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National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
Cultural Resources Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Protocols  
August 10, 2023

The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking the services of a qualified individual, firm, or organization (contractor) through a cooperative agreement with the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) to develop protocols for assessing climate change vulnerability for cultural resources to inform decisions. The vulnerability assessment protocol developed should integrate, consider, and align with existing vulnerability assessment protocols used by the National Park Service natural resources and facilities directorates as a critical component of adaptation planning as indicated within Step 2, “Assess climate vulnerabilities and risks,” in *Planning for a Changing Climate: Climate-Smart Planning and Management in the National Park Service* (NPS 2021). Project tasks must be created in accordance with the requirements specified in this Request for Proposals (RFP). The contract is administered by NCSHPO and the work is prepared, completed, and reviewed in coordination with the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and the National Park Service Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science directorate.

**Interested contractors should digitally submit a proposal and cost estimate in response to this RFP to NCSHPO no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on September 15, 2023.** Electronic copies of proposals may be directed to Ms. Sharon Smith, NCSHPO Business Manager, at [smith@ncshpo.org](mailto:smith@ncshpo.org).

**Project Background**

The expected impacts of climate change can vary in nature and extent across ecosystems, species, historic properties, and facilities. The NPS uses vulnerability assessments to understand the relative degree to which park resources are susceptible to effects from climate change to enable responsible management and adaptation planning.

National Park Service vulnerability assessments typically explore climate exposure(s), resource sensitivity to the identified exposure, and, where applicable, adaptive capacity. These factors produce a useful measure of relative vulnerability to address motivating decisions and targeted resources, generally built around a small number of divergent but plausible scenarios of future climate conditions. NPS Policy Memorandum 14-02 directs resource managers to focus on the

most vulnerable and significant cultural resources, thereby prompting assessments of vulnerability. An assortment of vulnerability assessments have been conducted for NPS resources and assets, as well as comprehensive review of cultural resource vulnerability assessments conducted through 2018 (e.g., see Yu et al. 2022). Recommendations for simplification, consistent vocabulary and data products, and uniform applicability of protocols across geographies and climate stressors, as well as calls for integration with natural resources and facilities, drive this RFP.

This project is intended to directly inform NPS management decisions, systems, and processes. However, the final report must also provide more general descriptions to enable other agencies, institutions, and property owners to benefit from consistent protocols to assess vulnerability of cultural resources to climate change.

### **Required Consultant Qualifications**

The selected contractor must have demonstrated experience in cultural resource management (e.g., archeology, historic architecture, cultural landscapes, ethnographic heritage, collections, and materials science) and climate change vulnerability assessment methodologies. Ideal candidates will also possess the following desired qualifications:

- a) One or more team member that meet the Secretary of the Interior Professional Qualification Standards of archeologist as specified under Department of the Interior's regulations 36 CFR Part 61.
- b) One or more team member that meet the Secretary of the Interior Professional Qualification Standards of architectural historian, and/or historical architect as specified under Department of the Interior's regulations 36 CFR Part 61.
- c) Additionally, team members may be historical landscape architects, conservation scientists and/or museum collections specialists with appropriate qualifications in those fields. Additional expertise related to cultural anthropology and ethnography are desired.
- d) Demonstrated experience in identifying and monitoring impacts to cultural resources from natural hazards and/or climate change.
- e) One or more team member with data management, geospatial information systems, and information science expertise.

If the consultant comprises a firm or organization, then a Principal Investigator must be designated for the project. The Principal Investigator must agree to be principally responsible for all work conducted by other contractor personnel for the project. The individual selected as the Principal Investigator may not change during the project without written approval of NCSHPO and the NPS.

### **Scope of Work**

The overarching goal of this project is to develop protocols that can be implemented at the National Park Service for climate change vulnerability assessment of cultural resources (historic

structures, cultural landscapes, archeology, museum collections, and ethnographic resources). This project should:

- a) produce a research synthesis of cultural resource climate stressor sensitivity to guide use and analysis of exposure metrics
- b) produce a cultural resource vulnerability assessment protocol that can integrate with natural resource and facilities vulnerability assessment practices to inform decision-making
- c) establish minimum and desired data, personnel, and time requirements to conduct cultural resource vulnerability assessments
- d) establish avenues for stakeholder and partner engagement (particularly observation-based, Indigenous, community, and traditional knowledges)
- e) identify requirements to enable centralized and secure data sharing and management

This product should directly tie to National Park Service management practices, systems, and processes, and more generally describe implementation for non-NPS property managers. Each element should be described in narrative form with accompanying templates, tools, procedures, equipment and systems lists, personnel requirements, and other supplemental information sufficient to fully describe the approach for immediate implementation.

### **Project Location**

The project will be done remotely through virtual meetings and sharing of electronic files. Information will be obtained through interviews, information provided by the NPS, and information collected by the researchers.

### **Project Deliverables**

This project includes two tasks with an optional third task dependent on funding:

#### Task 1: Research and Assessment

1. Produce a research synthesis of cultural resource sensitivity to climate stressors
2. Prepare a literature review of vulnerability assessment methodologies conducted for cultural resources, natural resources, and facilities, including both those utilized by NPS, and exemplary non-NPS inventory programs. Specific approaches to be reviewed include the NPS Cultural Resources Environmental Vulnerability Assessment Toolbox as well as previous and ongoing NPS work conducted in partnership with North Carolina State University (e.g., Fatoric and Seekamp 2016, 2017, ongoing), University of Rhode Island (e.g., Ricci et al. 2019b, ongoing), Western Carolina University (e.g., Peek et al.

2022), Boise State University (e.g., Yu et al 2022), and others to be determined. Assess strengths and drawbacks.

3. Discussions and literature reviews that identify and prioritize key cultural resource-related decisions that require climate change vulnerability assessments, with categorization of necessary scales and data requirements.
4. Research and discussions on minimum and desired data, personnel, and time requirements to conduct cultural resource vulnerability assessments.
5. Research vulnerability assessment integration of scientific datasets with other Ways of Knowing, such as Indigenous, traditional, and community knowledge with cultural heritage material sciences, specifically identifying pathways for stakeholder and partner engagement.
6. Research current NPS data management and geospatial information systems (including but not limited to cultural resource data management) appropriate for vulnerability assessment data integration.
7. Interview selected NPS cultural resource managers, climate scientists, natural resource managers, facility managers, superintendents, cultural resource subject matter experts within NPS, and identify and interview partners who have knowledge of existing vulnerability assessment approaches.

#### Task 2: Cultural Resource Vulnerability Assessment Protocol

8. Produce a consistent cultural resource vulnerability assessment protocol, that includes:
  - a. Established definitions, recommended methodologies, and minimum data requirements to conduct adequate cultural resource vulnerability assessments for the mutually agreed upon highest priority decision contexts.
  - b. Established avenues for stakeholder and partner engagement (including observation-based, Indigenous, community, and traditional knowledge)
  - c. Identified requirements to enable centralized and secure data sharing and management
  - d. Recommendations on frequency of vulnerability assessment analysis updates
9. Create templates, tools, procedures, equipment, and systems lists, personnel requirements, and other supplemental information necessary for implementation.

Task 3: Pilot cultural resource vulnerability assessment protocol (optional, funding dependent). Consultants may submit Task 3 with a separate cost estimate.

10. Within a limited, defined segment of the National Park System, implement the vulnerability assessment protocol, and assess results.

Deliverable products include items 1-7 below. Each item will be submitted for NCSHPO and NPS review at 75% and 95% completion to allow for 30-day NPS review and comment.

1. Overview of the proposed process, milestones, and schedule to be used to complete the project.

2. Final assessment report: vulnerability assessments and minimum data requirements, with a summary of findings and detailed list and analysis of each system reviewed.
3. Final assessment report: vulnerability assessment integration of scientific datasets with other Ways of Knowing, such as Indigenous, traditional, and community knowledge with cultural heritage material sciences, with identified pathways for stakeholder and partner engagement.
4. Complete written description of a cultural resource vulnerability assessment protocol that meets the above requirements.
5. Descriptions and supplemental materials, noted in 9 above, necessary to fully implement the protocol. Descriptions must also include options for implementation by non-NPS agencies.
6. Identification of the skills, expertise needed, and any standards that apply for successful implementation of the protocol.
7. Summary presentation (PowerPoint or equivalent) of findings, recommendations, and created products
8. (optional) Description of fully functional systems, processes, and procedures at pilot NPS location(s), and evaluation of pilot results.

### **Performance Expectations**

The deliverable products and materials will be submitted to NCSHPO and the NPS for review as outlined above. Project schedule, milestones, and response times will be negotiated after award. The project will include (depending on project funding and final project scope):

- One contractor-led kick-off meeting held virtually.
- Regular check-in meetings with NPS staff on a schedule to be determined. For proposal, estimate one-hour bi-weekly progress meetings for the duration of the period of performance.
- Submission of overview of proposed process, milestones, and schedule within two weeks of project kick-off meeting.
- Interim submissions:
  - List of resource sensitivities examined.
  - List of vulnerability assessment methodologies to be evaluated
  - List of decision contexts explored.
  - Research methods for assessing methodology strengths/drawbacks, minimum data requirements, integration of resources and knowledges.
  - Interview questions and content analysis methodology.
  - Draft descriptions of the cultural resource vulnerability assessment protocol
  - (optional) Draft scope of work and schedule for pilot project.
- Final presentation – in-person, virtual, or hybrid – for NPS staff and NCSHPO.

## **Proposal Submissions**

For evaluation purposes, proposals should provide sufficient information as to assist NCSHPO and the NPS in determining the most qualified contractor for the project. Contractors interested in bidding should submit a written proposal that includes the following elements:

- Key personnel that would be working on the project and their proposed area(s) of responsibility. If proposing as a firm, project team, or organization, describe the proposed staff structure and how it is organized to provide the services requested by this RFP.
- Description of the specific, relevant education, experience, and qualifications of the Principal Investigator and any contractor staff; demonstrated experience with vulnerability assessments; databases; cultural resource management; and/or climate change expertise.
- Information on projects of a similar nature and of pertinent NPS and non-NPS work completed by contractor in the past five (5) years. Include specific dates and types of services provided, and highlight success in meeting work schedules, project budgets, and product deadlines.
- A list of references (at least three, but not more than five) that may be contacted.
- A short narrative that responds to the scope of work as described in this RFP, which demonstrates the consultant's proposed approach to the project and ability to accomplish the desired goals.
- A proposed budget that includes hourly labor rates or project personnel, the number of hours required to complete each task or product, and any necessary and appropriate project travel costs.
- A proposed project schedule.

All proposals must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. EST pm on Friday, September 15, 2023. They should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise description of the contractor's qualifications and capabilities to satisfy the requirements of this RFP.

Proposals may be submitted via email in electronic format (MS Word or PDF format) to Ms. Sharon Smith, NCSHPO Business Manager, at [smith@ncshpo.org](mailto:smith@ncshpo.org). NCSHPO will confirm receipts of submissions. However, if there are any issues (e.g., with attachments working correctly), the contractor is responsible for resolving these issues with an alternative submission method acceptable to NCSHPO and the NPS prior to the RFP deadline.

## **Selection Criteria**

Submittals will be evaluated and ranked based on the following factors, presented in no particular order:

- Qualifications of Principal Investigator and other key personnel.
- Responsiveness of the proposal to the project's purpose, scope of work, and deliverables.
- Experience with vulnerability assessment methodologies and protocols for cultural resources.
- Demonstrated expertise related to climate change impacts on cultural resources.
- Successful experience assessing and evaluating a wide-range and scale of systems and practices.
- Successful experience creating new programs and/or systems for implementation by large agencies, sites, and/or organizations.
- Demonstrated ability of meeting projected deadlines and successfully completing contracts of this type.
- Past performance and references.
- Schedule and cost.

## **Terms and Conditions**

- A. NCSHPO reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, and to waive minor irregularities in any proposal.
- B. NCSHPO reserves the right to request clarification of information submitted, and to request additional information from any consultant.
- C. NCSHPO and NPS shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by consultants in preparing, submitting, or presenting its response to this RFP.
- D. Any and all rights to work produced through this project will be vested in the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, including any copyrights.
- E. Selected participant must adhere the DOI terms and regulatory requirements located at:
  - <https://www.doi.gov/grants/doi-standard-terms-and-conditions>
  - eCFR :: 2 CFR Part 200 -- Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200>)
  - eCFR :: 2 CFR Part 1402 -- Financial Assistance Interior Regulation, Supplementing the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-B/chapter-XIV/part-1402>)

## **Questions**

Respondents are invited to submit written questions requesting clarifications or explanations of the information contained in this RFP. Please direct all proposal or contract-related questions to Sharon Smith, NCSHPO Business Manager, at [smith@ncshpo.org](mailto:smith@ncshpo.org). Questions pertaining to the scope of this project may be directed to Kelly Clark, NPS Management Assistant to the Associate Director of Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science, at [Kelly\\_clark@nps.gov](mailto:Kelly_clark@nps.gov).