Request for Proposals

Seeking Development of a National Tribal and Indigenous Partnerships Expansion Strategy for the National Wildlife Federation

September 9, 2020

Please send proposals to:
Hilary Falk, Chief Program Officer
National Wildlife Federation
FalkH@nwf.org

Proposals are due close-of-business on October 9, 2020.

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) is seeking a qualified professional and/or firm to work closely with NWF leadership to develop a National Tribal and Indigenous Partnerships Expansion Strategy for the organization.

NEED
NWF recognizes that, for generations, Indigenous communities have wisely stewarded the natural resources of North America through their knowledge, culture, and practice. Achieving the conservation and climate goals of the 21st century requires better understanding and recognition of this stewardship, reaffirmation of Tribal rights for resource conservation, and ensuring sufficient resources and capacity for policy advancements and on-the-ground efforts.

Over the past thirty years, the National Wildlife Federation has built strong relationships with numerous individual Tribes, Indigenous communities, and regional and national Tribal organizations across North America. While many partnerships are deep and long-standing, others are more short-term, based upon aligned interests related to a common challenge. NWF recognizes the importance of building authentic, collaborative partnerships with Tribes and Indigenous communities based on the four R's: relationships, respect, responsibility, reciprocity. It is essential that NWF significantly strengthen this aspect of our work.

We will not be successful in meeting our conservation mission unless we develop a comprehensive nationwide strategy and meaningfully and thoughtfully build the right internal structure, competencies, communications, policy guidance, and capacity to engage authentically with and to truly empower Tribes and Indigenous communities. Advancing our conservation goals requires that we honestly admit our
deficiencies as an organization with few staff who identify as Indigenous or members of a Tribe, and actively address our shortcomings.

**BACKGROUND**

Building upon the Federation’s existing trust, respect, and successful place-based conservation partnerships with Tribes and Indigenous communities since the mid-1980s, we aim to listen to and learn from Indigenous leaders to forge authentic relationships and partnerships across the country that advance Indigenous policy priorities, help achieve greater place-based conservation, and help rectify environmental injustices. With power in D.C. and in state Capitols, connected to a robust advocacy network and deep experience building and facilitating tribal-NGO conservation coalitions, NWF can proactively and purposefully open doors to amplify and elevate Indigenous voices on critical policy, budgetary, and on-the-ground conservation issues. Where NWF shares common ground as allies and partners, we aim to support the efforts of sovereign Tribal governments and Indigenous communities to increase their capacity and influence to achieve shared conservation goals and better address social, economic, and environmental justice challenges.

NWF’s National Tribal and Indigenous Partnerships Expansion Strategy would be an essential component of NWF’s efforts to truly become a just, equitable, and anti-racist organization. The strategy would need to complement NWF’s [2020 Equity and Justice Strategic Plan](#), and advance NWF’s efforts to broaden and accelerate the environmental justice movement, as reflected in our recent series of [environmental justice roundtables](#). Additionally, this strategy would build on NWF’s existing [Strategic Plan](#), and inform the upcoming refresh that will take place in 2021. With an existing Tribal Partnerships Program, efforts to advocate for Tribal inclusion in federal legislation, and multiple partnerships with Tribes by NWF’s Regional Centers and affiliate organizations, NWF has a substantial foundation to build on. However, we recognize that NWF has much work to do in order to strengthen Indigenous voices in policymaking and resource allocation processes while advancing on-the-ground projects. Beginning in January 2020, NWF has convened a leadership team to inform the development of this RFP that will serve as a resource for this contract, and the NWF Board of Directors has prioritized this effort with particular attention from the Board’s Partnership Committee.

**WORK DESCRIPTION**

The development of the National Tribal and Indigenous Partnerships Expansion Strategy would include:

1. **Review of NWF’s existing information**, including: structure, capacity, and governance; a summary of NWF work and role with Tribes and Indigenous communities.

2. Develop and work with NWF to implement a **multi-faceted engagement plan** to guide and inform the strategy. The plan should consider the background in the RFP Appendix A, consider the potential for longer-term engagement, and include learning from at least the following groups:
   a. Tribal and Indigenous leaders (including representation from a variety of Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Indigenous communities with varying capacities)
   b. Tribal-led NGOs, non-Tribal NGOs who have done deeper work with Tribes and Indigenous communities, and government agencies
   c. NWF Staff
   d. NWF Board
   e. NWF Affiliates

3. **Evaluate opportunities and challenges** facing NWF in the development of a national strategy for working with and helping Tribal and Indigenous partners build power.
4. Work with NWF leadership to develop a National Tribal and Indigenous Partnerships Expansion Strategy which will include the following products to guide NWF’s work with Tribal and Indigenous communities:
   a. **A set of guidelines and principles** by which NWF conducts national, regional, and programmatic work, describing how and why we work with Indigenous communities and Tribes, and how NWF can help them build power. This will identify actionable goals and serve as a foundation and framework for work with Indigenous communities and Tribal consultation. This may include such items as land acknowledgement, guidance for ongoing consultation and relationship-building with Indigenous and Tribal communities, etc.
   b. **Structural and budgetary guidance** which may help NWF meet our goals and implement the strategy. This should consider staffing and organizational structure, as well as governance recommendations, to foster work with Indigenous communities across the country, including a proposed budget to ensure sufficient capacity (e.g., staffing) to implement a nationwide strategy. Recommendations should consider and provide guidance on the intersection of national, regional, and programmatic (i.e., Tribal Partnerships Program) work with Indigenous communities and Tribes.
   c. **Recommended organizational best-practices and competencies**, with a recommended plan to instill these among NWF staff and affiliates.
   d. **National guidance on policy** including position statements to consistently support Tribal and Indigenous communities’ conservation, sovereignty, trust responsibility, self-determination, and environmental justice goals.
   e. **Identification of potential funders and/or fundraising opportunities** to enact recommendations.

Please refer to the attached Appendix to see more background and considerations that inform this RFP.

Key NWF staff and Board members (the “core team”) will work with the consultant to provide information, develop engagement details, and review drafts. After each major stage of strategy development, the consultant will discuss findings with the core team.

The strategy should be completed within six months of the contract being signed.

**REQUESTED MATERIALS**

Please submit your proposal for evaluation to Hilary Falk, FalkH@nwf.org (and CC ErichsenC@nwf.org), on or before October 9, 2020. The proposal should describe:

1. The relationships, history, experience, and understanding that the consultant has with Tribes and Indigenous communities;
2. The qualifications and experience of the staff developing the strategy; specifically, with regard to planning and evaluation;
   a. Please include 2-3 examples of projects you have completed (no more than 1 paragraph each) that describes the job you were asked to complete, how you accomplished, and provide references.
3. Experience and knowledge of the non-profit advocacy arena, with focus on the conservation landscape in North America.
4. The proposed plan for conducting the full engagement, evaluation, and strategy development, including a proposed schedule; and
5. The resources/budget needed for the full project, broken down by component.
Guidelines for the National Wildlife Federation’s Development of a National Tribal and Indigenous Partnerships Expansion Strategy

Vision for NWF’s Work with Tribal and Indigenous Partners:
For generations, Indigenous communities have wisely stewarded the natural resources of North America through their knowledge, culture, and practice. Achieving the conservation and climate goals of the 21st century requires better understanding and recognition of this stewardship, re-establishing Tribal rights for resource conservation, and ensuring sufficient resources and capacity for policy advancements and on-the-ground efforts. Building upon the Federation’s existing trust, respect, and successful place-based conservation partnerships with Tribes and Indigenous communities since the mid-1980s, we will listen to and follow the guidance of Indigenous leaders to forge authentic relationships and partnerships across the country that advance Indigenous policy priorities, help achieve greater place-based conservation, and help rectify environmental injustices. Where NWF shares common ground as allies and partners, we will support the efforts of sovereign Tribal governments and Indigenous communities to increase their capacity, influence and power to achieve shared conservation goals and better address social, economic, and environmental justice challenges.

Problem statement:
For more than two centuries, Indigenous communities and Native American Tribes have experienced systemic injustices and faced structural barriers that have hindered their ability to exercise political power and achieve self-determination. This marginalization manifests itself through insufficient access to government resources, limited influence on policymaking, and repeated violation of treaty rights—all of which are contributing to the poverty, violence, addiction, and lack of opportunity that afflict many Indigenous communities. While many organizations have partnered with Tribes to assert their legal/treaty rights through the courts, there remain great opportunities to strengthen Indigenous voices in policymaking and resource allocation processes while supporting on-the-ground projects. The National Wildlife Federation could play an integral role in providing such critical support.

Over the past thirty years, the National Wildlife Federation has built strong relationships with numerous individual Tribes and some Tribal coalitions (such as the Native American Fish & Wildlife Society) across North America. While some partnerships are deep and long-standing (especially those related to bison restoration in the West), others are more short-term, based upon aligned interests related to a common challenge. Going forward, NWF recognizes the importance of building authentic, collaborative partnerships with Tribes and Indigenous communities based on the four R’s: relationships, respect, responsibility, reciprocity. In fact, NWF will not be successful in achieving our strategic plan goals unless we significantly strengthen this aspect of our work.

Embodying the principles of servant leadership, equity, and justice, the National Wildlife Federation will develop a national strategy that will create the foundation and framework for NWF to:

(A) Support Indigenous partners in their pursuit of equitable resources, access to decision-making processes, and achievement of policy priorities through coordinated advocacy;
(B) Support on-the-ground Tribal priorities for conservation/restoration, education, and environmental justice on sovereign Tribal lands; and
(C) Enhance and expand relationships with Indigenous communities nationwide.
Advancing these goals requires that we honestly admit our deficiencies as an organization with few staff and board members who identify as Indigenous or members of a Tribe, and actively address our shortcomings. We will not be successful in meeting our conservation mission unless we develop a comprehensive nationwide strategy and meaningfully and thoughtfully build the right internal structure, competencies, communications, policy guidance, and capacity to engage authentically with Indigenous communities.

Value Proposition:
The National Wildlife Federation is well-positioned to serve as a primary ally to Indigenous and Tribal communities to advance policy priorities, achieve greater place-based conservation, and rectify environmental injustices across the U.S. NWF can build on its substantial history of working effectively with individual Tribes on shared conservation and education goals, as well as our partnerships with Tribal coalitions, both of which are built on relationships forged over decades. NWF will reinforce existing relationships and double-down on forging new, authentic connections with Indigenous and Tribal communities to raise Indigenous conservation outcomes to the next level.

In particular, NWF will activate our federal and state-level advocacy machines for the good of Tribal and Indigenous conservation goals, which include: a robust advocacy network, access to many influential decision-makers, and direct relationships with traditional funders who can elevate this work. NWF will serve a critical role in assuring Tribal and Indigenous peoples are not only consulted in critical natural resource policy and budgetary discussions, but helping to create seats at the table to counteract centuries of marginalization and exclusion. With power in D.C., connected to a network of Regional Centers and state affiliates around the country, NWF will proactively and purposefully open doors and amplify and elevate Indigenous voices on critical policy, budgetary, and on-the-ground conservation issues.

In short, we bring the following skills and expertise to help advance tribal and indigenous conservation goals: decades of personal and institutional experience of building conservation partnerships with tribes; advocacy power; access to decision-makers; access to funders; federal, regional, and state advocacy networks; deep experience building and facilitating tribal-NGO conservation coalitions; and experience as a large conservation NGO that has worked successfully with tribal and indigenous communities on policy and on-the-ground conservation wins.

Outcomes:
- A National Tribal and Indigenous Partnerships Expansion Strategy for the Federation, serving as a foundation and framework for work with Indigenous communities and Tribal consultation which identifies actionable goals. This strategy will provide a set of guidelines and principles by which NWF conducts national, regional, and programmatic work, describing how and why we work with Indigenous communities and Tribes.
- Structural and budgetary guidance for work with Indigenous communities across the country, including a proposed budget to ensure sufficient capacity to implement a nationwide strategy. This structural and budgetary guidance will provide clarity on the intersection of national, regional, and programmatic (i.e., Tribal Partnerships Program) work with Indigenous communities and Tribes.
- Organizational best-practices and competencies; plan and implement an effort to instill these among NWF staff.
- National guidance on policy including position statements to consistently support Indigenous communities’ conservation, sovereignty, and environmental justice goals.