proposed costs will be evaluated.

2. **Review and Selection Process**

a. **Categories:** Based on the Peer or Scientific Review, proposals will be categorized as Selectable or Not Selectable (see definitions below). The selection of the source for award will be based on the Peer or Scientific Review, as well as importance to agency programs and funding availability.

1. **Selectable:** Proposals are recommended for acceptance if sufficient funding is available.

ii. **Not Selectable:** Even if sufficient funding existed, the proposal should not be funded.

Note: The Government reserves the right to award some, all, or none of proposals. When the Government elects to award only a part of a proposal, the selected part may be categorized as Selectable, though the proposal as a whole may not merit such a categorization.

b. No other criteria will be used.

c. Prior to award of a potentially successful offer, the Grants Officer will make a determination regarding price reasonableness.

###### **Section VI: Award Administration Information**

1. Award Notices

Written notice of award will be given in conjunction with issuance of a cooperative agreement signed by a Grants Officer. The cooperative agreement will contain the effective date of the agreement, the period of performance, funding information, and all terms and conditions. The recipient is required to sign and return the document before work under the agreement commences. **Work described in this announcement SHALL NOT begin without prior authorization from a Grants Officer.**

1. Administrative Requirements

The cooperative agreement issued as a result of this announcement is subject to the administrative requirements in 2 CFR Subtitle A; 2 CFR Subtitle B, Ch. XI, Part 1103; and 32 CFR Subchapter C, except Parts 32 and 33.

1. Reporting

See 2 CFR Sections 200.327 for financial reporting requirements,

200.328 for performance reporting requirements, and 200.329 for real property reporting requirements.

###### **Section VII: Agency Contact**

Melissa Keen, Grants Specialist

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