

BitterRoot Economic Development District (BREDD, Inc)
Economic Gardening Strategic Plan for Mineral, Missoula and Ravalli Counties
 Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Introduction

BitterRoot Economic Development District (BREDD, Inc) is offering interested individuals or organizations an opportunity to submit a proposal to BREDD to develop an Economic Gardening Strategic Plan for Mineral, Missoula and Ravalli Counties. The Strategic Plan will enhance regionalism by providing strategies to support small and medium sized businesses and entrepreneurs, encouraging innovation and job growth. The Strategic Plan will also help pave the way to a more diverse and globally competitive economy for the region.

Summarized Scope of Work:

- Assess potential stakeholders, likely supporters, resources, and entrepreneurial talent in the region to be targeted by an Economic Gardening Project.
- Develop an Economic Gardening Strategy, building on regional priorities and assets, with the overarching goal of developing a sustainable initiative.
- Prepare recommendations for short and medium term actions by the communities. Present final Economic Gardening Strategic Plan to communities throughout the region.

Total Award:

- Up to a total of **\$50,000** is available for this project, made available to BREDD through the Community Trade Adjustment Assistance (CTAA) Program Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce.
- BREDD anticipates that one contract will be issued for the entire scope of work, to one individual or organization.
- The anticipated duration of the project is eighteen (18) months.

Timeline

RFQ Issued: January 12, 2011
Proposals Due: February 11, 2011 by 4:00 p.m. MST
Planned Proposal Review and Interviews: February 14, 2011 – February 25, 2011
Planned Award Notification: February 28, 2011
Planned Project Duration: March 2011 – August 2012

Background¹

Economic gardening is an economic development model that embraces the fundamental idea that entrepreneurs drive economies. The model seeks to create jobs by supporting existing companies in a community. Economic gardening connects entrepreneurs to resources, encouraging the development of essential infrastructure and providing entrepreneurs with needed information.

By supporting second-stage companies (those that have grown past the startup stage but have not grown to maturity, with roughly between 10 and 100 employees) and the entrepreneurial organizations that assist them, Economic Gardening plants the seeds for a stronger economy. Communities are the economic gardens that cultivate these companies and organizations and create supportive environments where they can thrive.

The three basic elements of Economic Gardening are:

1. Providing critical information needed by businesses to survive and thrive.
2. Developing and cultivating an infrastructure that goes beyond basic physical infrastructure and includes quality of life, a culture that embraces growth and change, and access to intellectual resources, including qualified and talented employees.
3. Developing connections between businesses and the people and organizations that can help take them to the next level — business associations, universities, roundtable groups, service providers and more.

Economic gardening initiatives provide local entrepreneurs with access to competitive intelligence on markets, customers, and competitors that is comparable to the resources customarily only available to large firms. Included in the market information category are database and data mining resources, and geographic information systems.

Detailed Scope of Work

A total of up to \$50,000 is available to one organization or individual for a period of 18 months to complete the Economic Gardening Strategic Plan project. Please note, this RFQ seeks to hire a Contractor to create the Strategic Plan. Implementation of the Strategic Plan is not included in this Scope of Work.

Project components to be completed by the Contractor will include:

¹ Background information on Economic Gardening from: <http://www.kauffman.org/advancing-innovation/economic-gardening.aspx> and <http://www.edwardlowe.org/secondStage/economicGardening.elf> .

Phase 1 (approximately 6 months)

- Identify and assess potential Economic Gardening stakeholder groups capable of creating and supporting the Economic Gardening Program.
- Identify and assess potential Economic Gardening resources.
- Identify and assess likely supporting stakeholders.
- Identify priority entrepreneurial talent to be supported by the Economic Gardening Program.
- Develop and perform community awareness programs about Economic Gardening and the Strategic Plan.
- Meet with stakeholders to determine sustainability, and to discuss opportunities and challenges.
- Prepare and present preliminary assessment report with initial strategy observations.

Phase 2 (approximately 6 months)

- Perform initial system mapping with recommendations for the region.
- Develop an Economic Gardening strategy which builds on the region's priorities and assets.
- Develop a plan of how to implement the strategy that will be sustainable in the long run.

Phase 3 (approximately 6 months)

- Prepare and present final recommendations for short-term and medium-term actions to be implemented by the community.
- Conduct a series of community briefings to roll out the Strategic Plan.
- Interact with various media outlets, promoting of the Economic Gardening project.

Framework

The Economic Gardening Strategic Plan will provide a framework for providing small and medium sized businesses the support that large businesses are able to provide for themselves. This supports growth and innovation of the existing and new businesses by helping good ideas get off the ground. It also promotes regionalism, encourages entrepreneurship, and helps create a more diverse and globally competitive economy, increasing the region's appeal to successful companies from outside the area.

Who is Served

The Economic Gardening Strategic Plan will serve all communities within the BitterRoot Regional Economic Development District (in Mineral, Missoula and Ravalli Counties), including those most severely impacted by trade adjustments. This includes communities affected by forest, timber, manufacturing and mill industries.

Economic Gardening Project: Expected Economic Impact & Long-Term Goals

The purpose of this RFQ is to create and promote a Strategic Plan. Once the Strategic Plan is finalized and implementation begins, it is expected that the Economic Gardening Project will

grow jobs and private investment within the region's business community at a rate of 50 jobs per year, for the first three years of the program.

Eligibility Requirements for Individuals or Agencies

Proposals meeting the requirements of this RFQ will be accepted from organizations or individuals that meet the following conditions:

- The respondent is incorporated is a public, private or nonprofit organization established pursuant to Montana State Law, OR is an individual licensed to conduct business in Montana.
- The respondent has a demonstrated capacity to ensure adequate administrative and accounting procedures and controls necessary to safeguard all funds that may be awarded under the terms of this RFQ.
- A Federal Tax ID number is required to facilitate payments from BREDD to the contractor.
- The respondent demonstrates the capability to meet program expenses in advance of reimbursement.

Administrative and Contracting Requirements

- Any contract resulting from this RFQ will be between BREDD and the applicant organization or individual.
- Contractors will be required to comply with any applicable terms and conditions from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) Community Trade Adjustment Agreement (CTAA) Program.
- Contractors will be required to maintain books, records, documents and other evidence directly related to performance of the work in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Procedures. BREDD, or any of its duly-authorized representatives, shall have access to such books, records and documents for inspection, audit and copying for a period of seven years after completion of work.
- Contractors will document the use of BREDD / CTAA funds and track and report on hours worked, as well as progress and challenges related to the project.
- Contracts must complete all required reports and billing documentation in a timely manner. Reimbursement will be contingent upon receipt and approval of required reports. Additional data may be required for audit or evaluation purposes.
- Contractors will maintain a public liability insurance policy.

Response Format and Evaluation Criteria

Proposal packets (3 copies) that are not received by the 4:00pm MST deadline on February 11, 2011 will NOT be eligible for consideration. Responses which do not follow the required format will be deemed unresponsive and will NOT be rated.

The Statement of Qualifications is not to exceed ten (10) pages (8 ½ X 11), single spaced, typed or word processed, size 12 font, with 1 inch margins. Proposals can be shorter than 10 pages. Page count does not include the required Application Form (Attachment #1) or Key Staff resumes, if you choose to submit resumes. You do not need to re-write the specific questions, just the section titles.

Evaluation Criteria: Total points available are 100, awarded as follows:

- Narrative 1: Background and Experience (35 points)
- Narrative 2: Project Proposal (35 points)
- Narrative 3: Key Staff (30 points)

Narrative 1: Background and Experience. Up to 4 pages. 35 points.

1. Describe your background and experience in the field of Economic Gardening.
2. Describe your experience conducting relevant community assessment and stakeholder identification projects.
3. Describe your experience in relevant Strategic Planning and Reporting processes.
4. Describe your experience working with large, rural regions and small cities, such as the BitterRoot Regional Economic Development District.

Narrative 2: Project Proposal. Up to 4 pages. 35 points.

1. Describe how you would complete the Scope of Work detailed above.
 - a. How do you propose to identify supporters and resources?
 - b. How do you propose to identify and prioritize potential entrepreneurial/Stage 2 talent to be supported by an Economic Gardening project?
 - c. How will you advertise and conduct community awareness activities?
 - d. Describe briefly how you will go about the Strategy Development process, including how you will address project sustainability.
 - e. Describe briefly how you propose to roll out the Economic Gardening Strategic Plan throughout the three-county region.
2. Do you have the capacity, in relation to your current additional workload, to take on this project at this time, with anticipated completion within 18 months, at a cost equal to or less than \$50,000?

Narrative 3: Key Staff. Up to 2 pages. 30 points.

1. Describe your staffing plan to complete this project, describing the qualifications, backgrounds, and experiences of staff who will be involved the Economic Gardening Strategic Plan Project. Resumes are not required, but may be included if you'd like. Resumes will not be counted in the 10 page limit.
2. If you do not have all of the key people in place, describe your expedient recruitment and hiring plan.

Proposal Submission

All Proposals must be received at the following address no later than 4:00 PM, February 11, 2011, Mountain Standard Time (MST).

Three (3) copies of the Statements of Qualifications shall be submitted. Submittals must be in the actual possession at the location indicated above on or prior to the exact time and date indicated above. Statements of Qualifications submitted after the time and date specified herein will not be accepted. Statement of Qualifications that do not follow the format or answer the required questions will be rejected. The BitterRoot Economic Development District reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Statement of Qualifications. BREDD, Inc is an equal opportunity employer.

No explanations, answers to technical questions, representations or comments will be made by BREDD personnel concerning this request. Any questions regarding this request for qualifications and scope of services can be directed to Marcy Allen, Executive Director at (406) 258- 3435.

Proposals (three copies) may be hand-delivered or mailed to:

Marcy Allen, Executive Director
BREDD
200 West Broadway
Missoula, MT 59801

Faxed and Emailed proposals will NOT be accepted.

Selection Process

The Statement of Qualifications submitted will be reviewed and ranked by the Selection Committee using the outlined Evaluation Criteria. The program contact person listed on your Application Form (Attachment #1) may be contacted by phone, email or mail to clarify proposal contents. BREDD reserves the right to accept or reject any or all statements received. BREDD reserves the right to interview the most highly qualified firm(s).

The organization or individual considered by the Selection Committee to be the most highly qualified will be selected for the project, upon which discussions will be initiated with that firm to finalize the scope of services and negotiate a Consultant Agreement. If agreement cannot be reached with the selected firm then negotiations with that firm will be terminated and discussions initiated with the second ranked firm with this process followed until a Consultant Agreement is reached. If the proposal is selected for funding, proposers should be prepared to accept the terms they proposed for incorporation into a contract resulting from this RFQ.

The Request for Qualifications does not commit the Selection Committee to award a contract. All costs incurred by proposers in preparing Statements of Qualifications are the proposer's responsibility and in no way are the responsibility of BREDD.

The selection will be based solely on information provided in Statements of Qualifications formally submitted to the Selection Committee and from an interview if the Selection Committee chooses to conduct interviews.

Proposals submitted to BREDD for CTAA funds become matters of public record and after completion of the selection process can be disclosed under State and Federal Public Disclosure Laws.

Appeals Process

1. BREDD will notify all proposers in writing of the acceptance or rejection of the proposal, and, if appropriate, the level of funding to be allocated.
2. Within ten (10) working days from the date of the written notification, the proposer may submit a written appeal to the President of the BREDD Board of Directors. The basis of the appeal must address one or more of the following criteria:
 - Violation of policies or guidelines established in the RFP or RFQ
 - Failure to adhere to published criteria and/or procedures

3. The BREDD Board President will review the written appeal and may request additional oral or written information from the appellant organization. A written decision will be made within ten (10) working days of the receipt of the appeal. The BREDD Board President's decision is final.
4. If an appeal is filed, no new contracts resulting from the solicitation may be finalized until the appeal process is completed or the appeal is resolved. An appeal may not prevent BREDD from issuing an interim contract for services to meet critical needs.

BitterRoot Regional Economic Development District
Economic Gardening Strategic Plan Project
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Application Form

Include this form at the beginning of your proposal. This form is not included in the 10-page limit.

Organization Name: _____

Organization Director: _____

Primary Contact Person: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Mailing address: _____

Legal Status:

- Public Agency or Institution
- Private Company
- Non-Profit Organization
- Licensed Individual

Are you able to cover costs in advance of reimbursement?

- Yes
- No

I understand the terms and conditions of this RFQ and agree to meet BREDD and CTAA requirements if a contract award is made. All information provided in this Proposal Packet is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Information shall be valid until at least December 31, 2011.

Signed _____
Organization Director or Board Chair

Date _____