



Request for Qualifications

Professional Services for Research, Analysis,
Development and Planning Support -
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
(CEDS)

Submit Proposals to:
Southeastern Economic Development Commission
Pamela H. Bostic, Executive Director
PO Box 921 – 707 W. Broad Street
Elizabethtown, NC 28337
pbostic@sedcnc.org

Supported by a U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA)
Partnership Planning Grant.

Request for Statements of Qualifications

Professional Services for Research, Analysis, Development and Planning Support – Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs)

SCHEDULE

- RFQ Re-Release: Thursday, April 7, 2022
- Qualifications Package Due: Thursday, April 21, by 5:00 p.m. (EST)
- Qualifications Review and Selection: Tuesday, April 26, 2022
- Contract Signing upon Approval by Commission

CONTACT

All questions or requests for additional information regarding this RFQ should be directed to:

Pamela H. Bostic
Executive Director
Southeastern Economic Development Commission
(910) 862-6985
pbostic@sedcnc.org

SUBMISSION

Qualifications must be received no later than **5:00 p.m., April 21, 2022**. **No electronic submission or faxes will be accepted**. Qualifications received after this time and/or date will not be considered. **Three (3) hard copies of qualifications** are to be submitted to the SEDC Executive Director in a sealed envelope clearly marked "Statement of Qualifications" prior to the deadline. Responses should not exceed 20 pages in length single-sided.

Responses must be mailed, or hand delivered, to:

Pamela H. Bostic
Executive Director
Southeastern Economic Development Commission
PO Box 921
707 W. Broad Street
Elizabethtown, NC 28337

PURPOSE

In 2021, the Southeastern Economic Development Commission (SEDC), designated as the Economic Development District (EDD) for the twelve-county region, was awarded funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for a three-year Partnership Planning Investment. The primary project under this grant is to develop and implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CED) for the EDD. The SEDC seeks proposals from qualified professionals skilled in research and development, data analysis, and comprehensive planning to assist the Commission staff in the update of the region's five-year (December 2022 – 2027) CEDS using the framework provided by the EDA, which may lead to a contract to perform work to complete the CEDS Update. The CEDS update process will take place between May 2022 – December 2022 and will include disseminating a survey across the Commission's 12-county region, holding county and/or subregion-specific stakeholder meetings, data collection and data analysis required for developing the final CEDS documents for presentation to EDA and regional stakeholders. The Commission's region includes Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, New Hanover, Pender, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, and Scotland Counties.

CEDS BACKGROUND

As an EDA-designated EDD, SEDC is required to maintain a current CEDS, including annual updates, and a comprehensive 5-year update. The CEDS contributes to effective economic development in SEDC's counties through locally based, regionally driven economic development process. Economic development planning – as implemented through the CEDS – is not only a cornerstone of the EDA programs, but successfully serves to engage community leaders, leverage involvement of the private sector, and establish a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration. The CEDS provides the capacity building foundation by which the public sector, working in conjunction with other economic stakeholders creates the environment for regional economic prosperity.

The CEDS is a goal oriented and strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. A CEDS is the result of a regionally owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region. The CEDS provides a vehicle for regional stakeholders, private industry, and local governments to engage in a meaningful conversation and debate about what capacity building efforts would best serve economic development in the region.

From the regulations governing the CEDS, the following sections must be included in the CEDS document:

1. Summary Background of the economic conditions of the region
2. SWOT Analysis
3. Strategic Direction/Action Plan
4. Evaluation Framework

In addition to the sections noted above, the CEDS must incorporate the concept of economic resilience and maximizing Opportunity Zones.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The following Scope of Work components have been prepared as a guide to help interested respondents understand the expected product from this work engagement. Respondents are encouraged to provide suggestions to this scope that would improve the document to enable board members, CEDS Committee, public and elected officials to find, evaluate and utilize the information effectively and efficiently.

The proposed scope of work will generally include, but is not necessarily limited to:

- A. Stakeholder and Public Outreach
 - a. Assist SEDC staff facilitate stakeholder meetings and surveys by development outreach materials. Facilitate and/or participate in stakeholder meetings, note taking, and organizing information for the SWOT analysis.
- B. Data Analysis
 - a. Work with SEDC staff and CEDS committee members to collect and analyze regional data, as required by EDA.
 - b. Assist SEDC staff with updating demographic, economic, and industry information using collected data from multiple sources including Census 2020.
 - c. Develop easy to read graphs, charts and other visuals highlighting regional demographic, economic, and industry trends.
- C. Plan Development
 - a. Coordinate with SEDC staff and CEDS committee members to develop strategic direction and action plan including vision statement, goals/objectives, and implementation which should be consistent with other relevant state/regional/local plans.
 - b. Identify proposed action items for regional collaboration strategies based on concurrence and priorities and related short-term and long-term actions.
 - c. Coordinate with SEDC staff to develop an attractive, engaging, and accessible document that outlines a clear approach to economic development in the region. The report will include graphs, tables, visuals, as well as an Executive Summary, appendices as needed, and county specific one-page snapshots.
- D. Project Management
 - a. Consultant will monitor progress and meet deadlines set by SEDC staff. Consultant will submit regular billing with costs tracked and back up documentation.
- E. Schedule
 - a. Selected consultant will be required to complete the project by December 1, 2022, when the CEDS is due to EDA.

CONTENTS OF RESPONSE

This engagement will be funded in part by the U.S. Economic Development Administration to support Economic Development District planning efforts. Consultants' responses to the RFQ must demonstrate:

- The respondents' understanding of the plan of work, issues, and elements.
- The respondents' qualifications to address and provide the requested deliverables.
- The respondents' understanding of the Southeastern Economic Development Commission CEDS project objectives.

By submitting a response, respondents represent that they have thoroughly examined and become familiar with the proposed scope of work outlined in this RFQ and can perform the work to achieve the objectives. The submittal must demonstrate that the respondent has sufficient and appropriate resources to complete the project. Consultants must designate the project lead and report where his/her primary office is located.

STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS

Statements of Qualifications should include, but are not limited to, the following:

A. Organization Background & Experience

- a. Consultant should possess knowledge of databases related to demographics, socioeconomics, industry analysis, etc., and how to present the data in a concise, attractive manner.
- b. Consultant should possess experience synthesizing information collected in public outreach such as surveys and meetings.
- c. Consultant should possess experience in development of user-friendly, engaging reports, including graphs, tables, visuals, etc.
- d. Consultant should possess basic knowledge of EDA, CEDS, and related requirements.

B. Relevant Project Experience

- a. Project summaries for no more than five projects of similar scope. Each summary should contain the examples of work performed, schedules, and professionals involved.

C. Key Personnel

- a. Brief resumes including education, professional certifications and relevant experience of key personnel who will be assigned to the project. Also, include the name(s) and telephone number(s) of key personnel in your organization authorized to negotiate the contract.

D. Resources & Capacity

- a. Capacity of the consultant to conduct the project (i.e., Availability of personnel, access to databases and software, etc.) and whether these resources are available in house or if they must be obtained through contracted services.

E. Project Service Area Knowledge & Experience

- a. Firm and/or personnel knowledge of, and experience in, the twelve county SEDC service area.

F. Projects Costs

- a. Include a detailed pricing schedule and an estimated minimum and maximum total project cost. Please indicate if the maximum cost is a "guaranteed not to exceed" statement based upon proposed service sand timetables.

EVAULATION CRITERIA

A consultant selection team comprised of the Commission staff and board members shall review and score the State of Qualifications based on the following criteria.

1. **30 Percent: Ability & Experience to Carry Out Project.** Professional and educational experience; demonstrated experience that includes regional planning, knowledge of databases, data analysis, preparing documents, reports, and presentation of information in an attractive manner.
2. **30 Percent: Approach to and Understanding of the Project.** Qualifications will be evaluated on the familiarity with the project service area and local factors, understanding of and approach to the scope of services desired and the ability to meet the Commission's objectives and timeline. The approach must demonstrate competence and familiarity in completing the CEDS processes and requirements.
3. **25 Percent: Past Record of Performance.** Qualification will be evaluated on experience with regional planning and actual CEDS experience and consulting. Proposals will be evaluated based on comparisons to other respondents record of performance.
4. **10 Percent: Costs and Fees.** Proposal costs, including time, material and fee structures need to be complete and clear.
5. **5 Percent: Special Participation.** Additional points will be awarded equitability to proposals based upon participation by small, minority, women, and labor surplus area firms.)

GENERAL TERMS & CONDITIONS

The Commission reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received in response to this request, to negotiate with any qualified source, to waive any formality and any technicalities or to cancel in part or in its entirety this RFQ if it is in the best interests of the Commission. The Commission is not obligated to award a contract solely based on this request or to otherwise pay for information solicited. Information received will be considered contractual in nature and will be used in validation and evaluation of qualifications and in subsequent contractual action.

The Commission reserves the right to seek clarification of any proposal submitted. Based on the review of Statement of Qualifications, the RFQ Committee will make a recommendation to the Commission on a preferred consultant.

This procurement was developed to meet local, state, and federal procurement requirement. In such case that this procurement omits or conflicts with any appropriate applicable laws, said law will prevail.