

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
FY 2018 FUNDING**

VALUE ASSESSMENT OF “CERTIFIED” LOGGER PROGRAMS

December 2017

BACKGROUND

Since the 1990's, forest practice standards programs that seek to evaluate the sustainability of the U.S. industrial wood supply chain have become an inevitable part of doing business in the forest products business sector. The vast majority of forestland management organizations and wood consuming mill organizations undergo some form of annual audit under the standards of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) or the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or both. Logging firms, depending on the extent of their role in the supply chain, are either audited or participate in the audits. Wood procurement practices, logging practices, logger professionalism and raw material chain of custody are standard components of these audits.

In 2000, partly in response to this trend toward increased accountability and professionalism, loggers through the American Loggers Council set out to create a third-party, auditable set of standards and a certification program that holds to account the business and on the ground practices of loggers who hold the certificate. The American Loggers Council Master Logger Certification © program demands compliance with Seven Areas of Responsibility that ensure environmental protection, forest sustainability, and business accountability. Currently 18 states have developed approved templates for the ALC Master Logger Certification © program and 8 states are active with certified loggers. Other certified logger programs include the Michigan Master Logger Certification Program (MIMLC) and the Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands (TCNEF) program.

These programs are not to be confused with the common state logger training programs that most people involved in forestry are familiar with. Certified programs audit actual performance.

It is suggested that logger certification programs can offer a variety of benefits to the wood supply value chain. For landowners they potentially satisfy some chain of custody requirements for land management certification systems without the landowner having to personally audit the site. For mills, wood purchased through certified loggers could meet chain of custody requirements without further audit. For loggers who are certified there could be benefits associated with the recognition of their professionalism including market advantages and cost savings on things like insurance. While there is logic to these suggestions of potential benefit and some anecdotal evidence that they exist, there remains a general lack of understanding about logger certification within segments of the wood supply chain including the effectiveness of its value proposition.

RESEARCH TOPIC FOR PROPOSAL

The WSRI is requesting proposals to explore the value proposition of the American Loggers Council Master Logger Certification © program and other certified logger programs with an emphasis on determining actual benefits, if any, to forest landowners, logging businesses and consuming mills in states where the program has been implemented. Both financial and operational benefits are to be sought and evaluated. Proposals should also include a plan to review some states with approved templates only, and provide insights into the current and future potential of those programs.

DELIVERABLES AND DEADLINES

At a minimum, the WSRI expects to receive two specific “deliverables” from this work:

1. A detailed evaluation of actual benefits experienced by landowners, loggers and/or wood consumers derived through the American Loggers Council Master Logger Certification © program, the Michigan Master Logger Certification Program, and the Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands logger certification program in all the states where these programs have been implemented.
2. An effective evaluation of the status of Master Logger Certification © in a sampling of states where the program has an approved template but no certified logging businesses.

The suggested time frame for completion of this project from the signing of an agreement is six months. WSRI will consider other proposed schedules depending on the scope, detail and cost of the submitted proposal.

FUNDING

Submitted proposals should include the total price to meet all deliverables specified in this Request. Bidders are encouraged to submit budget details, particularly if they propose to add to or deviate from the expectations outlined in this RFP. The final Agreement with WSRI will be a fixed price contract with up to three payment installments, including the final one, based on accomplishments during the term of the project.

OWNERSHIP, CONFIDENTIALITY, AND PROPRIETY

WSRI reserves the rights to all data collected until the final reports are issued and accepted by WSRI. WSRI intends to provide the data (in aggregate form) and its reports to its membership provided that individual company data will remain confidential and no cost or other sensitive data will be released in such a manner as would permit such data to be identified to any particular entity, mill, or operation.

The reports may be published in total or in part with the approval of the WSRI Executive Director providing WSRI gets credit as sponsor of the project.

WSRI MEMBER COOPERATION

The WSRI membership is directly connected to the primary elements of the wood supply system. In general, potential researchers can assume they will be able to count on the cooperation of WSRI members during the course of this project when it is specifically requested and according to the approved methodologies of the proposal and all terms of confidentiality. The WSRI will entertain proposals where WSRI members assist with some aspects of the data collection process.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND SELECTION PROCESS

The proposal process for this project will be a four-phase process **to be completed by February 15, 2018**. The four phases are:

- Submission, evaluation and selection of pre-proposals.
- Ranking of pre-proposals by WSRI.
- Request for, submission, evaluation and selection of final proposals.
- Negotiation and signing of contract.

Pre-proposals

Those interested in performing the work described in this RFP are asked to **submit pre-proposals by January 15, 2018** to:

WSRI Executive Director Steve Carruth via email – stevecarruth@yahoo.com

or

to Steve Carruth via regular mail:

317 Domingo Road

Valley Head, WV 26294

Phone: 304-572-5195 Mobile: 843-209-0765

Pre proposals should be less than 5 pages long and include:

- Project Title
- Primary Investigator – name, title, address, phone numbers, email address and qualifications
- Collaborators – name, title, address, and qualifications
- Objectives
- Proposed methods
- Schedule, milestones, and timing of deliverables
- Budget and proposed funding sources if other than WSRI

The **WSRI Technical Team will select top pre-proposals by February 9, 2018** based on (1) apparent understanding of the topic as identified above, (2) clarity of the objectives, (3) general technical quality, (4) probability of achieving the objectives within the proposed schedule and budget, and (5) innovation (in terms of approach).

Final Proposals

Submitters of these pre-proposals will be asked to submit **final proposals by February 26, 2018**. Final proposals will address questions and suggestions discussed with project contenders during the pre-proposal process.

Final selection will be made by March 9, 2018 with funding available according to the terms of the contract to be negotiated by **March 30, 2018**.