Goldbelt Heritage

One Sealaska Plaza, Suite 201
Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907) 790-1460
GHF@goldbelt.com

Request for Proposal (RFP):

Traditional Tlingit Medicine Bags/Beadwork & Skin-Sewing instructor

RFP Issue Date: November 17, 2026
Proposal Deadline: December 1, 2026 5:00pm
Contract Period: December 14, 2026 through January 15, 2027
Anticipated Start Date: Upon contract execution
Point of Contact: Miranda Bell, Culture & Arts Program Manager
miranda.bell@goldbelt.com

OVERVIEW

Goldbelt Heritage Foundation (GHF) is seeking a qualified artist, beadwork instructor, and cultural educator to lead a hands-on medicine bag-making and beadwork art intensive for middle school students at Thunder Mountain Middle School in Juneau, Alaska.

Students will construct a small, beaded medicine bag using culturally appropriate materials (hide), learn foundational skin-sewing and beadwork skills, and create decorative designs with guidance from the selected instructor. Instruction should introduce historical Tlingit uses of medicine bags, alongside an age-appropriate discussion of traditional plant knowledge, healing, and cultural protocols. The project should emphasize cultural accuracy, artistic skill, student creativity, and respectful practice.

SCOPE OF WORK

The Contractor Will:

- Plan and lead a Tlingit medicine bag-making and beadwork intensive for middle school-aged students at Thunder Mountain Middle School.

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- Introduce the history and variety of Tlingit pouches and bags, including distinctions among everyday personal containers, ornamental beaded bags, and specialized medicinal or ceremonial objects.
- Teach age-appropriate construction techniques, potentially including pattern-making, cutting hide or cloth, hand stitching, edging, drawstrings or closures, and safe finishing methods.
- Teach foundational beadwork techniques, including bead selection, layout, stitching or appliqué, and the careful use of needles and thread; guide every student in completing a beaded design or decorative element to add to their medicine bag.
- GHF shall provide kit for hide medicine bag, must be willing to work with kits and material prep for student intensive.
- Provide basic seaweed or floral patterns for student beadwork. Students may use their own clan- or family-owned crest designs, provided they can obtain appropriately sized patterns on their own. Must also provide a size guideline.
- Explain, within the instructor's knowledge and authority, how traditional medicinal plants and/or objects were placed into medicine bags.
- Provide safe, engaging, age-appropriate instruction and supervise all tool and material use, including needles, cutting implements, adhesives, and any natural materials.
- Coordinate with GHF staff and school personnel on schedule, classroom needs, supply procurement, and project logistics.
- Identify required materials, tools, and supplies in advance. GHF will make every effort to accommodate requests while retaining retion to select materials that meet grant requirements and available funding.
- Complete agreed-upon preparation, instruction, student projects, and wrap-up within approved schedule and budget.

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MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Applicants should demonstrate:

- Strong practical experience making culturally appropriate pouches or bags, hand sewing, and decorative beadwork.
- Knowledge of Tlingit cultural history and protocols relevant to personal items, traditional materials, design, and medicinal or ceremonial knowledge.
- Experience teaching or mentoring middle school-aged youth, or a clear and effective youth-instruction approach.
- Ability to create a safe, welcoming, culturally respectful classroom environment. Welcoming to all students who come from any skill level and background.
- Ability to estimate instructional time, preparation needs, material quantities, and costs.
- Willingness to coordinate with GHF and school staff and adapt to the school setting.
- Ability to pass a required criminal background check.
- Ability to arrange transportation to Thunder Mountain Middle School, unless otherwise agreed.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Previous experience teaching traditional arts or cultural practices to youth.
- Experience working in schools or Indigenous community settings.
- Enrolled tribal citizen of a federally recognized tribe, with preference for a citizen of a Southeast Alaska tribe or Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA), consistent with GHF program priorities.
- Certified Tribal Artist or other relevant artist credentials, where applicable.

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CONTRACT TERMS

Location: Thunder Mountain Middle School, Juneau, AK
Contract Period: January 4-14 (excluding weekends), 8:30 AM-3:30 PM.
Estimated Time: 3 weeks (adjusting as necessary for school calendar and when appropriate), approximately 8 hours of instruction and 30 hours of preparation time. Not to exceed 50 hours of work, unless otherwise arranged between contractor and GHF.
With prior approval, contractors may schedule extra hours after the intensive to finish projects with students.

Additional Instructor Support

GHF is willing to provide up to $1,500 to compensate an additional teacher apprentice or classroom support person to assist with the art intensive. Any individual serving in this role must successfully pass a background check before working with students and must have prior approval from GHF before working with youth. GHF reserves the right for final approval of any teaching assistants or volunteers working under this contract. GHF supports the traditional passage of knowledge from artist to apprentice, and encourages apprentices in our work.

Artwork and Educational Use

The artist retains partial ownership of all original artwork and dance apron design created under this agreement. Goldbelt Heritage Foundation (GHF) is granted a non-exclusive, perpetual, royalty-free right to reproduce, display, adapt, and otherwise use the artwork/dance aprons for educational purposes, curriculum development, educational programming, student activities, and future educational work with students and Alaska Native youth. GHF shall not sell, license, or otherwise use the dance aprons or designs for commercial purposes without the artist's prior written permission. Any commercial use or sale of items must be explicitly approved by the artist. Any use of clan crests or culturally restricted designs must follow appropriate cultural protocols and be discussed with GHF before use.

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EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Relevant experience and qualifications
- Demonstrated understanding of the role
- Approach and professional capacity
- Availability and capacity
- References

GHF may request an interview with finalists.

ADDITIONAL TERMS

GHF reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals.
- Request clarification or additional information from applicants.
- Modify the scope of work before awarding a contract.
- Award a contract without an interview if deemed appropriate.
- Require a background check before contract execution or the start of work.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Please submit:

- Letter of interest describing your approach to the intensive and your relevant cultural and artistic experience.
- Résumé, CV, or artist biography.
- Examples of medicine bags and/or Northwest Coast artwork, if available.
- Description of relevant teaching, mentoring, or youth experience.
- Proposed project cost, including hourly rate or total contract amount, estimated preparation and instruction hours, and any additional expenses.

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- Proposed list of materials, tools, and supplies needed, with estimated costs and clarification of what the instructor would provide versus what GHF or the school would provide.
- Confirmation of availability for the proposed project period.

Submit to:

Miranda Bell
Culture & Arts Program Manager
Goldbelt Heritage Foundation
Email: miranda.bell@goldbelt.com
Subject Line: RFP – Medicine Bag
Deadline: December 1, 2026