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SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

## **Alaska Mariculture Cluster**

### **Alaska Mariculture Cluster Equipment RFP**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
RFP #2023-06  
EDA Project Number 07-79-07904  
Date of Issue: November 21, 2023  
Proposals Due: 1/8/2024

#### **Summary:**

Under the Equipment & Technology component of the Alaska Mariculture Cluster (AMC) grant, Southeast Conference is soliciting pre-proposals from eligible entities for the purchase of equipment to support a variety of mariculture operations including processing, nursery, and hatchery development. Selected pre-proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal. The pre-proposal process is intended to reduce the burden of preparing full proposals that do not score highly at this time and are in need of additional development. Pre-proposals that do not advance at this time will be encouraged to continue working on their project and resubmit to future AMC Equipment RFPs to be issued in 2024 and 2025.

#### **Background:**

Southeast Conference – the state and federally recognized economic development organization for Southeast Alaska – is the lead institution administering a federal grant from the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA) to grow Alaska’s mariculture industry through the Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC) program. The Alaska Mariculture Cluster (AMC) grant 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 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026. More information on the Alaska Mariculture Cluster (AMC) is available at [www.alaskamariculturecluster.org](http://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.

The objective of this RFP within the Equipment and Technology component is to stimulate mariculture industry growth through strategic investments in nursery, hatchery, and processing capacity in Alaska. Equipment purchases will help industry participants:

- Safely and cost-effectively handle and process seaweed and shellfish into products with strong market demand.
- Reduce operating costs, increase production capacity, and improve seed quality.
- Add capacity where needed to address any regional seed supply gaps, such as through the purchase of new oyster floating upweller systems (FLUPSYs), containerized seaweed nurseries, or other similar equipment.

A total of \$7.2 million in equipment funds are included in the AMC grant. Additionally, \$378,000 in supplies are included with a focus on hatchery/nursery supplies. SEC intends to use the supplies budget to support equipment purchases selected through this and future RFPs.

The AMC Equipment RFP will be reissued in November 2024 and November 2025. This staggered release will provide funding availability for projects not ready for this RFP – helping to ensure an equitable distribution of funds. No more than one-third of equipment funds will be released under this current 2023 RFP.

Through a separate RFP awarded in summer 2023, SEC hired Hatch – a global aquaculture consultancy – to provide equipment consulting services to SEC as well as potential equipment applicants upon request. Requests for Hatch consulting services can be made at any time and will be considered by SEC on a rolling basis – reach out to [dan@seconference.org](mailto:dan@seconference.org) to discuss your information needs and the fit with the Hatch consulting services available. Hatch will also be advising SEC in the process of evaluating pre-proposals and full proposals submitted through this RFP.

### Eligible Entities:

Due to EDA rules, only the following types of entities are eligible for proposing equipment purchases through the AMC grant:

- EDA-designated Economic Development Districts
- Indian Tribes, consortium of Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, Tribal Cooperatives
- States, boroughs, cities, or other political subdivisions of a State
- Institutions of higher education or consortiums of institutions of higher education
- Public or private non-profit organizations.

### AMC Equipment Procurement Process:

Pre-proposals are solicited from qualified applicants with equipment programs that broadly stimulate the growth of the mariculture industry in their region. Consideration will be given to ensure a spread of

projects between the four regions identified in the AMC grant (Southeast Alaska, Prince William Sound, Kenai Peninsula, and Kodiak/Aleutians).

This RFP will be reissued in November 2024 and November 2025. This staggered release will provide funding availability for projects not ready for this RFP – helping to ensure an equitable distribution of funds. No more than one-third of equipment funds will be released under this current RFP. If necessary, future RFPs will include modified scoring criteria to further support equity goals, including equity between regions of Alaska.

Equipment purchases must be for use at mariculture hatcheries/nurseries or processing facilities/sites. Farming equipment is not eligible for funding. Equipment is defined in 2 CFR 200.1 as tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000. Equipment maintenance and use are not funded under this RFP, only the cost of equipment purchase, shipping, and calibration. Prior to receiving funding, applicants must demonstrate the ability to house and maintain the equipment for its useful life, among other requirements.

Applicants should be aware that EDA will maintain first priority lien on any equipment purchased with BBBRC funds and will require recipients of BBBRC-funded equipment to follow specific procurement and filing processes detailed in this [Equipment Purchase Checklist](#) found on the AMC website's [resources page](#). Applicants also must not be disbarred from receiving federal funds and have an active UEI number through sam.gov by the time they receive funding. Applicants are advised that additional requirements may be added by EDA or SEC to meet federal requirements.

## RFP Timeline

**Pre-proposals are due by January 8, 2024.** By January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, SEC will announce the projects that are invited to submit a full proposal. Pre-proposals that do not advance will be encouraged to continue working on their project and resubmit to future AMC Equipment RFPs to be issued in November 2024 and November 2025 (new pre-proposals will also be solicited in those future RFPs). The use of a two-step RFP that includes pre-proposals is intended to reduce the burden of preparing full proposals that do not score highly at this time and are in need of additional development.

Full proposals will contain the same types of information as the pre-proposals with significantly more supporting material and detail required. Full proposals will be due by March 8, 2024 and scored using the same criteria used for the pre-proposals. A notice of intent to award equipment funding under this RFP is expected to be announced by March 31, 2024.

### Funding Available:

Funding is secured through the Equipment & Technology component of the AMC grant, which includes \$7.2 million in equipment funding and \$378K in supplies funding. The number of projects funded and award amounts will depend on the quantity and quality of proposals received. No more than one-third of equipment funds will be released under this current RFP, to hold money back for 2024 and 2025 issuances of this RFP. There is no cap set on each individual equipment purchase, but the larger the budget the more impact will be expected.

Successful applicants to this RFP can elect to either be reimbursed for the relevant equipment or receive funding in advance of purchase. Both options require applicants to work with EDA personnel to fulfill requirements listed in the [Equipment Purchase Checklist](#). It is strongly advised that successful applicants, even if opting to front the initial cost of equipment and pursue reimbursement, consult with EDA prior to purchase in order to ensure all requirements are or will be met. More information can be provided by SEC upon request.

Applicants may indicate if a proposed project can move forward with partial or phased funding and identify funding sources that have been previously sought, if applicable. Match is not required or requested (applicants can receive top scoring without any match) though financial resources and experience will be considered as part of the applicant's ability to house and maintain the equipment for its useful life.

### Proposal Contents:

Pre-proposals are expected to be no more than 4 pages in length, excluding supporting documents (resumes, letters of support, equipment quotes, etc.) which may be attached. Letters of support should generally be one page or less in length.

The pre-proposal narrative must provide:

1. Name of organization, Title of project, and Project Leader and team members, with email contact(s).
2. Focus area (hatchery/nursery or processing).
3. Description of equipment or equipment type requested.
4. Discussion of project context and importance, including any related work completed to date. How is the equipment purchase necessary to stimulate growth within the relevant focus area (hatchery/nursery/processing) and region?
5. Description of how the equipment purchase will have a broad benefit to multiple stakeholders and contribute to the equity goals in the BBB program. Letters of support from local and regional stakeholders are strongly encouraged. All proposals must demonstrate collaboration with and/or support from local or regional Alaska Native entities.
6. Description of the organization requesting funding and proposed equipment program. Where present, include a description of the organization's activities related to mariculture; experience with federal grants/contracts; experience with housing, maintaining, and/or using equipment comparable to that requested; and plan for housing, maintaining, and using equipment purchased.
7. Estimated budget amount (a detailed budget narrative is not required).

### Proposal Submission Process:

**Deadline.** Submit proposals in pdf format by January 8, 2024 by 5pm AST via email to procurement officer Alan Sorum at [alan@seconference.org](mailto:alan@seconference.org) and project manager Juliana Leggitt at [juliana@seconference.org](mailto:juliana@seconference.org).

- Proposers are encouraged to verify with the procurement officer that the pre-proposal has been received prior to the deadline.

- 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 pre-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 pre-proposal preparation.

**Questions.** Inquiries regarding this request for proposals can be directed to procurement officer Alan Sorum at [alan@seconference.org](mailto:alan@seconference.org) and project manager Juliana Leggitt at [juliana@seconference.org](mailto:juliana@seconference.org).

### Evaluation Criteria and Award Process:

All proposals must demonstrate engagement with and support from local or regional Alaska Native entities. Consideration will be given to ensure a spread of projects between the four regions identified in the AMC grant (Southeast Alaska, Prince William Sound, Kenai Peninsula, and Kodiak/Aleutians).

Criteria for evaluating proposals is as below. There is no cap set on each individual equipment purchase, but the larger the budget the more impact will be expected:

- Organizational capacity – Does the entity receiving equipment have the resources needed to house, maintain, and use the equipment for its useful life (or a credible plan to gather the necessary resources)? (35%)
- Regional impact – Does the equipment purchase represent a coordinated solution that addresses a barrier to mariculture industry growth in the state or region? How much does this investment stimulate private sector job creation/investment and benefit multiple stakeholders? (35%)

- Cost effectiveness – Does the proposed purchase use appropriate technology to accomplish goals in a cost-effective way? (15%)
- BBB equity goals – How much does the project positively impact Alaska Native industry participants and/or underserved communities (all projects must meet this criteria to some degree)? (15%)

Scoring of each pre-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 pre-proposal or proposals that, in its sole view, most nearly conform to its needs as outlined in this RFP and then negotiate directly with SEC staff and its consultant to refine the pre-proposal to achieve a contract that fully satisfies SEC needs.

#### [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.