



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Request for Proposals

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Communities Project Phase I: Place-Based Identification and Characterization of South Atlantic Fishing Communities

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) invites proposals from qualified contractors to conduct place-based identification and characterization of fishing communities impacted by SAFMC management. This project will enhance the Council's capacity to understand and engage these communities and provide information to help inform Phase II of this multi-phase project, to develop a comprehensive Outreach and Communication Plan.

Proposal Submission Deadline: January 12, 2026

Project Budget: \$250,000

Background

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Communities Project is a multi-phase initiative designed to enhance the Council's understanding and engagement with fishing communities across the South Atlantic region. In response to the increasing challenges posed by changing ecosystems, evolving social and economic dynamics, and uncertainty in fisheries management, the project aims to identify and characterize place-based fishing communities, assess their vulnerabilities, and develop effective communication strategies to ensure that community perspectives are fully integrated into management decisions.

Project Scope

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) seeks a contractor to undertake Phase I of its Communities Project to conduct place-based identification and characterization of fishing communities in the South Atlantic region. This project will enhance the Council's capacity to understand and engage these communities and provide the information to inform work on the next phase of the Communities Project that will include a stakeholder assessment and the development of a comprehensive Outreach and Communication Plan. The outcomes of Phase I and Phase II will also inform scenario planning discussions in Phase III of this multi-phase project.

In this phase the contractor will gather and analyze existing data to identify place-based fishing communities within the South Atlantic region at a higher resolution than is currently available through census designated place. This will be used to develop a comprehensive report and corresponding outreach products detailing the extent to which these communities interact with species managed by the SAFMC and assess their vulnerabilities to environmental changes, such as sea level rise, increasing storm impacts on fishing infrastructure, and shifts in fish distribution and productivity. By

understanding these dynamics, the Council can better tailor its management measures to support the resilience of these communities. This initiative will require the identification, gathering, and analysis of existing data to map out the geographical locations of these communities, their economic and cultural dependencies on fishing activities, and the specific environmental challenges they face. The goal is to ensure that these communities are recognized and supported through adaptive management strategies that mitigate the impacts of ongoing ecosystem change.

Project Oversight

Phases I and II of the Communities Project will be overseen by a single project oversight team (OT). The OT will provide support and guidance to contractors, ensure project expectations are met, and assist with implementation and communication of project outcomes. The OT will have 3-8 members and will include SAFMC staff and other subject matter experts.

Timeline

The SAFMC external grant process will be used to develop contract details once a proposal is selected; however, the project timeline is expected to begin in February 2026 and to be completed by May 2027. The timeline will include regular check-in meetings with the Council's Project Oversight Team. The draft report will be presented to the Council's Social and Economic Panel in April 2027, and the final report will be submitted by June 2027.

Deliverables

- Comprehensive report on place-based fishing communities impacted by SAFMC management decisions. The report will use existing data to identify and characterize the following:
 - Place-based fishing communities within the South Atlantic region and other communities impacted by SAFMC management at a higher resolution than is currently available through census designated place,
 - Interactions with Council-managed species, including information on changes in the interactions such as seasonality of species availability and new species encounters,
 - Community vulnerabilities (i.e. sea level rise, fishing infrastructure) to ecosystem and social and economic changes.
- Establish a database of information necessary to support a stakeholder assessment and the development of an Outreach and Communication Plan.
- Produce outreach products providing visual representation of projects findings, such as maps, storymaps, brochures, and infographics that can be used to communicate findings with different audiences, including the identified communities, the Council, advisory bodies and the public at large.

- Assess how the Council currently incorporates social data into its deliberations and identify on ramps where the new community-level information can support more informed decisions.
 - Develop training material on community analysis so that managers better understand social impact analysis.
 - Provide specific training to Council members and include in orientation for new members.
- Presentation of Final Report to the SAFMC Social and Economic Panel and the Council.

Applicant Qualifications:

The successful candidate should have:

- Experience with both quantitative and qualitative social science methodologies, including identification and analysis of fishing communities with a focus on communities of place and of practice (e.g. National Marine Fisheries Service social indicators)
- Demonstrated experience building relationships with communities resulting in conversations that lead to information that is relevant and in a form that is actionable to guide decision making.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills. Specifically, the ability to communicate effectively and collaborate with stakeholders from a range of cultures and capacities with respect toward individual experience and history.
- Knowledge of and familiarity with South Atlantic fisheries and fishing communities preferred.
- Experience managing research projects, including planning, coordinating, and executing project tasks. The applicant should be able to meet deadlines, manage resources, and ensure the successful completion of the project.

How to Apply:

Applicants may apply for both phases of the Communities Project, however, a separate application must be submitted for each phase. Applicants should submit completed proposals to Chip.Collier@safmc.net or mailed to Chip Collier, Deputy Director for Science, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Dr, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC, 29405. Please include the project title in the subject line by 11:59 pm on **Monday, January 12, 2026**.

Proposals should not exceed 12 pages and should include the following elements:

- Executive Summary: A summary of the proposed scope of work not to exceed 1 page.
- Description of Work: A detailed plan for addressing the scope of work and deliverables described above. This should include proposed analytical approaches, a project schedule, project management, and dissemination of results.

- Proposed Budget: A detailed budget for each year of the project, not to exceed a total of \$250,000 for the full project term. The budget must include the basis for the charges (e.g., hourly rates, fixed fees) and a breakdown of expenses by category: Salary, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Sub-Contract, and Indirect.
- Qualifications of Applicant: A summary of the qualifications of the applicant, and other team members, if applicable.
- Outside of the 12 page limit, please include up to a two-page CV for each PI and Collaborator.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria:

Proposals will be evaluated based on relevance to the request for proposal, technical merit of the project, qualifications of applicants, budget, and outreach and communication of results. Phase I and II proposals will be evaluated independently; however, strong coordination between the two phases is considered important and will be given particular attention during the evaluation process. The Council may request additional information as deemed necessary or negotiate modifications to an accepted proposal.

Requests for Further Information:

Any questions regarding the RFP, please contact:

Lara Klibansky
Resilient Fisheries Project Coordinator
Independent Contractor in support of the
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
LaraJKlibansky@gmail.com
252-324-9954

Disclaimer:

1. All costs associated with the preparation and presentation of the proposal will be borne by applicants.
2. Proposals and their accompanying documentation will not be returned.
3. Respondents must disclose any relevant conflicts of interest and/or pending civil/criminal legal actions.
4. The Council reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received, negotiate with all qualified applicants, cancel, or modify this request for proposals in part or in its entirety, or change the application guidelines, when it is in its best interests.