

# Market Research & Evaluation Request for Proposals (“RFP”): RFP #52804- Agricultural Pump Market Research



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## 1 Introduction

### About the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance

The Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (NEEA) is an alliance of more than 140 utilities and energy efficiency organizations working on behalf of more than 13 million energy consumers. NEEA is dedicated to accelerating both electric and natural gas energy efficiency, leveraging its regional partnerships to advance the adoption of energy-efficient products, services and practices.

Since 1997, NEEA and its partners have saved enough energy to power more than 985,000 homes each year. As the second-largest resource in the Northwest, energy efficiency can offset most of our new demand for energy, saving money and keeping the Northwest a healthy and vibrant place to live. For more information visit [www.neea.org](http://www.neea.org).

## 2 Background

### 2.1 About the Extended Motor Products (“XMP”) Program

NEEA’s XMP Program aims to accelerate the adoption of energy efficient commercial and industrial pumps and circulators by mitigating or eliminating identified market barriers to adoption of such technologies. XMP is a market transformation (“MT”) program designed to bring about extensive and sustained changes in how the pump supply chain produces, sells, markets, and buys clean water pumps and circulators (herein referenced to as the “Program”). NEEA has identified several key barriers to uptake of efficient pumping technologies, including lack of awareness of and confidence in efficient products, lack of understanding of the value of smart pumps and circulators, a preference for like-for-like replacements, and prioritization of first cost and other factors over maximization of efficiency. To address these barriers, the Program engages with manufacturers, their trade association (Hydraulic Institute<sup>1</sup>), regulators involved in codes and standards, manufacturers’ representative firms, utilities, and pump end-users to raise awareness of and to increase sales of highly efficient pumps and circulators.

Significant federal standards activity for clean water pumps and circulators has created new efficiency metrics, lab test procedures, and minimum requirements. The pump industry now includes a voluntary program to label clean-water pumps and circulators up to 200 horsepower with Energy Rating (“ER”)<sup>2</sup> labels designed to facilitate easy comparisons of relative efficiency levels across pump models and brands and creating a mechanism for product differentiation for efficient pumps.

NEEA is currently engaging with eight manufacturers’ representative firms, which sell clean-water pumping products in the Northwest Region in which NEEA operates, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington, herein referenced to as the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.pumps.org](http://www.pumps.org)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pumps.org/what-we-do/energy-rating/>

“Northwest Region”. NEEA works closely with participating manufacturers’ representative firms to identify ways to increase sales of highly efficient pumps and circulators, with a special focus on smart pumps and smart circulators (integrated systems in which the pump or circulator, motor, drive, and controls are built together at the factory). Program funding is used to motivate manufacturers’ representatives to implement strategies that will increase the portion of their sales comprising smart pumps, smart circulators, and other highly efficient pump solutions.

## 2.2 XMP Market Barriers, Opportunities, and Program Goals

The Program seeks to reduce market barriers around product awareness and acceptance of the value proposition for high efficiency pumps and circulators. The Program is a MT program focused on bringing about durable, sustained changes in how market actors produce, specify, buy, and sell pumps and circulators. The high-level XMP Program objectives, intended to build on identified opportunities and reduce or eliminate identified market barriers, are as follows:

1. Motivate participating manufacturers’ representative firms to preferentially stock and increase sales of highly efficient pumps and circulators.
2. Raise awareness of energy efficient pumps, the ER label, and the specific benefits of smart pumps related to installation and maintenance costs.
3. Leverage and expand relationships with pump manufacturers, distributors, and industry associations to benefit long-term market transformation and accelerate the pace of smart pump and variable-load pump sales growth.
4. Influence the advancement of new and existing federal standards by demonstrating significant sales growth of smart pumps and smart circulators in the Northwest Region.
5. Monitor progress in the market, collaborate with market actors to understand efficiency opportunities and product developments, and offer technical engineering support.

## 2.3 About this RFP

This RFP seeks to solicit proposals for a market research study in support of potential XMP Program expansion into the Northwest Region’s agricultural pump market (herein referenced to as the “Study”). The primary purpose of the Study is to explore the applicability of current XMP Program knowledge and intervention activities to the Northwest Regional agricultural irrigation pump market. The selected contractor will collaborate with XMP Program staff to develop specific avenues for inquiry regarding sample development and data collection instrumentation.

## 3 Research Objectives

The three Research Objectives (“RO”s) for this Work are as follows (further detail for each objective is provided in Subsections 3.1 through 3.3):

1. **RO1:** Identify and prioritize agricultural market barriers to uptake of highly efficient pumps for irrigation purposes.

2. **RO2:** Document market actor motivations and agricultural irrigation pump path-to-purchase.
3. **RO3:** Assess the accuracy of key market projections documented in NEEA's 2013 Agricultural Irrigation Market Characterization, specifically as pertaining to regional irrigated agricultural acreage and market actor technology usage.

### **3.1 Identify and prioritize agricultural market barriers to uptake of highly efficient pumps for irrigation purposes**

NEEA requires an assessment of the nature, magnitude, and tenacity of market barriers that may impede the uptake and diffusion of efficient pump technologies targeted by the XMP Program, including but not limited to, smart pumps, in agricultural irrigation applications.

Prior market research led to the development of a list of commercial and industrial market barriers which should serve as the foundation for refinement through this market research study. Specific research objectives for this learning area include the following:

- Confirm or recommend changes (including additions and/or deletions) to the list of commercial and industrial market barriers identified in [NEEA's XMP Logic Model \(Appendix B\)](#), specifically as these barriers pertain to the agricultural irrigation pump market
- Articulate the significance of all identified barriers with regard to severity of risk, scale of market presence, and likely degree of tenacity/resistance to interventions
- Assess and describe variance in identified barriers across key factors (e.g., market actor group, state, product type) where appropriate.

### **3.2 Document market actor motivations and agricultural irrigation pump path-to-purchase**

Understand and document the full process by which pump products are selected for a given agricultural irrigation project, including the perspectives, motivations, and pain points of relevant market actor groups. This should include documentation of factors supporting and constraining the decision to purchase a pump for agricultural irrigation application. Specific ROs for this learning include the following:

- Identify and document the motivations, priorities, and pain points of market actors involved in the agricultural irrigation pump purchase decision-making process, including how (if at all) these dynamics coincide or conflict across market actor groups.
- Assess the ways in which market actors conceive of, represent, and prioritize efficiency relative to their role in the agricultural irrigation pump decision-making process.
- Assess the potential impacts of seasonality of agricultural irrigation pump usage as pertaining to market actor weighting of efficiency as a decision-making factor.

- Describe the path whereby agricultural irrigation pumps are selected and installed, including (at a minimum) the following information:
  - The role and influence of each market actor in the decision-making process associated with agricultural irrigation pump path-to-purchase.
  - Typical motivations and perspectives expressed by each market actor associated with agricultural irrigation pump purchase decision-making.
  - The factors and priorities by which market actors assess agricultural irrigation pumping options when considering a purchase decision, including the presence and scope of any relevant product specification processes.
  - The relationships and interactions between market actors throughout the agricultural irrigation pump selection and purchasing process, particularly attending to dynamics of decision influence.
  - The degree, if any, to which purchasing decision processes vary across project types (e.g., new construction, planned retrofit, emergency replacement).
  - The approximate split between well and surface pumping in agricultural irrigation applications, as well as the percentage of agricultural well and surface pumps incorporating variable-frequency drives
  - The prevalence of soft-starters and variable-speed drives (VFDs, ASDs, etc.) being applied to irrigation pumps, and system characteristics where drives deliver the most value and/or are the most common

### 3.3 Assess the accuracy of key market projections documented in NEEA’s 2013 Agricultural Irrigation Market Characterization, specifically as pertaining to regional irrigated agricultural acreage and market actor technology usage

In 2013, NEEA published the [Northwest Agricultural Irrigation Market Characterization and Baseline Study](#), largely focused on assessing the potential viability of agricultural market intervention activities related to systems-level agricultural irrigation techniques; however, key findings and market projections are potentially relevant to the XMP Program’s specific focus on clean-water pumps. As part of the present Study, NEEA seeks a review of current agricultural market conditions for the purpose of determining the accuracy and validity of the following Agricultural Irrigation Market Characterization projections:

- **Estimates of irrigated agricultural acreage.** Total irrigated agricultural acreage approximately midway between the 2012 estimate and the 2032 estimate documented in the 2013 report (Table 5, p. 11).
- **Agricultural market actor reluctance to adopt new or untested technologies.** While the limited bandwidth of farmers suggests a captive market for decision support technologies, most growers are skeptical of

relying on a computer to manage their farm and prefer traditional methods of irrigation decision making such as personal judgments on the look and feel of soil and crops. Farmers typically look to the performance of innovative technologies and strategies on nearby and showcased farms before deciding to adopt these innovations (p. 7).

Bidders should note that the 2013 report focused on only three of the four states that NEEA currently serves (Idaho, Oregon, and Washington), and are strongly encouraged to include Montana market dynamics in their analyses. NEEA, likewise, encourages bidders to review the [2015 Agricultural Irrigation Initiative Overview](#), for additional insights and relevant completed research.

## 4 Parameters & Considerations

The proposed Activities should address the learning areas and research objectives outlined in Section 3 and document the firmographic characteristics (size, annual operating budget, geographic location, etc.) of relevant market actors where such information is available.

### 4.1 Sample Population

Bidders should propose a sample design drawing from key market actors appropriate to support the proposed Study design and methodology. NEEA recommends bidders consider including some or all of the following market actor groups in the proposed sample design:

- Agricultural irrigation pump end users (e.g., farmers, agricultural companies, agricultural building/facility managers).
- Agricultural irrigation pump specifiers (e.g., designers, engineers).
- Agricultural irrigation pump contractors/installers.
- Agricultural irrigation pump manufacturers' representatives.

NEEA encourages bidders to consider how best to include these groups in the research, and to add, exclude, and/or combine groups based on the bidder's view of how to best achieve NEEA's Study objectives. *NEEA has found that recruitment has been challenging for the types of market actors likely to be included in this Study.*

Bidders are encouraged to include a detailed description of their approach to recruiting respondents for participation once identified and highlight successful past recruitment experience with agricultural market actors in their proposals.

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## 4.2 Research Design (Approach and Methodology)<sup>3</sup>

NEEA expects bidders to recommend an approach that best meets the objectives laid out above. NEEA is open to well-thought-out and designed research approaches incorporating qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodologies.

For each research activity, bidders should include the Activity's objective, what will be done, the market actor group(s) included in that Activity, and the Activity's timeline from initiation to completion.

Additionally, NEEA's Market Research and Evaluation ("MRE") Team aligns itself with the American Evaluation Association's [Guiding Principles for Evaluators](#), including: (a) Systematic Inquiry, (b) Competence, (c) Integrity, (d) Respect for People, and (e) Common Good and Equity.

These principles collectively represent a "north star" toward which the NEEA MRE Team is oriented in the selection of study methodologies, identification of inquiry questions and objectives, development of sampling frames and techniques, and engagement with market actors and members of the public. NEEA encourages bidders to review the Guiding Principles and highlight the ways in which their proposed study design and activities align with and support these principles.

## 4.3 Deliverables

At a minimum, NEEA expects the following deliverables for this Study:

- Draft and final work plans.
- A Kick-Off Meeting with NEEA staff, including draft and final agenda and slides for the Kick-Off Meeting.
- One (1) working session with the NEEA Program Team near the end of the study timeline, including draft and final agenda and slides for the session.
  - The awarded Contractor will work collaboratively with the NEEA MRE Scientist to plan an agenda and facilitation approach for the session that fosters team engagement and socialization of results.
- Draft and final market actor sample lists; final sample lists should be cleaned and include: (a) current contact information; and (b) any notes generated during recruitment.
- Draft and final data collection instruments (e.g., survey questionnaires, interview guides).
- **Draft and final reports.** A report outline shall be submitted to the NEEA MRE Scientist. This outline will serve as a basis for discussion between the selected contractor, the NEEA MRE Scientist, and other NEEA stakeholders. Based on review and input generated in response to the report outline, the selected contractor will produce the draft final report and present it to the NEEA MRE Scientist for review and comment. This draft will be reviewed and commented on by NEEA staff. Based on these

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<sup>3</sup> The XMP Program Team intends to build long-term relationships with regional agricultural market actors who participate in Program interventions. NEEA will work with the selected contractor to develop an acceptable contact protocol with the research participants.



comments, the selected contractor shall make revisions and deliver to NEEA a final version of the report. Proposals should plan and budget for multiple iterations with NEEA to achieve an acceptable final report.

- Please refer to NEEA’s recently updated Style Guide for Public Research Reports; four (4) for additional guidelines regarding formatting, structure, and content of this Study’s report.

Bidders may include additional deliverables in their proposals, provided any such Deliverables are clearly tied to study objectives and related Activities.

#### 4.4 Budget

NEEA estimates a reasonable budget for this work to be \$70,000–100,000, with no more than \$60,000 to be allocated for expenditure in 2025; however, well-written proposals that present thoughtful and cost-effective strategies to meet the Study’s ROs will be considered without respect to budget. NEEA’s MRE Scientist will work with finalists to negotiate the specifics of their proposed research activities to meet resource constraints.

Proposal cost estimates should be provided on a time and materials basis and should reflect that the bidder is responsible and accountable for the following:

- All logistics associated with executing the project tasks including, but not limited to, review of Program materials and published reports, sample development, participant recruitment, and report preparation.
- Preparing and delivering all project deliverables.
- Managing and providing itemized expense reporting for all subcontractors used on this project.
- Contractors’ allocation of resources to tasks.
- Invoicing and expense reporting.
- Payment of any honorariums/incentives for study participation.

#### 4.5 Timeline

NEEA anticipates this Study’s Work to begin in November of 2024 and completed no later than June of 2025.

### 5 Proposal Requirements

Bidders shall submit their proposal to the RFP Point of Contact no later than the end of business day, in accordance with the RFP schedule listed below in Section 6.1- RFP Schedule.

Bidders should note that proposals ***MUST*** adhere to the structure and page limits stated below; any proposals received that fail to adhere to these requirements will be excluded from consideration for award. Core proposals must be no longer than twelve (12) pages (not including any appendices) and include the following components:

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<sup>4</sup> <https://neea.org/img/documents/NEEA-Style-Guide-for-Public-Research-Reports.pdf>



## 5.1 Proposal Format

### 5.1.1 Executive Summary of Research Design (1-page maximum)

Include the key strategies and approach to executing the study, a summary of proposed costs, and the reasons NEEA should select your team.

### 5.1.2 Introduction and Project Team Identification (1-page maximum)

State your understanding of the scope and key objectives of the Study, and provide information regarding the proposed project team, including project management personnel, plan for oversight of field work as appropriate, and specific skills, experiences, and qualifications supporting alignment with this study. NEEA encourages bidders to specifically articulate individual and/or team experience and demonstrated skills related to culturally responsive engagement with communities that have historically had limited access to efficient technologies, particularly rural communities. Project team bios and/or résumés should be included in the Proposal Appendix section.

*(Note that bidding firms that have previously submitted team qualifications and associated materials through NEEA's [MRE Request for Qualifications process](#) may disregard this component of the proposal; please contact the RFP Point of Contact listed below for confirmation of materials on file.)*

### 5.1.3 Approach, Methodology, Tasks and Deliverables (8-page maximum)

Provide a detailed description of the specific methodologies and approach to be undertaken to complete each research objective, including project management activities. Please include a detailed description of your strategies for creating sample frames and conducting research. What recruitment sources or lists will you rely on to develop the sample? How much time will you schedule for recruiting? Identify all major phases and milestones for the project and the associated deliverables. NEEA encourages the inclusion of methodologies and data collection methods grounded in culturally responsive frameworks, where appropriate to and supportive of the overall proposed study design and objectives.

### 5.1.4 Project Timeline & Cost Estimate (2-page maximum)

Provide the proposed timeline for all major phases and milestones of the Study broken out by proposed task and associated Deliverables and shall include a.) the cost estimate for each Task, b.) a breakout of any direct costs and an hourly rate sheet for the Study period may be included here or in the proposal appendix section.

### 5.1.5 Proposal Appendices

- **Hourly Rate Sheet** – Required for all proposed project team members with estimated hours by task.
- **Company Background & Qualifications** – Include information about your firm's mission, key activities, and readiness to undertake the proposed project.
- **Project Team & Team Bios** – Include information about the proposed project team members and team structure, past team efforts on similar work, years of experience, and other relevant qualifications.

- **Examples of Relevant Past Work** – You may provide links to reports or include a summary of current and/or prior project(s) that demonstrate your capabilities as they relate to this work.

## 6 Proposal Submission

Bidder shall submit one (1) electronic copy of the proposal to NEEA’s RFP Point of Contact by the end of business day listed in the RFP Schedule.

### 6.1 RFP Schedule

All deadlines below are by **5:00pm Pacific time**. (Note: Be advised NEEA’s RFP Schedule is subject to change and alteration in NEEA’s discretion.)

- **RFP released:** September 26, 2024
- **Intent to Respond submission (*required for consideration*):** October 4, 2024
- **Email questions for clarification (*optional*):** October 4, 2024
- **Answers to questions (*if any received*) emailed to all bidders by:** October 10, 2024
- **Proposals due to NEEA:** October 31, 2024
- **Selection of finalists by for awardee bidder(s) determination:** November 8, 2024
- **Anticipated contracting start date:** November 18, 2024

### 6.2 RFP Point of Contact

All correspondence, included but not limited to, questions and submissions shall be directed to:

**NEEA Employee Name:** Chris Cardiel  
**NEEA Employee Title:** Senior Market Research and Evaluation Scientist  
**NEEA Employee E-mail:** ccardiel@neea.org

### 6.3 Intent to Respond

All “Intent to Respond” forms (see Appendix A) must be received no later than by the end of business day listed in the RFP Schedule.

Only those parties submitting the “Intent to Respond” form will be provided with updates to the RFP, have questions responded to and have their proposals considered.

## 7 Selection

Bidding firms will be rated among others in terms of the overall responsiveness to the RFP – how well all RFP requests have been addressed including, but not limited to:

1. Demonstrated understanding project objectives, nuances, and potential roadblocks to meeting objectives.
2. The thoughtfulness and appropriateness of the proposed design used to accomplish the desired results of the Study.

3. Thoughtfulness and appropriateness of respondent recruitment approach and ability to address potential Study issues.
4. How well Deliverable examples and descriptions meet the stated needs and intended use.
5. Overall value for expenditure.
6. Evidence of innovation and creativity in both overall design, recruitment and Deliverables.
7. Evidence of flexibility throughout the project lifecycle.
8. Ability to communicate complex ideas/concepts in a clear and succinct fashion.
9. The balance of the complexity of design with the succinctness of communication of the design.

In addition, the following factors will play a key role in the selection process:

1. The experience and qualifications of the individuals specifically proposed to execute and manage the Study.
2. The experience of the firm or team of firms making the proposal.
3. The capability to execute the plan, including past experience and aptitude for collaboration.

Bidder's disadvantaged business enterprise ("DBE") state certifications are also a factor NEEA considers during the proposal evaluation process. Bidders are encouraged to provide information regarding any DBE state certifications they hold in the Intent to Respond Form (see Appendix A).

Proposals may be evaluated by the NEEA Project Manager and other NEEA staff that we believe have the perspective needed to make this important decision. NEEA is under no obligation to provide work to any vendors responding to this solicitation, nor is there any obligation or intent implied to reimburse any party for the cost of preparing a proposal in response to this RFP.

*NEEA is under no obligation to select any proposal that results from this solicitation, nor is there any obligation or intent implied to reimburse any bidder submitting a proposal for the cost of preparing a proposal in response to this RFP. There is also no contractual expectation, whether express or implied, by NEEA and any bidder based on this RFP or submission. NEEA's decision to contract future Work required a written contract proposed by NEEA and agreed to by any selected bidder for the Work.*

## **8 Insurance Requirements**

Contractors interested in working with NEEA should be aware of the following insurance requirements for all NEEA contracted vendors, as follows:

- Contractors must maintain adequate and reasonable insurance covering their performance under any offered contract as independent contractors to NEEA as required by NEEA which generally includes:
  - Commercial General Liability insurance of at least \$1,000,000/occurrence;

- Professional Liability Insurance of at least \$1,000,000/combined single limit;
- Business Automobile Liability insurance;
- Any Workers' Compensation and Unemployment insurance required by law;
- Cyber Liability insurance.

*NEEA may request a copy of such insurance policies prior to awarding Work.*

# Appendix A - Intent to Respond Form

## RFP #: 52804

Project Title: Agricultural Pump Market Research  
NEEA Point of Contact: Chris Cardiel, ccardiel@neea.org

### PLEASE PRINT:

<b>Company</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>City, State, Zip</b>	
<b>Contact Name</b>	
<b>Contact Title</b>	
<b>Phone #</b>	
<b>E-mail</b>	

The company named above intends to submit a proposal in response to NEEA's request for proposal listed above. Deadline for submitting the "Intent to Respond" form is end of business day of date listed in the RFP schedule.

### List any Disadvantaged Business Enterprise ("DBE") certifications and the state of the certifications below:

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# Appendix B – XMP Logic Model

