

Northwest Maritime



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Maritime Workforce Demand and Pipeline Assessment

RPF released: August 5, 2026

Proposals due: September 11, 2026

Background

Northwest Maritime seeks proposals from qualified economists, labor market analysts, research organizations, or consulting firms to conduct a maritime workforce assessment for Washington State.

This work will support the [Blue Schools Initiative](#), a collaborative effort connecting communities, maritime employers, K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, maritime educators, employers, workforce agencies, and other partners to strengthen maritime career awareness and workforce development.

Washington's maritime economy includes a wide range of occupations and industries, and anecdotal evidence abounds of major workforce gaps across a variety of roles. However, there is no comprehensive understanding of current and future workforce needs that gives a clear view of occupations across the field. Existing labor market information is fragmented across industries, occupations, regions, and data sources, and there has not yet been a framework for describing the wide variety of maritime occupations in a clear way. As a result, educators, employers, policymakers, and workforce development organizations lack a complete picture of where workforce shortages exist, how those shortages may evolve over time, and which career pathways offer the greatest opportunities for future workers.

Northwest Maritime seeks a study that will help establish a common understanding of maritime workforce demand, workforce pipeline capacity, and future workforce needs in Washington State.

Northwest Maritime is grateful to Senator Cantwell for supporting this Community Project and for recognizing the importance of investing in the Blue Schools Initiative

that supports maritime education and workforce development throughout our region and made this project possible.

Project Goals

The primary objective of this study is to determine the gap between Washington's maritime workforce pipeline and projected future workforce demand and where the most significant opportunities exist for those considering entering the field.

The study should:

- Develop a framework for understanding maritime workforce needs across Washington State using the Blue Schools Initiative career pathway categories of Vessel Operations, Marine Construction, and Marine Resources.
- Assess current and future workforce demand across maritime occupations and industries.
- Evaluate the extent to which existing workforce pipelines are meeting current and projected needs.
- Identify significant workforce gaps, opportunities, and emerging trends.
- Inform future investments in maritime education, training, and workforce development.
- Provide information that can be used by educators, employers, workforce agencies, and policymakers.

Findings should be presented in a manner that informs career pathway development, educational programming, workforce investment, and industry engagement strategies.

Career Pathways

Northwest Maritime's Blue Schools Initiative organizes maritime careers into three broad pathways:

- **Vessel Operations:** Introduces students to maritime careers through training in navigation, seamanship, vessel safety, and professional operations, preparing them for careers such as deckhand, mate, licensed mariner, tugboat operator, ferry worker, and vessel captain.

- **Marine Construction:** Provides students with hands-on experience in boatbuilding, welding, fabrication, marine systems, composites, and vessel repair, preparing them for careers such as welder, marine electrician, shipwright, marine technician, boatbuilder, and shipyard tradesperson.
- **Marine Resources:** Connects students to careers focused on the sustainable use and stewardship of marine ecosystems through aquaculture, fisheries, shellfish cultivation, habitat restoration, marine science, and environmental monitoring. Career pathways include aquaculture technician, commercial fisher, shellfish farmer, marine biologist, restoration technician, and natural resource manager.

The project should begin with development of an analytical framework that defines the maritime occupations, industries, and workforce pathways included in the assessment.

Respondents are encouraged to propose refinements to these categories and to recommend an analytical framework appropriate for the study.

Scope of Services

The selected consultant will propose and implement an approach for assessing maritime workforce demand, workforce supply, and workforce pipeline capacity in Washington State.

Proposals should describe:

- The proposed analytical framework.
- Data sources and methodologies.
- Approaches to assessing current workforce conditions and future workforce needs.
- Approaches to evaluating workforce pipelines and workforce supply.
- Stakeholder engagement strategies, if applicable.
- Expected outputs and findings.

Northwest Maritime is particularly interested in understanding:

- Which maritime occupations are most critical to the future workforce.
- Where significant workforce shortages currently exist or are anticipated.

- Whether current workforce pipelines are sufficient to meet future workforce needs.
- How workforce needs may evolve over short-, medium-, and long-term planning horizons.
- The extent to which current education, training, certification, and workforce development systems are positioned to meet future demand.
- The implications of findings for maritime career pathway development and workforce investment.

To the extent feasible, findings should be presented at the occupational level rather than solely at the industry-sector level.

Respondents may recommend additional areas of analysis they believe would strengthen the study.

Deliverables

At a minimum, the selected consultant will provide:

- An analytical framework and work plan.
- Contact list of participants and partners (name, email, role, company etc.)
- Periodic progress updates.
- Draft findings for review and discussion.
- A final report.
- An executive summary suitable for public distribution.
- Presentation of findings to Northwest Maritime and project partners.

The final report should clearly communicate key findings, assumptions, limitations, and recommendations.

Budget

This project is supported in part by federal funding awarded to Northwest Maritime. The selected consultant will be expected to comply with all applicable federal requirements associated with the award, as incorporated into the final contract.

Alternate Scope

Northwest Maritime is also interested in understanding the feasibility of expanding this work beyond Washington State, supported by other funding sources.

Respondents are invited to provide pricing and scope modifications for expanding the assessment to include:

Alternate 1:

- Oregon
- California

Alternate 2:

- Oregon
- California
- Alaska
- Hawaii

Respondents should describe any modifications to methodology, schedule, or budget that would be required for this expansion. A base report for Washington State alone would still be required.

Proposal Requirements

Proposals should include:

- Key personnel who will provide the requested services, their qualifications and relevant experience
- Firm qualifications and relevant experience, including a list of past (within 7 years) or current projects performed by the key personnel above.
- Proposed project approach and methodology, including subcontracts, if any.
- Proposed project timeline, with key dates and deliverables.
- Proposed fee, inclusive of direct expenses.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Understanding of the project goals

- Familiarity with the maritime field & related industries
- Relevant firm and personnel experience and expertise
- Quality, comprehensiveness, and thoughtfulness of the proposed approach
- Cost effectiveness

Schedule

This RFP was released on August 5, 2026. Proposals will be accepted through September 11, 2026, after which submissions will be reviewed and evaluated. Northwest Maritime may contact one or more respondents for clarification or discussion of their proposals. We anticipate selecting a consultant and negotiating a contract by the end of September, with project work expected to begin shortly thereafter. Northwest Maritime reserves the right to modify this schedule as needed.

Questions regarding this request should be submitted on or before August 20, 2026, to blueschools@nwmaritime.org. Completed proposals should be submitted electronically as a PDF via email to this address by September 11, 2026.

Northwest Maritime reserves the right to request additional information or clarification from respondents as part of the review process. We appreciate your interest and look forward to reviewing your proposal.