

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
(SAP&DC)**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

FOR

An Economic Diversification and Growth Strategy for Somerset County, PA

For The Period

April 1, 2016 through August 31, 2016

INQUIRIES AND PROPOSALS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

**Brandon Carson
Director, Planning & Community Development
Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission
3 Sheraton Drive
Altoona, PA 16601
Telephone Number: 814-949-6506
E-mail Address: bcarson@sapdc.org**

**Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission is an Equal
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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Purpose

This Request for Proposals (RFP) seeks proposals for the development of an economic diversification and growth strategy for Somerset County, Pennsylvania to be in the form of a hardcopy document with supporting information (referred to herein as the “Strategy”).

B. Who May Respond

Any planning consultant, economic development agency, or other organization with appropriate expertise may respond. Proposals that include partnerships between multiple organizations with applicable areas of expertise are preferred. Parties submitting proposals in response to this RFP are referred to herein individually as “Offeror” or collectively as “Offerors”.

C. Description of Entity

SAP&DC, a nonprofit corporation that serves six counties in South-Central Pennsylvania, has been determined to be exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501(c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code. It is governed by a 19-member volunteer Board of Directors. Administrative offices and all records are located at 3 Sheraton Drive, Altoona, PA 16601.

SAP&DC is the grantee for the Economic Development Administration (EDA). Funds to be awarded to the Offeror submitting the proposal selected by SAP&DC pursuant to this RFP are federal funds.

D. Proposal Information

1. Closing Submission Date

Proposals must be submitted no later than 4:00 PM on **February 19, 2016**.

2. Project Budget

The budget for this project is an amount not to exceed \$80,000. Offerors are encouraged to prepare proposals in accordance with this budget.

3. Submission Instructions

Proposals and supporting materials must be submitted in electronic format via e-mail to Brandon Carson at bcarson@sapdc.org. A confirmation of receipt will be provided by SAP&DC.

Questions regarding submission instructions may be addressed to:

Brandon Carson
Director, Planning & Community Development
814-949-6506
E-mail: bcarson@sapdc.org

It is the responsibility of all Offerors to ensure that SAP&DC receives the proposal by the date and time specified above. Late proposals will not be considered.

4. Inquiries

Inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to Brandon Carson, 814-949-6506 or bcarson@sapdc.org.

5. Conditions of Proposal

All costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal responding to this RFP will be the responsibility of the Offeror submitting the proposal and shall not be reimbursed by SAP&DC.

6. Right to Reject

SAP&DC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received in response to this RFP. A contract for the accepted proposal will be based upon the factors described in this RFP.

7. Small and/or Minority-Owned Businesses

Efforts will be made by SAP&DC to utilize small businesses and minority-owned businesses. An Offeror 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.

8. Notification of Award

Offerors may be asked to give a presentation at the Project Steering Committee meeting scheduled for March 10, 2016, in Somerset, PA. It is expected that a decision selecting the successful Offeror will be made on March 16, 2016. Upon conclusion of final negotiations with the successful Offeror, all other Offerors submitting proposals in response to this RFP will be informed, in writing, of the name of the successful Offeror.

E. Contract Information

1. Type of Contract

Firm Fixed Price.

2. Period of Performance

The period of performance for this program will be from April 1, 2016 – August 31, 2016.

3. Payment

Payment will be made when SAP&DC has determined that the Strategy has been satisfactorily completed. Should SAP&DC reject the Strategy, SAP&DC's authorized representative will notify the Subcontractor in writing of such rejection giving the reason(s). The right to reject the Strategy shall extend throughout the term of this contract and for ninety (90) days after the Subcontractor submits the final invoice for payment.

Progress payments will be allowed to the extent that SAP&DC can determine that satisfactory progress is being made. SAP&DC will withhold 20% of the total contract amount until final delivery and acceptance of the Strategy.

Upon delivery of five (5) hard copies and one (1) electronic copy of the Strategy to SAP&DC and its acceptance and approval, the Subcontractor may submit a bill for the balance due on the contract.

4. Options

At the discretion of SAP&DC, this contract can be terminated at any time or extended beyond the specified contract period. The cost for the option periods will be agreed upon by SAP&DC and the Subcontractor.

5. Confidentiality

The Subcontractor agrees to keep the information related to all contracts in confidence.

II. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

A. Proposal Format

Proposals should not exceed ten (10) pages in length and should be typed on 8.5 X 11 inch pages with margins no smaller than one (1) inch. Font size should be no smaller than ten (10) point. Supporting materials can be provided in addition to the ten (10) page scope of work. Proposals must be submitted electronically (PDF format) to Brandon Carson via e-mail at bcarson@sapdc.org. A confirmation of receipt will be provided by SAP&DC.

B. Proposal Outline

1. Understanding of Work to be Performed

Each Offeror should demonstrate its understanding of why the project is needed and how it will meet SAP&DC's needs. Offerors should not repeat the Statement of Work, but rather describe how the Offeror will accomplish the tasks defined within the work program within the specified time limits.

2. Service Delivery Process

Each proposal must describe how the Offeror proposes to complete all tasks identified in the Statement of Work included in Section IV of this RFP. The Offeror must also include a timeline that demonstrates the completion of each task within the limits of the specified period of performance. The timeline should include project milestones that details the completion date of each task outlined in the Statement of Work.

3. Organizational Experience/Past Performance

Each Offeror should describe its organization, size (in relation to the proposed services to be performed), and structure. Indicate if appropriate, if the Offeror is a small, minority-owned, or disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE). DBEs are certified by the Pennsylvania Unified Certification Program (PA UCP) in accordance with 49 CFR Part 26. The following information must be obtained from Offerors who maintain DBE status:

- a) Firm name;
- b) Firm address;
- c) Firm's status as a DBE or non-DBE;
- d) Age of firm; and
- e) Annual gross receipts of the firm. Specifically indicate which gross receipts bracket your firm falls under:
 - o Less than \$500,000
 - o \$500,000-\$1 million
 - o \$1-\$2 million
 - o \$2- \$5 million
 - o Greater than \$5 million

The Offeror should also describe its prior experience that qualifies the Offeror to fulfill the tasks described in this RFP based on past performance of the same or similar projects and programs. Include all prior experience with similar programs and the operation of programs financed by the Federal/State Government.

4. Staff Qualifications

Each Offeror should identify all personnel that will be assigned to the project, including contact information, and specifically identify the project manager. Each Offeror should also describe the relevant qualifications of staff to perform the proposed service, including technical, educational, and work background. This section of the proposal should include descriptions staff team makeup, overall supervision to be exercised, and prior experience of the individual staff team members.

5. Cost Proposal

All Offerors must submit their total project cost, along with a task-by-task cost breakdown for each of the four major tasks defined within the Statement of Work in Section IV of this RFP.

III. PROPOSAL EVALUATION

A. Proposal Contents

All proposals must follow the specified format and include all required elements listed in Section II of this RFP.

B. Nonresponsive Proposals

Proposals may be judged non-responsive and removed from further consideration if any of the following occur:

1. The proposal is not received timely in accordance with the terms of this RFP.
2. The proposal does not follow the specified format.
3. The proposal is not adequate for the reviewers to form a judgment that the proposed undertaking would comply with federal and state requirements.
4. The amount of the proposal exceeds the amount of funding available for the project.

C. Evaluation

Evaluation of each proposal will be based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Value
PROPOSER'S METHOD FOR PROVIDING REQUESTED SERVICE	55
• Demonstrated understanding of the overall project and its goals	25
• Proposed scope of work for completing an asset inventory for the County	10
• Proposed scope of work for identifying target industries for growth and attraction	10
• Proposed scope of work for the development of an action plan	10
PROPOSER'S QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE, AND STAFFING	35
• Qualifications of the designated project manager and other key personnel to carryout the project	10
• Relevant past projects with a focus on implementable/action plans and strategies	25
COMPENSATION	10
• Cost relative to the proposed services and deliverables provided	10
TOTAL	100

D. Review Process

Proposals will be initially reviewed and evaluated by the Project Steering Committee using the above evaluation criteria. However, final selection of an Offeror will be at the sole discretion of the SAP&DC Board of Directors. SAP&DC may, at its discretion, request presentations by or meetings with any or all Offerors to clarify or negotiate modifications to the Offerors' proposals. The Steering Committee has set aside time on March 10, 2016, to interview proposers if that should be necessary. All proposers should be available to travel to Somerset, PA on that date if they are invited to do so. However, SAP&DC reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposals submitted. Therefore, proposals should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms, from both technical and price standpoints, that the Offeror can propose. SAP&DC contemplates award of the contract to the responsible Offeror with the highest total points.

IV. STATEMENT OF WORK

Background

Situated in the southwest corner of the Southern Alleghenies Region of Pennsylvania, Somerset County, is a traditional heavy manufacturing and coal mining-based community, currently home to 13 active mining establishments. The mines in Somerset produce metallurgical coal, which is used in the process of creating coke necessary for iron and steel-making. The domestic demand for coking coal has slowed in recent years, due to changes in the regulatory environment. The credit crisis and global economic slowdown have also decreased the number of customers in key markets such as construction, automobiles, and industrial equipment which has sent metallurgical coal prices plummeting. As a result, steel companies have been slashing production, scaling back shipment forecasts, delaying expansion, and greatly reducing their workforce.

For years, the coal industry in Somerset County has supplied the coal used in power generation. However, recent regulatory changes have prompted the conversion of many power plants to natural gas, further reducing the demand for coal. In terms of demand, this is a market sector that will not be replaced by the coal industry in the foreseeable future.

Though this region of Pennsylvania has been gradually transforming its economic base to a more diverse sector mix of agriculture, health care, tourism, distribution, retail & arts, and entertainment & recreation, the coal mining industry has continued to be a significant driving force of Somerset's local economy over the last decade.

Overview of Project

To effectively address the severe impacts of coal-related job losses within Somerset and aid businesses adversely affected by these losses, the Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission has been awarded funding through the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to develop a strategic business development and attraction plan that will help create a stronger, more resilient local and regional economy by attracting and growing new businesses that suite the County's needs, given their existing resources and assets. The business development and attraction plan will include an inventory of assets to include, but not be limited to, an analysis of infrastructure that identifies usable buildings and sites; a market study to determine the types of industries that should be targeted for growth and attraction by providing a profile of the market, the benefits the market offers to Somerset County and what factors have to be available to attract specific industries; and a growth strategy that provides a "blue print" of how to appropriately direct resources and stimulate immediate growth.

Due to a number of factors, Somerset County has struggled with business attraction in recent years. However, the County has had some success in developing local entrepreneurs and expanding existing businesses. This presents an opportunity for the County to do even more to encourage and develop its local entrepreneurs. In order to be successful, the Strategy should

utilize innovative approaches wherever possible in addressing strategies to encourage entrepreneurship and expansion of existing business as well as new business attraction. It is particularly necessary to better refine such efforts in light of barriers related to business development in rural areas and related challenges of technology and logistics.

Task 1.0 Project Management and Coordination

1.1 Conduct an initial kick-off meeting with the Project Steering Committee to discuss project goals and objectives.

The Subcontractor will facilitate a project kick-off meeting with the Project Steering Committee. The purpose of this meeting will be to review the project goals and objectives, discuss the main tasks, walk through the project timeline, and identify expected outcomes. At this meeting, the Subcontractor will present its proposed plan for completing the Strategy. This meeting will allow an opportunity for the Project Steering Committee to provide input to the Subcontractor regarding the project and offer opportunities for stakeholder involvement. The Subcontractor will then use this initial feedback to adjust the project plan as necessary.

1.2 Coordinate project activities with the Project Steering Committee.

Throughout the project, the Subcontractor will meet with the Project Steering Committee and will communicate with the Project Steering Committee members regularly via phone and electronic mail. The Subcontractor should plan on a total of at least three meetings with the Project Steering Committee and will closely coordinate all project activities, including all public outreach events and activities, with the Project Steering Committee.

Task 2.0 Stakeholder Outreach

2.1 Identify and gather input from key stakeholders in Somerset County and throughout the region.

The Subcontractor will meet with and interview key stakeholders in the region to gather input for the Strategy. These key stakeholders, at a minimum, will include the 11 members of the Project Steering Committee, 12-15 local business leaders, 2-3 educational institutions, and representatives from agriculture, healthcare and other prominent sectors. The Project Steering Committee will work with the Subcontractor to help identify the stakeholders for this process.

Task 3.0 Inventory of Assets

3.1 Complete an inventory of current assets in Somerset County.

The Subcontractor will collect data on the various assets that the County currently has or is expected to have in the near future (i.e. Route 219 South). Members of the Project Steering Committee possess a great deal of knowledge as it relates to the County's key assets and will serve as an excellent resource to complete the task. The inventory of assets will, at a minimum, include:

- Available buildings and land
- Natural resources

- Current and future transportation network
- Excess power capacity
- Assets being abandoned by the coal industry (rail, independent haulers, etc.)
- Access and proximity to markets
- Workforce attributes including educational institutions and workforce training programs
- Tax and financing incentives (KOZ, low-interest loan funds, etc.)
- Other characteristics that are unique to Somerset County
- Synergies or partnerships that could be an asset to the County, including business, industry, geographic, institutional and others
- Infrastructure including broadband
- Successful and progressive industries

3.2 Identify specific assets that need to be developed in order for the County to diversify

The Subcontractor will evaluate the regional economy and identify assets that may not currently be present but that could be developed as part of the Strategy. A vital part of diversifying the local economy is building upon the success of existing businesses. If developed, the identified opportunities should encourage local business growth, expansion and entrepreneurship while making the County more attractive for businesses that may be looking to relocate in the region.

Task 4.0 Identification of Potential Industries for Growth and Attraction

4.1 Focus on encouraging local entrepreneurship and building upon existing industries

The Subcontractor will identify opportunities for growth of existing businesses, identify barriers that are limiting growth, and develop strategies to overcome those barriers. The County has a history of success in growing local businesses through individual entrepreneurs and the Strategy should build on that success. Building entrepreneurship, recruiting new businesses, and sustaining existing businesses should all be part of the strategy. The plan should specify potential opportunities for local business leaders and entrepreneurs to invest in the county

4.2 Identification of growth industries that are in line with the identified assets of the County

The Subcontractor will utilize the inventory of assets to identify which industries should be targeted for growth and attraction.

4.3 Economic forecasting

The subcontractor will complete forecasting that includes both regional and global economic impacts to:

- Determine what existing industries could diversify based on available market capacity
- Determine what products and services could be developed to meet future market demands

Task 5.0 Growth Strategy “Blueprint”

5.1 Development of an Action Plan

The Subcontractor will develop an Action Plan to include a list of prioritized strategic programs, initiatives and related projects that may be necessary to accomplish them. A project list related to the framework of priorities should include, wherever possible, cost estimates for each of the initiatives as well as a list of potential resources available for implementation. The list will be categorized as follows:

- Short-term priorities (implemented in less than a year)
- Mid-term priorities (implemented in 1-5 years)
- Long-term priorities (implemented in 5-10 years)