

November 16, 2022
Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Solicitation Number: RFP-2295
ADDENDUM NO. 1
Questions and Answers

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (“Corporation”) seeks proposals from qualified firms to provide strategic management and implementation of a holistic and integrated long-term economic development plan for the State of Rhode Island.

TIMING

What period does the new economic development strategy intend to cover (i.e., a 5-year strategic plan or longer)?

The plan is designed to cover a five-year period.

The final date of 9/23/2023 – does this include any required public review periods?

Yes. The CEDS must be completed in July 2023 for initial submission to the EDA and public review periods must be conducted prior to that completion.

For the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation’s Request for Proposal for Long-term Economic Development Strategy Development (the “RFP”), is the State open to alternative timelines to deliver impact faster?

The CEDS for the State must be completed by July 2023 for initial submission to the EDA, and public hearings for the State’s Long-term Economic Development Vision and Policy must be completed by June 2023. We believe this process will require the full articulated timeline to complete.

Can you provide details on the timing and approval process for the long-term economic development strategy and the State’s General Assembly?

The Corporation expects work to begin relating to this RFP in January 2023, with a first draft of the economic development plan suitable for release for public comment by the end of May 2023. The Corporation expects public hearings on the plan to be held before the end of June 2023 and initial submission to the EDA for review in July 2023. Final curing and edits to the plan to ensure it is ready for Governor approval must be completed no later than September 2023.

Can you confirm that the electronic copy is due December 1, and the hard copy is due December 2?

Confirmed.

MBE PARTICIPATION

We understand that the State has a 10% MWBE target participation rate. Does this include only businesses with an MWBE certification in Rhode Island, or would national MWBE certifications satisfy this requirement?

Pursuant to the ISBE form with the RFP, the company must be registered with the Office of Diversity, Equity and Opportunity Compliance Office.

Is it correct that MBE/WBE/DisBE participation is not required for submission and will not be a reason for disqualification?

That is correct.

BUDGET

What is the total allocated budget for the project?

This project is funded through a grant from the EDA; Proposers are encouraged to well articulate the true cost of work being proposed.

Is the budget in line with past strategic planning efforts such as Innovate 2.0?

This budget is reflective of the level and scope of work of the current process and needs.

Are you able to share the anticipated budget or budget ceiling for this body of work?

See answer above.

What is the State's budget for the Long-term Economic Development Strategy Development project?

See answer above.

Would you be willing to share the budget allocated for this work? As cost effectiveness is awarded up to 10 points, any guidance you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

See answer above.

Could you provide the Corporation's Travel and Expense Policy for ease of reference?

The Corporation's Travel and Expense Policy is for staff members specifically. The Proposer's travel must be in line with budget submitted and approved by the Corporation and follow Guidance from all relevant federal and state statutes, including overarching administrative allotments.

Per the RFP, Consultants are required to calculate their estimated costs by task utilizing their hourly rates. Will RICC also accept task prices based on alternative pricing approaches, such as bundled labor categories and associated weekly rates fully inclusive of all Contractor Personnel support, to cover all Services and Tasks described in the RFP? This method of pricing/build up would increase competition and offer cost-effective solutions in accordance with each Proposer's best practices, to ensure an inclusive procurement open to all eligible vendors.

The RFP states that fee structure proposals "shall include *but are not limited* [emphasis added] to costs for specific task items from the Scope of Work along with an estimate regarding the duration and number of hours to complete each task."

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The stakeholder engagement process mentions "public engagement", by public does this mean residents or is this meant to be aimed at economic ecosystem actors (e.g. private companies, industry associations, economic development agencies, academia etc), or both?

The Corporation anticipates engaging a broad range of relevant stakeholders, including “economic development actors” and residents. This process will follow parameters required by the EDA for public engagement during the creation of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Is there a certain number of stakeholders that are expected to be engaged?

The EDA states that a CEDS “should be developed with broad based community participation.” The Corporation is not dictating a number of stakeholders to engage, though this engagement should be a strong component of the work proposed.

Will the selected consultant be the lead on the creation of the strategic advisory committee? How will the Corporation engage in that activity?

The Statute governing the State’s Long-term Economic Development Vision and Policy requires certain participation in the strategic advisory committee. As such, the Corporation and the State will lead in the creation and official appointment of the strategic advisory committee.

Are there other agencies, legislative bodies, and community partners that the selected consultant should expect to engage with during the planning process?

These processes should be robust and include a broad range of relevant stakeholders. Other state agencies will certainly be involved, especially Division of Statewide Planning and those represented on the state’s Economic Development Planning Council as laid out in R.I.G.L § 42-64.17-1. The Senate and House of Representatives will also be involved with the State’s Long-term Economic Development Vision and Policy per the same statute.

ELIGIBILITY

Can you confirm that non-US based companies are allowed to bid?

Yes, provided that they are registered with the Rhode Island Secretary of State. Per the RFP: Eligible Proposers include businesses, institutions of higher education, and nonprofits that are registered with the Rhode Island Secretary of State, and individuals with appropriate experience. Businesses that are not located in Rhode Island, but that are registered with the Rhode Island Secretary of State, are eligible to apply.

Is it required that Subcontractors that the Respondents are including in this response also be registered with the Rhode Island Secretary of State? Specifically for businesses that are not located in Rhode Island.

This is not required, but it is good practice to have Subcontractors registered with the Rhode Island Secretary of State.

Is there a preference for a firm with an on-the-ground presence in Rhode Island? Our firm has offices in New York and Austin and would plan trips to Rhode Island during key milestones in the project.

Out-of-state firms are eligible to apply. However, there is a desire for a firm that can conduct the necessary stakeholder engagement required by this project. Additionally, our evaluation will include our assessment of understanding of our organization and Rhode Island’s economic drivers and how this information is integrated into a proposal.

Is an entity that currently collaborates with Commerce RI eligible to receive a contract or subcontract from this solicitation? This could be for engagement or research support in particular areas. For instance groups like Chambers of Commerce, GrowSmart RI, RI Bio, etc?

Yes.

GENERAL

What was the outcome of last year's previous budget planning project and what was the impact? Were there lessons learned the State can share?

This process is funded through a grant from the EDA and is not connected to a State budget planning project.

Per the RFP, selected proposers are considered subrecipients of a federal grant from the US Economic Development Administration ("EDA). Given the objective of the RFP to provide analyses and recommendations for decision-makers rather than decisions and the inherent functions of the Corporation, it is assessed that selected proposers would be considered "contractors" rather than "subrecipients" in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.331. This interpretation is derived from the Task 1-3 descriptions. Based on the sanctioned authority of the Corporation decision-makers, it is understood that the selected proposer will not be responsible for determining who is eligible to receive Federal assistance and will not have responsibility nor the authority for programmatic decision-making. Rather, the selected proposer will provide goods and services within normal business operations, with such goods or services being provided to many different purchasers; normally operates in a competitive environment; and provides goods and services that are ancillary to the operation of the Corporation's long term economic development strategy.

Given this information, can the Corporation confirm that selected proposers are considered "contractors" rather than "subrecipients," and therefore, the contract resulting from the RFP will not be considered a "subaward"?

Selected Proposer(s) will likely be considered Contractors by the Corporation. The Corporation will, however, complete a Subrecipient vs Contractor Determination Form and reserves the right to determine at that time whether the entity is a Subrecipient or a Contractor.

Is there a desire to look at the infrastructure of the state including transportation, utilities, broadband, ports and airports, and their role in support of or a barrier to economic development?

Yes; in line with requirements for a CEDS, the State's Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis should include infrastructure of the state, including elements mentioned above as well as housing.

Is there a desire to create a 'brand' for this process/ final document as has been done in the past? Related to this - what is the relationship to this plan and RI2030? Should the existing website be utilized in this plan process?

Yes; a final document, in the format required by the EDA as well as the State, must be completed.

The Corporation expects Proposers to leverage past work, including RI2030, to inform this current effort. This effort should build on knowledge gained through Innovates 2.0, RI Rising, and RI2030 and should align to the principles established through RI2030.

Will the Corporation be actively engaged in the planning process at both a strategic and tactical level? Tactical roles could include helping to schedule meetings> Identifying space for meeting etc?

Yes; the Corporation will have staff dedicated to supporting this work at the strategic and, as needed, tactical levels. Determination of exact roles will be determined during contract negotiation.