

Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM) Request for Proposals to Develop: Next Generation Universal Interface

This RFP is to advertise for a contractor with the appropriate skill sets to develop a UI upgrade plan. The chosen contractor will work closely with NESCAUM and compliance and enforcement staff at the federal, regional, and state level.

I. Background

The Universal Interface (UI) is a piece of software that is used as a go-between translator between State environmental databases and the federal database repository (Aerometric Facility System – AFS). In 2001, the UI was rewritten. This rewrite moved the UI from a Fox Pro platform to a web-based application using Visual Basic 6.0 language and Active Server Pages scripting language. The existing UI is a client-server browser based application consisting of three basic components – browser (.ASP) pages, a Visual Basic (VB) dynamic link library (dll), and an MSAccess2000 database. The browser pages are used as system interface screens, but perform no heavy data processing. All database manipulation must reside in the VB dll. The Access database contains tables only, with no storage of data procedures. The dll is normally installed on a Microsoft web-server. All processing therefore occurs at the server, rather than the client workstation.

Since Microsoft is no longer supporting Classic VB, an upgrade of the system is once again necessary to ensure the continued viability of the software for states to report data to the federal data system, especially since states will need the UI to continue reporting to AFS for the foreseeable future. Therefore NESCAUM is seeking contractor support to assist NESCAUM in developing options and a long range plan to upgrade the UI to include identification of features that could enhance and streamline the UI. In addition, NESCAUM is interested in developing a mechanism to take advantage of new advances in technology including, but not limited to, the use XML and schematron environment. NESCAUM anticipates that the contractor will need to conduct the following tasks:

- Re-visit the UI structure and function to determine how new features could enhance and streamline the UI
- Participate in calls with UI users to obtain feedback
- Identify revision options including pro's and con's and anticipated cost for revision
- Assist in identifying a plan to move forward
- Develop a detailed UI upgrade plan

II. Scope of work

The contractor will be provided with direction and will be responsible for communicating with NESCAUM's project manager, Lisa Rector. The total project is broken into two phases. This RFP is for the first phase. Phase II will be completed under a second contract and will consist of implementing the UI upgrade plan. The following is list of tasks that the contractor will be

responsible for completing under Phase I. Budgeting information should be broken down by task.

Phase 1 – UI Evaluation and Plan Development

- 1) *Examine and evaluate UI*
 - Examine the purpose and method of all the UI functions
 - Identify alternative programming mechanisms and opportunities for enhanced and/or streamlined reporting

- 2) *Review existing data/issues*
 - Participate in discussions with UI users group to learn of UI needs/issues
 - Review recommendations of AFS modernization project to the feasibility of incorporating any of the reports recommendations
 - Review existing XML schema to determine how to incorporate XML functionality into a new UI

- 3) *Develop UI Options Plan*
 - Develop information to educate the project team on the options and functionalities of alternative software option
 - Prepare an outline that details potential UI options
 - Present this data to the UI Users Group via a web-based demonstration to determine a preferred UI direction

- 4) *Develop UI Upgrade Plan*
 - Upon identification of a preferred path forward, the contractor shall develop a detailed task list for upgrading the UI.

All the original source code is available for this project. Support information for this RFP can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/oecaerth/data/systems/air/afsui/index.html> and <http://www.nescaum.org/topics/afs-universal-interface>

All work will be performed at the contractors' site. No space or equipment will be provided by NESCAUM. NESCAUM does not anticipate any travel will be required for this project.

IV. Timing

The UI review and upgrade plan shall be completed within three months of the project, starting approximately January 5, 2009.

V. Experience

The contractor chosen for this upgrade must be able to quickly and efficiently with the project team and show a track record of successful upgrades for existing software components. While direct knowledge of the UI is not necessary, contractors that exhibit an understanding of the existing Universal Interface, an understanding of AFS and .NET expertise will be ranked higher.

In addition, proposal that show a depth in using alternative platforms will also receive additional consideration. Experience that proposal reviewers are specifically interested in includes:

Experience Requirements:

- MS Visual Studio
- Javascript & VBscript
- ODBC connectivity
- MS Access 2000
- Component services (specifically COM+ applications and packages)
- Visual Studio.NET
- ASP.NET
- XML
- XML Schematron

Additional skills that are considered a plus:

- Mass data processing
- Client/Server experience
- Experience using prepared statements
- Experience with Microsoft Data Access Components (MDAC)
- Experience with Microsoft Transaction Service (MTS)
- Air compliance & enforcement data experience

VI. Payment

Bids must identify costs by task and deliverable. Contractors will be paid for work completed and deliverables received, not on the basis of hours worked. Payment of the final 10% of the contract will not be made until the agreed products are delivered.

VII. Due Date of Proposals

If you are interested in being considered for this project, please submit the information listed below to NESCAUM by 5:00 p.m. November 24, 2008. One electronic copy of the complete proposal must be submitted (Word, Word Perfect, Excel, Power Point, or Adobe Acrobat Reader). Electronic proposals shall be submitted to lrector@nescaum.org.

Questions may be addressed to Lisa Rector, NESCAUM (Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management), 101 Merrimack Street, 10th Floor, Boston, MA 02114; 802-899-5306.

VIII. Proposal Content

Proposals should be limited to 20 pages (i.e., 10 double-sided pages) with 12 point font size with a margin of 1" on all four sides, and should address the following:

- Identify personnel you will assign to work on this project, their experience with similar projects (e.g. relevant publication should be identified), and their expertise.

- Summarize work to be done (proposed approach and deliverables). Include information about any work already completed or underway, funded by another source, that could satisfy NESCAUM's requirements.
- Schedule for completing the project, showing what support you will need from participating agencies, when products will be produced, review periods for draft documents, etc. Include a Gantt chart (time/task bar chart) as well as descriptive information organized by date.
- Costs—including hourly rates for personnel who will be assigned to the project as well as costs for elements of the project. (Hourly rates are used as a mechanism of comparing bids.) Costs must be linked to tasks and deliverables so that billing and payment can be linked to the delivery of products.
- References whom we can contact regarding previous projects.

Contractors are encouraged **not** to submit hard copy examples of previous work, although if recent work is directly relevant and available via Internet links, the contractor is encouraged to provide those links as supplemental information.

NESCAUM will only select experienced contractor(s). Selection criteria will include relevant experience, quality of proposed approach, timing, references, and costs. Experience, expected quality of product, and timing will be the most important criteria, provided that cost is within available resources. The amount of funds available for Phase I of this project shall not exceed \$35,000.

IX. Other Information

NESCAUM recognizes that it may be necessary to utilize more than one contractor to provide the expertise needed to complete the project. NESCAUM may hire one contractor who has subcontracting arrangements with various experts. Minority- and women-owned businesses are encouraged to bid and to identify themselves, since NESCAUM seeks to meet EPA goals for utilizing these businesses. Funds available for these contracts are federal funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and contractors must meet requirements associated with the use of federal funds. All information and data developed under this contract will be in the public domain. All resulting data and electronic infrastructure must be fully transferable, such that the resulting system could be maintained and continued by other contractors in future years.