



Request for Qualifications

For: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

ANTICIPATED PROCESS SCHEDULE

Issue Request for Qualifications:	March 24, 2023
Written Questions Deadline:	April 5, 2023
Submittal Deadline:	April 14, 2023
Interview Finalists (if necessary):	May 8–12, 2023
Notify Finalists of Decision by:	May 19, 2023
Contract Execution by:	June 30, 2023

March 24, 2023

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) is a voluntary organization of local and tribal governments within Skagit County whose purpose is to cooperate and collaborate in regional transportation and economic development. SCOG is the metropolitan planning organization designated under federal law, and regional transportation planning organization designated under state law, in Skagit County. SCOG also administers the Growth Management Act (GMA) coordination efforts between governments of Skagit County, Indian tribes, cities and towns.

SCOG has led the preparation of Skagit County's economic development strategies since the 1970s. The most recent Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) was completed in 2003, and updated in 2013.

SCOG is initiating a request for qualifications (RFQ) from qualified firms and individuals to conduct a new Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Skagit County. This RFQ is only open to those qualified firms and individuals who satisfy the requirements stated herein and who are licensed and available to do business in Washington state. The successful firm or individual will assist SCOG with conducting the study in Skagit County. SCOG has a budget of up to \$100,000 available for this project.

It is anticipated that an agreement will be executed by SCOG and a firm or individual for this project, with an approximate 18-month term. The agreement start date is anticipated to be **July 1, 2023**, with an end date of **December 31, 2024**.

B. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The CEDs is a long-term, consensus-driven planning document that is intended to guide economic development throughout a region. The content and structure of the CEDs process and final document are governed and monitored by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The CEDs also provides a long-term vision and plan for economic development in the region, generates consensus regionally on development priorities, and makes development more programmatic and efficient.

Some desired outcomes and components have already been identified for a new CEDs in Skagit County through some initial scoping. The following are outcomes and components SCOG expects in the new CEDs:

1. Prepare a new, robust, data-driven, Skagit County CEDs as soon as possible to align with other on-going countywide efforts, such as 2025 local comprehensive plans and recent strategic plans by SCOG members;

2. Include strategies and actions on how to leverage federal and state funding to increase the cost feasibility of prime sites for regional economic development;
3. Ensure the CEDS is federally compliant and meets all the requirements from EDA. For example, identify industry sectors in Skagit County with a competitive advantage over other areas, with strategies and actions to grow those sectors. This allows SCOG member jurisdictions to seek future EDA grants and improves likelihood of receiving state grants;
4. Coordinate the CEDS with state GMA requirements and have the new CEDS prepared so it can inform the economic element of Skagit County's 2025 comprehensive plan, and other local comprehensive plans. The 2003 CEDS and 2013 CEDS update prepared by SCOG also served this function;
5. Take economic resilience into account. Follow guidance by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and align CEDS with Skagit County's Hazard Mitigation Plan and other applicable resiliency efforts; and
6. Address emerging public and private infrastructure needs and issues, such as electric power transmission, distribution and storage needs.

The above list should not be viewed as the entirety of CEDS outcomes and components; other components are anticipated to be part of the new CEDS as well.

In addition to meeting federal requirements for a CEDS, SCOG is interested in having the strategy form the core of a broader strategic framework for the region. A number of existing plans, recent reports, and agency-wide discussions have identified trends and situations with significant implications for the region. Recent examples include:

1. North Star Project;
2. Port of Skagit Strategic Plan;
3. Sedro-Woolley Innovation for Tomorrow Center;
4. Skagit County Strategic Plan; and
5. Skagit PUD Strategic Plan.

These plans and projects, along with other future-oriented products from around the region, can be incorporated into a unifying strategy on economic development that provides a guide for future coordinated growth, which should be contained within the CEDS.

SCOG expects the first task of work will be to develop a scope of services by working with SCOG staff, Board of Directors and key stakeholders.

C. RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

SCOG expects that each offeror will have the following relevant experience included within this section.

SCOG seeks a firm or individual with significant experience and competency in producing economic development plans and working with diverse stakeholders to reach consensus, specifically with the development of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies. Successful offerors must have demonstrated experience in preparing a federally compliant CEDS. Other desired qualifications include demonstrated experience working in natural resource-based rural communities, and familiarity with asset-based-development models that seek to build multiple forms of community capital and wealth building. In addition, successful offerors must have demonstrated ability in economic analysis and integrating that analysis to inform the development of strategies and actions.

Experience in regional planning, familiarity with the Growth Management Act and resiliency planning is desirable.

D. RESPONSE CONTENT AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

The successful offeror will indicate its ability to provide, as needed, a full support team. The firm or team selected must also demonstrate competence and relevant qualifications.

Responses will be scored using the following criteria:

1. QUALIFICATIONS - 25%

- A. Name, address and telephone number of the firm or individual;
- B. Names of project team members, professional certifications and registrations, education, team role and relevant experience of each member;
- C. Knowledge of databases, data analysis, preparing documents and reports, and presentation of information in a clear manner; and
- D. Three references, including names and phone numbers of contact persons.

2. APPROACH - 30%

- A. A general approach to how the scope of work would be accomplished, including a sufficient level of detail to convey the general approach. A detailed approach is unnecessary for the response;
- B. Familiarity with the project service area and local factors, understanding of and approach to the scope of services desired, and the ability to meet SCOG's objectives; and
- C. Demonstration of competence and familiarity in conducting CEDS processes, while addressing CEDS requirements.

3. COLLABORATIVE WORK - 10%

- A. Demonstration of ability to collaboratively work between CEDS stakeholders, including, but not limited to, federal agencies, state agencies, local agencies, tribal governments, local associations and businesses.

4. PAST RECORD OF PERFORMANCE - 25%

- A. List of similar relevant projects and where to view them;
- B. Demonstrated professional experience consulting on regional planning projects; and
- C. Professional experience of project team members working on CEDS projects in particular.

5. PRICE - 10%

- A. Cost per hour for each individual on the consultant team.

Responses must total no more than 15 pages. A cover letter does not count toward the 15-page maximum, and dividers do not count as pages if they do not contain content (i.e. text, pictures and graphics) other than what is necessary to identify the section of the response. Front and back covers of the response also do not count toward the 15 pages.

Responses must be received by **5:00 p.m. (PT)** on **April 14, 2023**. Late responses will not be considered for selection.

E. CONTRACT TERM

The contract is anticipated to begin on **July 1, 2023** and end on **December 31, 2024**. Any contract extension must be mutually agreed by the contractor and SCOG.

F. SUBMITTAL AND SELECTION PROCESS

Responses must be received by **5:00 p.m.** (PT) on **April 14, 2023**. It is anticipated that submitted responses will be evaluated within two weeks of the submission deadline. SCOG expects to make the selection decision after evaluating written proposals and contacting references. If SCOG determines that interviews are warranted, any interviews with prospective individuals or firms will be scheduled for **May 8-12, 2023**. A remote interview option will be provided to reduce travel time and associated costs. After interviews (if necessary), references will then be contacted, and a firm or individual will be selected to undertake the project.

Responses will be evaluated to determine the best value to SCOG based upon the evaluation criteria included in this RFQ. SCOG reserves the right to accept or reject any or all responses received from this RFQ, or to negotiate separately with any offeror, and to waive any informalities, defects, or irregularities in any response, or to accept that response or responses, which in the judgment of the proper officials, is in the best interest of SCOG. SCOG reserves the right to award the contract to other than the lowest offeror.

This RFQ includes the scope of services (Section B) to be performed, which should be used as the general basis for the response. Variations or alternative approaches are welcome. Responses which do not include all requested information listed in Section D may be considered non-responsive. All responses will become a part of the public file on this matter without obligation to SCOG.

G. INTERPRETATION OF SOLICITATION

Any person contemplating submitting a response who is uncertain as to the intended meaning of any part of this solicitation or finds discrepancies in, or omissions from the specifications, may request interpretation, clarification, or correction of this RFQ. Such request must be by email and must be delivered to the SCOG contact person no later than **5:00 p.m.** (PT) on **April 5, 2023**. The person submitting the request is responsible for its timely delivery. Any interpretation, clarification, or correction to the RFQ will be made by written addendum and will be available on the SCOG website (www.scog.net).

Any questions concerning this solicitation should be directed via email to:

Kevin Murphy
Executive Director
Skagit Council of Governments
Email: kmurphy@scog.net

H. POST-CLOSING DISCUSSION

Conversations may take place between SCOG and offerors after the responses are initially reviewed, for purposes of clarification. Offerors will be held to the information submitted in their response and subsequent negotiations.

Those submitting responses may be required to make a presentation to SCOG as part of the selection process. The presenter shall be the person within the offeror's organization who is responsible for the professional service.

I. INCURRED COST

This RFQ does not obligate SCOG to award any contract, nor will it be responsible for any cost or expense that may be incurred by the offeror in preparing and submitting a response to this RFQ, or any cost or expense incurred by the offeror before the execution of a contract agreement. The offeror shall be solely responsible for any and all costs associated with submitting a response including any and all costs associated with interviews. No claims shall be submitted to SCOG for preparation or presentation of responses.

J. PROTEST OF CONTRACT AWARD

Protests concerning the consultant selection process must be delivered by an interested party in writing to SCOG within 14 calendar days of the award announcement. SCOG will review the protest, contact the parties involved, and recommend the appropriate action to the SCOG Board of Directors, and other agencies as applicable. The Board's decision will be the final SCOG position. The final decision will be presented to all interested parties within forty-five (45) calendar days of receipt of the protest.

Unsuccessful offerors will be afforded the opportunity of a debriefing conference if they so request. The request for a debriefing conference must be made within three days of receipt of the notification indicating that their response was not selected. Discussions will be informal and limited to a critique of the requesting consultant's response. SCOG representatives will explain the scoring of a consultant's response. Debriefings may be conducted in person or by telephone and may be limited to a specific period of time.

K. ASSIGNMENT

The awarded contractor shall not assign, transfer, convey, sublet, or otherwise dispose of any award or of any of its rights, title, or interests therein, without the prior written consent of SCOG.

L. ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

SCOG reserves the right to introduce additional terms and conditions at the time the final contract is negotiated. Any additional terms or conditions would be limited to ones having the effect of clarifying the RFQ language and/or correcting defects, such as omissions or misstatements, which are discovered after the RFQ is issued, or that reflect state or federal law changes, or as required by funding entities.

M. OFFEROR'S RESPONSIBILITY

By submitting a response, a firm or individual represents that:

1. The offeror has read and understands the RFQ, and the response is made in accordance therewith;
2. The offeror is familiar with the local conditions under which this contract must be performed. The offeror possesses the capabilities, resources, and personnel necessary to provide efficient and successful service; and
3. It is understood, and the offeror agrees, that the offeror shall be solely responsible for all services provided.

Each offeror shall be responsible for reading and completely understanding the requirements and specifications contained herein. The deadline for submission of responses will be strictly adhered to. Late responses will not be considered.

N. PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

Upon selection, the offeror shall be responsible for providing proof of professional liability insurance coverage for errors and omissions in the proposed work. The coverage should amount to at least \$1,000,000.

O. TITLE VI ASSURANCES

The Skagit Council of Governments, in accordance with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 252, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d to 2000d-4) and the Regulations, hereby notifies all bidders that it will affirmatively ensure that any contract entered into pursuant to this advertisement, disadvantaged business enterprises will be afforded full and fair opportunity to submit bids in response to this invitation and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, or national origin in consideration for an award.

P. DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS

Responses must be received by **5:00 p.m.** (PT) on **April 14, 2023**. Responses shall be emailed to:

Kevin Murphy
Executive Director
Skagit Council of Governments
Email: kmurphy@scog.net