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## **Alaska Mariculture Cluster**

# **Marketing Program Development & Implementation RFP**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
RFP #2025-02  
EDA Project Number 07-79-0794

Date of Issue: March 28, 2025  
Closes: May 5, 2025

### **Summary**

Southeast Conference (SEC), in partnership with Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA), is soliciting proposals from experienced marketing firms to work with SEC and AMA staff, Alaska Mariculture Cluster (AMC) coalition and industry members, and others to unlock industry growth potential and increase market demand for Alaska mariculture products. Currently, mariculture production in Alaska is primarily focused on oysters and kelp products sold into food-related markets, though many kelp products are being researched and developed for other markets, including bioplastics, cosmetics, agriculture, and other markets. The intent of the RFP is to build demand within existing and emerging markets. Multiple contractors may be selected to ensure the ability to engage in a broad range of mariculture products and markets.

### **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, trade organizations and more. A Governance Body, composed of AMC

coalition leads as well as Tribal representatives from each of the project regions, guides the work and evaluation of the overall grant.

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.

## Related AMC Projects

Applicants are encouraged to review and consider existing AMC research and initiatives related to this RFP, including but not limited to the following:

- **Food Sector Market Research:** The AMC has contracted Food for Climate League (FCL) to [conduct market research](#) on consumer preferences, market gaps, and potential growth areas for Alaska's mariculture products in food markets.
- **AMA Governance Coordination and Outreach:** Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA) has a seat on the AMC governing body, manages the tribal and rural community liaison program, and led creation of a Public Relations and Communications Plan for the Alaska mariculture industry.

AMA's members have also identified marketing as a key priority and voted to support legislation allowing the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute to market mariculture products. AMA will be collaborating with SEC on guiding and informing the work of the contractor selected through this RFP. AMA will create and manage two industry panel groups (Shellfish & Seaweed) to provide initial input and continued feedback throughout the project, recognizing that each sector has their own unique marketing needs.

- **Kelp Processing Technical Report:** This report provides information on kelp processing technologies, market trends, and regulatory considerations related to both food and non-food applications. "[Kelp Processing: Technical Report on Technology, Market, and Regulatory Considerations](#)".
- **Oyster Nutritional Profile:** AMC recently funded a project managed by the Alaska Shellfish Grower's Association to develop a [nutritional label for Alaska oysters](#).
- **Joint Innovation Projects:** These initiatives are exploring innovative approaches to seaweed processing and farming that may yield new products and applications to be marketed.
- **Equipment Program:** This program supports investments in seaweed processing and nursery equipment that will enhance product quality and consistency.
- **Kelp Biostimulant Market Development:** AMC recently announced funding for three groundbreaking projects that will help propel Alaska's mariculture industry by researching kelp-based biostimulants for agricultural markets.

## Scope of Work

This Marketing Program Development & Implementation project will lay the groundwork for growing the commercial value of Alaska's mariculture industry within Alaska, domestic, and international markets in collaboration with companies producing Alaska mariculture products or products made with Alaska mariculture ingredients.

Successful proposals will demonstrate a plan to increase demand for Alaska mariculture products sold into food-related markets as well as unlock industry potential within less developed markets, such as agriculture, bioplastics, and cosmetics, among others. The work of this project may feed into future marketing efforts by trade organizations or marketing associations working to advance Alaska's mariculture industry.

Proposals can address a variety of topics, including some or all of those listed below. Proposers may include additional recommendations or specifics that would benefit the project based on their professional expertise.

- Digital & Physical Asset Creation
  - Coordinating photographers with industry members to create a media library of high-quality imagery/video assets of mariculture operations, products, preparations, and consumers. Ensure permissions are in place for expected uses.
  - Establish methodology for using these assets for long-lasting effect, such as an online platform to share assets among industry and promotion partners or other long-term uses.
- Trade Show and/or Culinary Festival Participation
  - Organize an Alaska mariculture umbrella booth or presence at trade shows or festivals focused on targeted audiences for mariculture products. This could include consumer-packaged goods (CPG), food service, seafood, agricultural markets, beauty/health ingredient markets, and/or others.
  - Support mariculture food product samples at events. Please explain the target audience and target mariculture products associated with any proposed events.
- Media & Familiarization Tours/or in-bound buyer's missions
  - Design and execute media and/or influencer familiarization trips to Alaska mariculture farms, processing facilities, and coastal communities. Trips will support targeted food influencers and media becoming Alaska mariculture advocates and ambassadors, among other strategic goals.

- o Design and execute in-bound buyer’s mission targeting one or more segments of the mariculture industry
- Engaging Restaurants, Chefs, & Retailers
  - o Partner and promote mariculture products to grow familiarity among chefs and retail buyers about taste and potential uses of kelp, oyster, and other mariculture products.
  - o Conduct menu promotions in target markets, including within Alaska, showcasing Alaska mariculture products suitable for restaurants.
- Digital and physical sales collateral such as buyer’s guides, tasting notes, or marketing templates that producers can customize to fit their products.

All deliverables produced under this RFP will become publicly available on completion. Specific deliverables, deadlines, and projects will be identified in collaboration with selected contractor(s), building on project proposals submitted through this RFP.

## **Funding Available:**

A total of \$500,000 in funding available, secured through the AMC’s [Market Development](#) component project. Depending on proposals received and the submitting firms’ specialized expertise, multiple contractors may be selected for different work areas. SEC is pursuing approval of additional marketing funds through the AMC project; if approved, additional budget could be added to this contract on mutual agreement with selected contractor(s).

## **General Requirements:**

**Timeline.** A notice of intent to award is expected to be announced by May 23, 2025. Project work is to begin in June or July 2025. Selected proposals will be funded through the end of the AMC grant (September 2026).

**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 a UEI through SAM.gov prior to award finalization. Applicants, including any subcontractors, must not be disbarred from receiving federal funds.

**Public Information.** All products produced under this RFP will become publicly available on completion.

## **Proposal Contents:**

Proposals are expected to be no more than 10 pages in length, excluding attachments such as resumes, project examples, letters of support, and/or budget templates. Proposals should include the following components:

### **1. Introduction and Project Understanding**

- Demonstrate understanding of the Alaska mariculture industry and relevant markets
- Overview of team and approach to the project

### **2. Methodology**

- Provide a proposed approach to the scope of work, including general tactics, timelines, and deliverables
- Describe how the plan will address different market segments and product applications
- Explain how success will be measured for each component

### **3. Experience and Qualifications**

- Describe relevant experience of the firm and key team members
- Highlight experience with similar projects, industry sectors, and markets

## 5. Management Plan

- Describe how the work will be managed and coordinated, including the role of each key team member and subcontractor
- Provide a project timeline with major milestones
- Explain procedures for ensuring quality control and addressing challenges

## 6. Budget and Cost Effectiveness

- Provide a summarized budget in the proposal as well as spreadsheet budget using the [Contractor Budget Template](#). Details will be further refined and negotiated with the selected contractor.
- Include a table that breaks down costs by major activity/deliverable
- Include fully loaded hourly rates for personnel working on the project

## Proposal Submission Process:

**Deadline.** Submit proposals in pdf format by May 5, 2025 via email to Stephane Granato at [stephane@seconference.org](mailto:stephane@seconference.org) and Dan Lesh at [dan@seconference.org](mailto:dan@seconference.org).

- Proposers are encouraged to verify with SEC that the 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 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 proposals shall be directed to Dan Lesh (dan@seconference) and Jason Lessard (jlessard@alaskamariculture.org).

## Evaluation Criteria and Award Process:

Criteria for evaluating proposals are as follows:

- **Strategic Approach and Impact (40%):** The quality, creativity, and potential effectiveness of the proposed marketing approach, including consideration of innovative strategies that address the unique challenges and opportunities of Alaska's mariculture industry.
- **Experience and Capability (40%):** The qualifications, experience, and demonstrated success of the proposer in similar marketing initiatives. Specific experience with seafood, agricultural, or marine products marketing will be highly valued.
- **Cost Effectiveness (20%):** The reasonableness of the proposed budget relative to the scope of work and expected outcomes. Efficient use of resources and clear budget justification.

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 proposals that, in its sole view, most nearly conform to its needs as outlined in this RFP and then negotiate directly with that proposer to refine the proposal to achieve a contract that fully satisfies SEC's 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.

### **About Alaska Mariculture Alliance:**

Established in 2021, the Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA) is a successor organization to the Alaska Mariculture Task Force. AMA is a nonprofit organization with the stated mission to develop a robust, sustainable mariculture industry for the long-term benefit of Alaska's economy, environment, and communities. The Alaska Mariculture Alliance is the defacto voice of the industry whose membership includes shellfish and seaweed farmers and processors, hatchery operators, Alaska Native Corporations and villages, regional economic development authorities, research institutions, state agencies, and coastal communities.