



## **Request for Proposals**

**For**

**Richland County Economic Diversification Strategy and new  
and revised Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

**Issued by:  
Richland Economic Development Corp**

**Issued  
September 3, 2024**

**Request For Proposals  
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**Section 1: General Information**

**Request For Proposals (RFP) – Richland County Economic Diversification Strategy & CEDS**

THE ABOVE DESCRIPTION MUST APPEAR ON ALL PROPOSALS AND RELATED CORRESPONDENCE.

**THIS IS NOT AN ORDER**

<p>RFP INITIATIVE:</p> <p><b>Richland County Economic Diversification Strategy &amp; CEDS</b></p>	<p>All consultants must respond in detail to each element of this RFP in order to be considered for contract award.</p> <p><b>Six copies of the proposal should be mailed to the contact person at the address below with the budget in a separate sealed envelope.</b></p>
<p><b>SUBMITTAL DEADLINE:</b></p> <p><b>Monday, September 30, 2024</b></p> <p><b>5:00 PM MT</b></p>	<p><b>SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE CONTACT BELOW:</b></p> <p>Leslie Messer Richland Economic Development Corp 609 S Central Ave, Sidney, MT 59270</p> <p><a href="mailto:lmredc@midrivers.com">lmredc@midrivers.com</a></p> <p>406-482-4679</p>

## **Section 2: Introductions and Objectives**

### Introduction

This RFP is issued by Richland Economic Development Corp (REDC) for the purpose of developing an Economic Diversification Strategy & Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Richland County, MT, to address potential changes in the coal, power generation, and Ag processing economy.

The proposed project is to prepare two planning documents that will assist REDC in developing an economic diversification strategy and CEDS in efforts of diversifying and stabilizing the economy of Richland County and the surrounding area that has been dependent on coal mining, power generation, and Ag processing.

### Objectives

It is the intent of the Entity to review and assess the RFP responses to determine if the response from solicited consultants can meet the needs of the proposed Scope of Work.

The proposed objective is to prepare two planning documents that will assist REDC in developing an economic diversification strategy and CEDS in efforts of diversifying and stabilizing the economy of Richland County and the surrounding area that has been dependent on coal mining, power generation, and Ag processing.

It is our intent to select a qualified contractor (s) through an open and competitive bid process who will provide assistance in achieving the project objectives.

Consultants are expected to provide their best and most competitive proposal.

### RFP Submission

Upon the submission of the RFP response, the consultant acknowledges that all information is accurate and complete. In addition, please send six (6) hard copies via mail to the point of contact listed in Section I.

### RFP Process Timeline

### Dates

Issue RFP:	September 3, 2024
Advertise:	September 4, 7, 11, 14, & 21, 2024
Proposals due by 5:00PM:	September 30, 2024
Evaluate and choose:	October 4, 2024
Proposed start date:	October 14, 2024
Final Report Due:	March 31, 2025

## **Section 3: Scope of Work:**

### **Scope of Work:**

#### **1.) Develop Economic Diversification Strategy & CEDS**

- A.** The Consultant(s) will identify an agenda for the reports that outlines all of the items necessary to complete the strategy and CEDS:

- a. **Community Participation:** Facilitate public meetings and focus groups, particularly including key stakeholders, such as property owners, residents, real estate developers, and other interested groups and individuals, in order to formulate key recommendations on development options and ensure community support for plan adoption.
- b. **Data Gathering:** Utilizing tools found at [www.eda.gov/tools/](http://www.eda.gov/tools/), establish baseline demographics, economic data, workforce information, resource identification, disaster assessments and reference point (benchmark) data for comparisons, outcome projections and project performance evaluation.
- c. **Analysis of Local Economy:** Analyze economic development problems and opportunities, identify strengths and weaknesses in the regional makeup of human, infrastructure, and economic assets, and determine problems and opportunities posed by external and internal forces affecting the regional economy.
- d. **Analysis of Local Workforce:** Identify existing workforce skills and deficiencies with regard to the skills potential employers would require. Analyze training opportunities provided by local institutions of higher learning. Identify means of financing training programs.
- e. **Inventory of Local Economic Development Tools:** Consider and inventory existing plans and planning processes in the region. The analysis may incorporate relevant material from other government supported plans. It should also demonstrate consistency with applicable state and local strategies, identify past, present and projected economic development in the region, and identify and analyze economic clusters in the region.
- f. **Development Areas:** Determine those areas that are critical to cluster formation and development that could benefit substantially from the formation of development areas. Create a plan outlining the type of area needed and the steps to create those areas, including suggested realignment or adjustment to existing development area boundaries when applicable.
- g. **Cluster Identification:** Analyze Location Quotients for regional industries and consider local conditions to identify potential industry clusters for local economic diversification. Specifically, make use of the Innovation in America Regions and Cluster Mapping Tools at [www.statsamerica.org/Innovation](http://www.statsamerica.org/Innovation), and [www.clustermapping.us/home/](http://www.clustermapping.us/home/).
- h. **Recruitment Capability:** Evaluate latent resources, identify regional capacity, and determine site acreage and development requirements for accommodating basic sector economy businesses to relocate or expand. Determine the minimum infrastructure investment requirements needed to catalyze immediate private investment and job creation within the next eighteen months. Ensure that recruiting bolsters and accentuates the natural beauty of Richland County and promotes healthy outdoor lifestyles for potential employees.
- i. **Goals and Objectives:** Determine goals and objectives necessary to establish and/or enliven each economic cluster identified for the region. Identify barriers to meeting these goals and establish priority programs or activities to fulfill these goals and objectives.
- j. **Prioritization of Goals:** Prioritization of goals may include the impact each goal will have on the economic development potential in the area, whether the goal will produce short, intermediate or long-term results, actions related to the goal that are

already underway or planned, and the relationship of any goal to the accomplishments of the other goals.

- k. **Implementation Plan:** Describe a plan of action that implements the goals and objectives in a manner that promotes economic development and opportunity, enhances and protects the environment, maximizes effective development, uses the workforce consistent with other strategies, promotes the use of technology, balances resources, and obtains and utilizes adequate funds and other resources.
- l. **Performance/Evaluation:** Determine processes for ongoing evaluation of the outcomes of the report that may include number of jobs created, number and type of investment undertaken, number of jobs retained in the region, amount of private sector investment, and changes in the economic environment. Also recommend timeframes and methodologies for updating the report.
- m. **Final Reports:** An electronic copy containing the final report in a Searchable Image Adobe Acrobat (pdf) format will be provided to REDC.

**Performance Measurement:** The issuing Entity will assess the Contractor's performance and progress towards expected results. Assessments and program monitoring will be based on:

- 1.) Monthly progress review meetings/conference calls between REDC and Contractor's team.
- 2.) Feedback from partnering local, state, and federal agencies.
- 3.) Progress towards final report and development of strategies.

The monthly progress review meetings may serve as checkpoints for making overall and strategic adjustments in implementation by analyzing the data, determining gaps, and identifying benchmarks or milestones reached as defined in the proposal and approved Scope of Work.

The proposed Scope of Work will assist Richland County and the surrounding region in an effort to develop a plan to move toward diversifying the existing economy.

**Personnel** – The Contractor will assemble a team with the required knowledge and experience in order to deliver the scope of work and meet the project objectives. The structure of the team and an organizational chart shall be included in the proposal with the name, position and resumes of proposed personnel. The contractor shall identify who will be considered key personnel.

**Performance Monitoring** – The contractor's performance shall be evaluated based on the completion of specific tasks outlined in the Scope of Work, adherence to the work plan, and reports submitted to a designated REDC representative.

### **Deliverables, Budget and Completion**

- A. The project objective is to:
  - Develop an Economic Diversification Strategy & CEDS for Richland County, MT
- B. Deliverables:
  - Monthly Progress Reports
  - Six copies of the final Strategy that fulfills the project objectives.
  - One electronic data submission of the final Economic Diversification Strategy & CEDS
- C. Budget
  - \$138,000
- D. Completion Date
  - March 31, 2025

## **Section 4: RFP Evaluation and Selection Processes**

### Initial Evaluation

Proposals received will undergo an initial review to determine:

- Compliance with instructions stated in the RFP
- Compliance with proposal submittal date

### Phase II Evaluation

The evaluation of consultant's proposals may include, but is not limited to, the following criteria:

- Consultant's experience with developing similar strategies.
- Capacity to assume new business.
- Perceived ability to meet the issuing Entities' requirements.
- Availability (timetable) for providing goods and/or services.
- Breadth of services available
- Reporting capability (i.e. monthly or weekly written or oral reports)
- Training and professional development history
- Compliance with the issuing Entities' terms and conditions

### Evaluation Criteria

The Proposals being requested will be scored on the following criteria:

Qualifications and ability to perform requested services (50 points total):	
A. Experience with developing Economic Diversification Strategies & CEDS	20 points
B. Location as it relates to provision of services to the Entity	15 points
C. Firm/personnel qualifications	10 points
D. References from other communities	5 points
Execution of the scope of work (50 points total):	
A. Description of proposed work plans	20 points
B. Description of public outreach process	10 points
C. Process timeline	10 points
D. Deliverables, budget, and completion schedule	<u>10 points</u>
	100 points

## **Section 5: Information for Consultants**

### Disclaimer

This RFP does not form or constitute a contractual document. The Entity issuing this RFP shall not be liable for any loss, expense, damage, or claim arising out of the advice given or not given or statements made or omitted to be made in connection with this RFP. The Entity also will not be responsible for any expenses which may be incurred in the preparation of this RFP.

### Instructions to Proposers

#### EXAMINATION OF DOCUMENTS

Before submitting the proposals, the proposer shall:

- (a) Carefully review the terms of this request as well as the attachments.
- (b) Fully inform yourself of the existing conditions and limitations.
- (c) Include in the proposal sufficient information to cover all items required in the specifications.

#### PROPOSAL MODIFICATIONS

In addition to any other information and documentation requested in this RFP, any forms provided herein shall be included in the submitted proposal. Modifications, additions or changes to the terms and conditions of this request for proposals may be cause for rejection of the proposal. Proposals submitted without required forms may be rejected. No oral, telephone, email, fax or telegraphic proposals or modifications will be considered.

#### CERTIFICATION OF ALTERATION OR ERASURE

A proposal shall be rejected should it contain any material alteration or erasure, unless, before the proposal is submitted each such alteration or erasure has been initialed in INK by the authorized agent signing the proposal.

#### SIGNATURE

All proposals shall be typewritten or prepared in ink and must be signed in longhand by the proposer or proposer's agent or designee, with his/her usual signature. A proposal submitted by a partnership must be signed with the partnership name to be followed by the signature and designation of the partner signing. Proposals by corporations must be signed with the legal name of the corporation, followed by the name and signature of an authorized agent or officer of the corporation. Proposals submitted by a proprietorship must be signed by the owner and the name of each person signing shall be typed or printed legibly below the signature.

#### WITHDRAWAL OF PROPOSALS

Proposers may withdraw their proposal either personally or by written request at any time prior to the due date set for receiving proposals. No proposal may be withdrawn or modified after the due date and time, unless and until the award of the contract is delayed for a period exceeding ninety (90) days.



### QUOTE VALID

The proposer must honor their quote for a period of ninety (90) days after the RFP due date.

### CERTIFICATION

The proposer certifies that the proposal has been arrived at independently and has been submitted without any collusion designed to limit competition. The proposer further certifies that the materials, products, services and/or goods offered herein meet all requirements of the stated specifications and are equal in quality, value and performance with highest quality, nationally advertised brand and/or trade names.

### INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

The proposer certifies that it/they can comply with REDC's minimum insurance requirements of workers' compensation and employer's liability coverage as required by Montana law, including:

1. Commercial general liability, including contractual and personal injury coverage in the amount of \$1,000,000 per occurrence.
2. Professional liability in the amount of \$1,000,000 per claim.

### DISPOSITION OF PROPOSALS

All materials submitted in response to this RFP become the property of the issuing Entity. One copy of each proposal submitted shall be retained for the official file of the entity and will become public record after award of the Contract. Price proposals submitted, but not reviewed by the Entity, do not become a public record and shall only be retained for official files.

### QUESTIONS

Questions regarding the Request for Proposals contents may be sent to the contact person(s) listed in Section 1 via email no later than two business days prior to the due date for proposals. The issuing Entity will make every effort to provide a written response within two business days. Whenever responses to inquiries would constitute a modification or addition to the original RFP, the reply will be made in the form of an addendum to the Request for Proposals, a copy of which will be forwarded to all Consultants who have submitted an "Intent to Respond" form (Attachment F).

Consultants must submit their questions using the "Master Q & A" form found in **Attachment E**, and provide, at a minimum, the following:

- Supplier's name, requester, and appropriate contact information
- The question, clearly stated
- Specific reference to the applicable Request for Proposals section(s)

## ATTACHMENT A

### VALIDATION QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTANT

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

- 1) Company Name  
Address:  
Contact Name:  
Contact Phone:  
Contact Email:  
Website/URL:
- 2) How many years has your company been doing business in the community and economic development planning field?
- 3) Total full-time employees.
- 4) What are your standard payment terms?
- 5) References - Please attach a word document with all contact information for at least three references:
  - a) Clients you have worked for in the last three years and/or
  - b) Former clients where you've conducted community planning services for in the last two years.
- 6) Can you provide documentation that your firm can meet the issuing Entity's minimum insurance requirements?

#### FUNCTIONALITY

- 1) A certificate of insurance must be provided prior to signing the contract, commencing on the day the contract begins. Are you willing to comply with these requirements?
- 2) You must instruct your insurance broker/carrier to notify the issuing Entity should your coverage change. Are you willing to do this?

#### QUALITY AND SERVICE

- 1) Do you have a quality assurance program? If yes, please attach a copy.
- 2) Are your employees required to take a mandatory drug test?

#### LEGAL ISSUES

- 1) Are there any pending lawsuits against your company? If yes, please explain.

## **ATTACHMENT B**

### **STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

In case of default by the successful proposer or failure to deliver the goods or services within the time specified, the issuing Entity, after written notice, may procure them from other sources and hold contractor responsible for excess costs occasioned thereby.

The specifications attached to the instructions to proposers establish a standard of quality desired by the issuing Entity. Any proposer may submit quotations on any article-which substantially complies with these specifications as to quality, workmanship, and service. The issuing Entity reserves the right to make its selections of materials or services purchased, based on its best judgment as to which articles substantially comply with the requirements of the specifications.

No alteration in any of the terms, conditions, delivery, quality, or specifications will be effective without prior written consent of the issuing Entity.

No exception to delivery or service dates shall be allowed unless prior written approval is first obtained from the issuing Entity.

The contractor warrants all articles supplied under this contract to conform to specifications herein. The contractor will deliver a warranty stating that all articles supplied under the contract are fit and sufficient for the purpose manufactured, merchantable, and free from defects.

The contractor agrees not to be discriminate against any client, employee, or applicant for employment or for services, because of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, or age with regard to, but not limited to, the following: employment upgrading; demotion or transfer; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoffs and termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; selection for training; rendition of services. It is further understood that any contractor who is in violation of this shall be barred forthwith from receiving awards of any contracts for the issuing Entity unless a satisfactory showing is made that discriminatory practices have terminated and that a reoccurrence of such acts are unlikely.

The issuing Entity reserves the right to cancel and terminate this contract forthwith upon giving 10 days written notice to the contractor. (This provision does not apply to the purchase of materials and equipment. A purchase order for materials and equipment is a binding contract.)

Should either party employ an attorney or attorneys or utilize the services of in-house attorneys to enforce any of the provisions hereof or to protect its interest in any manner arising under this contract, the non-prevailing party in any action pursued in a court of competent jurisdiction agrees to pay to the prevailing party all reasonable costs, damages, expenses, and attorneys' fees, including fees for in-house attorneys, expended or incurred in connection therewith.

Where applicable, possible, or required, the proposer is required to submit descriptive literature, sample material, design sketches and detailed shop drawings. Failure to submit required items may result in rejection of the proposal or termination of contract.

The successful proposer may not make any advertising or sale use of the fact that contract items are being used by purchaser and other approved agencies, under penalty of contract termination. News releases pertaining to the award resulting from the RFPs shall not be made without prior written approval of the issuing Entity.

This Agreement shall be construed and enforced in accordance with the laws of the State of Montana. Venue for any suit between the parties arising out of this Agreement shall be the State of Montana, Seventh Judicial District Court, Richland County, in Sidney, MT.

The contractor may not assign or subcontract the agreement, or the right to receive reasonable performance of any act called for by the contract, shall be deemed waived by a waiver by the issuing Entity of a breach thereof as to any particular transaction or occurrence.

Regardless of FOB point, contractor agrees to bear all risks of loss, injury, or destruction of goods and materials ordered herein and such loss, injury, or destruction shall not release contractor from any obligation hereunder.

## ATTACHMENT C

### BUDGET

(to be sent with proposal in a separate, sealed envelope)

<b>Project Element</b>	<b>Price</b>
RC Economic Diversification Strategy	\$70,000
RC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	\$68,000
Advertising, room rentals, food and beverages at meeting locations across Richland County	\$2,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$140,000</b>

**ATTACHMENT D**

**CONDITIONS AND NON-COLLUSION FORM**

To receive consideration, this form must be signed in full by a responsible, authorized agent, officer, employee, or representative of your firm.

CONDITIONS AND NON-COLLUSION AGREEMENT

We have read and agree to the conditions and stipulations contained herein and to the Standard Terms and Conditions contained in the attached.

We further agree to furnish the services specified at the prices stated herein, to be delivered to the location and on that date set forth herein.

In signing this proposal, you also certify that you have not, either directly or indirectly, entered into any agreement or participated in any collusion or otherwise taken any action in restraint of free competition; that no attempt has been made to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit a proposal; that this proposal has been independently arrived at without collusion with any other proposer, competitor or potential competitor; that this proposal has not been knowingly disclosed prior to the due date and time to any other proposer or competitor; that the above statement is accurate under penalty of perjury.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Legal Name of Firm/Corporation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number

**ATTACHMENT E**

**MASTER Q & A FORM**

**PROJECT: Richland County Economic Diversification Strategy & CEDS**

<b>Master Q&amp;A</b>	Any questions regarding this Request for Proposals should be submitted according to the process outlined below. The issuing Entity will make every effort to answer within two (2) days of receiving the questions.
<b>Q&amp;A Process</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prepare questions or concerns on the template provided.</li> <li>2. Complete the table in full, providing a date for each question and a section of the RFP to reference (if applicable).</li> <li>3. Submit the completed form via email to Leslie Messer, <a href="mailto:lmredc@midrivers.com">lmredc@midrivers.com</a> Attach associated documents as necessary.</li> </ol> <p>Please contact Leslie Messer at (406) 482-4679 with any questions regarding this process.</p>

**Questions from:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Company:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

#	Date	Reference Section	Question or Comment	Issuing Entities' Response
1				
2				
3				
4				