



PISCATAQUIS COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Request for Proposals for an Economic Development Strategy

Issue Date: October 4, 2021

**Piscataquis County Economic Development Council
Attn: John Shea
50 Mayo Street
Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426**

john.shea@pcedc.org



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Piscataquis County Economic Development Council (PCEDC)

Piscataquis County Economic Development Strategy

The Piscataquis County Economic Development Council (PCEDC) is seeking proposals for technical, facilitation, drafting and outreach support for the development of an Economic Development Strategy for Piscataquis County.

Introduction

Piscataquis County is a rural county with an older population, low-income levels and some of the highest poverty rates in Maine. Municipalities in Piscataquis County are struggling to maintain even core services, such as police, fire, public works, according to PCEDC Municipal Board members. Up until the mid-20th century, Piscataquis County, Maine, comprised of 17 rural municipalities, 2 plantations and many unorganized territories (over 4,300 square miles, almost the size of Connecticut), was the manufacturing backbone of Maine in the wood and textile industries. Many of the communities were built around manufacturing facilities, primarily lumber and woolen mills, creating jobs and supporting vibrant rural communities with strong village centers providing all of the necessary services. With the sharp decline of these industries in recent decades and the loss of over 1,000 jobs over the past decade alone, many secondary businesses that served local workers have also disappeared. With approximately 18,000 people, Piscataquis is one of only two ‘frontier counties’ (fewer than six persons per square mile) in the northeast.

As noted, Piscataquis County has a particularly high proportion of elderly and disabled individuals, high poverty rates with lower household incomes relative to Maine and national data. Like other counties in northern Maine, Piscataquis has seen continued population loss (-4.3% since 2010 alone) and a continuing aging of the demographic (over 25% of the County’s population was over 65 in 2018, compared to about 15% for the U.S. as a whole). Per capita personal income was



70.58% of the national average in 2018. The 2018 poverty rate in the County was 17.5%, nearly 50% higher than the national rate of 11.8%. While the County's unemployment rate compares favorably to the national average, this belies a more serious and systemic distress in the county. The average labor participation rate for the period 2013-2017 in Piscataquis County was 67%, the lowest in the state and far below the Maine average of 78%. This reflects the lack of job opportunities in traditional industries as well as a level of educational attainment which ranks Piscataquis at the bottom of counties in Maine. In addition, Piscataquis County has a higher incidence of children living in poverty and eligible for school lunch assistance relative to the Maine and national rates.

Without an Economic Development Strategy (EDS) to address the loss of the traditional economic base in Piscataquis and to educate and retrain the workforce for the jobs of today and tomorrow, these alarming trends will continue. Such a plan needs to reflect the new environment created by the COVID epidemic and be both resilient and adaptable. An EDS will also address new opportunities for economic growth, investment, and long-term infrastructure and quality-of-life issues that will impact the decision of businesses, families and individuals to relocate to and stay in Piscataquis County.

This request for proposals seeks a consulting firm (hereafter referred to as the 'consultant', 'proposer', 'submitter' or 'proposal submitter') with economic and strategic development expertise to provide professional services in the development of an Economic Development Strategy (EDS) for Piscataquis County to the Piscataquis County Economic Development Council. A more specific list of the tasks and work items associated with this project and the consultant's responsibilities are outlined below.

Scope of Work

Proposals for this project will need to address the following work items:

- 1) Review and quantification of pertinent Piscataquis County economic, demographic, public revenue and other issues that have a bearing on economic development. The drafting of the EDS should also be informed by the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for four Maine Counties (including Piscataquis) produced by the Eastern Maine Development Corporation



(EMDC) and the Maine Economic Development Strategy, among others.

- 2) Facilitation of monthly meetings (Zoom virtual meetings until decided otherwise) of the EDS Steering Committee, which will consist of 20-30 individuals from Piscataquis County with a broad range of roles and backgrounds, including economic development, county and municipal government, businesses, NGOs, etc., as well as approximately 20 meetings of smaller subcommittees focusing on specific topics; these meetings will likely be largely virtual. This Steering Committee will serve as a sounding board to help guide the project, providing additional expertise to the consultant.
- 3) Engagement in public meetings and outreach to inform the public, garner input and build community support, including presenting the final draft of the EDS to a meeting of the County Commissioners.
- 4) Drafting and revising the EDS as needed over the course of the project.
- 5) A county-wide SWOT Analysis.
- 6) An economic resilience, sustainability and adaptability strategy for the county.
- 7) Evaluation of developmental resources compatible with the EDS.
- 8) Implementation plan involving timelines, costs/resource estimation, and deliverables.

Deliverables

In addition to the output of the tasks listed under the *Scope of Work* above, the selected consultant will be responsible for providing the following hard-copy deliverables to the PCEDC:

- 1) Electronic & hardcopy final draft Economic Development Strategy for Piscataquis County.
- 2) Monthly progress reports and invoices including description of work items, staff performing the work, hours worked and other documentation as requested by the PCEDC.
- 3) A final Powerpoint presentation highlighting the principal goals, actions and intended outcomes of the EDS.

Process



The consultant reports to the Executive Director of the PCEDC, who will direct the project and make any decisions required related to the process, content or other aspect of the EDS, including approving consultant invoices. The Executive Director will be supported in this effort by the PCEDC's Executive Committee, Council, the County government, and the representatives of the project steering committee and workgroups as referenced above.

Project Time Line

It is estimated that the EDS development process will occur over a period of eight- to twelve-months, from the selection of a consultant to the submission of the final report.

Consultant Budget, Cost Proposal Amount and Payment Structure

Submitted proposals must include a lump-sum total accompanied by estimated hours, hourly rates and costs associated with the items in the Scope of Work. Proposals should not exceed \$45,000, and the selected consultant will not be reimbursed for any cost overruns. The PCEDC will withhold 20% of the total proposal amount until after the delivery of all the items listed in the *Scope of Work* and *Deliverables*. Consultants can invoice on a monthly basis and will be reimbursed after approval of submitted invoices.

Subcontractors

The proposer is required to identify any subcontractors utilized. Subcontractor qualifications and rates of reimbursement should be indicated.

Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MBE/WBE)

Proposals from or including minority and women-owned businesses are encouraged. Proposals from or including MBE/WBE should identify the MBE/WBE.

Terms of Award



The PCEDC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, and the PCEDC reserves the right to negotiate the scope of services, costs or other terms and conditions with any individual/firm submitting a proposal.

Submitting Proposals

Proposals must contain:

Section I A detailed statement of qualifications demonstrating ability and capacity to complete the scope of work. The proposer should identify specific staff to be assigned to the project, their respective responsibilities and qualifications.

Section II The proposed methods and means for completing the Scope of Work.

Section III A proposed project schedule providing adequate time for the outreach and facilitation activities noted and direct interaction with the PCEDC.

Section IV A description of 2-3 similar projects completed by the proposer, with references.

Section V A detailed budget, not exceeding \$45,000 total, including hourly rates, and time allocated linked to the items in the scope of work.

Deadline for submissions is 5 pm Eastern Time on Friday, October 29, 2021.

Three (3) hardcopies and one electronic proposal should be submitted to:

John Shea

Piscataquis County Economic Development Council

50 Mayo Street

Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426

john.shea@pcedc.org

(401) 323-0068

Questions regarding this Request for Proposals or other issues related to the project can be directed in writing to John Shea, Executive Director, PCEDC (contact information above).

Consultant Selection

Upon receipt of the proposals, a review committee of the PCEDC Executive



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Committee will review each proposal and if appropriate recommend a consultant for approval. A final decision will likely be made by 5 PM EST on Monday, November 8, 2021 and the PCEDC will inform all proposers of their status and the selected proposal. The PCEDC may request additional information from a proposal submitter, and submitters should be available as necessary for interviews or site-visits as necessary.

Rating and selection of the contractor will be based on the following criteria:

- 1) Statement of qualification and experience from the proposal submitters on similar projects
- 2) Proposed method and approach to the Scope of Work
- 3) Cost proposal
- 4) References

Disclaimer

This RFP does not obligate the PCEDC to accept any of the bids submitted, and the PCEDC may re-offer the RFP if it determines that it has not received an actionable proposal. The PCEDC or Piscataquis County are not liable for any unintentional errors or misrepresentations in this RFP.