

Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

For a real property change finding and CAMA update.

Announcement

The Western Connecticut Council of Governments (“WestCOG”) has initiated a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process to identify and procure a qualified vendor to use available data, including aerial orthoimagery and LIDAR produced under contract with the State of Connecticut, to identify discrepancies between this remotely-sensed information and municipal property cards, flagging where structures and improvements significantly differ from property card information (values, tables, and sketches), and updating this information with new estimates.

About WestCOG

Founded in 2014, the Western Connecticut Council of Governments is one of nine regional Councils of Governments established pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §4-124i et seq. WestCOG serves the Western Connecticut Planning Region, the second most populous and fastest growing region in Connecticut, with an estimated population of 620,000.

WestCOG is governed the Chief Elected Officials (Mayors and First Selectmen) of its members, comprising three principal cities (Stamford, Norwalk, and Danbury) and fifteen surrounding towns (Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield, Sherman, Weston, Westport, and Wilton).

Connecticut’s Councils of Governments (COGs), which are recognized as county equivalents, provide a regional framework for cooperation among local governments and between the latter and state and federal agencies. COGs may “accept or participate in any grant, donation or program available to any political subdivision of the state and may also accept or participate in any grant, donation or program made available to counties by any other governmental or private entity.” COGs may furthermore exercise any power that any political subdivision of the state (e.g., municipalities and school districts) do¹. Which authorities COGs exercise, and the extent to which they do so, is the decision of their governing boards.

WestCOG is associated with the WestCOG Foundation, Inc. a 501(c)3 charitable organization, whose mission is to promote environmental, social, and economic vitality and sustainability through regional cooperation and collaboration.

¹ These include but are not limited to: “(1) Engineering; (2) inspectional and planning; (3) economic development; (4) public safety; (5) emergency management; (6) animal control; (7) land use management; (8) tourism promotion; (9) social; (10) health; (11) education; (12) data management; (13) regional sewerage; (14) housing; (15) computerized mapping; (16) household hazardous waste collection; (17) recycling; (18) public facility siting; (19) coordination of master planning; (20) vocational training and development; (21) solid waste disposal; (22) fire protection; (23) regional resource protection; (24) regional impact studies; and (25) transportation.” (CGS §8-31b(b))

More information on WestCOG is available at <http://westcog.org>; more on the Foundation at <http://westcog.foundation>.

Project background

In Connecticut, which has not had county government since 1960, public services are provided at the state or local level. In this regard, Connecticut is similar to other New England states, with its strong traditions of small government and home rule. Connecticut, however, differs from its peers – and the nation as a whole – in the extent to which it is dependent on property taxes.

Not only is the property tax the largest tax in Connecticut by collections but:

- Connecticut has the second highest average property tax bills, at \$7,671², in comparison with all 50 states, and
- Municipalities in Connecticut are more reliant on the property tax for their own revenue than in any other state. (88% of local revenues come from the property tax in Connecticut; this compares with a 50-state median of 46%³.)

As the size and significance of a revenue source grows, so, too, does the importance in ensuring that it is accurately levied: a variance of 10% has less impact on households and businesses when that works out to \$93 (as in the case of West Virginia) or \$176 (South Carolina) than when it is \$767 (Connecticut).

Real property taxes in Connecticut are assessed as a percentage of the appraised, or fair market, value of that property. These assessments are based on the data captured in property cards that are maintained by local assessment departments in each of Connecticut's 169 cities and towns and stored in electronic computer-aided mass appraisal systems (CAMAs).

While Connecticut has a strong framework to ensure that assessments stay relatively equitable, with state-mandated physical revaluations and statistical revaluations alternating every five years, these assessments are only as good as the data in the property cards. Where these records do not fully and accurately capture what is on the ground, property tax bills may not be full nor accurate, and the property tax burden may not be fairly shared. Discrepancies between property cards and reality may relate to:

- Property lines
- Land use (especially environmental and legal constraints such as easements)
- Presence and exterior dimensions of improvements (structures and surfaces)
- Interior configuration, habitability, and amenities

Discrepancies in the presence and dimensions of improvements may have various causes:

- Omissions and inaccuracies in identification/discovery
- Errors in recording/listing
- Unpermitted improvements

² [Property Taxes By State | Bankrate](#)

³ [State and Local Government Finance Data | Tax Policy Center](#)

- Data loss

GIS provides an opportunity to identify and rectify discrepancies pertaining to the presence and dimensions of improvements efficiently at scale. Central to such an undertaking is the availability of remotely-sensed data about real property. These include aerial photographs and light detection and ranging (LIDAR), which produces a three-dimensional model of land cover. In early 2023, contractors for the State of Connecticut completed a statewide flyover. Outputs of this exercise include:

- *High-resolution orthoimagery (3-inch resolution, 4-band, leaf off)*
- *LIDAR point cloud*
- *Planimetric features (building footprints, with buy-up options)*

WestCOG intends to engage a qualified consultant to compare these data with property cards as pertains to the presence and dimensions of improvements in the region and, where discrepancies are found to have a material impact on assessments, to flag these discrepancies and produce corrections, including values, tables, and sketches, that may be easily reviewed and, as desired, applied in part or in whole to the respective property cards.

Scope of work

Unless otherwise suggested by the proposer and accepted by WestCOG, the project shall:

- *Determine the property card attributes that pertain to the presence and dimensions, and as applicable, any other exterior characteristics, of structures and surfaces (“improvements”) that have a material impact on assessments and may be accurately determined using the flyover data provided by the State of Connecticut and, as needed, any other information sources.*
- *Use a valid, statistically reliable, and replicable methodology to identify improvements, determine their dimensions, and, as applicable, any other exterior characteristics of them, compare these with CAMA systems to identify discrepancies, and flag property cards where discrepancies exceed one or more significance levels or critical values and would be expected to have an impact on assessed values, providing information about the attributes that are discrepant, current values and best estimates, relevant aerial imagery, and links to the geocoordinates of the property at online viewers such as Google Earth or Bing Maps.*
- *Produce estimated corrected values for each discrepant attribute, with the option to import or merge in selected or, as desired, all attributes into the respective property card and CAMA system.*
- *Produce a report with information on project goals, scope, timeline, participants, inputs/methodology/outputs, findings, and interpretation, and recommended next steps. The report should enable the projects outputs to be applied, even if all personnel turn over and their successors have no familiarity with the project*
- *Produce an export for forwarding to a mass revaluation firm*

The project shall also address stakeholder and public engagement:

- *Include meetings with a project advisory committee of selected COG and municipal staff to inform the project and broader coordination with all assessors in the region*

Examples of questions the project may address:

Remotely-sensed data	Property card	
	Attributes	Sketch
Building footprint	First floor area	✓
Roof heights	Effective number of stories Second floor area	✓
Outbuilding/shed footprint	Outbuilding/shed presence and area	✓
Deck footprint	Deck presence and area	✓
Swimming pool footprint	Pool presence and area	
Outdoor A/C unit	Air conditioning	
Asphalt footprint	Parking area	

Proposers may suggest other data, methods, or tasks to substitute for or supplement the foregoing.

Expertise sought

The following knowledge, skills, and experience will be needed to complete the project:

- *Track record of comparable projects that are completed and meet expected outcomes, with few to no surprises and a positive return on investment*
- *Expertise in*
 - *Geographic information systems (GIS)*
 - *Remote sensing data*
 - *Raster (aerial imagery, LIDAR) and vector (parcel maps, planimetric) datasets*
 - *Batch data processing*
 - *Artificial intelligence and machine learning*
 - *Applied spatial analysis and spatial statistics*
- *Expertise in*
 - *Property assessment, including discovery, listing, and assessment*
 - *Property cards*
 - *CAMA systems including qualitative, quantitative, and sketch data*
- *Experience working with regional and local officials, including*
 - *Chief Elected Officials*
 - *Assessors*
 - *Tax collectors*
 - *Municipal planners*
- *Experience working with property owners, both residential and business*
- *Ability to deliver on time and within budget*
- *Ability to research, analyze, and provide solutions to complex questions*
- *Ability to communicate specialized technical, financial, and legal matters to and make them understandable by elected officials, civil servants, and to the public*
- *Ability to facilitate groups and lead them to actionable consensus*

- *Understanding of local government and property assessment/tax systems with experience in Connecticut and/or New England states preferable*
- *Expertise in communication during all project development phases*
- *Project management experience*

Application process

Format

Each application should include the following components:

1. *Cover page with project title; proposing firm; and name, telephone number, and e-mail address for the project manager.*
2. *Stage-based project approach. Each stage in the project should be briefly described, including timing/duration, output, and associated fee.*
3. *Work history. Similar or relevant work conducted by proposer in the past, with project outcomes and client references. Name, title, employer, relationship to the project, telephone number, and e-mail address should be given for each reference.*
4. *Qualifications. Task assignments and resumes for key staff on project. The total hours each staff person is expected to spend on each task should be documented.*
5. *Corporate background. Include the history, location(s), length of time in existence, and structure of the firm; and demonstration of the capacity of the firm to carry out the project.*
6. *If a joint venture is proposed, provide the number of projects that have been conducted under previous joint ventures with the designated firm and the success of those joint ventures as measured by on time, and under budget performance and customer satisfaction with the performance of the work.*
7. *Signature of a representative of the firm having legal authority to contract for the firm.*
8. *A completed Organizational Conflict of Interest Statement that either warrants that there are no relevant facts or circumstances that could give rise to organizational conflicts of interest or, as applicable, gives a full, written disclosure of all such conflicts of interests. Political activity on housing, land use, or related policy in Connecticut; legal action against local governments in Connecticut; and efforts to influence local regulatory processes in Western Connecticut will be considered a conflict of interest.*

Material submitted in response to this RFQ and received by WestCOG may be subject to the provisions of the Connecticut Freedom of Information law (CGS §1-200 et seq.).

Submissions should be provided in PDF format, as a single file. The file may be attached to the e-mail, or, in case of a large submission (larger than 10 megabytes), linked in the e-mail. Recipients should enable delivery and read receipts in their e-mail client. No other confirmation will be given.

Review and contracting

WestCOG will evaluate proposals received after close of the application period. At this point, WestCOG may invite additional information from selected proposers, including but not necessarily limited to, samples of other work or an in-person interview.

Should WestCOG determine to proceed with a proposal, WestCOG will begin contract negotiations, including on scope and fee, with the respective proposer. Should WestCOG and the selected proposer be unable to come to an agreement, WestCOG may terminate negotiations with that firm and revisit other proposals submitted.

It is expected that proposers will be notified of decisions on their submission **by October 31st, 2023**. WestCOG may award the project in part or in full to one or more proposers, and to cancel or to reissue this RFQ. Any award will not be final until a contract has been negotiated and executed.

Communications

Location of posting

This RFQ may be found online at <https://westcog.org/about/RFQs-grant-opportunities/> until September 26, 2023. It is the responsibility of interested parties to retrieve and store a copy of the RFQ beyond this date.

Pre-proposal meeting

A pre-proposal meeting will be held, **Wednesday August 30th, 2023 at 2:30 PM ET**. The meeting will be held by videoconference. Parties interested in attending should e-mail ccarpenter@westcog.org for an invitation link. Attendance, by phone or in person, is optional and is not required in order to respond to this RFQ.

Inquiries

Proposers may submit questions on this RFQ by August 30th, 2023 at 11:45 PM ET. Questions should be directed to Mr. Francis R. Pickering, Executive Director at ccarpenter@westcog.org. Answers will be posted online where WestCOG posted this RFQ on a rolling basis until the close of business on Friday, September 8th, 2023.

No questions will be accepted by other forms of communication.

Information about WestCOG can be found at <http://westcog.org>.

Addenda and supplements

Should WestCOG amend or adjust this RFQ, such changes will be posted online where WestCOG posted this RFQ. It is the responsibility of proposers to check for changes to the RFQ.

Conditions

Legal requirements

Contracts awarded as a result of this RFQ are subject to all applicable federal and state laws, including those concerning civil rights, nondiscrimination, and equal opportunity. Any responses to this RFQ, as well as any work resulting from it, are subject to freedom of information.

Insurance requirements

Proposers must maintain insurance coverage as required by federal and state law.

Consortia, joint ventures, and teams

Proposals from consortia, joint ventures, and teams (“groups”) will be accepted. In such cases, a lead firm must be identified for contracting purposes. A work history and statement of qualifications (as described under Expertise sought, #4 and #5) must be provided for each member of the group.

In designating a lead firm, groups should consider the following:

- 1. The lead firm should have sufficient experience and expertise to perform or supervise all facets of the project and must have sufficient resources to carry out the contractual responsibilities of the group.*
- 2. The lead firm will be legally responsible to WestCOG for the performance of, and must perform at least 51% of, the total work awarded under any contract issued as a result of this RFQ.*
- 3. Firms that are subsidiaries may not rely on the experience, expertise, or resources of its parent firm to meet these requirements.*

Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE)

DBE firms are encouraged to respond to this RFQ.

If a DBE firm is proposed, the proposal must clearly identify the DBE firm, the role the DBE will play in the project, and the tasks assigned to the DBE. Proof of Connecticut DBE certification must be submitted with the proposal. Responses that fail to give proof of DBE certification and description of project involvement will not be identified as including DBE participation.

Nonreimbursement of proposal costs

Costs associated with responses to this RFQ, including proposal development and participation in a selection process, are the sole responsibility of the respondent firms. WestCOG will not reimburse firms for such costs, nor will any selected firms be permitted to negotiate such costs as part of a contract with WestCOG.

Conflicts of interest

All relationships that may pose a conflict of interest shall be disclosed as part of the response to this RFQ.