

**Request for Qualifications
Marketing, Southwest Virginia Economic Development
Virginia Coalfields**

The LENOWISCO, Cumberland Plateau, and Mount Rogers Planning District Commissions, and private sector representatives of these planning districts, have formed a regional effort to solicit statements of qualifications from a firm/team of qualified individuals for professional services for coordinated economic development activities in Southwest Virginia. The region consists of the Cities of Norton and Bristol, Virginia, and the Counties of Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Grayson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Wise, and Wythe.

The scope of work requires professional services from the qualified firm/team or individual to coordinate economic development activities within the localities outlined above. Collaboration with local, regional and state economic development agencies is a requirement for the qualified candidate. We seek qualified individuals to lead a targeted marketing effort to generate qualified economic development prospects, internationally and domestically, suitable for locating within Southwest Virginia. The successful candidate will outline a plan that enhances local, regional, state and federal marketing of the region's efforts to generate economic development prospects suitable for location within the region.

For a copy of the full Request for Qualifications, please contact Mr. Duane Miller, LENOWISCO, at dmiller@lenowisco.org or (276) 431-2206.

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The LENOWISCO Planning District Commission, the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission, and the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, and private sector representatives of these planning districts have formed a regional effort to solicit statements of qualifications from a firm/team of qualified individuals for professional services for coordinated economic development activities in Southwest Virginia. The effort is coordinated by an advisory board of public and private sector representatives (the "Advisory Board").

The region consists of the Cities of Norton and Bristol, Virginia, and the Counties of Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Grayson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Wise, and Wythe (the "Region").

The scope of work requires professional services from the qualified firm/team or individual (hereafter, "candidate") to coordinate economic development activities within the localities outlined above. Collaboration with local, regional and state economic development agencies is a requirement for the qualified candidate.

We seek qualified individuals to lead a targeted marketing effort to generate qualified economic development prospects, internationally and domestically, suitable for locating within Southwest Virginia.

The successful candidate will outline a plan that enhances local, regional, state and federal marketing of the Region's efforts to generate economic development prospects suitable for location within the Region.

The purpose of this RFQ is to:

- a. Seek qualified candidate to provide professional services to market the Region for economic development prospects.
- b. Seek plans to support the Region's coordinated efforts to produce suitable economic development prospects.
- c. Seek strategic outliner of tasks, required strategic planning, leadership of organization and timeline to implement plans.
- d. Identify candidates with current networks sufficient to attract high-quality business prospects to Southwest Virginia.

All payments for professional services will be made to the candidate as approved by the newly created Advisory Board.

Background

Mineral extraction has a long and rich history in far Southwest Virginia. Increasing mechanization in the coal mining industry in recent decades has resulted in an ongoing decrease in coalfield employment.

The region has also experienced significant job losses in other industry sectors such as apparel and other manufacturing sectors.

The region has recently enjoyed success creating employment opportunities in outdoor recreation and other tourism related activities, as well as with the recruitment of data centers, low and middle-skill technology companies, and light manufacturing and service related employment.

The Advisory Board seeks to target industry sectors that will find the Region as an advantageous region to locate their business, with a particular focus on the technology and IT sectors.

Expectations

The successful candidate will provide the following key points in their response to the RFQ:

1. A detailed outline of tasks proposed to achieve a successful marketing plan and justification for the estimated costs.
2. A detailed timetable – with deliverables – for generation of business relocation or expansion prospects to Southwest Virginia.
3. A description of the candidate's ability to work in a rural/mountainous setting with high unemployment rates.
4. The candidate's ability to successfully collaborate with other key economic development agencies, public partners, and private partners.
5. The candidate's targeted industry sectors and geography.
6. The candidate's willingness to travel frequently to Southwest Virginia to familiarize him/herself or themselves with sites and important local partners.

Selection Criteria

The Advisory Board will empower a selection committee to review the proposals. Each proposal will be evaluated by the selection committee for compliance with the RFQ instructions, and the terms and conditions set forth within. The objective of the evaluation will be to recommend the firm or team of firms that will be the most responsive to the heretofore described needs.

The selection committee will evaluate proposals based upon:

1. Demonstrated experience in successfully recruiting targeted economic development prospects to rural areas with high unemployment.
2. Specific Plan to be used in operationalizing regional marketing initiative.
3. Timeline for achieving critical milestones of the regional marketing initiative.
4. Knowledge and familiarity with Southwest Virginia, Appalachia, or similar region, with an understanding of the unique challenges of the region.
5. Experience working with Federal economic development initiatives – Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Administration, Tennessee Valley Authority, USDA, etc., in a rural setting.
6. Experience working with State economic development initiatives – Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, Workforce Investment Board, or similar agencies in other states.
7. Experience in identifying economic development prospects and successfully attracting high-quality, high-wage prospects to a rural region with high unemployment.
8. Experience working with post-secondary institutions to address workforce needs of prospects in low, middle, and high skilled industries.

Selection Process

Statements of Qualifications will be evaluated by a selection committee based upon the criteria contained herein. Interviews will be conducted with at least three candidates with final selection based upon those interviews. The highest ranked offeror of the desired professional services will enter into contract negotiations, and a final Scope of Services, amounts and methods of compensation will be determined. If a mutually acceptable contract for services cannot be successfully negotiated, the selection committee will commence negotiations with the next highest ranked offeror and continue until a contract is successfully negotiated. The Selection Committee reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to negotiate with the most qualified respondent.

Submittal of Statement of Qualifications

Submittals will be made in .pdf form to Mr. Evan Feinman, Executive Director, Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, at EFeinman@RevitalizeVA.org. The deadline for submittals is 3:00 p.m., Monday, November 5, 2018.