



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM Procurement Policy

Office of the Executive Director
Kearney, Nebraska

I. Introduction

This directive establishes policy to be applied and overseen by the Executive Director (ED) and staff in coordination with Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF). The policy is intended to provide a clearly-defined and efficient process for obtaining the goods, services, and construction required to meet the goals of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program) while maintaining appropriate oversight from the Governance Committee (GC) and Finance Committee (FC). As referenced below, it is intended to ensure sound business practice and compliance with laws and policy of the United States of America and the States of Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming.

II. Authorities

A Memorandum of Understanding among the States of Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming; Nebraska Community Foundation; and the Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior establishes a financial management and administrative support process for NCF to assist the Program as the Financial Management Entity (FME). Funds for the Program are provided by the Department of Interior (pursuant to a cooperative agreement with NCF) and the states of Colorado and Wyoming. Therefore, transactions are subject to regulations established by the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the General Services Administration, and laws and regulations established by the States of Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming.

Title 2, Part 200 of the Code of Federal Regulations - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards provides regulations governing awards of federal funds. All applicable documentation is available at www.ecfr.gov.

Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) issued by the General Services Administration apply to acquisitions from for-profit entities. They are available at www.gsa.gov.

The instructions below are intended to incorporate the principles and intent of regulations to the conduct of the Program.

III. Exceptions

The Program document states that land may be acquired through a willing buyer/willing seller process with prices and terms established by negotiation. The procedures provided in this directive do not apply to land acquisition.

In addition to land, water may be acquired for Program purposes. Similar to land, the acquisition of water is to be accomplished through a negotiation process. The procedures provided in this directive do not apply to water acquisition.

Retention of special advisors to the ED of a technical or legal nature is exempt from the procedures provided in this directive.



IV. Full and Open Competition

With rare exceptions, procurement of goods, services, and construction will be the result of a competitive market place. When goods, services, and construction are obtained in a manner other than a competitive process, a written justification for this deviation will be provided to the Governance Committee for approval prior to goods, services, or construction procurements being awarded. A written justification for non-competitive selection will be based on unique qualifications, special circumstances, or similar conditions.

V. Small and Minority Businesses, Women’s Business Enterprises, and Labor Surplus Area Firms

The Program is committed to the inclusion of small and minority businesses, women’s businesses, and labor surplus area firms in its procurement practices and will take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that such firms are used, whenever possible.

VI. Conflict of Interest

Offerors on a project will be required to address whether or not any potential conflict of interest exists between that project and any of their past or on-going projects, including any projects currently being conducted for the Program.

VII. Suspension and Debarment

Prior to entering into a contract or other agreement to procure goods or services in a covered transaction (generally, a transaction expected to equal or exceed \$25,000), assurance will be obtained that the contracting entity and its principals are not suspended or debarred from receiving federal funds. This will be done by one or more of the following processes: (1) review of the active and inactive exclusions in <https://www.sam.gov/>, (2) collecting a certification from the entity, or (3) adding a clause to the covered transaction.

VIII. Types of Contracts and Agreements for Procurement of Goods, Services, and Construction

The following types of procurement formats/strategies will be employed, but they may be adjusted or modified for a specific procurement so the approach is the most appropriate method to fill the need.

Formats:

- Firm Fixed Price Contract – The total requirement has a fixed price for satisfactory delivery or complete performance. Progress payments can be made based on completion of predetermined deliverable milestones and percentage of contract amount for each.
- Time and Materials Contract – Used when a determination is made that no other contract format is suitable; typically for labor intensive requirements where the hours needed may depend upon variables not clarified until the work has started; services are based upon direct labor hours at a specified fixed hourly rate and materials at cost (including a material handling fee). The agreement will provide for a “not to exceed” ceiling price that the contractor exceeds at its own risk. Progress payments are based on elapsed time for services rendered during the agreed upon period.

Strategies:

- Specific Project Contract – A contract developed for a specific project wherein the terms, conditions, scope, budget, schedule, and contract form are specified.



- Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (ID/IQ) Term Contract – A multiple award contract for specified line items through which delivery orders can be negotiated and issued over a three to five-year period. There would be a guaranteed earnings level established for the contract.
- Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) – An agreement for specific line items with a provider who is intermittently called upon for those goods or services; terms and conditions are negotiated up front and any orders against the BPA must comply.
- Grant/Cooperative Agreement – An agreement with a non-profit or public entity which shares interest in the Program’s goals to provide services which benefit the interests of both parties. This is the only instrument where funds can be advanced prior to the work.

Content:

- Contracts will include, and will require contractors to include in all sub-contracts, the applicable provisions described in Appendix II to Part 200 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

IX. Thresholds and Procedures

Procurement thresholds and general procedures are as follows. Contract thresholds reference the intended total contract amount over the duration of the contract. For example, a contract that is intended to cover five years at \$30,000 per year ($\$30,000/\text{year} \times 5 \text{ years} = \$150,000$) would be subject to the procedures for a $>\$50,000$ threshold. Further procedural detail will be established by the Executive Director.

The Executive Director can solicit proposals for goods, services, or construction costing less than \$25,000 without FC approval if the costs of the goods and services are within the budget approved by the GC. Solicitations for proposals or bids for goods, services, or construction costing \$25,000 or more must be approved in accordance with the “Governance Committee Approval Process for Contract Services” specified herein.

All Thresholds: Authorization of budgets lies with the FC and the GC as described in the Program Document and summarized subsequently in this document. Authority and responsibility for procurements contained within an authorized budget rests with the Executive Director. Input from various Program Committees will be solicited as described below or as otherwise deemed appropriate by the ED. In addition to the monetary thresholds described below, guidance from the Governance Committee pertaining to requests in areas of particular sensitivity may result in variances from the procedures described. The ED may delegate authority in writing to personnel directly reporting to the ED for acquisitions less than \$5,000. Personnel so authorized may not disburse more than \$5,000 to any one entity in a single year.

 $\leq \$3,000$ Goods **$\leq \$2,500$ Services** **$\leq \$2,000$ Construction**

- Need for proposed item or service is documented.
- Up to three quotes should be acquired; transaction can be by phone or in writing.
- Award may be to the low quote or most qualified providing best value.

 $> \$3,000$ but $< \$10,000$ Goods **$> \$2,500$ but $< \$10,000$ Services** **$> \$2,000$ but $< \$10,000$ Construction**



- Need for proposed item or service is documented
- Three quotes will be acquired by phone or in writing.
- Award may be to the low quote or most qualified providing the best value.

=> \$10,000 and < \$25,000:

- Need for proposed item or service is documented.
- Requirement will be advertised on Program Web site for five business days.
- Quotes will be provided in writing by providers.
- Award may be to the low quote or most qualified providing the best value.

>= \$25,000 and <= \$50,000:

- Requirement is documented in detail – specifications, units, delivery schedule, level of expertise, qualifications of personnel, and other specific requirements are clearly defined.
- Requirement will be advertised on Program Web site for a minimum of 15 days and a maximum of 30 days, based on discretion of ED. Notice of requirements may also be advertised in regional and/or local newspapers, based on discretion of ED, for up to three days with initial publication at least two weeks prior to offer closing date.
- Quotes, bid packages, or proposals to be provided in writing as requested.
- Pre-offer meeting may be held up to one week prior to offer closing date.
- Submittals will be reviewed for determination of responsiveness and acceptability.
- In the case of proposals:
 - Offers will be reviewed and where necessary, ranked by three or more subject matter experts. The selection of the subject matter experts will be based on knowledge and expertise of the project at issue. The panel of subject matter experts will be assembled with input from the appropriate Program Committees. The Governance Committee will always be solicited for input on the composition of the panel proposed.
 - An interview of the offerors with the subject matter experts and ED may or may not be required, as determined by the subject matter experts and the ED.
 - Award is to highest ranking offer where consideration may be given to fee as part of the selection process. Negotiation of scope and fee will occur subsequent to selection.
- In the case of a bid or quote:
 - A public bid opening will be held.
 - Award is to lowest cost bidder who can meet the requirements of the bid solicitation.

>\$50,000:

- Requirement is documented in detail – specifications, units, delivery schedule, level of expertise, qualifications of personnel, and other specific requirements are clearly defined.
- For procurements, including contract modifications, over the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (\$150,000 as of August 6, 2015), a cost or price analysis will be performed prior to receiving bids or proposals.
- Requirement will be advertised on Program Web site for a minimum of 21 days and a maximum of 45 days, based on the discretion of the ED. Notice of requirements will also be advertised in regional and/or local newspapers for up to three days with initial publication at least three weeks prior to offer due date.
- Quotes, bid packages or proposals to be provided in writing as requested.



- Pre-offer meeting may be held up to two weeks prior to bids/proposals due date.
- Submittals will be reviewed for determination of responsiveness and acceptability.
- In the case of proposals:
 - Offers will be reviewed and where necessary, ranked by three or more subject matter experts using a pre-determined evaluation system. The selection of the subject matter experts will be based on knowledge and expertise of the project at issue. The panel of subject matter experts will be assembled with input from the appropriate Program Committees. The Governance Committee will always be solicited for input on the composition of the panel proposed.
 - An interview of the offerors by the subject matter experts and ED may or may not be required, as determined by the subject matter experts and the ED.
 - Award is to highest ranking offer where consideration may be given to fee as part of the selection process. Negotiation of scope and fee will occur subsequent to selection.
- In the case of a bid:
 - Conduct a public bid/proposal opening.
 - Award is to lowest cost bidder who can meet the technical requirements of the bid solicitation.

X. Governance Committee Approval Process for Contract Services

1. At each Governance Committee meeting, the Executive Director will report the contract services that will be sought during the interim until the next GC meeting. The report will include the budget item under which the work will be performed and the estimated amount required to provide the services. If the request is in an area of particular sensitivity, guidance from the Governance Committee may result in variances from the procedures described in terms of strictly monetary thresholds in the policy described previously in this document. If the estimated amount exceeds the budget for the item, the increased budget must be approved by the GC before the selection process can be initiated. The members of the GC may offer representatives to review the requests for proposal and/or serve on the selection team.

2. The Executive Director will draft all Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and seek comments from the related advisory committee(s) and representatives offered by the GC members.

3. The final drafts of the RFPs with the updated cost estimates will be submitted to the Finance Committee (FC).

If the RFP is for a single-year service and cost estimates do not exceed the budget for the related work item, the FC may authorize the initiation of the selection process. If the cost estimates exceed the budget for the related work item, the selection process must be delayed until the GC has the opportunity to approve or reject a budget increase.

All RFPs proposing multi-year services must be reviewed by the FC and approved by the GC, even if the existing budget includes funds for the first year's activities. This is necessary as multi-year contracts affect future budgets, and future budgets are the responsibility of the GC.

4. The Executive Director will ensure the Selection Process progresses as outlined previously in this Program Procurement Policy and in Section X of this document. For those requests requiring a selection panel, the Executive Director will organize a selection team that includes representatives from the related



advisory committee and representatives offered by the GC. The Executive Director may chair the selection team or designate as chair:

1. a member of the Executive Director's staff
2. a member or alternate of the Governance Committee
3. the chair of the related Advisory Committee, or
4. any other person approved by the Governance Committee.

5. After selection of the consultant/contractor, the Executive Director will prepare the draft contract including, as a minimum: general provisions, scope of work, contract amount and schedule. The draft contract will be submitted to the FC for review.

If the contract meets the standards of the Program procurement policy, the contract is for a single-year service, and the contract amount is within the budget for the work item, the FC can authorize the Executive Director to finalize the contract and submit it to the FME, as well as issue the notice to proceed to the consultant/contractor. If the contract amount exceeds the budget for the cost item, the finalization of the contract must be delayed until the GC has the opportunity to approve or reject a budget increase.

If the contract meets the standards of the Program procurement policy, the FC can authorize the ED to finalize multi-year contracts if the RFP was approved by the GC and the proposed contract amount is within the budget for the first year's activities.

Multi-year contracts will specify that each year's work activities and contract amount must be approved in writing before the consultant can proceed on that year's assignments. In order to streamline this process, the FC can authorize the ED to issue the written notice to proceed if the budget approved by the GC for that year's work activity is not exceeded. If revisions are needed to the budget, those revisions must be approved by the GC.

XI. Selection Process

When Program services are sought through the RFP process, written submittals and interviews, if considered necessary, will be utilized in selecting the winning proposal. The Proposal Selection Panel will have a minimum of two weeks after the proposal submission deadline to review and rank submitted proposals in accordance with scoring guidelines developed by ED Office staff. Proposal scores will be compiled by ED Office staff and the Proposal Selection Team will then discuss the rankings to determine if interviews are necessary, and if so which contractors to interview. Interviews may be written, via conference call, or face-to-face depending on the situation. Information from the proposal, from interviews, and from internal Program discussions will be used to determine the successful contractor. Commitments made by a contractor at the interview, if any, will be considered binding.

After completing the evaluation of all proposals and, if deemed necessary, interviews, the Proposal Selection Panel will tentatively select the contractor that is most advantageous to the Program, with price and other factors considered. A final award, however, will be contingent upon successful negotiation of a contract. If the Program is unable to negotiate a mutually satisfactory contract with its first choice, it may, at its sole discretion, negotiate with its secondary choices or cancel and reissue a new RFP.

Debriefing of Unsuccessful Contractors

Contractors whose proposals have not been selected for further consideration will be notified via e-mail. Only contractors who have submitted a proposal under the criteria established by this solicitation document may protest the rejection of a proposal and request a debriefing with the ED and staff. The request for a debriefing must be received by the RFP point of contact within three (3) business days after the Notification



of Unsuccessful Proposal Letter is e-mailed to the contractor. The debriefing must be held within three (3) business days of the request.

Debriefing discussions will be limited to a critique of the contractor's proposal. Comparisons between proposals or evaluations of the other proposals will not be allowed. The debriefing conferences may be conducted in person or on the telephone and will be scheduled for a maximum of one hour.

Protest Procedures

This procedure is available to contractors who submit a response to RFP solicitation documents and have participated in a debriefing conference. Upon completing the debriefing conference, the contractor is allowed three (3) business days to file a protest of the solicitation with the RFP point of contact. Protests may be submitted by e-mail but must be followed by the original document. Contractors protesting a contractor selection must adhere to the following procedure. This protest procedure constitutes the sole administrative remedy available to bidders:

All protests must be in writing and signed by the protesting contractor's authorized agent. The protest must state the grounds for the protest with specific facts and complete statements of the action(s) being protested. A description of the relief or corrective action being requested must also be included.

Only protests stipulating an issue of fact concerning the following subjects shall be considered:

- A matter of bias, discrimination, or conflict of interest on the part of an evaluator.
- Non-compliance with procedures described in the solicitation document or with the Program's Procurement Policy.

Protests not based on procedural matters will not be considered. Protests will be rejected without merit if they address such issues as: (1) an evaluator's professional judgment on the quality of the proposal, or (2) the Program's assessment of its own needs or requirements.

Upon receipt of a protest, a protest review will be held. The Executive Director will consider the record and all facts available and issue a decision within five (5) business days of receipt of protest unless additional time is required, in which case the protesting party will be notified by the Program.

The final determination of the protest shall:

- Find the protest lacking in merit and uphold the Proposal Selection Panel's action; or
- Find only technical or harmless errors in the solicitation process and determine the Proposal Selection Panel to be in substantial compliance and reject the protest; or
- Find merit in the protest and provide the Governance Committee options which may include:
 - Correct the errors and re-evaluate all proposals; or
 - Reissue the solicitation document and begin a new process; or
 - Make other determinations and pursue other courses of action as appropriate.