

Jefferson County Development Authority
Request for Proposals

Rural Economy Development Business Strategy

Acceptance Date: Prior to 5:00 pm (EST) on February 16, 2024

RFP Number: RFP-2024-01

Acceptance Place: Jefferson County Development Authority
1948 Wiltshire Road, Suite #4
Kearneysville, WV 25430
Attention: Edwina Benites-LM, executive director

Or: ebenites@jcda.net

Issue date: January 16, 2024

Please note:

Proposals may be mailed or emailed but must be received by the acceptance date. Please direct any questions to Edwina Benites-LM, executive director, at ebenites@jcda.net.

Overview:

The Jefferson County Development Authority (“JCDA”) seeks proposals from qualified firms to assist in developing a written, long-term rural economic development vision, policy, and strategic plan for implementation at the JCDA.

Project overview:

Jefferson County is rapidly developing, resulting in the loss of agriculturally productive land, rapidly increasing rezoning of agricultural land into residential developments, and significant reductions in agrarian-based businesses. The JCDA seeks a policy and strategy to preserve and assist farm-based businesses.

Background:

The JCDA is the Jefferson County, WV, lead entity for economic development. The JCDA is committed to fostering strong and diverse economic sectors. As farmland leaves agricultural use for residential neighborhoods, there are reductions in farm-based businesses. According to USDA data, the number of farms in Jefferson County has increased since 1987, while the average size of farms has decreased. In 1987, 363 farms comprised an average of 229 acres each, while in 2017 607 farms averaged 109 acres each. The total percentage of farmland in Jefferson County has also decreased, from above 80% in 1987 to just below 50% in 2017. The average age of a farmer has also increased to 57.5 years in Jefferson County.

In 2023, the JCDA has been active in research, policy, attraction visits, local development, and State policy review regarding vineyards, wineries, distilleries, and craft beverages; meat processing; and a locally grown and made marketing campaign.

Respondents:

Respondents include businesses, institutions of higher education, nonprofits, and individuals with appropriate experience.

Scope of Work:**Task 1: Economic analysis**

Jefferson County’s rural economic development strategy will include a summary of economic conditions present in the County and a comprehensive Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis.

Respondents should be prepared to complete a deep and targeted analysis of Jefferson County's rural economic industries informed by research, data analytics, and stakeholder engagement. These should include analyses of Jefferson County's economic competitiveness, business climate, regional reputation and location, and economic development resources currently available and should leverage past reports including the JCDA's strategic plan, the County's comprehensive plan, and others.

Key partners in this work include West Virginia University Extension and the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board.

Task 2: Stakeholder engagement

Respondents should be prepared to complete a thorough public engagement process, including public feedback forums, and online feedback. Additionally, respondents shall convene and facilitate a strategic advisory committee to provide recommendations and strategic oversight of the rural economic development strategy planning process and final report.

Task 3: Synthesis and writing

Respondents should be prepared to develop and draft a high-quality written plan. This plan should present the analysis done, conclusions drawn, and specific policy and initiative suggestions to drive rural economic growth. This plan should draw on economic growth opportunities and provide a detailed roadmap for implementation.

Topics respondent(s) should be prepared to cover include but are not limited to:

- Jefferson County's assets and strengths in rural development;
- Entrepreneurship and innovation, including pathways and methods to evolve an advanced economy;
- National models for key economic development policies, including legal and regulatory changes to encourage vineyards and wineries, legal and regulatory changes to foster meat processing, and other legal and regulatory changes for the economic viability of farmland preservation;
- Workforce development and skills training for rural economic development;
- Review of the political climate for applicability of proposed policies and initiatives;

All set forth herein must be **completed by December 31, 2024**.

Qualifications:

Respondent(s) should have strong abilities in the following areas:

- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of economic trends;

- Strategic analysis and planning;
- Conducting interviews and workshops with various stakeholders;
- Presenting complex data findings in a simple-to-understand and visually compelling method;

Project Timeline

The JCDA is expected to begin work related to the RFP in the spring of 2024, with a first draft of the rural development plan suitable for public release in the summer of 2024. The plan should be completed in the fall of 2024.

The successful respondent will enter into a contract for services with the JCDA.

Budget:

Respondents to this RFP shall provide a proposed fee structure for providing services necessary to complete the proposed scope items. Respondents shall include a total, maximum price to accomplish the scope items incorporated in the proposal. Fee structure proposals shall include but are not limited to costs for specific task items from the Scope of Work along with an estimate regarding the duration and number of hours to complete each task. Additionally, respondents shall provide a personnel schedule which includes job title and billing rate for any work that may be undertaken under this contract. Respondents will also provide job titles and rates for any subcontractors that the respondent includes in this response. If the respondent contemplates any purchases or pass-through changes during the engagement, any mark-up rate above actual costs shall be identified as a separate line item in the budget. The JCDA reserves the right to adjust both the budget and related services.

Proposal Requirements

Respondents should provide the following:

Technical Proposal Elements

1. Description of the proposed approach and work plan. Activities and timelines should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-oriented. Include a timeline of major tasks and milestones.
2. Explanation of any/ all analytic tools or services that the respondent plans to use in developing the rural development strategy including how the tools will be used to support the proposed approach and work plan. Detail on whether the tools or services will require additional purchase or licensure at the expense of the JCDA.
3. Please include who will be the respondent's point of contact.
4. Qualifications of the respondent to provide the requested services including capability, capacity, similar complex projects, related experience, and two client references.

5. A listing of the staff to be assigned to this engagement and their respective qualifications, experience on engagements of this scope, and their role in those past engagements. Please include the resumes of all staff to be assigned to this project.
6. A description of the outcome monitoring and evaluation plan including a list of tools to track progress, output, and outcome measures for each component of the application.
7. A cost estimate for work to be completed, inclusive of travel costs expected to incur during the contract period. Travel and per diem expenses shall not exceed rates authorized by the Jefferson County Travel Policy.

Criteria for Selection

Proposals for this RFP will be evaluated according to the Evaluation Criteria outlined below.

EVALUATION CRITERIA	Points
<p>Overall experience of the company and demonstrated results Evaluation will include an assessment of the history of the respondent, the respondent’s experience as it relates to the requirements within the RFP, evidence of past performance, quality and relevance of past work, references, and related items.</p>	35
<p>Qualifications of personnel Evaluation will include an assessment of the qualifications and experience of the respondent’s managerial team, staff, subcontractors, and related items.</p>	20
<p>Familiarity with Jefferson County rural economic drivers Evaluation will include an assessment of the respondent’s understanding of the Jefferson County Development Authority, Jefferson County’s rural economic drivers, and how the respondent will integrate this knowledge into the final rural economic development strategy.</p>	15
<p>Strategic thinking/ planning approach Evaluation will include an assessment of the overall approach and strategy described/ outlined in the proposal and the respondent’s capacity to perform the engagement within the specified timeframe-- prior experience of the firm in meeting timelines will be a consideration.</p>	10
<p>Ability to execute proposed approach Evaluation will include an assessment of the respondent’s capacity to perform the engagement as well as the respondent’s experience working with development authorities, federal economic and community development programs, the State of West Virginia, Extension programs, and Farmland Protection programs.</p>	10
<p>Budget approach/ cost effectiveness Evaluation will include an assessment of the proposal’s demonstration of effective and efficient delivery of quality services.</p>	10
Total	100

Note: JCDA staff and selected advisors will evaluate the written proposals. JCDA may seek clarification from RFP respondents. Final scores for each respondent will reflect a consensus of evaluations.

Sample Documents

The following documents are examples of the type of work to be completed through this RFP.

Monroe-Union County Economic Development Corporation Work Plan

<http://developunion.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MUCEDC-Work-Plan-2015-18-FINAL.pdf>

St. Mary's County Economic Development Strategic Plan

<https://www.yesstmarysmd.com/docs/Strategic%20Plan%20to%20Build%20a%20Innovation%20Driven%20Economy%20Final%20Report.pdf>

Economic Development Strategy for Frederick County, Maryland

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m8UT3t_BXEJO9ci8QgBwUWZwbkX5cMeJ/view?usp=drive_link

The Long View, A Business Development Plan for Loudoun County's Rural Economy

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uW6IEBmiAv8M10MXWrdRhfk4N0Iyr0Nr/view?usp=drive_link

Loudoun County's Rural Economic Business Development Strategy Update - 2021

https://biz.loudoun.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/REBDS_Update_FNL_for_web.pdf