

**Response to Questions on RFP DEEP06242024CM – Posted July 15, 2024**

***To facilitate a more rapid response to questions, DEEP is releasing responses to a partial list of the questions received. There were additional questions received by the deadline of July 8, 2024 for which DEEP is continuing to develop responses. The remaining questions will be answered on or before July 18, 2024.***

***Please note that in response to Question 1, DEEP is extending the deadline for receipt of proposals to 4pm July 31, 2024.***

**Q1: Questions about extending the response deadline**

**Q1a.** Would CT DEEP consider extending the deadline (~1 week) to allow more time after questions are answered to submit? DEEP's responses to questions could dictate significant changes to our proposal. Any additional time more than a six-day turnaround would be greatly appreciated.

**Q1b.** Can a 2-week extension to the current July 24, 2024 proposal submission deadline be issued to allow sufficient time to update our proposal based on the answers released by CT DEEP for the RFP questions (currently scheduled for July 18, 2024)?

**Q1c.** Considering responses to questions are expected July 18, 2024, would CT DEEP consider an extension to the proposal submission deadline to July 31, 2024?

**A1a,b,c.** DEEP will extend the proposal deadline to **4pm July 31, 2024.**

**Q2: Questions about the overall estimated budget for Core Services A and B**

**Q2a.** Are you able to share an estimated budget for this project?

**Q2b.** What is the budget and or total available funding for services for DEEP06242024CM - CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection?

**Q2c.** Is there an allocated maximum fee for these services in total or for each core service?

**Q2d.** Can CT DEEP provide an estimate of the total available budget for Core Services A and Core Services B, respectively?

**Q2e.** Has DEEP determined a not to exceed budget for Core Services A? If so, what is the not to exceed for Core Services A?

**Q2f.** Has DEEP determined a not to exceed budget for Core Services B? If so, what is the not to exceed for Core Services B?

**Q2g.** On page 10, the RFP states: "The proposer is expected to review the total available funding for services and acknowledge that these total budgeted cost estimates align with costs the proposer might reasonably incur over the scope of the grant project cycle. The proposer is expected to provide hourly rate[s] by staff level with estimated annual hours per staff level for all proposed tasks and technical assistance." *The RFP indicates CT DEEP received \$3M to*

*prepare the PCAP, CCAP, and Status Report. Since the PCAP was already prepared, what portion of the \$3M CPRG funding is available to perform the Core Services B (CCAP and Status Report) as outlined in the RFP? ... Can CT DEEP provide the budgeted amount for this contract? Is there a specific amount for Core Services B?*

**A2a,b,c,d,e,f,g.**

The estimated total value for this RFP was up to \$4 million.

The breakdown of the total value for Core Services A and Core Services B is not set, but a reasonable range is \$1M - \$2.5M each for Core Services A and Core Services B.

**Q3: Questions about key milestones, project timeline, and period of performance**

**Q3a.** Can you provide any additional key milestones required under Core Services A and Core Services B as well as the period of performance for this scope of work?

**Q3b.** Has DEEP determined a period of performance for Core Services A? If so, what is the period of performance?

**Q3c.** What is the timeframe for the work described in Core Services A: Climate Resilience? When will the contract for this work end?

**Q3d.** What is the expected timeline for the project, including key milestones and deadlines to administer the CPRG planning grant and GHG reduction strategies?

**Aa,b,c,d.** As stated in the RFP on pg. 3, "DEEP intends to select qualified consulting firm(s) for an initial project cycle, of up to three years with the option, at DEEP's discretion, to extend the contract(s) for an additional period. Those firms selected for this engagement will be placed on a preferred list of consultants for not more than 48 months to be considered for assignments, as needed. Consultants may submit proposals for all such services or any subset of these services."

For Core Services A, there are no additional milestones or Period of Performance.

For Core Services B, the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant planning grant agreement set deadlines for when the plans supported by the grant are due.

As stated on pg. 7 of 44 of the RFP,

- A Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP), due March 1, 2024,
- A Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP), due in August 2025, and
- A Status Report, due at the close of the 4-year grant period (anticipated due date in August 2027)

The consultants selected under this RFP for Core Services B are expected to work with DEEP to complete all elements of the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan and Status Report to meet these deadlines.

**Q4: Questions about whether respondents should submit separate proposals for each Core Service**

**Q4a.** This RFP says a separate proposal may be submitted for Core Services A and B but does not specify if separate proposals are required. Can we submit one proposal for both Core Services A and B?

**Q4b.** If our firm intends to submit under both Core Services, should we submit two separate proposal responses, or can the responses to both Core Services be combined in a single proposal?

**Q4c.** Please confirm that bidders must submit separate proposals (e.g., that proposals cannot be combined) if bidders wish to submit proposals for both Core Services A and B.

**A4a,b,c.** We encourage firms submitting proposals for both Core Services A and B to submit a single proposal.

**Q5: Questions about the evaluation criteria for this RFP**

**Q5a.** What is the weighting of the evaluation criteria list?

**Q5b.** Does DEEP have an evaluation rubric that will be used for this RFP? If yes, will DEEP provide? If no, does DEEP intent to create and use one? If yes, will DEEP provide?

**Q5c.** What is the weighting of the evaluation criteria list?

**Q5d.** Does DEEP have an evaluation rubric that will be used for this RFP? If yes, will DEEP provide? If no, does DEEP intent to create and use one? If yes, will DEEP provide?

**A5a,b,c,d.** DEEP is not providing the evaluation rubric or evaluation weighting information for this RFP.

**Q6: Questions about Proposal Length**

**Q6a.** Is there a maximum or preferred Workplan (section 4.5) length or total proposal length?

**Q6b.** Is there a proposal page limit?

**A6a,b.** The RFP did not include formal page limits, but we strongly request applicants limit their submissions to necessary materials given there is a small staff to review proposals and we expect a robust response. DEEP also strongly requests applicants keep narrative responses to under 10 pages per Core Services (i.e. if a firm is submitting a proposal for Core Services A and B, limit the narrative response to no more than 20 pages, and if a firm is submitting a proposal for Core services A OR B, limit narrative to no more than 10 pages).

**Q7: Questions about Submitting Proposals with a Subset of Core Services**

**Q7a.** Services under Core Services A are divided into nine (9) task areas. Is it possible for applicants to submit a proposal for subservices within Core A? For example, would it be allowable to submit a proposal for all but the first 2 bullet items listed on page 8 of the RFP under Core Services A?

**Q7b.** Can you confirm that respondents for Core Services B are able to respond to a subset of items within the Scope of Services?

**Q7c.** Are respondents for Core Services B expected to be able to provide services for all sectors or is a subset of sectors acceptable (i.e. providing services, or a subset of services, for commercial and residential buildings but not agricultural)?

**Q7d.** The RFP states that “Respondents must submit a proposal for at least one of the Core Services listed below (i.e. Core Services A or Core Services B, in their entirety), and may submit a separate proposal for each listed Core Services”. Will DEEP consider proposals for Core Services B that cover only a portion of the listed sectors (i.e., industry, buildings, agriculture, ...)?

**A7a,b,c,d.** As stated in the RFP on page 3, “consultants may submit proposals for all such services or any subset of these services.” As such DEEP will accept proposals for all or a subset of services under Core Services A and/or Core Services B.

#### **Q8: Required Technical Expertise and Special Certification Questions**

**Q8a.** The RFP states *“For Core Services A, prior technical experience with engineering design and development of resilience projects is required.”* Is engineering/design experience required if we intend to only submit for Core Services A, with an application focused primarily on grant management, technical assistance, climate resilience planning, outreach, and funding/financing support?

**A8a.** No. As stated in the RFP on pg. 5 “Minimum Qualifications of Proposers: To qualify for a contract award for Core Services A, a proposer must have the following minimum qualifications: documented experience conducting, reviewing, designing, and/or engineering climate resilience planning and projects of similar scope and complexity for government entities or public- or private-sector clients, similar to the scope of work outlined in Core Services A.”

**Q8b.** Are there any specific certifications or accreditations that Proposer need to possess?

**A8b.** No, but proposals should include relevant certifications or accreditations. As stated on pg. 16 of the RFP, under D.4.1, “Proposals must include a general overview of the organization including its history and prior experiences engaging with relevant key stakeholders. Proposals must also include: 2. A description of any relevant accreditation, certifications, and/or licensure of the organization or any staff contributing to the work outlined in Section II.C – Scope of Services.”

### **Q9: Grant Writing Services**

**Q9a.** In Core Services A, there is a request to describe the proposers experience with competing for federal climate resilience funds and grants. Does this indicate that the contractor selected to do this work will be responding to grants from federal agencies or supporting DEEP with writing proposals for federal funding.

**Q9b.** In Core Services B, there is an action: Prepare applications for federal funding to implement greenhouse gas reduction strategies. Will this be composed of preparing the entire application or providing assistance on what type of grants and funding to go after and providing materials that may assist with the content?

**A9a,b.** Under Core Services A, the RFP includes the core services of “assist DEEP with developing federal grant applications related to climate resilience, including identifying funding opportunities and evaluation criteria; developing cost benefit analyses using Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) methodologies and other relevant studies required for applications; supporting DEEP with public processes, including but not limited to attending public meetings and reviewing and analyzing written comments submitted, and identifying match funding opportunities from existing programs in Connecticut at the direction of DEEP.

Under Core Services B, the RFP includes the core services of “prepare applications for federal funding to implement greenhouse gas reduction strategies.”

As such, contractors selected for the preferred list may be asked for these core services and those services could include any tasks related to developing or preparing federal grant applications.

### **Q10: Governor’s Council on Climate Change (GC3) recommendations**

**Q10a.** [Core Services A] The *Taking Action on Climate Change and Building a More Resilient Connecticut for All* Phase 1 report released in 2021 contains over 50 recommended near term actions. Have these been prioritized by DEEP? And are there specific actions that you would like the consultant to focus on for project development/solutions, etc.?

**A10a.** The recommendations in the 2021 GC3 report were not prioritized. The DEEP Climate Resilience Fund (DCRF) has its own criteria for project development/solutions, which may change depending on DEEP initiatives and priorities. You can review the most recent DCRF criteria here: <https://portal.ct.gov/connecticutclimateaction/executive-order/deep-climate-resilience-fund>.

### **Q11: Educational and Technical Support Questions for Core Services A**

**Q11a.** [Core Services A] Who would the education and technical support be provided to - would this be focus for DEEP and state employees, external stakeholder groups, both?

**A11a.** Educational materials and technical support will depend on specific needs, but are expected to include DEEP and state employees, local government staff and elected officials, external stakeholders, and general, non-expert audiences. Topics will include nature-based solutions, living shorelines, and other climate resilience issues.

**Q11b.** [Core Services A] Does DEEP require creative design services as part of the development of materials, or will DEEP utilize in-house final creative design support?

**A11b.** DEEP does not require creative design services. As stated in the RFP on pg. 5, “Minimum Qualifications of Proposers. To qualify for a contract award for Core Services A, a proposer must have the following minimum qualifications: documented experience conducting, reviewing, designing, and/or engineering climate resilience planning and projects of similar scope and complexity for government entities or public- or private-sector clients, similar to the scope of work outlined in Core Services A.”

However, creative design and related editorial services can support the services in Core Services A and proposers may include this type of capacity in their response.

### **Q12: DEEP Climate Resilience Fund program management**

**Q12a.** Can DEEP provide any additional information on the scope for Core Services A, particularly around the anticipated number of grant awards in coming years that will need to be reviewed / managed in addition to the 21 grants / projects already awarded in 2023?

**A12a.** The legislature has authorized a total of \$75 million for the microgrid and resilience grant and loan program to date. While the number of grant awards will depend on the size of the grants awarded, number of competitive proposals received, etc., the total value of the authorized program means it is likely the microgrid and resilience grant and loan program will continue to have a significant number of grantees per year.

### **Q13: Core Services B questions**

**Q13a1.** [Core Services B] Was a private consultant engaged for the development of the PCAP submitted to the EPA this past March?

**Q13a2.** [Core Services B] Other than the CT DEEP staff, who has prepared and completed the Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) that was due in March 1, 2024?

**A13a1,a2.** A contract with *Synapse* was utilized to support PCAP measure development in the buildings sector. DEEP also partnered with the nonprofit organization *Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM)* of which Connecticut is a member to support PCAP development.

**Q13b.** [Core Services B] The provided services may include “Planning, developing, and implementing programs.” Please describe what program implementation services DEEP seeks.

**A13b.** On RFP pg. 9 under the list of core services for Core Services B, the RFP includes the core services of “Planning, developing, and implementing programs within DEEP’s purview to assist DEEP with developing targets for greenhouse gas reduction for major sources of emissions.”

The RFP core services B provides one additional example of services related to implementation, which is “prepare applications for federal funding to implement greenhouse gas reduction strategies.”

At a minimum, DEEP is seeking assistance with the development of Quantified GHG Reduction Measures as part of the CCAP. EPA requires ([EPA CPRG Planning Grants Program Guidance for States-Municipalities-Air Agencies 03-01-2023](#) pg. 52-53) that, “A CCAP must include a full suite of implementation measures that have been identified to meet the GHG reduction targets specified elsewhere in the CCAP. The plan must include measures addressing the main GHG emission sectors: industry, electricity generation and/or use, transportation, commercial and residential buildings, industry, agriculture, natural and working lands, and waste and materials management. Similar to the PCAP, for each measure, the CCAP must identify the quantifiable GHG emissions reductions (or enhancement of carbon sinks), key implementing agency or agencies, implementation schedule and milestones, expected geographic location if applicable, milestones for obtaining implementation authority as appropriate, identification of funding sources if relevant, and metrics for tracking progress. It must also include cost information for each measure.”

Proposers may review the Priority Climate Action Plan ([Connecticut Climate Pollution Reduction Grant - Climate Action Plans](#)) for examples of greenhouse gas reduction measures.

**Q13c.** [Core Services B] Are there previous climate action or green jobs workforce analyses that have been recently completed for the state?

**A13c.** All climate action plans can be found here: <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/climate-change/climate-change>. The most recent climate action analysis released by the agency is the CPRG Priority Climate Action Plan.

There are no recent green jobs workforce analyses completed for the state.

**Q13d.** The provided services may include “a review of authority to implement GHG reduction strategies included in the CCAP.” Please clarify if DEEP seeks legal services as part of this review.

**A13d.** No, DEEP is not seeking legal services.

**Q13e.** For Scope B: UMass Amherst has been providing GHG Emissions calculations and reduction modeling for MSA CAPs (SCRCOG, CRCOG, MetroCOG, etc.), but they are not mentioned in this RFP. Will UMass Amherst be involved? If not, who completed the GHG Emissions calculations for the PCAP and how will that information be provided to the consultant selected for this Scope?

**A13e.** UMass Amherst did not support the State Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP). There were separate EPA CPRG planning grants awarded to MSAs in the state, which were led by councils of governments in Connecticut. Questions about the EPA grants for the MSAs should be directed to those entities.

The State PCAP emissions calculations were conducted by DEEP staff with additional support from Synapse and a partnership with the nonprofit organization Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM) of which Connecticut is a member.

DEEP will provide information to the consultant(s) selected for this Scope. As stated in the RFP on page 11 under DEEP Agency Role Core Services B, DEEP will, “Facilitate access to pertinent datasets and other information relevant to appropriately conduct quantitative and qualitative analyses of greenhouse gas reductions strategies.”

#### **Q14: Core Services B Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach**

**Q14a.** [Core Services B] It is understood that in-person engagement will be needed for outreach and engagement. Does DEEP expect in-person coordination from the consulting team beyond this or could regular project meetings be across virtual platforms?

**A14a.** DEEP will not necessarily require in-person coordination from the consulting team. Regular project meetings can be across virtual platforms.

**Q14b.** Can DEEP elaborate on expectations of stakeholder engagement to solicit feedback on CCAP strategies?

**A14b.** Proposers may review the Priority Climate Action Plan ([Connecticut Climate Pollution Reduction Grant - Climate Action Plans](#)) for examples of the types and level of engagement that was performed during the development of that plan and in previous climate plans, including the Governor's Council on Climate Change and its working groups, which were active in 2020 and in a similar GHG analysis process to the CCAP that was done in 2018 on how Connecticut could meet a 45% reduction by 2030 target.

In brief, stakeholder engagement will include a mix of online resources including emails, webpages, and social media; presentations and meetings with stakeholder groups including Governor's Council on Climate Change working groups and the Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council (CEEJAC); and other engagement tools such as surveys.

**Q14c.** [Core Services B] Can the proposal assume that DEEP will provide a key role supporting and connecting the team to stakeholders from other CT government agencies for the review of authority to implement GHG strategies?

**A14c.** Yes, the proposal can assume that DEEP will provide a key role supporting and connecting the team to stakeholders from other CT government agencies for the review of authority to implement GHG strategies as necessary.

As stated in the RFP on page 11 of 44 under DEEP Agency Role Core Services B, DEEP will, "Facilitate access to pertinent datasets and other information relevant to appropriately conduct quantitative and qualitative analyses of greenhouse gas reductions strategies."

#### **Q15: General Bidding Questions**

**Q15a.** Would DEEP please confirm that the selected contractor will be categorized as a contractor for the procurement of goods and services as defined under the Uniform Guidance (see 2 CFR § 200.331 Subrecipient and contractor determinations, specifically: (b)(1)-(5))?



**A15a.** Yes, DEEP will categorize the selected firm as a contractor, rather than a subrecipient, pursuant to the guidelines contained in 2 CFR §200.331

**Q15b.** This solicitation mentions that proposers must be registered with the state of CT contracting portal. Does registration have to be completed by the solicitation deadline, or can registration be in pending status at the submission deadline?

**A15b.** Yes, registration must be completed by the solicitation deadline.

**Q15c.** Under Section E: Attachments on page 18, please can you more clearly define violations? And what is the intended time horizon to be used for the related history?

**A15c.** DEEP requires five years' worth of regulatory enforcement actions, penalties, notices or violation or other disciplinary action taken by a state or federal agency, for any conduct of the proposer.

**Q15d.** To support the demonstration of financial stability, can we submit annual financial reports as an attachment? Or can we provide a direct link an online version of the relevant documentation?

**A15d.** Either method is sufficient. Please refer to question 6 for page count limit requests.

#### **Q16: Questions about Contracting Terms and Negotiation**

**Q16a.** Appendix A PSA Scope of Work, pages A-1 -A-3: Will Appendix A be completed by the Consultant and CT DEEP for each individual project or for the contract period?

**A16a.** DEEP will develop Appendix A for the contract period. Specific tasks and projects will be developed separately based on Appendix A and payment will be through purchase order.

**Q16b.** Are there any terms and conditions that Proposer need to agree to if their proposal is accepted?

**A16b.** Please see the sample terms and conditions in Appendix C of the RFP.

**Q16c.** May the Consultant request changes to the proposed contract terms and conditions during the contract negotiation period?

**Q16d.** Can the consultant provide proposed redlines to the standard terms and conditions in the RFP including the indemnification clause?

**Q16e.** Will respondents have an opportunity to request edits to the standard contract provisions/sample agreement? If so, should respondents submit requested edits during the proposal phase or only upon award?

**A16c,d,e.** The standard terms are required for every state contract and not subject to further edits. Standard terms stand unless determined by DEEP and the Attorney General's office as not applicable. Please be advised that the Personal Service Agreement in Appendix C is a sample that may be revised to accommodate federal requirements.

#### **Q17. Questions on forming teams of consultants**

**Q17a.** Can firms team on this submission to provide the full range of proposed services, or should each firm submit individually so that CTDEEP can select individual firms rather than teams of firms?

**Q17b.** If teaming is allowed, could a consultant be a prime or lead consultant on a team for one set of Core Services (for example, Core Services A) and also be a subconsultant on another team for the same Core Services or the other set of Core Services?

**Q17c.** Can a prime submit a team that includes subcontractors under this RFP?

**Q17d.** Do all subcontractors need to be included at this stage of the submission? Or, may the Prime add subcontractors as needed, with DEEP's approval on an assignment basis?

**A17a,b,c,d.** DEEP encourages consultants to team with other consultants prior to submitting to the RFP to best present themselves in a competitive manner as capable of providing the widest range of proposed services.

The RFP provides consultants with the flexibility, however, to either submit as a prime consultant with a team of subcontractors, or to bring subconsultants under contract later as assignments arise.

In the event the firm chooses to bring on subconsultants after they are under contract with DEEP, that firm shall ensure that 1) DEEP is charged for those subconsultants' work at rates that are equal to those in the agreement between DEEP and the firm and 2) the firm solicits the assistance from subconsultants in the future pursuant to Paragraph 24 of sample terms and conditions or any similar federally mandated selection processes required in the final agreement between DEEP and the consultant. Additionally, any consultant shall require subcontractors to agree to contractual terms and conditions as stated in the agreement between DEEP and the firm.

#### **Q18. Questions on number of contracts/competing for tasks/Declining assignments response/on-call**

**Q18a.** Can DEEP confirm that being selected under this RFP will result in master agreement between DEEP and the selected firm(s), and that bidders awarded a master will then apply for individual projects under that master? If yes, please confirm when that master agreement will likely begin and end.

**Q18b.** Can CT DEEP confirm the intent of the solicitation is to secure a Master Services Agreement from which specific task orders will be issued?

**Q18c.** Would DEEP please confirm that it anticipates awarding a Time and Materials (T&M) Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract for on-call services?

**Q18d.** The work outlined for Core Services A includes a range of support roles, including grant management and support, technical assistance, general climate support, etc. Does DEEP envision a workplan is established at the beginning of the contract and that is followed for this work or will the work be conducted on more of an as needed basis?

**Q18e.** How many firms are expected to be included on the list for each set of core services?

**Q18f.** If multiple consultants are selected for each Core Services area, will they need to compete with other selected consultants for individual assignments?

**Q18g.** Do we have the option to pass on/have the right to refuse task orders at our discretion to avoid potential or perceived conflicts?

**Q18h.** Since the RFP says multiple consultants will be selected under each of the Core Services, will the services provided be on-call?

**Q18i.** Do selected consultants under Core Services A have the ability to decline assignments?

**A18a-i.**

As further explained in the RFP on pg. 2 and 3 under RFP Purpose, "DEEP will use the responses to this RFP to select consultant(s) for a preferred list. As assignments come up, the specific scope items and desired budget for the engagement, utilizing the hourly rates submitted in response to this RFP, will be discussed with the firm(s) under consideration. If the selected firm is not able to assemble a team to DEEP's satisfaction, has a potential conflict of interest, or is unable to perform the assignment for any reason, or does not, in DEEP's sole judgment, offer an acceptable price or terms, another consulting firm may be selected from the preferred list. Acceptance onto the preferred list does not guarantee selection for any given assignment."

DEEP anticipates selecting up to three (3) consultants for the preferred list per Core Service.

There will be a **Personal Service Agreement (PSA)** with each of the firms selected for the preferred list. The PSA will detail the list of services that may be provided while under contract with DEEP and subject to agency need and funding availability.

For specific tasks DEEP will request quotes from the preferred list of consultants for the applicable Core Service A or B. Based on the quote, DEEP will evaluate the level of interest and total cost for services and move head. All consultants on the preferred list will have the opportunity to respond to the request for services based on qualifications and total cost. Contractors can determine whether they will want to bid for a specific task and will have the ability to decline if they are selected.

**Q18j.** The RFP states that “Respondents must submit a proposal for at least one of the Core Services listed below (i.e. Core Services A or Core Services B, in their entirety), and may submit a separate proposal for each listed Core Services”. Will DEEP consider proposals for Core Services B that cover only a portion of the listed sectors (i.e., industry, buildings, agriculture, ...)?

**A18j.** Yes, DEEP will consider proposals for Core Services A or B that cover only a portion of the listed sectors. However, as stated in responses to **Question 17**, firms are encouraged to form teams to respond to Core Services A and/or Core Services B. DEEP expects to select no more than three (3) proposals from consultants in response to this RFP, including consultant team proposals. Proposals that can address all Core Services may be more competitive. DEEP recognizes the diversity of sectors covered under Core Services B, which is why we are encouraging the formation of consulting teams that will have the skills necessary.