

Request for Proposals
for the Sustainable Jersey Website Contractor

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Scope of Work	2
I. Users	2
II. Content Management System of Text and General Information	2
III. Content Management System for Advanced Certification Functions	3
A. Municipal Accounts	3
B. Actions	5
C. Certification	6
IV. Special Functions	7
A. Map and Search Function	7
B. Calendar	8
C. Grants Administration	8
D. Forum	8
E. Limited Access Resources	8
F. Grants Portal	9
G. Mailing list	9
H. Communications	9
I. Registration and Training	9
J. Website Search Function	10
K. Optional: Additional Functionality for Data Management and Display	10
V. Services Needed	10
Period of Performance	10
Budget and Payment	11
Form of Proposal	11
Intellectual Property Rights	12
Proposal Evaluation	13
Proposers' Conference	13

Introduction

Sustainable Jersey (www.sustainablejersey.com) is a municipal certification program that provides detailed guidance, technical assistance, and some funding to participating communities that want to become sustainable by addressing economic, environmental, and social issues according to best practices. New Jersey communities must first register with the program and then build an application for certification by documenting the successful completion of actions in the program according to SJ requirements. Program staff provides training and technical assistance throughout this process. Once completed actions total sufficient points, the communities can apply for certification.

There are currently two levels of certification, Bronze and Silver; however an additional “Gold” tier is anticipated. Once the actions are approved and the municipality is certified at the appropriate level, the certification endures for three years however many participants choose to re-apply within that timeframe to receive recognition for earning more points and achieving higher tiers. Currently 345 of the 566 municipalities in NJ participate in the program, and of those, 74 are certified.

Administration of the Sustainable Jersey program requires an easy-to-navigate online solution hosted by the vendor that will suit programmatic needs for at least several years. In summary, the website must provide a basic content management system for communicating information to the public (text, calendar function, editing menus and sub-pages) within an attractive website design and have a separate system for managing, tracking, and displaying information and data about applicants to the certification program.

Section II. Content Management System of Text and General Information may be bid separately from sections III. Content Management System for Advanced Certification Functions and IV. Special Functions, which should be bid together. Addressing functionality outlined in letter K of Section IV in the proposal is optional. The functionality described within this RFP is minimally that which is required to administer the Sustainable Jersey program, however we invite bidders to suggest additional functionality, modules, and capabilities that will enhance long-term programmatic goals. Any additional functionality that bidders suggest should be priced separately from the mandatory elements and will be included in the final contract at the New Jersey League of Municipalities (NJLM) Education Foundation’s discretion.

The final website must be fully functional and live by January 31, 2012, and the NJLM Education Foundation and its assignees will retain all rights to data associated with the program.

A web services contractor will be procured through this RFP. The contractor will be responsible for website development as outlined in the Scope of Work below as well as the services described in Section V. Program staff will host a conference after releasing the RFP to provide further guidance regarding program needs and expectations. If further discussion with Proposers is necessary to clarify approaches or alleviate deficiencies within the proposal, interviews will be held before a request for a Best and Final Offer is made. The NJLM Education Foundation reserves the right to award a contract based on original proposals without further interviews.

Proposed Contractor Selection Timetable	Date
Proposers' Conference	August 11, 2011
Final Questions Due	August 19, 2011
Closing Date for Receipt of Proposals	August 31, 2011
Proposal Interviews or Discussions if necessary	Early September
Best and Final Offers Due (if requested)	Mid-September
Start of Contract	September 2011

Scope of Work

I. Users

There are three primary types of users that will need to access various web pages and functions of the website. Each user needs a unique log in associated with specific role level permissions and a customized interface reflecting the capabilities associated with those permissions.

Participating Communities – Each municipality that would like to participate in Sustainable Jersey must register to create an account and receive a log in that allows them to access their profile and build an application for certification. These users need to access their municipal accounts securely, add calendar events, manage the profile information, edit their certification reports, and upload documentation for their certification application.

Participating communities will benefit from having the ability to grant varying levels of access to different users with the community. The administrator should access all functions, while the calendar, uploading documentation to the certification application, editing the profile, and customizing the report could be optional accesses that the administrator can grant to each user within the community.

Sustainable Jersey Staff – Different staff and partner organizations play various roles while administrating the program. These roles include editing text, links, or uploaded files on the website, editing the content of the actions, reviewing and approving registrations, reviewing certification applications, and approving actions and overall certification applications. Administrators must be able to grant permissions to allow appropriate access to different website functions.

Interested third parties – Unaffiliated individuals visiting the website need access to join mailing lists, view general information including the actions, and utilize the map and search functions. These individuals do not receive log ins.

II. Content Management System of Text and General Information:

The Sustainable Jersey website includes specific custom functions, such as the certification application management system, that are embedded within a more standard website that conveys information through text modules grouped into categories (e.g. about us, grants and resources, news and events, etc). Our staff needs a simple, easy, and flexible content management system to change the category titles,

add or delete new categories, and edit information within each area. Each category heading should lead to a webpage that allows further links to subpages that can also be added, deleted, and edited.

These sections are predominantly text that includes web links and links to documents. They should consist of modules that allow easy text editing and formatting especially when transferring text from Microsoft Word documents, insertion of links, and uploading of files. The embedded files, which typically include the Microsoft suite as well as images, will need to be archived in an organized way so that administrators can access them in the future or replace files with new versions while maintaining access to older versions. Ideally, file formats would include pdfs, excel spreadsheets, word documents, and jpgs.

The homepage of the website should accommodate an Announcements section that allows administrators to automatically set a date for removal of the announcement if they choose.

The contractor will be provided with a style sheet including graphics, logos, fonts, colors, etc to produce a website design consistent with existing branding and media.

III. Content Management System for Advanced Certification Functions

Summary

The certification program has a number of “actions” that municipalities can implement and document to receive a “certification” as a sustainable community. The website must display these detailed actions, enable the program staff to change the actions, create accounts to track municipal applicants, and share information among the actions, municipal accounts, and various other functions, such as a map, search function, automated municipal report created from the municipal accounts, and information management and archiving.

A. Municipal Accounts

When a municipality registers for the program and is accepted, an account must be established that is accessible by both the municipality and the program staff. At registration when the account is created, the municipality must provide contact information, including name, title, department, phone number, mailing address, email address, must be saved along with information from a survey administered online at the time that solicits interest in training or planned activities that have been selected from a list of actions (see section IV.I). Contact information for a secondary contact should also be collected. Participants often forget log in information, and therefore the account must be linked to the automatic generation of a new log in distributed via email to the contact.

These accounts will track the status of the community and provide data to other sections of the website such as the map, the map search function, and a tally of registered or certified towns that should appear on the homepage. When a municipality first creates an account they are considered a “Registered” community and appear on the map and search functions as “registered.” Later the community can become “certified” at either the bronze or silver levels (and later a gold level). When their status changes, it must be reflected in the various other functions such as the map and search functions.

Participating communities use these accounts to gain access to a secure section of the website where each municipality can build an application which they submit through the website to apply for certification. Users must upload text and files according to the program's submission requirements for each action in order to earn points. This section of the site needs the following functionality:

A user interface for each municipal account holder that lists the various actions they can implement, enables them to view detailed submission requirements for each action, and upload documentation in support of their application for each action. The user interface must enable the account holder to add, edit, delete files, and see their progress.

When files are uploaded, a time stamp should appear to help users keep track of their progress. Any changes in the text box or file uploads should alter the timestamp. The upload functions should allow communities to replace or delete documents and should support new file formats (e.g. docx) as well as large file sizes that might be expected in a large word or PDF document that has many graphics and pictures embedded. The file size the system will accept must be specified, and if it will not enable all conceivable submissions then the system must have an alternative solution for files that exceed this size. Municipal users face significant obstacles when trying to pdf, scan, shrink, or combine files so any website functionality that simplifies these processes would be best. Ideally, file formats would include pdfs, excel spreadsheets, word documents, jpgs, and video files.

Once files are uploaded to document completion of actions, they must be saved in the municipal account while the application is underway and then eventually submitted for official review. As municipalities upload files, the interface should tally the point values of the actions they have completed and give them a running total (see section B below). To become certified, municipalities must complete a subset of the actions totaling a certain number of points. In addition, they must also have a certain number of "priority actions" and a certain number of complete actions in each of the 16 categories. Each of these requirements should be tracked and tallied on this page.

Staff should have access to all of the municipal accounts and documentation while the application is being built in order to provide support. The system must have a mechanism for a participating community to alert program staff when their application is complete by hitting a "submit application" button or equivalent. When an application is submitted, the website should screen the application to ensure that prima facie the application meets minimum standards for certification and not allow incomplete applications to go forward (i.e. it must total a certain number of points, priority actions, and categories). A pop up should remind them of the minimum criteria needed for certification if they attempt to submit an incomplete action. An automatic email should be sent to the primary contact once the application is successfully submitted to the program. While under review by program staff, the municipal account should be "locked" to prevent changes being made to the documentation.

The municipal account should automatically track changes in the status of the community (e.g. registered vs. pending review vs. certified - see section C below).

The municipal account should also collect data that allows staff to profile and poll communities online. The profiling data would be specified by staff and allow them to separate stakeholders by categories or

representative groups (e.g. rural, urban). The categories must be editable. Once one or multiple categories are selected, staff should be able to email the contacts to quickly poll or send information to a certain group of participants.

B. Actions

There are approximately 120 different actions organized by 16 categories within the themes of People, Planet, and Prosperity. To become certified, municipalities must complete a subset of the actions totaling a minimum number of points. In addition, they must also have successfully accomplished a given number of “priority actions”, and the application must include actions from a certain number of the 16 categories.

Each action has a point value associated with it which must be displayed and integrated into a system that tracks the point totals for the municipalities in their individual accounts as they build their applications (see section A above). In addition to point values, some of the actions further identified as “priority actions” and the number of actions implemented by the municipal applicants in each “category” is tracked.

Staff must be able to manage the actions. The actions will appear in various places on the website and will be linked to other functions of the site, such as the municipal accounts, survey administered at the time of registration, and the search function. The website must either enable adding, deleting, and reordering of actions, or must automatically order the actions within each category, as well as the category headings, in alphabetical order.

The website must display the actions in a page viewable by the public, while each action in the list should link to a full narrative on that action. The public display of the actions should also enable a user to check off actions and see a running point total (see <http://sustainablejersey.com/actionlist.php>). Since there are currently two levels of certification, requiring different minimum requirements for points, priority actions, and categories, the public display of the actions should show the two levels of certification but also allow for the addition of a third (gold) tier in the future.

The display of the actions must reflect the above organization and functionality while allowing for flexibility as staff edit, add, and delete actions regularly. The public display of actions must be generated from a CMS that is linked to the municipal accounts and other functions. If program staff edits the action list or narratives, the change should automatically appear on both the public and municipal account pages, and update the search function, map function, and public report.

In addition to changing the categories and actions, staff must be able to edit the number of points associated with each action, indicate whether funding is available, list the “shelf-life” (i.e. how recently the actions must have been completed in order to earn credit), and designate actions as priority, mandatory, or neither. Because there are multiple levels of certification, these parameters must be edited independently for each tier.

The content provided for each action consists primarily of text, links, and uploaded documents. The actions are all organized in the same way with 10 different section headings, such as “Who to Involve”

and “What to Do”. The 10 section headings should be easily navigable through links in the webpage. The text for these sections should be easy to enter and edit especially when copied from a Microsoft Word document. The uploaded documents should be accessible through an archival system that allows staff to find and replace or update documents provided on the website.

Staff should be able to enter and edit brief descriptions of each file to upload as well as information to provide in the text box to highlight the submission requirements for each action.

From a visitor’s perspective, the actions are more easily navigated if they can be sorted by point values, funding availability, priority designations, or perhaps topic areas. The action list needs to be easily usable and there should be no pop up pages when navigating from the main sections of the site to the actions or municipal accounts. . Once inside an action, the sections should be easy to navigate and there should be a printable version offered that contains the full action tool kit in one PDF document. The printable version should include a header with pertinent information such as the point value, the priority designation, and the date it was uploaded to the website.

C. Certification

The website needs to create a process management system for tracking the process of reviewing and certifying the municipal applicants. This includes managing many reviewers participating in the review of each applicant and tracking the progress of each application.

Participating communities use their municipal accounts to upload documents to verify they have completed actions successfully and then submit their profile to staff for review and certification. When they submit for certification, their account must reflect the change in status (i.e. “pending review”) and also record a timestamp to allow staff to see whether submissions arrived by the deadlines.

Multiple staff and partners share the responsibility of reviewing these submissions. Each reviewer is assigned specific actions to review in all applications, so the reviewer views the documentation for those actions for each community. Ideally, the lead staff person could assign actions to the reviewers via the website so that the actions for each application were highlighted specifically for that user. After logging in to access the files submitted by each municipal applicant, the reviewers make comments about the documentation that will be compiled with similar reviews for all other actions in that application. The reviewer should also be able to manually enter an “expiration date” associated with the documentation submitted for that action. For instance, if an inventory is valid for 2 years and the one submitted is a year old, the reviewer will enter an expiration date of one year. The website should automatically flag that action as expired on the date indicated to help municipalities update their applications for future certifications.

When the review of the application is complete, the information will be made available to the municipal applicant, either on the webpage of the municipal account or via an email automatically generated or both. The reviewers also must track whether they approved points for the action and sign off that it was reviewed. Reviewers also should be able to nominate applicants for specific annual awards through this process.

While this certification process is currently tracked and summarized manually through the use of an excel spreadsheet, we would like to create an automated process flow and project management system (contingent on price) that not only allows reviewers to comment on actions and approve them through the website but also manages and tracks communications between the municipal applicant and staff and milestones in the review process. This would include summarizing the results of the certification, including the actions approved, those that failed, how many points the applicants received for each action and in total, which towns were nominated for awards, and which applicants can be certified. In order to do this, the summary must show how many priority and mandatory actions were successfully implemented as well as how many different categories were represented by the points earned.

The staff member overseeing this process must also be able to track the reviews as they are completed. This user will need a summary section to show not only the actions reviewed within an application, but also the progress of review among all applications.

The lead staff person will need to review and edit the comments made for each action in each application before approving the communication to the applicant. The applicant will be given a new deadline to provide any missing documentation and must be able to access their municipal account again (i.e. the account needs to be unlocked) to upload or edit their documentation. The summary should track the resubmissions which are again reviewed by staff and partners.

Upon official certification of the applicant, the map and municipal account must update to show the status change (See section IV.A.). The certified report, including a customized introduction as well as the submitted text and files for each approved action, must become available for the public to view. The certified report (including documentation files) should be archived as towns get recertified, and the program must retain records of the previous specifications of the former certification. Once certified, the participating communities must be able to again access their documentation and continue to make progress within the program.

The date of certification must be tracked as it is only valid for three years, however note that many towns apply for certification at a higher level before this three year period ends.

IV. Special Functions

A. Map and Search Functions

The profiles of all participating communities populate a New Jersey map with colored balloons according to their status (e.g. registered, certified). The map should differentiate between registered, certified Bronze, and certified Silver communities and easily adapt to add categories like Gold in the future. Visitors can select the icon for each municipality in order to view a profile for that municipality which is generated with data from the “municipal accounts”. This includes contact information for each community and their certified report (if certified).

This webpage should also show a running tally of all registered and certified towns. The totals should automatically update based on the status of the municipal accounts.

A search function using data from the municipal accounts allows any visitor to filter the communities by status, location, and actions planned or completed and approved (certified). The resulting list of municipalities also contains links to the files on record for each community for the action for which the search was completed. The search function should be simple and intuitive to use and needs to have a “clear search” capability to allow visitors to start over.

On the map webpage, staff must be able to edit prominently displayed text modules to explain the map and the search function. The communities and the data provided in the map and search function should update automatically from the municipal account data and registration/certification approvals.

B. Calendar

A calendar should be accessible from the homepage and display upcoming events to all visitors. Visitors should be able to filter the events by criteria, such as location, date, topic, and type of event (e.g. webinar, meeting, conference call) and then have the ability to print or email the information for that event without printing the whole calendar. Multiple users, including certain staff and all participating communities, will need to be able to add/edit/delete events from the calendar. Participating communities should only be able to delete or edit an event that they added, however SJ staff will need to be able to edit or delete any events added to the calendar by any user.

C. Grants Administration

Sustainable Jersey administers a small grants program. Participating communities should be able to submit an application online (upload documents). Staff should be able to identify guest users (selection committee) that can temporarily access these applications for review and selection of winners.

Grantees should then be able to submit mid-term and final reports online as well for staff approval.

D. Forum

The forum should be publicly viewable however only registered users with log ins can post messages or respond to postings. Staff administrators must be able to edit or delete postings as well as respond to them. Staff administrators should be able to manage the categories of postings to help organize discussions.

E. Limited Access Resources

Registered and certified towns need access to materials, such as logos or sample web text, provided by staff. Staff members need to be able to upload the materials to share and select whether registered or certified communities’ log ins are granted permission to access them. The participating communities should be able to retrieve the items when logged in to their municipal accounts.

F. Grants Portal

A "grants portal" that enables entities to conduct active searches or create profiles that will automatically match search preferences with known grants should embody the following specific features:

- The ability for municipalities and other entities with accounts to create a profile and receive matches on a recurring basis. This profile can be linked to the accounts that communities create when they register for the Sustainable Jersey program.
- The ability for public users as well to conduct a manual search utilizing the same characteristics that would be contained in the profile.
- The ability to enable numerous external entities to add new entries (new grants) to the database in a standardized format.
- A time stamp so that outdated grants will be removed from the database at a pre-determined date.

G. Mailing List

Sustainable Jersey maintains several list serves through Constant Contact to communicate with participating communities, partners, and other interested parties. The program needs a web interface to interact with these list serves. Currently an email solicitation feature appears on the homepage to encourage visitors to join an appropriate list serve. The feature collects the name, email address, and affiliation of each visitor, but staff manually enters the data into an appropriate list based on criteria such as affiliation. An export function consistent with Constant Contact is preferred.

H. Communications

All automatically generated emails should be logged for staff to return to in cases where inquiries from towns require it.

I. Registration and Training

Each participating community must first register with the Sustainable Jersey program. Registration involves identifying a primary contact to receive vital communications from the program, entering contact information for a secondary contact, and uploading an official resolution authorizing the community to participate. This information must be saved as the municipal account with a timestamp denoting the time and date of registration, although a community is not officially counted as a registered participant until their information and resolution have been reviewed and approved by staff. When registration is approved, the primary contact should automatically receive an email with an automatically generated log in specific to the community. This log in should be automatically retrieved via a website "forgot password" function in the future. At that time, the registrant also appears on the map as registered and adds to the total tally of registered communities on the homepage.

At the time of registration, the registrant can also identify which actions in the program their community plans to complete and for which they would like to receive training. This data should populate a summary spreadsheet that allows staff to evaluate training needs, and the planned items populate the search function on the map webpage.

J. Website Search Function

New visitors are often overwhelmed by the amount of information on the website and would be better served by a search function that allows them to type in key words to find relevant webpages.

K. Optional: Additional Functionality for Data Management and Display

Currently the program collects data as files, and staff reviews each file and approves or rejects the content. The file is then stored and displayed. Some files however contain data that could be brought into a database and displayed. For example, instead of a municipality submitting a spreadsheet showing their energy usage, they could upload the data into a database. With this data we could automate certain aspects of the approval process, track their performance over time, and display the information graphically. Over time, such data could be tracked for educational and research purposes. Some of the current actions that require the submission of quantitative data include green fleets, carbon footprints, building inventories and audits, green purchasing, canopy coverage, and waste and recycling.

As an optional element, propose a system for collecting, manipulating (e.g. aggregating), and displaying data from municipal submissions. This could be accomplished through a dashboard or similar data management system that allows tracking of progress toward established benchmarks for the individual municipalities and the program as a whole. Based on cost and attractiveness of the proposed new system, the proposed element will be considered as an addition to the contract or for a future contract.

V. Services Needed

- Hosting of website and storage of data.
- Data Security – Need appropriate security given personal information and secure log ins. Also require server back up daily to preserve records.
- Web services and ongoing support -Need to respond to incidents, update file extensions and security on ongoing basis.
- Project managers need to approve proposed specifications before development of website components proceeds.
- Actions and other information need to be printer-friendly and include the dates the information was uploaded.
- Data migration– All data from existing SJ website, including that for all registered and certified towns, uploaded documents, etc need to be transferred to the new platform.

Period of Performance

The NJLM Education Foundation intends to award a contract by September 2011. A prototype of the website is expected by December 2011. Content must be loaded by mid-January 2012 in order to test the site and accommodate a January 31, 2012 launch date. Services to resolve any discrepancies will be required through February 2012. The contractor will provide ongoing maintenance services through December 2012 at which time the contract may be renewed.

Budget and Payment

One third of the contract fee for website development will be paid upon execution of the agreement. One third will be paid upon delivery of a satisfactory prototype. The final third will be paid upon completion of the project.

Ongoing maintenance should be invoiced on a quarterly basis.

Form of Proposal

Please do not inquire about this RFP directly, and attend the conference for proposers if you have questions.

Proposers must submit an electronic copy in MS Word, Excel, and/or Adobe PDF of the proposal by August 31, 2011. Submit requested materials to:

Patricia Ruby
Program Manager
Institute for Sustainability Planning and Governance
Municipal Land Use Center at The College of New Jersey
McCauley House
P.O. Box 7718
Ewing, NJ 08628
(609)771-2063
rubyp@tcnj.edu

Format:

Proposals should consist of 12 point font, and proposers are encouraged not to exceed 30 pages excluding cover pages, resumes, and design samples.

An official authorized to bind the Proposer must sign a transmittal letter identifying the project team and contact information including phone number, email address, and address of the primary contact. The transmittal letter must include a statement that the proposal (or Final and Best Offer if requested) is a binding offer to contract with the NJLM Education Foundation according to the requirements outlined in this RFP.

Include a cover page with the contact information referenced above and the name of the Proposer's Firm. Also include a Table of Contents that corresponds to the RFP components and includes page numbers.

Description of Proposer:

Include a description of the firm as well as responsibilities of key personnel working on this project. Confirm ability to deliver all services required by describing the team's qualifications as they relate to the tasks outlined in this RFP. Include references and samples of previous work.

Identify a single project manager who will serve as primary contact and oversee all aspects of contract delivery. Note if any personnel will be located off site or subcontractors. Describe how staff will communicate with the designated project manager representing the NJLM Education Foundation and whether personnel other than the primary contact will communicate directly about specific project components.

Identify any licensed or proprietary software or other intellectual property that will be or may be used to deliver the project. Provide a detailed description of any conditions or restrictions that accompany the use of such intellectual property.

Work Plan:

Include a work plan with a timeline that addresses the Scope of Work. For each component in the scope, describe the approach for addressing it and include details about which platforms you intend to use and for what purposes. Explain the self-configuration capabilities that allow administrators to configure system components and note any limitations such as maximum levels of hierarchy.

Also describe how desired services will be delivered. Specifically address how the transition of assets from the existing contractor will be accomplished.

Describe how and where data will be stored and secured. Outline the procedure for addressing security breaches. List all parties that have access to the data and any relevant privacy rights. Data should only be used by the NJLM Education Foundation and its assignees. How will data be destroyed or transferred to another vendor in the event the contract is not renewed upon expiration of the original contract? Describe how uptime / downtime is measured.

Cost proposal:

Provide a detailed budget for each component outlined in the RFP and describe how the pricing relates to website development, installation, training, maintenance, updates, etc. If the proposal includes optional functionality outlined under letter K. in Section IV, price this component separately from others.

Intellectual Property Rights

All documents, data, and materials provided by the NJLM Education Foundation or its assignees to the contractor remain solely property of the NJLM Education Foundation and/or its assignees. Any enhancements or revisions to such items made by the contractor remain the NJLM Education Foundation's property. All work products produced by the contractor are property of the NJLM Education Foundation. The contractor, in its agreement with the NJLM Education Foundation, must assign all interest (including proprietary and intellectual property rights) in such property to the NJLM Education Foundation. The contractor is not permitted to use any work products outside the context of this project without prior approval of the NJLM Education Foundation.

If any licensed works are included in the deliverables, the contractor must grant the NJLM Education Foundation and its assignees a royalty-free, perpetual, nonexclusive, and limited license to use such products in the context of this project.

Proposal Evaluation

The proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Approach to Scope of Work
2. Qualifications of Proposer's Team
3. Cost Effectiveness

The NJLM Education Foundation reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals submitted, waive minor irregularities in proposals, request additional information or revisions to offers, and to negotiate with any or all Proposers. Any contract award will be to the Contractor that presents the proposal that, in the opinion of the NJLM Education Foundation, is the most advantageous to the NJLM Education Foundation.

Proposers' Conference

Please do not inquire about this RFP directly, and attend the conference for proposers if you have questions.

A meeting will be held on August 11th at The College of New Jersey. Details will follow. All questions are due by August 19th. Questions should be emailed to rubyp@tcnj.edu.