

EVANSVILLE REGIONAL
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR EVANSVILLE REGION

ISSUE DATE:

November 9, 2023

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

December 6, 2023



**EVANSVILLE
REGIONAL
ECONOMIC
PARTNERSHIP**

BUSINESS |

POLICY |

COMMUNITY |

TALENT |

STRATEGY |

INNOVATION POINTE

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INTRODUCTION

The Evansville Regional Economic Partnership (E-REP) is seeking proposals from qualified professionals who are knowledgeable in research and development, planning, and data analysis to provide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) planning services for the Evansville (Indiana) region. Throughout this RFP, the Evansville Region is defined geographically as the combined areas of Vanderburgh, Posey, Warrick, and Gibson counties.

BACKGROUND

In early 2020, the Economic Development Coalition of Southwest Indiana produced a CEDS that largely drew from the regional strategy, formerly known as Talent 2025 (now Talent EVV). That CEDS was not approved by the EDA due in part to its inclusion of Henderson County (Kentucky), which is part of the Green River Area Development District. In late 2022, the E-REP Board of Directors labeled it a priority for the organization to produce a new CEDS for the Evansville Region to gain designation as an Economic Development District (EDD). Throughout 2023, E-REP worked to position itself well for that pursuit, and in September of that year, was awarded a matching grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to complete a CEDS as well as coordinate designation activities.

PURPOSE

Following the award of the matching grant from the EDA, E-REP is seeking a qualified consulting firm to complete a CEDS document in 2024. The draft CEDS completion date is September 30, 2024, with final approval after all public engagement and approvals completed by December 31, 2024.

Completion of the CEDS will set the region up to apply for designation as an EDD in early 2025. A CEDS and the EDD designation also positions the region to qualify and be competitive for the EDA's grant programs moving forward. After adoption of this initial CEDS, the document will need to be updated every five years to maintain federal designation as an EDD.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY?

The CEDS contributes to effective economic development in the Evansville Region's towns, cities and counties through a locally-based, regionally-driven economic development planning process. Economic development planning, as implemented through the CEDS, is a cornerstone of the EDA's programs, and successfully serves to engage community leaders, leverage the involvement of the private sector, and establish a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration. The CEDS provides the capacity-building foundation by which the public sector – which works in conjunction with other economic partners, including individuals, firms, and industries – creates the environment for regional economic prosperity.

Simply put, a CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. A CEDS is the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region.

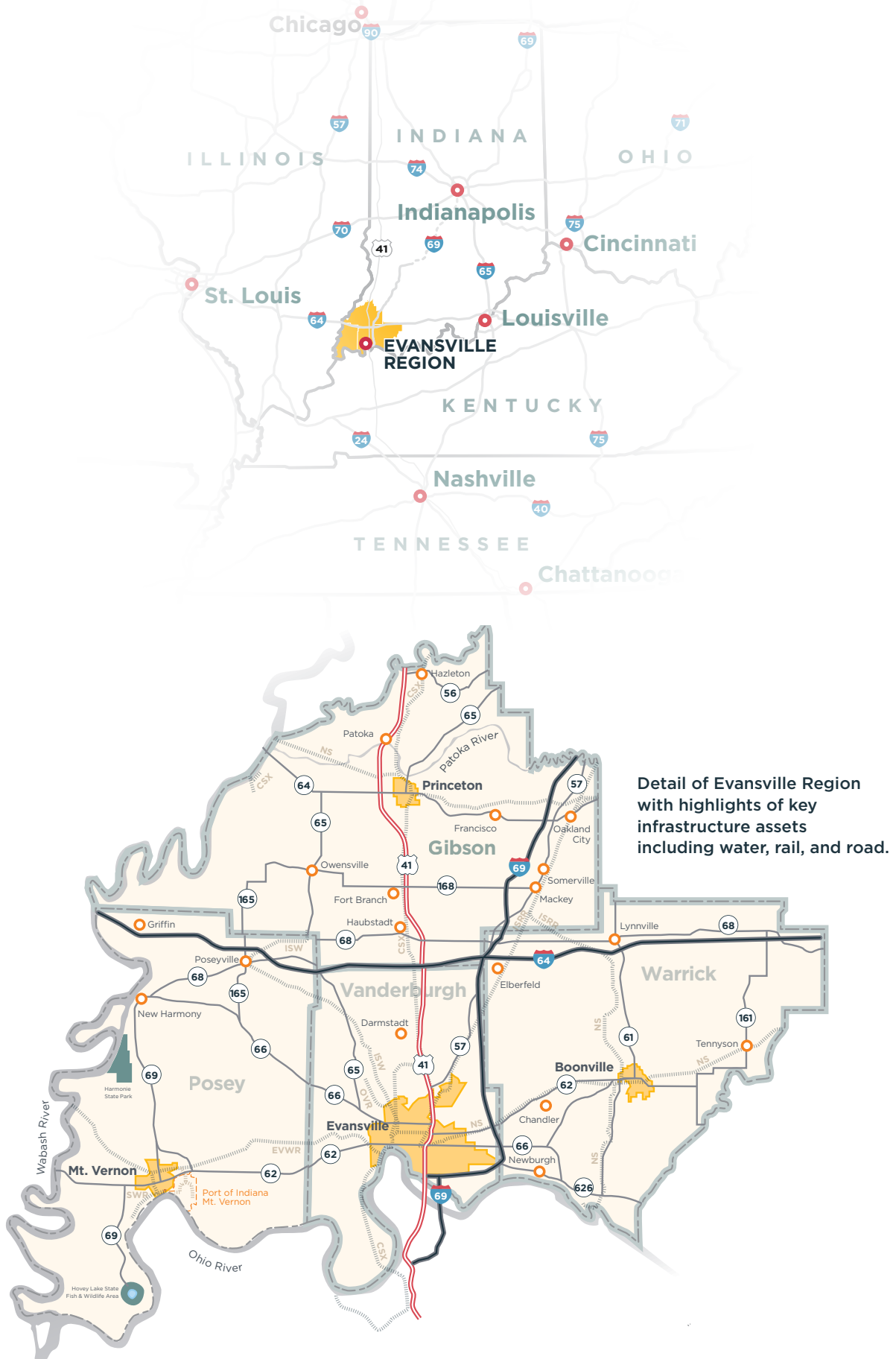
It is a key component in establishing and maintaining a robust economic ecosystem by building regional capacity (through hard and soft infrastructure) that contributes to individual, firm, and community success. The CEDS provides a vehicle for individuals, organizations, local governments, institutes of learning, and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation and debate about what capacity building efforts would best serve economic development in the region.

PLANNING AREA

The planning area includes the four counties traditionally described as the Evansville Region. They are Vanderburgh, Posey, Warrick, and Gibson counties.

HIGHLIGHTED COUNTIES

Gibson, Posey, Vanderburgh, Warrick



PROPOSAL CONTENT

Responses to the RFP should include a detailed work plan that includes, identifies and/or addresses a variety of items including various elements of the new CEDS.

- Overall timelines, schedule, milestones and budget necessary to complete the CEDS
- Specific activities that will be accomplished
- Staffing and number of hours that will be devoted to each activity
- Descriptions of work products that will be produced
- A process for communication with the sponsoring agencies
- Collection of data and assessment of needs
- Methods and tools of research, evaluations, forecasting, analysis
- Report preparation and documentation

This process and document must meet [EDA's requirements for an EDA-funded CEDS](#), which will include Summary Background, SWOT Analysis, Strategic Direction/Action Plan, Evaluation Framework, and sections on Economic Resilience, Workforce Development, and Equity.

The comprehensive update of the Evansville Region's CEDS should:

- **Present** background and historical information about economic development
- **Evaluate** the economic conditions of the Evansville Region
- **Identify** the Evansville Region's economic development strengths and constraints
- **Identify** infrastructure needs
- **Evaluate** the needs of the Evansville region, including a full SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis concerning economic development
- **Evaluate** the infrastructure inventory of the Evansville Region
- **Assess** appropriate economic development strategies for the Evansville region
- **Anticipate** the Evansville Region's economic development activity, potential future developments, current and future plans and other information that could affect the project
- **Evaluate** local and regional labor characteristics; recommend actions to strengthen links between regional educational institutions and employment development providers
- **Identify** appropriate economic development strategies for the Evansville Region
- **Identify** the goals and visions for the region
- **Set the Course** for future development actions
- **Create** a strategic action plan to achieve goals and objectives
- **Establish** evaluation standards to measure the success of the strategies
- **Identify** other potential opportunities and issues
- **Outline E-REP's role in helping the Evansville Region recover from future disruptions, and reposition the region to move forward:**
 - Illustrating E-REP's ability to navigate federal programs
 - Documenting E-REP's Technical Expertise, organizational-wide
 - Identifying E-REP's Broad Network of Partners
 - Prioritizing resilient transportation investments
 - Diversifying the Regional Economy
 - Assessing Economic Vulnerabilities
 - Promoting Green Infrastructure
 - Promoting Safe Development

- **Provide** Resiliency and Disaster Plans
 - o The CEDS should address resiliency and recovery in the face of natural disasters and other major economic disruptions in our changing global economy. It should outline ways to:
 - » Diversify the regional economy away from a declining sector
 - » Deal with the impacts of the loss of a major employer
 - » Position the Evansville Region to withstand and quickly recover from the effects of natural disasters, a changing climate, and other economic shocks
- **Identify** Funding Opportunities
 - o Research and identify federal, state and local funding sources
 - o Identify opportunities for joint development and/or public-private partnerships
- **Perform** stakeholder and public outreach
 - o E-REP expects this to be a major element of the project and is open to a variety of methods. Our vision is to have a process whereby key stakeholders are brought together to discuss the issues, trends, and opportunities facing the region, and how the region’s economy can be moved forward.

Part of our evaluation of RFP responses will be the strength of the stakeholder and public outreach process proposed by the respondent. Our desire is to have a robust outreach process that informs people of the trends shaping the region and engages them in crafting and advocating for solutions. E-REP anticipates that this will involve members of the public, non-profits, governments, and the corporate sector. At a minimum, the process will involve the CEDS Strategy Committee (complying with EDA standards), advisory groups and stakeholder interviews. E-REP also anticipates that this process will be iterative and will involve multiple rounds of soliciting input, presenting data/analysis in response to that input, and soliciting further input.

This iterative process will inform both the analysis and solution development processes. The consultant may advise on creating a website regarding this project and E-REP would assist with maintaining the website with basic information about the project and project-related events.

PLEASE NOTE: The design of both the draft and final CEDS must be in compliance with E-REP’s visual identity standards. E-REP will provide and perform creative direction including draft and final layout, art, photography and illustration direction.



E-REP’S ROLE IN SUPPORTING CEDS DEVELOPMENT

E-REP is matching grant dollars via in-kind staff time. Therefore, E-REP staff will play a supporting role in the development of the CEDS. Staff can play a role in local coordination, assisting or hosting stakeholder and public outreach meetings, and plan layout, art, photography, and illustration. The proposal should identify potential areas of assistance that E-REP staff can provide.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS, PLANS AND INITIATIVES

- [Talent EVV Goals](#)
- [Regional Development Plan](#)
- [Ohio River Vision and Strategic Plan](#) (Coming February 2024)
- [Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2050](#)
- [Transportation Improvement Program 2024-2028](#) for Vanderburgh, Warrick, and Henderson (KY) counties
- [Vanderburgh County Comprehensive Plan 2015-2035](#)
- [Evansville Downtown Master Plan](#)
- Other municipal comprehensive plans available upon request

BUDGET

The allocated budget for this scope of work is \$60,000. E-REP is matching the \$60,000 grant from the EDA with in-kind staff time and will provide support to the chosen firm. The winning proposal will be determined based on a number of factors that work together to create the best value for E-REP. These include quality, cost, efficiency, qualifications and experience. Proposers are responsible for all costs of developing and submitting a proposal package, interviews or any other bidder costs associated with responding to this solicitation.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

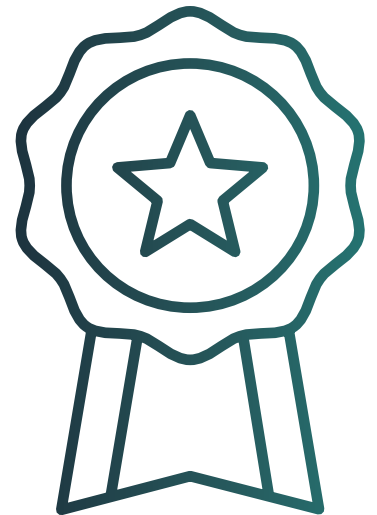
Responses to this proposal will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Qualification/experience of prime consultant with studies of similar type and size
- Qualification/experience of sub consultants with studies of similar type and size and/or special expertise beneficial to study
- Demonstration of knowledge of economic development principles and trends
- Indication of sufficient staff for all facets of the study
- Past record of performance on similar projects
- Proposed cost of the study and demonstration of commitment for meeting the project budget and schedule

A selection committee comprised of E-REP staff, representatives of E-REP technical and/or policy committees and the Evansville region’s economic development professionals will review the proposals, conduct the interviews and select the project consultant. Interviews will be scheduled for December 11-15, 2023.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

- RFP issue date.....November 9, 2023
- Deadline for proposals.....December 6, 2023
- Review by RFP Committee.....December 7-11, 2023
- Consultant interviews..... December 11-15, 2023
- Consultant recommendation determined.....December 22, 2023
- Consultant Selection approval..... January 3, 2023
- Project Commencement Date..... January 8, 2024
- Project Completion Date September 30, 2024



EVANSVILLE REGION’S CEDS, GOVERNANCE AND DEPLOYMENT

The hired consultant will cooperate and work with E-REP and regional economic development partners in the preparation and development of the proposed CEDS. After the CEDS is reviewed and approved by the EDA, the E-REP Board of Directors and staff will coordinate the work of the CEDS Committee and work to deploy and implement the recommendations and strategies of the plan.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN EVANSVILLE REGION

The Evansville Region has several very dynamic organizations dedicated to economic development. E-REP serves as the Regional Economic Development Organization (REDO) for the four-county footprint. E-REP also serves as the Local Economic Development Organization (LEDO) for Vanderburgh and Posey counties, while working closely with the LEDOs in Warrick and Gibson counties, all of which have a successful track record of economic development projects.

In addition, E-REP is heavily engaged in industry-building efforts. There are also many smaller organizations and municipalities including, but not limited to area chambers of commerce and nonprofits dedicated to various aspects of economic development. They are primarily focused on job creation within their respective jurisdictions and/or area of interest.



CEDS PARTNER ENTITIES INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

The **federal agencies** listed below will be invited to participate in the CEDS planning process. These agencies can also add value in framing implementation strategies by identifying federal resources. Staff within these agencies can also share their unique insights and experiences during the planning process.

- US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration
- The Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization
- USDA Rural Development
- Department of Housing and Urban Development

The **state agencies** listed below will be invited to participate in the CEDS planning process. These agencies can also add value in framing implementation strategies by identifying state resources. Staff within these agencies can also share their unique insights and experiences in the course of planning process.

- Indiana Economic Development Corporation
- Indiana Department of Workforce Development
- Office of Community and Rural Affairs
- Indiana Ports Commission
- Indiana Department of Transportation
- Higher Education Institutions

Participation by **local governments** listed below is essential. These local government units appreciate the lived experiences of their communities and residents are best suited to understand current conditions and help to plan for a brighter future.

- Gibson County and all units of government therein
- Posey County and all units of government therein
- Vanderburgh and all units of government therein
- Warrick and all units of government therein

In terms of **regional government**, the Southwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, which was created in 2015 has experience managing state and federal programs. The collective insights and experiences of the board members and staff can help bring “lessons learned” into the CEDS planning process.



www.evansvilleregion.com

ABOUT E-REP

The Evansville Regional Economic Partnership (E-REP) leads economic development efforts for the Evansville, Indiana region and elevates the overall quality of life through transformational projects, planning, advocacy, and business engagement. Additionally, E-REP supports the attraction, startup, and growth of regional businesses.

CHANNELS

Facebook: facebook.com/evvregion

LinkedIn: [@evvregion](https://www.linkedin.com/company/evvregion)

X (formerly Twitter): [@evvregion](https://twitter.com/evvregion)

Instagram: [@evvregion](https://www.instagram.com/evvregion)

LEGAL MATTERS

- A. It is understood that this RFP does not obligate E-REP to pay any costs incurred by the applicants in the preparation and submission of a proposal or an interview.
- B. E-REP reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to negotiate the terms of the contract, including the award amount, with the selected vendor prior to entering a contract.
- C. As a public agency, E-REP is exempt from income, property, and sales tax.
- D. E-REP in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 78 Stat. 252, 42 U.S.C 2000d to 2000-4, hereby notifies all bidders that it will affirmatively ensure that in any contract entered into pursuant to this advertisement, Disadvantaged Business Enterprises will be afforded full opportunity to submit bids in response to this invitation and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, sex, age, national origin, disability/handicap, or income status in consideration of award.
- E. Upon completion of the CEDS, all data, maps and reports shall be the property of E-REP.
- F. This is a competitive proposal. Insurance will be required.

DEADLINE:

Proposals must be received no later than 5 p.m. CST, Wednesday, December 6, 2023.



SEND PROPOSALS VIA MAIL OR EMAIL TO:

(Proposals must be limited to 30 pages. Proposals sent via email should be in PDF format. Proposals sent via mail should include five hard copies.)

JOSH ARMSTRONG

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QUESTIONS

Please submit questions in writing via email to Patrick Hickey phickey@evvregion.com.