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## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

### STRATEGIC CONSULTATION SERVICES

#### Background and Statement of Work:

The Southeast Landscape of the Future Initiative “Building the Southeast Landscape of the Future” provides an opportunity for Tribal, federal, and state natural resource leaders and leaders in collaborative conservation initiatives to come together to define a shared vision for the Southeastern landscape of the future. This Initiative is enabling participants to connect regionally to build a stronger collective voice and community, convene with peers to learn from each other, build capacity to address shared challenges, and catalyze actions that strengthen future collaboration and enhance conservation success. An initial Summit to bring together partners from across the natural resources community in the South to determine a path forward was held February 27-29, 2024, in New Orleans, LA.

The SE Landscape of the Future Initiative is a collaborative development with diverse representation across the Southeast natural resource community. A primary focus of the Initiative is on building relationships to work toward a shared vision for collective action across the landscape. Reaching that shared vision will require interactive engagement between natural resource community leaders. Data-driven approaches, such as Social Network Analyses (SNA), provide a deliberate method to define those network leaders and provide the basis for data-informed decision-making regarding network growth. The first meeting of this Initiative included representatives from the USFS Regional Leadership Team, the USFWS R4 Leadership Team, the State Foresters and State Wildlife Directors from the southern 15 states, the NRCS State Conservationists, representatives from Tribal Governments, other federal and state government agencies, and the Southern Research Station Management Council. Future engagements will be based on strategically-derived approaches to build on existing relationships to foster partnerships with other organizations and sectors.

There were three major themes at the initial Summit:

- Creating success at scale: What does “landscape of the future” mean? How do different landscape scales influence success -- from the local to the regional level? Beyond geographic and ecological factors, what else do we include in a landscape?
- Collaboration is hard: Collaborations stall or fail when involved partners don’t pause to assess their readiness. Before anyone opts in or opts out, we explore what collaboration means within “building the SE landscape of the future” and what issues can most benefit from collaboration. Additionally, what kind of leadership is needed to continue the conversation, where are they, and what do they need to make the commitment?

- Inviting people to the table: Conservation cannot succeed without collaboration. It’s an invisible hand that guides the work that we do. We recognize that there are gaps in who we are collaborating with and how we are engaging them. But to date, we are lacking a framework that helps us invite new collaborators. Integrating social science provides an opportunity to build a data-informed network strategy while avoiding the focus on simply “more is better” and using research-based tools to inform how to partner with other organizations. Current efforts are not sufficient, and there is a need for a deeper understanding of both how to assess the strength of collaboration and what motivates and moves partners to action.

There are two previously completed regional products that will help identify the strengths and weaknesses in our networks, the Keeping Forests Social Network Analysis (SNA) and the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS). These efforts each provide tools for strengthening their respective networks, connecting emerging leaders, and identifying network gaps. We can use and advance these initial efforts to help broaden our stakeholder group and support the SE Landscape network in meaningful ways.

The landscape of the Southeastern U.S. will not be determined by the natural resources community alone. Other sectors of society will influence our landscape, including transportation, energy, development, etc. The SE Summit began to identify those from the natural resources community who will champion conservation and restoration during additional engagements in subsequent years. In FY25, another summit will be held, which will broaden the table to those additional sectors. Again, in FY26, a final Summit will be held to identify the most critical focus areas for continued collaborative efforts.

The hoped-for end result is that a cross-sector team identified through these three Summits will develop a long-term, cross-boundary, cross-jurisdictional, cross-sector strategic plan that identifies the most critical strategic investments the South can make to ensure human communities are healthy and resilient. Additionally, this plan would include a spatial analysis and map that identifies the areas of highest leverage across the landscape and across sectors both now and in the future.

This effort will not look like anything that is being done because it hasn’t been done before! Successfully developing a long-term, multi-sector strategic plan and prioritized spatial product will require several experts outside of the natural resources community to guide the efforts and manage the many collaborative projects that result from the discussions and work groups from the series of summits.

## I. Project Overview

### **Scope of Work - Leverage existing datasets to build out the SE Landscape of the Future network**

We are looking for an experienced professional(s) to provide Technical Consultation to build from existing social network data from Keeping Forests and SECAS to inform new opportunities for network member engagement, strategies for integrating the two networks, and strategically increasing the collaborative capacity of the integrated initiative. Expected outcomes include the development of tools and processes to operationalize connectivity (or lack thereof) among partner organizations and recommendations and examples for decision-makers to employ the tools. Specific duties and responsibilities include:

### Tool Building

- Provide project design and monthly or bi-monthly project management meetings  
*Estimated delivery – ongoing through the end of December 2024*
- Leverage existing data by combining the Keeping Forests and SECAS datasets in an accessible format for leadership use, with provisions for incorporation of future SNA data.  
*Estimated delivery – ongoing through the end of October 2024*
- Develop additional tools for building leadership capacity using simulations and skills workshop materials for use in evaluating the strength of network connections, network gaps, and approaches for expanding network participation to additional sectors.  
*Estimated delivery – ongoing through the end of December 2024*
- Develop or provide a platform for the data to include the two datasets as a tool for organizations to access, share data publicly, and disseminate.  
*Estimated delivery – ongoing through the end of December 2024*

### Data Analysis and Reporting

- Provide data analysis for a combined social network dataset and prepare a comprehensive report on the combined data, focused on new learning. Additionally, provide advice and counsel to the SE Landscape of the Future initiative planning team related to leveraging outcomes and incorporating findings into strategic planning and any future analysis needs.  
*Estimated delivery – ongoing through the end of November 2024*

### Presentations

- Provide a technical presentation on the integration of the Keeping Forests and SECAS social network analyses, and preview and demonstrate the application of associated tools. Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies annual conference, October 12-16, 2024, Augusta, GA.  
*Estimated delivery – end of October 2024*
- Provide additional presentations for leadership teams as needed and identified throughout the period of performance.  
*Estimated delivery – ongoing through the end of December 2024*

### **Schedule**

The experienced Technical Consultant will need to work quickly to achieve deliverables on time as needed. The period of performance is September 3 through December 31, 2024.

## Information Requested

If interested in submitting a bid for this project, please submit a proposal for the above statement of work by providing:

- Company Information
- Portfolio
- Methodology
- Scope
- Timeline
- Cost
- Capacity for this project
- Experience in similar projects

Specific requirements are detailed below.

## II. Required Components

### Company Information

Please provide the company name and contact information, organizational history, lead consultant profiles, and a CV or resume for each team member.

### Portfolio

Please provide a brief explanation of previous experience with similar projects (with supporting documentation) and at least three client references.

### Methodology

Please provide a detailed statement on the intended approach to completing the project.

### Scope

Please provide an initial scope of work intended to complete the project.

### Contractor Qualifications

- I. Past Experience – Please briefly explain previous work experience with land management agencies.
- II. References – Please provide three professional references that can speak to past performance.

## **Timeline**

Please provide a detailed timeline for completing the project pursuant to the project overview in this proposal request.

## **Budget**

Please provide a detailed project budget estimate. The budget estimate must include all anticipated charges, including time, travel, lodging, and per diem. The budget should represent the total sum to be billed. Invoices shall be issued monthly for services rendered NET 60 once approved by the National Tribal Geographic Information Support Center (NTGISC) and the USDA Forest Service.

## **III. SUBMISSION, EVALUATION, AND CONTACTS**

### **Contractor Selection Process**

This is a request for proposals only, and the bids furnished are not offers from the SE Summit Initiative Planning Committee. This request does not commit the SE Summit Initiative Committee, NTGISC, or the USDA Forest Service to pay any costs incurred in the preparation or submission of the proposal or to contract for supplies or services.

NTGISC will use the Evaluation Factors below to review each submitted bid. Based on the outcomes of that selection process, NTGISC will notify unsuccessful bidders and select a consultant by August 30, 2024. NTGISC will prepare a separate contract document to detail the agreement with the selected consultant.

### **Evaluation Factors and Relative Importance**

The following criteria will be used in the evaluation of submitted proposals.

- Price/cost
- Timing of when the contractor can begin and/or finish the project
- Past performance, references
- Methodology/approach
- Technical proposal / proposed approach to the project

### **Point of Contact**

Please submit any questions about the project in writing by August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, via email to [esmith@tribalgis.com](mailto:esmith@tribalgis.com).

Ed Smith, National Tribal Geographic Information Support Center, Project Manager,  
[esmith@tribalgis.com](mailto:esmith@tribalgis.com)

### **Bid Submission**

**Submit bids via email to [esmith@tribalgis.com](mailto:esmith@tribalgis.com) by 4:00 PM Central on August 23, 2024.**