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Request for Qualifications (RFQ): Southern Appalachian Forest Products Marketing and Supply Chain Analysis

Issued by: Land of Sky Regional Council

Funding Source: Appalachian Regional Commission (ARISE Initiative)

RFQ Issued: May 14, 2025

Project Time Period: July 2025-February 2026

1. Project Overview

Land of Sky Regional Council (LOSRC), with funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission's ARISE initiative and other state and local partners, is seeking qualified firms or teams to support the implementation of regional forest products marketing and supply chain analysis. This effort will help revitalize the Southern Appalachian forest sector by addressing supply chain disruptions, market challenges, and opportunities for innovation.

The selected firm will support a multi-state task force in assessing market conditions, mapping supply chain assets, and identifying pathways for industry growth in pulpwood-using product that have positive market growth forecasts, such as paperboard and paperboard packaging, composite board products, biochar, sustainable aviation fuel, textiles, and other forest-based products.

2. Background

This project responds to economic disruptions and natural disasters that have strained the region's forest products sector. The initiative aims to build economic resilience and regional competitiveness through strategic marketing, supply chain evaluation, and investment-attraction tools. Deliverables will guide future actions by regional stakeholders, including economic developers, private industry, and government agencies.

This work will be focused on the following counties over a Tri-State Appalachian region:

North Carolina (32): Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cherokee, Clay, Cleveland, Davie, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians- Qualla Boundary, Forsyth, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell,

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Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, Yancey

Tennessee (24)- Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Carter, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, Sullivan, Unicoi, Union, Washington

South Carolina (7)- Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, Spartanburg, Union

3. Scope of Work

This RFQ seeks qualifications for the following services:

- Supply Chain Mapping: Document and analyze existing forest product supply chains across the Southern Appalachian region, including:

- Analysis of existing average annual net growth, harvest removals, average annual mortality, and current surplus net growth
- Potential feedstock annual supply forecast based on growth & yield modeling over a 30-to-40-year planning period
- Forest Resources Modeling and Analysis (i.e. Subregional Timber Supply, Forest Inventory Analysis)

- Market Research & Analysis: Evaluate current and emerging markets (e.g., packaging paper & paperboard, composite board, biochar, SAF, textiles), including workforce feasibility, demand trends, barriers, and competitive positioning.

- Strategic Marketing Recommendations: Inform a marketing strategy to promote regional forest products and attract private investment.

- Stakeholder Engagement: Facilitate input from forest sector businesses, industry groups, landowners, and economic development entities.

- Pitch Deck & Investment Materials: Support the creation of materials to promote the region's value proposition for green innovation and investment.

4. Required Qualifications

Respondents should demonstrate:

- Proven experience in forest sector economics, supply chain evaluation, or industrial market development

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- Familiarity with Appalachian or rural regional economic development
- Strong capacity for data collection, stakeholder engagement, and regional collaboration
- Experience working with public sector and grant-funded projects

5. Submission Requirements

Please provide the following in a single PDF file:

- Cover Letter: Overview of firm/team and interest in the project
- Firm Qualifications: Background, personnel bios, areas of expertise, and related project experience
- Project Examples: Up to 3 relevant past projects (can be redacted)
- References: Minimum of 3 references with contact information

Note: No cost proposal is required at this stage. Selected firms may be invited to submit a full proposal with scope, timeline, and budget.

6. Selection Process

Submissions will be evaluated based on:

- Relevant experience and technical expertise (40%)
- Demonstrated understanding of forest sector and regional development (30%)
- Qualifications of key personnel (20%)
- Quality of references (10%)

7. Timeline

- RFQ Issued: May 14, 2025
- Submissions Due: June 9, 2025
- Interviews/Follow-up: June 16th-June 23rd
- Vendor Selection: June 23rd
- Project Kickoff: Week of July 7th

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8. Submission Instructions

Send all materials and/or questions via email to:

Jessika Bond
Land of Sky Regional Council
jessika@landofsky.org
Subject Line: Forest Products Supply Chain RFQ Submission