REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:
BUSINESS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN

BOROUGH OF STATE COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION:
The Borough of State College’s Redevelopment Authority (hereafter, the “RDA”) seeks a consulting team with broad experience in visioning, urban/suburban design, planning, and market analysis with specialization in retail and economic development to create an economic development strategic plan. The plan should include a commercial vision for downtown State College and strategies to attract and retain a variety of businesses. The plan will include the review of relevant community demographic data, an analysis of the local economy and the capacity for additional growth, as well as stakeholder engagements to capture the desired vision of residents, business owners, and commercial landlords. This plan will have specific goals, objectives, and implementation strategies for growing and diversifying downtown State College’s business mix and local economy.

BACKGROUND:
The Borough of State College is located in central Pennsylvania and houses the Pennsylvania State University, who is also its main employer. Due to its status as a college town, the Borough’s economy faces the unique challenge of addressing the needs of both students and families. Historically, the businesses downtown have marketed their services toward the student population as the University is adjacent to the downtown corridor. As such, the commercial profile has remained homogenous with similar retail, fast food, and restaurant chains maintaining a strong presence. The lack of a diverse business mix continuously prevents local residents and families from shopping downtown, and the overwhelming presence of students has fostered a market for purpose-built student housing. Within the past five years, downtown State College has seen an increase in multifamily developments marketed exclusively to the student population. The multifamily projects that come online are maximizing the number of residential floors because of the high demand for purpose-built student housing. These projects are typically developed within the Collegiate Housing and Signature Development overlay zoning districts, which allow for greater residential buildout, but require commercial development on the first or second floors to create a mixed-use building. The overlay districts apply to specific areas within the Commercial (C) and Commercial Incentive Districts (CID). Due to the rapid boom of purpose-built student housing, the commercial space is coming online faster than it can be filled. There is approximately 70,000 sqft. of vacant commercial space in the new mixed-use developments, adding to the surplus of commercial vacancies from other properties in the downtown area, where businesses closed due to the economic shock of the Covid-19 pandemic.
OVERVIEW:

These challenges present unique opportunities for the RDA to address the current economic needs of the community. The primary goal of the comprehensive economic development strategy is the targeted development and growth of the local economy with an emphasis on attracting and retaining diverse retail industries to draw families downtown and sustain our local business mix. Specifically, the RDA seeks to first maintain and expand the many small businesses our downtown has to offer, and second to fill vacant commercial spaces. The RDA would like the final economic development strategy and business recruitment and retention plan to accomplish the following:

1. Establish a customized economic development strategic plan for the Borough of State College for the next 10 years, setting forth specific goals and objectives for capitalizing on existing economic opportunities and suggesting potential solutions to the economic development challenges that the Borough faces.
2. Provide recommendations on what business sectors the Borough should focus its efforts on for future commercial growth and to fill vacant downtown commercial space (i.e., retail, general office, restaurant, fast food, light industrial, professional services, business park, etc.). How does the Borough overcome barriers to this growth if any exist?
3. Preparation of a basic business attraction/retention strategy for preferred business sectors identified by this project.
4. Develop a toolkit of policies and programming to retain our current small and locally owned businesses.
5. Create a strategy for servicing businesses needs to expand facilities or their overall marketplace to ensure long-term sustainability and economic success.
6. Hold a minimum of four (4) community visioning sessions and several stakeholder group engagements to capture community and stakeholder views on the Borough’s future, highlighting specific visions for the local economy and downtown business mix. Provide a basic layout of your proposed meeting schedule with community and stakeholders groups in your response.
7. Evaluate and provide recommendations how the RDA can use an allotted $500,000 to support business recruitment, expansion, or retainment in an effective program.

The consulting firm chosen must have the following:
- experience working with municipal government,
- technical planning expertise,
- extensive knowledge in preparing comprehensive economic development strategies with retail recruitment plans to address local business needs, and a
- professional background in locating and working with a variety of retailers and community stakeholders.

The RDA intends to enter a formal contract with the chosen consulting firm for the proposed project term. Compensation for the services rendered will not exceed $150,000.
SCOPE:

The RDA’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: Business Recruitment and Retention Plan will consist of three key phases, each with specific points to be included.

1. A Market Analysis containing the following:
   a. Population demographics and household changes
   b. Competition
   c. Existing firms
   d. Retail leakage and surplus
   e. Retail development in similar municipalities
   f. Cannibalization
   g. Current and projected retail trends for the next 10 years
   h. Market viability and tenant turnover
   i. Key psychographics
   j. Report tools for existing and local retailers

2. A ‘Results Driven’ Economic Development Vision and Business Recruitment Plan addressing the following:
   a. A comprehensive economic development strategy including the local economic vision for the next 10 years
   b. Identification of activities, projects, and programs meant to implement goals set forth in the strategy
   c. Specific recommendations for implementation of these activities and the preparation of basic performance measures to track and evaluate progress towards achieving the stated goals of the overall strategy
   d. Identification of short- and long-term goals for the Borough’s business community
   e. Identification of appropriate prospective retailers suited to fill vacant commercial space
   f. Strengths and weaknesses of the Borough’s retail market
   g. Identification of sites for potential retail development consistent with the Economic Development Vision established for the next decade

3. Implementation, Marketing, and Representation of the Plan addressing the following:
   a. Contact and attract potential retailers
   b. Work with local officials, property owners, real estate brokers, and other stakeholders to build and retain the retail sector
   c. Assist in production of marketing materials for use by retail prospects, both physical and digital versions to enhance the State College Borough’s retail environment
   d. Meetings with the RDA and Borough Council members to discuss findings
   e. One-page information sheet pitching the benefits of opening a business or office in State College, available to share with brokers and property owners
REQUIRED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE:

The Borough of State College is looking for a qualified consultant who can analyze current market trends and offer strategies to expand upon existing retail markets. The consultant must have strong communication skills to conduct outreach to a variety of stakeholders, including property owners, entrepreneurs, and local government officials. The consultant must demonstrate a high level of professionalism, which will be evaluated based on the completeness of the proposal submitted. Finally, the consultant should be familiar with the economic makeup of State College, as well as those of other Pennsylvania/East Cost/Mid-Atlantic communities. Experience developing similar projects in communities heavily influenced by institutions of higher education is also desired.

REQUIRED FORMAT AND CONTENT:

Each proposal must contain the following items to be considered complete.

1. A cover letter containing an overview of the firm’s organization, highlighting its most relevant professional experience as well as the specialization of its key staff. It must also describe the facilities involved in servicing the RDA, and the name, telephone number, and email address of a main contact person.

2. A description of qualifications and experience containing a brief history and organization of the firm, along with its legal entity for the contract and the name and title of the person authorized to enter into the master contract agreement. Please include the location of the main work office. Any sub-consultant firms should also be included if applicable. In addition, the RDA will need a narrative describing how prior experience and qualifications pertain to its scope of work.

3. Project Team. A description of each project team member should include the following components: name, office location, individual roles and responsibilities, subconsultants if applicable, resumes that include educational experience, work experience in similar projects, and licensure and certifications, and individual hourly rates.

4. A proposed project schedule that includes a detailed approach to completing the project, identifies unique issues related to this project, proposes a process for communication with key stakeholders, and describes the roles of the RDA and the firm.

5. A statement of the firm’s current workload and capacity to meet the project schedule.

6. References. Provide contact information for at least 3 client references. These references must be from similar projects completed within the last 3 years.

7. Work Samples. Provide descriptions of 3 similar projects completed within the last 3 years. Each of these descriptions should include the dates, location, budget, team members, and each of their roles, work, and levels of involvement.

8. Fee estimate including staff’s hourly rates, applicable escalation clauses, miscellaneous billable costs, and an estimated final project cost.
CONTACT INFORMATION:

Completed proposals must be submitted digitally to istorey@statecollegepa.us.

Questions and concerns can be directed to Isabel Storey by email at istorey@statecollegepa.us or by phone at (814) 234-7100 ext. 4415.

SCHEDULE:

RFP Released by the Borough: April 27th, 2022

Proposal Submission Deadline: May 27th, 2022

Proposal Review and Evaluation: May 31st-June 7th, 2022

Final Interviews and Selection: June 8th-June 15th, 2022

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

RDA staff will review and evaluate the proposals using the criteria below.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>Description of Successful Submission</th>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Demonstration of timeliness in completing work</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Relationship of proposed cost to value of services provided</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Relevance of qualifications and experience of key project personnel</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Overall administrative capacity as demonstrated in part by completeness of Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Satisfaction of References</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Innovations or recommendations to improve upon requested scope of services</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Participation by Section 3 Business Concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Participation by Minority and Women Business Enterprises</td>
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Award of the contract shall be made to the responsible Offeror, or Offerors, whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to the RDA, taking into consideration the evaluation factors set forth above.

MBE/WBE AND SECTION 3 FIRMS:

Firms qualifying as Minority Business Enterprises and Women Business Enterprises (MBE/WBE) must be registered as such with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in order to receive credit in the evaluation process. All firms identified as MBE/WBEs must attach to their proposal a written description of the role and duties of the minority or women in the firm
ownership. Firms interested in becoming PA MBE and WBE firms can refer to https://iup.edu/ptac/state/pa-women-and-minority-certification/ for details on that process.

A “Section 3 Business Concern” is:

1. 51% or more owned by Section 3 residents;

2. A firm whose permanent, full-time employees include at least 30% current Section 3 residents, or who within three years of first employment at the business were Section 3 residents; or

3. A firm providing evidence of a commitment to subcontract in excess of 25% of the dollar award of all subcontracts to be awarded to business concerns that meet the qualifications in (1) or (2) above.

A Section 3 Resident means a public housing resident, or an individual who resides in State College Borough whose family income does not exceed 80 percent of the median income for the area. Income guidelines are available from the State College Borough Planning Department on request.

It is the responsibility of firms seeking Section 3 preference to include with their proposal a written, signed letter of certification that the firm qualifies as a Section 3 Business Concern, indicating the basis on which the firm qualifies for preference. The firm shall produce acceptable evidence of means of qualification if requested.

State College Borough operates under Section 3 of the National Affordable Housing Act of 1968, as amended by Section 915 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992. Section 3 stipulates that employment and other economic opportunities generated by certain HUD financial assistance programs for housing and community development programs (such as the HOME program) shall, to the greatest extent feasible, be directed to low- and very-low-income people, women, and minorities. No person will be excluded from participation in, or otherwise discriminated against, on the basis of perceived or actual race, creed, age, ancestry, color, national origin, religion, sex, place of birth, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, source of income, disability or handicap, presence of a service animal or support animal, pregnancy, birth of a child or marital or familial status.