



# Request for Proposal Market Readiness Assessment

## AWE OUTDOOR WATER SAVINGS RESEARCH INITIATIVE

### Phase 3

### Evaluating & Optimizing Large-Scale Landscape Irrigation Management and Transformation Strategies

**RFP Due: December 19, 2023 by 5:00 PM Central Time**

## Project Overview

### Background

The Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE) is a stakeholder based non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the efficient and sustainable use of water. On this project, AWE seeks to fill a research gap related to quantifying the water savings of “large” landscape transformation and irrigation optimization programs (i.e., not single-family residential landscapes) and evaluating program structures and features. The property/customer types may include commercial, industrial, institutional, multi-family common space, HOA common space, and municipal/government properties. This research will focus on both landscape transformations, which are often referred to as “cash for grass” or xeriscaping programs, and irrigation optimization strategies such as irrigation audits, landscape water budgets, technology or equipment incentives/rebates, report services, repair/upgrade services, and more.

This research is especially timely and important because many utilities are considering or actively investing in large-scale landscape transformation programs. States have allocated additional funding for turf replacement programs, 30 cities in the Colorado River Basin signed an MOU to reduce non-essential turfgrass by 30%, and some have banned irrigation of non-essential turf.

The Alliance for Water Efficiency is seeking proposals from well qualified firms or individuals (Consultant) to conduct a Market Readiness Assessment (Assessment) as a component of this study.

The Assessment will evaluate:

- 1) the willingness and ability of water provider customers to implement landscape transformations, which should include both decision makers within the customer's organizations and the professionals responsible for implementation and management of the new landscapes,
- 2) what factors are important to them in making these decisions, and
- 3) what factors facilitate or delay the market's transformation to water-efficient landscapes across market stakeholders.

Information is expected to be gathered from three groups: customers who have participated in utility programs, customers who demonstrated interest but did not follow through, and customers who have not yet demonstrated interest.

Consultants may also consider outreach to associations or organizations representing common customer types and/or the businesses involved in implementation.

Further, water-saving projects at these types of properties often involve other professionals who provide services related to the design, installation and maintenance of the irrigation system and landscapes. Some may work "in-house" for the customer, and others are hired contractors and consultants. This project seeks to understand the perspectives of these professionals in achieving successful water-saving projects.

## Research Questions

The proposal should set out how the research team will seek to answer the following questions:

1. Understanding customers:
  - a. Who are the stakeholders and professionals involved in these types of landscapes and what are the decision-making structures? How does the answer to this question vary by property type?
  - b. To what extent do customers and related stakeholders monitor their water use? Do they understand their water bills and costs; are costs a concern? How, if at all, do customers and related stakeholders perceive their water usage and efficiency?
  - c. What aspects of landscapes are important to customers and related stakeholders? How do they perceive "water-wise" landscapes vs. traditional turf-centric landscapes?
2. Landscape and irrigation choices:
  - a. What are the range of actions customers are willing to take on the spectrum of landscape-related water-saving actions?
  - b. What are the reasons and rationale for water management decisions, irrigation operations and maintenance, and landscape changes? How does this vary by property or customer type?
  - c. What motivates customers to change their landscape and irrigation practices to reduce the overall water requirement and usage? What practices help to build a relationship with customers?

3. Identify barriers, challenges, and opportunities:
  - a. What are key barriers and how can these be overcome via program design, incentives, regulation, market actor engagement, workforce development, supply chain, contractors, etc.
  - b. What are the best strategies and partners to motivate customers to advance water-saving projects?
  - c. What lessons can be leveraged to accelerate water-saving projects and practices?
4. Financing sources and approaches:
  - a. How are projects funded/financed?
  - b. What other funding/financing options exist that may be underutilized?
  - c. What barriers do customers perceive about current utility programs' approaches to financial incentives?

## Project Budget

AWE has allocated up to \$50,000 for the Assessment.

## Project Timeline

The Assessment is expected to launch in February 2024 and to be completed over a 6-month schedule. Starting from the date when a contract is signed, the Consultant will be expected to meet the following schedule: Month 1: Project Launch, Months 2-4: Outreach, surveys, and interviews, Month 5: Draft report, Month 6: Final report.

## General Information

The Consultant will work with the AWE project team as well as the project advisory committee to inform the project approach and review progress throughout the project. The Consultant will deliver high-quality services, conduct professional meetings, and work with utility participants and all stakeholders respectfully. AWE is seeking a consultant with a proactive plan to engage with a diverse range of utility customers and market participants, such as plant farmers and nurseries, landscape designers, landscape contractors and laborers, and landscape operations and maintenance staff. Additionally, AWE encourages consultant to highlight its competency with Spanish or other languages that may be encountered during communications.

## Scope of Work

AWE is seeking proposals from qualified consultants to conduct a market readiness assessment.

The Consultant's proposal should include a description of their proposed approach to answering the research questions. It is anticipated that the basic structure of the approach will at a minimum include the following core elements. The Consultant should fully describe their approach to each of these, and describe any proposed differences, additions, etc.

- Conduct a literature review documenting any existing knowledge on the topic of market readiness in this context.
- Gather information from participating utilities from any previous site visits, discussions, outreach initiatives, or other data sources related to customers' receptivity to the program.

- Conduct a standardized survey.
- Interview stakeholders to collect additional qualitative data.
- Compile all work into a final report.

## Utility Partners for Market Readiness Assessment

There are several water providers and other stakeholders across multiple Western states participating in the larger research effort. Some have volunteered to assist with the Market Readiness Assessment and provide information, data, and assistance with outreach to their customers and/or other local stakeholders.

Below are some of the expected service areas to include in the assessment, and may include others:

- County of Santa Barbara, CA
- Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, CA
- San Diego County Water Authority, CA
- Denver Water, CO
- Northern Water, CO
- City of Bend, OR
- Central Utah Conservancy District, UT

Most utility partners have well established landscape transformation programs. Proposals should describe the Consultant's approach to reaching customers and stakeholders across multiple different communities. While each community is different, proposals should explain what steps will be taken to ensure uniform methods and approaches are used to the maximum extent possible. AWE and Consultant will finalize communities and approach through contracting and finalization of the project's scope of work.

## Deliverables

The key deliverables for this Assessment are a Final Report, including:

- Research methods and findings.
- Copy of data and sufficient details to permit replication, including all materials, raw data from all responses, spreadsheets, survey and interview instruments, and related data summaries and analyses.
- Recommendations of key factors influencing customer interest in landscape-related water-saving projects and participation in related utility programs.
- Slide deck of results & Presentation of results to the Project Advisory Committee

## Proposal

### Requirements

The following elements should be included in the body of the proposal, which is limited to 10 pages. A basic title page does not contribute to the 10-page limit. The document must be at least 11 pt. font with one-inch margins.

- Cover Letter/Executive summary.
- Description of project team, qualifications, and expected roles/contributions to the project.

- Scope of work including research methods and study site locations, including information on target sample size and method to ensure sample is representative.
- Schedule
- Proposed budget including clear delineation of the team members, anticipated hours assigned to each project task, and hourly rates for each team member.

The following elements should be included with the proposal, but are not subject to the 10-page limit:

- Description of up to three similar projects completed by research team members (one page per project max).
- Statement of qualifications
- Resumes
- References, including names, contact, information, and project detail.

## Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will scored and ranked by the Project Advisory Committee in each of the following aspects:

1	5%	Overall impression of the quality of the proposal
2	10%	Understanding of the project and the research objectives
3	35%	Complete research approach describing all aspects of the work in a task-by-task manner
4	10%	Plan for working with study partners
5	25%	Description of final deliverables
6	5%	Schedule and budget
7	10%	Experience and qualifications of the research team

AWE reserves the right contact proposers directly to discuss aspects of their proposal if additional information is needed. AWE's intention is to award this contract to a single entity, but AWE reserves the right to reject all proposals or to award the project to multiple teams as appropriate.

## Proposal Schedule and Deadline

- RFP Issuance: November 13, 2023
- Opportunity to Submit Questions & Clarifications: November 28, 2023
- Responses to Questions Posted: December 1, 2023
- Proposal Due Date: December 19, 2023
- Anticipated Notice of Award: January 10, 2024
- Contract Negotiation and Execution: January 31, 2024
- Project Launch: February 1, 2024

Proposal packages should be submitted as a single PDF file via email to Jeffrey Hughes of the Alliance for Water Efficiency: [jeffrey@a4we.org](mailto:jeffrey@a4we.org). You will receive an email back confirming receipt.

## RFP Contact

If you have questions about this Request for Proposal, please contact Amanda Christophe at [Amanda@a4we.org](mailto:Amanda@a4we.org).