



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Economic Development Services for
Development of a 10-year Strategic Plan

Introduction

Carteret County Economic Development Foundation, Inc. (CCEDF) is requesting statements of qualification from qualified professional consultants specializing in economic development services for technical analysis, facilitation, and planning activities required for the development of a comprehensive economic development strategic plan. The project will include the review of relevant community demographic and economic data, a SWOT analysis of our local economy, community visioning and stakeholder group engagements to capture the vision of our residents and stakeholders, an assessment of the local economic climate, and the community's capacity for additional growth. This data will culminate in a comprehensive economic development strategy for CCEDF and Carteret County. The plan will set forth specific goals and objectives for growing and diversifying the County's economy and creating community prosperity over the target period, and a detailed action plan for how to achieve strategic objectives.

The submittal deadline is Wednesday, December 2, 2026 at 12:00pm EST.

The firm's submittal package shall be submitted as an electronic PDF on a USB thumb drive and five paper copies in a sealed envelope/box. The envelope/box shall be labeled with the project's name and the firm's name.

Qualification packages can be submitted by either one of the following methods:

- Mail: Carteret County Economic Development
Attn: Ben Warren
3820 Bridges Street, Suite B
Morehead City, NC 28557
- In-person: Carteret County Economic Development
Attn: Ben Warren
3820 Bridges Street, Suite B
Morehead City, NC 28557

Questions about the RFQ can be emailed to Ben Warren at crystalcoasted@carteretcountync.gov no later than 12:00 pm EST on Monday, November 23, 2026.

Any qualification package received later than the specified date and time will not be accepted or considered. No public bid opening will take place. Firms submitting qualified packages will be notified in writing of their selection status.

Mission

The Carteret County Economic Development Department provides an integrated approach to programs and services necessary to support local business, increase employment opportunities, encourage residential growth, and increase the County's tax base to help our businesses grow and compete in today's economy. We also foster relocation and expansion services to make the start-up as smooth as possible.

Background

Carteret County is a coastal North Carolina county that includes the towns of Atlantic Beach, Beaufort, Bogue, Cape Carteret, Cedar Point, Emerald Isle, Indian Beach, Morehead City, Newport, Peletier, Pine Knoll Shores, and the Down East community. The County has consistently held the lowest county property tax rate in North Carolina. It also has one of the highest-ranked school systems in North Carolina, with the second-highest average SAT and ACT scores in 2020. Carteret County also has one of the best performing rural hospitals in the country, and the only Mayo Clinic Care network affiliated hospital in North Carolina. The County's overall population is currently around 70,469. The County's major highways include US-70, NC-24, NC-101, and NC-58. The County is also home to the Port of Morehead City, located within 700 miles of more than 70% of the U.S. industrial base. The port is located on US-70 and is also accessible by train service provided by Norfolk Southern.

Carteret County is also home to one of the largest concentrations of marine scientists and researchers in the United States. This includes the Duke University Marine Laboratory, the University of North Carolina Institute of Marine Sciences, the North Carolina State Center for Marine Sciences and Technology, the Carteret Community College Aquaculture Research and Development program, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Beaufort Laboratory.

Project Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders for this project will be the CCEDF Board members. The Board consists of member investors from the private and public sector.

The Board will convene a Strategic Planning Committee, made up of Board members, investors, business owners, and other community stakeholders, for the purposes of guiding the strategic planning effort. Additionally other stakeholder groups and public input is strongly desired as part of the project scope of work.

Professional Services

The consultant will provide professional services to support the tasks listed below. CCEDF will work jointly with the selected consultant to develop a final, comprehensive scope of work, fee structure, and schedule for the project. Responses to this Request for Qualifications should demonstrate the consultant's experience and expertise with the following range of services included in the project's scope of work:

1. Review and analyze existing demographic, economic, housing, and labor force data. Use this data to show key demographic, social, economic, and financial trends and forecasts for inclusion into the final strategic plan. Include the data sources you propose to use in your response. Additional consideration will be given to firms that can demonstrate

effective visual representation of this data.

2. Review and analyze relevant master planning documents for the community and incorporate the visions contained therein into the final report for this project.
3. Review existing plans and documents and update SWOT analysis findings to identify the current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that affect our local economy.
4. Hold a minimum of two (2) community visioning sessions and several stakeholder engagements to capture community and stakeholder views on Carteret's future. This data should be incorporated into the final report. The CCEDF Board members and County staff will be available for any needed consultation. Include a basic layout of your proposed meeting schedule with community and stakeholder groups in your response.
5. Prepare a customized economic development strategic plan for CCEDF, setting forth specific goals and objectives for the next 10 years that capitalizes on existing economic opportunities and suggests potential solutions to the economic development challenges that our community faces.

The final report will provide data and other relevant information that enables stakeholders to agree on a common understanding of the current reality and establish an overall direction of the plan. The report will include strategic goals and proposed activities, projects, and programs meant to implement the goals set forth in the strategy.

6. Provide a 5-year action plan that includes recommendations for implementation of the final report's activities and the preparation of basic performance measures to track and evaluate progress towards achieving the report's stated goals. The implementation plan will organize, prioritize, and sequence economic development efforts, with short and long-term actions to achieve the goals.
7. Provide two (2) references for which your organization has provided services of a similar size and scope to that proposed herein. The information obtained may be considered in the evaluation of the proposal.

Specific questions to be addressed by this plan include, but are not limited to:

1. Targeted sectors for recruitment: Recommendations on what business sectors Carteret County should focus its efforts on for future growth (i.e., retail, general office, light industrial, professional services, business park, tourism, etc.).
2. Business attraction and retention: Preparation of a basic business attraction/retention strategy for preferred business sectors identified by the report.
3. Blue Water Development: Recommendations and recruitment strategies for attracting prospective marine technology and aquaculture businesses and facilities (evaluate potential options for streamlining permitting and approval processes).
4. Strategic Infrastructure Investment: Recommendations for investments in transportation, water & sewer, and other infrastructure.
5. Labor and Workforce Development: Recommendations for how best to leverage our workforce pipelines and existing workforce development assets.
6. Quality of Life Amenities: Recommendations for achieving housing variety and availability; and filling retail and service sector gaps, all commensurate with the findings of this report.

7. Marine Science: Recommendations for attracting new business interests that benefit from close proximity to the extensive Marine Science research base located in Carteret County.

Budget Information

The budget for this project will be established following consultant selection and fee negotiation.

Evaluation Criteria		
We will evaluate each response received and rank them based upon the evaluation criteria below.		
1.	Completeness of the submitted materials.	5 points
2.	Qualification statement that includes a cover letter, a roster of team members who will be working on the project, their professional qualifications, technical knowledge, and experience with creating economic development strategic plans.	10 points
3.	Demonstration of specialized experience related to the development of economic development strategic plans. Please describe what your team's approach to this assignment will be and outline how you will proceed with the creation of the plan. Identify the sources of data you intend to use to complete the data review on page 2 of this RFQ.	40 points
4.	Provide two examples of a similar plan you have created for a community similar in size and demographic. If there are sections of the plan where your approach will differ substantially from the examples given, explain this in as much detail as possible.	20 points
5.	Provide examples of your capacity to successfully convene, manage, and gather data from community visioning events, stakeholder group sessions, and other outreach activities.	15 points
6.	Graphic Design: Provide an example of an economic development strategic plan / report you have produced for a previous client that highlights your firms' ability to effectively show data in a graphic format.	10 points
	Total	100 points