

E12AC10310
National Park Service
Financial Assistance Application Instructions

Natural Resource Condition Assessment for Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Pipestone National Monument, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, and Homestead National Monument

The National Park Service (NPS) is requesting information on the interest and qualifications of potential investigators to complete a Natural Resources Condition Assessment (NRCA) for Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Pipestone National Monument, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, and Homestead National Monument in Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska. The NPS reserves the right to make multiple awards for the assessments.

I. Submission Instructions

Request for statements of interest and qualifications may be submitted through the Grants.gov funding opportunity announcement number E12AC10037. ***Incomplete application packages will not be evaluated or considered.***

Complete packages are due by Saturday, April 28, 2012 at 5:00 pm CDT.

Application Checklist

- Complete, signed and dated (SF 424) Application for Federal Assistance
- Written statement of interest and qualifications
- A complete Budget Information (SF-424A) form
- Budget Narrative
- Signed and dated Assurances (SF-424B) form

II. Basic Eligibility Requirements

All Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU) partner institutions with a department of Natural Resources, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) or related field of study are eligible to apply for this funding opportunity. CESU partners must need and expect substantial involvement from NPS staff to include, but not limited to collaboration, participation, project visioning or re-envisioning.

For more information about the CESU network see: <http://www.cesu.psu.edu/default.htm> Applicants must also be registered on the Central Contractor Registration website: <https://www.bpn.gov/ccr/default.aspx>

Responses to this request will be used to identify potential investigator(s) with the ability to complete a Natural Resource Condition Assessments. This project will be funded by the NPS with an amount that is to be determined, and the award will be based on the availability of funds. Similar past projects awarded by NPS have had funding amounts of approximately \$230,000- \$275,000 for all four parks, with per park budgets ranging from \$40,000 to \$100,000. A total budget is requested at this time, but a detailed budget breakdown is **NOT** requested at this time.

Entities identified on the Excluded Parties List System as debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, excluded or disqualified under the non-procurement common rule, or otherwise declared ineligible from

receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding.

III. Application Requirements

To be considered for funding under this funding opportunity, an application must contain:

A. Written statement, not to exceed twelve (12) pages (single-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman font), that describes how you envision implementing this project. The application package shall be assembled in the following order.

1. Cover Page (not to exceed 1 page)
 - Shall include Project Name, University Name, and Contact Information
2. Brief Statement of Qualifications (not to exceed 9 pages)
 - Shall identify the Principal Investigator (Faculty member who will oversee the cooperative agreement), and Technical contact (Staff member(s) who will administer the cooperative agreement) including address, phone number, fax number, and email address
 - Other staff, faculty, students, and/or other partners available to work on this project and their areas of expertise;
 - A biographical sketch or curriculum vitae for key positions that includes expertise relevant to natural landscapes and geospatial analyses;
 - Brief description of any other capabilities you may have to successfully complete the project (e.g., AutoCAD/GIS/data analysis capabilities, access to other relevant information sources, previous research experiences at the park or region, etc.).
3. Related Experience/Projects (not to exceed 2 pages)
 - Shall include a description of related past projects and experience in natural resource condition assessments with the National Park Service. Projects shall include brief description(s) and client references with contact information. References will be contacted regarding past performance.

Previous experience working in Iowa, Nebraska, southwest Minnesota, and Kansas will be advantageous, but is not an essential requirement. Applicants may submit statements of interest for all parks. The strongest candidates will have expertise and experience with geospatial analysis and synthesis of natural resources datasets and experience in working within Iowa, Nebraska, southwest Minnesota, and Kansas and will include all parks in the project.

B. A completed Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A) form. The budget forms are available online at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>. When developing your budget, bear in mind the following:

1. Cost Principles: Financial assistance awards and sub-awards are subject to OMB Circulars A-122, Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations, A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, and A-87, Cost Principles for States and Local Governments, as applicable to the recipient organization type. These OMB circulars are available online at <http://www.doi.gov/pam/financialassistance/resources/index.html>.
2. Federally Funded Equipment: Applicants cannot attribute equipment paid for by the U.S. Federal Government under another award as matching or in-kind contributions (do not include this type of equipment in your budget). Instead, provide a separate list of any equipment paid for

by the U.S. Federal Government that will be used for the project, including the name of the Federal agency that paid for the equipment, in your budget narrative (see section II, E below).

3. Indirect Costs: CESU Network indirect costs rate not to exceed 17.5%

C. Budget Narrative

Provide a separate description supporting/justifying the proposed basis of costs and cost category totals. The narrative must make a clear connection of cost to project activities, and show how cost category amounts were determined. Requests for personnel salary and benefits must be well documented, including the baseline salary figure and the estimate of time (as a percentage) to be directly charged to the project.

D. Assurances

Include the appropriate signed and dated Assurances form available online at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>. Use the **Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)** if your project does not involve construction. Use the **Assurances for Construction Programs (SF-424D)** if it does involve construction.

IV. Summary

The objective of the project is to provide a snapshot-in-time evaluation of resource condition status for an important subset of park natural resources. Project findings, which include a written report and accompanying map products, will help individual park managers:

- Develop near-term management priorities (how to allocate limited staff and funding resources);
- Engage in watershed or landscape scale partnership and education efforts;
- Conduct park planning (e.g., General Management Plan, Foundation Document, Resource Stewardship Strategy);
- Report program performance (e.g. Department of Interior’s Strategic Plan “land health” goals).

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2003, the NPS Water Resources Division received an increase in base funding to assess watershed resource conditions within national park units (parks). The division’s Watershed Condition Assessment (WCA) Program is overseeing these assessments. As a result of input from NPS staff at parks and regional and national level offices, a determination was made to fund an overview assessment for each of the 270-plus parks deemed by NPS as having significant natural resources and related values. These assessments will be generically titled as “Assessment of Natural Resources and Watershed Conditions for [park name]”.

Assessment of Natural Resources and Watershed Conditions are a multi-disciplinary synthesis of existing scientific data and knowledge, from multiple sources, to help answer the question: what are current conditions for important park natural resources?

Expected Uses: NRCAs strive to provide a mix of new insights and useful scientific documentation about current resource conditions and some of the factors influencing those conditions (i.e., threats and stressors). NRCAs should have practical value to park managers as they work to:

- 1) develop near-term strategies and priorities—given limited park staff and funding, determine what park areas and resources deserve their greatest attention right now;
- 2) engage in watershed or landscape scale resource partnerships and education efforts;
- 3) conduct formal planning to quantify desired conditions for their most important resources, and to develop comprehensive strategies for how to best protect/restore those same resources;
- 4) Meet “resource condition status” reporting requirements (e.g., DOI-GPRA land health goals, NPS State of the Parks reports).

Some Key NRCA Characteristics:

- Helps place technical science in a more readily understandable and useful management context
- Is multi-disciplinary (ecological) in scope
- Relies on existing data, from multiple sources
- Provides a credible interpretation of current resource conditions (defensible, transparent logic)
- Uses appropriate assessment methods and frameworks
- Identifies critical data gaps
- Provides a regional and/or historic condition context
- Emphasis on GIS (map) products
- Highlights some existing and/or emerging resource condition influences (threats/stressors)
- Reports condition status by selected indicators
- Summarizes overall conditions by park areas
- Good linkage to NPS Inventory and Monitoring program
- Good linkage to the park's fundamental resources/values

Additional NRCA Program information is posted at:

http://www.nature.nps.gov/water/NRCondition_Assessment_Program/Index.cfm

V. Description of Anticipated Products

Products will include a written report and set of Geographic Information System (GIS) databases, with appropriate emphasis on the park areas and resources identified as “high priority” by park managers. A possible list of information highlighted in the report and GIS products would include:

1. Park and Resources Context:

- Bio-geographic and physical setting (emphasize system-level ecological features, attributes, functions—i.e., by watersheds, habits and/or park mgmt zones)
- Regional context, historic condition and trends
- Unique and significant park resources and designations
- Likely GIS products developed or delivered by the PI:
 - Watershed boundaries used in the project (e.g., USGS 5th and/or 6th field HUCs)
 - Ecosystem/habit unit classifications used in the project
 - Landscape scale maps that depict or interpret park resource conditions or features in a larger regional context, and provide historic context if time series data are available

2. Current Condition Status:

- Condition status for the subset of resources focused on, which are based on known thresholds where possible and professional ratings when such thresholds are unknown
- Supporting assumptions and logic based on scientific literature
- Level of confidence, caveats on use of assessment findings
- Critical data and knowledge gaps
- Likely GIS products developed or delivered by the PI: Spatially defined summaries of current resource conditions for the individual measures evaluated as well as overall condition status by park areas

3. Existing/Emerging Resource Condition Influences (Threats/Stressors):

- Existing and emerging resource management concerns
- Currently impacted and at-risk park areas and resources
- Strategies to address impacts and risks
- Likely GIS products developed or delivered by the PI (as map able):
 - Potential source areas
 - Currently impacted park areas and resources

- At-risk park areas and resources
4. Knowledge Gaps

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the National Park Service (NPS) and principal investigator(s) are detailed below. Project contacts from the NPS will work with the investigator(s) to obtain data and applicable maps, site plans and/or GIS layers for the project area.

The Investigator(s) will:

- Collaborate with NPS park and regional staff via an agreed upon communications strategy.
- Jointly define the scope of work with NPS to ensure benefit to students.
- Follow NPS deliverable requirements, including complying with the agreed upon project timeline.
- Review appropriate data, information sources, and previous reports/studies in completing the NRCA.
- Comply with the established guidelines for the NPS Natural Resources Publication Series, mapping, and graphic delivery standards and guidelines for all required deliverables.
- Review student work for quality and completeness prior to submitting draft NRCA documents to NPS.
- Provide NPS all supporting data, metadata, graphics, photographs, documentation and reports generated through this project.
- Meet the terms and conditions of the scope of work and final agreement(s).
- Clearly acknowledge NPS and the CESU in any published material produced from this agreement.

The National Park Service will:

- Provide financial support to the investigator(s).
- Provide relevant source data, information, analyses, and previous reports/studies to the investigator(s).
- Jointly define the scope of work with investigator(s) to ensure quality product for each park.
- Provide technical review and expertise and provide review comments to the investigator(s).
- Provide on-site orientation to each park office and employees and provide access as needed to park files.
- Provide access to park areas as required and logistical support as needed.
- Provide a team of park resource managers and other park staff at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Pipestone National Monument, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, and Homestead National Monument, Midwest Regional Office Natural Resources Stewardship and Science, and Heartland Inventory and Monitoring Network who will support and contribute to the project.
- Clearly acknowledge the investigator(s) in all published material and websites resulting from this project.

The advantages of completing this NRCA through a Cooperative Agreement are:

- University faculty and students gain experience with a specialty within geographic information systems (GIS), natural resources, or landscape dynamics that is not well-known, thus giving them exposure to potential career tracks
- NPS gains knowledge of the latest approaches and techniques for GIS and landscape dynamics documentation and evaluation being taught at the university level.
- University faculty and students are provided with opportunities to become familiar with the NPS approach to documenting and evaluating natural resources, while evaluating current condition of natural resources in NPS park units.

VII. Application Rating

A review panel of National Park Service members will score applications, placing equal weight on the following criteria:

- Qualifications of Principal Investigator and interdisciplinary team assembled
- Geospatial expertise and capacity of the team
- Past project experience and references of PI conducting landscape level analyses and synthesis
- Ability to meet NRCA program goals (including project costs and expected timeline)

After Statements of Interest and Qualifications have been scored using the above rating criteria, the National Park Service will select the investigator(s). Notification of a successful submittal **does not** constitute authority to incur costs. Costs incurred prior to receipt of a cooperative agreement and finalized scope of work will not be reimbursed. Costs for this project may be incurred **only after the receipt of an award** is signed by an Agreements Officer of the NPS. Once the award document has been received, the investigator(s) may incur costs as specified in their proposed and approved budget submittal. Funding is subject to the availability of appropriations from the Congress.

Once notified, the selected investigator(s) will jointly prepare a final scope of work with the NPS and a proposed budget. A CESU Task Agreement will be completed and the project will begin immediately thereafter. For further information or questions regarding this Request for Statements of Interest and Qualifications, please contact Penny Russell, NPS-Agreements Officer, Penny.Russell@nps.gov or (402-661-1662) .

VIII. Award Administration

Award Notices: Following review, applicants may be requested to revise the project scope and/or budget before a final award can be made. Successful applicants will receive written notice in the form of a Notice of Award letter. Notice of Award letters are typically sent to recipients by e-mail. If e-mail notification is unsuccessful, the documents will be sent via courier mail (FedEx, DHL, Airborne Express). Applicants whose projects are not selected for funding will receive written notice, most often by e-mail, within 30 days of the final review decision.

Standard Award Terms and Conditions: Acceptance of a Federal Financial Assistance award from the Department of the Interior (DOI) carries with it the responsibility to be aware of and comply with the terms and conditions of award. Acceptance is defined as starting work, drawing down funds, or accepting the award via electronic means. Awards are based on the application submitted to, and as approved by DOI and are subject to the terms and conditions incorporated either directly or by reference in the following:

- Program legislation/regulation
- Special terms and conditions
- Code of Federal Regulations/Regulatory Requirements, as applicable:
 - 2 CFR Part 25 Central Contractor Registration and Data Universal Numbering System
 - 2 CFR Part 170 Reporting Sub-awards and Executive Compensation
 - 2 CFR Part 1400 Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement)
 - 2 CFR Part 175 Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000
 - 43 CFR 12(A) Administrative and Audit Requirements and Cost Principles for Assistance Programs
 - 43 CFR 12(E) Buy American Requirements for Assistance Programs
 - 43 CFR 12(C) Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local
 - 43 CFR 12(F) Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, other Non-Profit and Commercial Organizations

- 43 CFR 43 Government-wide Requirements for a Drug-Free Workplace
- 43 CFR 18 New Restrictions on Lobbying

The text of all standard award terms and conditions are available online at <http://www.doi.gov/pam/TermsandConditions.html>.

Recipient Financial Reporting Requirements: Interim financial reports will be required no more frequently than quarterly, and no less frequently than annually. Financial reports must be accomplished on a SF-425, Federal Financial Report. Submission of payment requests using the SF-270 satisfies interim financial reporting requirements. A final SF-425, Federal Financial Report is required within 90 calendar days of the end date of the award and reports on the life of the award. This form can be accessed on the Internet at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_forms/.

Recipient Performance Reporting Requirements: Interim performance reports will be required no more frequently than quarterly, and no less frequently than annually. A final performance report is required and is due within 90 calendar days of the end date of the award and reports on the life of the award. Performance reports must contain: 1) a comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals and objectives of the award as detailed in the approved scope of work; 2) a description of reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and 3) any other pertinent information relevant to the project results.