

Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund 2021 Proposal Scoring Guide

The following guidance and instructions are designed to help AKSSF independent reviewers evaluate proposals in a consistent manner. Proposals will be rated on a scale of 0 – 10 in each of the categories listed below. Total scores will be calculated by summing the product of category ratings and category weights.

Category	Relative Weighting (Percent of Total Score)
Project Alignment	25%
Project Impact	25%
Technical Merit	20%
Budget	20%
Experience and Qualifications	10%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

The table below provides a general framework for rating proposals; subsequent tables provide specific considerations for each category. Please ensure your comments are reflective of your scores. For example, if you rated a proposal low for budget, please provide comments that explain your concerns (e.g., budget has numerous mathematical errors and was difficult to follow; costs are unreasonably high for the activities; applicant failed to provide sufficient detail or explanation to justify \$60,000 for X). Your comments should succinctly capture both the strengths and weaknesses in each category. When appropriate, suggestions for improving the proposal are encouraged.

General Rating Criteria

Range	Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses
Low	0	Negligible	Essentially no strengths with numerous major weaknesses ¹
	1	Poor/Inferior	Only slight strengths with numerous major weaknesses ¹
	2	Weak	Very few strengths with numerous major weaknesses ¹
	3	Marginal	Some strengths but also at least two major weaknesses ¹
Mid	4	Fair	Some strengths but also at least one major weakness ¹
	5	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses ²
	6	Good	Strong but also with at least one moderate weakness ²
	7	Very Good	Strong but also with numerous minor weaknesses ³
High	8	Excellent	Very strong with only a few minor weaknesses ³
	9	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses ^{1,2,3}
	10	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses ^{1,2,3}

¹ Major weaknesses severely limit the effectiveness or impact of a project.

² Moderate weaknesses reduce the effectiveness or impact.

³ Minor weaknesses are potential issues or concerns that are easily addressable and do not substantially reduce the effectiveness or impact.

Project Alignment or “Goodness of Fit” (25% of total score) <i>How well does the proposed project match up with the CFP?</i>		
Range	Score	Considerations
Low	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tenuous or indirect alignment with the respective AKSSF objective and any restrictive language (e.g., <i>Projects must...</i>) ○ Secondary activities (e.g., planning, design, engineering, and outreach) may be excessive in scope or unnecessary to accomplish the primary objective
	1	
	2	
	3	
Mid	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moderate and direct alignment with the respective AKSSF objective and any restrictive language (e.g., <i>Projects must...</i>) ○ Secondary activities (e.g., planning, design, engineering, and outreach) may be somewhat excessive in scope or not entirely necessary to accomplish the primary objective
	5	
	6	
	7	
High	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Substantive and direct alignment with the respective AKSSF objective and any restrictive language (e.g., <i>Projects must...</i>) ○ Secondary activities (e.g., planning, design, engineering, and outreach) are all reasonable in scope and essential to accomplish the primary objective
	9	
	10	

Project Impact (25% of total score) <i>Will there be meaningful and lasting benefits?</i>		
Range	Score	Considerations*
Low	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For habitat projects, the amount and quality of habitat protected, restored, or assessed may be low relative to the cost of the project ○ For monitoring and assessment projects, the benefits to subsistence fishing or contribution to ensuring sustainability of salmon populations utilized for subsistence may be low or indirect ○ Habitat restoration projects are unlikely to achieve lasting benefits through the restoration of self-sustaining natural ecosystem function and processes ○ Project benefits may be ephemeral or conditional on subsequent phases that have a significant risk of failure (e.g., tenuous funding, lack of institutional support)
	1	
	2	
	3	
Mid	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For habitat projects, the amount and quality of habitat protected, restored, or assessed may be somewhat low relative to the cost of the project ○ For monitoring and assessment projects, the benefits to subsistence fishing or contribution to ensuring sustainability of salmon populations utilized for subsistence may be moderate or somewhat indirect ○ Habitat restoration projects may achieve moderate benefits through the restoration of self-sustaining natural ecosystem function and processes ○ Project benefits are of moderate duration (5+ years) and not conditional on subsequent phases that have a significant risk of failure (e.g., tenuous funding, lack of institutional support)
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	6	
	7	
High	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For habitat projects, the amount and quality of habitat protected, restored, or assessed is high relative to the cost of the project ○ For monitoring and assessment projects, the benefits to subsistence fishing or contribution to ensuring sustainability of salmon populations utilized for subsistence is substantial and direct ○ Habitat restoration projects will achieve substantial benefits through the restoration of self-sustaining natural ecosystem function and processes ○ Project benefits are long term (10+ years) and are not conditional on subsequent phases that have a significant risk of failure (e.g., tenuous funding, lack of institutional support)
	9	
	10	

** Whether or not a proposal is aligned with preferential language included in the AKSSF objectives (e.g., Preference will be given to projects that...) should be a secondary consideration to adjust scores by up to 3 points. Scoring may also be fine tuned based on endorsement letters.*

Technical Merit (20% of total score)		
Range	Score	Considerations
Low	0	○ Objectives, methods, anticipated results, and products may not be clearly described or are otherwise inappropriate or unrealistic
	1	○ Study design or project plan may have moderate to major flaws or omissions that are likely to reduce the likelihood of accomplishing project objectives within the time and budget constraints of the project
	2	○ Any methods or aspects of the study design that are experimental or otherwise unproven have a low likelihood of success*
	3	○ Data collection, sampling procedures, and data analyses may be inadequate or not described in sufficient detail
Mid	4	○ Objectives, methods, anticipated results, and products may not be clearly described or are otherwise inappropriate or unrealistic
	5	○ Study design and methods appear to be generally sound; any minor flaws or omissions are unlikely to compromise results or diminish the likelihood of accomplishing project objectives within the time and budget constraints of the project
	6	○ Any methods or aspects of the study design that are experimental or otherwise unproven have a moderate to high likelihood of success*
	7	○ Some of the data collection or sampling procedures may not be described in sufficient detail
High	8	○ Objectives, methods, and anticipated results are clearly described and appropriate to the project
	9	○ Study design or project plan is robust with a high likelihood for success in meeting project objectives within the time and budget constraints of the project
	10	○ Any methods or aspects of the study design that are experimental or otherwise unproven have a high likelihood of success* ○ Data collection, sampling procedures, and data analyses are technically sound

**The technical expertise, track record, and overall experience of the investigators, as supported in their proposal and résumés, may be considered when evaluating the likelihood of success for novel methods or approaches.*

Budget (20% of total score)		
Range	Score	Considerations*
Low	0	○ Costs may be unreasonably higher or lower than what is necessary to accomplish project objectives
	1	○ Budget may be lacking in sufficient detail or accuracy to evaluate appropriateness of overall budget as well as individual cost items
	2	○ Costs may be excessive relative to anticipated benefits
	3	○ Project is unlikely to leverage coordinated investments from other entities and programs
Mid	4	○ Total project cost may seem reasonable, but the budget lacks specificity or has minor mathematical errors that precludes a detailed review of individual cost items
	5	○ Costs may be slightly above or below expected costs to accomplish project objectives
	6	○ Overall budget may be realistic to accomplish project objectives, but total project cost is somewhat high relative to anticipated benefits
	7	○ Overall budget may be reasonable, but some of the individual cost items may seem unnecessary or inflated ○ Project may leverage a small to moderate amount of coordinated investments from other entities and programs
High	8	○ The budget is clearly articulated, itemized, and is appropriate in both type and amount
	9	○ Costs are reasonable and realistic to accomplish project objectives ○ Costs are warranted relative to anticipated benefits
	10	○ Project may leverage moderate to high amounts of coordinated investments from other entities and programs

**Match considerations: Please note that all projects are required to provide a 35% nonfederal match. Reviewers are not expected to scrutinize items for eligibility relative to federal requirements (this will be done by AKSSF staff), but you may adjust your score and provide comments on match items that seem unnecessary or unreasonable. Apparent overmatch (i.e., match in excess of 35%) should be disregarded (i.e., no additional points, comments, or consideration given), as AKSSF will not require or track overmatch if the project is approved.*

Experience and Qualifications (10% of total score)		
Range	Score	Considerations
Low	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proposal failed to demonstrate that the investigators have a solid track record of successfully implementing, administering, and completing comparable projects (including reports and other deliverables) ○ Proposal likely to have not demonstrated that project investigators have the capacity, including the technical expertise, to successfully complete the project ○ Proposal likely to have not demonstrated that investigators' organizations have the training, facilities, existing programs, and administrative resources and personnel to successfully manage the project
	1	
	2	
	3	
Mid	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proposal may not have demonstrated that investigators completed comparable projects (or they may have assisted but not taken the lead on comparable projects), but it did demonstrate that their education and experience would make them likely to succeed with the proposed project ○ Proposal may not have adequately demonstrated that project investigators have the capacity, including technical expertise, to successfully complete the project ○ Proposal may not have adequately demonstrated that investigators' organizations have the training, facilities, existing programs, and administrative resources and personnel to successfully manage the project
	5	
	6	
	7	
High	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proposal demonstrated that the investigators have a solid track record of successfully implementing, administering, and completing comparable projects (including reports and other deliverables) ○ Proposal demonstrated that project investigators have the capacity, including technical expertise, to successfully complete the project ○ Proposal demonstrated that investigators' organizations have the training, facilities, existing programs, and administrative resources and personnel to successfully manage the project
	9	
	10	