



6100 Southport Road  
Portage, Indiana 46368  
(219) 763-6060  
[www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org)

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
**(RFP 24-11.01)**  
**CEDS UPDATE**

August 19, 2024

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# 1. PROCUREMENT OVERVIEW

## 1.1. Description

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, herein known as the Commission (or NIRPC), desires to engage a qualified planning consulting firm. The selected firm will be responsible for developing an update to the current Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) which will cover the three counties in northwest Indiana that are in NIRPC's regional planning area and Economic Development District (EDD). These counties are Lake, Porter, and La Porte.

## 1.2. Background

The Commission is a multi-purpose, area-wide planning agency representing local governments within Lake, Porter, and La Porte counties in Indiana. It is governed by a board of fifty-three Commissioners, all being elected officials. The 1,520 square mile planning area has a population of over 775,000. The Commission is a unit of government and besides being the regional council of local governments, is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning and programming in Northwest Indiana. For information, please visit the Commission's website at [www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org).

The current [CEDS](#) was prepared in February 2016 and revised in December 2018 with expiration in October 2024. A six-month extension into March 2025 has been discussed with and approved by the Economic Development Administration (EDA).

The composition of the CEDS Strategy Committee was revised in April 2024 with the Commission Board's approval of the reorganization of the Commission's committee structure. The specific roles and responsibilities for these new committees were approved in June 2024 by the Commission's Executive Board. The Economy and Place Committee is the new 22-member body which will serve as the CEDS Strategy Committee and be responsible for the development of the CEDS update and its implementation. The previous commissioner only membership was expanded to include ten non-commissioner members. These members will represent higher education, workforce development, the regional economic development organization, labor, and a realtors' association. Also, a private individual will be appointed along with two minority group representatives, and two other representatives who can contribute to and benefit from improved economic development in the region. Four commissioners per county (or their proxy appointment of a qualified staff representative) will serve on the Economy and Place Committee, with a commissioner serving as the chair.

An [Economic Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) (ERR Plan) was completed in September 2022 which was funded by a CARES Act grant from the EDA. The ERR Plan addressed short-term and long-term economic development impacts to aid in the economic recovery from the pandemic and future disasters. Numerous action plan items were proposed for immediate and long-term recovery and future resilience. The Commission desires to integrate the action plan recommendations that are still warranted into the CEDS update.

Additionally, two other regional planning documents have relevance to the CEDS update. The first is [NWI 2050+](#) which is the Commission's long range transportation plan adopted in July 2023 to guide federal transportation funding for the region. This plan examines matters associated with roadways, transit, freight traffic, active transportation networks, housing issues, climate change, population trends, and land use including growth patterns and rural and urban design.

Encompassing a larger planning region of seven counties is the Northwest Indiana Forum's [Ignite the Region: A Regional Strategy for Economic Transformation](#) (Ignite) completed in September 2018. Ignite's five pillars focus on Business Development & Marketing, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Infrastructure, Talent, and Placemaking. Guided by this strategy, Northwest Indiana was the recipient in 2021 of a \$50 million grant from the state of Indiana's first Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI 1.0). Forty-two projects are or will be implemented reflecting a total investment of over \$695,000,000 to improve quality of place, life, or opportunity. Furthermore, READI 2.0 is

currently underway after a state award of \$45 million in April 2024. READI 2.0 projects that focus on population growth and quality of life investment are selected by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation.

Two noteworthy regional economic development initiatives should also be considered in the CEDS update. The first is the inclusion of Northwest Indiana as part of the [Bloch Tech Hub](#) which received designation as one of 31 Phase 1 Tech Hubs nationwide by the EDA. The Bloch Tech Hub’s objective is to transform the greater Chicago area into a global leader in quantum information and science technology.

The second is the Greater South Shore Initiative (GSSI) spearheaded by [One Region](#) in partnership with [Purdue University Northwest](#). GSSI is a regional effort to position Lake Michigan’s southern shore from Chicago, Illinois, to South Bend, Indiana, as a 90-mile-long, advanced-research, applied science, technology, and manufacturing corridor. GSSI’s objective is to be a top North American destination for business, industry, educational advancement, and new households.

A Consultant is sought to provide multi-faceted expertise to prepare the CEDS update in accordance with the current [CEDS Content Guidelines](#) issued by the EDA. To ensure compliance with the EDA and related requirements, the Commission is seeking Requests for Proposals for the provision of the services relating to the CEDS update. The funding available for the contracted professional services is no more than **\$50,000 (Fifty Thousand Dollars)**. The provisions under Small Purchases of the Commission’s Purchasing and Procurement Policy (4-18-2019) shall apply.

The project seeks to:

- Update the current CEDS for a new five-year period.
- Engage the CEDS Strategy Committee during the planning process.
- Provide for public comment during the planning process.

### **1.3. Method of Procurement**

The method of procurement will be Competitive Negotiation.

### **1.4. Solicitation Schedule**

Release date:	Monday, August 19, 2024
Deadline for inquiries:	Tuesday, September 3, 2024, at 12:00 PM (CT)
Deadline for responses:	Friday, September 6, 2024
Deadline for submittals:	Monday, September 16, 2024, at 12:00 PM (CT)
Award Date:	Thursday, September 19, 2024
Tentative Contract Start Date:	Friday, September 20, 2024

### **1.5. Contact**

Lisa Todd  
Procurement Manager  
Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission  
6100 Southport Road  
Portage IN 46368  
P: 219-254-2527  
[ltodd@nirpc.org](mailto:ltodd@nirpc.org)

## Communications with Proposers

After the release of the RFP, all communication must be in writing, via email, to Lisa Todd at [ltodd@nirpc.org](mailto:ltodd@nirpc.org). All questions must be received by Tuesday, September 3, 2024, at 12:00 PM CT. Questions received will be reviewed and NIRPC's written response will be sent to all proposers.

## 2. INSTRUCTIONS TO PROPOSERS

### 2.1. Inquiries

Any question related to this solicitation shall be directed to the contact whose name appears herein. The Proposer shall not contact or ask questions of the department or agency for which the requirement is being procured. Questions shall be submitted in writing or by e-mail. Any correspondence related to a solicitation should refer to the appropriate Solicitation number, page, and paragraph number. Oral interpretations or clarifications will be without legal effect. Only questions answered by formal written solicitation amendment will be binding. All questions and answers will be shared with the e-mail list.

It is the interested parties' responsibility to contact the individual whose name appears herein to be added to the e-mail list. If the interested party is not on the e-mail list, they will not be sent any addendums, questions, answers, etc. This can be done by submitting an email to Lisa Todd at [ltodd@nirpc.org](mailto:ltodd@nirpc.org) with the subject line:

#### **RFP 24-11.01 CEDS Update**

All questions and clarifications are due by 12:00 PM CT on Tuesday, September 3, 2024, with subject line: **Question Re: RFP 24-11.01 CEDS Update.**

### 2.2. Instructions for Submittal

Proposer(s) must include the following information in the order outlined below in their submission of Proposal(s):

1. Individuals: Names of any and all members of the consulting team to be used, with an indication as to the team leader for any and all work, and what work each member(s) will do. Include the name and contact information for the individual authorized to negotiate and sign a contract.
2. Description of the scope of services as per "Scope of Work" including approach to project, especially those that are unique to your proposal. Include responses to items 1-8 under 4.4 Scope of Work.
3. Proposer(s) must describe their capacity to perform the professional services within the required timeframe (completed by end of March 2025 - see 4.3 Timeline).
4. A schedule of fees to be charged.
5. Submission: each Proposer(s) must submit an electronic copy of Proposal by email to Lisa Todd, Procurement Manager at [ltodd@nirpc.org](mailto:ltodd@nirpc.org) by 12:00 PM CT on Monday, September 16, 2024, the subject line should read: **Response to RFP 24-11.01 CEDS Update.**
6. Completeness: All Proposal materials must be complete and be received at the office of Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission via email by 12:00 PM CT on Monday, September 16, 2024.

### 2.3. Evaluation and Vendor Selection

#### 2.3.1. Proposal Evaluation

Proposal(s) will be subject to an initial review by the Commission's Procurement Manager. Interested Proposers shall be deemed responsive if they conform to the essential requirements of this document which includes the specifications, terms, and conditions to be met.

All submitted Proposal(s) will then be reviewed by the review committee which will consist of the Commission's Executive Director and EDD Coordinator. Where there are apparent deficiencies, ambiguities and uncertainties present in the Proposal(s), one or both review committee members may engage in discussions, in the manner most appropriate (either via writing or verbally), with interested Proposers for the sole purpose of addressing these deficiencies, ambiguities, and uncertainties.

## **2.4. Interviews, If Necessary**

Interviews with top scoring consultants may or may not be necessary. After evaluation and scoring of the Proposal(s), the review committee may wish to interview the top scoring consultants. Interviews may be held virtually or in person at the Commission's office in Portage, Indiana. Notwithstanding the above, the Commission reserves the right to select one Proposer based on the original submission of the Proposals, without negotiations with any Proposers or without oral presentations.

### **2.4.1. Evaluation Criteria**

Responsive Proposal(s) will be evaluated in accordance with the following four evaluation and selection criteria, listed in general order of relative importance. The review committee will evaluate the Proposal(s) received based on the following criteria:

- 1. Capacity of the organization to perform the work within time limitations, taking into consideration the current planned workload of the firm, 25 points**
- 2. Price Competitiveness, 25 points**
- 3. Demonstrated specialized experience or technical expertise of the organization and its personnel in connection with the scope of services to be provided and complexity of the project, 25 points**
- 4. Proposal reflects understanding of the Scope of Work in context of familiarity of the organization with this type of project or problems applicable to the project, 25 points**

Each Proposal(s) will initially be reviewed to determine if it meets the minimum requirements. The Proposal(s) must be complete, in the required format and in compliance with all the requirements. A list of ranked Proposals will be developed based upon the totals of each committee member's score for each Proposal.

At the conclusion of the evaluation process, the Executive Director or his designed appointee will engage in contract negotiations with the firm with the top score. In the event of a tie for top score, the firm with the top score given by the Executive Director will have preference. A recommendation to the Commission's Leadership Committee (formerly Finance and Personnel Committee) is not needed under the Small Purchase provisions of the Commission's Purchasing Policy. The Executive Director or his designated appointee is authorized to award and execute the contract.

## **2.5. Deadline**

All Proposal(s) must be received at the Commission by **Monday, September 16, 2024, at 12:00 PM CT**. No Proposal(s) will be accepted after this time and date. The Commission reserves the right to reject any or all Proposal(s) received.

## **3. GENERAL CONDITIONS**

### **3.1. Definitions**

**Proposal(s):** Proposal(s) may refer to a quote, proposal, sealed bid, or set of qualifications to be submitted by the Proposer.

**Proposer:** Proposer shall refer to a firm, agent, company, or person submitting a Proposal(s) to the Commission.

**Contract:** Refers to an agreement between the Proposer and the Commission in which a set of terms and conditions and a scope of work are agreed upon after evaluations have determined a competitive Proposer.

**The Commission:** The Commission refers to the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission.

**Solicitation:** Refers to this document.

### **3.2 Right of Rejection**

The Commission reserves the right to postpone the closing/opening date for its own convenience and to reject any or all Proposal(s) for any reason.

### **3.3 Proposer Responsibility**

The Proposer shall have the responsibility of satisfying all parts of this solicitation. It is the desire of the Commission to procure goods and services of the finest quality. No advantage shall be taken by the Proposer in the omission of any part of detail that would be necessary to fully satisfy all work required in this solicitation.

### **3.4 Familiarization of Scope of Work**

Before signing a contract, each Proposer shall familiarize itself with the Scope of Work, laws, regulations, and other factors affecting performance of work. It shall carefully correlate its observations with the requirements of the solicitation and contract and otherwise satisfy itself as to the expense and difficulties attending the performance of the work. The signing of a Contract will constitute a representation of compliance by the Proposer. There will be no subsequent financial adjustment, other than that provided by the Contract, for lack of such familiarization.

### **3.5 Responsive Proposal(s)**

The Commission shall award contracts only to responsible/responsive Proposers who possess the potential to perform successfully under the terms and conditions of the Request for Proposals. The Proposer shall affirmatively demonstrate its responsibility and, when necessary, the responsibility of any proposed Sub-Contractors.

If information obtained by the Commission clearly indicates that the Proposer is not responsive and the Commission has doubts about the productive capability or financial strength of a Proposer that cannot be resolved affirmatively, a determination that the Proposer is non-responsive shall be rendered.

## **4. SCOPE OF WORK**

### **4.1. Project Background**

The EDA requires that the CEDS be updated every five years in accordance with the EDA's current CEDS content guidelines. The CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development within the EDD. Additional project background is included under 1.2 Background.

### **4.2. Project Overview**

This project seeks a highly qualified planning consultant or multi-consultant team to develop the CEDS update which will cover the three counties in northwest Indiana that are in NIRPC's regional planning area. These counties are Lake, Porter, and La Porte.

### 4.3. Timeline

It is required that the Proposer complete and deliver all deliverables, including the EDA required 30-day public comment period and resolution to any comments received, by no later than the end of March 2025.

### 4.4. Scope of Work

The Scope of Work is the update and preparation of a CEDS for the next five-year period which conforms to the current CEDS Content Guidelines issued by the EDA. The RFP submittal is to include responses to the following eight items:

1. An itemized and detailed scope of work to update the CEDS based on current CEDS Content Guidelines. See link to CEDS Content Guidelines under Section 1.2 Background. *(Scope of Work)*
2. Any work items that will be required to be furnished by the Commission and dates by which these work items are needed. *(Commission to furnish)*
3. A total fee proposed for the contract inclusive of all work and expenses anticipated. *(Total Fee)*
4. A detailed timeline tied to each scope of work item including all Economy and Place Committee / CEDS Strategy Committee meetings proposed and the quarterly Committee meetings already scheduled. *(Timeline)*
5. Identification of entire project team and project manager. Include experience profiles or resumes of the project team. Explain the work each project team member will perform. Include information about past work and/or special skills which will aid in updating the CEDS. *(Project Team and Expertise)*
6. A summary of current workload and consultant's availability to complete the work by the end of March 2025. *(Workload and Availability)*
7. A description of how the consultant will manage, control, and supervise the planning process to ensure satisfactory provision of services. *(Project Management)*
8. A description of how the consultant will approach the scope of work items involving public engagement and stakeholder input. *(Public Engagement and Stakeholder Input)*

### 4.5. Project Deliverables

1. Updated CEDS developed in compliance with current CEDS Content Guidelines. The CEDS update is anticipated to be no more than 50 pages including an Executive Summary and any appendices.
2. If needed, resolution of any public comments received during the 30-day comment period.
3. Electronic copy only is required for CEDS update.
4. Attendance at quarterly meetings of the Economy and Place Committee which serves as the CEDS Strategy Committee. Attendance shall be in person at the two committee meetings included in the CEDS update planning period which are on **October 9, 2024, at 10 AM CT** and **January 8, 2025, at 10 AM CT**. Committee meetings are held at the office of the Commission located at 6100 Southport Road, Portage, Indiana.
5. Virtual attendance at additional and yet to be scheduled meetings of the Economy and Place Committee is required.

### 4.6. Reporting and Monthly Progress Meetings

The consultant will prepare and submit a brief written progress report of tasks accomplished no later than five (5) days after the end of November 2024, January 2025, and March 2025. Monthly virtual meetings shall be held with the EDD Coordinator and/or Executive Director to keep everyone involved up to date with the progress of the CEDS update and for discussion of any issues or items that might arise during this planning process.