



Enhancing Iowa's Lakes Through Community Supported Innovative Water Quality Solutions

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

*The Nature Conservancy Iowa
505 5th Ave #630
Des Moines, IA 50309*

1/24/2025

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1.0 Introduction and Overview

1.1 Statement of Purpose

It is the intention of The Nature Conservancy ("Conservancy" or "TNC") to solicit Proposals for the provision of services in support of the Conservancy's "Enhancing Iowa's Lakes Through Community Supported Innovative Water Quality Solutions" project. Those receiving this Request for Proposal ("RFP") are referred to as "Vendor".

The Conservancy has offices in over 79 countries globally. Our mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Please visit www.nature.org for more details on what the Conservancy does and where we work.

1.2 The Conservancy's Procurement Process

Procurement activities will be conducted without discrimination with Vendors given fair treatment.

The Conservancy reserves the right to reject any or all offers for any reason, waive technicalities, and pursue purchasing in a manner that is in the organization's best interest.

1.3 Conservancy's Obligations

The Conservancy incurs no obligation or liability because of the issuance of this RFP or action by anyone relative to it.

1.4 Vendor's Obligations

The Vendor must respond to all sections of this RFP and provide sufficient information to allow the Conservancy to evaluate the Proposal. By submitting its proposal, the Vendor agrees that any costs incurred by them in responding to this RFP, are the Vendor's responsibility and may not be billed to the Conservancy.

If the Conservancy has any confusion or difficulty retrieving information from a Vendor's proposal, the Conservancy may seek written clarification from the Vendor. Unless requested by the Conservancy, the Vendor will not be allowed to resubmit their proposal to the Conservancy.

The Vendor shall not use the names, logos, images, or any data or results arising from the anticipated contract for advertising without the Conservancy's prior written consent.

1.5 Proposal Pricing Structure

The Conservancy requests firm fixed pricing for this assignment. If a Vendor is selected for contract award and additional costs are presented during the contract negotiations or implementation, the Conservancy has the right to reject that Vendor.

1.6 Vendor Submission Requirements

All proposal responses will follow the instructions indicated in Section 3. Vendors may insert hyperlinks to their website or online documentation as part of their response to reduce the size of their proposals.

NOTE: Such hyperlinks must go directly to the information required and Vendors must include which section on their website it can be found.

1.6.1 Vendor Confirmation of Intent to Participate

Upon receiving the RFP packet, Vendors must submit their confirmation of intent to participate in this procurement process through the email addresses, paige.frautschy@tnc.org and mridula.menon@tnc.org before the date and time indicated in Section 1.10.

1.6.2 Nature of Proposals

All material submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of the Conservancy and may be returned only at the option of the Conservancy and at the expense of the Vendor.

1.6.3 Contractual Commitment of Proposal

The contents of submitted Proposals will be considered obligations of the successful Vendor. Vendors should ensure that their proposals are valid throughout the RFP process and if selected for contract award, valid until the contract is executed. Vendors should not submit information that will not be incorporated into the Proposal and any contract that may result from such Proposal.

If there is any inconsistency between the terms herein and any other Conservancy contract documents, the other Conservancy contract document terms shall prevail.

1.6.4 Submission of Vendor's Queries on the RFP

All vendor queries must be submitted through the email addresses, paige.frautschy@tnc.org and mridula.menon@tnc.org. It is the Vendor's responsibility to seek clarification if they do not fully understand or may be interpreted in more than one way.

It is the Conservancy's policy to avoid situations that:

- Place it in a position where its judgment may be biased;
- Create an appearance of conflict of interest concerning rendering an impartial, fair, technically sound, and objective decision before selection; or
- Give an unfair competitive advantage to competing Vendors.

Therefore, to ensure an ethical and transparent procurement process, all inquiries or other communications regarding this RFP shall **exclusively be directed** to the TNC's local BU Procurement Contact. Responses to Vendor queries received will be shared by e-mail with all Vendors. However, the Conservancy is not required to answer all questions that are not pertinent to the RFP or considered to be the Conservancy's proprietary information.

If the Vendor or its affiliates, officers, employees, agents, consultants, and subcontractors violate these restrictions, they will be disqualified from the RFP and their proposal rejected.

1.6.5 Proposals Submission

Vendors must submit their proposals through paige.frautschy@tnc.org on or before the submission due date and time indicated in Section 1.10. Any proposal received after that date and time shall be disqualified from proceeding to the evaluation stage.

If the Vendor experiences any issues sending their proposals, they should contact paige.frautschy@tnc.org.

TNC will not accept hardcopy proposals.

1.7 Evaluation Process

The Conservancy's evaluation process is based on a confidential scoring method involving ratings and weighted scores that will not be shared with the Vendors. In general, the Proposals will be evaluated based on the following evaluation criteria:

- *Mandatory requirements*
- *Organization's experience in similar assignments*

- *Proposed methodology and work plan*
- *Proposed key personnel experience and qualifications*
- *Vendor's diversity and sustainability considerations*
- *Maintenance costs*
- *Proposed assignment pricing*
- *Interviews/presentation criteria*

The Conservancy will evaluate Vendor proposals in three stages:

1.7.1 Stage 1: Technical and Financial Proposal Evaluation

A Technical Proposal refers to a Vendor's proposed resolution to a problem or assignment that includes a detailed description of the proposed approach, the requirements, and the resources needed to implement the proposed solution, among others.

The Conservancy will evaluate and compare all Vendors' Technical and Financial to Sections 2 - 4 of this RFP with the evaluation criteria set above and shortlist Vendors to proceed to Stage 2.

1.7.2 Stage 2: Interviews/Presentations

This will be the interview/presentation session on the Vendor's offered proposals where the Vendors and the Conservancy can ask clarifying questions while going through the interview/presentation of the Vendor's proposal.

The Conservancy, at its discretion, may share any knowledge or data discussed during the presentation that is not considered confidential or proprietary to either party but will be beneficial for all participating Vendors that make it to this stage. TNC will shortlist the final vendors to proceed to Stage 3.

1.7.3 Stage 3: Negotiations Stage

The Conservancy will clarify any other assignment requirements and may allow the Vendor to revise their Financial Proposal based on the negotiations agreed upon. The Conservancy will have the right to review and negotiate further such pricing before selecting a vendor for contract award.

Note: A contract award is not finalized until both parties mutually accept and sign the contract in writing. If neither the Conservancy nor the Vendor reaches an agreement, the Conservancy reserves the right to rescind the award notification and either begin discussions with the second-ranked qualifying Vendor, re-start the RFP process, or terminate the project.

1.8 Vendor Notification of Evaluation Outcome

Successful and unsuccessful Vendors will be notified of the evaluation outcome in writing via email. The Conservancy shall not be obligated to provide specific details of any of the scores or results of the evaluation.

1.9 Certificate of Insurance

The Vendor shall provide a copy of its current certificate of insurance showing the types and limits of insurance in effect as of the Proposal submission date. If selected for contract award, the Vendor will then be required to add the Conservancy to its certificate of insurance before signing the contract.

1.10 Key RFP Timelines

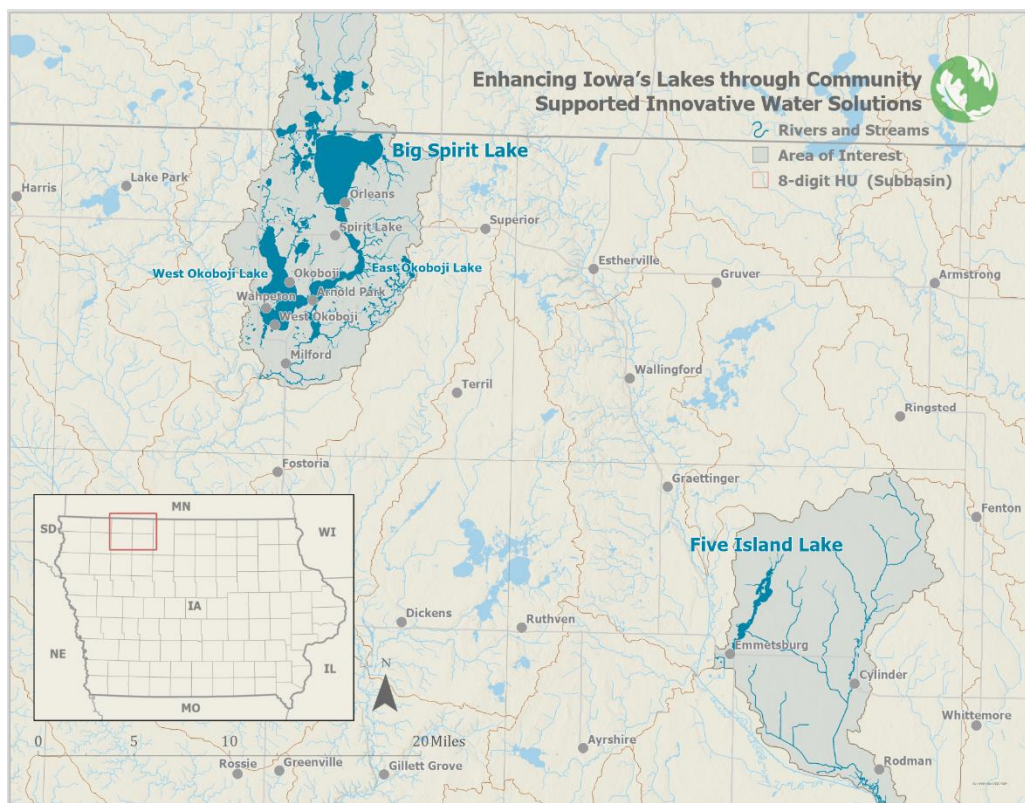
The dates for each RFP requirement are as follows

Event	Date	Time and Zone
Vendor's email confirmation of intent to participate	2/7/2025	5:00pm CST
Vendor submits any clarification queries	2/14/2025	5:00pm CST
The Conservancy's Response to Vendor's Queries	2/21/2025	5:00pm CST
Proposal Due Date (with signed Conflict Inquiry Form)	2/28/2025	5:00pm CST
Vendor Interviews/Presentations	Weeks of 3/3/2025 - 3/21/2025	TBD
Negotiation Phase	Weeks of 3/3/2025 - 3/21/2025	TBD
Selection of Vendor for contract award	By 3/24/2025	TBD

2.0 Project Background

The Iowa Business Unit is seeking to contract a vendor to provide services to model the impact of various in-field and edge-of-field conservation practices on water quality in support of its Enhancing Iowa's Lakes Through Community Supported Innovative Water Quality Solutions project. The Iowa Great Lakes Region (IGL) boasts some of Iowa's most scenic lakes, providing important habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species, as well as recreational opportunities. However, lake quality is threatened by excess nutrient runoff from a variety of sources, including agriculture.

A new effort led by the Conservancy, with both public and private support, aims to mobilize the formation of a farmer-led peer learning group to promote and support the adoption of agricultural conservation practices that benefit both area wildlife and the farmers' bottom line, and ensure Iowans and other visitors can continue to enjoy the region's lakes. The project will specifically target the Big Spirit Lake Watershed in Dickinson County and Five Island Lake in Palo Alto County. The project has a goal of influencing 30,000 acres in the respective project area shown below by June 2027



To implement best management practices (BMPs) to address nutrient run-off, it is imperative to understand the existing conditions and practices within the watershed and model the impacts of various in-field and edge-of field conservation practices on water quality. Watershed models that can model the impact of various practices can guide decision-making when implementing BMPs in the region.

The project is funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Conservation Partnership Program (CPP), The Mosaic Company, and the Wright Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation. Project activities and goals are to be set and achieved over a period of 3 years, currently ending in July 2027.

2.1 Assignment Scope of Work

The selected vendor will provide **services to model the impact of various in-field and edge-of field conservation practices to water quality** within the Big Spirit Lake and Five Island Lake watersheds.

Tasks of the scope of work include:

Watershed Assessment: By August 2025, complete a baseline assessment of the target watersheds, including but not limited to analyses of historical land-use impacts and changes, comparative aerial photography, discharge, current land use impacts, and other relevant/necessary data to understand how the watersheds behaved historically. The watershed assessment shall identify sources of nutrient and sediment run-off to understand where contributions are coming from and target hotspots.

Using nutrient and sediment load reduction estimations for specific BMPs outlined in the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, develop scenarios and/or recommendations for which best management practices will be most effective in reaching local water quality goals and where they should be located to have the greatest effect. Best management practices may include but are not limited to, cover crops, reduced tillage, improvements in fertilizer use efficiency, constructed wetlands, oxbows, filter strips, etc.

In addition to the baseline assessment and targeting, modeling/monitoring the estimated impacts of practices implemented throughout the course of the project period (2025-2027) will also be required on a yearly basis and with a final report due upon completion of the project. The project anticipates influencing practice adoption at a scale of 30,000 acres in and around the watersheds disclosed. Models developed shall have the ability to estimate the impacts of best management practices implemented on the landscape at this scale.

Model Design: Design or enhance watershed models for Big Spirit Lake and Five Island Lake. The models must simulate the potential outcomes of implementing various conservation practices including but not limited to reduced tillage, cover crops, 4R nutrient management, prairie strips, edge of field buffer strips, and constructed wetlands. In addition to on-farm practices, the model should also consider outcomes of novel solutions that directly address nutrients in-lake, in-channel, and near-channel.

2.2 Required Experience and Qualifications

2.2.1 Mandatory Requirements for the Vendor

The Vendor will be required to demonstrate the following mandatory requirements. Failure to do so will lead to disqualification of the Vendor from the RFP process:

- i. At least five (5) years of experience providing similar services in the Midwest.
- ii. Board Certified Water Resources Engineer certification
- iii. Knowledgeable on the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy and the impact that practices outlined in the strategy have on reducing nutrient losses

2.2.2 Proposed Personnel Qualifications and Experience

The Vendor's proposed personnel must demonstrate the following mandatory requirements:

- i. Minimum of 5 years experience working on similar assignments
- ii. Valid Professional Engineer certification
- iii. Project Management Professional certification preferred.

3.0 Proposal Format

The Vendor's proposal will be submitted as either a PDF or Word document in line with the two-part submission below:

- i. Technical Proposal
- ii. Financial Proposal

NOTE: Please omit all pricing information from the Technical & Functional Proposal. Include pricing information only in the Financial Proposal.

Please refer to the guidance provided in the table below:

Proposal	Requirement	Content
Technical Proposal	Executive Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an overview of the Organization and if applicable, details of the parent and subsidiary organizations.
	Vendor's Response to the Scope of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed, thorough solutions (proposed methodology and techniques) to the requirements listed in Section 2 and/or attached in Section 4; and Workplan/implementation plan including number and roles of proposed staff, considered contract and project deadlines
	Pre-qualification (Mandatory) requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vendors must demonstrate that they meet the mandatory requirements indicated in Section 2.5. Failure to do so shall lead to disqualification.
	References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Names of at least 3 client organizations (preferably other nonprofit or government organizations besides TNC) to whom similar services were provided. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, name, and designation of the point of contact; and Dollar value, type of contract, duration, and description of similar goods and/or services provided.
	List of Current or Prior TNC Contracts within the last 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A brief description of the services provided and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dollar value and duration; The TNC employee contact person (name, designation, telephone number, and e-mail address); and Whether the contract was terminated before the end of the term specified in the original contract,

Proposal	Requirement	Content
		including whether any available renewal option was not exercised.
	Subcontractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a complete list of all subcontractors that will work on the Contract if the Vendor is selected for contract award; • A Letter of Intent describing a full description of the duties each subcontractor will perform and why/how each subcontractor was deemed the most qualified for this project; and • Signed Conflict Interest Forms and Non-Disclosure Agreements from all participating subcontractors. These should be submitted together with the Proposal submissions.
	Legal Action Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement as to whether there are any outstanding legal actions or potential claims against the Vendor and a brief description of any action taken; • A brief description of any settled or closed legal actions or claims against the Vendor over the past five (5) years. This should include the court, case name, complaint number, and a brief description of the final ruling or determination; and • In instances where litigation is ongoing and the Vendor has been directed not to disclose information by the court, provide the name of the judge, court, and the location of the court.
	Required Forms and Certifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalist Vendor(s) may be required to complete the Supplier Diversity and Sustainability Tool. This will be shared in a separate email. • Where applicable, submit a copy of a valid certificate if the Vendor is a certified woman-owned, minority-owned, veteran, disabled-veteran, LGBTQ+ status, or a combination thereof. The certificate must provide the name of the certifying body along with the certification number and expiration date; and • Signed and completed forms whose links are provided under Section 4.
	TNC Standard Clauses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TNC requires a set of clauses to be incorporated into any agreement we execute with vendors. The clauses are attached under Section 4; and • Vendors shall review the clauses and indicate in their proposal, whether they "accept" or "accept with revision". If any are "Accepted with Revision",

Proposal	Requirement	Content
		Vendors are required to send those revisions in a red-line format as part of their proposal submission
	Federal Contract Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because this project is part of a federal award, TNC requires the Provisions for Non-Federal Entity Contracts under Federal Awards found at Appendix II to Part 200, Title 2 be incorporated into any agreement we execute with vendors. • Vendors shall review the clauses and indicate in their proposal, whether they “accept” or “accept with revision”. If any are “Accepted with Revision”, Vendors are required to send those revisions in a red-line format as part of their proposal submission.
Financial Proposal	Costs Breakdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Proposal shall contain all costs associated with this assignment including remuneration of Key and Non-Key Personnel and any reimbursable costs; and • The Proposal may include a commonly accepted method to prove its fiscal integrity. The Vendor may submit independently audited financial statements like the Profit and Loss statement and Balance Sheet, for the last two (2) years.
	Payment Terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TNC’s applicable payment terms are net 30 (calendar days)
	Currency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Financial proposal shall be in US Dollars
	Taxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vendor, its sub-consultants, and Experts are responsible for identifying the applicable taxes for this assignment as well as meeting all tax liabilities arising from this assignment; and • The Vendor shall break down all the applicable taxes related to the assignment.

4.0 RFP Appendices

4.1 Appendix A: Conflict Inquiry Form

Attached as a separate document

4.2 Appendix B: TNC's Standard Clauses

Attached as a separate document