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SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Alaska Mariculture Cluster Grant Other Mariculture Species RFP

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP #2023-05
EDA Project Number 07-79-0794

Date of Issue: November 7, 2023 *Updated and Reissued November 16, 2023*

Summary:

Southeast Conference is soliciting proposals from individuals, companies, or organizations, as part of the Alaska Mariculture Cluster (AMC) program, to conduct applied research and development projects around methods for cultivating new mariculture species.

Mariculture farming in Alaska is currently dominated by Pacific Oysters and three species of kelp (sugar, ribbon, and bull). The Alaska Mariculture Cluster grant program has a primary focus on supporting the viability of these species that dominate the current industry. In the long term, it is likely that other species of macroalgae, shellfish, and other mariculture species will be important parts of the industry as well. This RFP is focused on innovation related to other species of interest for cultivation (not including Pacific Oysters, bull kelp, sugar kelp, or ribbon kelp). This RFP will not accept proposals around the cultivation of black seaweed.

Proposals are sought for research and development projects that advance our understanding of key questions related to the viability of “other species” for commercial, restoration, and/or enhancement uses, including enhancement of subsistence resources.

Proposals should demonstrate support from local or regional tribal leadership and include a plan to engage with local Alaska Native entities to ensure the results of the proposed project will benefit, respect, and represent the values of the local Alaska Native community.

Background:

Southeast Conference, a state and federally recognized economic development organization for Southeast Alaska, is the lead institution administering a recent federal grant received in September of 2022 from the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA) to grow Alaska's mariculture industry through the Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC) program. Alaska Mariculture Cluster (AMC) coalition includes a diverse group of stakeholders including Alaska state regulatory agencies, Alaska's university system, Economic Development Districts (EDDs), trade organizations and more. A Governance Body, composed of AMC coalition leads as well as tribal representatives from each of the project region, will guide the work and equity metrics of the overall grant. The Alaska Mariculture Cluster has an overall equity goal that applies to all projects. Specifically, 25% of AMC program impacts and investments are targeted to rural underserved communities and 25% to Alaska native entities and individuals. The AMC grant is composed of seven component projects (listed below), which have been purposely designed to be complementary to address barriers to growth and break out of the "chicken or egg" cycle of industry development:

- Revolving Loan Fund
- Governance, Coordination and Outreach
- Workforce Development
- Research and Development
- Market Development
- Green Energy
- **Equipment and Technology**

The full project period for the AMC BBBRC project is October 1, 2022 – September 30th, 2026. More information on the Alaska Mariculture Cluster (AMC) is available at www.alaskamariculturecluster.org, including the Overarching Narrative, which explains how the seven components work together to grow the mariculture industry in an equitable and environmentally responsible manner.

Eligible Entities:

- District Organization of an EDA-designated Economic Development District
- Indian Tribe, consortium of Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, Tribal Cooperatives
- State, borough, city, or other political subdivisions of a State
- Institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education
- Public or private non-profit organization

Scope of Work:

The Alaska Mariculture Cluster program has a primary focus on Pacific Oysters and three species of kelp: sugar, ribbon and bull kelp. This RFP is focused on innovation related to other species of interest for cultivation.

Eligible project categories under this RFP include:

- Innovations in cultivating mariculture species (not including Pacific Oysters, sugar, ribbon, or bull kelp***)

***R&D around these species is funded through another AMC project, the Joint Innovation Project (JIP) through the Research & Development component.

Proposals must demonstrate engagement with local Alaska Native entities and include a plan for ongoing engagement with local Alaska Native entities to ensure the results of the proposed project will benefit, respect and represent the values of the local Alaska Native community. This RFP will not accept proposals around the cultivation of black seaweed. All products produced under this RFP will become publicly available on completion. Specific deliverables, deadlines, and projects will be identified in collaboration with selected contractor(s).

Funding Available:

Funding is secured through the AMC Equipment & Technology component of the BBBRC. Selected proposals will be funded for a timeline generally limited to 18 months, though where necessary longer projects can be proposed as long as they are completed by August 2026. If projects are proposed for longer than 18 months, proposer must identify benchmarks that will be met at 18 months to ensure

that the project remains viable (projects that do not meet their benchmarks will not receive continued funding). Start dates must be between February 1 and May 1, 2024.

The number of projects funded and award amount will depend on the quantity and quality of proposals received. SEC intends to hold a portion of this funding to allow for a second issuance of this RFP in Fall 2024. Proposals may only request funding up to \$150,000. If the need for additional related services arises, additional scope and budget may be added to this contract on mutual agreement.

General Requirements:

Single Point of Contact. The consultant will designate one person as the project manager and point of contact with SEC. In the case of multiple investigators, one shall be designated as the lead to serve as the project manager and point of contact.

Progress Reports. Updates will be submitted to SEC monthly, detailing progress to date, any difficulties encountered in accomplishing the work, and next steps planned.

Disbarment. Applicants must have or acquire an active SAM.gov registration prior to award finalization. Applicants must not be disbarred from receiving federal funds.

Proposal Contents:

Proposals are expected to be no more than 8-10 pages in length, excluding resumes which may be attached.

Proposals should include the following components:

- **Introduction and Understanding of the Project.** Include the RFP title, discussion of project context and importance, and an overview of the project team and approach.
- **Methodology.** Discuss proposed approach to accomplishing the scope of work listed, including proposed deliverables and timeline. Respondents may propose to provide services related to one or more of the tasks listed above.
- **Experience and Qualifications.** Describe relevant experience of the firm and key team members, including any subcontractors if part of your team. Relevant experience includes

projects with related content as well as project experience working with rural, coastal, and/or indigenous stakeholders.

- **Management Plan.** Briefly describe how the work will be managed including the role of each key individual/subcontractor expected to be involved in the work and their availability to complete the work.
- **Costs.** Provide a list of the key individuals/subcontractors expected to work on this project and the fully loaded rates charged per individual. Final budgets will be negotiated when the contractor has been selected.

Proposal Submission Process:

Deadline. Submit proposals in pdf format by January 14, 2024 at 5pm AST via email to procurement officer Alan Sorum at alan@seconference.org and project manager Juliana Leggitt at juliana@seconference.org.

- Proposals received after the deadline may be considered but only if they can be accommodated by SEC's review process. Additional information provided after the deadline may also be considered but only if such information can be accommodated by the review process.

Public Information: Proposals and work plans may be distributed throughout the organization for review and comment. Proprietary information should not be submitted in any proposal. SEC will not knowingly reveal the contents of a proposal that is not subsequently accepted for contract; however, SEC accepts no liability should such contents inadvertently be revealed to third parties.

Changes. Any changes or addendum will be posted on the Alaska Mariculture Cluster website and sent directly to respondents who have specifically requested notification.

Preparation Costs. SEC is not liable for any costs incurred by the proposer during the proposal preparation.

Questions. Inquiries regarding this request for qualifications shall be directed to procurement officer Alan Sorum at alan@seconference.org and project manager Juliana Leggitt at juliana@seconference.org.

Evaluation Criteria and Award Process:

Criteria for evaluating proposals is as follows:

- Importance of the research and development project to growth of the Alaska mariculture industry (35%)
- Past experience on relevant or similar projects (20%)
- Demonstration of capacity and methods to complete deliverables successfully and within a reasonable timeline (20%)
- Costs are reasonable and fall within available/projected funding levels (25%).

Scoring of each proposal against the criteria listed above will be conducted by an RFP review committee. SEC reserves the right to reject any and all of the proposals received. If necessary, SEC may select the proposal or proposals that, in its sole view, most nearly conform to its needs as outlined in this RFP and then negotiate directly with that consultant to refine the proposal to achieve a contract that fully satisfies SEC needs.

A notice of intent to award is expected to be announced by January 26, 2024.

About Southeast Conference:

As the state and federally designated regional economic development organization for Southeast Alaska, Southeast Conference serves as the collective voice for advancing the region's economy. Southeast Conference has over 200 member organizations representing 1,200 people from 32 regional communities and 19 Tribes. The mission of Southeast Conference is to undertake and support activities that promote strong economies, healthy communities, and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska. Southeast Conference formed in 1958 with a group of people supporting the establishment of a regional transportation system in Southeast Alaska, which led to the formation of the Alaska Marine Highway System. After that success Southeast Conference stayed together through more than a half-

century to focus on concerns unique to the region, including transportation, maritime, tourism, seafood, natural resources, health care, government, and overall quality of life.