REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
Working on the Water:
Strengthening Small Business Opportunities in Coastal Areas
Outreach and Coordination
RPC Task SLED3SU-WOW2

Background:

1. The St Bernard Economic Development Foundation (SBEDF) initiated an EDA funded study called “Fisheries Moving Forward” Project (FMFP) to identify opportunities for fisherman put out of work by the BP Oil Spill to be re-employed, working on the water and in the Parish. This initiative identified 3 fields of alternative work on the water: Coastal Restoration, Eco-Tourism, and Sustainable Fisheries.

2. The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) is the Economic Development Administration’s (EDA) locally designated Economic Development District and receives “District Planning Grant” funding from the EDA to prepare the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and to perform a number of economic development planning functions. The EDA has made additional planning grant funding available to the RPC which is being made available to this initiative.

3. The RPC has partnered with entities in St Bernard to utilize a portion of the additional EDA funds to support ongoing economic development initiatives in the Parish which have regional impact.

4. The SBEDF and RPC have partnered together to build upon findings of the “Fisheries Moving Forward” project to provide continued education and outreach that supports the individuals and businesses engaged in commercial fishing, coastal restoration, eco-tourism and disaster response in Southeast Louisiana.

Project Framework: The FMFP has revealed a number of ways in which supporting working on the water is an interconnected endeavor crossing many fields of practice within economic development.

- *Economic Development Clusters* – On the Water supports multiple industry clusters
  - *Commercial Fishing* – St Bernard Parish has a strong history of seafood production and manufacturing. The Parish is home to many fisherman, boat captains, and deck hands. There are many opportunities to strengthen this industry while also encouraging the diversification of businesses into additional commercial activity.
  - *Coastal Restoration* - The Gulf region is experiencing rapid loss of wetlands and other natural coastal protection features. The State’s Coastal Restoration Master Plan which is expected to be the framework for the deployment of RESTORE Act funds identifies a number of projects in the New Orleans region.
  - *Eco-Tourism* – New Orleans is a major national and international tourism destination. Tourism is a major industry cluster employing large numbers of workers in the New Orleans region. St Bernard Parish can leverage its proximity to the major tourist draws in the City of New Orleans by providing opportunities for eco-tourism activities located in St Bernard Parish to those tourists and visitors to the New Orleans region.
o **Disaster Response** - The New Orleans region is experiencing a new “energy boom” with many large investments in facilities supporting the energy industry along the Mississippi River and Gulf. These facilities represent opportunity for employment and revenue for the region, but also must be managed properly to avoid another man-made disaster

- **Small Businesses** – Many fisherman have their own boats and their own businesses. These fisherman and their crews can go out on the water commercial fishing one day, can provide an eco-tourism excursion the next day, can be involved in wetlands restoration the day after that, and can be contracted to perform clean-up activities in the event of a disaster. These are diverse client bases with different pay schedules, communication methods and service needs which a small business or employee must be able to navigate.

- **Workforce** - Working on the water requires a diverse skills set, those who have it can be a small business person one day and an employee the next, called upon to perform a different function in a different industry on the water. Many types of work on the water require certifications such as Hazardous Materials Handling, certifications on how to store, prepare and sell seafood for sale etc. To make a living on the water, boat captains and crews must be flexible and responsive to different set of “customers” and employers requiring different expertise and skill sets. They must constantly be adding to their inventory of skills to be eligible and prepared for opportunities in different endeavors on the water.

**Qualifications:**
- The selected consultant will have:
  o Established relationships and a working knowledge of the businesses and organizations involved in coastal businesses in St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson and Orleans Parishes.
  o Previous experience in outreach and communications strategies
  o Familiarity with the issues, challenges, and recent history of coastal communities in St Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson and Orleans Parishes.
  o Previous experience coordinating and facilitating seminars or workshops
  o Excellent writing skills and experience in producing final reports

**Deliverables:**
- See “Scope of Work”