

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Fractional Business Development Consultant

Issued by: Chesapeake Conservancy

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Engagement Period: 9-12 months, target start date October 14, 2026

Proposal Due Date: Sept. 30, 2026

1. Background

The Chesapeake Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation organization working throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Its Conservation Innovation Center (CIC) is a geospatial data science lab that develops leading-edge geospatial, remote sensing, and AI tools to advance conservation, restoration, and environmental decision-making across the watershed's six states.

The CIC has built strong technical capabilities and a respected reputation, including data products developed under a cooperative agreement with the EPA and the Chesapeake Bay Program. The organization is now focused on translating that technical strength into product adoption, market validation, and sustainable, recurring revenue, taking conservation decision-making from reactive to proactive.

To support this transition, the Chesapeake Conservancy is seeking a fractional business development consultant to help the CIC identify, cultivate, and secure business partners and revenue-generating opportunities over a 12-month period.

2. Purpose of This RFP

The Chesapeake Conservancy is requesting proposals from qualified individual consultants or firms to serve as a fractional (part-time) business development lead for the CIC. The consultant will work closely with CIC leadership as a thought partner, helping bridge CIC's technical expertise with market needs. The consultant will:

- Conduct customer discovery to test market needs, value propositions and demand.
- Assess and prioritize CIC's product and service opportunities for market entry
- Build and manage a pipeline of prospective partners, clients, and funders
- Design and run a pilot to validate market demand for a prioritized product
- Develop a pricing strategy for data products and services
- Leave CIC leadership with a few high value relationships and a playbook to sustain business development

3. Scope of Work and Deliverables

This is a 9-12 month engagement organized into three sequential phases. The table below reflects the tangible deliverables the consultant will be responsible for producing or directly leading in each phase. Exact timing and sequencing may be adjusted in coordination with CIC leadership.

Phase	Approx. Timing	Tangible Deliverables
Phase 1 Foundation & Positioning	Months 1–3	• Market assessment evaluating CIC’s priority product/service opportunities • Written recommendation of one pilot product/service to prioritize, with rationale • Messaging framework articulating CIC’s value and evolution, plus internal and external positioning language • Early customer and partner discovery to test market needs, customer value and demand • Draft 12-month business development roadmap with milestones and owners • Initial short list of target business partners and new clients by sector (state and local government, federal agencies, land trusts, utilities, private developers, solar/energy companies, etc.)
Phase 2 Pilot & Market Testing	Months 4–7	• Pilot scope document and user-testing plan for the prioritized product • Coordination of product refinement with CIC leadership and delivery of a prototype/demo to prospects • Documented outreach log (contacts made, meetings held, follow-ups) • Written summary of user feedback and market signals from pilot testing
Phase 3 Go-to-Market & Scale	Months 8–12	• Go-to-market plan for the pilot product, including target segments and channels • Pricing and revenue model recommendations (e.g., subscription, licensing, fee-for-service) • Lead- and opportunity-tracking • Final pilot findings report with outcomes and lessons learned • Documented pipeline of qualified partnership/business opportunities, including any signed agreements secured during the engagement • Replicable business development playbook CIC can apply to future products

Across all three phases, the consultant is expected to directly own outreach to and cultivation of prospective partners, including state and local agencies, federal agencies, land trusts, watershed and conservation organizations, utilities, and private-sector companies (e.g., solar developers, real estate and engineering firms). Documentation of the pipeline will be an ongoing process, not just a Phase 3 deliverable.

4. Engagement Structure and Budget

Engagement type	Fractional / part-time consultant (contractor or agency)
Engagement length	9-12 months
Estimated budget	\$65,000 total for the fractional business development lead over 12 months; separate budgets exist for market research, tools and systems, and general expenses within reason
Reporting to	Director of the Conservation Innovation Center
Location	Remote, with occasional availability for in-person meetings in Annapolis, MD

5. Desired Qualifications

The Chesapeake Conservancy is looking for a consultant or firm with a demonstrated track record in some combination of the following..

- Demonstrated business development, sales or partnership-building experience in geospatial technology, GIS, environmental data, or related technology sectors
- Experience selling or positioning data products/services to government agencies, nonprofits, geospatial data providers, and/or private-sector buyers
- Ability to translate complex technical capabilities into clear customer value and work effectively with data scientists in a lean environment
- Experience designing and running product pilots or market validation processes
- Experience developing pricing and revenue models and go-to-market plans for new products or services
- Ability to work independently in a fractional capacity while coordinating closely with nonprofit leadership and technical staff
- Familiarity with the conservation sector or environmental policy landscape (preferred, not required)

6. Proposal Requirements

Interested consultants and firms should submit a proposal that includes:

- Overview of relevant experience and qualifications, including examples of comparable business development engagements
- Proposed approach to the three-phase scope of work described above, including any recommended adjustments
- Relevant work samples or case studies (e.g., market assessments, go-to-market plans, pipeline results)
- Proposed fee structure and estimated hours by phase, within the estimated budget
- References from three comparable engagements

- Availability and proposed start date

7. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Relevant experience in business development for data, geospatial, or environmental technology products
- Demonstrated ability to build partnerships with government, nonprofit, geospatial data providers, and private-sector organizations
- Quality and clarity of the proposed approach to the scope of work
- Value and reasonableness of proposed fees relative to the estimated budget
- References and past performance

8. Submission Instructions

Please submit proposals electronically to Emily Beach, Director of the CIC, at ebeach@chesapeakeconservancy.org by September 30, 2026. Questions about this RFP may be directed to the same contact. The Chesapeake Conservancy will request interviews with shortlisted candidates before making a final selection.