

NOAA Ocean and Coastal Mapping Contracting Policy

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recognizes that qualified commercial sources can provide competent, professional, and cost-effective ocean and coastal mapping services and expertise to NOAA in support of its diverse mapping missions. NOAA also recognizes that providing mapping services is a core mission requirement of NOAA under the 1947 Coast and Geodetic Survey Act, Hydrographic Services Improvement Act of 1998 (as amended), and other laws and authorities. In the interest of public and environmental safety and the furtherance of scientific knowledge, the Federal Government's responsibility for executing its ocean and coastal mapping missions is manifest and non-delegable. However, it is incumbent upon NOAA, as recommended by the Hydrographic Services Review Panel, a Federal Advisory Committee, to maintain operational ocean and coastal mapping core capabilities and supplement its operational capacity by contracting for ocean and coastal mapping services where appropriate and to the extent of available funding.

This policy statement documents the framework and conditions under which contracting will be employed to ensure an open and consistent approach. To support this policy, NOAA will maintain a dialogue with private sector organizations and constituent groups. For the purposes of this policy and as defined in the Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration Act, the term “ocean and coastal mapping” includes the acquisition, processing, and management of physical, biological, geological, chemical and archeological characteristics and boundaries of ocean and coastal areas. This also includes hydrographic services. As defined in the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act, the term "hydrographic services" means the management, maintenance, interpretation, certification, and dissemination of bathymetric, hydrographic, shoreline, geodetic, geospatial, geomagnetic, tide and water level, and current information, including the production of nautical charts, nautical information, databases, and other products derived from hydrographic data. It is NOAA's intent to advance contracting and adhere to the principles of this policy to meet its diverse ocean and coastal mapping requirements.

It is the intent of NOAA to contract for ocean and coastal mapping services when such contracts are determined to be a cost-effective method of obtaining these services and to the extent funding is available. NOAA will procure ocean and coastal mapping services from qualified sources in accordance with its legal authorities, the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR), and the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 (40 U.S.C. 101 *et seq.*). Where required by law or where otherwise deemed appropriate, NOAA will procure the acquisition of hydrographic data¹ in accordance with Title IX of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act (40 U.S.C. 1101 *et seq.*).²

NOAA may determine that a particular ocean and coastal mapping activity is inherently governmental or otherwise not subject to contracting. NOAA ocean and coastal mapping activities not subject to contracting may include, but are not limited to, services necessary to: (1)

¹ Hydrographic data means information that is acquired through hydrographic, bathymetric, photogrammetric, lidar, radar, remote sensing, or shoreline and other ocean- and coastal-related surveying; geodetic, geospatial, or geomagnetic measurements; tide, water level, and current observations; and is used in providing hydrographic services.

² Commonly known as the “Brooks Act” or A&E (Architectural or Engineering) contracting services, Title IX contracts are negotiated and awarded on the basis of demonstrated competence and qualifications (qualification-based selections or QBS) as opposed to price.

monitor the quality of NOAA products; (2) promulgate and promote national and international technical standards and specifications; (3) conduct basic research and development and ensure the rapid transfer of derived technologies to the private sector; and (4) maintain the integrity and accuracy of Federal geodetic, navigational and other databases.

To facilitate the leveraging of government mapping resources, NOAA will continue to make its coastal geospatial and hydrographic services contracts with private-sector companies available to State and local government entities that have a need for the services provided by these contracts and can provide adequate funding.

NOAA may task qualified commercial sources with ocean and coastal mapping services in any part of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, territorial sea, Great Lakes, inland waters and coastal watersheds for any mission-related purpose. The government's interests in and responsibilities for mapping vary broadly and experience has shown that maintaining flexibility is key to responding to the nation's changing needs for geospatial data.

Ancillary Statements and Actions

As recommended by the Hydrographic Services Review Panel, NOAA will continue to utilize a mix of in-house and private-sector resources to accomplish its ocean and coastal mapping missions. Costs and productivity will be monitored within each category (*i.e.*, public and private) to ensure best use of mapping resources. NOAA will continue to seek the optimal resource allocation between in-house and private-sector resources based on the strength of the governmental interest, the total requirement for ocean and coastal mapping services, and the particular operational capabilities of either government or private-sector resources that may make one resource more suitable for a given situation.

NOAA will continue to examine ways to improve its contracting processes, including minimizing the turnover frequency of contracting personnel and reducing the length of time required to award contracts and task orders. NOAA will continue to offer debriefings to successful and unsuccessful contractors after final contractor selection has been made in order to assist contractors with identifying significant weaknesses or deficiencies in their submissions. NOAA will continue with its efforts to establish an Ocean and Coastal Mapping Training Center, which, as conceived, will support NOAA's in-house hydrographic and acoustic surveying training requirements. In addition, the Center would provide training to NOAA and private sector contractors in techniques, standards and technologies that support NOAA's many ocean and coastal mapping activities. Such training would be beneficial to current or prospective NOAA contractors seeking to improve their capabilities and proposal submissions.