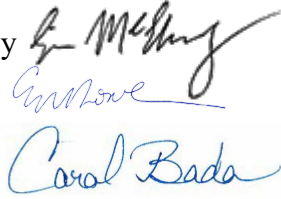


Forest and Watershed Planning & Facilitation Services RFP: Decision Memo

Review Panel Meeting: 7/22/2025

Panel Members:

- Erin McElroy
- Erika Rowe
- Carol Bada



Scoring Results:

	Review Panel Total Score	Review Panel: Average Score	Budget Score	TOTAL	Panel Decision
True Wind Collaborative	197	65.7	8.2	73.9	Do not Award
Ruby Mountain Consulting, LLC	172	57.3	8.8	66.1	Do not Award
Keystone Policy Center	184	61.3	7.5	68.8	Do not Award
Karen DiBari Consulting, LLC	203	67.7	7.8	75.5	Award
Hardigg Consulting, LLC	213	71.0	7.7	78.7	Award
Trees, Water & People	148	49.3	11.3	60.6	Do not Award
Spatial Informatics Group - Natural Assets Laboratory (SIG-NAL)	210	70.0	10.1	80.1	Award
Institute for Applied Ecology	204	68.0	10.6	78.6	Award
Southwest Decision Resources	182	60.7	5.5	66.2	Do not Award
H2O Partners, Inc.	185	61.7	11.9	73.6	Do not Award
Forest Stewards Guild	214	71.3	13.2	84.5	Award
Plexos Group, L.L.C.	180	60.0	9	69.0	Do not Award
The Nature Conservancy	NA	NA	NA	NA	Unresponsive

Determination Narrative:

The New Mexico Forestry Division (NMFD) sought contractors for a range of critical services, including planning and facilitation services for: the Forest and Watershed Health Coordinating Group (FWHCG) meeting facilitation (including subgroups), Forest Action Plan (FAP) update(s), Rare Plant Technical Committee meetings, Rare Plant Conservation Strategy updates, Forest and Watershed Restoration Act (FAWRA) Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Buffers planning and public meetings, Landscape Stewardship Planning community meetings, Industry Roundtables, Shared Stewardship meetings with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and other partnership and public engagement events.

The review committee rigorously evaluated all applicants based on their demonstrated ability to provide these services, as evidenced by their work product highlights, application narratives, and

reference testimonials. While all applicants displayed strong skills in facilitation and logistical planning, the committee prioritized local knowledge, specialization in facilitating potentially contentious meetings, and alignment with budget requirements.

Ultimately, five out of twelve applicants were selected for awards. This number is anticipated to adequately cover statewide needs at any given time and ensures a broad range of natural resource expertise aligning with the ten strategies of the FAP. Budget scoring details are provided in the attached budget memo.

Applicants Selected for Award:

- **Forest Stewards Guild:** Demonstrated strong knowledge of the FAP and New Mexico's unique challenges. Their expertise and work products were highly relevant to the Division's envisioned tasks. Located in-state, they achieved the best budget score and the highest overall application score. However, it was noted their expertise leans heavily towards fire and less towards botany or general conservation.
 - **Spatial Informatics Group - Natural Assets Laboratory (SIG-NAL):** Showed clear expertise in New Mexico and strong knowledge of the NMFAP. They offered diverse and robust work products and specialties not widely covered by other applicants, such as urban forestry, web-based tool development, and advanced mapping and technical writing capabilities.
 - **Hardigg Consulting, LLC:** Presented extensive facilitation experience, with testimonials describing her as the "best facilitator." Her application clearly demonstrated her approach and expertise in facilitating contentious meetings. While her work products were incredibly strong, her specific role in compiling and designing them was not always apparent.
 - **Institute for Applied Ecology:** Strongly demonstrated expertise in partnership building and strategic plan development. They were the only applicant with robust skillsets relevant to botany and reforestation. While more limited in areas like general forestry and fire, these subject matters are well-covered by other selected contractors.
 - **Karen DiBari Consulting, LLC:** Another highly effective facilitator with proven expertise in achieving consensus within large groups, even in contentious environments. They were the only applicant to describe specific expertise in facilitating FAP development, though their role in its compilation or design was unclear. Despite limited direct experience in New Mexico or with the FAP, they provided very strong references and showcased significant expertise working with the Forest Service.
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Applicants Not Selected for Award

- **True Wind Collaborative:** Had limited experience in New Mexico, and their local partner had not been engaged with the Forest and Watershed Health Coordinating Group or other NMFD collaboratives. While they presented strong work products and clear expertise in facilitation, including the notably contentious NM Forest Plan Amendment, the panel decided they did not fill a critical need due to their limited New Mexico experience, NMFAP knowledge, and some less relevant or actionable work examples.
 - **H2O Partners:** Specializes in hazard mitigation and disaster recovery, with less focus on forestry and no direct expertise in New Mexico, although their subcontracted subject matter experts (SMEs) have good New Mexico and FAP experience. They provided very limited diversity of work products, as they were all presentations. While they mentioned creating hazard mitigation plans, none were provided, leaving the quality of their technical writing and strategic planning unsubstantiated.
 - **Southwest Decision Resources:** Unable to provide continuing education credits. Their work product highlights were among the least advanced, and they demonstrated no direct knowledge of the FAP, with limited description of outcomes affiliated with their listed experience.
 - **Plexos Group, LLC.:** Showed minimal knowledge of the FAP and lacked a strong background in many natural resource areas of interest, such as conservation, botany, or climate adaptation. Some of their work products were less relevant, focusing on agricultural and housing recovery. Plexos' primary expertise lies in disaster recovery, a workload the Division does not anticipate requiring significant external expertise for.
 - **Keystone Policy Center:** Their application provided limited detail on staff's natural resource expertise and knowledge of New Mexico and the FAP. While they submitted strong work products, their focus on wildlife and outdoor recreation was less aligned with the forest and watershed restoration work central to this RFP.
 - **Ruby Mountain Consulting, LLC:** Demonstrated limited expertise in New Mexico or in natural resource topics beyond outdoor recreation related to the FAP. Their application narrative was difficult to follow, and there was no description of expertise with facilitating contentious groups or significant knowledge of the FAP.
 - **Trees, Water, People:** Exhibited a very strong tribal engagement component, but their application primarily focused on a single event they had facilitated and had only limited descriptions of staff experience. Provided references did not submit input, and their inability to provide continuing education credits resulted in the lowest score among all applicants.
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In conclusion, the review panel is confident that the selected applicants collectively represent the best candidates to fulfill the diverse needs of the Forestry Division and provide the full variety of anticipated planning and facilitation services.

Attachment 1: Budget Scoring Memo

This memo outlines the budget scoring methodology utilized for the Facilitation Services RFP. We encountered several inconsistencies in how budgets were provided by offerors, which made direct application of the RFP's prescribed base calculation challenging as offers were not directly comparable. Due to these encountered inconsistencies, the following budget scoring methodology was utilized, including alternative methods specifically for the **Travel** and **Supplies & Materials** categories. We believe this approach ensures a fair evaluation despite the initial formatting variations.

RFP Budget Guidance: The original RFP guidance states: "Budget: Points will be awarded based on the following formula: Lowest responsive Offeror's cost (all items identified in Section II.D are equally weighted) divided by each Offeror's costs. This is multiplied by available points."

Utilized Scoring Adjustments & Justification

Personnel

- **Scoring:** Points for Personnel were awarded directly according to the RFP formula, based on the average rates across positions for non-travel time.

Supplies & Materials

- **Issue:** Supply and materials proposals were inconsistent, making direct application of the RFP formula challenging.
- **Utilized Rubric:** The following rubric was used to assign a raw score, which was then converted to points per the RFP formula:

Proposal Type	Score	Rationale
No cost (built into staff time)	1	Fully cost-contained; reflects high efficiency and alignment with RFP intent.
At cost	2	Very reasonable; transparent and fair.
At cost + percentage (up to 24.95%)	3	Acceptable, but higher cost to agency
At cost + flat \$350 tech fee	4	Potentially excessive unless justified by significant tech need.
Rates per meeting (non-compliant with RFP instruction)	5	Not compliant; makes budget comparisons difficult.

Travel

- **Issue:** While all proposals complied with mileage and per-diem regulations, some included out-of-state travel requirements, which impacted overall cost and applicability.
- **Utilized Rubric:** The following rubric was used to assign a raw score, which was then converted to points per the RFP formula

Score	Criteria
1	No out of state travel required
2	Out-of-state travel for some staff,
3	Travel required for all staff