



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Trish Murphey, Chair | Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair
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Request for Proposals South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Communities Project Phase II: Stakeholder Outreach and Communication Assessment and Strategic Plan

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) invites proposals from qualified contractors to conduct a stakeholder outreach and communication assessment and development of a strategic Outreach and Communication Plan for fishing communities impacted by SAFMC management. This project will be informed by Phase I of this multi-phase project.

Proposal Submission Deadline: January 12, 2026

Project Budget: \$400,000

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. By building trust, fostering participation, and making qualitative data actionable, the project outcomes will support management that is both scientifically robust and grounded in the realities of those most affected by ecosystem change.

Project Scope

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) invites proposals from qualified contractors to conduct a stakeholder assessment to inform development of a strategic Outreach and Communication Plan for fishing communities impacted by SAFMC management. This project will use fishing community information gathered through Phase I and will be designed to ensure that the needs and perspectives of these communities are actively incorporated into Council management decisions. The outcomes of Phase I and Phase II will also inform scenario planning discussions in Phase III of this multi-phase project.

The contractor will work closely with community stakeholders to understand their communication preferences and identify the best methods to encourage engagement in the Council's decision-making process. This collaborative approach aims to build trust and foster a sense of ownership among fishing communities, ensuring that stakeholder voices are heard and their concerns addressed. By doing so, the

Council hopes to improve the effectiveness of its management measures and promote sustainable fishing practices that benefit both the fisheries and the communities that depend on them.

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 September 2027. The timeline will include regular check-in meetings with the Council's Project Oversight Team, and review by the Council's Social and Economic Panel and Outreach and Communication Advisory Panel. The final report will be submitted to the Council in August 2027 and presented during the SAFMC September 2027 meeting.

Deliverables

- Assessment of the Council's communication and outreach activities and provide recommendations to enhance and support on-going efforts.
- Comprehensive communication plan that includes:
 - Description of communication goals, objectives, strategies and performance measures,
 - Identification and description of key audiences and stakeholders, including community leaders and social networks within fishing communities,
 - Analysis of outreach channels within the communities, highlighting trusted resources, community leaders, and descriptions of social networks,
 - Recommendations for effective methods and core messaging to promote meaningful engagement in the Council's decision-making process,
 - Tailored communication strategies, including preferred channels, methods, and tools for each audience and community.
- Online communication hub, accessible to Council and SERO staff, that includes:
 - Talking points by common topics (allocations, data collection, ways to get involved),
 - Interactive stakeholder map that builds on the tool requested in Phase I to include key contacts, networks, leaders etc. by fishery and area,
 - Template generator with ready-to-go email drafts, meeting announcements, etc.,
 - Built-in metrics dashboard to log communication activities, track engagement, etc.,
 - Online storage for quick reference guides that can be easily pulled up when doing in-person outreach.

- Guidance materials and training sessions for Council staff, SERO staff, and Council members on the communication plan and hub with emphasis on:
 - The best communication channels and tools for different communities,
 - Performance measures for continuous improvement,
 - How to effectively utilize the developed communication hub.
- Introduction of key members of the identified fishing communities to Council members using recommended approaches to build relationships and better incorporate local ecological knowledge into the Council decision-making process.
- Presentation of draft Stakeholder Assessment report to the SAFMC Social and Economic Panel for review;
- Presentation of draft Outreach and Communication Plan to Outreach and Communication Advisory Panel.
- Presentation of final Stakeholder Assessment report and Outreach and Communication Plan to 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.
- Demonstrated experience in community engagement and expertise in developing outreach and communication plans.
- Demonstrated experience building relationships with communities resulting in conversations that lead to information that is relevant and in the 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 are not to 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 \$400,000 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.