

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTANT SERVICES  
TO SUPPORT WASHINGTON VERTICAL CLEAN ENERGY CLUSTER

Washington State Department of Commerce  
Innovation Cluster Accelerator Program (ICAP)  
Washington VERTICAL Clean Energy Cluster, Richland WA

The Port of Benton's (hereafter referred to as “Port”) purpose is to foster economic development, trade, and tourism by providing quality infrastructure and multimodal transportation at a variety of sites in Benton County of Washington State. The Port administers the regions state Innovation Partnership Zone known as the Tri-Cities Research District’s (TCRD). The TCRD’s goal is to accelerate innovation that results in economic growth, investment capital and supportive to educational resources for local startups in southeastern Washington State. Target sectors of greatest interest are within advanced manufacturing, clean energy and bioscience sectors to support state-wide decarbonization. More information may be accessed at:

- [portofbenton.com/economic-development/](http://portofbenton.com/economic-development/)
- [discoverrichland.com](http://discoverrichland.com)
- [washingtonvertical.com](http://washingtonvertical.com)

The Port is soliciting proposals from organizations or contractors (hereafter referred to as “Consultant”) interested in creating and managing an industry-led clean energy cluster to be known as Washington VERTICAL (hereafter referred to as ‘VERTical’ – ‘vert’ is green in French, and the operative word for the green cluster). The cluster’s first activity will be to support creation of a supply chain alliance to solve industrywide challenges to accelerate clean energy innovation. A recently awarded grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce Innovation Cluster Accelerator Program (ICAP) will be used to recruit and empower cluster membership, form and grow the supply chain alliance, coordinate with industry CEOs and foster cross-sector collaboration to ultimately grow and leverage the Tri-Cities professional and technical workforce, local and entrepreneurial businesses expanding their network and collaboration across the state.

The Port will evaluate responses with how well the consultant would support the overall VERTICAL clean energy cluster within a larger industry and entrepreneurial ecosystem and, thus, benefit from a range of expertise and support. Moreover, responses will be evaluated on the robustness of organizational evaluation metrics and the articulated plan to create a supply chain alliance to ultimately become self-funded.

This solicitation is meant to select one or more consultants to fulfill the role of the Washington VERTICAL Cluster Director (AND) the Washington VERTICAL Supply Chain Project Coordinator. Consultants may submit their response for one or both positions and will **not** be penalized in scoring for failure to respond to both roles. The Port reserves the right to segregate proposals submitted for both positions and request a contract for the consultant to fulfill only one position. The most important aspect of submitting a well-written and well-articulated plan to serve either or both positions is the Consultants experience with the role(s) identified in their submittal with particular attention to skills in contract management, meeting and reporting on goals, excellent communication skills, and ability to foster collaboration amongst organizations typically in competition with one another.

**Duties of the Proposed Washington VERTICAL Cluster Director**

The expectation is that the Consultant – over the two-year grant cycle – will manage, create, and implement the VERTICAL Clean Energy cluster, establish target sector collaboration groups, and bring private and public entities together in creating jobs, stabilizing economic growth, and recruiting new

talent to the region. The Consultant would work to formalize the bridge between existing industry needs around innovations such as advanced reactors, transportation electrification, carbon capture, and hydrogen integration; create networks for supply chain innovation, accelerate the clean energy sector and support industry desire to meet the goals of Washington States Clean Energy Transformation Act. This would include programming to complement existing entrepreneurs working with the community to link existing businesses and drive projects and funding. The Consultant is expected to collaborate and work with TCRD board, Port of Benton, MCEI Nuclear Energy Technology & Fuels, PNNL, WSU, CBC, local labor and other area businesses to promote cross-sector team development.

Specific deliverables the Consultant will be responsible for in collaboration with Port of Benton staff include:

- Establishing business authority in Washington State; this could include formation of Washington VERTical as an independent entity or formation as a subsidiary of Tri-Cities Research District
- Developing a cluster member recruitment plan
- Completion of a gap analysis and identify market potential of new industry needs.
- Creating and retaining board meeting agendas and minutes

#### **Duties of the Supply Chain Project Coordinator**

The expectation is that the Consultant – over the two-year grant cycle – will create and implement the framework for an industry-led supply chain alliance – initially focused on the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Projects within the community. The Supply Chain Project Coordinator will be responsible for identifying regional, statewide, and national Advanced Reactor Demonstration Project supply chain needs, and organizing a coalition of private-sector companies and entrepreneurs that are able to serve those supply chain needs. In organizing the coalition, the Project Coordinator is not expected to perform all components of setting up the supply chain but will be responsible for coordinating amongst private-sector companies to design achievable minimum standards of excellence, safety, quality controls, common procurement procedures, and sourcing agreement. The Project Coordinator will work together with the Cluster Director to develop a Charter for the supply chain alliance that focuses on leveraging community assets and resources and identifying local and national clean energy metrics.

#### **Additional RFP Details**

This RFP is intended to identify a Consultant or Consultants to serve as the Washington VERTical Cluster Director and Washington VERTical Supply Chain Project Coordinator. A non-mandatory pre-proposal conference is scheduled for Monday, December 6, 2021 at the Port of Benton Administration offices, 3250 Port of Benton Blvd, Richland, WA 99354 or via Zoom. The zoom link to the meeting will be posted at [www.portofbenton.com/bids](http://www.portofbenton.com/bids) 24 hours before the scheduled meeting.

The pre-proposal conference will be simultaneously held virtually via Zoom video conference (more information about joining the meeting will be posted at <http://www.portofbenton.com/bids> and at [www.washingtonvertical.com](http://www.washingtonvertical.com). Questions regarding the RFP should be submitted by email or in writing that you would like to be addressed at the Pre-Proposal Conference, and should be received by 11:00 a.m. Friday, December 3, 2021. All questions should be directed to the Diahann Howard, [dhoward@portofbenton.com](mailto:dhoward@portofbenton.com), 509-375-3060.

Total available funds available:

- There is a total award of \$110,000 over two years to fund the position of Cluster Director.
- There is a total award of \$100,000 over two years to fund the position of Project Coordinator

Eligible Proposals. To be considered, proposals must contain the following materials:

- A written project narrative, stating the process proposed and how the Consultant will establish and grow the Washington VERTical Cluster and/or formation of a Supply Chain Alliance to support advanced reactor projects. (Limited to 10 pages)
- A staffing plan and budget narrative that indicates how funds will be spent over the two-year cycle. To be competitive, your budget narrative must demonstrate your commitment to have Washington VERTical and the supply chain alliance become self-funded. (Limited to 2 pages)
- A descriptive history of the Consultant's ability to legally form and manage administrative attributes of the Cluster and Supply Chain Alliance.
- Specific information related to previous experience in the type of association management being proposed.

Proposals should provide a straightforward, concise delineation of the proposed project and experience of the Consultant's management team. Emphasis in proposals should be on completeness, clarity of content, robustness of metrics, and explicit goal to becoming self-sustaining. The selection will be based on the experience of the potential management organization, project narrative, and budget narrative.

This RFP does not obligate the Port to pay any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals nor enter into a lease, sale or other arrangement with any Consultant. The Port of Benton Commission reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to accept any bid, or to waive minor informalities and accept the proposal that is in the best interest of the Port or TCRD.

Proposals furnished hereunder can be submitted electronically to [collins@portofbenton.com](mailto:collins@portofbenton.com). Electronic proposals or one (1) original provided to the Port no later than 4:00 p.m. local time, Wednesday, January 5, 2022 and should be addressed to:

Port of Benton  
3250 Port of Benton Blvd  
Richland, WA 99354  
Attn: Diahann Howard

It is anticipated that a decision and notice of award for all or part of the RFP will be issued on Wednesday, January 12, 2022.