



QUALIFICATION BASED SELECTION PROCESS FOR ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION SERVICES

I. BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lake County, a Michigan county government entity, is soliciting “Statements of Qualification” for firm(s) to provide Economic Diversification Services, including the creation of an Economic Diversification Study that leads to the development and successful implementation of an Economic Diversification Plan by December, 2025. The plan will be the framework for creating a community environment that fosters business and entrepreneurial growth and creatively utilizes its unique resources to attract and expand its rural economy. This work will be completed in collaboration with the Lake County Economic Diversification Advisory Group, under the oversight of the Lake County Economic Development Alliance Director who serves through a partnership with The Right Place.

Lake County is a rural community in Northwest Michigan with a total population of just under 13,000 and a median income of \$40,753 (making it historically the poorest county per capita in Michigan). It is a recent recipient of US Economic Development Agency funding to support the diversification of its rural, non-agricultural, tourism-based economy following the closure of its largest employer and taxpayer, Geo Group’s North Lake Correctional Facility.

Selected consultant(s) will work with the Lake County Economic Diversification Advisory Group, under the oversight of the Lake County Economic Development Alliance Executive Director to create an Economic Diversification Study that leads to the development and successful implementation of a Lake County Economic Diversification Plan by December, 2025.

II. SCOPE OF WORK AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Interested parties are encouraged to submit qualifications for all or part of the following project scope of work, which will support Lake County to develop a strategy to replace the jobs and lost revenue from the departure of a major regional employer and taxpayer, Geo Group. This economic diversification initiative project, which will begin with an Economic Diversification Study and culminate with implementation of a collaborative community-based Diversification Plan, will establish the resources and tools needed for not just replacing, but improving upon the jobs and revenue lost.

The selected consultant will work in partnership with the Lake County Economic Diversification Advisory group, with oversight from the Lake County Economic Development Alliance Executive Director provided through a partnership with The Right Place, to provide the following services:

A. ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION STUDY IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNITY

INVOLVEMENT: Perform field work and produce study findings with the assistance of the ED Advisory Group and community input. Consultant will also utilize findings as appropriate from studies and plans recently completed within the county, including Village of Baldwin Downtown Vision, Historic Community Planning for the African American resort community of Idlewild, and a County-wide Housing Needs Assessment.

B. REPORT OUT TO COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS: Create a Report of Findings and Recommendations and present it to county stakeholders through a series of community meetings, including a special meeting of Board of Commissioners.

C. PLAN DEVELOPMENT: Develop an Economic Diversification Plan, based on study findings, including researching, and securing necessary resources for plan implementation. Plan will provide suggested use for current and proposed infrastructure, viable business development options for increased employment and tax revenue, potential incentives and resources for business attraction.

The Scope of Work will also culminate in the following interrelated studies and reports as deliverables:

- 1. INFRASTRUCTURE INVENTORY:** An infrastructure inventory will identify the existing types and location of infrastructure, as well as crucial service gaps. This information will allow county and municipal governments to identify and prioritize infrastructure investments and best available sites for future development. Types of infrastructure to be assessed include electric, natural gas, broadband, water, sewer, roads.
- 2. MUNICIPAL UTILITY ASSESSMENT:** The study will assess infrastructure capacity and need, and provide Lake County, the Village of Baldwin, and Webber Township with potential solutions for utilizing excess capacity and minimizing impacts to low-income households. Study will include recommendations for reaching minimum capacity through public/private partnerships and/or funding requests for system changes.
- 3. CORE COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEURIAL HUB FEASIBILITY STUDY:** The project study will explore findings related to the creation of an entrepreneurial hub with an open market concept on the site of a condemned structure located in the heart of recent redevelopment in Downtown Baldwin. The study will include an analysis of viability for such a hub downtown, along with potential funding opportunities.

4. **ECONOMIC RECOVERY STRATEGY:** The selected consultant will facilitate discussions to identify community supported solutions for sustainable economic recovery and diversification in the wake of the closing of the county's largest employer.
5. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL VACANCIES:** The study will provide suggested viable uses for inventoried industrial sites that can result in the marketing of these sites to potential industrial users as well as the potential for a future funding request for necessary infrastructure development. An inventory of the County's core city's (Village of Baldwin) vacant commercial sites and an analysis of their potential use, including a market leakage report will be included in the study's final report as well.

III. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

The Lake County Economic Diversification Advisory Group will review, evaluate, and rate SOQs using the following criteria (75 Points):

- a. Reputation for professional integrity and competence (10 points);
- b. Experience and familiarity with economic development, community development, community revitalization and recovery in rural, non-agricultural community (particularly following the loss of a key employer), and the proposed Project (30 points);
- c. Experience and reputation providing similar services to other rural communities (15 points);
- d. A satisfactory list of clients and references for which similar services were provided within the past 5 years (10 points); and
- e. Key personnel or team members and their experience in performing the duties as outlined in this QBS (10 points).

In accordance with the QBS process, Lake County will identify the most advantageous submittal(s) using the criteria listed above.

Lake County reserves the right to short-list and interview multiple firms and/or select the most advantageous firm based solely on the SOQs submitted without conducting interviews.

Lake County may require selected firm(s) to make a presentation to the Lake County Economic Diversification Advisory Group and/or the Lake County Board of Commissioners.

Lake County reserves the right to accept or reject any or all SOQs or any part of a SOQ, to waive formalities or informalities, and to award to the Consultant deemed to be in the best interest of the project.

IV. SUBMISSION PROCESS

QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS SHOULD SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING, VIA EMAIL TO NICHOLSJ@RIGHTPLACE.ORG, **NO LATER THAN 5:00PM (EST) ON JANUARY 26, 2024:**

- 1. Documentation of professional experience and qualifications to successfully perform the scope of work outlined below;**
- 2. Resumes of key personnel who would serve as project lead(s);**
- 3. References from recent rural economic / community development clients;**
- 4. Examples of similar economic development plans, including specifics regarding plan implementation and areas of success;**
- 5. In conjunction with item 4, prices and costs associated with the development and implementation of the plans.**

Selected consultants will be notified by February 28, 2024, of opportunity for interview.

For questions regarding the proposed services or the submittal process, please contact Jodi Nichols, LCEDA Executive Director at nicholsj@rightplace.org or 231.742.3328