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Southeast Conference Website Redesign RFP

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS RFP #2025-03

Date of Issue: February 21, 2025

Proposals Due: March 14, 2025

Summary

Southeast Conference (SEC) is requesting proposals from qualified individuals, companies, or organizations with expertise in web design and development to undertake a comprehensive redesign of our website. Our goal is to create a modern, user-friendly online platform that showcases the work being done by SEC and its partners to drive economic growth and development in Southeast Alaska. The redesigned website will serve as a centralized hub where members, stakeholders, and the public can access updated information about SEC projects, events, and resources. The plan is to launch the new website at our next Annual Meeting in September 2025.

Background

Southeast Conference is one of three regional strengthening partners for the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS), an initiative launched in 2021 by three USDA agencies—the Forest Service, Rural Development, and Natural Resources Conservation Service—working collectively as OneUSDA. The strategy aims to foster a diverse economy, conserve natural resources, and enhance community resilience and Tribal engagement across Southeast Alaska.

As part of the strategy, the Secretary of Agriculture committed an initial \$25 million to the region. Roughly half of the \$25 million investments were funded directly by the three OneUSDA agencies, and the other half funded through cooperative agreements with the three regional strengthening partners, including SEC.

A guiding principle of SASS is Southeast Conference’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which also shapes the work of SEC’s teams, including Biomass and Energy, Mariculture, Transportation, Special Projects, SASS, and Administration.

- Biomass and Energy: Supports energy-efficient solutions and beneficial electrification to reduce costs and reliance on fossil fuels in rural communities.
- Mariculture: Advances mariculture industry growth through research, workforce development, equipment and technology, and market expansion for shellfish and seaweed farming.
- Transportation: Works to strengthen regional connectivity by improving the Alaska Marine Highway System, freight logistics, and essential infrastructure.
- Special Projects: Addresses key economic and environmental challenges, including timber sustainability, food security, and workforce development.
- SASS: Implements projects and initiatives under the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy to promote long-term economic and ecological resilience.
- Administration: Leads event planning and coordination while supporting the other teams with financial processes and communication.

Southeast Conference’s SASS agreement outlines its responsibility to work with SASS partners to create content that highlights the impacts and stories of SASS across the region. To support these efforts, SEC is soliciting a contractor to revamp its website by developing a dedicated SASS page and updating existing pages to better reflect each team’s work. Through a separate RFP, SEC is soliciting a contractor to produce videos showcasing its work across Southeast Alaska. Contractors may submit a combined proposal for both the video production and website redesign RFPs.

Scope of Work:

Task 1: Conduct discovery and research in preparation for a proposed website redesign plan.

- Participate in a kickoff call with the SEC communications team.
- Interview SEC teams — Admin, Biomass + Energy, Mariculture, Transportation, Special Projects, and SASS — to understand each programs activities, website needs, and communication goals.
 - Review existing communication materials provided by these teams.

- Conduct a review of Southeast Conference’s [current website](#), other economic development organizations’ websites, and SEC’s [Alaska Mariculture Cluster Website](#) (which we see as a potential model for the new SEC website).

Task 2: Develop a project plan.

Deliverable:

A plan that contains and provides recommendations on the following:

- Website architecture and uniform concepts for layout and branding.
 - Each SEC team (see teams under Task 1) has its own landing page and sub-architecture.
- Content Management System and Theme.
 - Southeast Conference uses WordPress and Divy on its [own website](#), and WordPress and Avada on the [Alaska Mariculture Cluster Website](#) SEC staff manages. SEC is open to other suggestions, but staff has preferred WordPress and Avada.
- Content Creation and Management.
 - Dedicated space for board meeting minutes, agendas, and packets.
 - Dedicated spaces for each SEC team to post regular updates, including newsletters, publications, RFPs, photos, videos, infographics, story maps, and presentations.
 - Searchable and filterable content.
 - Examples: [AMC News Page](#); [AMC RFP Page](#).
 - Content that should be excluded from old website in the redesigned website.
 - Additional content needed for redesigned website pages.
- Plugins for event registration, newsletters, donations/memberships, and social media.
- Other features and elements that are identified in Task 1 discovery and research.

Task 3: Create a draft and final website.

- Two to three rounds of revisions before finalizing the website.
 - SEC envisions an iterative feedback process and welcomes recommendations on the best stages of website development for incorporating feedback.

Deliverable:

- Final website that is responsive, functional, search engine optimized, and aligns with SEC staff needs and the project plan.

Task 4: Facilitate website onboarding and support services.

- SEC would look to the contract on recommended onboarding materials or trainings for SEC staff regarding website design and plugins.

Deliverable:

- Support services during the six-months following the end of the project to address bugs and tweaks (up to 20 hours).

Funding Available:

Funding is secured through the SASS agreement between Southeast Conference and USDA Rural Development. 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 4 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. Proposers are encouraged to share relevant examples of existing 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 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 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 competitive (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.