

# **REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS**

## **Coastal Alabama Strategic Plan**

The Coastal Alabama Partnership (CAP), a not-for-profit organization of regional business and non-profit leaders in Baldwin and Mobile Counties, seeks a team of broadly experienced consultants to lead CAP and its partners in a six-to-nine-month process to shape a transformational Regional Strategic Plan to guide decision-making in the Coastal Alabama region over the next two decades.

### **Our Region:**

Baldwin and Mobile Counties, in Alabama's southwest corner, account for the state's entire Gulf Coast. Their combined 600,000-plus population represents more than 12 percent of the state's residents. Taken together, the two counties' GDP output would rank second among Alabama's MSAs, with the Port of Mobile and the region's shipbuilding and aerospace industries serving global markets and seasonal visitors crowding Baldwin County's beaches.

In the City of Mobile, Coastal Alabama has an historic city that predates the founding of America. In Baldwin County, there's everything Gulf Coast visitors desire in recreation, seafood and just hanging out on the beaches. Between Pensacola, Florida, to the east and the Texas coast to the far west, there's no comparable combination of history, culture, industry and beaches on the northern Gulf Coast.

Yet with all their collective assets, Baldwin and Mobile Counties and the municipalities within them have more often acted more as a collection of independent, sometime rival, jurisdictions than as a region. The divide is historic, with cultural and social dimensions as well as economic ones. It's beach and city, tourism and industrial port, urban and suburban.

The disconnect has hindered problem solving on a scale equal to the challenges. And there are plenty of challenges, including those that the region shares with other communities throughout one of the poorest state in the US. A high percentage of the population is stuck in cycles of poverty, low educational attainment and unhealthy lifestyle patterns. There are looming infrastructure needs. Add to that, the threat of catastrophic storms like Katrina, which annihilated Gulf Coast communities in 2005, and the trauma of the 2010 BP oil spill, and you have threats that can be overcome only by a commitment to collaboration on a regional scale. It was, in fact, the most recent threat to Coastal Alabama stability, the 2010 oil spill that awakened the two counties to the potential of such collaboration.

From September to December of that year, a Coastal Recovery Commission (CRC) appointed by then-Governor Bob Riley built a coalition of business, non-profit and government leaders across jurisdictions. The leaders were committed, they said, “to position ourselves to respond not only to future oil spills, but also to other forces beyond our control, including everything from hurricanes to sudden shifts in the economic environment.”

In the *Roadmap to Resilience* report the CRC presented to the governor 90 days after the Commission’s founding, the regional leaders vowed to “propose bold but attainable goals, based on the most authoritative research and reality-tested best practices,” to assure “a healthier environment, society and economy for Coastal Alabama.”

This Regional Strategic Planning effort, driven by the same core of business, non-profit and government leaders that shaped the CRC effort, is intended to be a giant step toward completing that mission.

To understand this context for planning, we encourage potential proposing teams to peruse these background sources:

- The CRC’s *Roadmap to Resilience* report and on-line archive of the Commission’s activities: [www.crcalabama.org](http://www.crcalabama.org).
- Coastal Alabama Partnership: [www.CoastalAlabama.org](http://www.CoastalAlabama.org)
- Mobile Bay National Estuary Program: [www.mobilebaynep.com](http://www.mobilebaynep.com)
- Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium: [www.masgc.org](http://www.masgc.org)

### ***Our Partnership:***

Coastal Alabama Partners is a 501©3 organization that evolved from the Commission appointed by Governor Riley in 2010, then expanded to include a broad cross-section of leaders from regional Chambers of Commerce; the Port Authority; economic development groups; major employers; and education, health and environmental non-profits.

A founding member of both the Coastal Recovery Commission and CAP and an advocate of the Regional Strategic Planning process since the Commission’s report is the newly elected mayor of Mobile. Similarly, strong alliances exist between CAP leaders and elected officials, non-profit organizations and their staffs in both counties.

CAP will oversee the planning effort and facilitate its implementation. Its President/CEO, Wiley Blankenship, will be the day-to-day contact for the consulting team.

For a look at CAP’s goals, leadership and current initiatives:  
[www.coastalalabama.org/overview/](http://www.coastalalabama.org/overview/)

## **Our Expectations:**

The Regional Strategic Planning process and the eventual Plan should, in general:

1. Recognize and build on the visioning foundation shaped by the Coastal Recovery Commission, CAP and others as outlined above. We are not in the business of reinventing wheels.
2. Identify and help to institutionalize regional networks (governmental and non-governmental) in long-term planning and implementation relationships that address and overcome the challenges of multi-jurisdictional governance.
3. Shape, in collaboration with CAP and its partners, a strategic framework for decision-making on a regional level and for aligning that framework with planning on the county and municipal levels.
4. Anticipate – and account for in the Plan -- potentially disruptive economic and environmental forces (global and mega-regional) that are beyond the direct control of regional leaders and institutions, yet would affect families and businesses in Coastal Alabama.
5. Define roles, assign accountability and establish performance measures and timelines for implementing the Plan and binding together regional collaborative networks.

We anticipate a successful consulting team will include in its approach:

1. A critical analysis of our assumptions and of our competitive position in the Gulf Region and beyond.
2. An “audit” of our capacities.
3. Delineation of a management structure necessary for successful implementation of the Plan’s goals and for continuing oversight of subsequent regional planning and implementation.
4. Strategies for benchmarking performance to measure progress towards goals not only in traditional business sectors but also in quality-of-life areas related to health, education, the environment and the arts.
5. A system for prioritizing future projects to assure alignment with the Plan’s long-range goals.
6. Strategies for securing support and financing for projects.
7. A continuity plan for refining and updating the Plan to assure its viability and adaptability in the face of future unknowns.

## **Our Process:**

Timeline: We anticipate: interviewing no more than three finalists by early May and selecting a team by early June. However, upon reviewing qualifications, CAP reserves

the right to extend this timeline by requesting further refinements of submissions.

Cap also reserves the right to request that a team be assembled combining components and/or approaches from two or more submittals.

**Budget:** Our preliminary survey of consultants suggests our goals will require a budget of between \$500,000 and \$1 million, depending upon the breadth and depth of a final agreed-upon scope. We invite, as part of submittals from qualified teams, a budget outline that imagines a cost-effective scope in line with our ambitions, informed by industry best practices and by the submitting teams' experience.

We will evaluate budget outlines to understand and compare proposers' perspectives on relationships between suggested tasks and likely fees and expenses for those tasks. We do not consider cost estimates to be formal cost proposals.

**Deadlines:** Deadline for proposals: April 4, 2014

**Pre-submittal conference:** March 13, 2014

Potential proposers should register with CAP in order to receive information about participating in the pre-submittal conference and to receive clarifications and answers to questions that may emerge from that discussion.

**Contact:**

Wiley Blankenship

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Because of the diverse skill sets we see as necessary to accomplish the range of tasks we anticipate, a project-specific team is more likely to be our choice than a single firm. But we welcome proposals from firms anxious to dissuade us from that assumption.

We caution, however, against proposing an "off-the-shelf," one-size-fits-all process. We expect a Coastal Alabama-specific Plan requiring a team with broader-than-usual skill sets. Proven skills should include, for example, expertise in:

1. Identifying and organizing multi-jurisdictional networks (governmental and non-governmental) with the goal of institutionalizing regional management capacities.
2. Exploratory scenario planning, where uncertainty is acknowledged and potential strategies are tested for their capacities for leveraging connectivity and assuring resilience.

3. Infrastructure planning, financing and management—including but not limited to the full range of transportation/transit options (surface, air, water); port and waterfront issues; and water quality, wastewater and storm water management.
4. Economic development defined in the broadest sense to include: targeting companies and sectors beyond the aerospace, maritime, chemical, steel, distribution/transportation sectors that are already regional success stories; customizing proven “economic gardening” strategies to incubate local enterprises that have chances to reach broader markets; and integrating strategies to protect and enhance the Coastal Alabama quality of life essential to the region’s appeal.
5. Tourism development, including the leveraging of natural, cultural and historical assets, as well as enhancing already popular resort and beach community experiences.
6. Smart Growth-style land use and infrastructure planning in both urban and non-urban contexts, including the successful application of unified codes that encourage the full range of mobility options (pedestrian, bike, transit, etc.) and integrate infrastructure policies such as storm water management.
7. Gulf Coast resilience issues, including coping with sea level rise, intensified storm patterns and the full range of regional environmental challenges.

**Support you can expect from CAP and its partners:**

- 1. A community involvement process to assure project buy-in.**
- 2. Media/public relations.**
- 3. Facilitation of consultant interviews with key stakeholders.**
- 4. GIS mapping and other technical support to be negotiated.**
- 5. Assistance with logistical arrangements (meeting scheduling, travel, local accommodation arrangements, etc.)**

**Submittal Information**

The proposals should be no more than 12 pages, excluding appendices with examples of previous projects, references and other support material.

Format, using this order of components:

- I. A brief summary of your understanding of the project. If appropriate, you might suggest corrections and refinements to our assumptions, given our goals and your experience.
- II. A description of your team, key personnel, their experience in relevant projects.
- III. An outline of your suggested approach, deliverables and project phases within our six to nine month timeline.
- IV. A budget with sufficient detail to help us understand key cost drivers.

- V. Appendices with related work examples and references. Examples should demonstrate formats that you recommend for organizing and presenting actionable Plans accessible to a broad range of stakeholders.

**Selection Criteria**

1. Team's grasp of project goals (25%)
2. Personnel choices in line with project goals (25%)
3. Project approach (30%)
4. Nationally recognized success with regional strategic plans in similar contexts (20%)