

# **Request for Proposals for Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

## **Announcement**

Flathead County Economic Development Authority (FCEDA), in partnership with Montana West Economic Development (MWED), is requesting proposals to complete a regional Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), a five-year planning document that reflects both current economic and demographic conditions of the region and future goals and objectives by the industry sector.

## **Background Information**

The CEDS is a planning document submitted every 5 years, and updated annually, to the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA), as well as other federal and state agencies that provide grants and loans to the region for various infrastructure and economic development projects. The FCEDA/MWED CEDS encompasses all of Flathead County.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) contributes to effective economic development in America's communities and regions through a locally-based, regionally-driven economic development planning process. Economic development planning – as implemented through the CEDS – is not only a cornerstone of the U.S. Economic Development Administration's (EDA) programs, but successfully serves to engage community leaders, leverage the 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 actors (individuals, firms, industries), creates the environment for regional economic prosperity.

Simply put, a CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. CEDS is the result of a regionally driven planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region. It is a key component in establishing and maintaining a robust economic ecosystem by helping to build regional capacity (through hard and soft infrastructure) that contributes to individual, firm, and community success. The CEDS provides a vehicle for individuals, organizations, local governments, institutes of learning, and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation and debate about what capacity-building efforts would best serve economic development in the region.

The CEDS must include the following:

- Summary of background information
- SWOT analysis
- Industry analysis
- Strategic direction/Action plan
- Evaluation framework
- Economic and Disaster Resilience

## **Scope of Work**

Using FCEDA/MWED's current CEDS framework, the final scope of services to be provided by the selected Consultant will be developed in partnership with MWED staff.

The scope may include the following elements:

- Updating demographic, economic, and industry analysis
- Work with the MWED staff to develop an updated demographic analysis for the region.
- Provide administrative support to schedule meetings and track attendees.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Assist MWED staff with the identification of stakeholder groups and/or individuals for the purpose of input and discussion.
- Develop and facilitate, in coordination with staff, a public input strategy (number, frequency, time, location, etc.) to ensure the greatest level of participation.
- Update & develop current Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT): List strategic issues based on stakeholder input and developed in coordination with the CEDS committee that can serve as the basis for formulating goals, objectives, and strategies.
- Plan Development: In partnership with staff, develop the CEDS report. The CEDS report should be an attractive, engaging, and accessible document that outlines a clear approach to moving the needle for the region. An Executive Summary, as well as supplemental reports providing a more detailed analysis of demographic and economic trends, historical reports, meeting summaries, and development projects, will be developed as appendices.
- Planning for and implementing resilience through specific goals or actions to bolster the long-term economic durability of the region
- Additional Information to guide proposal development:
  - Attachment A - Work Plan Timeline for an example of a CEDS outline of tasks and projected time frame.
  - Attachment B - CEDS Checklist.

## **Deliverables and Performance Expectations**

- Monthly progress reports
- A completed draft of the CEDS and the economic recovery and resiliency addendum must be provided to the CEDS committee for review, comment, and recommendation for adoption at the MWED and FCEDA Boards of Directors meeting in Q1 2023. The draft plan will include goals, objectives, and strategies that assist stakeholders in diversifying and expanding the economic base of the region.

## **Proposal Evaluation Criteria**

- Qualification/experience of prime and sub-consultant(s) with studies of similar scope and size
- Demonstrated knowledge of economic development principles and trends, especially in rural and/or northwestern Montana
- Demonstrated knowledge of current EDA requirements for CEDS
- Experience in leading collaborative workshops, focus groups, and outreach events

- Past record of performance on similar projects
- Proposed cost of the study and demonstration of commitment for meeting the project schedule
- Completeness and quality of proposal submission

### **Conditions of the Proposal**

- FCEDA/MWED reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to negotiate portions thereof.
- Proposals that address only part of the qualifications contained in the Request for Proposal will not be considered.
- FCEDA/MWED reserves the right to select any proposal.
- The selection of the proposal will be based on how well the applicant addresses the Application Criteria.
- It is anticipated that the contract will begin no later than January 19, 2023 and will end with final submittal to EDA. 10% of the total contract will be withheld from final payment until the CEDS has been accepted by EDA (but not more than 45 days), and the Consultant will be expected to make any revisions to the final document as may be required to meet EDA's approval requirements.

### **Regarding Direct Costs**

Costs of printing, advertising and other such costs will be the responsibility of FCEDA/MWED. The Consultant should consider costs related to travel within the region, telephone expenses, and other such items in their budget and cost proposal.

### **RFP Selection Schedule**

Proposals will be accepted until 5:00 PM, January 5, 2023. Any proposals received after this date and time will not be considered. To submit a proposal electronically, email to: [christy@dobusinessinmontana.com](mailto:christy@dobusinessinmontana.com).

Proposals can be addressed to the following:  
Christy Cummings Dawson, President,  
Montana West Economic Development  
44 2nd Ave W, Kalispell, MT 59901  
[christy@dobusinessinmontana.com](mailto:christy@dobusinessinmontana.com)

It is anticipated that a proposal will be selected by January 12, 2023.

### **Questions**

Please submit questions in writing via email to [christy@dobusinessinmontana.com](mailto:christy@dobusinessinmontana.com).