



Strategic Planning Services

Request for proposals

Executive Summary

The Public Lands Alliance (PLA) seeks to engage a qualified strategic planning consultant to guide the development of a comprehensive, multi-year strategic plan that is driven by PLA's commitment to serving the public lands partners community. This process should engage a wide range of stakeholders, define PLA's unique value propositions and explore new ways to deliver on our mission to ensure the organization's mission, vision, and priorities remain aligned with the needs of its members, its federal agency partners, and the broader public lands community.

We are looking for a partner with demonstrated expertise in both nonprofit strategic planning and the public lands sector, someone who understands the operating environment our members and agency partners work within, including federal budget cycles, agency planning processes, and the unique role nonprofit partners play in supporting public lands.

About Public Lands Alliance

The Public Lands Alliance (PLA) is a nonprofit organization with the mission is to connect, strengthen, and represent the nonprofit partners of America's public lands. Our members include friend's groups, cooperating associations, philanthropic partners and other organizations working alongside federal land management agencies, including the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and State Parks, to enhance visitor experience, support conservation, and strengthen the financial and operational capacity of public lands. When founded in 1977, the organization was focused on supporting only cooperating associations in the National Park Service. Today, PLA members directly serve more than 675 public lands across all major federal agencies and includes some state agency partners. Collectively, they contribute more than \$250 million annually to the legacy that is America's public lands system.

PLA's current strategic plan was adopted in 2024 and concludes in 2026. Over the life of that plan, the organization has grown membership, expanded our educational offerings, launched a government relations program and helped our members navigate an ever-changing landscape in which federal partnerships operate. In addition, staff capacity was restructured and expanded to help support these goals.

Project Scope

PLA Board and Staff will compile data on core programs, conduct a review of the mission and vision, and conduct a SWOT analysis prior to the consultant contract. The consultant should build from this work to lead a strategic planning process that achieves the following core objectives.

Mission, Vision, and Identity

- After reviewing pre-work done by PLA's Board and Staff, the consultant should recommend revisions, if warranted, based on stakeholder input and environmental analysis.

Competitive and Comparative Landscape

- Map PLA's position relative to other organizations serving the public lands and nonprofit-partner community, including other national associations, regional coalitions, and issue-specific advocacy groups.
- Identify what is genuinely distinctive about PLA's value proposition to members and to federal agency partners, and where PLA's role overlaps with or duplicates other organizations.
- Assess external trends relevant to PLA's positioning, including shifts in federal land management priorities, funding environments, and the broader nonprofit-partner landscape.

Priority-Setting and Trade-offs

- Provide a process for the Board and staff identify a focused set of strategic priorities for the plan period.
- Facilitate decisions about adjustments to PLA's current work plans so it can focus resources on its highest-priority work.
- Support the Board in reaching genuine consensus on priorities, including documenting dissenting views where relevant.

Implementation Readiness

- Translate strategic priorities into a plan that is specific enough to guide annual work planning, budgeting, and staff accountability.
- Recommend a small set of meaningful metrics or indicators the Board and staff can use to track progress.
- Advise on organizational or capacity implications of the plan (e.g., staffing, committee structure, partnership models), without conducting a full organizational assessment unless proposed as an optional add-on.

Approach to Stakeholder Engagement

Robust, multi-audience consultation is a central requirement of this engagement. PLA expects the consultant to design and lead an engagement process that authentically incorporates the perspectives of the following groups, at minimum:

Required Stakeholder Groups

- **PLA Members:** the full diversity of PLA's membership reflecting variation in size, geography, and agency relationship.
- **Federal Agency Partners:** leadership and program staff from agencies PLA works with, such as the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to understand agency priorities and how PLA can best support them.
- **Peer and Allied Organizations:** other nonprofits, associations, and coalitions serving the same community of public lands stakeholders, to clarify roles, avoid duplication, and identify partnership opportunities.
- **PLA Board of Directors:** sustained engagement throughout the process, not only at kickoff and final approval.
- **PLA Staff:** input on operational realities, capacity constraints, and implementation feasibility.
- **Funders and Donors:** A small, limited group to gain perspective from key institutional or major funders on PLA's value and direction.

We expect the consultant to propose a combination of methods that may include One-on-one or small-group interviews, membership-wide surveys, facilitated listening sessions or focus groups, potentially including sessions at existing PLA convenings, structured input opportunities for federal agency partners that respect agency time constraints and, where relevant, any applicable engagement protocols.

Deliverables

At minimum, the engagement should produce:

1. Revised (or reaffirmed) mission and vision statements, with supporting rationale.
2. A stakeholder engagement summary.
3. A competitive/comparative landscape analysis and articulation of PLA's distinct value proposition.
4. A documented strategic priority-setting and trade-off framework.
5. A final written strategic plan including goals, strategic priorities, and high-level success metrics.
6. Implementation guidance to support the transition from planning to execution.

Consultant Qualifications

PLA is specifically seeking a consultant or team with the following qualifications.

- **Nonprofit strategic planning expertise:** a track record of leading strategic planning engagements for nonprofit membership organizations or associations, ideally including organizations of comparable size, structure, or national scope to PLA.
- **Public lands and/or federal land management sector experience:** demonstrated familiarity with the public lands ecosystem, including the role of both nonprofit partner organizations and the operating context of federal land management agencies.
- **Facilitation skills in priority-setting and trade-off decisions:** specific experience helping boards and staff make difficult resource-allocation and prioritization decisions.

- Multi-stakeholder engagement experience: demonstrated ability to design and conduct engagement processes spanning diverse audiences, including member organizations, government partners, and peer nonprofits.

Proposal Submission Requirements

Proposals should include the following sections:

1. Proposed Approach and Methodology, including specifically how you will facilitate priority-setting and trade-off decisions, and how you will structure stakeholder engagement across the audiences.
2. Proposed Work Plan and Timeline: a phase-by-phase plan within the approximately six-month window, including proposed Board/staff touchpoints.
3. Team Qualifications and Roles, including bios or resumes of all team members who will work on this engagement, with the lead facilitator clearly identified
4. Relevant Experience to include at least three comparable engagements, with brief descriptions and outcomes along with names and contact information for at least three references.
5. Budget Proposal: a detailed budget, including professional fees, expenses (e.g., travel for in-person sessions), proposed payment schedule and any assumptions about number of in-person vs. virtual sessions.
6. Optional Add-Ons: any optional services you would recommend (e.g., organizational capacity assessment, board governance review) presented as separate line items

Budget and Timeline

PLA anticipates a process of approximately six (6) months, beginning in late fall of 2026. We've included several important dates below, but consultants are encouraged to present a timeline based on their methodology.

- 2027 Convention and Trade Show February 7-11, 2027, in Bellevue, WA – this event offers great opportunity to communicate with 600+ members and stakeholders of our community.
- 2027 Board meetings: January 20 (virtual) and May 4-5 (in-person, Washington, DC).

PLA's anticipated budget range for this engagement is \$25,000 to \$40,000, inclusive of professional fees and expenses. Consultants whose standard approach falls outside this range are still encouraged to apply and should clearly explain the value of their approach.

How to Respond

Submit proposals in PDF format via email by August 31, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. EST. Decision notification will be made by mid-October.

- **To:** andrea@publiclandsalliance.org
- **Subject line:** Strategic Planning Services - Consultant Name

Public Lands Alliance reserves the right to amend this RFP, reject any or all proposals, or terminate this solicitation at its sole discretion.