

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)
N00014-23-RFI-0014**

National Marine and Great Lakes eDNA Strategy

This announcement constitutes a Request for Information (RFI) for the purpose of determining the capability of sources or obtaining information. It does not constitute a Request for Proposal (RFP), a Request for Quote (RFQ), or an indication that the Government will contract for any of the items and/or services discussed in this notice. In accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 15.201, responses to this notice are not offers and cannot be accepted by the Government to form a binding contract. Contractors responding to this request are advised that participation does NOT ensure opportunities for future solicitations or contract awards. Any formal solicitation that may subsequently be issued will be announced separately through SAM.gov. It is the responsibility of any potential Contractor to monitor SAM.gov for additional information pertaining to this topic.

Information on the specific topics of interest are provided in the following sections of this announcement. Information in the RFI or Statement of Work (SOW) is in draft form only and is subject to change in the future. Capability Statements, comments, or responses to this RFI, are not to be construed as offers and any input received is not binding on the Government or this potential future requirement. The Government is not responsible for any cost incurred by responders in furnishing this information.

1.0 Background

The last decade of environmental Deoxyribonucleic acid (eDNA) research has garnered significant scientific and technological advances and readied this approach for use across a variety of applications. Researchers, Government agencies, industry representatives, private foundations, and other stakeholders now need to work together to accelerate the incorporation of marine eDNA science into environmental monitoring and management protocols. Such work includes recognizing and addressing primary impediments to eDNA-method adoption.

In September 2022, the federal and non-federal communities gathered at the 2nd National Workshop on Marine Environmental DNA (Workshop) with a goal to accelerate the incorporation of marine eDNA science into environmental management. Outcomes from the Workshop indicated that better communication, coordination, and harmonization across the Federal Government, industry, academia, etc. are needed to fully harness the advantages of the eDNA approach. Workshop participants also produced a whitepaper calling for the need for a National eDNA strategy.

A National eDNA strategy will help the growing number of federal agencies utilizing eDNA to share and coordinate interests, approaches, and priorities; develop congruent implementation plans to operationalize eDNA monitoring for environmental management; and harness biotechnology to support the growing Blue Economy.

The eDNA Task Team under the Ocean Science and Technology (SOST) Biodiversity Interagency Working Group (IWG) has been tasked by SOST, a subcommittee of the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), with developing a National Marine eDNA Strategy. Because the approaches to analyze eDNA vary and applications for utilization of eDNA are broad, as are the applications of the technology, the scope of work will be constrained initially, focusing on utilizing filtered water samples from the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes with the intended principles and approaches learned through this process to be applied beyond the marine environment.

2.0 NAICS Code and Small Business Size Standard

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is the standard used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments. The NAICS Code applicable to this potential award is 541715 - Research and Development in the Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences (except Nanotechnology and Biotechnology).

3.0 PSC Code

The Product and Service Code (PSC) is a four-digit code that describes a product, service, or research and development (R&D) activity purchased by the Federal Government. The PSC Code applicable to this potential award is AC12 - National Defense R&D Services; Department of Defense - Military; Applied Research.

4.0 Anticipated Responses

The purpose of this RFI is to develop the themes to inform on the development of a National Marine and Great Lakes eDNA Strategy. ONRs intent for this strategy will include several high-level goals to achieve the desired objective to consolidate the field's technology gains, harmonize the nascent efforts in process at federal agencies, and facilitate the standardization of methods for widespread management applications. Through this RFI, ONR requests responses to the following questions, which will help inform the development of the strategy and in determining how to achieve the high-level goals. Please note that it is not necessary to respond to every question in your response and that ONR is not anticipating a contract award to draft the final strategy. The purpose of this RFI is to seek input and information to these questions to draft the final strategy in collaboration with other Government agencies.

1. Coordination

- a. How should interagency eDNA efforts and resources be coordinated to explore and characterize life in the oceans and Great Lakes?
- b. Would there be value in federal leadership (i.e., establishing a National eDNA Council) to establish exploration and characterization standards and protocols?
- c. What actions can federal agencies take to facilitate the high-level harmonization in eDNA policy across federal agencies, with subsidiary benefits to a range of non-federal entities, to avoid confusion and make the uptake of eDNA approaches more efficient?

2. Explore and Characterize

- a. Would it be helpful for the Federal Government to identify strategic priorities for eDNA implementation? If so, what would those strategic priorities be?
- b. How can the transition of research to applications be accelerated?
- c. How can eDNA exploration and characterization data be made usable and available? Which existing mechanisms or repositories could be leveraged?

3. Technical Needs

- a. What are the science and technology needs to explore and characterize life in the oceans and Great Lakes using eDNA approaches?
- b. What support is required for the development, testing, deployment, and use of new eDNA technologies?
- c. What partnerships that promote, invest in, or develop eDNA methodologies, technologies, and applications should be developed or encouraged?
- d. What infrastructure is required to meet the technical demands for eDNA current and future approaches?

4. Capacity Building

- a. How should public and private partnerships be developed or enhanced to explore and characterize life in the oceans and Great Lakes using eDNA approaches? Which existing partnerships could be leveraged?
- b. How can opportunities for non-federal participation in public and private partnerships be maximized?
- c. How should workforce proficiency in eDNA approaches be promoted?
- d. How can the public be engaged in the development and implementation of a national eDNA enterprise?

5.0 Submission Requirements:

Input statements to this RFI shall be submitted via email to the Technical Point of Contact, Dr. Michael Weise, as listed below. Email submissions should include "Input for National Marine and Great Lakes eDNA Strategy" as the subject line to the email. All input statements must be received via email by 30 November 2023 at 11:59 EST. All input statements shall be nonproprietary and shall not contain classified information. The Government may not provide replies/responses to input statements received.

6.0 Questions and Point of Contact

Questions of a technical nature regarding this RFI may be sent to the following Technical Point of Contact:

Name: Dr. Michael Weise
Title: Program Manager – Marine Mammals & Biology Program
Email Address: michael.j.weise.civ@us.navy.mil

Questions of a business nature regarding this RFI may be sent to the following Business Point of Contact:

Name: Ms. Surlean Darby
Title: Contracting Officer
Email Address: surlean.d.darby.civ@us.navy.mil