



## Request for Qualifications (RFQ) - Rural Development & Strategic Planning for South Carolina

### SECTION 1: GENERAL SCOPE

The South Carolina Department of Commerce is seeking qualified strategic planning and community development consultants to collaborate with the South Carolina Department of Commerce's Rural Development Program. This collaboration aims to guide rural development and strategic planning for various communities in South Carolina.

#### Project Overview

The South Carolina Department of Commerce is embarking on a transformative Rural Planning Initiative as part of its Rural Development Program. This initiative aims to address the unique challenges faced by rural communities across the state of South Carolina and explore strategies to enhance both the quality of life and economic growth within these regions. To achieve this, the Department will collaborate with experienced strategic planning and community development consultants who will play a pivotal role in evaluating the effectiveness of various strategies. The consultants will delve into key areas such as housing, transportation, culture, art and history, community services, business recruitment, entertainment, asset inventory, public safety, land use, zoning, infrastructure, parks and recreation, and tourism. Through a comprehensive and inclusive approach, this initiative seeks to foster sustainable development, empower local communities, and create a roadmap for a vibrant and prosperous rural South Carolina.

### SECTION 2: SPECIFICATIONS

#### Scope of Work

The selected consultant(s) will be responsible for a comprehensive range of duties and responsibilities aimed at guiding rural development and strategic planning for multiple communities in South Carolina. The consultant will be required to collaborate closely with stakeholders, conduct thorough research, and engage in an inclusive public participation process to ensure that the resulting strategic plan reflects the aspirations and priorities of the communities involved. The deliverables will include a public draft document of the strategic plan, feedback mechanisms, and a final draft document, with presentations at public hearings and council meetings to communicate and gather input throughout the process.

The Scope of Work includes, but is not limited to, the following areas:

1. **Housing:** Evaluate and provide recommendations for housing initiatives to address the diverse housing needs of the communities, ensuring inclusivity and affordability.
2. **Transportation:** Examine and propose transportation solutions that enhance connectivity and accessibility within and around the communities.
3. **Culture, Art, and History:** Preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage, art, and history of the communities through innovative strategies and initiatives.
4. **Community Services:** Identify gaps and opportunities in community services, proposing improvements to enhance the overall well-being of residents.

5. **Business Recruitment:** Develop strategies to attract and support businesses that align with the economic goals and unique characteristics of each community.
6. **Entertainment:** Enhance community life through recommendations for entertainment options and cultural events that celebrate the diversity of the communities.
7. **Asset Inventory:** Conduct a comprehensive inventory of community assets, both tangible and intangible, to inform planning decisions and identify strengths and opportunities.
8. **Public Safety:** Evaluate and propose strategies to enhance public safety, working collaboratively with local law enforcement and emergency services.
9. **Land Use and Zoning:** Develop land use and zoning recommendations that align with the Master Plan and promote responsible and sustainable development.
10. **Infrastructure:** Assess and propose improvements to infrastructure, including utilities, roads, and public facilities, to support the evolving needs of the communities.
11. **Tourism:** Identify and promote tourism opportunities that showcase the unique features and attractions of each community.
12. **Parks and Recreation:** Enhance recreational opportunities by recommending improvements to parks and recreational facilities, fostering community engagement and well-being.

#### **1. Desired Deliverables:**

The selected consultant will be responsible for the following deliverables:

1. Executive Summary
2. Vision Statement
3. Identification of Priority Investment Areas
4. Overview of Public Input (with priority scoring)
5. Conceptual Renderings
6. Implementation Strategies
7. Cost Estimates

#### **Progress Updates:**

Provide a monthly progress update via email, phone, video conference, or in person to SC DOC Rural Development Manager, Gilleon Frieson for the duration of the contract.

#### **Considerations and Limitations:**

By acknowledging and addressing these considerations and limitations, consultants can demonstrate their commitment to conducting the Rural Planning Initiative in a transparent, ethical, and legally compliant manner:

1. **Adherence to State Procurement Policies and Statutes:** The selected consultant must strictly adhere to all applicable state procurement policies and statutes governing the execution

of this project. This includes compliance with procurement procedures, ethical standards, and any legal requirements specified by the South Carolina Department of Commerce.

2. **Budget Constraints:** The project budget is finite, and consultants are expected to submit qualifications that align with the allocated financial resources. Any proposed adjustments or variations from the budget must be clearly justified and pre-approved by the relevant authorities.
3. **Collaboration with Stakeholders:** Successful execution of the project requires active collaboration with local communities, government entities, and other stakeholders. The consultant must engage in transparent and inclusive communication throughout the planning process, seeking input and feedback to ensure the Master Plan reflects the needs and aspirations of the communities involved.
4. **Timeliness and Project Milestones:** Adherence to project timelines is critical. The selected consultant is expected to meet all milestones as outlined in the project timeline. Any potential delays must be communicated promptly, along with a proposed mitigation plan.
5. **Confidentiality and Data Security:** Consultants are expected to handle all project-related information with the utmost confidentiality. Any sensitive data collected during the planning process must be securely stored and used only for project-related purposes.
6. **Ethical Conduct:** The consultant is expected to uphold the highest standards of professional ethics throughout the duration of the project. This includes avoiding conflicts of interest, maintaining objectivity, and ensuring fairness in all dealings related to the Rural Planning Initiative.
7. **Quality of Work:** Deliverables must meet high-quality standards, demonstrating a thorough understanding of urban planning and community design principles. The consultant must strive for excellence in all aspects of the strategic plan, from research and analysis to final presentation.
8. **Regulatory Compliance:** The selected consultant is responsible for ensuring compliance with all relevant federal, state, and local regulations. This includes but is not limited to environmental regulations, zoning laws, and any other legal requirements that may impact the planning process.
9. **Public Relations and Communication:** Consultants should maintain positive and professional relations with the public, media, and all stakeholders. Clear and effective communication is crucial in conveying project updates, milestones, and outcomes to the broader community.
10. **Ownership of Deliverables:** The South Carolina Department of Commerce retains ownership of all project deliverables. Consultants must provide the Department with copies of all documents, data, and plans generated during the project, allowing for future reference and use as needed.

### **SECTION 3: SUBMITTAL INFORMATION**

#### **Statement of Qualifications**

Interested consultants are invited to submit their qualifications for consideration. Submissions Submittal shall include, at a minimum, information required in the solicitation, responses to all selection criteria required by the SC Consolidated Procurement Code (found in Chapter 4 of the OSE Manual) and the following:

Submissions should clearly demonstrate the consultant's expertise in strategic planning, community development, and successful experience with similar rural development projects. Interested consultants should site experience in the aforementioned key areas in the Project Overview. Projects may include multiple key areas for one community, not to exceed five (5) key areas. By addressing each of these criteria comprehensively, your submission will enable a thorough evaluation of your qualifications and

position your firm as a strong candidate for collaboration in the South Carolina Department of Commerce's Rural Planning Initiative. All statements of qualifications must include, but are not limited to the following evaluation criteria:

1. **Title Sheet:** Provide a title sheet containing the company name and primary contact information. Clearly present your firm's identity and ensure easy access to key contact details for efficient communication.
2. **Cover Letter:** Include a comprehensive cover letter outlining the composition of the project team members. Clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of each team member, demonstrating a thoughtful approach to assembling a team with diverse skills and expertise necessary for successful project execution.
3. **Table of Contents:** Present a detailed table of contents for the submission, ensuring that the content is organized in a logical and easily navigable manner. This will facilitate the evaluation process and enable efficient access to specific sections of interest.
4. **Company Background Information:** Provide a thorough overview of your company's background, highlighting its mission, vision, and values. Include key achievements, recognitions, and any unique attributes that distinguish your firm in the field of strategic planning and community development.
5. **Team Philosophy:** Articulate the philosophy that guides your project team. Clearly communicate the values and principles that underpin your approach to strategic planning and community development. Emphasize your commitment to collaboration, community engagement, and sustainable development.
6. **Relevant Experience:** Showcase your firm's relevant experience in rural development and strategic planning projects. Provide detailed summaries of past projects, emphasizing the successful outcomes and lessons learned. Highlight specific achievements that align with the objectives of this initiative.
7. **Qualification of Team Members:** Present the qualifications and expertise of each team member involved in the project. Include resumes and profiles detailing relevant experience, skills, and certifications. Clearly demonstrate how the collective skills of the team contribute to the successful execution of the proposed Scope of Work.
8. **Professional References:** Include professional references from previous clients or partners who can speak to the quality of your work and collaboration. Provide contact information for these references to facilitate verification of your firm's capabilities and reliability.

**INTERESTED FIRMS SHOULD ALSO SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING:**

1. A Current STANDARD FEDERAL FORM 330;
2. The Name and Contact Information, including email, of a Primary Contact;
3. A Certification stating whether the Firm is a Resident of South Carolina (See SC Code §11-35-3215); and
4. Response to Selection Criteria set forth in SC Code §11-35-3220, as amended.

#### **SECTION 4: PRE-SUBMITTAL CONFERENCE**

The State will conduct a Non-Mandatory Pre-Submittal conference as part of this process to provide additional project information and expound upon potential questions. This conference will be held on Monday, April 22, 2024, at 10:00 AM via video conference. Although attendance is not mandatory, all interested firms are strongly encouraged to attend. Firms interested must contact Clarissa Belton at [cbelton@sccommerce.com](mailto:cbelton@sccommerce.com) to receive an invitation to the meeting.

Any questions regarding this project must be submitted in writing (email) no later than 4:00 PM on Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup>. Questions should be emailed to the Agency Coordinator, Clarissa Belton. All submitted questions will be addressed at the Pre-Submittal conference.

Deadline for submissions is 3:00 p.m. Monday, May 6, 2024. The solicitation is also posted on [South Carolina Business Opportunities \(SCBO\)](#) under project number P32-P003-SG.