

PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT

US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC)

Title: Technical assistance with riparian ecosystem monitoring along the Middle Rio Grande

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Funding Opportunity Number: W81EWF-24-SOI-0015

Assistance Listing Number: 12.630

Date Issued: 26 January 2024

Key Dates: Phase I announcement will be open to receive statements of interest continuously until 12 noon Central Time (CT), 26 February 2024, at which point all statements of interest must be received.

If invited to Phase II, full proposal applications will be due at 12 noon Central Time (CT), 27 March 2024.

Estimated Award Ceiling: \$470,000.00 Amount of Initial Funding

Estimated Total Program Funding: \$2,350,000.00 Amount of Total Funding including options

Agency Contact: Kisha Craig, Kisha.M.Craig@usace.army.mil.

I. Program Description

A. Short Description of Funding Opportunity

1.3 ERDC seeks applications for: Technical assistance with monitoring of biotic and abiotic conditions at riparian research sites within the Middle Rio Grande bosque in Central New Mexico in coordination with USACE and the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program (MRGESCP). This project will research the effects of ecological drivers (flooding, fire, climate, and human alteration) and the effects of management, maintenance, and restoration activities on ecosystem health.

B. Background

The Middle Rio Grande and the adjacent riparian woodland habitat (“bosque”) provide valuable habitat for a rich assemblage of wildlife. Water management and maintenance activities affect riparian habitats and the animal species they support. In addition, drought, wildfires, invasive species, changing climate and hydrologic conditions, and proximity to urbanized areas impact riparian ecosystems.

The USACE Albuquerque District (District)’s Civil Works mission includes aquatic ecosystem restoration, flood risk management, recreation, and environmental stewardship. The District aims to promote processes that restore natural ecosystem functions and thriving aquatic and riparian wildlife habitats.

The Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program (MRGESCP) is a diverse partnership of federal, state, tribal and local signatory agencies and organizations whose mission is a collaborative and science-based approach to protect and improve the status of endangered species along the middle portion of the Rio Grande watershed of New Mexico, while simultaneously protecting existing and future regional water uses.

To better understand changing conditions and the impacts of District and other agencies’ water and riparian habitat management, maintenance, and restoration activities, the District in cooperation with MRGESCP signatories has collected data for over ten years at research monitoring sites established within the Middle Rio Grande bosque. Data collected on abiotic factors includes groundwater level, water levels in adjacent ditches, precipitation, and air and soil temperatures. Biotic factors monitored include tree and shrub composition and productivity, and arthropod abundance and distribution.

Data are made available to the public and efforts are made to engage citizen and student groups in monitoring activities to increase public understanding of the Rio Grande ecosystem while supporting essential research needs. Furthermore, these data have been analyzed to provide results useful to both the District and other signatories to the MRGESCP.

C. Program Description/Objective: (brief description of the anticipated work)

Work under this program will support ongoing research, monitoring, management, and restoration activities by the USACE Albuquerque District within the Middle Rio Grande bosque and will continue to support collaboration with the MRGESCP.

Objectives include: providing technical assistance; conducting monitoring and research related to riparian habitat conditions; and providing sound scientific data useful for water and riparian habitat management and protection.

Specific tasks include:

- Design monitoring programs in coordination with USACE personnel and collaborating agencies;
- Conduct monthly monitoring of groundwater levels, ditch water levels, precipitation, and air and soil temperatures;
- Conduct arthropod and leaf litter monitoring;
- Conduct tamarisk leaf beetle monitoring;
- Conduct vegetation monitoring;
- Manage and analyze monitoring data;
- Collect and manage geographic data for mapping purposes;
- Collaborate with other federal agencies, state agencies, tribes, local government, nonprofit organizations, and the scientific community on Middle Rio Grande conservation and management issues;
- Submit an annual report that details long-term trends and short-term patterns in monitored variables and highlight results important to the District's and the MRGESCP's Mission and Objectives;
- Submit monthly updates to USACE;
- Attend quarterly review meetings; and
- Submit copies of all data to USACE

D. Public Benefit

Management, maintenance, and restoration activities influence plant and animal diversity along the Rio Grande. The Rio Grande and adjacent bosque provides recreational opportunities for the public and offers quality-of-life benefits by providing access to open space and natural areas. Biodiversity also is recognized as benefitting the public good. Research supported by the Agreement will inform the implementation of enhanced management, restoration, and conservation of river and bosque habitat, support management of threatened and endangered species and their habitat, and help manage for biodiversity.

Collected Information will be shared with the MRGESCP and will support coordinated management of the Rio Grande ecosystem – a public resource. Data will be made available to the public as appropriate via the MRGESCP data portal (<https://webapps.usgs.gov/MRGESCP/data/data.html>) and through MRGESCP publications. Making these data available will help inform agencies, organizations, and public entities that conduct activities and manage resources on the Middle Rio Grande. In addition, engaging citizen and student groups in monitoring activities increases public understanding of the Rio Grande ecosystem, promotes stewardship, and provides training opportunities in scientific monitoring and data collection.

E. Authorization: 10 USC 4001

F. Legal Requirements

Each Cooperative Agreement awarded under this announcement will be governed by 2 CFR 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”, 2 CFR 1100 Subchapter D—Administrative Requirements Terms and Conditions for Cost-Type Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Nonprofit and Governmental Entities and the DoD research general terms and conditions located at <https://www.nre.navy.mil/work-with-us/manage-your-award/manage-grant-award/grants-terms-conditions>.

G. Program-Specific Requirements

Program-specific requirements include:

- The Project Manager shall have at least three (3) years of experience in project management for riparian ecosystem monitoring contracts/programs;
- The Principal Investigator or Lead Biologist must have a minimum of 10 years of experience in riparian monitoring and riparian ecology, and a Master’s Degree or higher in an applicable field (i.e., Biology, Ecology, or Conservation Biology);
- The Field Crew Leader should have at least a bachelor’s degree in an applicable field.
- Key personnel must have at least five (5) years of experience using applicable survey methods; and
- Field personnel must include at least one skilled botanical observer with 1) expertise in plant survey techniques (e.g., Hink and Ohmart vegetation community and structure classification method) and 2) the ability to identify plant species occurring in the Middle Rio Grande, such as common canopy and understory plant species and exotic and invasive plant species.

II. Federal Award Information

The following information applies to awards issued under this announcement:

- This is a one-time initiative
- The Government anticipates 1 Federal awards from this announcement, but reserves the right to award more or less
- The total amount of funding expected to be awarded through this announcement is \$2,350,000.00
- The expected amount of funding for each award is \$470,000.00 per year for Years 1 to 5.
- Award(s) from this announcement will be Cooperative Agreement(s)
- The anticipated period of performance is up to 5 years.
- Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new Federal awards
- The government reserves the right to accept only portions of an application and to negotiate with potential awardees
- USACE’s substantial involvement includes providing input on sampling design, survey locations, survey methods, data analyses and interpretation, and report content. Furthermore, USACE will partner with the awardee on data collection to provide USACE staff with valuable field experience and training.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

This opportunity is restricted to non-federal partners of the Colorado Plateau Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit (CESU).

Disclosures of current and pending support made in this application may render an applicant ineligible for funding. Prior to award and throughout the period of performance, ERDC may continue to request updated continuing and pending support information, which will be reviewed and may result in discontinuation of funding.

Religious organizations are entitled to compete on equal footing with secular organizations for Federal financial assistance as described in E.O. 13798, “Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty.”

B. Conflict of Interest

a) General Requirement for Disclosure

You and your organization must disclose any potential or actual scientific or nonscientific conflict of interest(s) to us. You must also disclose any potential or actual conflict(s) of interest for any identified sub recipient you include in your application. We may have to ask you more questions if we need more information.

At our discretion, we may ask you for a conflict-of-interest mitigation plan after you submit your application. Your plan is subject to our approval.

b) Scientific Conflict of Interest

Scientific collaborations on research and development projects are generally the result of close collaboration prior to the submission of applications for support. Accordingly, these collaborations should be considered when considering potential conflicts of interest. The potential conflict is mitigated by the disclosure of these collaborations, and the list of current and pending support you provide for senior and key researchers. Therefore, you must include in your list of current and pending support all collaborators, even if they did not formally provide support.

C. Other

a) Licensure or Certification

You must include the Acknowledgment of Support and Disclaimer on all materials created or produced under our awards. This language may be found in the Terms and Conditions included in the award documents.

E. Certifications, representations, and assurances

1. To apply for grants and other funding opportunities the applicant entity must have an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM). Applications will not be accepted through Grants.gov or other methods unless the entity is registered in SAM. Registration in SAM now includes the acceptance of Certifications and Assurances. See <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/grantors/grantor-standard-language.html> for details on how to register in SAM, and Grants.gov
2. The Federal Assistance Certifications Report is an attestation that the entity will abide by the requirements of the various laws and regulations; therefore, as applicable, you are still required to submit any documentation, including the SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if award value exceeds \$100,000.00), and, if applicable, informing DoD of unpaid delinquent tax liability or a felony conviction under any Federal law.
3. Certification Regarding Disclosure of Funding Sources. By checking "I Agree" on the SF 424 (R&R) block 17 you agree to abide by the following statement: "By signing this application, I certify the proposing entity is in compliance with Section 223(a) of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 which requires that: (a) the PI and other key personnel certify that the current and pending support provided on the proposal is current, accurate and complete; (B) agree to update such disclosure at the request of the agency prior to the award of support and at any subsequent time the agency determines appropriate during the term of the award; and (c) the PI and other key personnel have been made aware of the requirements under Section 223(a)(1) of this Act. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. code, Title 218, Section 1001)."

D. Cost Sharing or Matching

This action will be 100% funded by USACE.

IV. Application and Submission Information (2 Phase Process)

A. Phase I: Submission of Statement of Interest (SOI)

1. Materials Requested for Statement of Interest/Qualifications:
 - a. Please provide the following via e-mail attachment to: Kisha M. Craig, Kisha.M.Craig@usace.army.mil (Maximum length: 2 pages, single-spaced 12 pt. font).
 - i. Name, Organization and Contact Information

ii. 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 Kisha M. Craig, Kisha.M.Craig@usace.army.mil

2. ERDC will only accept SOIs submitted on or before 26 February 2024, 12 noon Central Time (CT).

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.

B. Phase II (if invited): Submission of Full Application Package

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 Kisha M. Craig, Kisha.M.Craig@usace.army.mil.

2. 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.

- a. SF 424 R&R - Application for Federal Assistance
- b. 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.
- c. 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 a full budget in sufficient detail so that a reasonableness determination can be made. A recommended template will be included in the invitation to Phase II. The SF

424 Research & Related Budget Form can be used as a guide but is required if the sub-recipient uses it. 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.

d. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile

1. Biographical Sketch
2. Disclosure of Current and Pending Support:
 - i. A list of all current projects the individual is working on, in addition to any future support the individual has applied to receive, regardless of the source.
 - ii. Title and objectives of the other research projects.
 - iii. The percentage per year to be devoted to the other projects.
 - iv. The total amount of support the individual is receiving in connection to each of the other research projects or will receive if other applications are awarded.
 - v. Name and address of the agencies and/or other parties supporting the other research projects.
 - vi. Period of performance for the other research projects.

e. SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if award value exceeds \$100,000.00)

f. Data Management Plan:

A data management plan is a document that describes which data generated through the course of the proposed research will be shared and preserved, how it will be

done, or explains why data sharing or preservation is not possible or scientifically appropriate, or why the costs of sharing or preservation are incommensurate with the value of doing so. See also: DoD Instruction 3200.12.

<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/320012p.pdf?ver=2019-04-30-073122-220>

Data management plans are generally 2 pages in length, and must include the following considerations:

- (1) The types of data, software, and other materials to be produced.
- (2) How the data will be acquired.
- (3) Time and location of data acquisition, if scientifically pertinent.
- (4) How the data will be processed.
- (5) The file formats and the naming conventions that will be used.
- (6) A description of the quality assurance and quality control measures during collection, analysis, and processing.
- (7) A description of dataset origin when existing data resources are used.
- (8) A description of the standards to be used for data and metadata format and content.
- (9) Appropriate timeframe for preservation.
- (10) The plan may consider the balance between the relative value of data preservation and other factors such as the associated cost and administrative burden. The plan will provide a justification for such decisions.

3. ERDC will only accept full application packages submitted on or before 27 March 2024, 12 noon Central Time (CT).

4. Submission Instructions

Choose **ONE** of the following submission methods:

a. E-mail:

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

b. 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 an 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>.

Organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and active System for Award Management (SAM) registration to apply for Federal financial assistance.

C. Application Withdrawal:

An applicant may withdraw an application at any time before award by written notice via email. Notice of withdrawal shall be sent to the agency point of contact identified in this announcement, and are effective upon receipt.

D. Funding Restrictions

Per 2 CFR § 200.216, funds may not be used to procure telecommunications equipment or video surveillance services or equipment produced by

- Huawei Technologies Company,
- ZTE Corporation Hytera Communications Corporation,
- Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company,
- Dahua Technology Company
- any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities

Funds from an award may not be used to attain fee or profit.

V. Application Review Information

A. Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria, listed in descending order of importance:

- Technical merits of the proposed research and development; and
- Potential relationship of the proposed research and development to Department of Defense missions

B. Review and Selection Process:

Each application will be reviewed based on the selection criteria above rather than against other applications submitted under this Announcement.

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.

i. 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.

In addition to the technical/program review, the DoD performs a budget review and a risk

review as directed by 2 CFR 200.206, including a review of the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS). Applicants may review information in FAPIIS and comment on any information entered into that system. Comments made by applicants will be taken into account in addition to other information in considering applicants' integrity, business ethics, and record of performance.

VI. Federal Award Administration Information

The notification e-mail regarding a selection is not authorization to commit or expend DoD funds. A DoD grants officer is the only person authorized to obligate and approve the use of federal funds. This authorization is in the form of a signed Notice of Award. Applicants whose applications are recommended will be contacted by a DoD grants officer to discuss any additional information required for award. This may include representations and certifications, revised budgets or budget explanations, or other information as applicable to the proposed award. The award start date will be determined at this time.

VII. Reporting Requirements

The terms and conditions of the award will provide the specifics on how to submit the reports and any required sections for those reports.

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.328 (Financial Reporting) and 2 CFR 200.329 (Program Performance)

Report	Requirements/Form	Frequency	Means of Submission
ERDC Progress Report		Upon receipt of SF 270	E-mail
Research Performance Progress Reports (Interim and Final)	OMB Control Number: 0704-0527	Annually	E-mail
Financial Report	SF 425	Quarterly	E-mail
Payment Report	SF 270	Monthly	E-mail
Closeout Report		Once	E-mail

Awardees will need to comply with the reporting requirements in 2 CFR 170: Reporting Subaward and Executive Compensation Information.

The terms and conditions of the award will provide the specifics on how to submit the reports and any required sections for those reports.

VIII. Federal Contacts

Questions should be directed to:

Kisha M. Craig
Grants Specialist

Kisha.M.Craig@usace.army.mil

Timothy D. Black

Grants Officer

Timothy.D.Black@usace.army.mil

Questions regarding Grants.gov should be directed to: the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov.

IX. Other Information

The Federal government is not obligated to make any Federal award as a result of the announcement. Only grants officers can bind the Federal government to the expenditure of fund.

Applicants are advised to monitor Grants.gov for potential amendments to this Notice of Funding Opportunity. You can also elect to be automatically notified by Grants.gov whenever there is a change to the opportunity.

Applications must not include any information that has been identified as classified national security information under authorities established in Executive Order 12958, Classified National Security Information.