# **Performance Work Statement**

# National Student Services Contract

Office of Research and Development

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA or the Agency), Office of Research and Development (ORD), with 12 locations across the United States, has interest in outsourcing the management of the Student Services Contracting Authority (SSCA) Program to an Institution, University, or Non-Profit Organization. The contractor shall provide support through student service providers performing services to the ORD under a personal service relationship through Agency-issued task orders. The contractor shall provide student contractors for administrative and research projects as outlined in the technical requirement s of the task order Performance Work Statement (PWS). The required support shall take place on-site at the various ORD organizational locations, such as, but not limited to EPA Headquarters in Washington, D.C.; laboratories in Grosse Ile, MI; Edison, NJ; and Duluth, MN; research centers in Cincinnati, OH; Research Triangle Park, NC; and Ada, OK including remote, and field locations. The contractor shall handle the recruitment , selection and personnel administration of individuals based on EPA 's particular administrative, technical or research requirements.

# **PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION**

1. **Background**

The mission of the EPA is to protect public health and to safeguard and improve the natural environment - air, water, and land - upon which human life depends.

The EPA's purpose is to ensure that: (l) Federal environmental laws are implemented and enforced fairly and effectively, (2) Environmental protection is an integral consideration in U.S. policies concerning economic growth, energy, transportation, agriculture, industry, international trade, and natural resources, (3) National efforts to reduce environmental risk are based on the best available scientific information, (4) All parts of society, business, state and local governments, communities, citizens, have full access to information sufficient to become participants in preventing pollution and protecting human health and the environment.

The ORD provides the science needed to support the Agency's mission. ORD conducts high quality peer­ reviewed research targeted at better understanding the nation's most serious environmental threats, and assists the Agency efforts to address them. ORD prepares health and ecological risk assessments and makes recommendations for sound risk management strategies to assure that highest risk pollution problems receive focused attention. All research is prioritized based on risk and carefully aligned to support the Agency environmental goals and strategic priorities.

The ORD is geographically dispersed, with approximately 1 ,800 staff members located in 12 locations, and environmentally diverse, encompassing a wide array of scientific and engineering disciplines. The ORD environmental laboratories, centers and offices responsible for conducting the research are currently located in the following locations:

1. Washington, DC,
2. Research Triangle Park, NC,
3. Cincinnati, OH,
4. Gulf Breeze, FL,
5. Athens, GA,
6. Corvallis, OR,
7. Newport, OR,
8. Ada, OK,
9. Grosse Ile, Ml
10. Duluth, MN,
11. Narragansett, RI,
12. Edison, NJ.

## Definitions

1. Contract Level Contracting Officer's Representative (CL-COR) - the CL-COR is the primary representative of the Contracting Officer (CO). The CL-COR will coordinate all program requests for new task orders.
2. Contracting Officer (CO) - the Contracting Officer is responsible for administering the Student Services Contract. The Contracting Officer will receive initial requests from ORD, submit these requests to the contractor, assist in the evaluation for award of the task orders, issue the task orders, obligate funds and close out the task orders.

C) Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative (TOCOR) - the TOCOR will submit specific requests for student contractor requirements to the CL-COR. The TOCOR will be responsible for the overall monitoring of the student contractors and projects under their Task Order. The TOCOR may be either an EPA employee or, as appropriate, another Federal Agency employee, appointed by the CO, who possesses the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform pre-award and/or post-award functions. The TOCOR is responsible for technical direction and certifying that services were received and accepted. TOCORs do not have the authority to issue any technical direction which changes or modifies the scope of work, or alters the period of performance of the contract. The TOCOR may also serve as a mentor and continue to perform their pre-award and post-award Task Order functions.

1. Mentor - the mentor is a Government scientist or other professional who provides day-to-day direction, coaches, advises, counsels, and provides guidance and support to the student or recent graduate in the performance of their work. Mentors review the student 's or recent graduate's work and provide input to the TOCOR on the quality and quantity of this work. Unless the mentor is also the TOCOR, mentors will *not* perform acquisition functions.
2. Recent Graduate - An individual, at least 18 years of age, who has graduated with a degree from a college or university within the last two years.
3. Student - An individual, at least 18 years of age, who is enrolled, in good standing, in a degree program (actively seeking a degree) at a recognized, accredited educational institution. A student is not required to carry a full course load, as long as the individual is a bona fide student, not merely someone who signed up for a class in order to work under these contract arrangements.
4. **Overview of SSCA**

The Consolidated Appropriation Resolution for 2003 (P.L. 108-7) included the following authority for the EPA Office of Research and Development to contract for the temporary or intermittent personal services of students or recent graduates:

*"Provided. that the ORD of the EPA may hereafter contract directly with individuals or indirectly with institutions or nonprofit organizations, without regard to 41 U.S.C. 5, f or the temporary or intermittent personal services of students or recent graduates, who shall be considered employees for the purposes of chapters* 57 *and 81 of title 5, United States Code. relating to compensation for travel and work injuries, and chapter 171 of title 28, United States Code, relating to tort claims, but shall not be considered to be Federal employees for any other purposes.* "

The contractor understands there is a personal services relationship between its employees and ORD personnel as described in FAR 37.103. The contractor understands the students will be considered Federal employees for compensation for travel and work injuries and tort claims as set forth in this statutory authority, but will not be considered to be Federal employees for any other purpose.

The U.S. EPA/ORD has maintained the Student Services Contracting Authority (SSCA) program in which it has contracted with pre-baccalaureate students and/or recent college/university graduates, which may be baccalaureate, master's degree, or doctoral degree applicants (hereafter referred to as students) to work with the ORD in various capacities through which the students are introduced and contribute to the mission, functions, and performance of the ORD.

The objective of this authority is the development and administration of a program that will provide opportunities for exceptional undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate students to participate in environmental research, technical assistance, and administrative support at any ORD location. Students must be at least 18 years of age, enrolled i n good standing in a college or university, or have graduated within the past two years. Administrative areas can include, but are not limited to, accounting, business law, business, mathematics, statistics, and human resources. Areas of research can include, but are not limited to, the following areas; engineering, toxicological, clinical, epidemiological, ecological, bio geographic, atmospheric modeling, .air quality forecasting, aquatic assessment, multimedia modeling for landscape, nutrient, and chemical stressors of ecosystems, source/stressor formation , human exposure to chemical and microbial hazards, ground water and ecosystem restoration, sustainability, climate change, biofuels, nanotechnology , carbon sequestration , and water quality stressors. In addition to providing support for research and administration, this authority provides students with an opportunity to obtain hands-on work experience in their field of study. The intent of the statutory authority is for students to gain experience through a mentoring relationship with an ORD scientist or ORD administrative professional, while working in a fully operational federal research laboratory or office. This contract will assist in increasing both the effectiveness and pool of available scientists and administrative position s (i.e., budget, program operations, and human resources) for the future and contribute to the mission, functions, and performance of the ORD. It also provides ORD Staff an opportunity to mentor, develop, and observe the next generation of workers.

The ORD's authority is to contract for the temporary or intermittent personal services of students or recent graduates, who are at least 18 years of age, for up to 60 months, or five years, of total service, including options.

The student or recent graduate may not apply again for the same requirement they have previously held, but may apply for any other student service requirement for which they are qualified and otherwise eligible. There is no maximum time limitation on the number of years that a requirement may be fulfilled under the student service authority. Likewise, there is no limitation on the number of years a particular student may perform under student service contracts; however, a student may not hold a contract for the same requirement more than 60 months.

ORD employees, their spouses, and children are not eligible to participate in this program.

Student contractors' travel, in support of the Government, is authorized, arranged, and paid the same as federal employees. Travel must be documented with official government travel orders and approved in advance by the TOCOR. Travel orders will be prepared and paid by the Government directly to the student.

A Federal employee will serve as the student's mentor and will provide day-to-day direction, monitor performance and provide feedback.

Project descriptions will be issued by the CO, through an issued task order, and will identify the area of expertise requested, with a complete task order project description and any deliverables required. The project description will include duty locations and estimated numbers of students by site and discipline for ORD’s requirement.

Task orders will be written for a base period of up to 12 months with up to four additional optional periods of up to 12 months each not to exceed the limitations set forth i n Clause FAR 52.216-22, entitled "Indefinite Quantity ". However, there is no requirement for EPA to exercise the optional terms. Furthermore, changing the duration of the task order will require a bi-lateral amendment.

Student contractors must participate in any required location-specific health and safety training. The government shall provide any health and safety equipment needed to perform the student's assigned tasks.

Students performing the work are considered government employees for the purposes of worker’s compensation. Students or recent graduates injured on the job are eligible for Workers Compensation at the Government's expense (via the Department of Labor) the same as a Federal employee. They are also included in workplace safety and injury prevention programs; protective gear, medical monitoring, and inoculations will be provided to students and recent graduates by the Government. Consistent with the law, the Government may be sued for damages or injuries to third parties caused by these students or recent graduates in the conduct of EPA activities. This does not mean that the students or recent graduates are indemnified from all liability. They are not entirely immune personally from lawsuits just as Federal employees are not. Properly licensed students or recent graduates may be permitted to drive Government vehicles, if required to do so by the task order statement of work.

Performance under this contract may require students to work on weekends.

EPA will not pay any overtime premiums and will not pay for any work conducted during holidays. In addition, the contract does not provide for any paid time off including but not limited to sick days, vacation days and personal days.

## PART II: WORK REQUIREMENTS

1. **Technical Requirements**

Under this contract, the contractor shall be required to provide the services listed below. The contractor shall:

* 1. Provide professional, timely, and accurate performance in managing the administration of the SSCA Program, including the recruitment, hiring, placement, generation of payroll, invoicing against task orders, task order budgeting, and handling of other administrative requirements.
  2. Identify and recruit recent college graduates or current undergraduates, graduate or doctoral students with academic requirements and training in fields of study relevant to the requirements in the issued task orders.
  3. Identify qualified students after receiving the government's request. If no qualified student has been identified, the contractor shall provide the government with a summary of the steps that have been taken to find one along with an estimated timeframe for completing the search.
  4. Post announcements for recruitment of students.
  5. Develop and execute an interview process for evaluating and selecting student hires that meets the requirement of the project description.
  6. Notify the CO and CL-COR of all hiring and projected student start dates.
  7. Notify the CO and CL-COR of all student departures to include projected departure dates.
  8. The Contractor shall communicate with the student contractor and the TOCOR the term s of the project/tasks, the human resource policy guidelines which govern the student program, and administrative procedures.
  9. Maintain an electronic (digitally imaged) database of all related employment documentation which shall be made available to authorized ORD representatives upon request for information from the CO and upon expiration of the contract:
     + - * Employment application, resume, etc.
         * Time sheets, expense disbursements, payroll disbursements
  10. Comply with the Agency Security Requirements for Personnel outlined in Attachment 3.

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## B. Quality Assurance

Students contractors hired to work in EPA laboratories or in support of other science-based activities will be governed by the EPA quality system, as described in the approved quality management plan for the organization in which they work. Approved quality management plans are in full compliance with the EPA' s quality system requirements as expressed in these two documents:

* *Policy and Program Requirements for the Mandatory Agency-wide Quality System,*

EPA CJO 2105.0, October 2008; and

* *EPA Quality Manual for Environmental Programs,* EPA CIO 2105-P-O 1-1, October 2008.

Student contractors who are engaged in scientific research, including laboratory work must:

* Meet with the organization 's Quality Assurance Manager (QAM)
* Complete QA training prior to the initiation of research activities
* Work under an approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)
* As appropriate, use standard operating procedures (SOPs)
* As appropriate, follow the policies and procedures provided by the EPA National Geospatial Program, including the National Geospatial Data Policy (NGDP)

The mentor is responsible for ensuring compliance with these requirements. If the student will work under an existing, approved QAPP, it will be provided to the contractor when the task order is issued. Alternatively, the mentor may ask the student to participate in development of a QAPP and/or SOP related to their work as part of their employment.

## C. Personnel and EPA Policy

Identification of Personnel: Contractor personnel shall identify themselves as contractor personnel at all times, to include the wearing of ID badges, clearly indicating that the wearer is a "contractor". Contractor employees shall clearly identify themselves as contractor employees in correspondence, regardless of form, and while speaking on the telephone. Any question regarding EPA policy or intent shall be directed to the appropriate mentor, TOCOR, or the CL-COR. At no time by act or omission to act shall a contractor employee be held out as a Government employee.

EPA Pol icy: The contractor shall refer any questions relating to the interpretation of EPA policy, guidance or regulation to the CO, or the COR. Students shall not perform inherently governmental functions.

# **D. Environmental Management System Policy**

# Reference: Efficient Federal Operations Executive Order 13834, May 17, 2018.

The contractor shall perform work under this contract consistent with the relevant policy and objectives

identified in the agency, organizational, or facility environmental management system (EMS) applicable for your contract and subcontracts. The contractor shall perform work in a manner that conforms to all appropriate Environmental Management Program s and Operational Controls identified by the agency, organizational, or facility EMS, and provide monitoring and measurement information as necessary for the organization to address environmental performance relative to the environmental, energy, and transportation management goals. In the event an environmental nonconformance or noncompliance associated with the contracted services is identified, the contracting officer will notify the contractor in writing with the appropriate corrective and/or preventative actions. In the case of a noncompliance, the

contractor upon written notification from the CO shall respond and take corrective action immediately. In the case of a nonconformance, the contractor, upon written notification from the CO, shall respond and take corrective action based on the time schedule established by the EMS Site Coordinator. In addition, the contractor shall ensure that their employees are aware of the roles and responsibilities identified by the environmental management system and how these requirements affect their work performed under this contract.

All student contractor personnel shall complete yearly EPA-sponsored environmental training specified for the type of work conducted on-site. Upon contract award, the CL-COR will notify the facility-level Environment al Management Systems Coordinator to arrange EMS training for appropriate staff.

# **E. Information Technology Requirements**

The US EPA will provide the appropriate software required for the student to perform his/her duties. The TOCOR and EPA IT coordinator will determine the appropriate database access and software for the student(s) to conduct the tasks as outlined in the project description. The EPA will provide all computers for the students. Student contractors are required to complete the annual EPA Information Security Management on-l i ne training as well as any other IT required training.

The contractor shall comply with sections B, C, D, P, T and V of EPA IPN 17-01.

# **F. Homeland Security Initiative**

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-1 2), signed on August 27, 2004, requires a Government-wide, common identification standard for all Federal and contractor employees requiring physical access to Federally controlled facilities and/or logical access to Federally controlled information systems. The goals of HSPD-12 are to enhance safety and security, increase Government efficiency, reduce identity fraud, and protect personal privacy. All contractors shall be required to undergo the agency verification procedures as outlined in Attachment 3.

**G. Occupational Safety, Health and Environmental Management**

Some students assigned under this contract may be assigned to work in areas where there is potential exposure to chemical, radiological or biological agents and/or physical stressors. These students may be offered medical examinations to identify any adverse health effects related to exposure. These examinations, when offered, will be paid for by the Government.