



**Request for Proposals:**

**Development and Operation of Web-  
Based Environmental Compliance  
Assistance Centers**

**NCMS  
3025 Boardwalk Drive  
Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48108-3266**

Contact:

Bill Chenevert  
NCMS  
Phone: (734) 995-7989  
Fax: (734) 995-1150  
[bchenevert@ncms.org](mailto:bchenevert@ncms.org)

The National Center for Manufacturing Sciences (NCMS), with support provided through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA), is seeking proposals to assist in developing and operating a series of sector and topic specific web-based environmentally-related resources called Compliance Assistance Centers (CACs).

assistance related to specific industry sectors or environmentally-related topics. The websites are part of a larger group of websites, collectively forming the Compliance Assistance Centers Program (“Centers Program”), funded under the auspices of EPA-OECA. In most cases, each Center is focused on environmental compliance issues of concern to its particular industry sector, and is operated by a not-for-profit grant recipient working in partnership with one or several of the major trade or professional organizations representing the sector.

**Contents**

**BACKGROUND**..... 2  
**TASKS INCLUDED IN THIS REQUEST** ..... 3  
**QUALIFICATIONS** ..... 4  
**EVALUATION CRITERIA** ..... 5  
**BUDGET AND SCHEDULE**..... 6  
**SUBMITTING PROPOSALS** ..... 6

In addition to ten (10) CACS, NCMS has created, and is responsible for the operation of the Compliance Assistance Platform (“Platform”), which provides content of general interest for all the CACs under the Centers Program, and assists in the creation of new CACs.

**Background**

NCMS is a not-for-profit (501-c3) membership organization primarily concerned with organizing and carrying out collaborative research projects supporting manufacturing and sustainability among its member companies. Its members are primarily companies, academia or other organizations with a significant North American manufacturing presence.

Content developed by the Platform includes a series of State Resource Locators (SLRs), currently numbering twenty (20). The SLRs contain information on each of the fifty U.S. state’s regulations on specific environmental topics. Additionally, NCMS developed and manages three (3) environmental-topic-specific Portals.

NCMS currently operates several websites offering environmental compliance

NCMS also manages a general entry website [National Compliance Assistance Centers](#) to all available resources under the Centers Program. Finally, NCMS assimilates

website usage data (e.g., visits, page views) of the CACs covered under the EPA-OECA Centers Program and submits annually to EPA-OECA.

All CACs, SRLs, and Portals are accessible via:

<http://www.complianceassistancecenters.net>.

The 10 CACs currently managed by NCMS are:

Border Compliance  
Port Compliance  
Import/Export  
Construction (CICA)  
Food Processing (FPEAC)  
Healthcare (HERC)  
Surface Finishing (STERC)  
Paints and Coatings (PCRC)  
Transportation (TERC)  
Veterinary (VetCA)

The 3 NCMS managed Portals are:

Beneficial Use  
Combustion  
Hazardous Waste

The 20 SLRs are accessible via:

<http://www.envcap.org/statetools/>

Unless otherwise noted, “Centers” in the following will refer to the NCMS-operated Centers Program resources including the Compliance Assistance Centers (CACs), State Resource Locators (SLRs), Portals, Platform, and

<http://www.complianceassistancecenters.net>

NCMS operates its Centers under an EPA Cooperative Agreement. Funding is provided through EPA grants and industry/trade organizations partnerships.

## Tasks Included in this Request

### ***Centers and Program Support***

Under a NCMS Collaborative Agreement (see addendum for details), participate as a sub-contractor to assist NCMS operate and maintain existing NCMS Centers for up to a five-year period depending on funding availability. Must be capable adding content, features, tools, and online training aids in response to regulatory developments and/or calls from industry/trade organization partnerships as they arise. Must be knowledgeable of EPA environmental compliance regulations and potential impact on companies/small businesses impacted by those regulations. Must be able to maintain and update Centers utilizing the latest website technologies including meeting ongoing cybersecurity requirements.

Areas of responsibility include:

- Hosting the site, or arranging for third party hosting
- Installing and maintaining all software
- Creating and maintaining all database-driven pages (currently implemented in Cold Fusion)
- Creating and/or assembling all graphic design elements and page templates
- Generating regulatory content (covering federal and all state environmental and related regulations)
- Assisting current and newly-forming Centers (including non-NCMS Centers if requested) and other environmental assistance websites in using available Platform features and content on their sites
- Promoting public awareness of the websites (in partnership with the relevant trade organizations) and participation in the annual user survey

- Assisting NCMS creating new partnerships with industry/trade organizations to assure sustainability of NCMS Centers

At various stages in the development of the Centers Program, NCMS has provided or facilitated hosting services for non-NCMS Centers. Proposals should include provisions for doing so for one or two additional Centers on an as-needed basis. In general, NCMS is not responsible for maintaining site content on a hosted Center, but provides FTP or equivalent access for the operators of the non-NCMS sites, and assists with troubleshooting.

### ***User Support***

Sub-Contractor must be able to:

- Respond to users' requests for help with site functionality and password issues.
- Respond to content corrections or improvements suggested by users. Implement changes in site content where appropriate.
- Reply to users' relevant compliance questions, supplying information when possible, or indicating alternative information sources.

### ***Experts***

Several of the Centers feature "Ask the Expert" columns, where recognized authorities volunteer to answer questions from users. They are not compensated for their work, but typically find it advantageous for visibility and public service. Responses from the Experts are archived in a searchable database, and become part of the information resources of the Center. Proposers should indicate how they will interact with current Experts, and how they may recruit others.

## **Qualifications**

### ***NCMS Membership***

Companies or organizations do not have to be current members of NCMS to submit proposals. However, they are encouraged to become a member in good standing throughout the term of any contract awarded under this proposal.

### ***Collaboration Agreement***

The NCMS standard Collaboration Agreement ("Agreement") is the result of many years of development, and has formed the basis for over 300 multi-participant projects. While we are willing to make minor adjustments for special circumstances, we are generally bound by general federal or specific funding agency requirements, or by the need to be consistent across our membership, to adhere broadly to the basic provisions of the Agreement. Companies or organizations submitting proposals are expected to have reviewed the Agreement, and to list any significant reservations they may have in their proposals. If prepared to accept the terms of the Agreement substantially as is, please include a statement to that effect in the proposal.

### ***Collaborative work***

Companies or organizations should be able to demonstrate the ability to work on collaborative projects.

NCMS collaborative projects have gained a reputation at many government agencies for delivering unexpected levels of value for dollars expended. This is not a reflection on the capabilities of NCMS staff, but on the collaborative model, and on the qualities of our strong membership base.

Most NCMS projects involve substantial cost-sharing (typically in-kind). For the

work required under this RFP, cost-sharing is not a requirement. But we would expect that the successful bidder to this RFP would display a creative or entrepreneurial spirit that goes well beyond the bare minimum, and that performance of this type in previous collaborative work can be documented.

In addition to experience on collaborative projects, proposers should demonstrate the ability to interact with a variety of trade organizations in widely disparate sectors, and to display some understanding of their responsibilities to their memberships. A positive relationship with the relevant trade organizations for a given sector is an essential ingredient for a successful Center. The organization must feel that the Center is operating in partnership with them, extending their reach, and making their tasks easier, rather than usurping their territory or reaching around them to their membership. Evidence of successful collaborations with trade organizations would be a strong addition to a response to this RFP.

### ***Technical qualifications***

The RFP response must document that the company or organization can operate websites, preferentially multiple websites, that:

- Are database driven
- Are interactive
- Include password protected sections
- Provide RSS feeds for selected resources
- Meet current cybersecurity best practices

The RFP response should include:

- Plans for periodic link maintenance
- Provisions for site security and backup

### ***Content familiarity***

Proposers should demonstrate thorough familiarity with an overall structure of federal environmental regulations, a good

working knowledge of the variations to be expected with state regulations, and basic competence in types of regulations other than environmental that are covered by the centers, including worker safety and health, import-export, hazardous waste transportation, and medical waste issues.

It is not essential that proposers demonstrate detailed knowledge of all the content areas covered by the Centers. However, it would be useful to have sufficient content knowledge in at least some of the Centers' sectors to be able to respond to relatively straightforward questions directly, and to indicate what resources would be available to field questions in sectors lying outside the proposing organization's scope of familiarity.

### ***Flexibility***

Proposers familiar with federal funding cycles will not be surprised to learn that annual funding expected for ongoing operations is occasionally delayed, sometimes for many months. When such situations have arisen in the past, NCMS Centers have always been able to maintain full service to users. Proposals should indicate what level of service would be maintained over a three to six-month period if anticipated funding did not materialize during that time.

### ***Evaluation criteria***

RFP responses will be screened to ensure that the proposers' organizations satisfy the qualifying conditions, and the required technical and content capabilities have been demonstrated.

RFP responses meeting all qualifying conditions will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Cost

- Ratio between costs for productive work and costs for administration and overhead
- Demonstrated understanding of the work required
- Demonstrated success in carrying out similar or relevant work

Any suggestions for additional features to be developed for the Centers would be appropriate, and would strengthen the proposal.

### **Budget and schedule**

RFP responders should present plans covering five years starting in third quarter, 2017, on the understanding that NCMS receives incremental funding from year to year, and that there is no guarantee that funding will be available for any given year.

Historically, funding available for the Centers Program has been relatively steady, but funding available for any individual Center may be expected to decline gradually as more Centers are added to the program.

Proposers may want to distinguish between base costs required to keep the Centers operating, and contingent costs for Center development which may be expended if funds are available.

### **Submitting proposals**

Please submit proposals by email to Bill Chenevert at NCMS, [bcchenevertb@ncms.org](mailto:bcchenevertb@ncms.org) no later than 5:00 PM Eastern time, **August 08, 2017**].

Hard copy will not be necessary.

Material relevant to the proposal that cannot be transmitted in electronic form may be sent to:

NCMS  
3025 Boardwalk Drive  
Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
Attn: Bill Chenevert  
(734) 995-7989

Please ensure that the material arrives before the deadline above.