



**Request for Proposals**  
**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Consultant for Capitol Hill Ocean Week Conference**  
**November 2020**

**Summary of Solicitation**

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation ("Foundation") is the national non-profit partner of the National Marine Sanctuary System. We work closely with NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and communities across the Nation to conserve nationally significant areas for a healthy ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes.

Each year, the Foundation hosts Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW), the Nation's premier ocean and Great Lakes policy conference. CHOW is a place where policymakers, scientists, managers, business leaders, conservationists, and members of the public gather to exchange ideas on how to sustain the health of our ocean and Great Lakes for the people and species that rely on them. In 2021, the conference will focus on building a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just movement to sustain our ocean and Great Lakes.

The Foundation is seeking a partner to assist us in planning the conference program. To ensure the conference will include a diverse audience; address issues salient to increasing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in marine and Great Lakes conservation, science, and policy sectors; and identify concrete actions that elected officials, agencies, organizations, businesses, and educational institutions can take. Conference planning includes elements and events leading up to CHOW, at the CHOW conference, and meetings post-CHOW to follow through on recommendations.

We expect the engagement to begin in December 2020 and run for approximately 12 months.

**Scope of Work**

The **National Marine Sanctuary Foundation ("Foundation")**, established in 2000, is the national non-profit partner of the National Marine Sanctuary System. Working in close partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and its Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, the Foundation supports on-the-water conservation projects and scientific research, promotes community stewardship of our environment, and fosters our next generation of ocean guardians. The Foundation is headquartered in Silver Spring, MD, and has four local chapters that work with Gray's Reef, Olympic Coast, Monterey Bay, and Florida Keys national marine sanctuaries.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is a leading voice for U.S. protected waters, working with communities to conserve and expand those treasured places for a healthy ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. Our vision for national marine sanctuaries and monuments is to protect the rich biological and cultural diversity of our Nation by inspiring stewards for our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. We invite people to discover the wonders that lie beneath the surface; explore more

about these wonders, and work with us to protect these treasured places. We value involving people of different backgrounds, perspectives, and beliefs in our work and want to engage more diverse audiences as champions of national marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments. We also want to ensure our work is inclusive of and relevant to the many people who rely on a healthy ocean and Great Lakes and who are stewards of their future.

In 2001, the Foundation hosted the first Capitol Hill Ocean Week. Over the past 19 years, the conference grew from a small gathering on Capitol Hill to over 2,000 participants worldwide, joining virtually in 2020. CHOW's overarching goal is to build a constituency for our ocean and Great Lakes, who will serve as champions for their sound stewardship. To achieve this goal, Capitol Hill Ocean Week:

- convenes a diverse cross-section of people -- policymakers, scientists, managers, business leaders, conservationists, educators, students, and members of the public – to engage in a dialogue and debate on significant ocean and Great Lakes issues, and to propose innovative policies and partnerships to address these issues;
- provides a stage for significant announcements and commitments to marine and Great Lakes conservation, science and policy initiatives;
- strengthens public engagement and outreach for ocean and Great Lakes conservation through a growing online presence that supports more significant interaction between the conference participants and online viewers; and,
- demonstrates results and solutions and celebrates progress on addressing issues facing the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes.

CHOW is central to the Foundation's work to sustain a healthy ocean and Great Lakes. Right before CHOW 2020, our Nation saw the senseless killing of George Floyd and police using tear-gas on peaceful protestors who were standing up against prejudice and injustice. As an organization, we asked: how can we make a difference? And one part of the answer: CHOW 2021.

We surveyed CHOW 2020 participants and asked them the following question: "CHOW 2021 will focus on diversity, equity, inclusion in marine/Great Lakes conservation, policy, and management. What topics centered on this issue would you like to see addressed during CHOW 2021?"

The top responses included:

- Provide actionable/practical knowledge to drive impact and address JEDI;
- Address the importance of diverse voices in conservation, science, and policy, including how to improve access to jobs and create an inclusive environment in the workforce;
- Increase indigenous and community inclusion in science, policy, and management;
- Address environmental justice, climate justice, and coastal and resource access; and,
- Address exclusionary practices and entanglement with racist ideologies that impact ocean and Great Lakes conservation, science, and policy.

CHOW 2021 will focus on concrete steps we can take collectively to strengthen diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice for black, brown, indigenous, and people of color in marine and Great Lakes conservation, science, and policy. The actions we take now will have sweeping long-term impacts, and our success will require the experience, expertise, and input of the communities most affected by environmental change and quality.

We propose that CHOW 2021 address the following themes:

1. Climate Disruption and Climate Justice -- Climate change is altering our ocean and Great Lakes with social, economic, and public health impacts on families and communities across the U.S. and the globe. These impacts are not borne equally and disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color. This track will explore how people and communities vulnerable to climate change and disruption address these challenges and develop community-based solutions and empower people to take action.
2. Environmental Quality and Justice – Communities of color face some of the worst cases of environmental pollution and degradation in the Nation. The health of a community and the health of our ocean and Great Lakes are integrally linked. This track will explore how we ensure that all people have the same protection from environmental hazards and equal access to opportunities to maintain a healthy environment to live, learn, and work.
3. Equity and Inclusion for Sustainable Ocean and Great Lakes -- Coastlines contain some of our country's largest population and economic activity centers, with the majority (52 percent) living in coastal watershed counties. These areas are more ethnically and racially diverse than the United States as a whole. These communities directly impact the water quality and environmental health of our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. This track will look at cooperative management and how we can include all people in resource management and conservation.

We want to work with a partner to help us engage community and frontline leaders in the planning, content development, and implementation of CHOW. CHOW's structure traditionally includes facilitated panels and plenaries; however, we are open to a new format that strengthens dialogue, leads to actionable knowledge, and drives impact. For example, the proposal could include surveys, workshops, panels, roundtables, interviews, etc. leading up to CHOW 2021 and at CHOW, and meetings post-CHOW to follow through on recommendations. CHOW is a convening forum for the ocean and Great Lakes communities, and we welcome partners to plan events with us and/or host side events. We expect CHOW 2021 to occur from June 8-10 and with a predominantly online presence.

CHOW 2021 should continue to address CHOW's overarching goals and address pressing issues (climate change, protecting natural resources and habitat, overexploitation of resources, and pollution) impacting the health and long-term sustainability of the ocean and Great Lakes.

**Products/Deliverable**

The partner will help us plan the CHOW conference program, including identifying topics and speakers and creating an engaging and inclusive format for plenaries and panels. Below is a timeline of major milestones for CHOW.

Milestones	Deadline
Draft Conference Description posted on the website for review	11/16/2020
Track Descriptions Finalized	1/22/2020
Session Descriptions Finalized	2/12/2021
All Speakers Confirmed	4/16/2021
Gala Honorees confirmed	4/16/2021
CHOW Conference	6/8 and/or 6/9/2021
CHOW Gala	6/8/2021
CHOW Hill Day	6/10/2021

- We want to engage a diverse audience in the CHOW program. And, ensure the conference will include a variety of voices representing black, brown, indigenous and communities of color; address issues salient to these communities to increase diversity, equity, inclusion and justice in the marine and Great Lakes conservation, science, and policy sectors; and identify concrete actions that elected officials, agencies, and organizations, businesses, and educational institutions can take.

**Project Schedule:** Once the Foundation notifies the applicant of the selection to conduct this work, the Foundation would like to begin work as soon as possible, and we anticipate it will run for approximately 12 months. We expect the engagement to begin in December 2020.

**Project Budget:** The Foundation will consider proposals up to a maximum budget of \$100,000. Proposed budgets for the RFP response only need to include the planning/implementation for deliverables noted above and associated costs. The Foundation funds the CHOW 2021 conference logistics separately.

**Proposal Guidelines and Instructions:**

- A description of how the applicant will approach the scope of work and deliverables and meet milestones. The Foundation staff will work closely with the successful applicant to plan the conference and manage the logistics. We expect the partner to participate in regular planning meetings with Foundation staff and engage with our team to develop CHOW.
- A project budget.
- A brief history of your work, including examples of work for similar organizations
- Credentials and qualifications of consultant, including three professional references.

**Proposal Deadlines:** Please submit the above-requested documents no later than **11:59 pm ET on Friday, December 4, 2020**, to [rfp@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:rfp@marinesanctuary.org) with the subject line: CHOW 2021 Proposal. Please direct questions to Shannon Colbert, Director of Policy and Conservation, at [shannon@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:shannon@marinesanctuary.org). We are happy to arrange conference calls to discuss this RFP, provide additional information, and address questions.