



Request For Application to the Soil Science Society of America



PART 1: Introduction

1.1 Invitation to Applicants

This is an invitation for applications to the position of Coordinator of the North America Proficiency Testing (NAPT) Program and Proficiency Assessment Program (NAPT-PAP).

The successful applicant will provide services to the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) on a contract basis, according to the fee schedule laid out in the attached contract (Attachment A).

1.2 Program Description

The NAPT Program is an activity of the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) provided as an educational service to laboratories engaged in soil testing and plant analysis throughout North America and elsewhere. The NAPT Program provides laboratories with standard soil, plant, and water samples, summarizes the accuracy and precision of the analytical results, and provides detailed reports to each laboratory.

The Performance Assessment Program (NAPT-PAP) is offered as a voluntary service to all soil testing laboratories and operated as a part of the NAPT program and is administered by the NAPT Oversight Committee. The program intent is to assess and improve laboratory performance with respect to accurate and precise analytical results using appropriate routine soil analytical methods.

Both the NAPT program and the NAPT-PAP program are programs of the Soil Science Society of America.

PART 2: Deliverables

2.1 Responsibilities of and Services Provided by NAPT Coordinator

The primary role and responsibility of the Coordinator is to maintain and enhance the NAPT Program through satisfactory delivery of high quality, professional and scientific services to participant laboratories and to promote the program to a wider audience. The Coordinator will receive support and guidance through the NAPT Oversight Committee and SSSA. (NAPT Committee and Sub-Committee lists are available at: www.soils.org/about-society/committees/s890/)

2.1.1 Sample Collection and Distribution

For the 2010 and 2011 program years, the work of the contract laboratory is expected to remain with Utah State University. The contract laboratory will have a separate contract with SSSA. The coordinator's role will be to ensure that the collection, processing, and preparation of homogenous bulk soil, plant and water samples following specifications outlined in the NAPT Technical Guidelines (www.soils.org/about-society/committees/s890/). The contract laboratory will be responsible for the collection, processing, and preparation of homogenous bulk soil, plant, and water samples. They are also responsible for splitting the samples for distribution to participant laboratories (label, package and mail subsamples to individual laboratories participating in the NAPT program on a quarterly basis). Through SSSA Headquarters, the Coordinator will facilitate sale and distribution of reference soil, plant, and water samples, including invoicing and maintenance of inventory listing.

2.1.2 Data Management and Reporting

Collect analytical laboratory data, perform statistical analyses including, but not limited to, those specified in the NAPT Technical Guidelines, generate and distribute analytical reports and report summaries. Prepare and distribute annual report summarizing method performance, method comparisons and intra- and inter-laboratory proficiency evaluations. Maintain confidential records of program participants. Coordinate with state/provincial proficiency testing program directors to provide state/provincial laboratory data in appropriate report format.

2.1.3 Program Management and Maintenance

Manage day-to-day operation and implementation of NAPT program, including monitoring performance of contract laboratory, following policies and technical guidelines established by the NAPT Oversight Committee and/or SSSA. Provide input into the development of the annual budget prepared by the NAPT Oversight Committee. Annually, provide SSSA and the Oversight Committee with an expected date for program initiation and target shipping dates for quarterly samples and such other information as requested by SSSA. Coordinate all NAPT client contacts and address inquiries related to NAPT program and program reports. Work cooperatively with the NAPT Oversight Committee and SSSA, and provide quarterly reports to SSSA and the NAPT Oversight Committee and such other information as requested by SSSA.

2.1.4 Program Marketing and Promotion

Write and submit articles of relevance concerning the NAPT program to SSSA for review and potential publishing in SSSA publications. Develop promotional materials in cooperation with NAPT Oversight Committee and forwarded to SSSA for review, approval, reproduction and distribution. Solicit external funds to support NAPT program in cooperation with NAPT Oversight Committee. Manage and oversee pilot programs as recommended by the NAPT Oversight Committee and accepted by SSSA. Submit regular reports concerning such pilot programs, with such information as requested by the NAPT Oversight Committee, and/or SSSA. Provide information and outreach to regional state working groups and other state programs. Responsible for promoting the program to all potential laboratories to increase the number of participants.

2.1.5 Education and Technical Support

Lead presentations and be responsible for developing educational materials in cooperation with NAPT Membership and Outreach Committee (www.naptprogram.org/about/subcommittees/). Provide technical support to labs trying to improve their analytical proficiency, by responding to questions, providing technical information and referring labs to suitable resources for more involved troubleshooting.

2.2 Contractual Agreement

2.2.1 Contract for Services

The successful candidate will be required to sign, fulfill the obligations of Coordinator and perform pursuant to a contract agreement from July 1, 2010 through December 31, 2011 with SSSA (Attachment A). Annual contract renewal will be evaluated for renewal in November of each calendar year. The agreement may be terminated by either party at least 180 days in advance.

2.2.2 Liability

The Coordinator will maintain at all times during the term of the agreement professional liability, workers' compensation, unemployment compensation and comprehensive general liability insurance coverage for Coordinator's business, facilities, activities and employees with such insurers and with such coverage and terms as reasonably required by SSSA. Insurer's Certificate(s) of such coverage shall be provided to SSSA within 30 days of the signing of this Agreement by Coordinator, and shall be provided annually by December 15 of each calendar year during the term of this Agreement, for the coming 12-month period.

2.2.3 Avoidance of Conflict

Several principles are essential to the success and credibility of the NAPT Program and, by extension as its representative, to the Program Coordinator. Those principles include, but are not limited to:

1. Confidentiality
2. Objectivity and freedom from bias
3. Avoidance of conflict of interest

In order to ensure that these principles are upheld, it is essential that the program coordinator:

1. Maintain the highest level of ethics in dealing with confidential information or knowledge such as individual laboratory data and performance.
2. Does not have a long-term supervisory, ownership, economic or employment relationship with a participating laboratory during their tenure as Program Coordinator.

At the same time, it is clearly understood that part of the mission of the NAPT and PAP Programs, and thus the duty of the Program Coordinator, is to assist participating laboratories in improving their performance. Such assistance may include consulting with these laboratories on an individual basis, with fees and expenses covered by the laboratory involved.

To ensure that the principles above are maintained, the Program Coordinator will be required to provide to the Oversight Committee, on an annual basis, disclosure of all consulting with participating laboratories. Further information on “Confidentiality” and “Conflict of Interest” can be found in the Contract between the Soil Science Society of America and the Program Coordinator of the NAPT Program.

2.2.4 Support from SSSA

Develop renewal invoices and coordinate mailings. Process program fees and disburse fees for services.

The successful candidate may be provided financial support to purchase capital equipment to initiate the program as may be approved and agreed to by SSSA. The amount will be negotiated prior to signing the Agreement. All equipment purchased for, and data, information and/or other property produced for or in relation to the NAPT Program will remain the property of SSSA.

PART 3: Application Process

3.1 Submission of Applications

Send application materials and refer questions to:

Dr. Ellen Bergfeld
Executive Vice President
Soil Science Society of America
677 S. Segoe Rd.
Madison, WI 53711
608-268-4979
NAPT@soils.org

Applications may be submitted electronically (preferred), or by hard copy.

3.2 Deadlines

Applications for consideration should be received at SSSA headquarters by February 26, 2010 for immediate review. Application for position will remain open until a suitable candidate is identified.

3.3 Mandatory Requirements

To be considered, an application must include all of the following:

1. A vitae detailing education and professional experience
2. A work plan outlining how the applicant proposes to fulfill the responsibilities of the role of coordinator
3. A reference list with the contact information for at least four professional references

PART 4: Evaluation of Proposals

4.1 Stages of Proposal Evaluation

The evaluation of proposals will be conducted by the Society in the following three (3) stages:

4.1.1 Stage I

Consists of a review to determine which proposals comply with all of the Mandatory Requirements set out in Section 3.3. Proposals which do not comply with all of the Mandatory Requirements may, subject to the reserved rights of the Society, be disqualified and not evaluated further.

4.1.2 Stage II

Consist of a review by the Society of each qualified proposal on the basis of the Criteria described in Section 4.2.

4.1.2 Stage III

The selected candidate(s) will be interviewed by teleconference and/or in person. The candidate with the qualifications best fitting the position will be offered the contract.

4.2 Stage IV

Evaluation of Rated Criteria

The following is an overview of the criteria used in evaluation of the RFA:

1. Clarity of understanding of the program requirements and approach taken which identifies any issues / challenges of the program. Also shows a solid understanding of the needs of target audience and can provide a description of the approach to his/her audience.
2. Work plan / methodology that will be used to deliver the products to include:
 - a) Description of statistical techniques and models to be utilized in data analysis
 - b) Description of day to day operation and implementation of the program
 - c) Description of promotion of the program to existing and potential clients
 - d) Description of how applicant will provide technical support to participating labs in resolving proficiency problems
 - e) Ability to provide deliverables within timeframes

3. Experience and qualifications which demonstrates expertise in the following areas:
 - a) Knowledge, skills and expertise in the operation of an analytical lab that provides agronomic testing of soils, plants and waters, and environmental testing
 - b) Expertise of the applicant in Quality Assurance/Quality Control programs in a laboratory setting and
 - c) A description of statistical analysis reports applicant has previously delivered

Experience and Qualifications

Each applicant must provide in their proposal:

1. A brief description of the applicant, including education that is relevant to the delivery of the position of coordinator;
2. A description of the goods and services the applicant has previously and/or is currently delivering, with an emphasis on experience relevant to the Deliverables;
3. The roles and responsibilities of the applicant and any of their agents, employees and sub-contractors who will be involved in providing the Deliverables, together with the identity of those who will be performing those roles and their relevant respective expertise;
4. Knowledge, skills and expertise in the content area (familiarity with soil and water analyses.);
5. Knowledge, skills and expertise in developing and delivering scientific and statistical reports to public, academic and private sectors;

Education

A Ph.D. degree is preferred, although the minimum education required is a Masters of Science degree in agriculture, soil science, environmental science, or related area. Emphasis in nutrient management, soil fertility, soil chemistry, etc is preferred. Coursework or training in quantitative chemical and/or instrumental analysis and statistics is required.

Experience

A minimum of six years experience in agriculture, soil science, environmental science, or related area is required. Direct experience in soil testing and plant analysis is preferred.