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Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy Report RFP

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS RFP #2025-02

Date of Issue: February 14, 2025

Proposals Due: March 14, 2025

Summary

Southeast Conference is requesting proposals from qualified individuals, companies, or organizations to develop a comprehensive report on the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS) initiative. The report should capture lessons learned, success stories, and the overall impact of the initiative, and be presented as a publishable document with supplementary materials. The selected contractor will be expected to compile and analyze relevant data, engage with key stakeholders, and ensure the final deliverables meet the objectives of showcasing the SASS initiative's activities and successes.

Background

Three USDA agencies (Forest Service, Rural Development, and Natural Resources Conservation Service collectively working as OneUSDA) launched the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS) initiative in 2021. The goal of the SASS initiative is to support a diverse economy, conserve natural resources, and improve community resiliency and Tribal engagement throughout Southeast Alaska.

As part of the strategy, the Secretary of Agriculture made an initial commitment of \$25 million to the region. Following a solicitation of project ideas based on local priorities, \$25 million in projects were identified for funding in four broad investment categories: Tribal and Indigenous Interests (50%), Natural Resources (25%), Infrastructure (12.5%), and Community Capacity (12.5%). Investment recommendations were selected based on the strength of their ability to leverage existing regional partnerships, represent priority economic sectors, address critical community capacity needs, and meet SASS's goals of ecological, economic, and cultural sustainability in the Tongass. SASS also encourages

investment proposals that address historic and structural decisions which have previously contributed to inequitable access to programs at the three OneUSDA agencies.

Roughly half of the \$25 million investments were funded directly by the three OneUSDA agencies, and the other half funded through cooperative agreements with three “regional strengthening partners” – Southeast Conference (the state and federally recognized regional economic development organization for Southeast Alaska), Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, and Spruce Root (a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution focused on Southeast Alaska). In total, thirty-three different Southeast Alaska entities are receiving SASS project money, including local Tribes, non-profits, local governments, and Alaska Native Corporations. The full project list can be found at https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1058651.pdf.

Southeast Conference’s cooperative agreement includes the creation of an annual report that includes significant input from SASS partners. To this end, Southeast Conference will collaborate with Spruce Root and other partners throughout the report drafting process, though the selected contractor will be managed by Southeast Conference. The report will provide a comprehensive overview of all \$25 million in SASS projects, offering a holistic view on the positive economic, environmental, and community impacts SASS has had across Southeast Alaska. While many projects have been completed, some remain ongoing. Future funding may become available to support the development of an updated report.

Scope of Work:

Task 1: Conduct Program Familiarization, Background Research, and Project Management Planning.

- Participate in a kickoff call with key stakeholders convened by SEC.
- Gain a thorough understanding of the mission, goals, structure, projects, and key organizations involved in SASS.
 - Gather and review relevant materials, including reports, photos, videos, news articles, story maps, and other existing content to understand the scope and impacts of SASS.
 - SEC has a spreadsheet of all SASS projects and compiled progress reports and other products from many of the projects already.

- Meet with members of the OneUSDA team, regional strengthening partners, and other key SASS stakeholders across different Southeast Alaska communities.
 - Attend two already existing monthly meetings.
 - Conduct 6-8 interviews to further engage with SASS stakeholders and get the lay of the land.

Task 2: Develop Report Approach in Collaboration with Southeast Conference.

- Identify any additional or missing quantitative metrics or storytelling perspectives to frame the analysis and narrative of the report.
- Conduct targeted outreach and follow-up interviews to collect any missing or updated data and testimonials critical to the report.

Deliverable:

- A brief project plan that includes:
 - Proposed methodology.
 - Report outline.
 - Proposed supplementary materials to accompany the report. Some ideas include:
 - Highlights document suitable for printing as a two-page pamphlet.
 - Infographic dashboard that can be embedded on a webpage related to SASS.
 - Overview of the graphic design elements including color scheme, layout, and other visual elements.

Task 3: Draft and Finalize the Report and Supplementary Materials.

- Solicit and incorporate feedback from key stakeholders.
- Solicit and incorporate feedback from project leads on content related to their specific projects to ensure accuracy and proper representation.

Deliverables:

- A draft report and supplementary materials by June 1st, 2025.

- A publishable-quality report and supplementary materials by July 1st, 2025.
- Short slide deck and availability for a virtual presentation of the report.

Funding Available:

Funding is secured through the SASS agreement between Southeast Conference and Rural Development, with up to \$50,000 budgeted for the scope of work described. 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 selected entity will designate one person as the project manager and point of contact with SEC.

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

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.

Proposal Contents

SEC discourages overly lengthy and costly proposals; proposals are expected to be no more than 5 pages in length, excluding attachments such as budget templates, resumes and work samples.

Proposals should include the following components:

- **Introduction, Understanding of the Project, and Approach:** Include the RFP title and a brief discussion of how the proposer intends to accomplish the scope of work and deliverables requested. Proposers may submit additional recommendations that would benefit the project.
- **Experience and Qualifications:** Describe relevant experience of the individual or 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:** Please complete the [contractor budget template](#) and provide a list of the key individuals/subcontractors expected to work on this project, the fully loaded rates charged per individual, any estimated travel costs or other expenses, and total cost for each deliverable. The contract procured can be conducted as reimbursement for hours expended or as a fixed-price contract.

Proposal Submission Process

Deadline. Submit proposals in PDF format via email to Stephane Granato at stephane@seconference.org and project manager Dan Lesh at dan@seconference.org. Proposals are due on **March 14, 2025**. Proposers are encouraged to verify that the proposal has been received before their intended 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 to the RFP will be posted on the Southeast Conference 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 Stephane Granato at stephane@seconference.org and project manager Dan Lesh at dan@seconference.org.

Evaluation Criteria and Award Process

Criteria for evaluating proposals is as follows:

- Demonstration of knowledge and understanding of the project (20%).
- Past experience on relevant or similar projects (40%).
- Demonstration of capacity to complete deliverables successfully and within a reasonable timeline (20%).
- Costs are reasonable and fall within available/projected funding levels (20%).

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 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 March 31, 2025.

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 240 member organizations representing 1,200 people from 35 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, tourism, seafood, natural resources, health care, government, and overall quality of life.