

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY HARBOR & ESTUARY PROGRAM

Advancing Habitat Restoration in Disadvantaged Communities

April 5, 2023

The New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program (HEP) is requesting proposals to support enhancement of sites recognized in the Hudson Raritan Estuary Comprehensive Restoration Plan (HRE CRP) or similar community-supported plans that are located in or serve residents of a disadvantaged community.

A total of \$200,000 is available under this request for proposals (RFP). HEP anticipates distributing funds through two to four grants for projects that can be completed no later than September 2025. Applicants must be non-profit organizations with 501(c)(3) status or local government entities located in or otherwise serving disadvantaged communities as defined by HEP using criteria set by the US EPA and the states of New York or New Jersey. See [here](#) for a searchable map of eligible locations. Organizations without 501(c)(3) status may apply, but they must partner with a local government entity or another organization with 501(c)(3) status that will serve as a fiscal agent for the project/proposal.

An initial one-page letter of inquiry is due May 5, 2023. A webinar reviewing the content of this RFP is scheduled for April 19th. Prospective applicants will be able to ask questions about this solicitation and the application process at that time. We anticipate inviting a small number of applicants submitting a letter of inquiry to complete the full proposal by June 15, 2023.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) includes the following information:

- I. [Program Background](#)
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I. Program Background

The New York - New Jersey Harbor Estuary is a complex ecological system at the heart of the nation's largest metropolitan area. The New York - New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program (HEP) brings the benefits of the Clean Water Act to the people who live, work, and recreate on our shared waterways. Created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at the request of the governors of New York and New Jersey, HEP is an ongoing collaboration to develop and implement a consensus driven plan to protect, conserve and restore the estuary. HEP decisions and activities are conducted by staff and partners, organized through committees and work groups. More information about HEP and the priorities of our 2017 - 2025 Action Agenda is [here](#). The Hudson River Foundation (HRF) is the host of HEP and the Foundation will be the contracting entity for this RFP. HRF seeks to make science integral to decision-making regarding the Hudson River and its watershed and to support competent stewardship of this extraordinary resource.

II. RFP Background

The [Comprehensive Restoration Plan](#) (CRP) is a blueprint to protect existing habitat and restore or enhance ecological characteristics of the Hudson-Raritan Estuary. The CRP is organized around 12 Target Ecosystem Characteristics (TECs) that together define the structure, function and biological diversity of a restored estuary ([Appendix E](#)). Authorized by Congress in 1999, the CRP was sponsored by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and created with the assistance of the Hudson River Foundation and multiple agency, non-profit and scientific partners. It was adopted by HEP in 2009.

To implement the plan, federal, state, local government, and non-profit leaders have been advancing projects nominated and vetted by HEP's Restoration Work Group and USACE. More than 300 sites can be located using [HEP's interactive Restoration Activity Map](#). Habitat conservation and enhancement of some of these sites are being advanced and funded under the USACE's Hudson Raritan Feasibility Study as well as other state and local funding opportunities. New sites are [nominated](#) and reviewed by the Restoration Work Group; Including a site in the CRP can be a means of recognizing a site's current or potential habitat or public value and making it more visible to the restoration community.

In the Estuary north of the Mario Cuomo (Tappan Zee) Bridge, restoration opportunities have been identified in the Hudson River watershed through the [Hudson River Comprehensive Restoration Plan](#) by Partners Restoring the Hudson. A site map is available [here](#). Other restoration opportunities have been identified in the Hudson River Estuary Program Action Agenda as well as other local planning efforts.

Incorporating community knowledge and values as an integral part of project formulation, design, implementation, and on-going monitoring and management can lead to better outcomes for these important habitat enhancement efforts. This is especially important for projects located in or otherwise intending to serve disadvantaged communities, where historic and current inequities in funding, decision-making, siting of industrial and transportation facilities, and limited access to nature and ecosystem services make habitat enhancement projects especially valuable.

The recent Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) has afforded HEP an opportunity to help address these issues through this RFP. It will help HEP address the important goals of Executive Order 14052, the Justice40 Initiative, in keeping with HEP's own Equity Strategy.

III. Objectives

Through this RFP, HEP will identify and support two to four proposals that meet one or ideally more of the following objectives:

1. Enable disadvantaged communities and their partners to better participate in the identification of habitat enhancement opportunities and ecosystem service benefits (such as public health and access), project formulation, and planning and design decisions.
2. Ensure that restoration opportunities identified in the CRP or other ecological restoration plans meet community needs and help deliver desired ecosystem service benefits.
3. Help advance community-supported projects through the funding pipeline so that communities and their partners can gain access to federal and state capital funding.
4. Demonstrate the power of collaboration between community, government, non-profit organizations, and independent scientists. Habitat enhancement in our urban estuary requires a team effort. Proposals that engage multiple stakeholders or seek to develop successful community involvement in such partnerships are highly desired.

IV. Anticipated Activities and Outputs

Proposed actions can include all stages of restoration from project development and conceptual planning to post-construction monitoring. Any one or a combination of multiple Target Ecosystem Characteristics may be addressed; see Appendix E. The proposed project does *not* need to be located on a specific site identified in one of the Comprehensive Restoration Plans, or another community supported planning effort, but doing so is encouraged and part of the evaluation scoring (Appendix D). A site with previous habitat restoration projects would be eligible as well as an enhancement of a restoration in process.

The RFP selection process will prioritize projects with demonstrated community leadership, support and/or direct engagement opportunities. The proposed project does not need to have secured all required funding to be eligible for consideration under this RFP. Proposed planning and community engagement projects should indicate how HEP support will help leverage additional planning and capital funding from a variety of federal, state and local sources. Proposals for monitoring and data collection efforts should indicate how data and analysis will improve project proposals, restoration practice, or site management.

Recognizing that the capacity of organizations serving disadvantaged communities is sometimes limited, this work can include necessary capacity-building efforts that will help achieve RFP objectives. Some relevant examples include but are not limited to:

- Community engagement activities including public meetings and programs, preparation of outreach materials, and meeting facilitation and documentation. This can include stipends for community participation and involvement.
- Planning activities including defining goals and common visions, project identification, site assessments, design charrettes, conceptual plans, and initial (e.g., 10-30%) design drawings.
- Monitoring and data collection, analyses, and communication of findings by professionals and/or community members that will improve community and agency understanding of baseline ecological conditions, site constraints and/or the effectiveness of alternative enhancement measures.
- Organizational capacity building to support these and other proposed activities, including staff and other costs associated with administrative activities, membership support, and communications.
- Construction activity, in particular when funding provided under this RFP will fill a critical gap or meet a specific unfunded need that meet RFP objectives.

V. General Guidelines for Applicants

Eligibility: Applicants must be non-profit organizations with 501(c)(3) status or local government entities located in or otherwise serving disadvantaged communities as defined by US EPA and the state of New York or New Jersey. See [here](#) for a searchable map of eligible locations. Organizations without 501(c)(3) status may apply, but they must partner with a local government entity or another organization with 501(c)(3) status that will serve as a fiscal agent or play a clear leadership role for the project/proposal.

Proposed projects must be within the boundaries of the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program.

Compensatory mitigation projects as part of a permit application for a separate project will not be considered eligible. Exceptions may be made when the proposed project clearly demonstrates that it would enable *additional* work at the same location, for example providing for additional community participation in a restoration project or monitoring beyond what is typically required.

Schedule:

Announcement of Request for Proposals	April 5, 2023
Informational Webinar	April 19, 2023
Letter of Inquiry	May 5, 2023
Invitations to Submit Full Proposals	May 12, 2023
Full Proposals Due	June 15, 2023
Projects Selected (subject to change)	July 7, 2023
Project Period (subject to change)	Completed by September 2025
Final Report	October 2025

The project should be completed within two years of contract approval.

Funding: A total of approximately \$200,000 is available. There is no minimum or maximum grant award though HEP anticipates making two to four grants of between \$ 50,000 - \$ 100,000.

Once an award is made and a contractual agreement is signed, grantees will receive an advance of 25% of the total grant. Three additional payments of 25% of the total grant each will be made following submission and approval of an interim report or agreed upon deliverable(s), and the final deliverable(s) and report. Funds can be used to support salary, fringe, travel, equipment/supplies, and professional services. Indirect costs of up to 40% of staff costs, not including fringe, are allowed. Fringe costs of up to 30% of staff costs are allowed. Requests for higher rates can be made but must be supported by a copy of the federally-approved indirect rate and/or proof of use with other federal funds. Please note that this would be noted under the cost effectiveness scoring criteria. Food costs are ineligible. Costs must occur during the contract period. If construction costs are proposed for funding, site safety plans, insurance, and other compliance measures may be required.

Match: No matching funds are required, but contributions of outside funds, in-kind services, or other match will be favorably reviewed and should be indicated.

Deliverables and Conditions: Award recipients are required to provide interim progress reports and invoices, complete the project in a timely manner, and submit a final report. Guidelines for these reports will be distributed with the grant award. Award recipients must acknowledge HEP/HRF funding using language and logos for any public presentations or printed materials.

Quality Assurance & Quality Control Requirements: If you plan to publish, post, distribute, analyze, or otherwise use data collected through monitoring or other means (including data collected previously by you or others), proposals will be required to develop a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) that must be approved by HEP and EPA before any monitoring or data analysis can begin. A QAPP is a written plan of why, how, and where you intend to collect data; once submitted, the approval process can take two months or more. Please note that data collection or analyses conducted solely for educational purposes (no data published, posted, or distributed in any manner) does not require a QAPP. HEP staff will provide technical assistance for creation of the QAPP, if needed, but be sure to allocate time and effort for QAPP preparation as part of the proposal.

Proposal Evaluation: Both letters of Inquiry and full proposals will be evaluated based on criteria included in [Appendix D](#). Final decisions will be made by foundation staff and an external advisory committee based on the scoring and other considerations such as geographic and topical distribution.

VI. Submission Process

Informational Webinar: An informational webinar will be held April 19, 2023. Please register [here](#). You may also submit any questions about the RFP in advance via email to istinnette@hudsonriver.org.

Letter of Inquiry (due May 5, 2023): Prospective applicants are required to submit a brief letter of inquiry, including the lead organization, contact information, project location, prospective partners, and a brief description of proposed project. See attached form at Appendix A. Please send the letter of inquiry to istinnette@hudsonriver.org by May 5, 2023. The file name should be in the following format:

“Advancing Habitat Restoration RFP_NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION”. We may ask for meetings with individual applicants to help us better understand their letter of inquiry.

Invitations for Full Proposals: We anticipate inviting a small number of applicants submitting a letter of inquiry to complete the full proposal by May 12, 2023.

Full Proposal (Due June 15, 2023): Proposals must be submitted by no later than 9:00 PM EST June 15, 2023 to lstinnette@hudsonriver.org as a single PDF document. The file name should be in the following format: “Advancing Habitat Restoration RFP_NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION”. You will receive an email confirming your submission with the subject line “RFP Submission Confirmation.”

Grant Awards: HEP expects to provide award notification to applicants on or about July 7, 2023. Projects cannot start until both parties sign the contract. HEP and HRF reserve the right to modify, postpone or cancel this solicitation and to reject all applications.

VII. Full Proposal Content

Each package should not exceed the equivalent of 12 single spaced pages.

The proposal *must* include the following information:

1. **Cover Letter.** Please include a cover letter, printed on an official letterhead, and signed by an authorized representative of the lead organization that is applying.
2. **Title Page.** The title page must adhere to the format provided in [Appendix B](#), using a maximum of one page.
3. **Proposal Narrative.** Please start the proposal narrative on a new page. This section must not exceed eight pages and must include the following information:
 - **Goals and Rationale:** Describe the issue(s) that the project will address. Summarize the major goal(s) and motivation of the proposed project and how they relate to any or all of the four objectives of this RFP. Summarize *why* your project is important, what you expect to accomplish, and the expected benefits.
 - **Location & Community being Served by this Proposal:** Please indicate where the project will take place and *who* the project will benefit, including *your organization’s history of serving that community*.
 - **Commitment to Serve and Support:** Describe how the proposed activity serves, supports, and/or broadens the participation of disadvantaged communities and/or underrepresented populations. Specify the equitable and inclusive practices that you will undertake.
 - **Associated Projects and Relevant Agencies:** If your proposal is intended to inform a specific agency or municipal decision or plans/project/initiatives, in particular an opportunity that is identified in the CRP and/or a specific TEC, please indicate this including any specific conversations to date.
 - **Workplan:** Please provide an outline of how you will accomplish this work and achieve your goals. This description should reference specific *activities and outputs that are anticipated*, for

example: Community engagement activities; planning; technical assistance and communication; data collection, analyses, and communication of findings; and/or organizational capacity building to support these and other proposed activities. If relevant, please describe the data being collected, purpose, and monitoring methods that will be used as part of your project. Please read “Quality Assurance & Quality Control Requirements” on page 3 of this RFP.

- **Timeline:** Provide a detailed timeline for meeting project objectives and identified tasks and deliverables. Projects should be completed within the period identified for this RFP. All timelines should be stated in terms of Week or Month #1, #2, #4, etc. rather than specific dates. Project start dates may change based on the date an agreement is established.
- **Personnel:** Define the role of all individuals who will be involved in the project, including contractors and subcontractors, and briefly indicate their relevant experience/skills. Describe the role of partner organizations in the project and attach letters of commitment, if applicable. Note if these entities are contributing materially and are included in the budget, either as a recipient of funds or contributor of match.
- **Evaluation:** Indicate how you plan to evaluate the success of your project. Consider which outputs and outcomes (or suitable indicators) you will realistically be able to measure and how you will define success for your project. This should be in line with your project goals and results.

4. **Attachments.** Please include the following:

- **Budget Form:** provide an itemized budget in the table format provided in Appendix C or similar format. Please indicate the source of any matching funds or in-kind services. If matching funds are included, please specify if these have been secured or are being sought, and if they are from federal or non-federal sources.
- Please include any **letters of support** from partnering organizations, or other parties that support your proposed project. Letters of support do *not* count towards page limit.

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INQUIRY

Title:

Project Leader:

Contact Information:

Location & Community being Served by This Proposal:

Prospective Partners:

Brief Description of Proposed Project, including project goals and anticipated activities and outcomes:

Anticipated Duration of Project/Activities (No more than two years/no later than September 2025):

Anticipated Total Cost (Grants are anticipated to be between \$ 50,000 - \$ 100,000)

APPENDIX B: TITLE PAGE FOR FULL PROPOSAL

Title:

Project Leader:

Contact Information:

List of Partner Organizations:

Location & Community being Served by this Proposal, including representative latitude and longitude:

Total Funds Requested from HEP: \$

Total matching funds: \$

EIN/Federal Tax Identification Number:

DUNS Number:

APPENDIX C: BUDGET FORM FOR FULL PROPOSAL

BUDGET CATEGORY <i>(Add/remove itemizing lines below major categories as necessary, but please do NOT delete major categories)</i>	FUNDS REQUESTED FROM HEP	FUNDS FROM OTHER SOURCES****	TOTAL BUDGET
A. PERSONNEL (list individual staff member, task, and hours or % time) TOTAL:	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
B. FRINGE BENEFITS % of (e.g., 30% of total personnel costs) TOTAL:	\$	\$	\$
C. TRAVEL (estimate number/purpose of trips below) TOTAL:	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
D. EQUIPMENT* (itemize below.) TOTAL:	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
E. SUPPLIES (itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
F. CONTRACTS** (identify & itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
G. CONSTRUCTION*** (identify & itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$	\$
H. OTHER (identify & itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
I. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (SUM OF A-G)	\$	\$	\$
J. INDIRECT COSTS % of (Up to 40% of total personnel costs are allowed) TOTAL:	\$	\$	\$
K. TOTAL PROJECT COST (SUM OF H+I)	\$	\$	\$

* Note that equipment refers to items that cost \$5,000 or more each. Items of lesser cost are considered supplies.

** F. Contracts refers to goods and services, generally from a for-profit vendor operating in a competitive environment, being delivered at the direction of the applicant. Subawards refers to funding being provided through grants to non-profit or public sector entities for activities that are addressing proposal objectives.

*** G. Construction: If construction costs are proposed for funding, site safety plans, insurance, and other compliance measures may be required.

****Please indicate the source of any matching funds or in-kind services. If matching funds are included, please specify if these have been secured or are being sought, and if they are from federal or non-federal sources

APPENDIX D: EVALUATION CRITERIA

Score: 0 = not likely, 1 = somewhat likely, 2 = likely, 3 = very likely. Maximum score: 45.

	This proposal...	SCORE
Goals, objectives, and rationale	Makes a clear case for applicant’s motivation to carry out the project.	
	References and supports relevant goals and objectives as described in the RFP.	
	Located at a CRP site (3), or other publicly-vetted plan (2).	
Approach to the Project and Specific Tasks	Provides a clear and well-thought-out course of action, including a list of specific tasks, actions and methods.	
	Demonstrates a clear understanding of the required technical background.	
	Provides for opportunities to work with the community and sharing results of the project with stakeholders.	
	Has outputs and outcomes in line with those required in the RFP and the proposed course of action.	
Ability to Meet Schedule	The timeline for the identified tasks is realistic and likely to be met.	
Community and Professional Merits and Relevant Experience	Demonstrates organization’s historic and current connections with target community.	
	Helps build civic and other capacity in a historically disadvantaged community.	
	Demonstrates project manager and/or team member’s relevant technical experience.	
	Indicates understanding of and connections with landowner(s) and relevant federal, state, and local agencies including required permits.	
	Demonstrates commitment and support from project team and stakeholders including neighborhood associations, business and civic leadership organizations, and/or environmental groups.	
Cost Effectiveness	Includes a budget that is clearly presented.	
	Has costs that are reasonable and justified.	
	Provides for contribution of outside funds, in-kind services, or other match.	

APPENDIX E. TARGET ECOSYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

About Target Ecosystem Characteristics



Public Access

Improve direct access to the water and create linkages to other recreational areas, as well as provide increased opportunities for fishing, boating, swimming, hiking, education, or passive recreation.



Acquisition

Protect ecologically valuable coastal lands throughout the Hudson-Raritan Estuary from future development through land acquisition.



Eelgrass Beds

Establish eelgrass beds at several locations in the HRE study area.



Coastal and Maritime Forests

Create a linkage of forests accessible to avian migrants and dependent plant communities.



Habitat for Fish, Crab, and Lobsters

Create functionally related habitats in each of the eight regions of the Hudson-Raritan Estuary.



Habitats for Waterbirds

Restore and protect roosting, nesting, and foraging habitat (i.e., inland trees, wetlands, shallow shorelines) for long-legged wading birds.



Oyster Reefs

Establish sustainable oyster reefs at several locations.



Sediment Contamination

Isolate or remove one or more sediment zone(s) that is contaminated until such time as all HRE sediments are considered uncontaminated based on all related water quality standards, related fishing / shelling bans or fish consumption advisories, and any newly-promulgated sediment quality standards, criteria or protocols



Shorelines and Shallows

Create or restore shoreline and shallow sites with a vegetated riparian zone, an inter-tidal zone with a stable slope, and illuminated shallow water.



Tributary Connections

Reconnect and restore freshwater streams to the estuary to provide a range of quality habitats to aquatic organisms.



Enclosed and Confined Water

Improve water quality in all enclosed waterways and tidal creeks within the estuary to match or surpass the quality of their receiving waters.



Wetlands

Create and restore coastal and freshwater wetlands at a rate exceeding the annual loss or degradation, to produce a net gain in acreage.