

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Somerset Economic Development Commission is seeking proposals for a **Strategic Economic Opportunities Analysis**. It is due on March 15, 2019 at 11916 Somerset Avenue, Room 202, Princess Anne, Maryland 21853 by 3:00 p.m.

Any questions regarding this proposal should be directed to Danny Thompson, Executive Director, Somerset Economic Development Commission at 410-651-0500 or via email at dthompson@somersetmd.us

The funding for this project is federal Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funding provided to Somerset County through the State of Maryland.

Certified Section 3, minority and women owned businesses are strongly encouraged to submit applications.

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, Somerset County was one of the counties on the eastern United States that was severely impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Today, while many things have been improved or dealt with, the County still struggles to recover economically. Several businesses have closed while others try to remain open. Overall, the impact to the workforce experienced a decline due to the loss of residents and persons finding work in other counties or states. While not fully responsible, the hurricane has impacted the County's ability to achieve the economic stability it seeks.

In an effort to improve the situation, the County is soliciting for a consultant to partner with the development of a *Strategic Economic Opportunities Analysis*. This activity will include several components related to the identification of economic opportunities as well as the issues preventing full recovery. This endeavor will provide relevant, usable information as to rebuilding a sustainable economy that is able to support its residents.

The outcomes will include a market analysis to determine the types of businesses that could be supported based on information related to spending patterns in the County and region. It will also include a feasibility analysis of commercial and industrial real estate to determine quality and quantity. Additionally, it will include preliminary architectural design and structural analysis of commercial buildings in the City of Crisfield that were impacted by flooding. Initial information received could result in further study of specific opportunities.

Economic recovery efforts must ensure the growth of existing businesses as well as the attraction of new ones. A critical component to these efforts involves stabilizing and strengthening the existing workforce to ensure that the county is a good place to live and work. A workforce analysis will provide information that will help with retention and recruitment.

BACKGROUND

Somerset County is located on the eastern shore of Maryland on the eastern side of the Chesapeake Bay. It was settled by Quakers who moved there from Virginia for religious freedom in 1661. It was established as a county in 1666. By 1800, the population had increased to 17,358 persons. Today, the county is home to a total population of 26,750 according to the 2010 Census.

The county has the lowest median income in the state with 18.1% of its population living below the poverty threshold. The median household income is \$35,886 compared to the state median household income of \$76,067. The pre-disaster unemployment rate was 9.4% which was the second highest in the state. The current unemployment rate is 6.3%. 47.9% of the residents of the county commute to another county.

The major employers in Somerset County are both government entities - the University of Maryland Eastern Shore which employees 900 persons and the Eastern Correction Institution which employees 979 persons. The two largest private employers are SYSCO which employees 450 employees and McCready Memorial Hospital with 300 employees.

Somerset County consists of 338.4 square miles and 600 miles of shoreline. Much of the county is in the floodplain. During the hurricane, the wind pushed seven foot waves from the Chesapeake Bay through the City of Crisfield and other lower lying areas. Mandatory evacuations were ordered for Crisfield and Smith Island. Sea level rise and erosion are part of the daily conversation and will impact the future.

The county is located 2.5 hours from the City of Baltimore, 2 hours from the City of Annapolis, 1 hour from Ocean City and 30 minutes from the City of Salisbury. From Route 50 in Salisbury, Route 13 cuts through the county from north to south.

HURRICANE SANDY

As Somerset County is a rural, water oriented county, several of its major industries such as the seafood and poultry industries were severally impacted by the storm. There are a significant number of small businesses related to these industries, one of which is the crabbing industry. Watermen had a significant loss of equipment and building damage.

Many small businesses were damaged by high winds and flooding. There were 217 small businesses located in the Category 1 Storm Surge Area. The majority of those businesses employed four employees or less.

The immediate response by Federal, State and County officials was to work with and encourage business owners to re-open. The long-term goals are to help them sustain and grow their businesses. Since the storm, 6 existing businesses have closed but 8 have opened and 6 have expanded.

SCOPE OF WORK

In partnership with the Somerset County Economic Development Commission, the selected consultant will:

- 1) Identify economic opportunities and potential;
- 2) Identify missed opportunities;
- 3) Develop long term and short term goals;
- 4) Evaluate existing plans and strategies;
- 5) Understand why businesses do or do not select Somerset County;
- 6) Provide economic restructuring solutions for existing businesses;
- 7) Evaluate the tourism, branding and hospitality potential; and
- 8) Evaluate storm impacted commercial structures
- 9) Evaluate public transportation access and other private opportunities.

The selected consultant will be provided copies of all recent studies, plans and applicable documents from municipal and county governments as well as private sources that will help them learn about the county. They will also be required to meet with community and business leaders as well as various focus groups.

WORK PRODUCTS

Public presentation

Analysis

Design schematic

All products prepared under this project become the property of the Somerset Economic Development Commission.

PROJECT COORDINATION

The Executive Director of the Somerset Economic Development Commission will serve as the project manager and primary contact working with the consultant on behalf of Somerset County. They will play a support role providing the consult insight in the community's perspective, serving as the liaison with focus groups and local business and government officials. Regular monthly updates to the Director and others as needed.

RFP SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

The responses to this Request for Proposal must contain the following:

- 1) Cover Letter** – Cover letter must contain the company name, address, phone number, project contact and principal signature is required. The letter should express interest in the project and certify that sufficient resource in personnel, equipment and time are available and can be committed to this project. The letter should also include a statement of firm philosophy, goals, vision statement

or guiding principals. Applicants must state if they are a certified minority or women owned business or a Section 3 Business.

- 2) **Work Plan** – Explain the proposed work plan with a detailed description of the specific tasks as noted in Scope of Services and Products of this Request for Proposal. Include additional tasks and their purposes as needed to perform, outlining why, along with tasks that you would contract with sub-consultants to handle.
- 3) **Project Schedule** – Provide a project schedule showing deliverable and key task target dates that correlates with the Work Plan. Be specific on deliverables, format and dates.
- 4) **Community Involvement** – Describe the approaches used to engage a broad spectrum of residents, business leaders, and governments throughout the development process.
- 5) **Project Team** – Provide professional and technical qualifications of the key persons who will be assigned to the project by the consultant and their responsibilities with the scope of services. Resumes for key personnel should be included in the proposal as appendices.
- 6) **Experience** – List project(s) of similar nature with which the lead consultant has had direct experience. Please be specific on why the referenced project is similar to this project. Include the referenced project(s) name, a reference name and phone number, brief description, participatory processes utilized, if the project was completed on time and within budget. Also, include information on whether the plan(s) has been implemented.
- 7) **Fees** – Provide a complete list of fees broken down by deliverables for the consulting services and products with a total “not to exceed” amount. Provide a

listing of “Additional Services” and accompanying fees for any work noted by the consultant as part of their proposal beyond that requested specifically in this Request for Proposal. Provide factual information for the cost of labor, material, travel, overhead and other cost elements, which are expected to be incurred for each phase of the project. The Somerset Economic Development Commission is not responsible for any expenses that may be incurred by bidders in preparing and submitting proposals in response to this Request for Proposal.

8) Required Forms – Each applicant will complete and include the Section 3 Compliance Bid Form and the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form with the application or it will not be reviewed.

Bidders must submit 3 copies of the proposal. Each copy of the proposal must be in a 3 ring binder. NO ELECTRONIC COPIES WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Submitted proposals and quoted prices must be valid and will be irrevocable for at least 90 days following the closing date of March 15, 2019.

The Somerset Economic Development Commission reserves the right to reject all bids and re-advertise this Request for Proposal.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION

All eligible proposals received by the closing deadline will be reviewed and evaluated by a selection committee created by the Somerset Economic Development Commission. Proposals will be evaluated based on professional staff, references, demonstrated ability to perform services with timeframe and budget, location and availability, and demonstrated ability to be creative in strategic development. The Somerset Economic Development Commission will select the proposal with the best price from the most qualified applicant.

Interviews may be scheduled if necessary, to determine the best candidate for the project.

The selected applicant shall be expected to begin work within 30 days of executing a contract with the Somerset Economic Development Commission. The contract period will be 150 days. The contract amount will be a fixed fee to be paid in monthly installments contingent upon approval of both the quantity and quality of work covered by the requisition. There is no allowance for cost overruns on this project. Additional work items can be negotiated under change orders if initiated by the Somerset Economic Development Commission.

The selected applicant will be responsible for all subcontracts and management thereof.