

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Consulting

MOUNTAIN WEST PARTNERSHIP

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Proposals due by 5:00 pm

September 27, 2021

Requested By:



Southwestern Commission

125 Bonnie Lane

Sylva, NC 28779

Posted September 13, 2021

A. Overview

The Southwestern Commission (SWC) seeks the professional services of a qualified consultant to conduct a strategic plan for the Mountain West Partnership, hereafter referred to as the Project. The Mountain West Partnership is a collaborative effort of the seven western counties of North Carolina and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to further economic development in the region. The Project is funded by a grant from the US Economic Development Administration and will be administered by the SWC. The SWC is the council of government for North Carolina's Region A, which includes the 7 westernmost counties in the state and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The SWC provides technical assistance to the local governments in our region and facilitates partnerships to reach regional goals.

The Project covers Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The purpose of this project is to convene members of the Mountain West Partnership and key partners in a regional consultative planning, co-creation, and prioritization effort to identify the important initiatives that will expand and enhance the Mountain West Partnership by emphasizing activities that build a more resilient business community with a more fully developed entrepreneurial ecosystem.

B. Description of Services Requested

1. Complete a strategic plan for the Mountain West Partnership that focuses on regional resiliency and the importance of a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The Project will include a convening of Mountain West Partnership members and outside stakeholders in a planning and prioritization effort to identify the important initiatives that will expand and enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem and bring about a self-sustaining Mountain West Partnership. This effort will cultivate leaders for identified initiatives, develop work teams, and action plans to address identified strategies. Specific activities will include:

- a. Identify an overall goal for the Mountain West Partnership: conducting focus group and one-on-one interviews.**
- b. Initiative Setting: Identify key initiatives to help support the goals set forth by the group and set up committees made up of Partnership members and key outside stakeholders.**
- c. Action Plan: Come up with a list of activities that will be undertaken by each committee.**
- d. Resource Identification: Come up with a set of outside resources that can be utilized to support the efforts of the Partnership.**
- e. Planning and Scheduling: Help the group set a timeline for the various actions decided upon as part of the process.**
- f. Evaluation Framework: Establish a set of metrics for each initiative or action which will help to measure the impact of achieving the desired result.**
- g. Interdependencies: Assist the group with identification of cross-committee opportunities for collaboration.**

- h. Risk and Mitigation Strategies: Help create a list of potential risks for each action with a plan to address/mitigate the risks in order to increase the likelihood of success.**
- i. Budget: Create a budget showing potential costs of each activity and the opportunities available for revenue generation.**

2. Present report to the Southwestern Commission and the Mountain West Partnership.

C. Proposal Instructions

1. Deadline

Proposals must be received by 5:00 PM eastern time on **September 27, 2021**.

2. Submittal Instructions

Proposals should be emailed (russ@regiona.org) or delivered to:

Southwestern Commission

ATTN: Russ Harris

125 Bonnie Lane

Sylva, NC 28779

3. Project Contact

The point of contact for the Project is Russ Harris, Interim Director for the SWC. Prospective firms may make inquiries to obtain clarification of the requirements contained in this Request for Proposals (RFP). All inquiries must be submitted in writing by email to the following address: russ@regiona.org. A response will be issued typically within two business days.

4. Proposal Format

Proposals should be limited to 10 numbered pages or less. Please include a cover letter that identifies a contact person and all contact information. The following format is not required but is encouraged to provide consistency between proposals, aiding in evaluation and comparison. If the format is modified please include the following information at a minimum.

- a. Project Approach.** Describe your team's approach to successfully delivering the Project. Provide details on how each task will be completed. Include any recommendations for maximizing effectiveness and efficiency.
- b. Relevant Project Experience.** Provide a summary of your experience with similar projects, including location and client contact information. Specify the services provided, the office location from which the work was performed, and staff members' responsibilities. Web links to recent plans and past work, if available, may be included in addition to project summaries.
- c. Project Team.** Provide an organizational chart identifying all staff assigned to Project, including any sub-consultants, defining roles, responsibilities, and task assignments of each member for the duration of the Project.
- d. Qualifications of Personnel.** Provide relevant experience and qualifications of all personnel assigned to the Project.
- e. Plan for Completion.** Provide an outline for keeping the project on schedule and within budget. Include projected workloads and staff availability, as well as a projected schedule for completion of significant milestones and the draft and final Plan.

- f. References.** Provide contact information for at least three references for clients familiar with your work.

D. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals should address all aspects of the RFP and clearly express an understanding of the requirements and qualifications to conduct these services in a thorough and efficient manner. Evaluation of proposals will be performed by SWC staff along with members of the Mountain West Partnership. Proposals will be evaluated on the firm’s ability to meet the requirements of this RFP. Some evaluation criteria, among other factors, will include:

1. Project approach and demonstrated understanding of the goals for the project;
2. Familiarity with and understanding of the nature and challenges of the region and stakeholders;
3. Qualifications and availability of staff assigned to the Project.

E. Tentative Project Schedule

In order to ensure high-quality products, adequate time for review and revisions will be scheduled and included in the contractual agreement. All meeting materials will be submitted for review prior to scheduled meetings. Timelines for reviews and revisions will be detailed in the contractual agreement. The following schedule is provided as a guideline only.

September 13, 2021	Request for Proposals advertised
September 27, 2021	Proposals due to SWC
October 8, 2021	Selection and contracting
October 11, 2021	Notice to Proceed
January 15, 2022	Draft Report Due
February 15, 2022	Final Report Due
TBD	Present Findings to SWC and MWP

F. Budget

The budget for this project is \$70,000. No additional expenses shall be incurred without the express prior written authorization from SWC.

G. Administrative Information

1. All proposals become the property of SWC upon submission and will only be returned at SWC’s option. Any restrictions on the use of the data contained within must be clearly stated in the Proposal itself.
2. The cost of preparing, submitting and presenting a proposal is the sole expense of the consultant. SWC is not liable for any costs prior to issuance of a signed contract.
3. SWC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to consider alternatives, to wave irregularities and to re-solicit the request for proposals.

4. SWC reserves the right to cancel the RFP in part or in its entirety. This solicitation of proposals in no way obligates SWC to award a contract.
5. SWC makes no guarantees to any proposing firm until such time SWC approves the negotiated contract.
6. All Proposals must be valid for a period of 90 days after the due date.
7. The contents from the selected firm will become contractual obligations if a subsequent agreement is reached. Failure of the selected firm to accept these obligations may result in cancellation of the award.
8. SWC will provide information and assistance with this project where available. SWC will be the primary point of contact with all county and municipal governments.