

**Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation and Bennington County Regional Commission
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

for assistance in the development of a

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
for the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone

Issued: January 2, 2024

Due Date: February 1, 2024

Send to:

Executive Director

executivedirector@brattleborodevelopment.com

Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation

76 Cotton Mill Hill

Brattleboro, VT 05301

CC to:

Bobbi Kilburn, Director of Finance & Grant Management – bkilburn@brattleborodevelopment.com

Background information: The Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC), on behalf of its affiliate the Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies Group (SeVEDS), and the Bennington Regional Planning Commission (BCRC), and in conjunction with the area's Regional Economic Development Group (RED Group), is seeking proposals from qualified professionals knowledgeable in data analysis, comprehensive planning, and public outreach, to create the 2024 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone (Zone). Throughout this RFP, the Zone comprises the service areas of BDCC and BCRC: all municipalities in Bennington County and Windham County, as well as the Town of Weston in Windsor County.

About BDCC, SeVEDS, BCRC and the RED Group (Partner Organizations):

- BDCC is a private, nonprofit economic development organization that serves as a catalyst for industrial and commercial growth throughout Southeastern Vermont, including Windham County and the Vermont towns of Readsboro, Searsburg, and Weston. BDCC serves as the State of Vermont's certified Regional Development Corporation (RDC) for the greater Windham County area. BDCC is one of 12 RDCs throughout Vermont. For more information visit: <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/>
- Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) is an affiliate of BDCC that grew from a 2008 grassroots effort, initiated by BDCC, to reverse the economic decline of the Windham Region and plan for the economic impacts from the closure of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant. In 2014, after multiple years of regional input, education and data gathering, SeVEDS submitted the Windham Region's federally recognized S.M.A.R.T. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for federal approval. For more information visit: www.seveds.com

- The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) was created by the seventeen towns and villages it serves and works on behalf of those municipalities to build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities, to foster economic prosperity, and to promote a high quality of life for residents of the region. Since early 2016, it has provided the staffing and operational capacity for the Bennington County Industrial Corporation, the certified RDC for southwestern Vermont. For more information visit www.bcrcvt.org
- The Regional Economic Development Group (RED Group) is a volunteer body committed to increasing the shared prosperity and quality of life for the seventeen municipalities in southwestern Vermont. The group has a diverse membership that reflects the varied community, business, workforce, and demographic characteristics of the region. The RED Group focuses on the internal and external economic development issues that affect the Bennington County region as a whole; the regional implications of local economic development issues; the process of regional economic development from local, state, and federal perspectives; and options for future initiatives.

About the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone: The Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone, created by the Vermont General Assembly in 2015, directed organizations devoted to economic development within the Zone to collaborate on broad initiatives addressing shared issues. As a result of this directive, BDCC and BCRC were awarded a planning grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to develop the 2019 CEDS for the Zone. Following the creation and implementation of the CEDS, the organizations have applied for Economic Development District (EDD) designation from the EDA for the Zone. The application for EDD designation is still pending with EDA.

About the CEDS for the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone: The 2019 Zone CEDS is the result of a locally initiated planning process designed to provide a mechanism for directing the efforts of individuals, municipalities and organizations in the Zone concerned with economic development. It is a guide in the continuation of successful economic development projects and fosters the creation of new projects based on analysis of the region's economic situation.

Within the Zone, a number of significant economic development efforts are ongoing: Refugee Resettlement Strategy, Putnam Block Redevelopment, CUD Infrastructure, Southern Vermont Economy Project, COVID and Flood Response, Workforce Center of Excellence, College Transitions, major redevelopment in Brattleboro and Bennington.

The 2024 Zone CEDS will serve as the 5-year update to the 2019 Zone CEDS. The partner organizations begin the 2024 Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone CEDS with all the knowledge and experience gained in the development and implementation of the 2019 Zone CEDS.

A primary focus of the 2024 Zone CEDS will be to identify the best ways that BDCC, SeVEDS, BCRC and the RED Group can add value to the numerous current regional programs. The hired consultant will: work with BDCC and BCRC staff; meet with the SeVEDS and RED Group boards in the preparation and development of the proposed CEDS; provide detailed economic analysis, process management, and provide public meeting facilitation services.

Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone CEDS Goals and Strategies

The completed CEDS will:

- Include data and implementation work from 2019 Zone CEDS.
- Include background and historical information about economic development.
- Generate updated economic data, including a regional assets inventory, to evaluate alongside existing economic data for outlining the economic conditions of the Zone.
- Define regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges concerning economic development.
- Identify the goals and visions for the region through a series of focus groups and regional stakeholder meetings.
- Evaluate and expand on the existing Zone Objectives and Strategies outline.
- Delineate an implementation timeline.
- Determine benchmarks and evaluation measures for determining success of strategies.
- Assess external funding strategies and opportunities for dual and joint implementation.
- Economic Resilience:
 - Planning for and Implementing Resilience
 - Establishing Information Networks
 - Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning
 - Measuring Resilience

Upon completion of the CEDS, all data maps and reports shall be the joint property of BDCC and BCRC.

Proposal Content

BDCC and BCRC employ personnel familiar with CEDS development and data analysis. Consultant services are desired for public meeting facilitation, economic analysis, strategy development, outside perspective, communication and CEDS design and timeline management and coordination in the CEDS development. Responses to this RFP should:

- Include a detailed work plan that addresses the overall timeline and milestones necessary to complete the CEDS development work identified in the RFP;
- Identify specific activities that will be accomplished;
- Identify staffing that will be devoted to each activity; and
- Describe the work product that will be produced.

It should also include the following:

1. A process for communicating with BDCC and BCRC staff;
2. A public involvement plan including facilitation of seven weeks of public meetings, as well as attendance at Draft Plan public meeting and Southern Vermont Economic Development Summit (See schedule);
3. A budget outline;
4. A timeline for status reports, draft report, and hard copy and electronic delivery of draft CEDS document;
5. A minimum of two similar projects completed by consultant; and

6. Reference contact information.

BDCC and BCRC may elect to offer different aspects of the work to different respondents based on the experiences, qualifications and references submitted with the responses.

Evaluation Criteria

Responses to this proposal will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Qualification/experience of prime consultant with studies of similar scope and size.
- Qualification/experience of sub consultants with studies of similar scope and size.
- Demonstrated knowledge of economic development principals and trends, especially in rural communities and New England markets.
- Sufficient staff for all work required in the study.
- Past record of performance on similar projects.
- Proposed cost of the study and demonstration of commitment for meeting the project schedule.
- Completeness and quality of the project submission.

Proposed Schedule

Timeline

- RFP issue date (30 days): January 2, 2024
- Deadline for proposals: February 1, 2024
- Review by RFP Committee (7 days before meeting): February 5, 2024
- Consultant Interviews: Week of February 12, 2024
- Consultant recommendation determined: February 19, 2024
- Consultant Selection approval (CEDS committee/BDCC): February 26, 2024
- Start Date for consultant: March 1, 2024
- Strategy Development and Design: March 15 – May 15, 2024
- Consultant Attend SoVermont Economy Summit: May 21, 2024
- Public Process: June 1 – July 30, 2024
- Public Comment Period: August 1 – September 2, 2024
- Submit to EDA: September 9, 2024
- End Date: January 1, 2025

Contract

The execution of this contract is contingent on funding availability from EDA to BDCC. No contract for services will be executed prior to an EDA Grant award is fully executed. BDCC was notified on November 30, 2023, by EDA that its application for assistance has been selected through EDA’s competitive application review process for further consideration for funding. Subject to availability of funds, the project will be considered for EDA funding under EDA’s FY 2021 – FY 2023 Short Term Planning and Technical Assistance Program Notice of Funding Opportunity.

The total approved budget for contractual services is not to exceed \$74,000 and is inclusive of all travel costs and per diems.

Certification(s) / Contract Requirements (Pass Thru Provisions) – to be fully defined in executed contract

-

BDCC and BCRCs current projects, and the provisions of specific Financial Agreements include requirements that all contracts with Contracted Subordinates, Subcontractors', Agents, and Consultants shall contain such provisions as are appropriate and necessary to meet the requirement as set forth in the agreements. This certification shall accompany all bidding documents, contracts, agreements, and scope of work.

Certification of the following will be required as part of any final contract:

- 1) Contractor is in good standing with respect to, or in full compliance with a plan to pay, any and all federal, state, and local taxes, to the extent Contractor is subject to taxation;
- 2) Contractor is current on, or is in full compliance with a plan to pay, any and all debt financing;
- 3) There are no liens, judgements, or other encumbrances, other than those of record, or disclosed prior to the full execution of the Sub Grant Agreement, Contract, Agreements or Scope of Work;
- 4) Contractor's representations with respect to the financial and operational aspects of the business in written documents previously provided, if any, remain accurate and not misleading;
- 5) Contractor certifies, as of the date of execution of its Sub Grant Agreement, Contract, Agreement or Scope of Work, the Contractor is not listed in the Exclusions portion of Performance Information in the System for Award Management ("SAM") at www.sam.gov ; nor named on the State's debarment list at: <http://bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing/debarment>; and
- 6) Contractor, and all of its contracted subordinates, subcontractors, agents, consultants shall comply with Section 3 requirements in accordance with 24 CFR 135 to provide economic opportunities in connection with this Project, to the greatest extent feasible, to low and very low-income persons residing within the area in which the Project is located and to Section 3 businesses. Section 3 requirements shall be included in bid documents:<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/24-Cfr-Part-135-Section-3-Regulations.pdf>

Additionally, the following provisions shall be included in all contracts related to a project, and shall be binding for the duration of said project:

RETENTION OF RECORDS: The Contractor shall maintain those books, records, and other documents, including but not limited to payroll records, accounting records, and purchase orders that are sufficient to document that activities carried out were in accordance with the contract, and any other applicable laws and regulations. Such records shall contain all information pertaining to grant awards, authorizations, obligations, unobligated balances, assets, liabilities, outlays, and income. Such records are to be maintained for a period of seven (7) years from the date of expiration of the contract, or if such records become the subject of audit findings, they shall be retained until such findings have been resolved, whichever is later.

ACCESS TO RECORDS: All books, accounts, records, reports, files, and other papers, things, or property, that relate to its activities under this contract shall be made available at all reasonable times for inspection, review, and audit by the BDCC or their authorized representatives.

NON-DISCRIMINATION: The Contractor shall adhere to the requirements set forth in the following statutory provisions:

Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d et seq.) and DOC implementing regulations published at 15 C.F.R. Part 8 prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin under programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance;

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §§ 1681 et seq.) prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex under federally assisted education programs or activities;

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 et seq.) prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability under programs, activities, and services provided or made available by state and local governments or instrumentalities or agencies thereto, as well as public or private entities that provide public transportation;

The Age Discrimination Act of 1976, as amended (42 U.S.C. §§ 6101 et seq.), and DOC implementing regulations published at 15 C.F.R. Part 20 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance; and

Any other applicable non-discrimination law(s).

The Contractor shall not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. The Contractor shall take affirmative action to insure that applicants for employment are employed, and employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. Such action shall include, but not be limited to, the following: employment, upgrading, demotion, or transfer; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship. The Contractor shall post in conspicuous places, available to employees and applicants for employment, notices setting forth the provisions of this non-discrimination clause. The Contractor shall state that all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin.

PROCUREMENT STANDARDS: The Contractor shall adhere to relevant regulations, procedures and guidelines with respect to standards governing procurement, and any applicable provisions of State laws and regulations relative thereto, including but not limited to 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.318 (General procurement standards) through 200.326 (Contract provisions). This includes the requirement that non-Federal entities maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the performance of their employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.

All procurement transactions without regard to dollar value shall be conducted in a manner that provides maximum free and open competition. It is national and state policy that the recipient takes affirmative

steps to award a fair share of contracts taken to assure that small and minority businesses are utilized when possible as sources of supplies, equipment, construction, and services. The Contractor shall maintain records sufficient to detail the process for procurement.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: The Contractor shall adhere to the mandates of the State laws and regulations relative thereto, and the federal Conflict of Interest Provisions at 24 CFR 570.489 and the federal Hatch Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 1501 et seq.

CERTIFICATION OF DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE: The Contractor certifies that it has implemented an appropriate policy in accordance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, 45 CFR Part 76, Subpart F.

CERTIFICATION AGAINST LOBBYING: The Contractor certifies, to the best of its knowledge and belief that it is in compliance with Title 31USC1352, entitled *Limitation on Use of Appropriated Funds to Influence Certain Federal Contracting and Financial Transactions*, and that:

- (1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of all Grantees, Sub-Grantees, contracted subordinates, subcontractors, agents, and consultants, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.
- (2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, VE shall complete and submit Standard Form – LLL, *Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying*, in accordance with its instruction.
- (3) The Contractor shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all sub awards at all tiers and that all sub recipients shall certify and disclose accordingly.

SUBRECIPIENT PROVISIONS: The Contractor shall require all sub-contractors, including lower tier sub-contractors, under the Grant Award to comply with the provisions of the award, including applicable provisions of the OMB Uniform Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 200), and all associated terms and conditions.

Responses

Please submit proposals in a pdf format, 1 file only, (1 file) to the email addresses provided below. Materials and documents submitted in response to this RFP become the property of BDCC and BCRC and will not be returned to the bidder.

Responses must be emailed to:
Executive Director
executivedirector@brattleborodevelopment.com

Cc to:
Director of Finance & Grant Management

bkilburn@brattleborodevelopment.com

Inquiries may be directed in email form to:

Director of Finance & Grant Management

bkilburn@brattleborodevelopment.com

Any additional clarifications and materials provided to respondents will be posted at -

www.vermontzone/ceds.com