



THE RESOURCE PROTECTION GROUP, INC.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

RFP #E8 – Invasive Species Research in Compensatory Mitigation

WSSI #25000.01E8

Due Date/Time: February 17, 2017; 5:00 PM

Location: U.S. Mail/Messenger/Fed Ex/UPS

Resource Protection Group, Inc.
c/o Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc.
5300 Wellington Branch Drive, Suite 100
Gainesville, Virginia 20155
ATTN: Michael S. Rolband, P.E., P.W.S., P.W.D



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. Background	1
II. Research Topic	1
A. The Basic Issue	1-2
B. Prime Deliverables.....	2-3
C. Scope of Work	3-4
III. Submission of Proposals	4
A. Deadline and Delivery	4
B. Questions	5
C. Registration of Proposers.....	5
IV. Program Funding	5-6
V. Proposal Review Process	6
VI. Subcontractors	6-7
VII. Review Criteria	7
VIII. Submission Requirements	7
A. Solicitation Offer and Award Form.....	7
B. Table of Contents	8
C. Executive Summary.....	8
D. Project Team	8
E. Project Description.....	8
F. Scope of Work	8-9
G. Budget	9
H. Budget Narrative	9
I. Proprietary Information	9
J. Organizational Chart	9
K. Curriculum Vitae (CV).....	9-10
L. Peer Review.....	10
M. Research Schedule.....	10
IX. Payment and Reporting Requirements	10
A. Reporting Requirements	10
B. Payment Requirements	10-11

X.	Budget Sheet	11-13
XI.	Cash Flow and Work Task Budget Projection	14-16
CONTENTS		
XII.	Solicitation Offer and Award Form (SOAF)	17

Attachments:

- A. Solicitation Offer and Award Form**

I. Background

The Resource Protection Group, Inc. (RGP) is a non-profit 501(c)3. The mission of RPG is to protect, restore, enhance and increase public awareness and understanding of our natural and cultural resources, including the stormwater systems that contribute water to our aquatic resources such as streams, wetlands, lakes, and ponds. The protection, restoration, and enhancement of aquatic resources need to include the adjacent stream valleys, upland buffers, and contributing stormwater systems as much as possible in order to maximize aquatic and cultural resource values. One way RPG intends to implement its mission is through funding of scientific studies associated with the Wetland Research Initiative – a program established by Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc. with several of the wetland banks it has managed.

The general goal for all research projects funded by the Wetlands Research Initiative shall be to determine the overall effectiveness of compensatory mitigation efforts and specifically how design and construction practices should be modified to improve the performance, in terms of functions and values, of compensatory mitigation.

The mission of this program is to fund applied research that makes a real and measurable difference (in terms of how mitigation sites are designed, built, and monitored) in wetland creation, restoration, and enhancement activities in the Virginia Piedmont and, where applicable, adjacent physiographic regions. In the purview of compensatory mitigation, recent emphasis on streams and riparian buffers has expanded the focus of our mission to advancing the science and practice of riparian corridor preservation, enhancement, and restoration where practicable.

This Request for Proposal (RFP) is issued to public and private universities in Virginia, accredited by the Commonwealth of Virginia, and with established programs related to the research topic. Its goal is to support research that will advance the science and engineering and provide state-of-the-art practices for non-tidal compensatory mitigation involving creation, restoration, and enhancement activities centered on the Piedmont Physiographic Province of Virginia.

II. Research Topic

A. The Basic Issue

One of the most important and pervasive contemporary issues in the field of ecological restoration is that of biological invasion. Invasive species are organisms that are successful at colonizing new sites and, once established, are able to engage in explosive population growth in combination with a highly competitive life history strategy. This is problematic because invaders can quickly preempt space that could otherwise be occupied by desirable species. Disturbance represents a mode of introduction for invasive species, and ecological restoration sites can be particularly susceptible to biological invasion because the practices used to create, restore, or

enhance ecological conditions are often the same types of disturbances that leave a site vulnerable to invasion (e.g., site clearing and grading, etc.).

On compensatory mitigation sites in Virginia, invasive plant species present one of the greatest challenges to mitigation managers, designers, and natural resource agency reviewers. The capital outlay for invasive species management on compensatory mitigation sites has increased considerably over the past decade, and in some cases, it can represent the largest investment of money and resources in terms of post-construction maintenance on these sites. The problem with this practice is that it is not clear that the issue merits the investment. Biological invasion is a relatively new subject of study to science, deriving many of its first principles from agricultural or other commodity-based disciplines (e.g., mariculture, silviculture, etc.). In these fields of research, the emphasis has been on studying biological invasion to derive management programs that will maximize values (i.e., attributes beneficial to mankind), with less emphasis on maximizing ecological functions. Although there has been some research that addresses biological invasion and ecological function on mitigation sites, in most cases, invasive species have been ancillary to the primary research objectives in mitigation studies.

Perhaps even more important is the issue of performance standards for invasive species in compensatory mitigation. The current standards often necessitate the use of targeted (or even broadcast) herbicides, a practice that introduces foreign chemicals into natural systems and can result in collateral damage to desirable species. Performance standards are established to ensure that aquatic resource functions are maximized on compensatory mitigation sites, but it is unclear how the current invasive species standards accommodate this goal. Research is needed to determine the functional implications of invasive species, to address performance standards accordingly, and to inform decision-makers on the most efficient and effective investments of time, money, and resources to address this issue.

The purpose of this RFP is to stimulate scientific investigation that will fill these important research gaps, with a focus on compensatory mitigation sites in Virginia. The major lines of inquiry are as follows: What are the implications of invasive species in terms of aquatic resource functions on compensatory mitigation sites? Are existing invasive species performance standards appropriate and, if not, are there other standards that are more congruent with the magnitude of the problem? Are there characteristics of compensatory mitigation sites that render them more susceptible to biological invasion in comparison with other sites? If so, are there diagnostic criteria that can indicate relative risk of biological invasion at the outset of a compensatory mitigation project? Can money/time/resources be invested on the “front end” of a compensatory mitigation project to minimize costly and time-consuming remediation on the “back end”?

B. Prime Deliverables

The successful applicant will, at the conclusion of the research period, provide:

- a. Specific language that can be utilized by the regulatory agencies (e.g., COE/EPA/DEQ) in Mitigation Banking Instruments and other compensatory mitigation agreements. The language should be clear on what standards are to be followed for invasive species control in terms of:
 1. Specific treatment
 2. Seeding
 3. Planting
 4. Monitoring and Maintenance protocols

The standards should be practicable¹ and be implemented by bank sponsors and permittees.

- b. A white paper providing scientific and economic support of said recommendations.

C. Scope of Work

The successful applicant will prepare a proposal that will include a detailed, literature review-based analysis², field study, and controlled experiment.

Literature Review:

- a. Review existing literature to determine the current state of scientific knowledge and research gaps related to biological invasion in compensatory mitigation sites, with an emphasis on aquatic resource functions. Important species for non-tidal compensatory mitigation in Virginia include (but are not limited to): *Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*, *Arthraxon hispidus*, *Humulus japonicus*, *Lespedeza cuneata*, *Lonicera japonica*, *Lythrum salicaria*, *Microstegium vimineum*, *Murdannia keisak*, *Perilla frutescens*, *Persicaria perfoliata*, *Phalaris arundinacea*, *Sorghum halepense*, and *Typha* spp.
- b. Survey existing regulatory practices and invasive species performance standards. Include an economic analysis with an estimate of the monetary investment in invasive species management pursuant to existing performance standards.
- c. Review technology and industry practices used in invasive species remediation.

Field Study:

Describe and outline a field study, including statistical design and methods, that will:

- a. Incorporate a diversity of compensatory mitigation sites of different ages, degrees of invasive species infestation, and, if applicable, different management histories;
- b. Establish the range of environmental variables that would be most likely correlated with biological invasion (as determined from the comprehensive

¹ Virginia Water Protection Permit regulation (9 VAC 25-210-10) and the EPA's Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR §§ 230.1-230.80) define "practicable" as "available and capable of being done after taking into consideration cost, existing technology, and logistics in light of overall project purposes."

² After selection and funding (not for this proposal).

- review of the scientific literature above) and directly measure those variables at each of the mitigation sites; and,
- c. Through the use of statistical modeling, determine the most relevant factors correlated with biological invasion (or lack thereof) on the sites studied and, where possible, relate the modeling analysis to ecological function.

Controlled Environment/*In situ* Experiment:

Design and execute an experiment(s), either in a controlled environment (e.g., greenhouse) or *in situ* at an existing compensatory mitigation site (or both), to evaluate:

- a. The conditions under which invasive species become established and or dominant on newly created or restored compensatory mitigation sites;
- b. Management approaches that could be used at the outset of a compensatory mitigation project to minimize biological infestation over the early successional development of the site; and,
- c. Species-specific interactions that could inform management approaches to invasive species control.

III. Submission of Proposals

A. Deadline and Delivery

The proposal application must be received by **5:00 PM on February 17, 2017**. Each proposal should be submitted as four (4) bound paper copies and an electronic copy in PDF format on a CD. Send proposal applications to the following address:

Michael S. Rolband, P.E., P.W.S., P.W.D., President
Resource Protection Group, Inc.
c/o Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc.
5300 Wellington Branch Drive, Suite 100
Gainesville, Virginia 20155

Telephone: 703 679 5602
E-mail: mrolband@wetlandstudies.com

Please note that misdirected proposal applications will be deemed late and returned to the applicant. All proposal applications must be complete at the time of submission. Later changes or addendums will not be accepted.

FAXED OR E-MAILED APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

B. Questions

Questions that arise during the proposal preparation should be directed by e-mail or U.S. Mail or overnight service² to:

Jennifer Van Houten, PWS, PWD, Vice President
Resource Protection Group, Inc.
c/o Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc.
5300 Wellington Branch Drive, Suite 100
Gainesville, Virginia 20155

Telephone: 703 679 5641
E-mail: jvanhouten@wetlandstudies.com

All responses and related responses shall be distributed to all registered proposers.

C. Registration of Proposers

If you desire to be informed of all questions and answers addressed during the proposal preparation process, as well as any RFP amendments, you must notify (via e-mail or U.S. mail) the following for registration:

Jennifer Van Houten, PWS, PWD, Vice President
Resource Protection Group, Inc.
c/o Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc.
5300 Wellington Branch Drive, Suite 100
Gainesville, Virginia 20155

Telephone: 703 679 5641
E-mail: jvanhouten@wetlandstudies.com

IV. Program Funding

- A.** The RPG shall fund 100% of the accepted proposal's budget pursuant to an agreed upon payment schedule based upon research progress.
- B.** Applicants are *not* expected to provide any cost-share towards the research budget, unless your institution requires such funding to offset the difference between the allowed Indirect Cost rate and your institution's Indirect Cost rate.
- C.** The Indirect Cost rate shall be limited to 35% of all Direct Costs. This is a maximum rate; proposers may offer a lower rate.

² Telephone calls are not preferred, as all registered proposers must be informed of all questions, answers, and clarifications.

- D. Tuition for graduate students *is allowable* as a Direct Cost on a proportionate basis to the percentage of their research time dedicated to the proposal work.
- E. The estimated cost range for this project is \$100,000 to \$200,000, with 24-to 36-month duration. If you do not expect this budget or time frame to be adequate to perform the work, please notify us as soon as possible during your preparation of the proposal so we can consider an amendment.

V. Proposal Review Process

- A. Submission of Response to the Piedmont Wetlands Research Program in care of WSSI.
- B. Based upon peer review recommendations in each proposal, as well as suggestions from RPG staff and Interagency Review Team (IRT) members, RPG shall solicit peer review participants.
- C. RPG shall convene a peer review panel at its office for a one-day review meeting (IRT members shall be invited to participate).
- D. RPG shall provide a recommendation to the IRT for an award based upon its staff and peer review discussions. RPG staff, IRT members, and external peer reviewers will not review proposals where a significant personal or organizational conflict of interest exists.
- E. The IRT Chair shall have ten (10) days to (based upon IRT comments): (i) concur with the RFP Award Recommendation, (ii) select an alternative proposal, or (iii) reject all proposals. The IRT Chair shall provide one (1) signed original “Solicitation Offer and Award” form confirming its decision to RPG.
- F. *More than one (1) response may be selected* if the reviewers determine that significantly different research approaches are proposed that separately have the strong possibility of yielding a different, yet practicable, solution.
- G. Timing: We expect the review process to take 90-120 days.

VI. Subcontractors

One academic institution must be the prime research contractor and designate a Principal Investigator (PI) as both the point of contact and the party responsible for performing the work. Other entities may be subcontractors to the prime research contractor subject to the following conditions:

- A. They are an academic institution or a federal government entity with research capabilities (such as USGS), and
- B. No more than 49% of the work (measured in dollars of Direct Cost) shall be undertaken by academic personnel from a non-Virginian academic institution or federal government entity.
- C. The Prime Research Contractor cannot apply any indirect rate markup to the subcontractor's total cost except if that subcontractor's indirect rate is lower than that allowed for the prime. In such case, the prime contractor may charge the difference. In no case can the subcontractor charge more than the indirect rate allowed by the prime.

VII. Review Criteria

The proposals will be reviewed and scored based upon the following criteria, with the weighting noted below showing the likely value of each criterion in the award decision:

	Criteria	Weight
1.	Viability of the proposed research program relative to solving the stated need	20%
2.	Level of interest, experience, and expertise of the Principal Investigator(s) in the research topic	40%
3.	Overall proposal quality, innovation, and viability	20%
4.	Unique methodologies proposed for investigation	10%
5.	Cost	10%

The reviewers and ultimate decision makers reserve the right to modify, at any time during the review process, the weighting of each criterion or simply make a unilateral decision to not follow said weighting in the extraordinary circumstance that the weighting does not result in a practicable outcome. For example, if one proposal was triple the cost of all others, even if it was deemed superior in every other manner, we may determine that it is not an economically viable approach and not select that proposal or contact the proposer to discuss a modification to its proposal to address the cost issue.

VIII. Submission Requirements

Your response to this RFP must not exceed ten (10) single-spaced, typed pages³, using 12-point font size and one-inch margins (all sides) and include the following sections:

- A. Solicitation Offer and Award Form (referenced in Section XII and provided in Appendix A): You must complete all sections on this form and obtain signatures of the appropriate officials.

³ Text Section (i.e., does not include resumes, budgets, cash flow projection, schedules, or SOAF)

- B.** Table of Contents: Please include major sections and the corresponding page numbers.
- C.** Executive Summary (limit to one page single spaced): Explain what you plan to do and why your team should be selected.
- D.** Project Team: Describe which institutions and, specifically, the people who will be involved (and to what degree) in this project. Explain why this team is best suited for this project.
- E.** Project Description:
 - 1. Objectives: List the specific objectives of the project.
 - 2. Background: Explain the relevance of the project.
 - 3. Preliminary Studies (if applicable): Describe any precursor research you have conducted or are aware of that applies to the project topic and what was determined from those preliminary results.
 - 4. Experimental Procedures/Methodologies: Describe any laboratory or field testing to be performed referencing analytical methods used and commercial products planned to be used or assessed in this program. List and describe each type of device that you will test and evaluate.
 - 5. Description of Resources (i.e., laboratory facilities and/or field sites): Describe the laboratory facilities, testing equipment, field sites, etc. available for conducting the tasks associated with this project. If WSSI field sites are desired for use, describe which ones and how large an area.
 - 6. Literature Cited: List all sources used.
- F.** Scope of Work:
 - 1. Issue Identification: Identify and briefly describe the issue this project is addressing.
 - 2. Work Tasks: Break the project into specific work tasks and describe each work task individually.
 - 3. Time Allocation: Describe how much time (by months) is to be allotted for each work task and when each task is to begin and end.
 - 4. Resource Allocation: For each work task, list the personnel who will be working on that task and specifically what each person will be doing.

5. **Quality Assurance/Quality Control:** List measures planned to ensure that high quality results are achieved, such as descriptions of statistics to be used to evaluate data and to compare data to controls; field and lab QA/QC, data handling and security, and how to deal with the potential that graduate student tenures may not coincide with the research schedule.
 6. **Determination of Goals:** Identify the means to be used to determine that project goals are met.
- G.** Budget and cash flow requirements for requested funding (use similar format as provided in Sections X and XI). You propose duration and cost, within the general parameters established in Section IV.E.
- H.** Budget Narrative: The budget may include salaries, travel, equipment, materials, and services *not including fees or profit*. It is imperative that you specify any overhead, Indirect Costs, or fringe benefits rates, as well as which budget categories are affected by those rates. (For example, Indirect Costs defined as “Facilities and Administration” = 10% of Total Direct Cost less tuition and equipment). In addition, salaries must include personnel descriptions (i.e., faculty, graduate student, hourly worker, etc.), the number of hours expended on the project, and the hourly rate. Supplies must be listed in general terms (i.e., field supplies, general office supplies, etc.). Travel must include a description (trips to field site, conference, etc.), estimated number of hours for travel, and estimated cost per trip. In addition, for travel to conferences, estimate proposed expenses in the budget. For travel to conferences, specific information on conference title, dates of conference, and purpose in attending (i.e., presenting paper, poster session, etc.) must be supplied to WSSI for approval prior to travel. Other Direct Costs must include a general description (i.e., chemical analysis) and include units and unit cost. As stated in Section IV. C., Indirect Costs are fixed at 35% of Direct Cost. No cost-share funding is required.
- Major pieces of equipment (>\$5,000 with lifetime >2 years) are not eligible for purchase with funding from this program unless (i) they are clearly essential to the conduct of the proposed work, (ii) their documented use will be primarily for the proposed work, and (iii) they will be made available for use by future consortium research programs after the funding program is completed.
- I.** Proprietary Information: No information provided in proposals responding to this RFP shall be deemed proprietary. All information in each proposal could be subject to public disclosure or disclosed to other parties.
 - J.** Organizational Chart: Provide an organizational chart depicting the structure of your team.
 - K.** Curriculum Vitae (CV): Provide CV for each senior investigator involved in the proposed project. Resumes should be no more than two pages with an attachment

listing all relevant publications within the past 20 years (limit to two pages). Senior investigators include the principal investigator and any other faculty or senior-level personnel involved in the project. CV of lower level researchers may be included at your option.

- L. Peer Review: Provide the name and contact data (address, telephone, e-mail) for a minimum of three (3) researchers you feel would be qualified to provide a peer review of this proposal without personal or organizational conflict of interest.
- M. Research Schedule: Provide a projected schedule for your research activities. This schedule should be logically related to the budget's cash flow projections.

IX. Payment and Reporting Requirements

A. Reporting Requirements Shall Include:

- a. Quarterly (i.e., March 31, June 30, September 30, December 31) Progress Reports with reports submitted within thirty (30) days after the end of the quarter describing (one or two paragraphs) your progress relative to the Proposal Schedule, Budget, and Scope of Work tasks.
- b. An invoice for the work completed in the previous quarter – provided with the related quarterly report and billed by Work Task item.
- c. Draft Final Report, User Manual, and Software model for RPG and IRT review.
- d. Final Report, User Manual and Software model (six [6] hard copies of report and user manual, six [6] PDFs of report and user manual on CD, and six [6] CDs containing the water budget computer model for public use and free downloading on WSSI, Agency, and your institution's Web site).
- e. One short article for Virginia Association of Wetlands Professional Scientists (VAWPS) newsletter.
- f. One peer reviewed publication article shall be prepared and submitted to an appropriate journal, such as *Wetlands*.
- g. One seminar at WSSI's office which will be open to VAWPS and academics, as well as the consulting and regulatory community at large.

B. Payment Requirements

- a. RPG and/or IRT representatives may inspect research facilities and discuss progress with researchers to verify invoice amounts and research progress at their discretion.

- b. Undisputed Invoices shall be paid by RPG within thirty (30) days of tender ***if and only if*** they are submitted in the mandated manner and schedule described above. Invoices submitted later than prescribed above shall be delayed for processing until all reporting submissions are made timely in the next quarter.

X. Budget Sheet

Your proposed budget shall be submitted in a spreadsheet in a format similar to the description depicted below (to assist you in completing this form, a sample is provided):

Budget Sheet

Project Title: _____				
Principal Investigator: _____				
Organization: _____				
Requested Duration in Months: _____				
Item	Unit Rate⁴ (A)	Units⁵ (B)	Quantity (C)	Cost (D = A x C)
Salaries (list each person or position separately)				
Benefits (list each benefits rate per person / position)				
Tuition				
Supplies ⁶				
Equipment ⁷				
Subcontracts (provide breakdown of salary, benefits, tuition, supplies, equipment, etc. unless it is a lump sum less than \$5,000)				
Travel				

⁴ i.e., \$/hr; ¢/mile; \$/month

⁵ i.e., LS = lump sum; hr = hours; % of effort

⁶ Items costing <\$2,000.00 with a useful life <2 years

⁷ Items costing ≥\$2,000.00 with a useful life ≥2 years

Other Direct Cost				
Total Direct Cost				
Indirect Cost	35% ⁸	N/A	N/A	
Total Cost	N/A	N/A	N/A	

⁸ This is the maximum rate. Proposer may offer a lower rate.

SAMPLE

Budget Sheet

Project Title:		Water Budget Modeling		
Principal Investigator:		Sam Jones, Ph.D.		
Organization:		University of Wetlands		
Requested Duration in Months:		18 Months		
Item	Unit Rate⁹ (A)	Units¹⁰ (B)	Quantity (C)	Cost (D = A x C)
Salaries Sam Jones, P.I.	8,000/month	N/A	9 ¹¹	72,000.00
Jane Waters, Research Associate	3,000/month	N/A	18	54,000.00
Benefits P.I.	20%	N/A	N/A	14,400.00
R.A.	16.5%	N/A	N/A	8,910.00
Tuition	5,000 / semester	semester	3	15,000.00
Supplies	10,000	L.S.	1	10,000.00
Equipment	5,000	L.S.	1	5,000.00
Subcontracts Computer Lab	3,000	L.S.	1	3,000.00
Geek Squad	2,000	L.S.	1	2,000.00
Travel	.50/mile	Miles	5,000	2,500.00
Other Direct Cost	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Direct Cost	N/A	N/A	N/A	186,810.00
Indirect Cost	35%	N/A	N/A	65,383.50
Total Cost	N/A	N/A	N/A	252,193.50

⁹ i.e., \$/hr; ¢/mile

¹⁰ i.e., LS = lump sum; hr=hours; % of effort

¹¹ 50% of 18 months

XI. Cash Flow and Work Task Budget Projection

Your Scope of Work shall include a Work Task section. For each Work Task, provide a quarterly (calendar year basis) cash flow projection. Ideally, you should develop this by spreading out your man hours, and related costs (from your budget) by work task and quarter. Each Invoice and each Progress Report should relate to these projections.

In summary, the Cash Flow and Work Task Budget should be presented in a format similar to the spreadsheet titled, “Cash Flow Projection Form.” To assist you in completing this form, a sample is also provided.

Note: Some researchers asked why cash flow projections are requested. The reasons are twofold:

1. It provides a management indicator as to whether or not the resources expected to be needed for the project are being utilized – minimizing the potential of the “last minute push.”
2. It allows the RPG to invest these monies prior to payments to researches in vehicles that maximize the return on investment subject to the limitation that they be available for use when you need the money.

Cash Flow Projection Form
 (You Select Duration, i.e., Number of Quarters)

Work Task	Total Budget	Cash Flow Projection			
		1 st Quarter 2008	2 nd Quarter 2008	3 rd Quarter 2008	4 th Quarter 2008
List Each Task from Scope of Work:					
Draft Final Report					
Final Report					
VAWPS Article					
Peer Article					
WSSI Seminar					
Total Costs					

SAMPLE

Cash Flow Projection Form

(You Select Duration, i.e., Number of Quarters)

Work Task	Total Budget	Cash Flow Projection			
		1 st Quarter 2008	2 nd Quarter 2008	3 rd Quarter 2008	4 th Quarter 2008
List Each Task from Scope of Work:					
A. Document Existing Technology	15,000.00	15,000.00			
B. Develop Black Box Technology	70,000.00	35,000.00	35,000.00		
C. Set Up Testing Cells	30,000.00	30,000.00			
D. Lab Testing	60,000.00		30,000.00	30,000.00	
E. Data Compilation	30,000.00		10,000.00	20,000.00	
Draft Final Report	20,000.00			10,000.00	10,000.00
Final Report	10,000.00				10,000.00
VAWPS Article	2,000.00				2,000.00
Peer Article	10,000.00				10,000.00
WSSI Seminar	5,000.00				5,000.00
Total Costs	252,000.00	80,000.00	75,000.00	60,000.00	37,000.00

XII. Solicitation Offer and Award Form (SOAF)

Include one (1) original of the SOAF, signed by the Principal Investigator and Organization's Certifying Representative, with each of the six (6) hard copy submissions, and a PDF of said signed document on the CD containing your proposal.

See Attachment A: Solicitation Offer and Award Form.