

NROC Branding, Website, and Web Communications Strategy RFP
Pre-submittal Q&A
Posted May 15, 2012

Important dates:

- **Tuesday, May 15, 2012:** Post FAQ questions on NROC website. Note that additional questions will not be accepted.
- **Wednesday, May 23, 2012:** Proposals due by email by 5:00pm EST
- **Monday, June 18, 2012** (estimated): Applicants notified of selection

FAQs:

What is driving the timeline for this contract? A: The purpose for the NROC timeline is the planned stakeholder engagement process for the Ocean Planning initiative. The logo, key messages and website will be valuable to this process. At this time, there are no specific dates to tie in to. However, there are anticipated events in the fall. NROC does want the timeline to be realistic. Part 1, Section 6 does allow for the bidder to propose and justify a different schedule.

Is there a budget template? Can the budget be submitted in Excel spreadsheet form or does it need to be submitted as part of the PDF file? A: A budget template is not available. The budget is counted as part of the 10 page limit and submitted as part of the PDF. If this is not possible, please submit the budget as an appendix in the Excel format. The Excel budget will be counted as part of the 10 page limit. Please see Part 2, Section 4b of the RFP.

Does NROC currently use the www.northeastoceancouncil.org url? A: The licensing rights to www.northeastoceancouncil.org have been purchased/reserved through godaddy.com, but it is not currently hosted/active. NROC's current website is hosted and maintained by the NOAA Coastal Services Center and can be accessed at <http://collaborate.csc.noaa.gov/nroc>. The existing website and hosting will be discontinued after the new site is available.

Does NROC have specific technical platform requirements for the website? A: At this point, NROC does not have technical requirements, just functional requirements. NROC would look to the bidder to determine technical needs. Functional requirements are outlined in Task 3: a calendar, separate pages for each priority issue area, announcements, documents, contact information. NROC would also like a system that can be used by its staff, so it should be user friendly.

Describe the requirements for a "robust ocean planning page". A: NROC's ocean planning efforts will generate more content, documents, information and feedback than its other efforts. The ocean planning page needs to include easy access to all ocean planning information as well as a specific contact or comment form for ocean planning related feedback.

What functionality would NROC like to see with its existing internal Basecamp site? A: NROC would like easy access to the Basecamp login page. A simple link is satisfactory.

Who is NROC's primary audience? Secondary? A: For this website, the primary audience are coastal and ocean resource managers, including state, federal, and local government as well as non-governmental organizations in the field. The website will also serve as the public face of the group and should be accessible to the more general public interested in coastal and ocean resource issues.

Does NROC have a communications strategy? A: The web communications strategy is currently in development. It is a basic document that includes a core audience analysis and review of existing communication methods.

Are companies based outside of the US eligible? A: Yes.

Pre-submittal Conference Call Q&A:

- Optional pre-submittal conference call occurred on May 10, 2012.
- Participants included representatives from Pixels and Pulp; Maiden Media Group; Northeast Kingdom Information Associates; SeaPlan; Winning Strategies; Donya Melanson Associates; Watermain Branding and Design; Waterview Consulting

Q1: Is there an existing web communications strategy and will it be shared? A: The strategy is currently in development. It is a basic document that includes a core audience analysis and review of existing communication methods. The intent of the “final web communications strategy” deliverable is to build in time for the proposal team to familiarize themselves with NROC’s core audience and past/current communications methods. This deliverable includes reviewing the NROC web communications strategy and providing NROC with feedback to refine key components of the document. NROC will be responsible for incorporating the feedback and any edits into the document.

Q2: How much time do you see going toward talking to stakeholders and audiences to clarify needs? A: NROC has not discussed this. This would be something for a bidder to discuss in the proposal.

Q3: How much time would you like spent on the different deliverables? A: This would be something for a bidder to discuss in the proposal based on previous experiences. Likely the website would be the focus.

Q4: Would the documents in a document library all be available to the public? A: Yes. There is no need for a password protected document library.

Q5: What functionality would you like to see with the BASECAMP connection? A: NROC would like easy access to the Basecamp login page. A simple link would be satisfactory.

Q6: Technical platform requirements for website—do you have a preference? A: At this point, NROC does not have technical requirements, just functional requirements. NROC would look to the bidder to determine technical needs. Functional requirements are outlined in Task 3: a calendar, separate pages for each priority issue area, announcements, documents, contact information. NROC would also like a system that can be used by its staff, so it should be user friendly.

Q7: You’ve asked for separate pages for each regional priority area, how many are there? A: NROC has three priority issue areas: Coastal Hazards Resilience, Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem Health, and Ocean Planning.

Q8: You requested editing of existing content. Is that just formatting or is it more (copy editing, etc.)? A: NROC does have existing language. NROC will generate the content and expects the successful bidder to edit the content for use on the website. NROC is looking for formatting, streamlining, and improving the effectiveness of the language.

Q9: In the branding part, you are looking for 10 key taglines. Will the vendor choose them and then NROC select them? A: NROC is looking for up to 10 taglines (or key messages), including NROC’s mission or purpose; NROC’s membership; NROC’s relationship to other regional organizations focused on ocean and coastal issues; NROC’s three priority issue areas: coastal hazards resilience, ocean and coastal ecosystem health, and ocean planning; and Stakeholder engagement. Q9a: So this would be 10 separate areas that each need a core message? A: Yes

Q10: How was the logo made before and what has changed? How much of a change in the logo is envisioned? A: NROC is an in-kind organization made up of federal and state staff. The logo was made with in-kind support in 2007. There has been a general expression from NROC of the need for an updated look. NROC is looking to the bidder to make suggestions.

Q11: Do you have a list of comparable websites you like that would serve as an example? A: For reference purposes, I can give you the name of other similar partnerships: Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Council, South Atlantic Alliance, Gulf of Mexico Alliance, and West Coast Governors’ Agreement. NROC has not identified a site as a model. Each of these sites has different strengths.

Q12: Could you include a list of what you like and don’t like about these model sites? A: NROC has not discussed a preference for specific style or features used by other organizations.

Q13: The timeline is aggressive. Is NROC staff available to meet with the vendor to achieve this timeline? A: NROC will be available as needed to provide the bidder with assistance, review, and approval. A group of 4-6 people will be working on this from NROC. The purpose for the NROC timeline is the planned stakeholder engagement process for the Ocean Planning initiative. The logo, key messages and website will be valuable to this process. NROC does want the timeline to be realistic. Part 1, Section 6 does allow for the bidder to propose and justify a different schedule.

Q14: Do you anticipate the need to post video on the site? A: Video is not a priority for NROC. The bidder should note if this is a capability being offered in the proposal.

Q15: Do you have specific dates for things you are trying to tie in to? At this time, there are no specific dates to tie in to. However, there are anticipated events in the fall.

Q16: Search engine optimization is not discussed. Would you like that? A: Search engine optimization is not a priority for NROC. The bidder should note if this is a capability being offered in the proposal.

Q17: Does the budget include the hosting service for two years? A: Yes. Part 1, Section 3, task 3 of the RFP asks the bidder to include a minimum of 2 years of hosting.

Q18: Do you have a sense of how much traffic you expect? What is the expected size of the documents? A: NROC does not currently track the website traffic. It is a narrow audience which limits the expected level of traffic. Generally, NROC related documents posted to the website are small-moderate sized PDFs.

Q19: Are there any expectations for face-to-face meeting or can other technologies be used to reduce travel costs? A: NROC works well virtually. The RFP does not specifically include/request face-to-face meetings.

Q20: Do you have control over that domain? Is there an issue with it currently being offline? A: The licensing rights have been purchased/reserved through godaddy.com, but it is not currently hosted/active. NROC's current website is hosted and maintained by the NOAA Coastal Services Center.

Pre-submittal Questions received by email:

- Pre-submittal questions were collected between April 23, 2012 and May 14, 2012.
- Questions are listed in the order they were received.

Q21: Can you speak to the demographic and shareholders of your non-profit in more detail? What type of people are they and what do they respond to in terms of creative (professional, edgy, clever, subtle, or even humorous)? A: NROC is a government partnership of federal and state agencies. The web presence should be largely professional.

Q22: With the branding of the concept, are you leaning more towards the vision of the ocean or the states that are affiliated with the council? For example, would it be appropriate to explore options with fish and oceanic creatures or are we looking to focus more on the council and area as a whole? A: A vision for healthy and economically viable coastal and ocean resources New England wide and the regional approach for managing those resources.

Q23: Do you prefer the acronym NROC or should we focus on spelling it out in our brand pitch? Would you prefer the logo to be in acronym form or spelled out. NROC has not stated a preference. NROC is looking to the bidder to make suggestions.

Q24: What type of engagement and touchpoints are you looking to deploy your brand to and are we responsible for the creative of that as well? A: This is beyond the scope of this RFP/contract. NROC will be taking the deliverables of this contract and applying them to existing and new communication products.

Q25: As far as the website goes, can you describe, in slightly more detail, the needs of the website? What type of functionality and features are you looking for? A basic content site, a mobile site, contact forms, blog, social media elements, etc. A: The website requirements are outlined in Part 1, section 3, task 3 of the RFP. The bidder should note if additional features are being offered in the proposal.

Q26: The website is currently hosted by the NOAA Coastal Services Center. Please explain that relationship and if/how it will continue with the new site. If it will continue, are there any critical parameters to meet? A: The NOAA Coastal Services Center will no longer host the NROC website. The website created through this RFP will be a new website. Part 1, section 3, task 3 requests that the successful team use the new domain "northeastoceancouncil.org" and arrange for cost-effective hosting service for a period of 2-years.

Q27: Who is your primary audience? Secondary? A: For this website, the primary audience are coastal and ocean resource managers, including state, federal, and local government as well as non-governmental organizations in the field. The website will also serve as the public face of the group and should be accessible to the more general public interested in coastal and ocean resource issues.

Q28: Does NROC have a strategy plan that addresses your communications with these audiences as well as specific operational goals? A: The strategy is currently in development. It is a basic document that includes a core audience analysis and review of existing communication methods.

Q29: Does NROC issue news releases and/or share timely industry news? A: NROC currently releases announcements and updates regarding NROC activities.

Q30: What is driving your deliverables deadline date? A: The purpose for the NROC timeline is the planned stakeholder engagement process for the Ocean Planning initiative. The logo, key messages and website will be valuable to this process. NROC does want the timeline to be realistic. Part 1, Section 6 does allow for the bidder to propose and justify a different schedule.

Q31: Who will be reviewing and deciding on the award of this RFP? A: The selection team will be made up of state and federal staff with expertise in communications. The selection team will make a recommendation to the Executive Committee (or governing body of NROC) for approval.

Q32: Once the project begins, how will the decision making process work on your end? Will there be a single decision maker versus a board of decision makers? This is important for creating a realistic timeline for the project. A: The members of the selection team (up to four individuals) will serve as the primary points of contact for decision making. For decisions about the final logo, taglines, and web content the selection team will make recommendations to the Executive Committee for approval. The Executive Committee meets every two weeks and also has email protocols for approval between meetings.

Q33: Why 10 taglines? To provide variety to choose from and then settle on one? Or, do you want to have multiple taglines for the organization? A: NROC is looking for up to 10 taglines (or key messages), including NROC's mission or purpose; NROC's membership; NROC's relationship to other regional organizations focused on ocean and coastal issues; NROC's three priority issue areas: coastal hazards resilience, ocean and coastal ecosystem health, and ocean planning; and Stakeholder engagement.

Q34: Will the successful bidder be expected to generate considerable new editorial content -- or just revise what is internally generated to meet the communication strategy developed by the bidder? A: NROC will generate the content and expects the successful bidder to edit the content for use on the website. NROC is looking for formatting, streamlining, and improving the effectiveness of the language.

Q35: Have you done any quantitative research with your audience regarding the usability and content of the current site? A: No.

Q36: Should the new site have the capability for posting videos or linking to posted videos? A: Video is not a priority for NROC. The bidder should note if this is a capability being offered in the proposal.

Q37: Who would manage your online community? What is their expertise and are they able to monitor any feedback/interactive pieces daily? A: There will be a team of two managing the website/online community – the NROC Coordinator and the NROC communications lead. They have a growing expertise in the communications field and will be available to monitor feedback/interactive pieces 2-3 times per week.

Q38: Do any of the other regional councils have sites you admire -- either from a perspective of design, navigation, or content? A: For reference purposes, the other regional ocean partnerships include: Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Council, South Atlantic Alliance, Gulf of Mexico Alliance and the West Coast Governor's Agreement.

Q39: How many events will you list on the site per month? Will the calendar be a full calendar or a listing? A: Approximately 5-10 events per month (including NROC related meeting dates, partner meeting dates, and important deadlines). NROC currently has a list of meetings and events.

Q40: Will the resource library require any kind of password protection? A: No.

Q41: What is the purpose of the region map? Is this something interactive and will a unique graphic need to be created? A: The map should show the geographic extent of NROC. The graphic will likely need to be created in order to show the relationship with bordering states and regions such as NY and Canadian Provinces. An interactive component has not been discussed. This would be something for a bidder to discuss in the proposal.

Q42: What it meant by "meeting details"? Downloadable minutes? Or things like upcoming meetings with time/place? A: Yes, meeting details includes downloadable briefing materials, agendas, and minutes.

Q43: What are the specific measures of success for a "robust" ocean planning page? What type of functionality do you envision for the "Robust Ocean Planning" page? Could you explain this page/section in more detail? A: NROC's ocean planning efforts will generate more content, documents, information and feedback than its other efforts. The ocean planning page needs to include easy access to all ocean planning information as well as a specific contact or comment form for ocean planning related feedback.

Q44: Does "regional priority issue information" belong in a section of its own? Or are these more like news/resource listings that can be grouped into regions by categories or tagging? A: There are three regional priority issues: coastal hazards resilience, ocean and coastal ecosystem health, and ocean planning. Each issue requires a separate page.

Q45: Are you looking for full Basecamp integration? Or just a link over to the NROC Basecamp login page? A: A link to the NROC Basecamp login page is satisfactory.

Q46: What kind of photo editing is needed? A: NROC will supply photos as needed. The photos may require editing for use on the website.

Q47: Regarding stakeholder feedback, where do you see this feature falling on the spectrum from "simple contact form" to "complex forums and/or commenting structure that allows users to build community on the site"? A: NROC would like to explore more creative stakeholder feedback options but recognize its potential limitations for monitoring the more complex structures. Options for stakeholder feedback would be something for a bidder to discuss in the proposal.

Q48: Does the organization have a draft of a site map or list of pages/sections that are required on the web site? A: The website requirements have been outlined in Part 1, Section 3, Task 3. In general, they include NROC documents; contact information; meeting details; regional priority issue information for coastal hazards resilience, ocean and coastal ecosystem health, and ocean planning; calendar of events; announcements; and map of the region.

Q49: The given URL www.northeastoceanCouncil.org doesn't appear to be active now as it displays "Server not Found" error screen. Let us know if we can access this website by any means or do you have any alternative website for us to analyze. A: The licensing rights to www.northeastoceanCouncil.org have been purchased/reserved through godaddy.com, but it is not currently hosted/active. NROC's current website is hosted and maintained by the NOAA Coastal Services Center and can be accessed at <http://collaborate.csc.noaa.gov/nroc>.

Q50: We are able to view some information about NROC activities and events lists through <http://collaborate.csc.noaa.gov/nroc/default.aspx> website which we assume to be your partner websites as we see that these are totally different registered domains. Can we assume that redesigning these websites or pushing any information from NROC web-server is not part of the scope in the given RFP? A: The RFP requires the development of a new website. The existing website and hosting will be discontinued after the new site is available.

Q51: What is the kind of response that you want from your human browsers (i.e. End-users)? This is important for us to know because you might have specific goals and similarly you are in a better position to clearly define on certain expectations which different type of visitors might be having from the website. A: NROC has not completed any end-user research. NROC is working on a web communications strategy that includes audience analysis and review of existing communications products.

Q52: Can we assume that you are majorly expecting social media type of engagement tools, direct (e-mail) marketing, multimedia content, forums, instant messaging etc to be used for improving Web communication channel apart from development of key messages and web design? A: The website requirements are outlined in Part 1, section 3, task 3 of the RFP. The bidder should note if additional features, including social media type engagement tools, are being offered in the proposal.

Q53: What is the kind of emphasis you are expecting from vendors to put in while designing ocean planning page to make it much more robust than from what currently it is? We are definitely sure that you might have something to add into this requirement. A: NROC's ocean planning efforts will generate more content, documents, information and feedback than its other efforts. The ocean planning page needs to include easy access to all ocean planning information as well as a specific contact or comment form for ocean planning related feedback.

Q54: Do you have any preference of technology such as .NET or Open-source PHP or any other platform for developing this application so as to suite your current hardware setup and architecture? Or can you explain the current hosting platform and whether you are satisfied with it? A: At this point, NROC does not have technical requirements, just functional requirements. NROC would look to the bidder to determine technical needs. Functional requirements are outlined in Task 3: a calendar, separate pages for each priority issue area, announcements, documents, contact information. NROC would also like a system that can be used by its staff, so it should be user friendly. The current hosting platform is Sharepoint.

Q55: How many people are expected to manage (administer) the website from the backend and what are the different type of audience groups you expect from the frontend (Guest & Registered). A: There will be a team of two managing the website community - the NROC Coordinator and the NROC communications lead. For this website, the primary audience are coastal and ocean resource managers, including state, federal, and local government as well as non-governmental organizations in the field. The website will also serve as the public face of the group and should be accessible to the more general public interested in coastal and ocean resource issues.

Q56: Can we assume that Events are only for displaying the detailed information about the event (Details page and user has an option to view / download it through calendar control) and doesn't cover the functionality of registering for the event online for the member/non members users? A: The option to register for an event online has not been discussed by NROC. The bidder should note if this is a capability being offered in the proposal.

Q57: Who are the stakeholders? (Are they federal agencies that are listed under the background section of the RFP?) A: For this website, the primary audience are coastal and ocean resource managers, including state, federal, and local government as well as non-governmental organizations in the field. The website will also serve as the public face of the group and should be accessible to the more general public interested in coastal and ocean resource issues.

Q58: How does the NROC currently obtain feedback and comments from its key stakeholders? How do you currently communicate with your stakeholders? A: NROC does not currently obtain feedback and comments through its website. The primary communication methods are face-to-face meetings and discussions, email updates and notices, and phone calls.

Q59: Are there key publications, associations or web sites that the stakeholders obtain information through that would be relevant in building an online strategy? A: Yes, however NROC has not identified key publications, association or web sites. This is not a complete list, but includes potentially key connections: the National Ocean Council and the associated National Ocean Policy; the Northeast Ocean Data Portal; the StormSmart Coasts Network; the Northeastern Regional Association of Coastal and Ocean Observing; the Gulf of Maine Council; the Northeast Sea Grant Consortium; the New England Governors' Conference

Q60: Does the NROC have an HTML email platform that needs to be integrated with the new site? A: NROC has email capabilities associated with the northeastoceancouncil.org domain.

Q61: "Provide partners, stakeholders with access to key NROC info" - Will each item (person/company) needs its own access information? personal password, username, and will they all have access to the same information? or will it be specific to that item (person/company)? Who will be setting up these accounts access information? A: All of the information on the NROC website will be publically available and does not require password protection.

Q62: What does "Emphasis on Robust ocean planning page" mean. Does this page act in any certain way? When you say "Robust", what does that mean? A: NROC's ocean planning efforts will generate more content, documents, information and feedback than its other efforts. The ocean planning page needs to include easy access to all ocean planning information as well as a specific contact or comment form for ocean planning related feedback.

Q63: "Provide connection to (basecamp)" Is this what you use now for project management? Will this simply be a link or something else? A: A link to the NROC Basecamp login page is satisfactory.

Q64: Website key features - Announcements - will this act like a blog? or simply be an area to post a quick announcement? A: NROC has not discussed this. This would be something for a bidder to discuss in the proposal. Q64a: Document Library - Will this need to have a search function? will it be categorized, archived throughout years etc..? A: The current NROC website does have a search function. NROC has not stated a preference. NROC is looking to the bidder to make suggestions. Q64b: How many documents do you see this having? Are all documents just downloadable? A: Generally, NROC related documents posted to the website are small-moderate sized PDFs. The library will hold an estimated 100 downloadable documents.

Q65: Is this date coinciding with an event that we should know about? A: The purpose for the NROC timeline is the planned stakeholder engagement process for the Ocean Planning initiative. The logo, key messages and website will be valuable to this process. NROC does want the timeline to be realistic. Part 1, Section 6 does allow for the bidder to propose and justify a different schedule.

Q66: Is there a public relations strategy or person within NROC that will aid with the launch of the new site? A: No.

Q67: Are there long term opportunities for the selected agency to continue to work with the NROC and build their annual communications materials beyond the completion of this RFP? A: At this time, there are no additional communications projects anticipated.

Q68: Will you provide a complete list of stakeholders and offices they are representing? A: For this website, the primary audience are coastal and ocean resource managers, including state, federal, and local government as well as non-governmental organizations in the field. The website will also serve as the public face of the group and should be accessible to the more general public interested in coastal and ocean resource issues. Q68a: The NROC terms of reference on the web site mentions fostering international cooperation but the list of members does not include any international organizations. A: There is a Canadian counterpart to NROC call the Oceans Working Committee. NROC is also a strong partner with the Gulf of Maine Council. Q68b: Also, the list of members gives the name of the organization involved but not the office that provides the representative. A: A list of members and their organizations is available at <http://collaborate.csc.noaa.gov/nroc/about/member-states-agancies/default.aspx>

Q69: Will you provide a template or format in which the detailed budget should be provided? If not, can it be submitted in Excel spreadsheet form or does it also need to be submitted as part of the PDF file? A: There is not a template for the budget. The budget is counted as part of the 10 page limit and submitted as part of the PDF. If this is not possible, please submit the budget as an appendix in the excel format.