

FIVE COUNTY NORTHWEST OHIO COLLABORATIVE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

2025 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
(CEDS) PLANNING SERVICES

PROPOSAL DEADLINE

SUBMITTALS MUST BE RECEIVED VIA EMAIL BY:

MAY 30, 2025

5:00 P.M. EST

SUBMIT PROPOSALS TO:

MATT GILROY

MGILROY@FINDLAYECONDEV.COM

I. Intent

The Five County Northwest Ohio Collaborative intends to hire a consultant to provide services to implement the region's first Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in order to better plan for regional development strategies and coordinate locally/regionally with the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA). Funding for this project is provided by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and by the economic development organizations in Allen, Hancock, Hardin, Putnam and Van Wert Counties in Northwestern Ohio. The final product must meet the requirements of an EDA-funded CEDS.

The Five County Northwest Ohio Collaborative will procure consultant services in accordance with the requirements of the EDA terms and conditions of the grant award. The project will commence upon selection of a consultant by the collaborative and issuance of a notice to proceed.

II. Background Information

The Five County Northwest Ohio Collaborative consists of Allen, Hancock, Hardin, Putnam and Van Wert Counties and the county-wide economic development organizations in each county are collaborating to create this regional strategy in an effort to plan for the future benefit of our citizenry and establish a collaborative effort to overcome development challenges and enhance development opportunities.

As an EDA-funded CEDS, the final product must incorporate the following requirements:

- Summary of background information
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis
- Strategic Direction / Action Plan
- Evaluation Framework
- A discussion of resilience

III. Consultant Scope of Work

Respondents to this RFP will represent a firm, company, team or organization that possesses at least five years of experience and expertise in preparing Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies, conducting strategic planning, conducting public outreach, and working with public officials. Respondents should be able to demonstrate a strong strategic planning background and be able to undertake a planning process that involves economic development practitioners, public officials and other people of influence within the five-county region.

The following is a description of tasks to be undertaken by the chosen consultant:

1. Provide an analysis of the following in the five-county region by research, interviewing key stakeholders identified by collaborative and by discussion at kick-off meeting with collaborative:
 - a. Geography
 - b. Demographics
 - c. Socio-Economic Conditions
 - d. Employment & Labor Force
 - e. Economic trends/clusters/recent performance
 - f. Industry sectors / Industry clusters
 - g. Land Use
 - h. Environmental / Cultural / Historical conditions
 - i. Infrastructure
 - j. Other matters concerning regional economy that may be relevant
2. Conduct a focus group discussion with collaborative and other key stakeholders in each county to develop a SWOT analysis at a county-wide basis.
3. Upon the completion of the regional research and analysis (including a SWOT analysis for each county) consultant shall host a discussion with the collaborative to build consensus around a regional SWOT analysis and a focused discussion regarding the region's resilience to natural disasters as well as man-made disasters such as economic downturns or corporate relocations.
4. The consultant shall host a public session, completing steps to ensure the process is consistent with EDA regulations, to gather input from the general public and others that may wish to express suggestions and ideas related to the region's future development opportunities and challenges.
5. Upon the completion of the of the regional SWOT analysis, stakeholder outreach and the analysis assessing the economic conditions of the region, the consultant shall develop recommendations for a Strategic Direction for the collaborative that is designed to accelerate inclusive economic growth. Identified Action Steps should be actionable, specific and focused with an emphasis on benefiting from the region's strengths and assets.

6. The Collaborative shall meet with the consultant to discuss the recommended Strategic Direction and Action Steps and the Collaborative shall identify the core Action Steps to prioritize in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The collaborative, with support from the consultant, shall identify resources and partnerships necessary to implement Action Steps and shall develop metrics to achieve the Action Steps.
7. Completion of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy report should be finalized within 30 days of the completion of Step 5. The report should be an attractive, engaging and accessible document that makes the case for change and outlines a clear approach to achieving Action Steps the collaborative determines necessary for the benefit of the region.

IV. Project Schedule

The Five County Northwest Ohio Collaborative anticipates this project will be completed and a final CEDS report will be submitted to EDA by September 15, 2025.

V. Proposal Requirements

Proposals shall be submitted by email to mgilroy@findlayecondev.com with the subject line reading “2025 CEDS Proposal”, by 5:00 p.m. EST on May 30, 2025. Any responses received after the advertised opening date and time shall be rejected.

Attached files emailed should be less than 2 MB in size. The Collaborative suggests those submitting proposals call Matt Gilroy at (419) 438-0035 upon submission via email to verify receipt of the email.

NOTE: The submission of any proposal indicates acceptance by the respondent of the terms and conditions contained herein, unless otherwise specifically noted in the proposal itself.

General inquiries concerning the Request for Proposals must be made to:

Matt Gilroy
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Findlay-Hancock County Economic Development
123 E. Main-Cross Street
Findlay, Ohio 45840
mgilroy@findlayecondev.com
(419) 438-0035

No oral interpretations shall be made to any respondent as to the meaning of any of the proposal documents. Every request for an interpretation shall be made in writing and submitted via email to Matt Gilroy by May 8, 2025.

Respondents must submit complete responses to all of the information requested. Respondents who do not respond to the entire content of the RFP may be disqualified. Written proposals shall include, at a minimum, the following information in the order requested:

A. Cover Letter

A letter signed by an officer of the firm, corporation or organization binding the respondent to all of the commitments made in the proposal. The cover letter should be addressed to Matt Gilroy, Findlay · Hancock County Economic Development, 123 E. Main Cross Street, Findlay, Ohio 45840.

B. Contact Information

The name, address and contact information for the primary person that will communicate with the collaborative from the respondent. Please include the primary telephone number, email address of this individual and the website of the firm, corporation or organization responding.

C. Statement of Qualifications

Provide the respondent's professional history, background and experience. Include the background, education and experiences of all team members proposed to participate in all tasks identified in the scope of work. Please share the proposed roles of all participating team members.

Relevant information to include in the Statement of Qualifications includes experiences with economic development planning, focus group management, stakeholder engagement, outreach and communication and meeting moderation and facilitation.

Please provide a minimum of three references for which respondent conducted similar work, provide the name of the project or activity performed, project period and contact information (email and phone number) with the primary contact person for that reference.

D. Scope of Work

Proposed approach to the Scope of Work with an emphasis on the respondent's approach to outreach and engagement with stakeholders, platforms to be used to analyze region's

economic and socio-economic data, and approach to developing the metrics for the collaborative to achieve.

E. Project Schedule

Provide a proposed project schedule detailing the steps necessary to provide a Final Report by the project schedule outlined in Section IV.

F. Fee Proposal

The fee proposal shall include costs associated with the delivery and provision of finished product(s) and costs associated with carrying out all tasks specified in the Scope of Work. The fee proposal should include:

1. A complete rate schedule and pricing for staff participating in this project.
2. Total costs per task identified in the Scope of Work, itemizing personnel, subcontractors and direct expenses (such as travel, software programs, printing, etc.).
3. Total costs for the project, itemizing personnel, subcontractors and direct expenses.

G. Proposed Subcontractors

Respondents who intend to subcontract one or more elements of this project to other firms, individuals, corporations or organizations shall identify those work elements to be subcontracted and the firm or individual subcontractor. All subcontractors shall be included in the respondent's Statement of Qualifications. Subcontractors shall not be substituted, nor any portions of the contract assigned to other parties, after contract award without the written consent of the Collaborative.

The successful respondent shall be fully responsible for the performance, finished products, acts, omissions and work of its subcontractors and persons direct or indirectly employed by respondent and participating in the project.

H. Insurance Documents

Documentation of insurance coverage protecting each member of the Collaborative from all potential liability for the completion of the Scope of Work. See Insurance Requirements.

I. Response Page

See Attachment A

J. Non-Collusion Statement

See Attachment B

K. Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority/Female Business Enterprise Certification Form

See Attachment C

L. Conflict of Interest Statement

See Attachment D

VI. Selection Criteria

The Five County Northwest Ohio Collaborative desires to award a contract to the respondent who demonstrates the ability to provide the highest quality service within the approximately \$100,000 available budget. To accomplish this goal, the Collaborative's criteria for selection will be based on the following scoring method:

Description	Max Points
Experience, Expertise and Qualifications of Personnel participating in Project:	15
Quality of Proposal for analysis of region's economic data	5
Quality of Proposal for outreach and engagement	5
Quality of Proposal for the development of metrics	5
Response regarding Project Schedule	5
Response regarding Fee Proposal	10
Completeness of Response to RFP	<u>5</u>
Total	50

The Collaborative may elect to negotiate with the top ranked respondents and to accept modifications to the proposed Scope of Work and/or proposed Fee Schedule when such action is in the best interests of the participants to do so. Additional clarifying information may be requested to aid in the decision-making process.

VII. Procurement Schedule

The following schedule has been prepared for this RFP process:

RFP Release Date:	Tuesday, April 22, 2025
RFP Questions Due to Collaborative:	Thursday, May 8, 2025
Proposals Due to Collaborative:	Friday, May 30, 2025

VIII. Additional Terms and Conditions

A. Compliance with Applicable Laws

The successful consultant shall comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations. The project will result in an EDA-approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The consultant must take into account compliance with all regulations applicable to such plans and will also be subject to the Terms and Conditions of the EDA grant. Respondents are encouraged to review all applicable federal and state regulations prior to submitting a proposal.

The respondent also agrees that it will hold each member of the Collaborative and the Collaborative as a whole harmless and indemnify the Collaborative and its parties from any action which may arise out of any act of the firm, corporation or organization and its participants concerning lack of compliance with federal, state and local laws and regulations.

B. Project Funding

Work performed as part of this contract will be funded through the Economic Development Administration. All work is contingent on adequate funding from the EDA.

C. Ownership of Proposals

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP become the sole property of the members of the Collaborative upon submission.

D. Incurred Costs

The request for proposals does not commit the Collaborative or its members to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this request. The Collaborative will not be liable in any way for costs incurred by respondents in replying to this RFP.

E. Severability

If any terms or provisions of this Request for Proposal shall be found to be illegal or unenforceable, then such term or provision shall be deemed stricken and the remaining portions of this document shall remain in full force and effect.

F. Assignment

The successful respondent is prohibited from assigning, transferring, conveying, subletting or otherwise disposing of the resulting agreement or its rights, title, or interest therein or its power to execute such an agreement to any other person, company, corporation or organization without the prior written consent from the Collaborative.

G. Amendment

The Collaborative reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP, prior to selection of the proposal, if it is deemed to be in the best interest of the Collaborative to do so.

The Collaborative also reserves the right to accept or reject any and all responses to this Request for Proposals, or any part thereof, if it is deemed to be in the Collaborative's best interest.

H. Collusion

By submitting a proposal, the respondent implicitly states: his/her proposal has not been made in connection with any other competing respondent submitting a separate response to this RFP; is in all respects fair; and has been submitted without collusion or fraud. It is further implied that the respondent did not participate in the RFP development process, has no knowledge of the specific contents of the RFP before its issuance, and that no participant of the Collaborative either directly or indirectly assisted in the vendor's proposal preparation. Respondent firms will be required to sign the certificate (Attachment B) related to non-collusion in this RFP.

I. Termination

The Collaborative may terminate any contract(s) or any part of any contracts resulting from this process at any time for cause, default or negligence on the part of the selected respondent; or if the selected respondent fails, in the opinion of the Collaborative, to meet the general terms and conditions of any resulting contract or to provide a level of service that is deemed to be in the best interest of the Collaborative.

J. Equal Opportunity

Respondent firms will be required to sign the certificate incorporated in this RFP (see Attachment C) relative to Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority/Female Business Enterprise and return it with their response.

K. Insurance Requirements

The consultant awarded a contract to complete the Collaborative's CEDS shall be required to furnish a Certificate of Insurance evidencing the following insurance coverage prior to the execution of an agreement.

The insurance requirements shall apply to all subcontractors and participants working for the consultant.

Required insurance coverage:

- I. Comprehensive General Liability: includes Contractual Liability as applicable, with limits not less than \$1,000,000 for all damages because of bodily injury sustained by each person as the result of any occurrence and \$2,000,000 bodily injury aggregate per policy year and limits of \$1,000,000 for all property damage sustained by each person as a result of any one occurrence and \$2,000,000 property damage aggregate per policy year. All, if any, deductibles are the sole responsibility of the consultant to pay and/or indemnify.
- II. Automobile Liability Insurance: including non-owned and hired vehicles in the same limits as indicated above.
- III. Workers Compensation Insurance

L. Hold Harmless and Indemnification

In addition to its obligation to provide insurance as specified above, the Consultant, its subcontractors, agents and assigns shall indemnify and hold harmless the Collaborative, its individual members and all individuals participating as stakeholders, from any and all claims made against the Collaborative, including but not limited to, damages, awards, costs and reasonable attorney's fees, to the extent any such claim directly and proximately results from the negligent acts, errors or omissions in performance of work by the Consultant during the performance of this Agreement or any other Agreements the Consultant entered into by reason thereof.

ATTACHMENT A

RESPONSE PAGE

FIVE COUNTY NORTHWEST OHIO COLLABORATIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

DATE ADVERTISED **April 22, 2025**

RESPONSE DUE DATE **May 30, 2025** **5:00 p.m. EST**

Consultant/Organization Name

Contact Name

Email Address

Street Address

City, State & Zip Code

Telephone Number

EIN#, TIN# or SS#

ATTACHMENT B

Non-Collusion Statement

FIVE COUNTY NORTHWEST OHIO COLLABORATIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The consultant responding to this Request for Proposals certifies that it is being submitted without any collusion, communication or agreement as to any matter relating to it with any other respondent or competitor. We understand that this response must be signed by an authorized agent of our company or organization to constitute a valid response.

Consultant/Organization Name

Contact Name & Title

Signature

Street Address

City, State & Zip Code

Telephone Number

ATTACHMENT C

Equal Employment Opportunity

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The undersigned certifies that _____ is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to Equal Employment Opportunity.

Contact Name & Title

Signature

If applicable:

The undersigned also certifies that _____ is a Minority/Female Business Enterprise and is in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to Minority/Female Business Enterprise designations.

Contact Name & Title

Signature

ATTACHMENT D

Conflict of Interest Statement

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The consultant warrants that, to the best of his/her/its knowledge and belief, and except as otherwise disclosed, there are no relevant facts or circumstances, which could give rise to organizational conflicts of interest. The proposer agrees that, if after award, an organizational conflict of interest is discovered, an immediate and full disclosure in writing must be made to the Collaborative, which must include a description of the action, which the Consultant has taken or proposes to take to avoid or to mitigate such conflict(s). If an organizational conflict of interest is determined to exist, the Collaborative may, at its discretion, cancel the contract. In the event the Consultant was aware of an organizational conflict of interest prior to the award of the contract and did not disclose the conflict to the Collaborative, the Collaborative may terminate the contract for default.

The undersigned on behalf of the Consultant hereby certifies that the information contained in this certification is accurate, complete and current.

Contact Name & Title

Signature