

Rio Grande Water Fund 2020 Forest and
Stream, Wetland & Riparian Projects

Request for Proposals
January 16, 2020

Proposals must be received by:
11:59 PM on March 11, 2020



RIO GRANDE
WATER FUND
A Wildfire and Water Source
Protection Project

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. Background

The Rio Grande Water Fund (RGWF) is an innovative public/private partnership with the goal of restoring 600,000 acres of at-risk forests over 20 years to secure clean water for New Mexicans now and for generations to come.

The Nature Conservancy (“TNC”) works around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. TNC is a District of Columbia, USA, non-profit corporation with its principal place of business in Arlington, Virginia, USA. In New Mexico, TNC has been working in New Mexico for 40 years and has protected over 3,000,000 acres across the state. In addition to leading the development of the Rio Grande Water Fund, TNC works to secure freshwater across the state, tackle climate change, and seeks innovative conservation solutions for our growing urban population in Albuquerque. Please see www.nature.org for more details on what TNC does and where it operates.

1.2. Statement of Purpose

It is the intention of TNC to solicit Proposals from restoration contractors, Tribes, non-governmental organization, or political subdivisions of the State such as a soil and water conservation district, land grant or acequia association to support the restoration goals of the Rio Grande Water Fund.

All projects must have an ecological restoration goal and applicants should clearly describe how this goal will be achieved. Additionally, proposals should briefly highlight secondary benefits (e.g., water source protection, community wildfire preparation, local economy, traditional communities) of each project. More detailed information on the project can be found in Section 2 below. Those receiving this Request for Proposal (RFP) are referred to as “Applicant”.

TNC plans to issue contracts or subawards (collectively, Agreements) which may approximately total \$400,000 - \$500,000 for new projects under this RFP.

2. PROJECT PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS AND TASKS

Eligible projects fall into one of two broad categories: Forest Restoration or Stream, Wetland and Aquatic Restoration Projects (SWARP). The descriptions below outline the type of project that are eligible under each category.

All projects should contribute to broader landscape restoration efforts and are open to all land ownerships and may cross ownership/management boundaries. Projects are encouraged to involve multiple stakeholders and partners from diverse backgrounds and expertise.

Applicants must provide a Proposal to accomplish the Tasks and Deliverables established in section 2.3 of this RFP. Proposals must include a description of the work product, time estimates for each task, personnel to be assigned (where possible, individual staff members and titles should be provided), and costs, taking into account the proposed timeline for completion of the Work indicated in the RFP.

Projects should fall into one, or more of the 4 Focal Areas for the RGWF (RGWF Comprehensive Plan¹; page 14) and should provide a clear link to landscape scale plans, strategies, and/or existing collaborative groups within your chosen focal area.

All projects must have an ecological restoration goal and applicants should clearly describe how this goal will be achieved. Additionally, proposals should briefly highlight secondary benefits (e.g., water source protection, community wildfire preparation, local economy, traditional communities) of each project

2.1. Eligible Projects

2.1.1. Forest Restoration Activities:

2.1.1.1. Thinning and burning activities to restore and maintain desired forest and landscape conditions, as described in the RGWF Comprehensive Plan, Appendix D, and are at least 150 acres in size.

2.1.1.2. Planning activities such as archeological, plant and animal, or other surveys that support the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

2.1.2. Eligible Stream, Wetland and Aquatic Restoration Projects (SWARP) Activities:

2.1.2.1. Protect or restore riparian and wetland vegetation or watershed function, as described in the RGWF Comprehensive Plan. This can include the technical design, implementation and maintenance of proposed project areas.

2.1.3. Proposed projects should be part of a larger watershed restoration effort, and may include restoration activities that consider both upland and riparian areas. Proposed projects must contain some level of partnership or collaboration in both the project development and implementation.

2.1.4. Proposed projects can include federal, state, tribal, county, municipal, land grant, and/or private lands.

¹RGWF Comprehensive Plan http://riograndewaterfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/rgwf_complan.pdf

2.2. Eligible Applicants

- 2.2.1. Applicants should have demonstrable ability to control costs, meet deadlines, and perform high-quality work. The project lead must demonstrate leadership level familiarity with the project landscape, and applicants should document experience with government agencies or private industry.
- 2.2.2. Applicants can any entity other than a state or federal government is eligible for funding, for example: non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, businesses, tribes, acequia associations or land grants.

2.3. Tasks:

1. Forest: Restoration of 150 acres (minimum) OR SWARP: Restoration of 5 acres of wetland, wet meadow, or riparian area OR 1 mile of stream/riparian restoration.
2. Host two total fieldtrips and/or workshops with stakeholders before and after the project implementation (that is, one before and one after).
3. Develop a strategy to quantify benefits and any co-benefits, such as (but not limited to) economic development, youth engagement, or community involvement, of the project.

2.3.1. Deliverables:

1. Final report on restoration treatment, fieldtrip/workshop outcomes, quantified benefits/co-benefits and lessons learned from the project.
2. High resolution before and after photo exact repeats from the same vantage point and location.
3. Spatial polygon of the project area.

2.3.2. Billing/Reports:

The Applicant must provide interim reports, including invoices for work completed during the period of performance, at least quarterly. The Applicant must submit such reports electronically, as specified in the final negotiated contract. The Applicant also must submit a final report for the project that describes all actions associated with the funded activity.

3. INSTRUCTIONS, CONDITIONS, AND NOTICES TO APPLICANTS

This section of the RFP provides guidance and information for preparing proposals, as well as instructions on the format and content of the proposal. The Applicant shall submit a complete proposal including all data and information requested by the RFP. The proposal must be submitted in accordance with all Section 2 requirements.

This RFP is issued for full and open competition.

TNC anticipates awarding agreements for 3-5 total responsive and responsible Applicants whose proposal represents the best value to TNC, as set forth in Section 4, Evaluation Process.

TNC may conduct discussions with Applicants during the proposal evaluation process.

TNC may consider any failure to comply with these instructions to be indicative of what could be expected from an Applicant during contract performance and may consider it a weakness of the proposal.

The Applicant's proposal shall be clear, concise, and shall include sufficient detail for effective evaluation and for substantiating the validity of stated claims. The proposal should not simply rephrase or restate TNC's requirements, but rather shall provide convincing rationale to address how the Applicant intends to meet these requirements. Statements such as "will comply," "noted and understood," "in accordance with best industry practices/standards," etc., without supporting narrative, are unacceptable. Applicants shall assume that TNC has limited prior knowledge of their capabilities and experience and will base its evaluation solely on the information presented in the Applicant's proposal.

Each Applicant's proposal should provide information that tracks the tasks, deliverables, and content solicited in Sections **3.1 – 3.8**. If TNC has any confusion or difficulty in retrieving the required information from an Applicant's proposal, it may result in such proposal being disqualified.

Proposals must also include the Applicant's organization name, address, telephone number, email address, name of contact person, and date of the proposal.

By submitting its Proposal, agrees that any costs incurred by the Applicant in responding to this RFP, are to be borne by Applicant and may not be billed to TNC.

Proposal Sections. The Applicant's proposal should consist of four distinct sections:

3.1. Applicant Contact Information

Complete the Applicant contact information section using the attached template as a guide.

3.2. Technical Capability and Project Description

The Technical Capability Section must clearly explain how the Applicant proposes to satisfy each of the Tasks and Deliverables identified in the RFP. The Applicant must provide a detailed explanation of the approach to perform, including providing a description of the work product, time estimates for each task, and personnel to be assigned (where possible, individual staff members and titles should be provided). Applicants should reference any recent relevant experience administering similar grants, contracts and collaborative projects. The proposal must include a project schedule for all proposed project management services broken down by work task. Please note that all work tasks must be completed by **11/15/2021**. The Proposal must state what the Applicant does to help achieve the goals of the Rio Grande Water Fund (see RGWF Comprehensive Plan).

The Technical Capability Section also should identify any subcontractors the Applicant plans to leverage for the performance effort, the specific scope of work that each subcontractor will perform, and the rationale for using a subcontractor for this scope of work. If the Applicant intends to use subcontracts to perform the RFP's requirements, please describe Applicant's plan for ensuring that small, minority-owned, and women-owned businesses are used for any subcontracts when possible. TNC will not refuse a proposal based on the use of subcontractors, but it reserves the right to refuse the subcontractors selected. Applicant shall remain solely responsible for all subcontracted work.

3.3. Project Context

The Project Context Section should describe any recent and relevant past projects, and collaborative engagement and restoration landscape context for the proposed project. Collaborative context should include work invested to develop capacity, collaborative partners, or planning documents that lead to the development of the proposal. Proposed projects should be part of a larger watershed restoration effort, and proposed projects may include restoration activities in upland and riparian areas. Proposed projects **must** contain some level of partnership or collaboration in both the project development and implementation. Proposed projects can occur on federal, state, tribal, county, municipal, and/or private lands. The landscape context description should help the reviewers place understand the importance of the project within a broader landscape by answering questions, *for example*: How will this project contribute to protecting a larger watershed or forest?; How well does this project transfer to other areas within the RGWF landscape?; etc.

3.4. Project Budget

The Budget Section should identify the Applicant's total proposed price for the RFP's scope of work. Budget should be broken down into the following categories: Salaries and fringe, travel, supplies, for each task and total indirect cost the project or net margin. While match is not required please list any potential leveraged funds and the leverage amount and source(s) in the budget.

3.5. Insurance

Throughout the Agreement Term, Applicant shall maintain the following insurance policies:

(a) Liability Insurance. Comprehensive commercial general liability insurance for all of its activities and those of its agents and employees, applying to personal injury, bodily injury, and property damage, and including broad form contractual liability coverage.

(b) Worker's Compensation Insurance. Worker's compensation insurance for all of Applicants' employees, in compliance with all applicable laws.

(c) Vehicle Liability Insurance. Comprehensive vehicle liability insurance for owned, non-owned, and hired vehicles, applying to personal injury, bodily injury and property damage.

3.6. Letters of support

Please provide letters from key partners. This includes any subcontractors or project participants named in this proposal, and a letter from a decision-making authority from the landowner/manager (such as a USFS line officer). If project will be conducted on federally managed land, please reference the necessary clearances that have been completed in order to conduct this work.

3.7. Map

Applicants should attach a map of the project area that shows general location of the project and enough detail for reviewers to understand where the project and project tasks will take place.

3.8. References

Applicants may attach a list of scientific or other references used to support the proposal.

3.9. Proposal Preparation Requirements

Each Proposal must be submitted following the template included in this RFP. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to see that the Proposal is received by TNC in a timely manner. In order for a Proposal to be considered responsive, it must contain all of the documents and information which are required by this RFP.

3.10. Proposal Submission Requirements

Applicant will send their Proposal via email to collin.haffey@tnc.org no later than March 11, 2020. The submission email should contain the following information in the subject line: RGWF Proposal Submission 2020.

3.11. Applicant Questions

Applicants may submit questions by email to collin.haffey@tnc.org. Applicant understands that it has a duty to inquire about and clarify any RFP questions that the Applicant does not fully understand or believes may be interpreted in more than one way. Applicants should note that questions received less than two calendar days prior to the date scheduled for opening of the Proposals may not be answered.

3.12. Key Dates

RFP Activities	Due Date
Distribute RFP	1/16/2020
Clarification Questions Deadline	3/09/2020
Written Proposals Due	3/11/2020
Short List Notification	3/13/2020
Technical Panel Review	3/20/2020
Project Approval	3/27/2020
Execute Contract or Subaward	5/2020

4. EVALUATION AND AWARD PROCESS

TNC intends to award agreements to 3-5 qualified Applicants whose proposals conform to the RFP requirements and represents the best value to TNC and the Rio Grande Water Fund. TNC will conduct procurement activities in a manner that is fair and consistent with respect to all Applicants and will work to emphasize minority-owned businesses, women's businesses, and labor surplus firms. Funding provided through this RFP are federal in origin, and all applicants will be must comply with all applicable federal requirements.

TNC will provide a written notice of its intent to award a contract or subaward to the successful Applicant(s). The actual award shall be dependent on full execution of the contract(s) or subaward(s) and submission by the successful Applicant(s) of all other required documents.

4.1. Evaluation Factors

TNC will evaluate proposals based on the following evaluation criteria: (1) Technical merit; (2) Feasibility; and (3) Price. TNC intends to make award to the Applicant whose proposal represents the best value after a tradeoff between the RFP's Technical Capability and Past Performance factors and the Price factor.

4.1.1. Technical Merit:

TNC will evaluate the Project's Merit Applicant's Technical Capability based on the following capabilities:

1. Condition of or threat to natural resources

1. Forests that have a high probability of severe wildfire
2. Streams and riparian areas that can be improved as part of a larger watershed restoration effort

2. Opportunity to act or strategic advantage

1. Substantial acreage in planning process or ready for treatment
2. Highly engaged local communities and agency cooperators
3. Ability to leverage multiple sources of funding
4. Wildfire risk affected in a large landscape (50,000 acres or more)
5. Evidence of strategic placement of project
6. Strength of proposed tasks and deliverables

3. Urgency of the project

1. Water sources are at risk
2. Communities or significant concentrations of homes are at risk from wildfire, post-fire flooding or disruptions to water supplies

4. Economic development

1. Areas with high value for recreation and tourism are at risk
2. Ability to supply wood to existing wood processing businesses
3. Areas used for traditional and community wood supply

TNC will assign ratings for Project's Merit Applicant's Technical Capability factor in accordance with the following criteria:

Excellent: The Applicant's Proposal significantly exceeds requirements.

Good: The Applicant's Proposal exceeds requirements.

Satisfactory: The Applicant's Proposal satisfies requirements.

Unsatisfactory: The Applicant's Proposal does not satisfy requirements.

4.1.2. Feasibility:

TNC will evaluate the proposal's feasibility to assess potential project success within the timeline required". Feasibility shall be informed by performance efforts of similar size, scope, or complexity to the effort described in this RFP. In addition, Feasibility includes an ability to meet schedule requirements and availability of sufficiently qualified staff and the ability to attract and hire new staff as needed

TNC will assign adjectival ratings for the Past Performance factor in accordance with the following criteria:

High Confidence: The Applicant's past performance history indicates a high likelihood of successful contract performance.

Satisfactory Confidence: The Applicant's past performance history indicates a reasonable likelihood of successful contract performance.

Low Confidence: The Applicant's past performance history indicates a low likelihood of successful contract performance.

Not Applicable: The Applicant does not have recent and relevant past performance.

TNC will not penalize Applicants without recent and relevant past performance history during evaluation.

4.1.3. Budget and Price

TNC will evaluate the Applicant's total proposed budget, cost structure and price for reasonableness to ensure the Applicant's proposal is competitive, reasonable, and meets federal requirements. TNC reserves the right to request additional information to conduct its cost or price analysis.

4.2. Evaluation Results

TNC reserves the right to disclose the results of its proposal evaluation, including details of Applicants' proposed price and technical proposal, after TNC has issued an agreement. Any such disclosure, however, will be made on a fair and consistent basis for all Applicants.