



9360 Glacier Hwy, Ste 201
Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 586-4360
www.seconference.org
www.alaskamariculturecluster.org

Kelp Agricultural Product Development and Testing

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) 2024-04

EDA Project Number 07-79-07901

Date of Issue: 8/12/2024

Proposals Due: 10/21/2024

Links have been updated

Summary

Southeast Conference is soliciting proposals for agricultural product development and/or field trials involving Alaska kelp. Funded projects will conduct research and development projects that result in publicly available reports and data that advance an understanding of the most promising agricultural uses of Alaska kelp. Multiple projects may be funded through this RFP, with project completion required by September 2026. All Build Back Better Regional Challenge funds must be expended no later than September 30th, 2026. Proposals are welcome from companies, Tribes, Native Corporations, universities, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and other entities working in Alaska.

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 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.

This RFP is funded through the AMC Research and Development Component Project, with a possibility of other federal funds/grants to SEC supplying additional funding.

Related AMC Projects

While not an exhaustive list, relevant projects underway within the AMC project include those listed below. Applicants are encouraged to review these projects and consider ways to collaborate or build on what has been learned or is underway.

- \$360,000 in seaweed tissue analysis to be completed in 2024 and roughly the same again in 2025. More details on the targeted set of seaweed species and analytes is provided in [the RFP \(and links within\)](#) that went out to select the lab.
- Two rounds of Joint Innovation Projects (JIP) have been launched. JIP Round 1 awards ([more info here](#)) were made in Spring 2023 and included six projects in the area of seaweed processing along with three related to kelp farming. JIP Round II awards ([more info here](#)) were made in Summer 2024 and included seven related to seaweed processing and four related to kelp farming.
- [Round I of the Equipment program](#) resulted in four projects under way that involve the purchase of seaweed processing or seaweed hatchery/nursery equipment.
- Round I of the AMC Other Species program funded two projects developing methods to grow new seaweed species not currently in broad cultivation, including dulse, split kelp, and dragon kelp. For more information contact SEC staff.

Scope of Work

Southeast Conference is soliciting proposals for agricultural product development, testing, and field trials with Alaska kelp. Funded projects will conduct research and development projects that result in publicly available reports and data that advance an understanding of the most promising agricultural uses of Alaska kelp. Of particular interest are products with plant biostimulant or fertilizer properties, livestock feeds that incorporate kelp, or other kelp-based agricultural products. Projects involving field trials can include a product development component or test commercially-available products made with Alaska kelp.

Eligible Project Categories

All projects will be done with species of kelp proposed for cultivation in Alaska and that have demonstrated potential for scale. Project proposals must be in one or both of the following eligible categories:

- Product development, including purchasing kelp, processing trials, product analysis, and related work.
- Testing of product efficacy at farms, greenhouses, ranches, agriculture research facilities, or other real or simulated agricultural settings.

The goal of this RFP is to fund projects with demonstrated potential to result in scalable commercial applications and contribute to mariculture industry growth in Alaska.

Deliverables

The following deliverables will be a requirement of all funded projects:

- Semiannual reports to SEC detailing progress, including any problems encountered and how they are being addressed.
- Annual virtual presentation to AMC Coalition members on project progress
- Summary of the project to be presented at the annual Alaska Mariculture Conference or a similar mutually-agreeable venue.
- A copy of all data produced in conducting the project. Data should be provided in commonly-used formats that allow other researchers to re-analyze the data.
- A final report submitted to SEC detailing project outcomes – including successes, challenges, and lessons learned – to be posted online for the public.

Funding Available

Funding is secured through the federally funded Alaska Mariculture Cluster grant, with a possibility of other federal funds/grants to SEC supplying additional funding. Projects must be completed by September 2026 and must build in and meet intermediate milestones that indicate continued research is warranted.

Project proposals may be funded in the range of \$50,000 to \$500,000. Project impact is expected to be scaled with project budget. If the need for additional related services arises, additional scope and budget may be added to this contract on mutual agreement.

Matching funds are not required but will score extra points.

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/contractors, one shall be designated as the lead to serve as the project manager and point of contact. Any change of lead personnel shall be reported to SEC within 7 days.

Disbarment. Applicants must have or acquire a UEI and be registered through SAM.gov prior to award finalization. Applicants, including any subcontractors, must not be disbarred from receiving federal funds.

Alaska Business License. Per AS 43.70.020(a) a business license is required for the privilege of engaging in a business in the State of Alaska. Per AS 43.70.110(1) “Business” means a for-profit or non-profit entity engaging or offering to engage in a trade, a service, a profession, or an activity with the goal of receiving a financial benefit in exchange for the provision of services, or goods, or other property. If selected for funding under this RFP, an [Alaska Business License](#) will be required.

Restrictions on Funds. Funding is not eligible to be used for infrastructure, including construction, real property or improvements to real property. Funding cannot be used to purchase equipment. “Equipment” means purchases of single units with a total purchase price, including shipping and installation, in excess of \$5,000. If proposal is contingent upon purchasing equipment, please contact Dan Lesh (dan@seconference.org) to discuss in advance of proposal submission. Exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Public Information. All products produced under this RFP will become publicly available on completion. All files and raw data collected during this project shall be the property of SEC.

Proposal Contents

Proposals are expected to be no more than 12 pages in length, excluding attachments such as budget template, resumes, and project summaries/examples.

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.
- **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 participants.
- **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 total project cost and breakdown, using the Contractor Budget Template available on [the Grantee Resources webpage](#). For larger projects with discrete phases, please fill out a budget template spreadsheet for each phase.

Proposal Submission Process

Deadline. Submit proposals in pdf format by 10/21/2024 by 5pm AST via email to procurement officer Alan Sorum at alan@seconference.org and project manager Dan Lesh at dan@seconference.org.

- Proposers are encouraged to verify with the procurement officer 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 qualifications shall be directed to procurement officer Alan Sorum at alan@seconference.org and project manager Dan Lesh at dan@seconference.org.

Evaluation Criteria and Award Process

Criteria for evaluating proposals is as follows:

- Feasibility of the proposed project and demonstration of capacity to complete all of the deliverables within the required timeline (30%)
- Impact: Potential to result in scalable commercial applications and contribute to mariculture industry growth in Alaska. Impacts are expected to be scaled with project budget (40%)
- Past experience on relevant and/or similar projects (20%)
- Other resources committed by the project team (i.e. matching funds, existing equipment, staff time, etc.) (10%)

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 needs.

A notice of intent to award is expected to be announced by November 12, 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.