

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

### The Preparation of an **Economic Development Strategy-Plan**

For Vernon County, Wisconsin

Due Date: *Friday May 19, 2023 at 2:00pm*

**Introduction & Intent:** Vernon County, Wisconsin is soliciting proposals from reputable consultants to create an innovative economic development strategic plan addressing the area's unique assets and challenges. Our current Economic Development Strategy, which can be found [https://www.vernoncounty.org/government/plans\\_and\\_strategies/index.php](https://www.vernoncounty.org/government/plans_and_strategies/index.php) expires in December of 2023, has guided our efforts for the past 5 years, although it did not account for extensive flooding and the pandemic. The County expects to hire an accomplished consultant firm, seasoned in producing rural municipal, county, or state economic development strategic plans and economic resiliency reports, to help lead the community into the future with inventive thinking, new ideas, economic strategic tools/approaches, and implementable policies and action plans.

The anticipated RFP schedule is as follows:

1. RFP issuance Friday May 5, 2023
2. Proposals due Friday May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 2:00pm
3. Selection committee evaluation and selection of finalist(s)
4. Interview of finalist(s) Thursday May 25, 2023, online or in person
5. Selected Consultant recommendation to ED Committee June 1, 2023
6. As soon as approved: Project kickoff July 1, 2023
7. Consultant updates ED Committee formally on Sept 7, 2023 on progress; then attends – in person or online - subsequent monthly Vernon County ED Committee meetings that occur on 10/5, 11/2, 12/7 - to present ongoing updates until final plan delivered on January 4, 2024.
8. Consultant presents Plan with formal presentation to Economic Development Committee January 4, 2024
9. Plan Delivered with formal Final Presentation to Full County Board Tuesday January 16, 2024

### **Background**

Deep in the heart of Wisconsin's Hidden Valleys lies Vernon County. It is a place so quiet and beautiful, it's no wonder we call it God's Country. Our celebrated rivers, rugged hills, scenic

farms, sturdy forests, tranquil back roads, crystal air and friendly people combine to make Vernon County the ideal place to find live, work and play.

In 2020, Vernon County, WI had a population of 30,759 people with a median age of 42 and a median household income of \$54,549. Between 2019 and 2020 the population of Vernon County, WI grew from 30,633 to 30,759, a 0.411% increase and its median household income grew from \$52,459 to \$54,549, a 3.98% increase. Vernon County is home to multiple county and state parks. The Kickapoo Valley Reserve, an 8600-acre natural reserve, is between the villages of La Farge and Ontario. Wildcat Mountain State Park is also in the county. From 2020 to 2021, Vernon County has had a significant economic impact with Direct Visitor Spending going from \$36.6 million in 2020 to \$44.8 million in 2021, which is a 22.6% increase. Also, County Tourism has had a direct positive impact to our state and local taxes, which had an increase from 2020 to 2021 from 3.7 million to \$4.2 million, which was a 15.6% increase.

#### *Vernon County Economic Development Goals*

1. Support and Retain Current Businesses
2. Support entrepreneurship and the development of new businesses
3. Development of Workforce Housing and Childcare Facilities including Childcare providers/workforce
3. Create jobs through business Expansion
4. Skilled workforce development & Youth retention
5. Support Communities downtown business development and improvement efforts
6. Expand the use of the Vernon County Loan Funds
7. Expand Countys Tourism economy and enhance Outdoor Recreation opportunities

#### **Scope of Work**

Develop and present to Vernon County an Economic Development Plan. The plan would provide a framework to guide Vernon County's economic development over the next five years. The plan should identify clear actions the County Board, Vernon County Economic Development Committee & Staff can take to support and grow economic development in Vernon County.

Vernon County is prepared to pay market rate for the development of an Economic Development Plan.

1. Submission of Bids

All bids should be submitted to the address below by 2:00pm Friday May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Responses received after the due date will not be accepted.

Vernon County

Attn: Christina Dollhausen , Economic Development Coordinator

400 Courthouse Square

Viroqua WI 54665

All questions and inquiries should be made to:

Christina Dollhausen [christina.dollhausen@vernoncounty.org](mailto:christina.dollhausen@vernoncounty.org)  
608-209-7727

## **SELECTION PROCESS**

1. Proposals will be reviewed and scored by the County's selection team using the following criteria:
  - 5 years experience in economic development in rural areas (20 percent)
  - Experience working with local businesses and identifying needs (15 percent)
  - Knowledge and experience analyzing data and economic development (15 percent)
  - Ability to develop clear action items and targeted goals for consideration by the County Board (35 percent)
  - 3 professional references from rural clients served over the last 5 years (15 percent)
  - Ability and commitment to complete the project within the project timeline
2. Interviews - After all written proposals are initially reviewed, the County may request the finalist to participate in an interview. The interview may include more detailed questions regarding any part of the proposal or ask the applicant to further expand on his/her past experiences as it relates to the development of an economic development plan for Vernon County. Interviews will be scheduled on Friday May 26, 2023
3. The County selection team will make a recommendation at the Vernon County Economic Development Committee on June 1, 2023. A final decision will be made by acting committee members at this meeting.

## **REQUIRED MEETINGS**

1. The Consultant is to participate in person or online in the Sept 7, 2023 Vernon County Economic Development Committee meeting to provide an update to include what has been learned thus far and preliminary needs identified to date.

2. Consultant then attends and reports, in person or online, at subsequent monthly Vernon County ED Committee meetings on 10/5, 11/2 and 12/7 - to present ongoing updates until final plan delivered on January 4, 2024.
3. Consultant presents Plan with formal presentation with clear action items to Economic Development Committee January 4, 2024
4. Plan Delivered with formal Final Presentation to Full County Board Tuesday January 16, 2024 with clear action items

## **FINAL REPORT**

The final report including any drafts, maps, records and other documentation produced in connection with this report shall be the exclusive property of the County. All interviews with businesses, meetings with staff, and information collected on business retention strategies will be kept strictly confidential.