



**Request for Proposals (NR233A750004G069-TAPCONSULT) for the
Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska's
Center of Excellence for Regenerative Native Agriculture**



Request for Proposals (RFP) Number: NR233A750004G069-TAPCONSULT

1. General Information

1.1. Invitation

The Iowa Tribe of Kansas & Nebraska's Center of Excellence for Regenerative Native Agriculture (CERNA) is seeking proposals from qualified organizations and individuals to provide curriculum development, training instruction, and technical assistance for the CERNA project.

CERNA is funded by a USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities grant to train Native producers in regenerative agriculture practices and facilitate implementation on working lands over a 54-month project period.

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), CERNA seeks expertise to:

- Develop tailored training curriculum and materials,
- Provide in-person instruction and support for Native producer cohorts,
- Offer technical assistance to producers to transition to regenerative systems, and
- Help quantify climate impacts and access markets for climate-smart commodities.

The full Statement of Work outlining required qualifications, activities, timelines, and evaluation criteria is enclosed.

We welcome creative and impactful proposals from experienced entities able to advance CERNA's mission of sharing knowledge and expanding regenerative Native agriculture.

Submitters will be required to state their understanding of the project and describe past work that exemplifies their ability to complete the project as requested.

One winning Submitter (Contractor) and one Alternate Submitter (Alternate) will be selected from the submitted RFPs to proceed to contract negotiations with Owner (CERNA).

1.2 Background

CERNA is a project funded by the Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities grant program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The project is being implemented by the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, a federally recognized Tribal nation in the northeast corner of Kansas and southeast corner of Nebraska. The program is designed to provide regenerative Native agriculture education and technical assistance support for all farmers

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located within and surrounding the boundaries of all Tribal nations located throughout the United States.

1.3 Project Description

CERNA is seeking expertise in curriculum development, instruction, technical assistance, ecosystem services measurement, and market access to actualize CERNA's mission of catalyzing regenerative Native agriculture across Indian Country.

1.5 Scope of Services

1.5.1 General

The Contractor's exact scope of services will be detailed in contract documents signed by both parties (CERNA and Contractor) following completion of contract negotiations.

1.5.1 Additional Contractor Obligations and Authorities

The Contractor will complete all tasks in consultation with CERNA designated staff. In addition, Contractor will provide to CERNA project records, accounting, and other budgetary documentation and information directly related to the project, in any form, it may request at any time.

1.6 Cost Savings

To the extent the actual cost of the project may be reduced throughout the course of the project, the reduction in cost shall revert entirely to the benefit of CERNA. There shall be no shared savings compensation to the Contractor.

1.7 Schedule [keep and adapt to project schedule]

The project schedule shall be 52 months between March 2024 and July 2028, the end of the grant performance period. During the period of performance for delivery of the scope of work outlined in this RFP, the Contractor will provide services which support these key milestones over the project period:

1. Year 1 (2024/2025)

- a. Curriculum Development,
- b. First producer cohort training session,
- c. Initiation of technical assistance to producer participants,
- d. Support quarterly and annual reports.

2. Year 2 (2025/2026)

- a. Continued curriculum refinement,
- b. Lead cohort training session for cohort one and cohort two,
- c. Ongoing technical assistance,
- d. Continue supporting quarterly and annual reports.

3. Year 3 (2026/2027)

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- a. Finalization of curriculum,
- b. Second training session for cohort two,
- c. Completion of climate-smart transition plans for all producer participants,
- d. Ongoing technical assistance,
- e. Support MMRV activities for producer participants,
- f. Support climate-smart commodity marketing,
- g. Continue supporting quarterly and annual reports.

4. Year 4 (2027/2028)

- a. Finalization of producer participant training,
- b. Wrap up technical assistance,
- c. Complete producer participant reviews,
- d. Finalize annual report and final report.

Throughout the 52 months, the selected vendor(s) will collaborate with CERNA leadership and producers to iteratively enhance curriculum, provide impactful instruction, and offer hands-on guidance to catalyze adoption of regenerative practices across operations.

Proposals should include a detailed project schedule demonstrating their ability to achieve prescribed milestones over the project lifetime.

1.8 Contacts

Please direct all RFPs, submittals, and all other correspondence to Britni Beck, CERNA Executive Director, bbeck@iowas.org; and Artees Vannett, CERNA Program Manager, avannett@greysnow.com.

1.9 RFP Timeline

1. Release of RFP: February 16th, 2024
2. Deadline for Questions: March 14th, 2024
3. Proposal Submission Deadline: March 15th, 2024
4. Evaluation Period: 3 – 5 days
5. Contract Award Notification: March 22nd, 2024
6. Contract Negotiations: March 25th, 2024 – March 28th, 2024
7. Executed Contract: March 29th, 2024
8. Full Contract Term: March 29th, 2024 – July 31st, 2028

1.10 Selection Process

CERNA reserves the right to reject any or all responses to this RFP. Selection of candidates will be based on their apparent ability to best meet the overall expectations of CERNA and will be determined solely by CERNA.

CERNA reserves the absolute right to conduct investigations as it deems necessary for the evaluation of any proposal and to establish and check the experience, responsibility, reliability, references, reputation, business ethics, history, qualifications, and financial

ability of the submitter. The purpose of such an investigation is to determine that the submitter has the ability, experience, resources, and reputation necessary to perform the work and to support all warranties in accordance with the contract documents.

1.10.1 Selection Criteria

- 1.10.1.1 Cover letter (10 points)** detailing vendor's interest and qualifications for the project.
- 1.10.1.2 Technical proposal (40 points)** outlining the understanding, approach, methodology, and timeline for delivering the goods/services. Describe the qualifications of key individuals who will be assigned to this project, a description of three project references with project contact names and telephone numbers, and a brief project description. We are looking for a record of innovation, integrity, judgement, performance, and timeliness in the execution of previous contracts.
- 1.10.1.3 Cost proposal (40 points)** with a detailed breakdown of pricing, including any taxes, fees, or additional expenses.
- 1.10.1.4 Indian preference (10 points)** will be granted to submitter upon validation of proof of Indian ownership that is not less than 51% Indian ownership.

1.10.2 Eligibility Criteria

Vendors must meet the following eligibility criteria to be considered for this opportunity:

- 1.10.1.1** Experience in website development, graphic design, marketing and communications strategy, digital media and marketing management, and content creation.
- 1.10.1.2** Preferred experience with regenerative agriculture businesses, Native American or Tribally-owned businesses, as well as knowledge of regenerative agriculture principles and practices.
- 1.10.1.3** Indian preference: Indian preference will apply. Any firm seeking such preference must provide evidence that it is not less than 51% Indian owned and controlled. Please submit along with the proposal proof of Indian ownership.

1.11 Request for Proposal Instructions

- 1.11.1** CERNA's review of qualifications will be based on the qualifications of the submitter.
- 1.11.2** Proposals shall not exceed 15 pages (except the Table of Contents, Cover Letter, section dividers, and appendices) and shall be numbered in

sequential order. Two-sided, single pages will be counted as two pages.

1.11.3 Submittal Requirements

- 1.11.3.1 Submit a single PDF file of your proposal by the submittal date and time aforementioned. Email your submittals to the contact person and email address aforementioned. All other forms of submittal will not be accepted.
- 1.11.3.2 No proposing firm may submit more than one proposal. No proposing firm may be part of more than one submitting team. Multiple submissions under different names will not be accepted.
- 1.11.3.3 Each respondent must comply with the submission requirements as outlined. Submittals that fail to comply with the requirements as specified will be disqualified from consideration. At any stage, CERNA reserves the right to terminate, suspend, or modify this selection process; reject any or all submittals at any time; and waive any informalities, irregularities, or omissions in submittals, as the best interest of CERNA may require.
- 1.11.3.4 Interested vendors should submit their proposals by **March 15th, 2024** to aforementioned contact personnel as described in section **1.8 Contacts**.

1.11.4 RFP Content Requirements

- 1.11.4.1 Table of Contents
- 1.11.4.2 Cover Letter
- 1.11.4.3 Project Understanding and Approach
- 1.11.4.4 Experience and Qualifications
- 1.11.4.5 Cost Proposal and Timeline

1.12 Scope of Work Outline

- 1.12.1 See Attachment A for full scope of work details.

1.13 Compensation

- 1.13.1 On average, compensation ranges from \$60K-79K/year over the entire project period, depending on experience and skills needed to fulfill work scope. Compensation per month may vary depending on the volume of deliverables required within the final agreed upon project timeline and milestones.
- 1.13.2 Total compensation must be cost-inclusive and include:
 - 1.13.2.1 Direct labor hours charged at fixed hourly rates that reflect wages, general and administrative expenses, and profit.
 - 1.13.2.2 Direct travel costs as described in Attachment A.
- 1.13.3 Final contract compensation may be no greater than \$344,857.

1.14 Terms and Conditions

1.14.1 Upon award of contract, the Contractor may be required to provide to CERNA the following information and documentation prior to commencement of contract:

- 1.14.1.1** Valid and current signed Native-owned business certification, if applicable and/or any other business certifications. If approved, Contractor will be considered for Indian preference.
 - 1.14.1.2** If Contractor proposes to conduct work which is outside the scope of general consulting, CERNA may request proof of insurance including worker's compensation, liability insurance, general liability, automobile coverage, and, if applicable, builder's risk insurance. If required to provide proof of insurance the Contractor must provide a Certificate of Insurance to CERNA. The Certificate of Insurance should contain all of the following:
 - 1.14.1.2.1** Type of insurance
 - 1.14.1.2.2** Policy number
 - 1.14.1.2.3** Effective date
 - 1.14.1.2.4** Expiration date
 - 1.14.1.2.5** Limits of liability
 - 1.14.1.3 Worker's Compensation** – If Contractor proposes to have one or more employees working on Tribal lands, CERNA requires worker's compensation coverage and should hold the following Limits of Liability:
 - 1.14.1.3.1** Bodily injury by accident - \$100,000 each accident
 - 1.14.1.3.2** Bodily injury by disease - \$500,000 policy limit
 - 1.14.1.3.3** Bodily injury by disease - \$100,000 each employee
 - 1.14.1.4 General Liability** – If required, Contractor must possess throughout the contract period comprehensive coverage Limits of Liability:
 - 1.14.1.4.1** Bodily injury and property damage combined - \$500,000
 - 1.14.1.5 Automobile Coverage** – This coverage should encompass all autos including hired and non-owned autos. Limits of Liability are:
 - 1.14.1.5.1** Bodily injury and property damage combined - \$300,000
 - 1.14.1.6 Builder's Risk Insurance (if applicable)** – The Contractor will maintain builder's risk insurance on a 100% completed value basis on the project for the benefit of the owner, the Contractor, and all subcontractors.
- 1.14.2** Upon award the Contractor may be required to provide any of the following:
- 1.14.2.1 Organizational Conflict of Interest Certification** – Contractor declares that to the best of their knowledge that they do not have

any organizational, financial, contractual or any other type of conflict of interest.

- 1.14.2.2 Certification of Independent Price Determination** – The Contractor declares that they will not consult with any other vendor or competitor to arrive at the prices for a particular job.
- 1.14.2.3 Taxpayer Identification** – the Contractor must submit their a 1099.
- 1.14.2.4 Authorized Negotiators** – the Contractor will submit a list of names, titles, email addresses, and phone numbers of the people authorized to negotiate any proposal.
- 1.14.2.5 Affirmative Action Compliance** – the Contractor will declare whether they have or have not developed and implemented an affirmative action program.
- 1.14.2.6 Statement of Good Standing** – the Contractor must declare that they are not currently disbarred, license suspended or revoked, are under investigation by a regulatory or licensing organization, have litigated against the Iowa Tribe, or are former employees who have been dismissed.
- 1.14.2.7 Payments to Subcontractors** – Unless mutually negotiated and agreed otherwise by CERNA, the Contractor and any Subcontractor, all CERNA Contractors shall be required to pay subcontractors within ten (10) days of receipt of payment from CERNA, provided the subcontractor pay applications complete and accurate.

1.14.3 Additional Terms and Conditions may apply and be required prior to commencement of contract. All Terms and Conditions, if different from above, will be provided to Contractor during contract negotiations.

1.15 Contact Information

1.15.1 For inquiries and submission of proposals, please direct all RFPs, submittals, and all other correspondence to Britni Beck, CERNA Executive Director, bbeck@iowas.org; and Artees Vannett, CERNA Program Manager, avannett@greysnow.com.

1.16 Cost of Proposals

1.16.1 *All costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals shall be borne by the vendor. CERNA assumes no responsibility for payment of any expenses incurred by any submitter as part of the RFP process.*

Attachment A – Detailed Scope of Work

During the project period, Contractor will undertake planning, ongoing technical assistance, assist in training for program participants, and assist with planning and execution of CERNA farm management planning, soil health and design implementation plans, nutrient management plans, and soil health management plans. Specifically, the scope of work will involve:

- Development of each producer’s climate smart/regenerative agriculture transition plan
- Support of the education and training of each producer participant, and
- Provision of technical assistance to all producers throughout the lifetime of the pilot program.
- Subrecipient will be onsite for all cohort trainings assisting with curriculum instruction.
- Curriculum development, technical assistance, and training support
- Support recruitment and enrollment of producer participants into CERNA, and access to market partners for all resulting regenerative Native commodities generated through the pilot program.

A detailed description of each component of the scope of work is provided below.

1 Scope of Work

a. Curriculum Development Support

- i. Development of CERNA curriculum, syllabi, instructional materials
- ii. Materials delivered 1 month prior to each of the 8 producer trainings
- iii. Curriculum tailored specifically to climate-smart, regenerative agriculture practices for Native producers.
- iv. Aligns with CERNA project goals on implementing practices, measuring outcomes, and facilitating market access

b. Training Instruction

- i. Provide instruction and support for 10-day intensive cohort trainings, held twice per year over 4 years
- ii. Utilize developed curriculum and adult learning best practices
- iii. Hands-on activities and field-based learning
- iv. Evaluate effectiveness of trainings

c. Technical Assistance

- i. Work with each producer (est. 25) to develop customized climate-smart/regenerative transition plan
- ii. Provide ongoing remote and on-site technical assistance to all producers
- iii. Assist producers in implementing regenerative practices
- iv. Track progress and collect data
- v. Facilitate access to markets

2 Project Milestones

- a. **Curriculum Development:** Ensure curriculum is developed and finalized 1 month prior to each training session. There will be a minimum of sixteen weeks of training

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over the project period which will consist of two producer cohorts each participating in two (2) 10-day training sessions.

- b. **On-site Training:** On-site support for a minimum of 80 days of training over the project period. The trainings will be held on the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska reservation located near the tribal administrative office at 3345 B Thrasher Rd. White Cloud, KS 66094.
- c. **Technical Assistance:** Provide in-person and virtual technical assistance across the 52 month project period for all producer participants and CERNA staff.
- d. **Farm Planning:** Provide transition plans for each producer participant which describes a detailed action plan with associated tasks and requirements to support the transition from conventional agriculture farm management to regenerative agriculture farm management.
- e. **Reporting:** Support CERNA’s reporting requirements by providing quarterly and annual activity reports summarizing the Contractor’s project status for each milestone, other related activities, and total invoice amount for the previous quarter and/or year.

3 Project Milestone Schedule

Milestone	Delivery Date
Summer 2024 Cohort Training	July 2024
Fall 2024 Cohort Training	November 2024
Summer 2025 Cohort Training	July 2025
Fall 2025 Cohort Training	November 2025
TBD - Summer 2026 Cohort Training	July 2026
TBD - Fall 2026 Cohort Training	November 2026
TBD - Summer 2027 Cohort Training	July 2027
TBD - Fall 2027 Cohort Training	November 2027

4 Labor Rates

Provide hourly rates for each staff labor category described below or a similar staff labor category which the Contractor will utilize to fulfill the Scope of Work. If a single staff labor category will be utilized to fulfill the Scope of Work please describe why this labor category is sufficient. The Labor Rate must describe the direct labor hours charged at fixed hourly rates that reflect wages, general and administrative expenses, and profit

The billable hourly rate must not exceed \$113.27 per hour.

- a. **Labor Categories:**
 - i. Curriculum developer
 - ii. Instructor
 - iii. Technical assistance specialist



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5 **Travel Budget**

All travel costs must utilize federal GSA per diem rates including mileage, car rentals, flights, hotels, M&IE, as well as first and last day exceptions to the rates. For purposes of determining federal GSA per diem rates please use FY 2024 Per Diem Rates for Kansas City, MO.

- a. Lodging, mileage, meal reimbursement per GSA rates
- b. Estimate of number of on-site days for trainings and technical assistance

6 **Deliverables:**

- CERNA Curriculum, syllabi, and instructional materials
- Hands-on training instruction and instruction manual
- Remote technical assistance and technical assistance educational materials