

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

FOR THE PREPARATION OF:

**Update to the Northern Tier Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
(CEDS)**

FOR THE COUNTIES OF:

**Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, and Wyoming Counties
of Pennsylvania**

IN COOPERATION WITH:



**Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission
312 Main Street
Towanda, PA 18848**

November 2023

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PART I

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR THE CONTRACTOR

- 1-1 **Purpose:** This Request for Proposals (RFP) provides prospective bidders with sufficient information to enable them to prepare and submit proposals to satisfy a need for an update of the Northern Tier Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Northern Tier Region.
- 1-2 **Issuing Office:** This RFP is issued by the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission, 312 Main Street, Towanda, PA. This office is the sole point of contact for this RFP.
- 1-3 **Scope:** This RFP contains instructions governing the proposals to be submitted and the materials to be included therein; a description of the service to be provided; requirements which must be met to be eligible for consideration; general evaluation criteria; and other requirements to be met by each proposal.
- 1-4 **Problem Statement:** The purpose of this project is to update the Northern Tier Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) based on an analysis of economic and workforce development for the northern tier region of Pennsylvania inclusive of Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, and Wyoming Counties.
- 1-5 **Period of Performance:** December 15, 2023 - June 15, 2024.
- 1-6 **Project Funding:** Anticipated project funding sources may include, but are not limited to the Economic Development Administration (EDA).
- 1-7 **Contract:** NTRPDC will prepare a written agreement for execution between the consultant and the NTRPDC. The general provisions of this agreement, the Final Work Program and requirements placed on the project shall be made a part of this agreement. The consultant shall have authorization to proceed upon a written notice from the NTRPDC.
- 1-8 **Rejection of Proposals:** NTRPDC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received as a result of this request, to negotiate separately with competing contractors, or to award the contract for the purchase of the services on such basis as NTRPDC deems to be in their best interests. NTRPDC reserves the right to waive informalities and irregularities in proposals received, and to accept any portion of any proposal or all items proposed if deemed in the best interest of the conduct of the study. Only chosen contractors will be notified.

- 1-9 **Incurring Cost:** Neither EDA nor NTRPDC is liable for any cost incurred by proposers prior to issuance of a fully executed contract.
- 1-10 **Amendment to the RFP:** If it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, an amendment will be issued to all contractors who received the basic RFP.
- 1-11 **Response Due Date:** Proposals must be submitted in electronic format to the following:
E-mail Address: smith@northerntier.org
It is the responsibility of the consultant to ensure that the proposal is received by NTRPDC by 4:00 PM on Friday, December 8, 2023. The email should clearly state “Update to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.”
- 1-12 **Proposals:** To be considered, contractors must submit a complete response to this RFP, using the format provided in Part II. One original copy of each proposal must be submitted to the Issuing Office. The contractor will make no other distribution of proposals. An official authorized to bind the contractor to its provisions must sign proposals. For this RFP, the proposal must remain valid for at least 120 days. Moreover, the contents of the proposal of the successful bidder will become contractual obligations if a contract is entered into. Failure of the successful bidder to accept these obligations in a contract may result in cancellation of the award.
- 1-13 **Economy of Preparation:** Proposals should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise description of the contractor’s ability to meet the requirements of the RFP.
- 1-14 **Oral Discussions:** Respondents who submit a proposal in response to this RFP may be required to give an interview regarding their proposal. This provides an opportunity for the respondent to clarify or elaborate on the proposal. These are fact-finding and explanation sessions only and do not include negotiations. NTRPDC will schedule the time and location of these presentations/interviews. NTRPDC may or may not choose to conduct these presentations/interviews.
- 1-15 **Prime Contractor Responsibilities:** The selected contractor will be required to assume responsibility for all services offered in his/her proposal whether or not he/she produces them. Further, the Issuing Office will consider the selected contractor to be the sole point of contact with regard to contractual matters.
- 1-16 **Disclosure of Proposal Contents:** Cost and price information provided in proposals will be held in confidence and will not be revealed or discussed with competitors. All other material submitted becomes the property of the Issuing Office and may be returned only at the Issuing Office’s option. Proposals submitted may be reviewed and evaluated by any person other than competing bidders at the discretion of NTRPDC. The NTRPDC has the right to use any or all ideas presented in any reply to the RFP. Selection or rejection of the proposal does not affect this right.

- 1-18 **Standard Contract:** Each proposal will be submitted with the understanding that the acceptance by NTRPDC of the offer to furnish the services described herein shall constitute a contract between the proposers and the NTRPDC. This contract shall bind the proposer in his/her part to furnish and deliver at his/her bid price and in accordance with conditions of said accepted proposal and specifications.

The selected contractor will be expected to enter into an agreement containing the Standard Contract Requirements attached as Appendix A to this RFP. Upon acceptance of the work program, NTRPDC will prepare a contract for execution between the NTRPDC and the consultant. The contract will be awarded to that bidder whose proposal conforms to the RFP and will be most advantageous to the project partners, price and all other factors considered.

If a contract cannot be negotiated successfully with the highest rated proposer, negotiation will be conducted with the next highest rated proposer and so on until a successfully negotiated contract can be obtained. Oral discussions, if necessary, will be scheduled.

- 1-19 **Contact Person:** The NTRPDC Project Officers are:
- Katie Smith, NTRPDC Economic Development Program Manager
 - Phone: 570-265-1532; Email: smith@northerntier.org
 - Frank Thompson, NTRPDC Executive Director
 - Phone: 570-265-1515; Email: thompson@northerntier.org

PART II

INFORMATION REQUIRED FROM THE CONTRACTOR

Contractor proposals must be submitted in the format outlined below. To be considered, the proposal must respond to all requirements in this part of the REP. Any other information thought to be relevant, but not applicable to the enumerated categories, should be provided as an appendix to the proposal.

1. **Cover Letter**

2. **Technical Proposal**

- A. **Statement of Problem** - State in succinct terms your understanding of the problem presented and the service required by this RFP.
 - B. **Work Program** - Prepare a detailed, yet concise, work program that specifically addresses the needs of this project. The work activities outlined in the Project Scope of the RFP should not be considered final or all-inclusive, but rather a basic guide upon which to build your proposal. The NTRPDC will look at what and how the bidder proposes to accomplish the activities set forth in the RFP. Completion dates must be included for each work element proposed. A detailed listing of deliverables and a project timeline must be included.
 - C. **Prior Experience** - In narrative form, not to exceed five (5) type written pages, discuss the firm's experience in working with the Economic Development Administration, NTRPDC, elected officials, and special interest groups relative to preparing updates to the Northern Tier Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Specify prior project references that personnel assigned to this project have prepared and implemented similar in nature to this RFP.
 - D. **Personnel** - For this section, summarize the qualifications of the key personnel that will undertake the project. Include recent experience that is directly applicable to the project, a project personnel organization responsibility chart, and vitae of all personnel assigned to the project. NOTE: Please do not include the description of the entire history of past experience, but only that which directly pertain to this project
3. **Cost Proposal** - Prepare a detailed cost estimate in response to Section IV, the Work Statement, and Section V, the Scope of Work. The cost estimate should clearly define the cost for each task identified in the Scope of Work.

PART III

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

All proposals received from contractors will be reviewed and evaluated by a committee of qualified personnel representing the team of project partners. The committee will recommend for selection the proposal that most closely meets the requirements of the RFP and satisfies the needs of the project partners.

The committee will evaluate each written proposal and assign points for each segment of the proposal in accordance with the criteria herein set forth. The proposer with the highest total points for each service will be selected for purposes of negotiating a contract. The points to be awarded are set forth for each major segment and sub-segment below.

- A. Proposer's method for providing the requested service (60 points):
 - 1) Understanding of the program in general and subject project areas in particular (10 points)
 - 2) Adequacy of Scope of Services (20 points)
 - 3) Adequacy of the product (30 points):
 - Demonstration of concrete methods of implementation (15 points);
 - Demonstration of ability to provide innovation (15 points).

- B. Proposer's qualifications (30 points):
 - 1) Demonstrated ability of the project director to carry out the project consulting and coordination responsibilities (10 points).
 - 2) Demonstrated ability of other specifically named key personnel to carry out proposed assignments (10 points).
 - 3) Adequacy of the proposed level of effort, stability, and continuity, in terms of time commitment of project director and key personnel (10 points)

- C. Compensation (10 points):
 - 1) The proposer must include a statement of intent to negotiate a cost not to exceed the contract with the NTRPDC.
 - 2) The proposer must provide a Cost Estimate of Sufficient level of detail to document expense in the following categories:
 - Direct labor (for each individual assigned, include hourly rate x number of hours proposed);
 - Overhead (operating cost such as travel, equipment, and supplies);
 - Fee
 - Expenses
 - Subcontractor (if used)
 - Total

PART IV

WORK STATEMENT & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 5-Year Update

Overview:

- A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies. The CEDS analyzes the regional economy and serves as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process will articulate a vision and direction for the region and develop action plans in the areas of image, business climate, economic base, infrastructure, labor market, economic development effort, location, and quality of life. The CEDS must meet the regulations and requirements set forth in 13 C.F.R. § 303.7.

PART V

Scope of Work:

Scope of Work Outline:

- 1) **Strategic Direction/Action Plan**
- 2) **Evaluation Framework**
- 3) **Economic Resilience**
- 4) **Workforce Development**
- 5) **Equity**
- 6) **Final Product/Deliverables**

NTRPDC will be responsible for developing the background information and SWOT analysis portion of the CEDS.

Detailed Scope of Work:

- Public involvement is key to developing a CEDS.
 - A minimum of one meeting per county with stakeholders at the beginning of the information gathering stage of the process
 - Key person interviews
 - Follow-up stakeholder meetings and presentation of a CEDS draft/executive summary to gain feedback

- 1) **Strategic Direction/Action Plan: Flowing from the SWOT Analysis, the Strategic Direction and Action Plan should be consistent with other relevant state/regional/local plans.**
 - The strategic direction and associated action plan should logically flow from the critical internal and external factors that speak to the region’s assets and limitations and its role in capacity building.
 - Strategic Direction: Vision Statement and Goals/Objectives
 - The **vision statement** should answer the question “Where do we want to be in the next ten to twenty years?”
 - **Goals and objectives** provide the basis for formulating the action plan and serve as milestones to evaluate regional progress. The goal and objectives should be consistent with community aspirations for economic prosperity.
 - Action Plan: Implementation
 - The action plan should include a wide-range of activity types (housing, transportation, broadband, environmental, sector specific or cluster asset-leveraging efforts, etc.) and must be clearly linked to the goals and objectives from the strategic framework. A limited number of activities with the highest priority and potential for regional impact should be identified and described. Descriptions of these high priority activities of regional significance should include:
 - An outline of the steps required to take each selected high-priority activity from inception to successful completion;
 - A roster of the key individuals and institutions that will be responsible for implementing and supporting these steps;
 - A reasonable estimate of the costs associated with implementing the activity;
 - A list of the integrated funding sources (public, private and nonprofit) to support the costs; and
 - A realistic time frame for execution (i.e., implementation schedule), with relevant benchmarks and performance measures that speak to overall impact.

- 2) **Evaluation Framework:** Develop performance measures and a framework to evaluate progress toward the fulfilment of the Action Plan/Implementation.
 - The evaluation framework, with its associated measures and timelines, should cascade from the strategic direction and action plan, which, in turn, flow from the SWOT analysis.
 - Performance measures should be identified to evaluate the progress of activities in achieving the vision, goals and objectives. Include both traditional (e.g., jobs created and/or retained, private investment) and non-traditional (e.g., wealth creation such as GDP per capita, household income, per capita income, wages, net worth) performance measures.
- 3) **Economic Resilience: Develop steady state and responsive economic resiliency initiatives**
 - **Develop a Framework:**
 - Identify persistent economic challenges, deficiencies and vulnerabilities in the region
 - Prepare for disruptions by identifying “early warning” tools
 - Build mechanisms that create flexibility: What assets currently exist to adequately respond to disasters (i.e. recovery plans, business access to capital/credit resources, workforce training post-disruption, etc...)
 - Provide ideas to promote a positive vision for the region: How do we make sure the messaging about the region’s assets and opportunities is positive (to encourage investments in both times of tranquility and disruption)?
 - **From the framework, develop steady state and responsive economic resiliency initiatives:**
 - Planning for and implementing resilience through specific goals or actions to bolster the long-term economic durability of the region (steady-state).
 - Establishing information networks among the various stakeholders in the region to encourage active and regular communications between the public, private, education, and non-profit sectors to collaborate on existing and potential future challenges (responsive).
 - Integrating economic development strategies, sustainability principles, and hazard mitigation planning to develop and implement a strategy for disaster recovery
 - Addressing climate resilience by assessing risks and vulnerabilities, prioritizing identified actions, and investigating options to implement.
 - Measuring the economic resiliency of the region by the degree of regional income equality, regional economic diversification, etc.

4) **Workforce Development**

- Incorporate workforce development into the CEDS by:
 - Include specific measurable goals, objectives, and/or action items focused on workforce development both from the perspective of companies and of workers, and in particular, from underserved communities.
 - Determine how best to measure the impact (e.g., employment and earnings outcomes) of any workforce development efforts.

5) **Goals**

- Infuse diversity, equity and inclusive economic development throughout the CEDS.

6) **Final Product/Deliverables:**

- Minimum of four progress report meetings with the CEDS Committee
- Executive Summary of findings and recommendations for the CEDS.
- Prepare one draft copy of the CEDS.
- Incorporate comments received from review of the draft.
- Present the preliminary CEDS to the Economic Development Strategic Planning Committee at a public meeting.
- Prepare the final CEDS.
- Provide 5 printed copies of the final CEDS in its entirety, including attachments and appendices, as well as one electronic copy.

PART VI

Project Partners

- Sullivan County
- Susquehanna County
- Tioga County
- Wyoming County
- Bradford County
- NTRPDC
- Economic Development Administration

PART VII

Consultant Project Management

A. Designate a Project Manager

The consultant will designate a Project Manager to be responsible for the overall implementation of the project, direct interaction with all project partners, resolution of all issues and concerns, and attendance at required meetings.

B. Attend Bimonthly Project Update Meetings

C. Meet with Project Partners

D. Submit Written Monthly Progress Reports

The consultant will submit monthly written progress reports to NTRPDC that detail the work performed during the past month, work planned for the next month, and all issues or concerns that are pertinent to the project. These reports will be produced in Microsoft Word and submitted electronically via e-mail to the Economic Development Program Manager the second Wednesday of each month.

APPENDIX A.

STANDARD CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

1. **Issuing Office:** The RFP is issued by the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC).
3. **Equal Employment Opportunities:** A non-discrimination form must be part of the proposal.
4. **Ineligible Proposer:** The proposer certifies that they are not included in the U.S. Comptroller General's list of ineligible proposers.
5. **Funding Out Clause:** Where the NTRPDC obligations under the contract depend upon the receipt of funds from another governmental body, such as the Federal/State Government, and if such funds are not distributed by said governmental body to NTRPDC, then this agreement shall terminate and the grantee under this agreement assumes any risk of loss.
6. **Prohibited Interests:** No member, officer, or employee of the public body, NTRPDC, or locality during his/her tenure for one year thereafter shall have any interests direct or indirect, in this contract or the proceeds thereof. No member of or delegate to the Congress of the United States shall be admitted to any share or part of this contract or to any benefit arising therefrom.
7. **Covenant Against Gratuities:** If awarded the contract, the proposer shall warrant that he/she has not offered or given gratuities (in the form of entertainment, gifts, or otherwise) to any official or employee of NTRPDC with a view toward securing favorable treatment in awarding, amending, or evaluating the performance of the contract.
8. **Proposal Acceptance:** Each proposal will be submitted with the understanding that the acceptance in writing of the NTRPDC to offer to furnish the services described herein, shall constitute a contract between the proposers and the NTRPDC which shall bind the proposer in his/her part to furnish and deliver at his/her bid price, and in accordance with conditions of said accepted proposal and specifications. A formal contract agreement between the NTRPDC and the consultant shall be executed.
9. **Proposal Ownership:** All proposals, including attachments, supplemental, material, addendum, etc., shall become the property of NTRPDC and will not be returned to the sender.

10. **Proposal Award:** NTRPDC reserves the right to accept any proposal, or to reject any or all proposals, or to award the contract for the purchase of the services on such basis as NTRPDC deems to be in their best interests.
11. **Contract Changes:** Any proposed change in the contract shall be submitted to NTRPDC for its prior approval and the NTRPDC may, at any time, by written order, and without advance notice to the sureties, make changes within the general scope of the contract, to the study specifications. If any such changes causes an increase or decrease in the cost of or the time required for the performance of any part of the work under the contract, whether changes or not changed by any such order, an equitable adjustment shall be made in the contract price or delivery schedule, or both, and the contract shall be modified in writing accordingly. Any claim by the proposer for adjustment under this clause must be asserted within thirty (30) days from the date of receipt by the proposer of the modification of change; provided, however, if the NTRPDC and act upon any such claim asserted at any time prior to final payment under the contract.
12. **Termination of Contract:** The NTRPDC reserves the right to terminate the contract for or without cause and settlement payment will be based on successful delivery prior to termination. The NTRPDC shall pay the aggregate price of delivered service completed in accordance with the prices specified in the contract. In the event of termination, all furnished or unfurnished documents, data, studies, surveys, models, and report prepared by the consultant shall, at the option of the NTRPDC, become the property of the NTRPDC.
13. **Maintenance of Records:** The consultant will maintain records to show the actual time involved in the accomplishment of the costs incurred.
14. **Subcontracting:** It is expected that the assigned project team shall be responsible for completing the work tasks. Other subcontracting must be detailed in the consultant's original work program and shall be done only upon approval by NTRPDC in accordance with the provisions of the contract agreement. Contracts with said outside experts and contractors must be made in conformity with the bidding requirements of the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania pertaining to such contracts unless the consultant exhibits proof acceptable to NTRPDC that he/she is not required to advertise for proposals and award such contract to the lowest bidding expert/contractor. In the event that the consultant publicly advertises a request for proposal, the consultant shall submit to NTRPDC a list of all subcontractors submitting proposals. In the event that the low bidder is not awarded the contract, the consultant shall submit to NTRPDC explanation of the reasons why the contract was not awarded to the lowest bidder. Compliance with the provisions of this paragraph shall be condition precedent to disbursement of any of the funds to the NTRPDC.
15. **Compensation, Payment Schedule, Reporting Allowable Costs, Progress Reports:** As a condition to disbursement, the consultant will be required to submit to NTRPDC a copy of all contracts with outside experts/subcontractors engaged by the consultant to

participate in the project. If the consultant complies with the conditions for disbursement as herein above set forth, and as otherwise provided in this contract, each quarter, funds shall be disbursed. The reports and products must be satisfactory in form and content to NTRPDC and must be accompanied by all required supporting data.

Payment will be made quarterly by NTRPDC to the consultant upon receipt of acceptable invoices within fifteen (15) business days following receipt of funds to NTRPDC.

In addition to the invoice, the consultant shall also submit to the NTRPDC, written quarterly progress reports summarizing the work accomplished for that month, by task, in accordance with the requirements outlined in the Scope of Work.

16. **Small and/or Minority-Owned Businesses:** Efforts will be made by NTRPDC to utilize small businesses and minority-owned businesses. A consultant qualifies as a small business firm, if it meets the definition of “small business” as established by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.201), by having average annual receipts for the last three fiscal years of less than six million dollars.
17. **Contract Preparation/Notice to Proceed:** The NTRPDC or Consultant will prepare a written agreement for execution between the consultant and the NTRPDC. The general provisions of this agreement, the Final Work Program and requirements placed on the project shall be made a part of this agreement. The consultant shall have authorization to proceed upon a written notice from the NTRPDC.
18. **Meetings:** Meetings will be scheduled between the consultant and the project partners as specified in the Scope of Work. Other meetings may be held upon recommendation of NTRPDC or the consultant.
19. **Findings:** The deadline for the preliminary draft is five (5) months from project commencement. The consultant will incorporate written and oral comments in a draft before preparing the final draft. The number of draft and final reports will be produced in conjunction with requirements set forth in the Scopes of Work for each plan (detailed earlier in this RFP). The Final Report and other products will be submitted no later than June 15, 2024. Associated mapping generated through this project should be submitted in digital format as Arc Coverage files.
20. **Availability of Completed Reports:** NTRPDC will make available prior reports and studies to the consultant, in whole or in part, that pertains to or relate to the completion of the project. A confidentiality statement will be prepared by the NTRPDC and signed by the consultant prior to the issuance and release of any reports.