

COVER MEMO

Briefing Date/Time:	September 14, 2026
Staff Contact/Title:	Alex Smith, Executive Director (360) 528-8001, alexs@portolympia.com
Subject:	Contract for Grant Assistance
Purpose:	☐ Information Only ☒ Decision Needed

Type of Agenda Item:

Action

Background:

On June 1, 2026 the Port issued Request for Proposals (RFP) No. 2026-1022 for assistance with grant writing, grant administration, and the development of a long-term funding strategy for capital projects. Proposals were due June 22, 2026 and were received through the Port's Bonfire procurement portal. The RFP contemplated an initial contract term of two years with up to three one-year extensions. A copy of the RFP is attached.

The Port received fifteen responses, from firms located across the United States and Canada. A team of four Port staff reviewed and scored each proposal against the criteria published in the RFP: qualifications and expertise of the vendor (35 points), experience of the vendor (25 points), references (10 points), and reasonableness of cost (30 points).

The response that scored the highest came from The Beckett Group, a Gig Harbor, Washington firm and certified Women-Owned Business Enterprise owned and operated by Jeannie and Bruce Beckett. Jeannie Beckett worked for 24 years at the Port of Tacoma, where she served as Director of Operations, Senior Director of Inland Transportation, and Senior Director of Budget and Business Planning. Bruce Beckett brings more than 30 years of Washington State government affairs experience, including legislative representation for several port districts — among them the Port of Olympia, through December 2024. A copy of the Beckett Group's response to the RFP is attached.

The firm's proposal documents more than \$500 million in federal and state grant awards over the last five years with Jeannie Beckett as primary grant writer. Recent awards include \$25.5 million in U.S. Maritime Administration Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) funding for the Port of Grays Harbor, \$93 million in USDOT INFRA funding for the City of Wenatchee, \$93 million in FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) funding and Congressional Directed Spending for Aberdeen-

Hoquiam flood protection, and \$6.2 million in Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding for float replacement at the Port of Grays Harbor's Westport Marina. The Beckett Group also authored the Port's FY26 PIDP application for warehouse expansion and dockside dredging, and is therefore already familiar with the Port's facilities, capital needs and federal contacts.

Two capabilities set the proposal apart from grant writing alone. First, the firm prepares benefit-cost analyses in-house rather than subcontracting them, which the most competitive federal programs — INFRA, PIDP Large Projects and EDA — require. Second, the firm provides full-lifecycle grant administration and currently serves as program manager and primary grant administrator for an active Federal Railroad Administration cooperative agreement subject to 2 CFR Part 200, including progress reporting, reimbursement requests, compliance monitoring and close-out. Both principals perform the work directly; no junior staff or subcontractors are proposed. Both are billed at \$170 per hour. No bonding or retainage is required under this RFP.

Staff briefed the Commission on the RFP process and the proposed contract as an advisory item on August 10, 2026. Staff recommends entering into a contract with the Beckett Group that operates through a series of task orders as individual projects or grant opportunities arise. Each task order will carry a defined scope of work and its own not-to-exceed amount, and rates charged under any task order may not exceed the rates incorporated into the contract. The contract is for two years with three one-year options. Staff is proposing a "not to exceed" contract amount of \$250,000, anticipating spending the contract amount down over the five years of the contract as grant opportunities arise.

Alignment with Vision 2050:

Supports Vision 2050 Goals 1, 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9 — Marine Terminal, Marina and Boatworks, Airport Functions, Environmental Sustainability, Administration, and Funding and Finance. Grant funding is how most of the plan's capital-dependent actions get paid for. Three points stand out:

- **Funding and Finance** — Vision 2050 calls for a long-term finance strategy that supports the Port's mission, including actions to pursue funding scenarios that earn public support. This contract responds directly to that goal.
- **Environmental Sustainability** — community reviewers ranked sustaining legacy pollution clean-up in Budd Bay and advocating for state investment in Puget Sound water quality as the two highest-priority actions in the entire plan. Both depend almost entirely on outside funding.
- **Facility capital** — marine terminal master planning and permitting, peninsula water access, Swantown Marina and Boatworks improvements, and Airport Master Plan

projects (90 to 95 percent federal share under FAA programs) all require capital the Port cannot generate from operations alone.

Environmental Considerations and Review:

Execution of this contract is an administrative action for professional services and carries no direct environmental impact; no project-level environmental review is triggered by the contract itself. Environmental review will be conducted as required for any individual capital project for which grant funding is later pursued.

The Port's largest funding needs, however, are environmental. The Beckett Group's proposal demonstrates a substantial record of helping ports and local governments secure funding for environmental work, including:

- **Budd Inlet cleanup** — the proposal sets out a specific multi-program strategy — EPA Brownfields and CERCLA cleanup grants, NOAA habitat restoration and the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund, FEMA BRIC, Congressional Directed Spending, Department of Ecology Remedial Action Grants and the State Capital Budget — aimed at closing the remaining cleanup funding gap ahead of the anticipated removal of the 5th Avenue Dam.
- **Flood and sea level rise resilience** — \$93 million secured through FEMA BRIC (FY20 and FY21) and Congressional Directed Spending for the Aberdeen-Hoquiam flood protection and sea level rise project.
- **Stormwater** — state funding secured for the Port of Port Angeles Log Yard Stormwater project, recognized by a formal resolution of that port's Commission.
- **Marina infrastructure** — \$6.2 million in EDA funding for float replacement at the Port of Grays Harbor's Westport Marina, a direct analog to float replacement needs at Swantown Marina.
- **Federal environmental compliance** — the firm currently administers NEPA compliance, environmental mitigation plan monitoring and right-of-way acquisition compliance for a \$71 million federally funded rail project, meaning it can carry environmental obligations through the award period rather than only through application.
- **State environmental funding** — working knowledge of the Department of Ecology Remedial Action Grant program, where the Port already has an established relationship, and of state budget advocacy for Puget Sound water quality.

Grant funding is the most realistic source for the sediment cleanup, habitat restoration and climate resilience investments the Port cannot finance on its own. Strengthening the Port's ability to compete for that funding is, in practical terms, an environmental benefit.

Alternatives Considered:

In-house grant staff. The Port considered hiring in-house grant support. The intermittent and sporadic nature of grant opportunities may not justify a full-time employee, and a single hire would be unlikely to bring competitive federal grant writing, benefit-cost analysis and state agency relationships in one person. At a not-to-exceed \$250,000 over as many as five years, the proposed contract is expected to cost less than a fully loaded full-time position over the same period, and the Port incurs cost only when it issues a task order.

Continuing without outside assistance. Port staff have prepared grant applications as capacity allows. Federal programs increasingly require benefit-cost analysis, detailed readiness documentation and sustained post-award administration under 2 CFR Part 200. Relying on existing staff capacity risks missed application cycles and compliance exposure on awards the Port already holds.

Other proposers. Once the Port decided to hire an outside contractor, we considered all fifteen companies that responded and evaluated them on their qualifications, experience, references and the reasonableness of the cost of their proposal. Several responses came from larger multidisciplinary firms for which grant services are an adjunct to engineering or planning work, and from out-of-state firms without established Washington agency and legislative relationships. The Beckett Group scored the highest of the fifteen submittals.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to execute a personal services contract with the Beckett Group for grant writing, grant administration, and funding strategy services, in an amount not to exceed \$250,000, for an initial term of two years with up to three one-year extensions, with work authorized through individual task orders.

Suggested motion: "I move that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to execute a contract with the Beckett Group for grant writing, grant administration, and funding strategy services, in an amount not to exceed \$250,000, for an initial term of two years with up to three one-year extensions."

Documents Attached:

- RFP Solicitation for 2026-1022 – Grant Writing, Grant Administration and Funding Strategies
- Proposal in Response to RFP No. 2026-1022 from the Beckett Group