

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

East Central Vermont Economic Development District: Economic Inventory, Assessment,
Strategy, and Work Plan for the Creative Economy/Industries

Issued: October 13, 2015

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) seeks proposals for professional consultant services for an economic inventory, assessment, strategy, and work plan for the East Central Vermont Economic Development District's regional creative economy for completion by June 15, 2016. TRORC is interested in receiving proposals from consultants and/or consultant teams that integrate the necessary professional expertise.

Project Description

The East Central Vermont Economic Development District (ECVEDD) has been awarded grant funds from the U.S. Economic Development Administration through its Partnership Planning Assistance Program to conduct an economic inventory, assessment, strategy, and work plan for our 40-town/regional creative economy. TRORC is supplementing the EDA award with TRORC funds. We want to fully understand the extent, composition and contributions of our creative and design industries – district wide -- and to develop economic strategies that will cultivate growth opportunities for creative and design jobs and businesses throughout the region.

ECVEDD is the region-wide federally designated economic development district whose mission is to access and provide resources and to facilitate and support quality decision making for the benefit of entrepreneurs, businesses and communities in East Central Vermont.

We are keenly aware that our creative sector is an essential ingredient to East Central Vermont's economy and quality of life; contributing jobs and economic benefits, creating vibrant communities to attract and retain business and talent, and supporting statewide cultural tourism aims. Our goal with this project specifically is to fully understand the economic impact this sector makes to our economy as a whole and to develop a strategic plan for helping creative entrepreneurs and those businesses that support them start and expand within the region.

The region has attracted many budding entrepreneurs, largely because of our quality of life, but we could do much more to attract these creative and energetic individuals. We consider value-added agriculture, value-added forest products, the arts and businesses that support these as all part of our creative economy.

This project moves forward the following goal from ECVEDD's recently adopted Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS: http://www.ecvedd.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/CEDS_Final_9-23-15.pdf):

Goal 2, Strategy 2.1: Build upon existing capacity for cultivating businesses, supporting new entrepreneurial ventures, and attracting new businesses.

Action: Strengthen recognition of the economic impact of and support for the "creative economy."

1. Conduct study of creative cluster(s) (e.g., products, services, and quantity).
2. Analyze results and determine economic impact and potential opportunities.
3. Create action plan that specifically supports creative entrepreneurs.

Geographic Area for Project

The East Central Vermont (ECV) Region encompasses 40 towns within four counties. The ECV Region includes the towns of Andover, Baltimore, Barnard, Bethel, Bridgewater, Cavendish, Chester, Hartford, Hartland, Ludlow, Norwich, Plymouth, Pomfret, Reading, Rochester, Royalton, Sharon, Springfield, Stockbridge, Weathersfield, West Windsor, Windsor and Woodstock in Windsor County; Pittsfield in Rutland County; Hancock and Granville in Addison County; and Bradford, Braintree, Brookfield, Chelsea, Corinth, Fairlee, Newbury, Randolph, Strafford, Thetford, Topsham, Tunbridge, West Fairlee and Vershire in Orange County. The total population of all 40-towns according to the 2010 census was 80,707.

Much of the ECV Region is part of Vermont's "Upper Valley¹," with Hartford (pop. 9,952: 2010 Census) acting as the largest center of commerce, employment and the arts in this area of Vermont. Smaller hubs of commerce are found in the northern part of the ECV Region in Randolph and Bradford. Springfield (pop. 9,373: 2010 Census) is the largest center of commerce in the southern region. Most of the region is characterized by rugged, forested mountains; open farmlands, quiet historic villages and rural countryside, and the populations of each town vary accordingly.

TRORC will be a partner in this project and will work closely with the consultant on all outreach efforts, identification of what is considered the creative economy, mapping, compilation of data, and the final format of the deliverables.

Project Scope of Work and Deliverables

The scope of work for this project is in accordance with the grant funding awarded by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. Proposals should clearly describe and outline the project team's approach, expertise and skills for successfully completing these project tasks.

1. Conduct study of creative clusters.

Evaluate and track the economic influence of the creative economy. A key resource that should inform the research design is "America's Creative Economy: A Study of Recent Conceptions, Definitions and Approaches to Measurement across the USA, published in August 2013.

¹ The "Upper Valley" is an area situated along the Connecticut River and is comprised of several towns in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Identify other critical analytics and data needed to fully understand the characteristics, opportunities and challenges of the creative and design sectors; and develop a regional program and policy recommendations.

Work with stakeholders to define existing infrastructure gaps and opportunities to strengthen resources and supports needed to cultivate sector growth.

2. Analyze results and determine economic impact and potential opportunities.

Provide data and analysis using most current available data and sources from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW); US Census Nonemployer Statistics (NES); US Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics (OES); and other sources as may be strategically determined.

Assess and benchmark the findings against similar regions (e.g., Pennsylvania Wilds, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, Windham County, Vermont).

3. Create an action plan that specifically supports creative entrepreneurs.
4. Compile a comprehensive written report.
5. Support TRORC in the preparation of the required progress report due June 2016 for submittal to the US Economic Development Administration.
6. Provide monthly updates, at a minimum, to inform TRORC regarding project status, status and progress of subcontractor and other partnerships, and to identify any challenges or opportunities to be addressed or considered.
7. Other related items or activities that your firm/team proposes as essential or recommended for the project's success.

Desired Skills and Expertise of Consultant

In selecting the consultant team or team members for this project, TRORC will consider the following factors:

- Expertise in designing methodologies for and conducting creative and design industries, creative economy or related data research and analysis, including in-depth analysis to ensure comprehensive understanding of the relationships, challenges and opportunities impacting growth opportunities of these industries and as integral to the supply chain for other industrial sectors.
- Knowledge of contextual literature and research studies and reports documenting the character, depth, economic contributions, growth opportunities and challenges for the creative and design industries and creative economy in the U.S. and internationally.
- Experience, skills and recommended approach for designing, convening, engaging and facilitating interactive sessions with stakeholder groups for strategic and effective results.
- Experience in successfully developing strategies and actions that cultivate growth opportunities and sustain existing creative industries.

Project Lead

While this project will cover the entire ECVEDD, partial funding is being provided by TRORC and TRORC will act as the project lead. Specifically, Lorelee Morrow, Regional Planner for TRORC will be the primary point of contact for the project, including the Request for Proposals, and subsequently for the project management and coordination unless otherwise specified.

Request for Proposal Requirements

Completed proposals should include the following documents and information:

- A signed one-page cover letter describing why your firm/team is interested in and brings the experience, knowledge, resources and relationships to successfully achieve the goals and accomplish the scope of work for this project.
- A detailed and descriptive work plan that outlines the team/firm project approach and including:
 1. The name and primary contact information for the lead firm and names and contact information for each additional firm/individual proposed for the project team. Please include name, organizational name, mailing address, telephone number, website, and email addresses.
 2. Statement of qualifications and background of the firm(s) and identification of the key personnel to serve on the project team, including any firms or individuals proposed to be engaged as subcontractors.
 3. A proposed scope of work for the project that encompasses and describes the consultant team roles, responsibilities and activities for successful and timely completion of the required scope of work as described in this Request for Proposals.
 4. Description of the firms/individuals responsible for specific project roles and responsibilities. Identify the individual(s) who will serve as Project Manager.
 5. A detailed project budget with supporting documentation for all budget items (e.g., labor, direct costs, associated travel costs, materials and other requirements—each enumerated separately). **The project budget is \$45,000.** Note that our desire is to structure the project contract on a not-to-exceed basis with allowance for defined and approved reimbursable expenses.

Attachments to the proposed work plan should include the following information:

1. Resumes or bios of all key individuals proposed to be involved in this project.
2. Examples of other projects and accomplishments that the firm believes should be reviewed in considering their qualifications and experiences.
3. A proposed timeline highlighting the anticipated project phases, milestones and procedural steps necessary for successful project completion.
4. Three professional references for related projects and experiences including names, roles, organization name, project name, address, phone and email.

EDA Flow Down Provisions

Applicants/bidders for a lower tier covered transaction (except procurement contracts for goods and services under \$25,000 not requiring the consent of a Department of Commerce

official) are subject to Subpart C of 2 C.F.R. Part 180, Subpart C “OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).” In addition, applicants/bidders for a lower tier transaction for a subaward, contract, or subcontract greater than \$100,000 of Federal funds at any tier are subject to 15 C.F.R. Part 28, “New Restrictions on Lobbying.” Applicants/bidders should familiarize themselves with these provisions, including the certification requirement. Therefore, applications for a lower tier covered transaction must include a Form CD-512, “Certification Regarding Lobbying—Lower Tier Covered Transactions,” completed without modification.

TRORC shall include a term or condition in all lower tier covered transactions (subawards, contracts, and subcontracts), that the award is subject to Subpart C of 2 C.F.R. Part 180, “OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement.”

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Firms will be evaluated on the following basis:

Item	Max. Points
Experience, Skills and Capacity: Candidate has successfully completed similar projects and has the qualifications, skills, and expertise as evidenced by the proposal and references.	50%
Suitability of the Proposal: Understanding of the project and the candidate's proposed approach to the work.	40%
Price and Value: The price is commensurate with the value offered by the candidate.	5%
DBE: Proposer qualifies as a DEB (Disadvantaged Business Enterprise)	5%

Proposal Submittal Deadline

- The deadline for submittal of completed and signed proposals to TRORC is no later than 5:00 pm EDT on Tuesday, November 5, 2015.
- Deliver proposals to the attention of (**digital copies submitted via email preferred**):

Lorelee Morrow, Regional Planner
lmorrow@trorc.org
 Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
 128 King Farm Road
 Woodstock, VT 05091

Consultant Team Selection Schedule

Request for Proposals Open October 13, 2015
 Proposal Deadline November 5, 2015 – 5 pm EDT
 If needed, Project Interviews Week of November 19, 2015
 Consultant Selection December 3, 2015
 Project Start Date January 4, 2016
 Project Completion June 15, 2016

For More Information

Questions regarding this project should be directed to Loralee Morrow, Regional Planner, at lmorrow@trorc.org. Any proposed questions and the subsequent answers will be posted to the trorc.org website.