

# **WOOD COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

## Request for Proposal for Strategic Plan

### **Introduction**

The Wood County Economic Development Commission (WCEDC) is seeking proposals for services to create a comprehensive strategic plan for Wood County from consultants interested and qualified to perform such tasks. The plan is to serve as the guiding policy document for development within the county and reflects community goals and visions for the future.

It is the intent of the WCEDC to select a single consultant to accomplish all services outlined in this Term Sheet.

The Commission intends to commence a contract with the successful proposer within thirty (30) days from the date of the award and continuing for a period sufficient to complete the scope of work but no more than a twelve (12) month period. It is understood that the Commission reserves the right to negotiate all elements that comprise the proposal and to accept or reject part or all of any proposal.

### **Purpose**

The WCEDC is requesting proposals from potential consultants for the creation of a comprehensive strategic plan. The consultant will be expected to undertake the following:

1. Conduct meetings and community events to engage stakeholders and citizens from around the county and all municipalities/communities to create a vision of successful long term economic and community development.
2. Evaluate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges regarding economic and community development.
3. Evaluate target industries and potential development areas.
4. Conduct necessary review of existing research, plans, regional strategic plans, and existing relevant programs.
5. Conduct additional research as required for SWOT analysis and targeted industry recommendations.
6. Prepare and present a final report to the Commission including new recommendations and implementation plans to attract target industries.
7. Identify the best method for organizing, funding, and operating a superior county-wide economic development program; and
8. Identify key catalyst projects to impact economic development and present an implementation plan to the Commission.

## **Background**

Wood County comprises 689 square miles of the East Texas timberlands located in northeastern Texas between Interstate highways 20 and 30. Quitman, the county seat, is 80 miles east of Dallas and thirty miles north of Tyler. In 2020, Wood County had a population of 44,843. Communities include Quitman (population, 1,942), the county seat; Mineola (4,823); Winnsboro (3,455, partly in Franklin County); Holly Lake Ranch (2,973); Hawkins (1,274); Alba (473); and Yantis (405). The only institution of higher education within Wood County is Jarvis Christian University which is a Historically Black College. Major healthcare providers located within Wood County are UT Health and Christus Mother Frances. Wood County also contains the majority of Lake Fork which spans three counties (Wood, Rains, & Hopkins) and was recently named the #1 bass fishing lake in the USA by B.A.S.S. LLC.

The top ten employers in the county are:

- Kellers Creamery located in Winnsboro, TX
- UT Health Quitman
- Quitman ISD
- Jarvis Christian University located in Hawkins, TX
- Wood County
- Ozarka / Blue Triton located in Hawkins, TX
- Mineola ISD
- Winnsboro ISD
- WALMART located in Mineola, TX
- Brookshire's located at multiple locations in Wood County

## **Scope of Service**

The successful candidate has the responsibility to prepare an original strategic plan containing goals, objectives, implementation plans, and metrics. They will also provide meeting facilitation services, supporting materials and research, and social media services during the public outreach process as necessary. The consultant shall provide professional services to support the following tasks:

The scope of services listed below is not intended to be a comprehensive list of what the Consultant Team will provide. It is expected that the Consultant Team's proposals will provide more specific recommendations for approaches, tasks, and deliverables based on their experience and expertise from past work on strategic plan projects. The final scope of services will be developed in collaboration with the selected Consultant Team. The scope of services, focused on the formation and implementation of tactical economic development strategies, will at a minimum include the following:

## **Components:**

### Discovery & Investigation

Facilitate community involvement and engagement to identify needs and opportunities and create a shared vision specific to economic & community development and to determine goals and priorities. A well-developed community and stakeholder involvement and outreach process, facilitated by the consultant, is an essential part of the strategic plan engagement. The consultant will include needs assessment/surveys, facilitation techniques, focus groups, marketing strategies including press outreach, website, and social media efforts to both inform stakeholders and seek their input. Likewise, the consultant will conduct focus groups, public input meetings and interviews including but not limited to the following:

- a. County and city government elected/appointed officials and staff
- b. Citizens and property owners
- c. Current business owners, manufacturers, developers, realtors, and downtown merchants
- d. Chambers of Commerce
- e. Education leaders (K-12, higher education)
- f. Special event organizers, both non-profit and for-profit

### Economic Forces, Trends and Conditions \*

Analysis of current economic trends and factors to provide a profile of the changing demographics, industry trends and other local conditions.

\* This has been sub-contracted to the University of Texas-Tyler to complete. Their data will be reflected in the final report.

### SWOT Analysis \*\*

A qualitative analysis of the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats will be conducted.

\*\*An existing updated SWOT analysis will be used and reflected in the final report.

### Infrastructure Capacity Analysis

A survey of infrastructure plans and activities to determine opportunities for enhancement for economic development purposes. Included with the infrastructure capacity will be a building inventory survey & broadband expansion plans, industrial electrical capabilities, and domestic water service limitations.

### Economic Resilience Planning

Analyze environmental and economic threats and develop effective contingency planning for Wood County in regards to said threats.

### Land Use & Development Planning

Analyze existing land use plans and recommendations to ensure that the available land is used for the highest and best use as it relates to the county's long-term diversification and stability. This plan must also include a strategy to develop a Lake Fork Planning & Zoning Commission.

### Implementation Strategy and Final Plan Development

Development of final strategic plan & implementation steps—including presentation of draft strategic plan components to the WCEDC Board and presentation of the final product to the Commissioners Court of Wood County, and City Councils of all municipalities.

## **Budget**

The budget for this project and its combined sourced components (SWOT, Forces Studies) shall not exceed \$81,800.

## **Response to this Term Sheet**

The following items are required in each proposal. To expedite the evaluation of proposals, proposers will organize their proposal in the same sequence. Instructions regarding scope and contents are given in this section. These instructions are designed to ensure the submission of information essential to the understanding and comprehensive evaluation of each proposal. Proposals must contain a concise presentation of sufficient length to be complete. Brevity is appreciated when possible. Proposals for “boilerplate” plans will not be acceptable.

A. Cover Letter: A cover letter with company name, address, phone number, project contact and principal signature is required, expressing interest in the project and certifying that sufficient resources in personnel, equipment, and time are available and can be committed to this project.

B. Project Understanding and Detailed Approach with Benchmarks: Provide a statement demonstrating your understanding of the proposed project and of Wood County's business climate. Describe your approach to completing the Proposed Scope of Services and maintaining a competitive fee proposal and schedule. Explain how the Consultant Team will leverage work that has been previously conducted to achieve completion of the project as efficiently and effectively as possible. Please discuss any ideas for cost effectively modifying, clarifying, or improving the Proposed Scope of Services. Describe how the project team will handle raw data

and knowledge transfer between WCEDC, the firm, and stakeholders, and ultimately return to the Wood County.

C. Project Schedule: A project schedule showing key task target dates (including community meetings, public meetings and staff team meetings) and estimated task duration. Given the planning duration maximum of 12 months, the project schedule should include options for phased deliverables and programs implementation throughout the development of the strategic plan.

D. Project Team: A resume for the principle of the firm along with a resume for the project manager. Provide primary contact, names and titles of employees and all sub consultant team members, partnering firms and their team members who will have responsibilities under the subsequent agreement. Provide a brief background on all participants to include professional work and areas of expertise. Provide information regarding your firm's experience with similar projects including the number of years your firm has consulted on public/government projects.

E. Relevant Experience and References: List projects of a similar nature with which the successful proposer has had direct experience. Be specific on why the referenced projects are similar to this project and provide links to the completed plans of a similar nature/scope when appropriate. Also include at least one contact for each project (email and phone) that may be contacted as a reference.

F. Quality Control: Describe how the successful consultant will handle quality control to monitor and resolve issues and check and cross-reference documents.

G. Fees: Provide a list of fees for the entire scope of services with a total "not to exceed" amount listed for each item. Provide hourly rates for additional services as well as the costs for out-of-pocket expenses.

H. Failure to address items A through G in the Response to the Term Sheet section in detail will be sufficient reason to eliminate a proposal from consideration.

## **Submission**

An electronic (pdf format) response shall be submitted via email by no later than **June 12, 2023**.

Responses shall be emailed to Christine Thomas, WCEDC Executive Director. The county will not accept any other means of submittal. A response email will confirm receipt of Term Sheet submittal.

Email to: [cthomas@mywoodcounty.com](mailto:cthomas@mywoodcounty.com)

Subject: Strategic Plan Term Sheet Response

## **Evaluation & Selection**

WCEDC staff, board members of the WCEDC, and the Wood County Judge may choose to evaluate the responses to the Term Sheet and select a narrowed list of consultants to participate in an interview process. Proposals shall be evaluated based upon prior relevant experience, knowledge and expertise, creativity, methodology, staff capacity, use of partner subcontractors & references.

The WCEDC and Wood County are not liable for, nor will they pay any cost incurred by responding firms related to the preparation of proposals or the interview process.

#### Schedule

May 10, 2023 — Term Sheet released.

June 12, 2023 — Response deadline (emailed to [cthomas@mywoodcounty.com](mailto:cthomas@mywoodcounty.com)).

June 28, 2023 — WCEDC Board review.

June 29, 2023 — Selection of proposal.