SECOORA DMAC Applicant Briefing Request for Proposals 2026–2031

February 18, 2026
Jennifer Dorton, Deputy Director
secoora.org/secoora-request-for-proposals-dmac/
Questions: jdorton@secoora.org

Who Is SECOORA — and Why This Contract Matters

Understanding our mission before you propose

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit — one of 11 regional associations in NOAA's U.S. IOOS program (https://ioos.noaa.gov/)

- 20 years of continuous environmental data collection for the southeastern U.S.

- DMAC is the operational backbone of SECOORA's federal certification — this contract enables us to meet NOAA's IOOS DMAC Standards (§ 2.1)

- The DMAC Plan and RCOS certification documents: secoora.org/certification/

- RFP: secoora.org/secoora-request-for-proposals-dmac/

Partner, Not Contractor

What "partner" means:
- Provide technical leadership and strategic advice — not just execution
- Proactively identify system improvements and present them to us
- Present options with trade-offs so SECOORA leadership can make informed decisions

Required participation:
- Annual strategic planning and roadmap development
- Weekly or bi-weekly (every two weeks) calls
- Business development activities — helping us diversify funding

Strategic Partnership Capability is scored separately — 10% of total score

Six Strategic Priorities — Order Matters

These are not equivalent items on a list

Priority 1: Quantify and Track SECOORA Data System Usage — highest priority

Priority 2: Increase Efficiency and Operational Reliability

Priority 3: Leverage National and Pan-Regional DMAC Efforts

Priority 4: Integrate AI/ML Capabilities

Priority 5: Branding and System Recognition

Priority 6: Support Funding Diversification and Business Development

Common mistake: treating all priorities as equal or reversing priority order in your proposal

The Budget–Scope Gap

**Full scope exceeds $250K–$300K.
That is by design.**

Required: Three-tier response structure

- **Core Services (Must-Haves): essential operations, transition, federal compliance**

- **Enhanced Services (Should-Haves): strategic priorities, user analytics, system improvements**

- **Aspirational Capabilities (Nice-to-Haves): advanced features requiring >$300K**

Honest, prioritized, rationale-driven proposals score well

Tiering enables contract flexibility as funding changes

Ambitious proposals that ignore the budget are penalized

Year 1 Depends on Who You Are

**Incumbent and new providers
have different starting lines**

New Provider:

- **90-day transition is your primary Year 1 task**
- **Knowledge transfer from current provider**
- **Code repository and data migration**
- **Priority 1 (user tracking) realistically begins Year 2**

Incumbent Provider:

- **Transition burden is minimal**
- **Priority 1 (user tracking) development starts immediately from Day 1**
- **Begin executing prepared backlog in Year 1**

Proposals must clearly address which scenario applies

Navigating Section 2: Technical Scope

Elements requiring explicit treatment in your proposal

- Data priorities: SECOORA-funded (Tier 1), strategic partners (Tier 2), regional aggregation (Tier 3)

- QARTOD QC standards required for all real-time data

- Data dissemination: ERDDAP, OPeNDAP, WMS, NOAA Operations, ARCO in the cloud, etc.

- NOAA NCEI archival compliance and RCOS certification

- Open-source software strategy

Navigating Section 2: Technical Scope

Elements requiring explicit treatment in your proposal

- System uptime: 95% for website and data portal

- Incident response: 2 hrs (business hours), 12 hrs (after hours) - consider automated alerts

- National/regional coordination attendance — budget for travel

- Documentation (Public on secoora.github.io): user guides, technical specs, API references

Proposal Structure: What to Submit

Two separate documents with strict page limits

Technical Proposal: 12-page limit, PDF, 1-inch margins, 12-pt font

- 4 required sections
  - Title page (does not count towards the 12 page limit)
  - Strategic Approach to Partnership
  - Technical and Operational Responsibilities
  - Phased Transition and Implementation Plan

Proposal Structure: What to Submit

Two separate documents with strict page limits

Appendices (do not counted toward the 12 page limit):

- Team & Qualifications: CVs with FTE breakdown by role — named personnel required

- Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP): 2-page limit

- Agile Project Management Approach: 1-page limit

Cost Proposal: Separate document, 4-page limit

The Cost Proposal in Detail

Year 1 full breakdown required; Years 2–5 with escalation rates

Eight required cost categories:

- Personnel including fringe benefits rates applied
- Equipment costs (anything over $10,000)
- Supplies
- Travel
- Other costs required to complete DMAC services (e.g., subcontractors, cloud services projections)
- Indirect costs - include a link to the IDC rate agreement or provide a copy of the agreement
- Provide an estimate of costs for Years 2-5, including escalation rates

Show explicitly Core, Enhanced, and Aspirational costs

How Proposals Are Evaluated

Five criteria — two dominate the score

Technical Qualifications — 30%

Operational Approach and Transition Plan — 30%

Cost Estimate — 20%

Strategic Partnership Capability — 10%

Team Experience and Capacity — 10%

Proposal Review Process

How to submit and what happens next

Review process:

- Panel review → up to 3 finalists → interviews → contract negotiation

- Panel will include a SECOORA member with domain expertise and representatives from other RAs or state/federal agencies with data management expertise

- Contract will begin when SECOORA receives our 2026-2031 NOAA IOOS award

Submission Logistics

How to submit and what happens next

Submission Portal: egrants.secoora.org — register early (two-part verification required)

Deadline: **5:00 PM ET, March 31, 2026**

Period of Performance (tentative): Ideally, July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2031, but depends on NOAA timeline.

Eligible applicants: State agencies, universities, research institutions, NGOs, private industry

Questions & FAQ (will be posted after this briefing): secoora.org/secoora-request-for-proposals-dmac/