



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
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RFP # 18-605-24 – Addendum Two

To: RFP # 18-605-24
Interested Parties

Date: Tuesday, August 15, 2023

From: Bryant Trujillo – Procurement Specialist 3
Department of Environmental Conservation
Division of Administrative Services

Subject: RFP # 18-605-24
Addendum Two

The solicitation package for **Request for Proposal (RFP) 18-605-24 – Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report (IR) Automation Tools** for the State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Division of Water is hereby clarified or changed as follows:

1. A transcript of questions submitted during the pre-proposal conference meeting held on Monday, August 14, 2023, at 1:30 PM Alaska Standard Time (AKST) by interested parties and answers provided by the Division of Spill Prevention and Response (SPAR) representatives.

The transcribed meeting correspondence begins on page two. Addendum Two is hereby made part of the Request for Proposal (RFP) and comprises four pages.

All other terms and conditions for this Request for Proposal (RFP) remain unchanged.

Issued by: Bryant Trujillo
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Pre-proposal Conference Meeting Transcript

John Seigle: I have a really simple question, and maybe my only question out of the gate here, about the RFP itself and specifically section 1.04, "Prior Experience," relating to the third bullet. So, just to give a little bit of background, we have a lot of experience. I run the Fish and Aquatics Program here at ABR, and we have a lot of experience working particularly with junior miners around the state collecting baseline fish and water quality data. We also meet those first two bullets without any question, the requirements related to prior experience. The third bullet is a bit of a problem because we, based on the type of work we do, we don't actually work with TMDL tracking within the ATTAINS program, so even though we are well versed in the water quality standards for Alaska and performing water quality assessments for our clients. So, that 3rd bullet to me seems like a bit of a roadblock in terms of us being deemed non-responsive. Am I interpreting that correctly?

Bryant Trujillo: Which provision within that third bullet point is your firm in conflict with?

John Seigle: Well, we're, you know, pretty well versed in the Clean Water Act, but our work doesn't require us to adhere to the Clean Water Act. It comes up in reporting occasionally, but we're not providing, for the most part, baseline, sorry, post-development water quality work for any of my clients. It's typically baseline pre-development work where they haven't done anything yet to be in opposition to the Clean Water Act, for example. We do a lot of water quality baseline assessments to tell them where they stand before they've done anything in terms of the Alaska water quality standards. So, we never had occasion to use the assessment TMDL tracking and implementation system.

Bryant Trujillo: I'm going to defer to the water representatives to see if they have anything that they would like to discuss further regarding this.

Terri Lomax: So, this particular experience requirement is... it's actually pretty critical for us because it's taking that raw data that you guys are so good at collecting and the analysis, but then integrating it with this, called ATTAINS, so you have to have the experience and the knowledge of ATTAINS on how the data then gets translated into that particular system. That particular system does not take actual raw data. It only takes the assessment level kind of the higher level summaries. As with any EPA database, of course, nothing is straightforward, but this whole process we're wanting to do is find a way right to take the raw data to develop all these other all these other tools and then actually uploaded them as well into the ATTAINS database. So, having that experience is pretty critical for us, unfortunately for you guys.

John Seigle: So, ten years of experience with that program rather than having other than...

Terri Lomax: Rather than five years?

John Seigle: I mean coming to understand it, given that we already have an understanding of you know everything else and the requirements to the two bullet points above you're saying it's a non-starter.

Chandra McGee: Yes.

Terri Lomax: Yeah, it was initially... Yeah, that is... Our rationale is that these are very quick contracts. We want somebody to come in with that experience on hand so that you know the turnaround time is very fast. The integrated report happens on a two-year cycle, and so we're wanting to get this IR tool really in place by the next integrated report. So, that's one of the reasons we really have that requirement there so that there is this built-in experience in this, like on-the-ground readiness to do the work and not this time-built training and learning.

John Seigle: I have one follow-up question, so... Is this, is it thought that through this particular RFP is this going to come up for bid every two years? Is that what I'm...

Terri Lomax: No, we hope not. We hope that they build these tools for us, we should be able to update them, but we need help designing and building that tool. But, yeah, definitely not something we're thinking every two years is going to have to be updated.

Dylan Ahearn: I have a question about the TADA package. This was mentioned multiple times in the RFP: the first time on page ten under task three. I'm curious if you give us more information on where this tool is at currently. And, was this developed in-house, or did you have third-party support with developing this TADA tool? And, I guess how close is it to getting over the finish line?

Amber Bethe: I can answer this one. The TADA tool is a... I am trying to remember the name of the whole name spelled out, but it is an R script or an R package that is being developed by the EPA to pull data from the water quality portal, process that data, it is cleaning it as needed, and getting it ready for analysis for the integrated report. And, that analysis involves checking whether the data requirements are met so that that data can be analyzed to determine if the water is or is not meeting water quality standards. It is a work in progress. It is available to anybody through the EPA GitHub site. But, it is not like a final package. You can't get it from, what is it called, you can't get it from R directly. I forget what it is called when you download from there, but you can get it, and it changes pretty regularly. So, for example, I'm pretty hit-and-miss with R and I have to go back kind of to the beginning and look at the changes every time that I use it right now. Our hope is to either incorporate the existing, what is there now when this project starts, and pull that into our own scripts for analyzing data, or I should say really pulling the data and cleaning it up, and then hopefully, eventually, updated if needed, to incorporate that final TADA package. But, I do not know when that package will be completed, and I am in a group, but I haven't been in a meeting for a couple of months, so I'm not sure where it is at. I am sure that it is at least six months out from being completed. They are working on finishing the first part of it, like downloading the data and sort of cleaning up the data, but then they are starting to add new things on, in terms of a shiny tool and an R Shiny tool, and probably some more things. There is an amazing GitHub site with a ton of information. If you haven't found that we can follow up with that information, I just don't have it off the top of my head.

- TADA: <https://github.com/USEPA/TADA>
- TADA Shiny: <https://github.com/USEPA/TADAShiny>

Dylan Ahearn: If you could share that? I'm sure we could find it on GitHub as well, but that would be helpful.

Dylan Ahearn: Sorry, follow-up question. So, is this, in terms of prior art, is this the main thing, or do you guys have other R packages you've developed in-house or have developed for you that will be like a launching board for what we're proposing to do here?

Amber Bethe: We here at DEC don't currently have any R packages developed right now. We have actually been doing our data analysis, and most of this work pretty manually using Excel, for example. So, this whole RFP is the second part of a project to figure out how to automate our integrated reporting process and then how to build those tools. So, now we figured out a rough game plan which is outlined, and I believe attached it was attached to the RFP the report from the last contract, the scoping contract, and then this is to actually develop the tools that need that we are unable to develop ourselves that we don't have those skills. And I feel like I might have not answered your question there.

Dylan Ahearn: No, that was helpful. I need to go back to the report that was linked. I might have missed that. Sorry about that.

Amber Bethe: Yeah, it should be super helpful. And, basically, it's a series of, and it's described really well and in that other report, but it's a series of often R scripts that would build on tools, maybe that were developed by other states,

the TADA tool, and some of it probably starting a little bit more from scratch. Yeah... And, we don't, I'm right now, all I'm using is TADA... I haven't developed anything yet.

The proposal documents require acknowledgment individually of all addenda to the drawings and/or specifications. This is a **mandatory requirement**, and any proposal received without acknowledgment of receipt of addenda may be classified as being a non-responsive proposal.

End of Addendum