



TOP OF ALABAMA REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Individuals

FROM: Hannah Arendsen, Economic Development Specialist

DATE: January 10, 2022

RE: Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments
Request for Statements of Qualifications for Research, Development, Analysis, and
Planning Support – EDA Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Please find enclosed the Advertisement for Statements of Qualification regarding the referenced project as it will appear in the Huntsville Times on January 12, 2022, the submittal package requirements, and the associated evaluation criteria.

Should you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact EDA Project Administrator, Hannah Arendsen, at (256) 326-6184 or hannah.arendsen@tarcog.us.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

**Request for Statements of Qualifications
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
Research, Development, Analysis, and Planning Support**

The Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG) hereby solicits written Statements of Qualifications from professional consulting firms interested in contracting with TARCOG to perform research, analysis, development, and related professional planning support activities associated with the development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the TARCOG region (DeKalb, Jackson, Limestone, Madison & Marshall Counties).

This planning project is federally funded and will require adherence to all federal regulatory conditions required by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The firm(s) selected will be eligible to negotiate a contract with TARCOG. No minimum order of work is guaranteed. If the selected firm(s) is unsuccessful in negotiating a contract or does not maintain the minimum stated requirements, TARCOG, at its discretion, may select the next ranked firm(s) for contract negotiation. All work will be ordered on an "as-needed" basis within the EDA-approved scope of work for the one-year project period.

A Request for Qualifications package with detailed requirements and evaluation criteria is available at www.tarcog.us, at the address provided below, or by contacting EDA Project Coordinator, Hannah Arendsen, at hannah.arendsen@tarcog.us. Questions related to this request should also be directed to the same email address.

Responses shall not exceed 20 pages in length and must be submitted to the Project Coordinator in a sealed envelope clearly marked "Statement of Qualifications," by 12:00 p.m. central, January 28, 2021. Responses received after the stated deadline will not be considered. Please furnish three (3) hard copies to: Hannah Arendsen, TARCOG, 5075 Research Drive NW, Huntsville, AL 35805 via mail carrier or hand delivery. No responses will be received by facsimile or electronic mail.

Huntsville Times

January 12, 2021

**Request for Statements of Qualifications
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
Research, Development, Analysis, and Planning Support**

SCHEDULE

- RFQ Released: Monday, January 10, 2022 (TARCOG Website)
- RFQ Advertisement Published: Wednesday, January 12, 2022 (Huntsville Times)
- Qualifications Package Due: Friday, January 28, 2022, by 12:00 p.m. (CST)
- Package Review and Selection: Monday, January 31, 2022
- Project Period: February 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022

QUESTIONS

All questions regarding this Request for Qualifications should be directed to:

TARCOG EDA Project Coordinator, Hannah Arendsen (hannah.arendsen@tarcog.us)

SUBMISSION

Three (3) hard copies of response packages must be submitted to TARCOG's EDA Project Coordinator in a sealed envelope clearly marked "Statement of Qualifications" prior to the stated deadline. Responses should not exceed 20 pages in length single-sided.

Responses must be mailed, or hand delivered, to:

Hannah Arendsen
Economic Development Specialist
Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments
5075 Research Drive NW
Huntsville, AL 35805

**No response packages will be received by facsimile or electronic mail.
Response packages received after the stated deadline will not be considered.**

PURPOSE

The Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG) seeks proposals from qualified professionals skilled in research and development, data analysis, and comprehensive planning to assist TARCOG planning and economic development staff in the update of the region's five-year (2023 – 2028) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) using the framework provided by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The CEDS update process will take place between February 2022 – December 2022 and will include disseminating a survey across TARCOG's five-county region, holding county-specific stakeholder meetings, and related data analysis required for developing the final CEDS document for presentation to EDA and regional stakeholders. TARCOG's region includes DeKalb, Jackson, Limestone, Madison, and Marshall counties.

CEDS BACKGROUND

As an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD), TARCOG is required to maintain a current CEDS, including annual updates, and a comprehensive 5-year update. The CEDS contributes to effective economic development in TARCOG'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 as a means 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. A CEDS is the result of a regionally owned 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
- Strategic direction/Action plan
- Evaluation framework

- Concept of resilience & post COVID-19 recover
- Details regarding Opportunity Zones

SCOPE OF SERVICES

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

A. Data Analysis

- a. Work with TARCOG and CEDS committee members to collect and analyze regional data, as required by EDA.
- b. Assist TARCOG staff with updating demographic, economic, and industry analysis using collected data.
- c. Develop easy to read graphs and visuals highlighting regional demographic, economic, and industry trends.

B. Stakeholder and Public Outreach

- a. Assist TARCOG staff market stakeholder meetings and surveys by developing outreach materials. Participate in stakeholder meetings, note taking, and organizing information for the SWOT analysis.

C. Plan Development

- a. Coordinate with TARCOG staff to develop an attractive, engaging, and accessible document that outlines a clear approach to economic development in the region. The report should include graphs, tables, and 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 TARCOG staff. Consultant will submit regular billing with costs tracked and backup documentation.

E. Schedule

- a. Selected consultant will be required to complete the project by December 2022, when the CEDS is due to U.S. EDA.

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 five-county TARCOG service area.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

A consultant selection team comprised of TARCOG employees and/or board members shall review and score the Statements of Qualifications based on the following criteria:

1. Consultants knowledge and experience with databases, data analysis, and presentation of information. (25 points)
2. Consultants experience preparing documents, reports, and information in an attractive manner. (20 points)
3. Consultants knowledge and experience working with CEDS update processes and EDA requirements. (20 points)
4. Key personnel qualifications and experience. (20 points)
5. Familiarity with project service area and local factors. (15 points)

TARCOG will enter negotiations with the top-ranked firm for the purpose of entering into an agreement for consulting services subject to the availability of funding, within the intended budget of approximately \$50,000. If such negotiations are not successful, the firm will be dismissed from further consideration and discussions will be initiated with the second ranked firm. This process will continue until an agreement is reached.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

TARCOG reserves the right to reject any Statements of Qualifications received in response to the RFQ. TARCOG is not responsible for any costs incurred by consultants replying to this request. TARCOG is an equal opportunity employer and encourages responses from all qualified firms.