



NROC
Northeast Regional
Ocean Council

Request for Proposals:

**PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL
OCEAN PLANNING IN NEW ENGLAND**

RFP Issued: September 9, 2013

Proposals Due: October 7, 2013

Northeast Regional Ocean Council Request for Proposals: PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL OCEAN PLANNING IN NEW ENGLAND

Part 1: Scope of Work

- 1. Statement of Purpose:** The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) is seeking proposals for contractor assistance to provide logistics, facilitation, and event planning for regional ocean planning stakeholder engagement activities in New England. NROC is issuing this proposal in conjunction with the Northeast Regional Planning Body, which is the formal entity (pursuant to the National Ocean Policy) with the responsibility of developing a regional ocean plan for New England. Work conducted under the contract stemming from this RFP will directly support regional ocean planning activities in New England.

Successful engagement for regional ocean planning has been defined by the RPB as an open, transparent, efficient process that engages the public and key stakeholders in regional ocean planning activities. During the course of the next two years of this effort (through the end of 2015), there will be specific stakeholder engagement needs at specific points in the process. For purposes of this Request for Proposals (RFP), therefore, and as described below, “stakeholder engagement” includes potentially a variety of activities in a range of levels of formality, including settings such as broad invitational workshops, small public meetings, formal public hearing-type of situations, and specific meetings targeting specific constituencies. “Stakeholder engagement” is a clearly broad term, and respondents should note that there are other activities and projects underway intended to engage specific stakeholders, maximize public participation, and assist with communications in general. For example, there are specific projects underway that will be focused on engaging the shipping, commercial fishing, and natural resource communities. Ocean planning staff largely will be responsible for providing coordination with these other activities as appropriate and necessary. Thus, for the purposes of this RFP, the term “public and engagement support” is focused on the types of engagement described below. As regional planning proceeds, the emphasis on specific stakeholder engagement tasks will likely evolve, given the context at a particular point in the process.

Importantly, this RFP does not include tasks associated with coordinating RPB meetings themselves, but additional engagement activities as described below. Additionally, it does not include specific communications-focused tasks, beyond those directly associated with engagement activities as described below.

Therefore, this RFP is intended to provide an overview of the types of engagement activities being sought in general through 2015 to help support the goal of an open, transparent, efficient process. NROC will work with the selected contractor(s) to ensure that specific activities undertaken are appropriately scoped and implemented and are within budgetary and other practical constraints as this work proceeds.

2. **Background:** Regional ocean planning in New England has been underway formally since 2012. The formal entity charged with developing a regional ocean plan, the Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB), first convened in November 2012 in Portland Maine. In its subsequent public meetings and dialogue, the RPB has completed initial tasks including:
 - a. **Development of draft goals and actions** which were the subject of a series of public meetings during a comment period in May-July 2013;
 - b. **Identified principles for regional ocean planning in New England**, including statements of purpose regarding the need to conduct a transparent, open process that is inclusive of stakeholders; and
 - c. **Begun preparation of a work plan** that includes necessary tasks to meet the region's objectives for ocean planning, including identification of stakeholder participation and engagement activities.

The work of the RPB is being directly supported by grants obtained for regional ocean planning by the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC). NROC, established by New England's Governors in 2005, is a state-federal partnership formed to implement solutions to New England's most pressing ocean and coastal issues that require a regional response. NROC member states include Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont. Federal agencies, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of the Interior (U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Homeland Security (U.S. Coast Guard), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, have been full members of NROC since its inception. Individuals representing the New England states and federal agencies are in many cases members of both NROC and the RPB. The RPB also includes federally-recognized Tribal representatives in New England, as well as a representative of the New England Fishery Management Council.

In general, the focus of regional ocean planning in New England is on estuarine and marine waters from Long Island Sound north around the waters south of Rhode Island and Massachusetts and through the Gulf of Maine. Thus, stakeholders already participating in regional ocean planning include people from each of the New England states (as well as New York) and represent the wide variety of people who use, recreate on, or are concerned with the health of the ocean in New England: various industries (shipping, energy, fishing, boating, aquaculture), recreational interests, environmental advocates, academia and governmental scientists, and others. Stakeholders have been participating in regional ocean planning in several different ways: through participation at

formal RPB meetings, as part of specific projects that have been undertaken (e.g., the 2012 Northeast Recreational Boating Survey), and through targeted efforts to discuss ocean planning issues (e.g., public meetings in spring 2013 and workshops held in late 2012 with the maritime commerce, energy, and aquaculture industries).

For more information on the RPB and other activities underway in support of regional ocean planning, please see on-line information available at www.northeastoceancouncil.org.

- 3. Objective:** The primary objective of this RFP is to, over a period of two years, provide public and stakeholder engagement support to the regional ocean planning effort underway in New England. For an effort such as this, several different tasks likely will be needed, given differences in targeted stakeholders and the most effective ways to engage them, the needs at a particular point in the development of the regional ocean plan, and other practical issues.

A key consideration for responses to this RFP will be the potential structure and project management activities in support of the Tasks below. Generally speaking, the interest is in an approach to this work that is efficient, for example by providing a central point of contact for implementing the tasks in this RFP to enhance internal communication, minimize the need for multiple subcontractors, and provide superior project management capabilities .. Proposals should provide detailed information on how efficiency will be maximized and how overall project management will occur. Within this general approach, NROC welcomes creativity in responses to this RFP.

This RFP includes an estimated number of hours anticipated for each task in order to provide respondents an idea of the thinking of the effort needed to complete these tasks over the next two years (the duration of this work). These estimates are based on experience with previous related activities, and thus respondents are encouraged to view them as estimates only. Proposals should include and explain detailed estimates of effort, hours, and budget proposed to complete these tasks and include explanations of hours needed and corresponding assumptions for each task, if different from those suggested.

Task 1. Public meetings. At particular points in time in the next two years, a series of public meetings will be necessary in order to provide opportunities for broad public engagement and participation in the regional ocean planning process. It will be the responsibility of ocean planning staff and the RPB to ensure that the contractor has sufficient advance notice of what meetings are needed and their timing. Task 1 specifically does not include the formal RPB meetings, such as those held in November 2012 and April 2013. The types of meetings envisioned for this task include the recent public meetings held during May-June of 2013 in each state. These meetings were in the late afternoon and early evening and were in general three hours in duration.

Meetings under this task will likely include the following sub-tasks:

- a) Identification of appropriate venues, typically including publically available meeting space with low to zero facility rental costs that is accessible to those with physical disabilities (potentially also requiring the need for interpreters, as requested), including contracting with venues as necessary;
- b) Working with ocean planning staff and RPB members as appropriate to develop meeting agendas and plan for meetings;
- c) Ensuring that any audio-visual needs are met (sound system/microphones, use of a laptop and projector to enable presentations, etc.);
- d) Meeting facilitation to keep meetings on schedule and on topic but enables informal discussion with attendees. A relatively light touch on facilitation is anticipated for most such meetings;
- e) Preparation of written meeting summaries (requiring note-taking at the meetings), typically for public dissemination but not typically including formal meeting minutes through the use of court reporting-type of activity. This sub-task will include preparation of drafts for staff review prior to finalization;
- f) Publicizing meetings (e.g., through placement in typical media outlet calendars and coordinating with ocean planning staff to help publicize through on-line means, social media, etc); and
- g) Providing light refreshments.

Public meetings can be assumed to primarily be for engaging in public discussion about a particular decision-point in the overall regional ocean planning effort—an example is the recent public meetings to discuss draft goals. Thus will have some presentation of relevant material (typically by ocean planning staff and/or RPB members) followed by public discussion. Development of the content for presentation material will not be the responsibility of the contractor, although the contractor will be expected to help develop the agenda for such meetings. Potential future agenda topics will become more certain as regional ocean planning progresses but could include options for ways to achieve plan objectives, review of draft plan materials, or others. The meetings that were held in May to June of 2013 were held to obtain input on draft regional ocean planning goals, as an example, and there were a total of ten meetings held with at least one in each of the coastal New England states. Attendance ranged from 15 to 50 people.

For this task, respondents should assume that they will be responsible for all meeting logistics (scheduling, meeting preparation including any audio-visual equipment and copying of handouts, and other details), and that they will work with regional ocean planning staff and RPB members on developing meeting agendas. In general, given the regional nature of this work, a particular round of public meetings could include events in each of the five coastal New England states, which practically speaking leads to needs to coordinate meeting schedules where there are multiple meetings to be synchronized. Respondents should thus incorporate and discuss coordination

mechanisms in their responses, recognizing that regional ocean planning staff will be a primary point of contact for completing this task.

The level of effort for this task will obviously vary depending on the number of meetings, anticipated turnout, purpose and agenda, etc. Thus, responses to this RFP should provide a budget for this task that is based on a certain set of assumptions based on the above-mentioned background and past experience. Responses should make those assumptions clear and recognize that specific details ultimately will affect the budget since costs for meeting space, refreshments, supplies, and other needs will be covered through the contract arising from this RFP. Based on previous experience, an estimated number of hours for a round of public meetings assuming a minimum of one per each state, including providing capacity to complete all sub-tasks as described above, is in the range of 500; this is an estimate only and future activities may require more or less. Over the course of two years, there may be as many as three rounds of public meetings, but that is an estimate; proposals should provide a budget and describe the approach (complete with assumptions) for a single round of public meetings.

Task 2. General public workshops. Workshops provide a different forum for stakeholder engagement than the typical public meeting-type of format outlined in Task 1. Typically these events are half-day or longer and are organized to enable informal, in-depth discussion of a particular topic. Past regional ocean planning workshops have been centrally located, and depending on the topic have included up to 150 participants (most have been smaller). A summary of past workshops held to engage the maritime commerce, energy, and aquaculture sectors is available on-line: <http://northeastoceancouncil.org/committees/ocean-planning/>.

Workshops under this task will likely include the following sub-tasks:

- a) Working with ocean planning staff to develop workshop objectives and agendas;
- b) Identification of appropriate venues, typically including publically available meeting space with low to zero facility rental costs that is accessible to those with physical disabilities (potentially also requiring the need for interpreters, as requested), including contracting with venues as necessary;
- c) Ensuring that any audio-visual needs are met (sound system/microphones, use of a laptop and projector to enable presentations, etc.) and that workshop materials (handouts, copies, etc.) are provided;
- d) Meeting facilitation that generally keeps workshops on schedule and on topic and that may include the use of breakout groups or other ways of conducting smaller discussions within an overall workshop setting;
- e) Preparation of written meeting summaries (requiring note-taking at the meetings), typically for public dissemination. This sub-task will include preparation of drafts for staff review prior to finalization;

- f) Preparation of written workshop summaries (requiring note-taking at the meetings), typically not including formal minutes such as through the use of court reporting-type of activity;
- g) Advertising meetings and sending invitations, tracking responses and the number of attendees; and
- h) Refreshments (lunch and/or snacks).

Such workshops can be assumed to primarily be for engaging in focused discussion on a specific topic. They will typically include a mix of presentations, including those from ocean planning staff and/or RPB members or invited guests, and discussion in an informal setting (breakout groups, roundtable discussions, etc) with usually some level of facilitation. Development of the content for presentation material will not be the responsibility of the contractor. The contractor will be expected to help develop workshop agendas, working primarily with ocean planning staff to do so. Attendance could range from 25-150, depending on variables such as the topic, venue, and other factors. A total of five public workshops may be held over the course of two years under this contract; although that number is an estimate it can be used as a basis for considering this task.

For this task, respondents should assume that they will be responsible for all workshop logistics (scheduling, meeting preparation including any audio-visual equipment and copying of handouts, and other details), and that they will work with regional ocean planning staff and RPB members on developing workshop agendas. Workshops would typically be held in a central location in New England.

The level of effort for this task will vary depending on the scale and scope of the workshop (number of attendees, etc.) Thus, responses to this RFP should provide a budget for this task that is based on a certain set of assumptions based on the above-mentioned background. Responses should make those assumptions clear and recognize that specific details ultimately will affect the budget since costs for meeting space, refreshments, supplies, and other needs will be covered through the contract arising from this RFP. Based on previous experience, an estimated number of hours for an individual workshop, including providing capacity to complete all sub-tasks as described above, is in the range of 150; this is an estimate only and future activities may require more or less .

Task 3. Industry- or topic-specific meetings. In addition to workshops and public meetings described in previous tasks, contractor assistance will be required for more specific, focused meetings. Such meetings will often occur in a series, for example with a common agenda discussed at multiple meetings across the region. Such meetings will typically be smaller and less formal than even a workshop setting.

Meetings under this task will likely include the following sub-tasks:

- a) Working with ocean planning staff to develop meeting agendas;

- b) Identification of appropriate venues, typically including publically available meeting space with low to zero facility rental costs;
- c) Preparation of written meeting summaries (requiring note-taking at the meetings). This sub-task will include preparation of drafts for staff review prior to finalization;
- d) Sending invitations to targeted attendees and working with ocean planning staff to maximize attendance
- e) Providing refreshments (lunch and/or snacks).

A main portion of this task will be working with regional ocean planning staff to coordinate scheduling, venue, and other meeting logistics. Meeting summaries will generally be brief (e.g. one-two pages apiece). For this task, respondents should assume that they will be responsible for such meeting logistics. Meetings may be held in various locations throughout New England. A total of twenty such meetings may be held over the course of two years under this contract, although that number is an estimate.

The level of effort for this task will be dependent on the scale and scope of the meetings, number of attendees, etc. Thus, responses to this RFP should provide a budget for this task that is based on a certain set of assumptions based on the above-mentioned background. Responses should make those assumptions clear and recognize that specific details ultimately will affect the budget. Based on previous experience, an estimated number of hours for an individual set of meetings, including all sub-tasks as described above, is in the range of 20-40; this is an estimate only and future activities will likely be quite variable.

4. **Project Funding.** The overall budget for this project will be determined dependent on the selected contractor. NROC has provided an estimate of the number of hours for individual tasks, but these estimates are provided for guidance purposes only. Proposals should include the estimates of time that respondents feel is necessary to complete individual tasks, according to task, hourly rate(s) of individuals included in this proposal, and other direct costs (e.g., for other meeting logistics). As described above, there may be three rounds of public meetings, five workshops, and 20 topic specific meetings over the course of the contract. These numbers are estimates and are likely to change, but are given to compare budgets, experience, and approaches across proposals. Therefore, responses to this RFP should include these assumptions (plus any others). NROC reserves the right to re-allocate this funding if a satisfactory candidate(s) for this service is not determined or the services are no longer needed.
5. **Deliverables:** Proposals should include a detailed work plan, including a description of proposed approaches and methods to be used to complete Tasks 1-3. The review of proposals will be based in part on a consideration of demonstrated ability to conduct related public process functions, with preference given to respondents with direct experience in ocean and/or coastal issues, particularly in New England. The assumptions incorporated into a proposal should be clearly indicated to help

enable review of proposed approach and budget on a per-task basis. The following deliverables are anticipated:

- a. Detailed process agendas and participant agendas for Tasks 1 and 2
 - b. Detailed participant agendas for Task 3
 - c. Draft workshop/meeting summaries for Tasks 1,2, and 3 for staff/internal review
 - d. Final, revised workshop/meeting summaries incorporating comments
6. **Project schedule:** NROC expects that work on this project will start immediately following completion of a contract and will extend through 2015.

Part 2: Proposal Preparation and Submittal

The following sections describe the procedures and content for submitting proposals.

1. **Pre-submittal conference call.** NROC will host a pre-submission conference call to allow potential respondents to ask clarifying questions on Tuesday, October 1, 2013 at 1:00 pm. Instructions to participate in this conference call will be sent to all people who express their interest via email at least 24 hours before the conference call.
2. **RFP clarification.** Questions and requests for clarifications regarding this solicitation should be sent to the email contact below. The deadline for submitting such an email is Monday, September 30, 2013. Responses will be posted to the NROC web-site on Tuesday, October 1, 2013, by 5:00 pm. Questions should be sent to:

Proposal@northeastoceancouncil.org

John Weber, Ocean Planning Director
Northeast Regional Ocean Council

4. **Submittal requirements.** For review purposes, NROC requires responses to this RFP to be delivered electronically, via email as an Adobe™ .pdf file, to Proposal@northeastoceancouncil.org. Proposals must be received by email no later than 5:00 pm on October 7, 2013, and shall plainly identify the subject of the proposal and the name, phone, email, and address of the bidder.

It is the bidder's responsibility to ensure that NROC receives the proposals prior to the specified closing date. Proposals received after the specified closing date will not be considered.

5. **Content requirements.** Proposals must be clear, succinct and shall not exceed 10 pages. Section dividers, cover letter, title page, and table of contents do not count in the overall page count of the proposal. Exclusions to the page limitation may include relevant work samples and/or resumes, as described below, provided in appendices. Each bidder is required to describe how they will provide

the deliverables described above as part of their proposal. Information provided will be evaluated and scored; missing elements will adversely impact a proposal's overall score.

a. General requirements:

- i. Single-spaced pages when printed on 8.5" x 11" paper with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left and right) with font no smaller than 11 point.
- ii. The total number of pages must not exceed 10 pages (not including appendices).
- iii. The proposal must be submitted as an Adobe™ .pdf document with all pages numbered and clearly identifying the name of the bidder.

b. Proposal organization and content:

- i. Cover letter. Provide a cover letter indicating your organization's commitment to implementing this initiative (e.g. senior management approval, etc.). Also, include appropriate point of contact information, including the person's name, title, address, phone number and email address.
- ii. Table of contents. Identify page numbers of main sections, including any appendices.
- iii. Executive summary. Summarize the proposal's approach to completing the tasks required by this RFP and highlight any competitive advantages or unique approaches of your proposal, cost-effectiveness measures, and particular skills offered by the project team.
- iv. Work plan. Include a concise, yet detailed work plan for completing the tasks described in this RFP and to ensure appropriate management of the scope, schedule, budget and overall quality of work. Include a time line showing implementation, starting from contract execution, including all major tasks and their sequence, inter-relationships and dependencies between tasks and key milestones and deliverables.
- v. Detailed budget. Provide an itemized budget to for the tasks described in this RFP. Include all costs related to personnel (identify estimated hours and rate), administrative overhead, travel, materials, equipment, and any other anticipated expenditures required to complete the work described in this RFP. In this budget description, describe leveraging of existing work, funding, or other in-kind services. Note that because of the requirements of the source of funding for this project, indirect costs encouraged to be limited to a maximum of 12.5% of allowable direct costs. For purposes of this RFP, indirect costs are defined as "overhead expenses incurred by an organization but not easily tracked to a specific project. They generally include administrative or other support functions such as executive oversight, institutional communication networks, accounting, grants management, legal support, insurance, utilities, technology, rent, and facility maintenance." For purposes of this RFP, direct costs include all of the expenses

that are required for, and can be tracked directly to, this project, including but not limited to personnel, consultants/contractors, or other direct expenses such as travel, training, supplies, computers, and software. For this RFP, respondents should recognize that the budget for this proposal should be accompanied by a set of assumptions, since the details of implementing certain tasks will be clarified during the course of the contract.

- vi. Team structure and qualifications. Please provide the following:
 - Project team organization chart, including a brief description of the role of each team member.
 - Summary of the experience, skill or unique attribute of each team member. Including a maximum two-page resume for each team member is allowable in a “resumes” appendix.
 - Summary of related, successful projects that illustrate the capabilities and qualifications of the project team. In addition, providing a maximum two-page description of up to two recently-completed projects is allowable in a “related experience” appendix. Include references that NROC may contact for these projects.

Proposals must identify any tasks which will be assigned to subcontractors and associated budget details include in part v above. The successful bidder will be prohibited from subcontracting, assigning, or transferring any listed responsibilities without prior review and consent of NROC.

Part 3: Evaluation of Proposals

This section summarizes the general process and criteria NROC intends to use to evaluate proposals.

1. **General review process.** The NROC Ocean Planning Director will collect and assemble all proposals received by the RFP deadline. An evaluation team comprised of RPB members (and/or their staff designees) and the NROC Ocean Planning Director will be convened to evaluate and score all proposals, using the criteria below. Upon completion of the scoring process, the evaluation team will recommend to the RPB co-leads and the NROC Executive Committee that the highest scoring bidder be awarded the project.
2. **Criteria.** NROC will use score all proposals according to the following criteria:
 - a. *Approach (30%).* Bidders will be evaluated on the detail, clarity, and soundness of their approach to this project, including strategies for overcoming any potential obstacles, creativity, and cost effectiveness. Creativity in approach to accomplishing the tasks in this RFP is urged.
 - b. *Qualifications and experience of project team (30%).* NROC will evaluate a project team members’ combination of education, training, and record of achievement and experience

related to the tasks described in this RFP. Specific attention will also be focused on an assessment of a project team's direct experience with potential subject matter and with experts in pertinent fields.

- c. *Cost Effectiveness* (20%). Bidders will be evaluated on the budget submitted with their responses to this RFP. Any leveraging of existing work, funding, or other in-kind services, will be a significant portion of this evaluation.
- d. *Project Management* (20%). Bidders will be evaluated on their ability to complete the project within the schedule provided, track record of project management, and proposed project management strategies for this project. NROC will in particular look to the approach described to achieve Task 5, given NROC's interest in a centralized approach to managing this work, not by a broad, multiple-lead team approach.

Part 4. General Provisions

The following general provisions apply to this RFP and subsequent actions taken by NROC.

1. Response to this RFP does not commit NROC to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred during the preparation of the proposal.
2. NROC reserves the right to reject any or all of the proposals for completing this work. NROC also reserves the right to cancel or reissue the RFP at any time.
3. NROC reserves the right to eliminate the need for the selected bidders to complete one or more tasks, pending the outcome of preceding related tasks or issues, and/or the availability of project partners to complete that task.
4. NROC reserves the right to modify the final scope of work and deliverables prior to finalizing a contractual agreement with the selected bidder(s).
5. Subsequent procurement, if any, will be in accordance with an executed contract. This RFP and any response may, at NROC's discretion, become part of the executed contract.
6. All entities participating in this RFP process will be notified of acceptance or rejection. NROC reserves the right not to disclose reasons for the rejection. NROC is not obligated to accept the proposal with the lowest cost.
7. No publicity or media release about this RFP, response to this RFP, discussion of any kind related to this RFP, or the award of any contract related to the bid document, may be released without NROC's prior approval.
8. All materials submitted by bidders become the property of NROC. NROC will retain copies of all proposals for historical records and documentation.
9. Each Bidder agrees to comply with all federal regulations including those pertaining to non-discrimination in hiring and employment practices.
10. NROC owns all rights to deliverables and, within the bounds of acceptable practice as determined by limitations placed upon data used in this project by data providers, intends that products resulting from this project will be made publically available.