



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Analysis of Common Water Quality Parameters

Deadline for proposal submission: **May 26, 2023**

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA) is a partnership of the five Gulf States, federal agencies, academic organizations, businesses, and other non-profits in the region. Our goal is to significantly increase regional collaboration to enhance the environmental and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. For more information about the Gulf of Mexico Alliance visit <https://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/>.

BACKGROUND

GOMA's Data and Monitoring Priority Issue Team develops integrated networks for monitoring and mapping. These frameworks provide the foundation for increased coordination; integrated data efforts; and information/products that address local, state, and regional issues. Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), funding is available to the Data and Monitoring Team to develop a common understanding across GOMA partners of priority water quality parameters and analytical methodologies (and sampling methodologies when available) for collection and analysis across the Gulf of Mexico. This effort will enhance data comparability with the goal of improving understanding of water quality conditions, monitoring needs, and to develop better models across the Gulf of Mexico.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is available to develop a report summarizing the most frequently used methods for water quality sampling and analysis in the Gulf of Mexico. Therefore, all terms and conditions of the resulting sub-recipient agreement will be subject to Federal regulations concerning the receipt and use of Federal funds.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF WORK

A conscious effort to identify, coordinate, and communicate essential monitoring information improves decision making and provides guidance for future monitoring, research, and data sharing collaborations. To continue coordinated regional efforts focused on making water quality monitoring data more accessible and comparable, GOMA seeks proposals to use the Gulf Coast Monitoring and Assessment Portal (GCMAP) to conduct an analysis of water quality parameters and to develop a user-friendly guidance resource to be used by stakeholders from across the Gulf region. This guidance document will build on work accomplished by the RESTORE Council

Monitoring and Assessment Program (CMAP) and GOMA from 2018-2021 to develop an inventory and catalog of monitoring programs and assessments. GOMA played a key role in this effort by facilitating a monitoring community of practice that identified resources, stakeholders, and information needed for the evaluation. The resulting inventory (“CMAP inventory”) includes information on monitoring methods, parameters, and units; spatial and temporal data; and a database of programs collecting monitoring data. Thirty-seven different water quality parameters from over 350 water monitoring programs are included in the inventory. The next step in making water quality data more accessible and comparable is to take this extensive catalog of water quality information included in the CMAP inventory and create guidance that will inform stakeholders on the most commonly used methodologies and units in an easy to understand format.

GOMA seeks proposals that will do two things:

- 1) Engage with stakeholders from the five Gulf States on the following:
 - a. identification of additional monitoring programs from across the five Gulf States that are serving water quality monitoring data that may be compatible with the Gulf of Mexico Open Data Platform
 - b. sharing project goals, progress, and providing opportunities for stakeholder input on the development of a guidance document that can be shared across the region for greater data comparability and compatibility
 - c. collaborative opportunities and identification of additional data sources across the Gulf of Mexico
- 2) Develop a guidance resource that includes the following information:
 - a. for each of the 37 parameters listed in Appendix A, develop a written description of the most common methodologies listed in the CMAP inventory (top 3-4, depending on parameter), nomenclature used to represent speciation/chemical forms, abbreviations, and units being used
 - b. a summary table of the most common methodologies and units for each of the 37 parameters (similar to Table 4 in the [EPA WQX Nutrients Best Practices Guide](#))
 - c. a summary table identifying the most common challenges for comparability/compatibility
 - d. recommended best practices and goals for addressing these challenges

The guidance document, along with the stakeholder engagement, will serve as a basis for addressing comparability/compatibility challenges and improve data sharing collaboration across the region.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- 1) A series of workshops/meetings (format and frequency to be proposed by applicant and will occur in coordination with GOMA) to engage with stakeholders
- 2) A guidance resource document that will address comparability and compatibility challenges and improve regional data collaboration.
- 3) At least one webinar that presents the results of the project and recommended best practices to stakeholders.

Proposals should provide for the delivery of a draft final guidance document to the GOMA Project Management Team and GOMA identified state points of contact, review and return of comments by the project team/state contacts, and revision by the awardee of the draft based on received comments before delivery of a final report to GOMA. All relevant project-derived material (data, metadata, reports, products, etc.) must be provided to GOMA at the completion of the project. Project leads are encouraged to consult with GOMA to determine appropriate data discovery, access, dissemination, and archival measures.

AWARD DETAILS

Award agreements and payments will come directly from the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. Available funding for the project selected from this RFP is approximately \$225,000, so project proposals should not exceed that value. Minimum award value is \$185,000; proposals for less this amount will not be considered.

Although project costs cannot include already-incurred costs, projects may include funding for continuation or expansion of existing projects. Cost sharing or matching is not required.

Project duration can be no more than 15 months and must be completed prior to November 30, 2024. Anticipated start date is August 1, 2023.

ELIGIBILITY

Any state or municipal agency, academic/research institution, tribe, business, or non-governmental organization is eligible to submit a proposal and be considered for funding under this RFP.

Applicants of winning proposals will be required to attend at least one GOMA meeting (2024 Gulf of Mexico Conference), provide regular project updates, and submit semi-annual progress reports.

Applicants must be U.S. organizations or corporations with a valid tax ID number and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Applicants will be required to certify that they have the institutional, managerial, and financial capability to ensure proper planning, management, and completion of the project described in the scope; will establish safeguards to prohibit employees from using their positions for a purpose that constitutes or presents the appearance of personal or organizational conflict of interest, or personal gain; will initiate and complete the work within the applicable time frame after receipt of approval from the Gulf of Mexico Alliance; and will comply with all applicable requirements of all other Federal laws, executive orders, regulations and policies governing this project.

PROPOSAL CONTENT AND FORMAT

Proposals should be submitted in PDF format via email to Katie Wallace, GOMA Data and Monitoring Program Coordinator, at katie.wallace@gomxa.org by **May 26, 2023**. Proposals must be submitted using the GOMA Proposal Form that requires three main sections as described below:

(1) Title Page (GOMA fillable PDF form)

(2) Project Description and Budget (GOMA fillable PDF form; 5 pages maximum)

GOMA's Proposal Form requires that the Project Description and Budget be no longer than 5 pages and should contain the following elements:

Project Description:

In a clear and concise manner, describe what will be accomplished during the project:

- Project goals and objectives, methods or approach, and team members
- Primary activities that will be accomplished with this project and the schedule for implementation included as a milestone chart

- Outreach/engagement – stakeholders or users of the results of the project and describe the steps that will be taken to transfer the results of the project to the appropriate audience
- Data and information sharing – if applicable, describe how all relevant project-derived material (data, metadata, reports, products, etc.) will be publicly available by the completion of the project.

Budget:

- Project Cost Details: Salary, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Equipment, Contractual, Indirect
- Travel must include funds to attend the 2024 Gulf of Mexico Conference, February 19-22, in Tampa, Florida. (\$2,500 recommended)
- Justification should be provided for each applicable cost category

(3) Attachments (as appropriate)

Background information or other relevant information can be provided as an attachment. A Letter of Commitment is required for project team members from organizations other than that of the applicant's. Letters of commitment and support should be attached as PDFs to proposals. Attachments are not included in 5-page limit for the Project Description and Budget but attachments should not be used as a means to extend the proposal length.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Project proposals will be evaluated by members of the GOMA staff and Data and Monitoring Team. Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. Rationale (10 points) – Project addresses objectives identified in the GOMA Action Plan IV (available for download at <https://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/resources/publications>); clearly states the need for the project and the high primacy in accomplishing project goals.
2. Proposal Merit (10 points) – Project assesses whether the goals and objectives are clear and the methodology is appropriate for the proposed project. Likelihood that the proposed project will attain the stated objectives and GOMA priority issue action it proposes to address.
3. Impacts and Application of Results (10 points) – Project evaluates the overall impact and anticipated outcomes of the completed project. Identifies opportunities for leveraging or complimentary projects (if any).
4. Applicant Qualifications (10 points) – Principal Investigator and applicant team is well qualified to perform the proposed work and demonstrates intent to be active on GOMA Team(s) throughout the life of the project. Project lead and other project team members are experienced and have proper expertise to perform the project.
5. Outreach and Engagement and/or Data Sharing (5 points) – Applicant addressed the Outreach and Engagement and Data Sharing requirements satisfactorily.
6. Proposal Specifications (5 points) – Proposal is limited to 5 pages and contains all information required by the RFP. Budget costs are reasonable and justifiable.

SUBMITTAL, SELECTION, AND NOTIFICATION

Proposals must be submitted by email to Katie Wallace, GOMA Data and Monitoring Program Coordinator, at katie.wallace@gomxa.org by May 26, 2023.

Proposals will be evaluated by members of the Data and Monitoring Team in coordination with GOMA

headquarters staff. The evaluation committee will be composed of Team subject matter experts (who will remain anonymous). The Team will submit their recommendation to the GOMA Alliance Management Team who makes the final selection regarding funding of the project. The GOMA Alliance Management Team reserves the right to make selections based on the evaluation criteria and their own deliberations.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance anticipates notifying applicants of their award status in June 2023 and the project start date should be planned for August 1, 2023.

QUESTIONS

For questions about this RFP, please contact Katie Wallace, GOMA Data and Monitoring Program Coordinator, at katie.wallace@gomxa.org.

No questions will be allowed after the submission deadline.

Background Links:

Gulf of Mexico Alliance Data and Monitoring Team: <https://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/priority-issues/data-monitoring/>

Gulf Coast Monitoring and Assessment Portal: <https://restorethegulf.gov/cmap>

CMAP Resource on Data Gaps: <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/27551>

Gulf of Mexico Open Data Platform: <https://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/gomod>

EPA Water Quality Exchange: <https://www.epa.gov/waterdata/water-quality-data-upload-wqx>

EPA WQX Nutrient Best Practices Guide: <https://www.epa.gov/waterdata/wqx-nutrients-best-practices-guide>

RESTORE Council Monitoring and Adaptive Management Guidelines:
https://restorethegulf.gov/sites/default/files/Final_Council_MAM%20Guidelines_20191211_508.pdf

NRDA Cross TIG Monitoring and Adaptive Management Guidance:
https://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-08%20MAM_Manual_FULL_Updated%202019.pdf

Appendix A: CMAP Water Quality Parameters (<https://restorethegulf.gov/cmap/Statistics>)

Programs by Water Quality Parameter

