



**Virginia's Region 2000 Local Government Council
Request for Proposals for Economic Analysis & Strategy Consulting
for the County of Amherst**

Deadline: 3:00 p.m., November 6, 2015

SECTION 1
GENERAL INFORMATION

Synopsis

Virginia's Region 2000 Local Government Council (Region 2000) seeks sealed proposals from experienced and qualified consulting firms that wish to be considered to provide economic development analysis and strategy services for Amherst County.

Background

Virginia's Region 2000 Local Government Council is the Planning District Commission for Planning District 11 serving Lynchburg and the surrounding counties of Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford and Campbell. The Council has received a planning grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to assist with an economic development strategic plan for Amherst County, which has a budget of approximately \$100,000 - \$125,000. The strategic plan will be funded with a combination of private sector, U.S. Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grants.

Amherst County is located south of Charlottesville and directly north of Lynchburg and is primarily rural, with the exceptions of urban clusters in the south end of the county (Madison Heights) adjacent to the City of Lynchburg and the Town of Amherst near the northern border. The county has a population of 32,000+ and is 479 square miles and borders the Blue Ridge Parkway. The U.S. Route 29 corridor in the eastern region of the county as the focal point for most commercial, industrial and residential development. The largest industry cluster is manufacturing.

The County of Amherst faces significant challenges and opportunities relating to the closure and/or reorganization of two major institutions that have been a part of the community's fabric for over a century and collectively are responsible for approximately 25% of the county's workforce of 8,000+. In early 2015, Sweet Briar College announced that it would cease operations in August, but a court-ordered change in leadership has stayed the closure for at least another year. Whether the new board can develop a plan to ensure the college's sustainability remains unclear. As part of a statewide effort to decentralize care of mentally and physically-challenged clients currently in institutional care, the Central Virginia Training Center is scheduled to close its doors by 2020. A reduction of employees has already begun in advance of the closing as clients are being placed in the community for care. In addition to the

workforce impact, the closure will leave vacant a large campus that has seen prolonged and intense use.

The ultimate purpose of this RFP is to develop an economic development comprehensive strategic plan to address the current and future needs of our citizens, to increase the tax base, encourage investment, retain current jobs, create new jobs, and increase the standard of living for Amherst residents. The plan should have specific recommendations that capitalize on Amherst's unique characteristics combined with market realities and expectations which would result in the greatest return on investment for the community. It is expected that the plan will be developed using strong data and research as well as the expectations and observations of the community's leadership and economic development board and staff. While the RFP offers a suggested and expected way of responding, unique approaches will be considered. The strategic plan will be the basis for the Amherst EDA work plan for the next 5-10 years.

Information about the Amherst EDA can be found on our website, www.amherstvabusiness.com

Previous studies and strategies can be found at: https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B-1T_94RrGbaeDdPZHfFeF9BSIE&usp=sharing

Additional information on the Town of Amherst can be found at: www.amherstva.gov

Scope of Work

The scope of work to be performed by the selected firm involves the development of an economic development and resilience strategy for the County of Amherst, including the following tasks:

- Thorough quantitative and qualitative analysis of international, national, and regional information, demographics, and trends that will affect Amherst County and identify what strategic implications will affect the economic development strategic plan.
- Community Asset Report (SWOT) - Determine specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges affecting Amherst County. Engage stakeholders such as local business leaders, citizens, and government and legislators through interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.
- Based on the community asset report, identify target industries that would be particularly suitable to Amherst County. Given staff and organization capacity, how much attention should be devoted to attracting target industries?
- Make prioritized recommendations for the top 4 economic development initiatives/projects that could be undertaken to replace lost jobs, expand the employment base of the county, expand the county tax base, and better position our community to seize economic development opportunities when they arise. Identify additional initiatives and/or projects which should be investigated further.
- Evaluate current ED efforts and confirm and enhance existing successful programs and efforts and provide best practice recommendations to develop capacity and

infrastructure necessary to effectively position Amherst County to enjoy sustainable, balanced, and equitable growth in the near and long term future.

- Conduct a thorough cost benefit analysis of each of the top 4 initiatives/projects. An economic impact study has been completed for CVTC showing the regional and Amherst County impact. An economic impact study has also been completed for SBC showing the Amherst County impact only.
- Structure a funding plan for each of the 4 recommended initiatives/projects.
- Formulate an action plan to implement initiatives/projects which clearly show each step needed in all aspects of implementation of each initiative/project (including funding resources, contact information, and necessary staff capacity).
- Establish priorities and timelines for implementation of each initiative/project.

Committee Work Review

The Amherst EDA has appointed a committee to oversee the strategic plan process. It is the expectation of the committee that selected contractor will meet with the committee at a minimum of three separate occasions:

- Project Review & Scope – Meet to outline the expectations of the Amherst EDA and the contractor’s plans to achieve the goals in the shortest time possible while achieving the desired outcomes
- Checkpoint – Meet after the SWOT to review the findings of the contractor and verify the validity of the information. The contractor should be prepared to discuss thoughts on what broad goals might be included in the strategic plan.
- Conclusion – The contractor will develop a presentation of goals and recommendations to be presented to the EDA before issuing a final report.

This does not prevent the need for additional meetings at any point and there is an expectation the contractor will be working extensively with members of the EDA staff, board, and other committee members on a regular basis.

Budget

The estimated budget for this scope of work is \$100,000 to \$125,000.

Project Timeline

October 2015: Issuance of RFP for Economic Development strategic plan

November 2015: Consultant Interviews

December 2015: Selection of Consultant

January 2016: Work begins on ED strategic plan

March 2016: Draft of plan delivered and presentation made to EDA

April 2016: Final plan draft delivered and presentation made to Amherst County Board of Supervisors

This deliverable is expected approximately 90-120 days from the signing of the contract.

Additionally, periodic scheduled progress update meetings will occur with staff for the duration of the project.

Submittal Deadline

The deadline for submittal of proposals in response to this RFP is **Friday, November 6th at 3:00 p.m.** Proposals should be sent to:

Matt Perkins
Virginia's Region 2000 Local Government Council
828 Main Street, 12th Floor
Lynchburg, VA 24504
mperkins@region2000.org

Please provide one (1) original and three (3) copies of the proposal. Please also submit an electronic version of the proposal to the email address listed above.

Questions/Additional Information

All questions or clarifications related to this RFP must be submitted to Scott Smith via email ssmith@region2000.org. **All questions must be submitted before the close of business on Friday, October 30th.** All questions and Region 2000's response will be posted on the Region 2000 Web site: www.localgovernmentcouncil.org and sent to any consultant on our mailing list. It is the Offeror's responsibility to check the web site for information or request inclusion on our mailing list.

Cancellation

Region 2000 reserves the right to cancel this Request for Proposals at any time. Region 2000 reserves the right to waive minor informalities or discrepancies contained in any Proposal.

Pre-Proposal Meeting

No pre-proposal meeting will be held, unless determined to be necessary at a later date.

SECTION 2
PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Please provide the following information about your firm and members of the team who would be assigned to this contract. Proposals should respond to all requirements of this RFP to the maximum extent possible. However, brevity and clarity of Proposals are expected.

Tab 1: Introductory Letter

The introductory letter shall name the person or persons authorized to sign contracts and represent the consultant in any negotiations and provide a very general overview of the firm and the firm's relevant expertise and experience.

Tab 2: More Detailed Firm Information

Please provide the following:

- Name, address, phone number, fax number and e-mail of the firm office which would be providing the service to Region 2000 as well as the location of the firm's home office if other than the above
- Number of years in business
- Former names (if any).
- Corporate structure and names (if applicable).

Tab 3: Project Team Information

This section should provide information regarding the firm's project team who are likely to work on the project.

Provide the names and resumes of the project team including the project manager and all key support professionals, include applicable registrations where appropriate. Include a description of the team's experience with comparable projects, what role each team member provided for these projects, and the role expected on this work. Indicate in which office each team member is located. Include the number of experienced staff available to perform the requested services including specific qualifications and experience. If a multi-firm or team approach is proposed, clearly identify the identities and responsibilities of each party and the assurances of performance offered. Please describe your history of working with members of the team.

Provide a breakdown of how many hours each member of the strategic plan team will be devoting to the project.

Tab 4: Relevant Project Experience/References

This section should provide information regarding the firm's qualifications and experience in relation to the projects the RFP is intended to cover.

- Discuss firm's qualifications to perform the work of the size and nature described in this RFP.
- Provide specific firm qualifications to perform the general work described in this request including available resources, recent, current and projected workload.
- Discuss experience with similar contracts and provide references concerning past performance including ability to meet schedules, cost control, and contract administration.
- Describe any special capabilities of your firm, such as technical innovations, community outreach, cost effectiveness, etc.
- Discuss the firm's familiarity with the region.
- Discuss avoidance of conflict of interest.
- Discuss how the firm has successfully complied with compliance requirements placed by each funding organization (USDA, DHCD, Federal EDA)

Please provide a list of five clients of your company, preferably localities in the Commonwealth of Virginia, who have used your services. Describe the service provided, the approximate total project cost and the cost of your service for such projects, including the firm's estimate of construction costs versus final construction costs. Include the name and telephone number of the client's contact person who is familiar with both the project and your firm's role on the project.

Provide samples of work done (economic development strategic plans) for organizations who are similar to Amherst County (rural, population, challenges, etc.) Include the name and telephone number of the client's contact person who is familiar with both the project and your firm's role on the project.

Tab 5: Approach to Performing the Scope of Work

Please describe, in detail, your firm's methodology and action plan for performing the work requested in this Request for Proposals. Describe expectations of EDA staff, county personnel, and elected officials.

Tab 6: Fee Proposal

Please provide a total project cost. Consultants selected for interviews will be asked to provide a task-by-task cost breakdown.

SECTION 3: **SELECTION PROCESS**

The submitted proposals will be evaluated based upon the following criteria.

Evaluation Criteria

The firms will be evaluated upon the following general criteria:

- Experience and expertise of project team members (Tab 3)
- Previous experience with similar projects (Tab 4)
- Consultant's recommended approach to performing scope of work (Tab 5)
- Any special capabilities the team may bring to the projects (all tabs)
- Conciseness and completeness (all tabs)
- Understanding of the project (all tabs)
- Fee proposal (Tab 6)

After evaluation of the Proposals, Region 2000 will engage in individual discussions and interviews with two or more Offerors deemed fully qualified, responsible and suitable on the basis of initial responses, and with professional competence to provide the required services. Repetitive informal interviews are permitted. Proposers shall be encouraged to elaborate on their qualifications, performance data, and staff expertise relevant to the proposed contract.

At the conclusion of the informal interviews and on the basis of evaluation factors set forth herein and the information provided and developed in the selection process to this point, Region 2000 shall rank, in the order of preference, the interviewed proposers whose professional qualifications and proposed services are deemed most meritorious. Negotiations shall then be conducted with top ranked Offeror(s) and if a contract or contracts satisfactory and advantageous to the Agency can be negotiated at fees considered fair and reasonable, then Region 2000 shall award contract(s) to that Offeror(s). Should Region 2000 determine in writing and in its sole discretion that only one Offeror is fully qualified, or that one offer is clearly more highly qualified and suitable than the others under consideration, a contract may be negotiated and awarded to that Offeror.

False or misleading Statements

If, in the opinion of Region 2000, any proposal which contains false or misleading statements or references which do not support a function, attribute, capability or condition as contended by the firm, shall be rejected.

Clarification of the RFP

Region 2000 reserves the right to obtain clarification of any point in the firm's RFP or to obtain additional information necessary to properly evaluate a particular RFP. Failure of the firm to respond to such a request for additional information or clarification may result in rejection of the proposal.

SECTION 4

Equal Employment Opportunity

The Region 2000 Local Government Council and the County of Amherst provide equal employment opportunities (EEO) to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetics. In addition to federal law requirements, the Region 2000 Local Government Council and the County of Amherst comply with applicable state and local laws governing nondiscrimination in employment in every location in which the company has facilities. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation and training.

The Region 2000 Local Government Council and the County of Amherst expressly prohibit any form of workplace harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status. Improper interference with the ability of Region 2000 Local Government Council or County of Amherst employees to perform their job duties may result in discipline up to and including discharge.

Small, Minority and Female-owned Businesses and Section 3 Businesses or Firms

Small (SBE), minority (MBE), and female-owned (WBE) businesses or firms and Section 3 businesses or firms are encouraged to submit proposals.

Special Terms and Conditions: Virginia Public Procurement Act

The following Special Terms and Conditions are required by the Virginia Public Procurement Act (§ 2.1-4300 et seq. of the Code of Virginia) and shall be included in any contract entered into under this RFP. By submitting a proposal, Offeror agrees to comply with the following should it be awarded the contract:

1. EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION. During the performance of this contract, the Contractor agrees as follows:

- a. Contractor will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment due to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, age or handicap, except where religion, sex, national origin or age is a bona fide occupational qualification reasonably necessary to post in conspicuous places, available to employees and applicants for employment, notices setting forth the provisions of this nondiscrimination disclosure
- b. Contractor, in all solicitations or advertisements for employees placed by or on behalf of Contractor will state that Contractor is an equal opportunity employer.
- c. Notices, advertisements and solicitations placed in accordance with federal law, rule or regulations shall be deemed sufficient for the purpose of meeting the requirements of this subsection.

2. DRUG FREE WORKPLACE. During the performance of this contract, Contractor agrees to (i) provide a drug-free workplace for Contractor's employees; (ii) post in conspicuous places,

available to employees and applicants for employment, a statement notifying employees that the unlawful manufacture, sale, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance or marijuana is prohibited in Contractor's workplace and specifying the actions that will be taken against employees for violations of such prohibition; (iii) state in all solicitations or advertisements for employees placed by or on behalf of Contractor that Contractor maintains a drug-free workplace; and (iv) include the provisions of the foregoing clauses in every subcontract or purchase order of over \$10,000, so that the provisions will be binding upon each subcontractor or vendor.

3. ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS. Contractor does not and shall not during the performance of this contract knowingly employ an unauthorized alien as defined in the Federal Immigration and Reform and Control Act of 1986.

4. AUTHORIZATION TO TRANSACT BUSINESS IN VIRGINIA. SCC Identification Number (Note: This provision is applicable to all Offerors prior to the award of contract.) Offeror, whether organized as a stock or nonstock corporation, limited liability company, business trust, or limited partnership or registered as a limited liability partnership shall be authorized to transact business in the Commonwealth as a domestic or foreign business entity if so required by Title 13.1 or Title 50 of the Code of Virginia. Contractor shall not allow its existence to lapse or its certificate of authority or registration to transact business in the Commonwealth, if so required under Title 13.1 or Title 50, to be revoked or cancelled **at any time during the contract.**

Any Offeror organized or authorized to transact business in the Commonwealth pursuant to Title 13.1 or Title 50 of the Code of Virginia shall include in the proposal its identification number issued by the Virginia State Corporation Commission. Any Offeror not required to be authorized to transact business in the Commonwealth as a foreign business entity under Title 13.1 or Title 50 or as otherwise required by law shall include a statement in the proposal describing why the Offeror is not required to be so authorized.

The Owner may void any contract with any Offeror that fails to remain in compliance with this section pursuant to Section 2.2-4311.2 of the Code of Virginia.

5. INDEMNIFICATION. Under this contract, the successful Offeror agrees to indemnify, defend and hold harmless the Owner (Region 2000 and Amherst County Economic Development Authority), its officers, agents and employees from any claims, damages, suits, actions, liabilities and costs of any kind or nature, including attorneys' fees, arising from or caused by the provision of any services, or the use of any services or materials furnished (or made available) by the successful Offeror, provided that such liability is not attributable to the Owner's sole negligence. The Contractor shall notify the Owner of any suit, claim, demand, loss or action made or filed against the Contractor immediately upon the Contractor's receipt or learning of it.

The Owner will not agree to any limitation of damages, waiver of incidental or consequential damages, or indemnification clauses in the contract resulting from this procurement. By submitting a bid or proposal, the bidder or proposer agrees not to request such clauses in the resulting contract.

6. INSURANCE. The successful bidder shall maintain insurance to protect itself and the Region 2000 from claims under the Workers' Compensation Act, and from claims for damages for personal injury, including death, and for damages to property, which may arise from performance under this contract. The successful bidder shall deliver Certificate of Insurance to Region 2000 specifying the limits acceptable to Region 2000 which are as follows:

Workers' Compensation and Employer's Liability: \$1,000,000

Automobile Liability (bodily injury/property damage): \$1,000,000

Comprehensive General Liability (bodily injury/property damage): \$1,000,000

The Certificate shall show Region 2000 named as an additional insured for commercial general liability and automobile liability.

7. CONTROLLING LAW; VENUE. This contract is made, entered into, and shall be performed in the City of Lynchburg, Virginia, and shall be governed by the applicable laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Any dispute arising out of the contract resulting from the Request for Proposal, its interpretations, or its performance shall be litigated only in the City of Lynchburg General District Court or the Circuit Court for the City of Lynchburg, Virginia.

8. TERMINATION OF CONTRACT.

a. Region 2000 reserves the right to terminate the contract immediately in the event that the Successful Bidder discontinues or abandons the performance; if adjudicated bankruptcy, or is reorganized under any bankruptcy law; or fails to keep in force any required insurance policies or bonds.

b. Failure of Successful Bidder to comply with any section or part of this contract will be considered grounds for immediate termination of the contract by Region 2000.

c. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the contract between Region 2000 and the Successful Bidder, Region 2000 may, without prejudice to any other rights it may have, terminate the contract for convenience and without cause, by giving 30 days written notice to the Successful Bidder.

d. If the termination clause is used by Region 2000, the Successful Bidder will be paid by Region 2000 for all services satisfactorily performed by the Successful Bidder up to the termination date set in the written termination notice.

Consultant Mailing List

October 2, 2015

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