

Request for Proposals (RFP) - Agriculture Industry Partnership Needs Assessment

Issued by: Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC)

Project Title: Agriculture Industry Partnership Needs Assessment

Funding Source: Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)

Release Date: April 6, 2026

RFP Due Date: April 24, 2026

Project Budget: Not to exceed \$50,000

Project Timeline: Approximately 8 weeks from contract execution

1. Introduction

The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC) serves a five-county region in northeast Pennsylvania, supporting economic and workforce development initiatives. In 2025, NTRPDC launched an Agriculture Industry Partnership (IP) with initial grant funding to convene stakeholders and begin identifying workforce and industry needs.

To position the Agriculture IP for future investment, NTRPDC is seeking proposals from qualified consultants or firms to conduct a comprehensive Agriculture Industry Needs Assessment.

2. Organizational Background

NTRPDC serves as the Local Development District (LDD) for Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, and Wyoming Counties, encompassing approximately 4,000 square miles in northeastern Pennsylvania. The region is predominantly rural, with low population density and approximately 171,322 residents.

3. Purpose of the RFP

The purpose of this project is to identify workforce, economic, and operational needs across the agriculture sector within NTRPDC's five-county region. The assessment will inform strategic planning, partnership development, and future funding applications.

4. Scope of Work

The selected consultant will design and implement a needs assessment.

- At a minimum, the scope of work should include:
 - Development of a data collection and analysis strategy
 - Review of existing data sources, reports, and regional labor market information
 - Stakeholder engagement, which may include surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups.
 - Identification of:
 - Workforce gaps and challenges

- Skills and training needs
- Barriers to growth and sustainability
- Opportunities for industry collaboration and innovation

5. Deliverables

The selected consultant will be expected to provide:

- A Project Work Plan and Timeline
- A Data Collection and Analysis Plan
- A Final Needs Assessment Report that includes:
 - Key findings and data analysis
 - Identified workforce and industry needs
 - Actionable recommendations to support future Agriculture IP programming and funding opportunities

6. Project Timeline

The project is expected to be completed within the timeframe of June 30, 2026. Proposers should include a detailed work plan and timeline aligned with the project scope. Deliverables must be available and presented no later than June 30, 2026.

7. Budget

The total budget for this project shall not exceed \$50,000, inclusive of all costs. Proposals should include a detailed budget and justification.

8. Proposal Submission Requirements

Proposals should be concise and include the following:

- Cover letter
- Firm/consultant overview and qualifications
- Proposed approach and methodology
- Work Plan and Timeline
- Project Team and Key Personnel
- Budget and Budget Narrative
- Conflict of Interest Certification
- Debarment and Suspension Certification
- Insurance Certification
- Relevant experience conducting similar assessments (particularly in agriculture, workforce, or rural economies)
- At least two references

9. Evaluation Criteria and Scoring Weights

Proposals will be evaluated by a review committee convened by NTRPDC and project partners. Proposals will be scored on a 100-point scale using the criteria below:

Evaluation Criterion	Weight
Understanding of Project Goals, Regional Context, and Population Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of agricultural industry trends and workforce dynamics in rural communities • Recognition of unique challenges (e.g., labor shortages, aging workforce, infrastructure, access to training) • Alignment with project purpose and intended outcomes 	25 points
Relevant Experience and Qualifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience conducting similar needs assessments • Background in agriculture, workforce development, or rural economic development • Demonstrated success with stakeholder engagement and data-driven analysis 	25 points
Proposed Clarity and feasibility of data collection strategy (quantitative + qualitative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of multiple engagement methods (surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc.) • Plan for analyzing labor market and industry data • Inclusion of diverse stakeholder voices (farmers, employers, educators, etc.) • Ability to produce actionable, practical recommendations • Innovation and adaptability in approach Approach and Methodology 	30 points
Project Team Capacity and Ability to Meet Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications of key personnel • Clearly defined roles and responsibilities • Demonstrated ability to complete similar projects on time 	10 points
Budget Reasonableness and Cost Effectiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and detailed budget breakdown • Alignment of costs with proposed activities and deliverables • Cost-effectiveness relative to scope and outcomes 	10 points
Total Possible Score	100 points

The review committee may request interviews or presentations from shortlisted proposers as part of the evaluation process. NTRPDC reserves the right to select the proposal that best meets project needs and community priorities, not necessarily the lowest-cost proposal.

10. Budget and Procurement

Funding for this project is provided through the Appalachian Regional Commission and must align with the approved project budget.

NTRPDC will conduct this procurement in accordance with applicable federal regulations, including 2 CFR Part 200 (Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards), ARC policies, as well as all applicable state requirements.

The selected consultant will be required to comply with all applicable federal laws and regulations and will be subject to contract provisions required under federal awards.

11. Procurement Schedule

The anticipated procurement schedule for this RFP is outlined below. NTRPDC reserves the right to modify this schedule as necessary.

Milestone	Date
RFP Issued	April 6, 2026
Letter of Intent to Apply	April 15, 2026
Deadline for Written Questions	April 17, 2026
Responses to Questions	April 21, 2026
Proposal Submission Deadline	April 24, 2026
Proposal Review Period	April 25-28, 2026
Consultant Selection & Notification	April 30, 2026
Project Start Date	May 1, 2026

12. Questions

A letter of intent to apply and questions regarding this RFP should be directed to Cynthia Troare. Questions will be accepted no later than 4:00 pm April 17, 2026. Subject line should read: RFP Questions. Responses to all inquiries will be compiled and sent to all parties that submitted a letter of intent for this RFP by April 21, 2026.

13. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted electronically to: Cynthia Traore at: traore@northerntier.org by 4:00 pm April 24, 2026.

Subject Line: Agriculture IP Needs Assessment Proposal

14. Award Decision and Rejection of Proposals

Following the completion of all evaluations, an evaluation committee will recommend the highest-scoring proposer for a contract award.

NTRPDC reserves the right to negotiate with the selected proposer to refine the scope of work, deliverables, and contract terms. 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. All proposals received will be retained by NTRPDC.

The award decision will be based on the best overall value, considering qualifications, proposed service delivery approach, and cost-effectiveness.

Those not selected will be given an opportunity to file an appeal of their rejection, in writing, to the Executive Director. All disputes will be reviewed by the Executive Director with a written response in (20) days. If appealed, NTRPDC's Executive Board will be the final decision maker.

All procurement appeals will be handled in accordance with applicable federal procurement standards and NTRPDC's written procurement procedures.

Attachments: Budget, Budget Narrative, Work Plan and Timeline, Conflict of Interest Certification, Debarment and Suspension Certification, Insurance Certification.

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.