



Request for Proposals

The Workforce Opportunity Council in collaboration with the North Country Regional Innovation Grant partners and organizations is seeking proposals for consultant services to provide certain services related to research, analysis, strategic planning, meeting facilitation, and plan writing in support of the preparation of the North Country Regional Innovation Grant Implementation Plan.

64 OLD SUNCOOK ROAD, CONCORD, NH 03301 PHONE: 603.228.9500 FAX: 603.228.8557 TDD: NH RELAY 711

The Workforce Opportunity Council, Inc. is a sponsor of the NH WORKS system, a proud member of America's Workforce Network, and an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Request for Proposals

I. Purpose

As a result of the Regional Innovation Grant, the Workforce Opportunity Council (Council), an umbrella organization is working in collaboration with existing organizations to create a strategic, transformational regional plan to prepare the region to compete and succeed in a global economy. This Request for Proposal (RFP) is seeking a qualified consultant/vendor(s) for the provision of strategic planning services inclusive of research, analysis, strategy development, group process facilitation, and plan writing activities. Information to be collected/produced, studied and reported includes cataloguing and analyzing regional assets, strategies and outreach for economic development transformation, and effective career path strategies for the regional workforce. The planning process requires:

- Consultation with applicable state, local and community stakeholders;
- Conducting regional forums to elicit public/private input;
- Researching and analyzing the current regional economy, utilizing relevant and applicable resources and tools;
- Conducting SWOT analysis and resource mapping activities;
- Analysis of current local workforce system strategies for the purpose of determining how best to align these services with the regional implementation plan: .and
- Identifying strategies and resources for plan implementation

The results of these efforts will be utilized to prepare a strategic plan that:

- Establishes and articulates a vision for *economic and workforce* development in the Region;
- Includes clear and measurable goals and objectives;
- Outlines clear steps and strategies for achieving goals and objectives; and,
- Identifies potential resources/funding to support implementation of the plan.

II. Background

The Workforce Opportunity Council (Council) has received a US Department of Labor Regional Innovation Grant (RIG) to conduct strategic planning activities for the purpose of developing a North Country Regional Innovation Grant implementation plan. The role of the Council is to serve as the convener of stakeholders to the RIG planning process and oversee the implementation of grant activities consistent with the criteria set forth in the RIG proposal as approved by US DOL i.e., the RIG blueprint for economic and workforce transformation.

The RIG blueprint for economic and workforce transformation is based on a six step methodology for success:

1. Identify the Regional Economy

- a. Identify the surrounding communities and counties that share a regional economy, point-in-time and ongoing.
 - b. Identify diverse assets within the regional economy
2. Form Core Leadership Group
 - a. Form a group representing the major assets of the region to lead the effort
 - b. Include employers, economic and workforce development professionals, state and local governments, foundations and education entities (K-12, community college and research and development laboratories)
3. Conduct a SWOT Analysis
 - a. Measure the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the defined region
 - b. Include a regions attributes – existing assets, natural resources, current business climate and demographics, such as educational attainment level of workers in the region.
4. Create a Shared Regional Identity and Vision for the Regional Economy
 - a. All partners to the process must share the same vision both collectively and individually
 - b. Let the shared vision be the “driver” for new regional behavior, identifying regional strategies and aligning resources
5. Devise Strategies
 - a. Strategies for regional economic and workforce development must be “SMART” – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and with a Timeline.
 - b. Strategies must account for a region’s infrastructure, investment and available talent
6. Leverage Resources and Implement the Strategic Plan
 - a. Leverage resources from private, non-profit and government sources in support of strategies/common goals outlined in the RIG Strategic Implementation Plan

To this end, RIG funds will be used to achieve the goal of developing a comprehensive, integrated, strategic plan to support sustainable innovation-based economic development strategies in the North Country of New Hampshire and the bordering communities in Vermont and Maine, through the collaborative effort of a strong regionally-focused Core Leadership Group. Once the Core Leadership Group is established, this group will take the lead in identifying long-term system-wide solutions to address the devastating economic impact of the severe decline in the paper industry, and the rippling effects on all industries in the surrounding areas. In addition, the newly developed regional plan must specifically address the re-employment needs of the workers affected by the closure of the Wausau Paper mill, beyond those services typically provided on the ground level through the workforce development system.

The Council received a \$250,000 grant to support RIG activities. Specifically, RIG funds will be used for staffing to support the ongoing development of strategic partnerships, strategic planning activities at the regional level resulting in the development of a comprehensive plan for the Region, and the purchase and/or development of planning and/or implementation tools/resources as identified as necessary to support the regional planning process.

Respondents interested in accessing more detailed information on the entities/initiatives referenced in this RFP are encouraged to visit the following websites:

- www.nhworks.org: for information on the Workforce Opportunity Council, the North Country Regional Innovation Grant and the state Workforce Investment Board
- www.doleta.gov/wired: for information on the US DOL WIRED initiative (serves as the working framework for the RIG process and provides specific information on resources and planning tools referenced in this RFP)
- www.nhrapidresponse.com: for information on the Wausau Paper reemployment services offered through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Dislocated Worker Services and the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA)
- www.nh.gov/nhes/elmi: for access to the following labor market impact reports: Coos County Perspectives . . . The Groveton Mill Closures – December 2007; Coos County Perspectives . . . The Federal Prison – June 2007; and Coos County Perspectives (Pulp and Paper Closings) – May 2006; as well as other NH specific labor market information

III. Scope of Services

The RIG requires the development of a Regional Strategic Plan to use as a “mechanism to communicate goals, define strategies and align resources, and measure performance and results over time.”

The successful proposer will be required to complete the following tasks/activities:

Resource Mapping: In order to strengthen the region’s competitive position in diverse economics, an Asset Map will be a critical first step. The purpose of the map will be to inventory key resources and provide an understanding of the regional culture and capacity. The map will also offer a baseline by which to judge future progress.

While much work has already been accomplished, without an asset map the strategies adopted might not align with regional resources and thereby diminish the potential impact of our initiatives. A comprehensive asset map will allow for the realignment of existing strategies, identify gaps, redundancies, and inefficiencies, and allow for the reallocation of resources to maximize effectiveness. An asset map will also be critical in bringing together new strategic partners based on a set of shared assets. This request includes a full-level asset mapping process comprising:

- Asset identification – whereby an inventory of all assets would be catalogued
- Basic evaluation – where strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and redundancies would be identified
- A comprehensive assessment – where linkages between regional assets and the underlying business culture would be identified
- Technical assistance in conducting, cataloguing, and evaluating the asset map
- Documenting and disseminating the asset map

Social Network Mapping: Communities are built on connections, and better connections provide better opportunities. A Social Network Map would allow regional leaders to identify leadership roles, experts, and mentors in order to make connections and facilitate decision

making. It would also identify gaps where key connections are missing. Production of such a Social Network Map is a performance requirement that must be addressed in the proposal and must be completed by the contractor or have subcontracted.

Regionalization: The successful proposer shall conduct a regional identification process. The Asset Map will assist in the process; however, regionalization goes beyond cataloguing and analyzing assets. Regionalization also requires a cultural shift for local leaders, businesses, and communities. The proposal must include a development and delivery plan for the following.

- Educating local and regional leadership on emerging and global economies
- Conducting outreach to other communities regarding economic development transformation
- Achieving common, regionalized goals and initiatives

Educational Component: In order to ensure workforce capacity, economic initiative sustainability, and vision alignment, the region plans to maximize what is regarded as the Career Path Pipeline. Proposals must state a plan to conduct and produce reports for the following:

- *SWOT* analysis of current education system to identify gaps and develop strategies to strengthen Pipeline.
- *Career Audit:* The purpose of the audit will be to identify the top 5 careers in our regional economy necessary to implement and sustain new economic initiatives.

RIG Project Governance: Utilizing the data and information gathered from the activities/tasks identified above, the successful proposer will facilitate group stakeholder discussions for the purpose of identifying a project governance structure to guide the development of a new regional economy. The outcome of this effort shall be identification of the initial core leadership group membership, a framework for key sub-committees needed to support the work of the core leadership group, a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of participating organizations/partners, internal and external communication plans and decision making authority and approach.

Working with the RIG Project Manager the selected consultant(s) shall be expected to perform all tasks identified in the Scope of Services. It is understood that components of each of these tasks may occur simultaneously, and that while the contract period for services shall remain constant, the timeframes for completion of specific tasks may need to be fluid. It is further understood that the degree to which tasks are completed independently or as part of group activity will be determined in consultation with the RIG Project Manager, unless otherwise specified within this RFP. The RIG Project Manager shall be responsible for coordinating all group activity logistics and shall be available to assist the selected consultant(s) in carrying out tasks and/or follow-up activities as appropriate.

IV. Applicant Eligibility

Individuals and organizations, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, having the appropriate experience and specific expertise necessary to carry out the duties and responsibilities outlined in the Statement of Work below. All proposers must have demonstrated experience in the area of resource mapping and resource and educational strategy development to be eligible for consideration. The Council reserves the right to check all references furnished and consider the responses received in evaluating the proposals.

V. Proposal Narrative

Responsive proposals should provide straightforward, concise information that satisfies the requirements noted. Expensive bindings, color displays, and the like are not necessary or desired. Emphasis should be placed on conformity to the instructions, requirements of this RFP, and completeness and clarity of content.

Narrative:

Respondents must submit a written description of services that briefly describes the services to be provided specific to the requirements of this proposal. The written narrative, at a minimum, must include the following information:

1. Demonstrated knowledge of the tasks required to meet the requirements of this proposal and the skills, abilities and talent necessary to successfully complete the tasks outlined in the Scope of Services. (Please attach current resume of all personnel proposed to perform work for this project)
2. Demonstrated ability to perform the tasks required in this proposal, including prior experience in working on same/similar projects. (Please attach references to the narrative response, which include the names, physical and electronic addresses, and telephone numbers of a minimum of three (3) clients for whom the respondent has conducted similar services. These references may be contacted)
3. Demonstrated knowledge of the time requirements for completion of all work required in the Scope of Services. The narrative must include specific details on how the respondent will meet the timing requirements for this project and include a work plan with a brief description of each deliverable and its anticipated start and completion date.
4. Contact information for the primary contact, including name, physical and electronic addresses, telephone and facsimile numbers.

The description of services shall be no longer than five (5) double-spaced, single-sided pages in length.

Budget and Cost Effectiveness:

As a separate document, submit a detailed line item budget showing total cost for the services described in this proposal. This budget should identify unique hourly rates, titles, and responsibilities for each “Key Personnel,” Staff rates should be fully described, including indirect costs, overhead and profit. The cost proposal should also include separate line items for postage/ mailing costs and travel and lodging (if applicable). Include a narrative description for costs that may need further explanation to demonstrate cost effectiveness.

VI. Proposal Review Process and/or Funding Decision Process

A subcommittee, led by the Council will evaluate proposals in accordance with the requirements provided in this RFP.

The Council reserves the right to reject any and all proposals submitted. In addition, the distribution of this RFP shall not commit the Council to award funds to any applicant.

Any costs incurred in responding to this RFP shall not be reimbursed.

The Council reserves the right to seek clarification of any information contained in a proposal submitted, or to hold discussions, but is not obligated to do so.

Unless otherwise noted in the RFP, any work performed by a successful applicant prior to the effective date of a contract shall not be reimbursed.

Funding of any contract awarded under this initiative is subject to the availability and continued appropriation of federal funds awarded through the U.S. Department of Labor. The Council shall not be liable for any payments in excess of such available appropriated funds. In the event of reduction or termination of those funds, the Council shall have the right to withhold payment until such funds become available, if ever, and shall have the right to terminate or amend the contract immediately upon giving the contractor notice of such termination or amendment.

Estimated Schedule of Events (subject to change):

Event	Date	Time
Release of RFP	March 20, 2008	
Deadline for submission of questions	April 10, 2008	4:30 PM
Deadline for submission of proposals	April 18, 2008	4:30 PM
Proposal Review	May 2, 2008	
Contract Award and Contracting	May 16, 2008	
Contract Begins	May 23, 2008	
Contract Ends	August 29, 2008	

Proposal Inquiries:

All questions about this Request for Proposals (RFP) must be submitted by e-mail to Jackie Heuser at jheuser@nhworkforce.org by no later than 4:30 pm on April 2, 2008.

Answers will be posted on www.nhworks.org by Monday, April 7, 2008.

Scoring of the Proposal:

Respondent proposals shall be evaluated against a 130 total point system, weighted as follows:

Narrative	25 points
Budget and Cost Effectiveness	15 points
Prior Experience	35 points
Credentials/Job Descriptions	25 points
Ability to meet timing requirements to complete project	30 points

Additional Requirements:

It may be necessary to interview prospective applicants to clarify aspects of their submittal. If conducted, interviews will likely be conducted by telephone conference call. The Workforce Opportunity Council will notify prospective applicants regarding any interview arrangements.

Contract for Services:

The evaluation of responses to this RFP may result in the issuance of a contract for services with the Workforce Opportunity Council. The contract will incorporate the requirements of the RFP, the selected respondent’s proposal, and all other agreements that may be reached.

If the respondent proposes a multi-bidder or subcontract approach, full responsibility for all contract requirements will remain with the respondent who is awarded the contract, including audit findings. Copies of all subcontracts must be included in the response to this RFP.

The Workforce Opportunity Council will negotiate a contract with the successful respondent. The Council’s standard contract will define the terms and conditions used and will form the basis for contractual negotiations. (See Certification and Other Terms/Conditions imbedded in this RFP for further details)

The Council is not responsible for oversights in this RFP, which are not brought to the attention of the Council prior to starting contract negotiations. Contract terms, if any, required by the respondent must be included or attached to the respondent’s proposal.

Submission Requirement

Proposals must be typed. In addition to the specific documents/requirements outlined in this RFP, a complete proposal must include the cover sheet provided through this RFP, signed by the primary contact for the proposal submitted, as well as a signed copy of the Certifications and Other terms/conditions

An original proposal with original signatures on the cover sheet and five (5) identical copies of the proposal must be received **by no later than 4:30 PM EST on Friday April 18, 2008** at:

Workforce Opportunity Council
Attn: RIG Consultant Services
64 Old Suncook Road
Concord, NH 03301

Respondents may also submit a full proposal via email (pdf file) as long as an original proposal with original signatures on the cover sheet are mailed to the Council by no later than 4:30 PM EST on Friday, April 18, 2008.

<p>Deadline for Receipt of Proposals: 4:30 PM April 18, 2008</p>

Proposal Cover Sheet

Applicant: _____

Contact Person: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Telephone: _____ FAX: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Federal Tax ID No.: _____

If awarded funding, the applicant hereby certifies and assures that it will fully comply with the following federal regulations (if applicable to your organization):

- 29 CFR Part 96 (Single Audit Act)
- 29 CFR Part 98 (Debarment and Suspension: Drug-free Workplace)
- 29 CFR Part 93 (Lobbying Certification)
- 29 CFR Parts 33, 34, and 37 (Non-discrimination and Equal Opportunity Requirements)
- 29 CRP Part 97 (Uniform Administrative Requirements), Part 95 (Administrative Requirements for Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Non-Profit Organizations), and any subsequent amendments
- P.L. 101-166, Sec. 511 (Federal Dollar Amount Participation)
- RSA 193:13 (Gun-Free Schools)
- Public Law 105-220, Workforce Investment Act
- 20 CFR Part 652 et al (Workforce Investment Act, Final Rules)

Applicant's signature below indicates organization is agreeing to comply fully with the assurances and certifications as part of its responsibilities as a successful vendor/contractor.

Signature

Date

Printed Name and Title

Certification and Other Terms/Conditions

1. The signing individual certifies that he/she is authorized to contract on behalf of the organization offering this proposal.
2. The signing individual certifies that the prices in this proposal have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, or agreements made for the purpose of restricting competition.
3. When delivering services under an approved contract, the contractor shall work under the broad supervision of Council staff.
4. The signing individual certifies that there has been no attempt by him/her or anyone in their organization to discourage any potential applicant from submitting a proposal.
5. The signing individual certifies that he/she has read and understands all of the information in this Request for Proposals.
6. The signing individual certifies that his/her organization, and any individuals to be assigned to the project, does not have a record of substandard work and has not been debarred or suspended from doing work with any federal, state, or local government.
7. Unless otherwise deleted or modified by mutual agreement between the Council and the contractor, all general provisions contained on the Proposal Cover Sheet (attachment A) shall be incorporated into the contract.
8. The Council reserves the right to negotiate a best and final offer with applicant selected.
9. Payments shall be made on a cost reimbursement basis (no advances). Invoices shall detail expenses based on the line items in the proposal budget. Generally, the Council will pay invoices within 15 days of receipt, unless questions arise as to the appropriateness of an expense.
10. All information received by the contractor during the course of the contract period is considered confidential, and shall be protected to the utmost ability of the contractor. The contract shall include more specific language on this issue.
11. The contract awarded under this RFP shall be subject to and interpreted under the laws and jurisdiction of New Hampshire.

Signature

Date

(Signed certification/conditions to be returned with the proposal)