

STATEMENT OF WORK

Scientific and Technical Services to Manage Peer Reviews, Compilation and Synthesis of Scientific Information and Scientific Review Panels

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

As a result of the Office of Management and Budget's "Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review" (2005), the Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Information Quality Act Guidelines (<http://www.fws.gov/informationquality/>), and other guidance in the Department of the Interior (DOI), the demand for peer review of documents used by FWS and other DOI Bureaus to support important decisions has increased. In fiscal year 2005, the FWS conducted 37 peer reviews of influential or highly influential information while in fiscal year 2006, FWS conducted 51 peer reviews of similar information. Statistics had not been collected prior to that time. In addition, there is an increasing demand to gather, evaluate, and provide a synthesis of information on topics such as species status or other natural resources topic. The FWS, Bureau of Reclamation (BR), and National Park Service (NPS) expect these demands to increase in the future and thus, the FWS, BR, and NPS are seeking scientific and technical services to assist in meeting this and the associated workload (collectively, the Bureaus). The majority of the 2005 and 2006 peer reviews consisted of letter reviews. However, the Bureaus also convened scientific review panels to review scientific documents and all best available information, theories, conclusions, methods, and engage in structured deliberations that produced new information or reports that would support the agency's decision making. This solicitation is intended to obtain the management of a range of scientific review processes for the Bureaus including:

- Review of documents (models, data, proposed rulemakings such as listings, critical habitat designations or delistings under the Endangered Species Act, scientific papers, status reviews, management plans, recovery plans, biological opinions etc.) usually resulting in a report in letter form from each reviewer.
- Expert panel review of key documents or all available information which may include meetings with scientists, agency personnel and the public and culminates in a written report summarizing and evaluating the best available information to the Bureau.
- Scientific or technical services to gather, evaluate, and synthesize the best available information/data on a scientific topic resulting in a report to the Bureau.
- An ongoing program of reviews of longer-term science programs (i.e. a species recovery program or research and monitoring effort) Reviewers may periodically be assembled to conduct a review of the entire science program or a portion thereof or a standing review panel is asked to periodically review the science program or portion thereof. These reviews would culminate in a written report to the Bureau.

This scientific and technical services contract will be available to all Programs, Regions, and administrative units of the Bureaus throughout the United States. However, other

DOI Bureaus and non-DOI federal government agencies may be authorized to use this contract at the discretion of the FWS Contracting Officer through execution of an appropriate modification to the basic contract.

2. REQUIRED WORK ITEMS

Task 1: Selecting reviewers

- a. The Contractor shall undertake a structured search process whereby they shall select independent, objective peer reviewers that represent a broad spectrum of applicable scientific expertise on whatever topic is the subject of the review. Any appearance of conflict of interest must be avoided. When selecting peer reviewers, the contractor shall comply with the National Academy of Science's "Policy and Procedures on Committee Composition and Balance and Conflicts of Interest for Committees Used in the Development of Reports" (2003) and the Office of Management and Budget's "Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review" (2005).
- b. Expertise is the most important factor in selecting peer reviewers. The Contractor should target reviewers that have established, high-caliber scientific credentials (based upon important factors such as peer reviewed publications and presentations) in the appropriate areas pertinent to the planned review. In general, the expertise required will be from areas of science such as wildlife biology, ecology, fisheries biology, genetics, hydrology, geomorphology, engineering, adaptive management, taxonomy and systematics, population biology, conservation biology, land management, modeling, and related fields.
- c. The Contractor shall recognize and provide clear direction to prospective reviewers that the peer reviews required are scientific in nature and that decision making and policy interpretation are left to the Bureaus alone.

Task 2: Organizing, structuring, leading and managing the scientific reviews.

- a. There will be a Senior Technical Coordinator (STC) who will provide the overall technical coordination for this contract. In addition, each Bureau will appoint a Technical Coordinator (TC) for task orders to conduct work for them. In coordination with the TC, the Contractor shall develop a plan for each review following the format provided by the TC. This plan will meet the requirements of a peer review plan as specified in the OMB Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review.
- b. In coordination with the TC, the Contractor shall develop instructions to the reviewers and ground rules for operation, as necessary.
- c. Under the direction of the TC, the Contractor shall provide for panel deliberations to be conducted in either sessions open or closed to the public.
- d. The Contractor shall be aware that key Bureau personnel may observe the entire scientific review panel process and any other meetings (as

- necessary) that take place. The Contractor shall coordinate with the TC to ensure key personnel attendance.
- e. The Contractor shall schedule the review and coordinate all logistical issues associated with carrying out the review including, but not limited to, travel, facilities, equipment, facilitators, panelists, security (if necessary), arranging for transcription of panel discussions, and public access (as necessary).
 - f. The Contractor shall facilitate the plan and any face-to-face meetings needed in an orderly and timely manner for panel reviews. Also, all exercises and other necessary tasks must be completed in their entirety by the Contractor.
 - g. In coordination with the TC, the Contractor shall arrange for the compilation of a complete official record for the review/panel process including transcription of any meetings, if necessary.
 - h. All costs associated with the review/panel shall be borne by the Contractor.

Task 3: Managing and producing a final report

- a. The Contractor shall be responsible for writing and editing any initial, draft or final reports that are required under the task order. However, letter reviews of documents only require that all reviews be provided to the Bureau unless otherwise specified by the TC. If the TC chooses to have the final report peer reviewed (for example, a 5-Year Review under the Endangered Species Act), the Contractor must be prepared to consider those reviews and make changes to the report as necessary. The Contractor and TC must discuss the peer review comments and changes to the report as proposed by the Contractor. The Contractor must then provide a complete written reconciliation of the reviewers' comments. In addition, if the TC chooses to subject the final report to public review and comment, the Contractor must be prepared to provide a written response to those comments and provide that to the TC.
- b. In general, the final report for panel reviews shall summarize the goals and objectives of the review, the process undertaken to select the review panel participants, the participants selected, a brief summary of their qualifications, the information considered by the panel, the exercises completed as part of the process, and the results of the panel review.
- c. If specifically requested by the TC, the final report may include an analysis of the review conducted including observations of the strengths and weaknesses of the review and identification of ways the review could have been improved.
- d. The final report for panel reviews shall include appendices with any exercises or worksheets completed by individual panelists. Transcripts from the panel should also be attached as an appendix. All exercises, worksheets, and individual comments documented in the transcripts should be marked with the name of the panelists responsible for the

document. All materials may be made available to the public upon request.

- e. The final report shall be delivered to the TC in electronic format as a text selectable “pdf” file (portable document format created with Adobe Acrobat) within the dates established in the task order.
- f. The Contractor and any reviewers selected may publish (including Internet postings) results of this work only with the written consent of the TC. All work, findings, determinations, and products related to the task order, are inherently proprietary to the Bureaus and thus, may be communicated with other parties only with the expressed written consent of the TC.

Task 4: Maintaining an official record for this process

- a. The Contractor shall compile and deliver an official record to the TC with copies of all materials created, reviewed, used, or cited by the reviewers, including personal communications, electronic messages, and other non-published materials.
- b. The official record must be in electronic format, with copies of all relevant documents scanned with a linking index and converted to “pdf” files following the protocol that will be provided by the TC upon award of the task order and provided on compact discs.
- c. All records acquired or generated by the Contractor in its performance of each task shall be the property of the Government and shall be delivered to the Government or otherwise disposed of by the Contractor either as the Contracting Officer may from time to time direct during the process of the work, or in any event, as the Contracting Officer shall direct upon task completion or termination of the contract.

Task 5: Adhering to timelines

- a. Adherence to a compressed timeline may be required and if so, will be indicated in the task order. Statutory deadlines may require that work begin without delay although the TC will attempt to give the Contractor as much lead time as possible. As a result, the Contractor must be able to commit the necessary time and personnel to the process to produce rapid but complete, substantive, and high quality results.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY PRODUCTS EXPECTED

The Contractor shall provide the TC with three key products: (1) Proposed timeline; (2) Final Report; (3) Complete Official Record. Details and guidelines for the preparation of these documents are provided elsewhere in this document.

4. PLACE AND PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The Contractor and the TC shall coordinate on locations where any review panels or meetings (as necessary) shall take place, allowing full agency observation, with the TC to be the final decision maker on meeting location. The task order shall specify the amount of time allowed for the Contractor to conduct the work required.

5. EVALUATION AND ACCEPTANCE

Evaluation and acceptance of the products of this Contract shall be dependent upon the Contractor producing the required work items, completing the tasks identified, and meeting any additional requirements specified in a task order developed under this statement of work in accordance with the time periods identified herein. The due dates and nature of the products described in this statement of work may be subject to modification, if necessary, upon the mutual agreement of the Contractor and FWS.

6. TASK ORDER TECHNICAL AND PRICE PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

The proposal shall include the following as appropriate to the task order:

- (1) Statement of the topic or issue to be reviewed or product to be produced.
- (2) Explanation of all labor efforts including a detailed description of the type of review required.
- (3) Description of areas of expertise to be represented in the review process as well as identification of panel members, consultants, subcontractors etc., person-hours of effort, prices, and resumes (These personnel are subject to Government review and approval). Moreover, personnel shall not be replaced without approval of the TC.
- (4) Schedule including start date, important milestones, interim and final deliverables, and completion date.
- (5) Other direct costs including travel*, meeting space, transcription services, postage, etc., with basis of estimate explanation and support
- (6) Other pertinent information, if any; and
- (7) Total firm-fixed-price for each task order.

Contractor price proposals will be required to be adequately supported. Tests for reasonableness of price will be based upon price and cost analysis that may require information other than cost or pricing data. Prices and costs will be subject to Federal

Acquisition Regulation tests of allowability, allocability, and reasonableness. Proposals prepared and submitted in response to any request under this contract shall be at no cost to the Government.

*Travel - In the event that the performance of a specific task order requires travel, the Contractor shall be reimbursed for meals and incidental expenses in accordance with the current official Joint Travel Regulations. Only coach class for common carriers shall be reimbursed without additional justification. Travel information can be accessed via the internet.

The Government will provide the following types of information in its task order to assist the Contractors in their preparation of the task order proposals:

- (1) Statement of work describing the work to be undertaken.
- (2) Description of methods to be used if prescribed methods are necessary.
- (3) Description of analyses to be performed if specific analyses are required.
- (4) Information sources needed for performance of task order, if specifically required for the completion of the work (e.g. websites, electronic files, references etc.).
- (5) Description of deliverables.
- (6) Schedules and deadlines.

Selection of contractors for task orders will be based on the comparable strengths of contractors as measured by:

- (1) Past performance of earlier task orders.
- (2) Level of quality and timeliness of deliverable.
- (3) Continuity and/or continuation of a previous project.
- (4) Price.

7. GOVERNMENT FURNISHED EQUIPMENT/INFORMATION

The TC shall provide guidance, policy documents, scientific documents, and access to current information and data, as required to support the review in each task order. No Government equipment will be furnished to the Contractor. The Contractor shall furnish all labor, facilities, equipment, materials, supplies, travel and services to perform the requirements of this Contract.

8. AVAILABILITY

Normal duty hours are Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m. in whichever time zone the Contractor is conducting the work. Non-duty hours include week nights, weekends, and Government holidays (for example, New Year's Day, Memorial Day, President's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Columbus Day, and Christmas; a complete list of Federal holidays will be provided). Key personnel from both the Government and the Contractor are expected to be available for communications and

meetings during normal duty hours. The Contractor shall provide emergency contact information, in case the need for such should arise.

9. TECHNICAL COORDINATOR

A person from the appropriate office of the Bureau initiating the task order will be named by the Technical Coordinator and will be the Contractor's point of contact (POC) on matters related to interpreting and implementing this contract. To ensure that the reviews are conducted in a quality and timely manner, it is critical that coordination and feedback between the Contractor and TC occur regularly and begin at the outset of the execution of the task order. The TC is also responsible for seeking guidance from Bureau management to ensure that the reviews are being conducted in a manner that provides information that is useful and timely for the Bureau decision maker. The TC is responsible for appropriately incorporating the Bureau management guidance into the task order and, with the Contractor, into the execution of the task order. The name and contact information for the TC and POC will be furnished at the time the task order is awarded.

10. LITERATURE CITED

National Academy of Sciences. 2003. Policy and Procedures on Committee Composition and Balance and Conflicts of Interest for Committees Used in the Development of Reports. May 2003. Available online at: <http://www.nationalacademies.org/coi/index.html>

Office of Management and Budget. 2005. Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review. December 16, 2004. Available online at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/memoranda/fy2005/m05-03.pdf>