

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
Rural Economic Development Capacity Contractor**

RFP 2024-06

Section 1 – Overview and Schedule

A. Executive Summary

The New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA) is requesting proposals for a contractor to execute and advance an established technical assistance service for project development within the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) counties of Coos, Grafton, Carroll, Belknap, Sullivan and Cheshire for the purpose of providing Technical Assistance and Capacity Building guidance and support to municipalities and non-profits interested in pursuing NBRC and/or other state and federal grant opportunities.

The qualified contractor will assist communities with predevelopment strategies, program financial planning and development, and application assistance to various state, federal and private funding programs, in conjunction with BEA staff. With this support and guidance, communities and non-profits in rural New Hampshire will be equipped to uncover and successfully pursue new opportunities for business, community, and economic development.

The award of the contract is contingent on approval by the Governor and Executive Council.

B. Schedule

The following table provides a Schedule of Events for this RFP through contract finalization and approval. The Agency reserves the right to amend this Schedule at its sole discretion and at any time through a published Addendum.

EVENT	DATE	LOCAL TIME
RFP Released to Proposers (Advertisement)	November 22, 2023	
Proposer Inquiry Period Ends	December 1, 2023	12:00 PM
Final Agency Responses to Proposer Inquiries	December 6, 2023	5:00 PM
Proposers Submit Proposals	December 20, 2023	2:30 PM
Estimated Timeframe for Proposer Oral Presentations and Interviews (if applicable)	December 22, 2023	TBD

Estimated Notification of Selection and Begin Contract Negotiations	January 5, 2023	
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Section 2 - Description of Agency/Program Issuing the Request for Proposals

The Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA) is dedicated to enhancing the economic vitality of the State of New Hampshire while promoting it as a destination for domestic and international visitors and investment, including fostering and marketing the state’s excellent quality of life. BEA also serves as New Hampshire’s lead agency in the state-federal partnership Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC). For more information visit www.nheconomy.com, www.choosenh.com, and/or www.nbrc.gov.

Section 3 – Proposed Scope of Work

BEA has received an NBRC Capacity Building grant. The goal of the grant is to enhance the capacity of the non-profits and municipalities of the rural counties of the State to identify, pursue, win, and effectively deploy private, state, and federal grants that advance community and economic development goals and plans.

Proposals must be based on two 12-month periods and address each item listed below, as well as additional items at the bidder’s discretion:

- 1) Enhance the capacity of, and provide support for, local community and economic development efforts in the rural communities of the State.
- 2) Perform intake processes for municipalities and non-profits inquiring about Northern Border Regional Commission funding and screen project proposals for eligibility to NBRC and various other funding sources.
- 3) Provide technical assistance to self-identified non-profit and municipal leaders in rural New Hampshire to form program plans that develop, support, or advance an eco-system that leads to job creation and retention and, in general, improves the region’s economic opportunities.
- 4) Deploy predevelopment strategies such as conducting feasibility research, developing project plans and budgets, and curating data to form a strong case for support. Additional assistance shall include introductions to other grant resources.
- 5) Work with the State of New Hampshire and the North Country Council to identify sources of funding to fill the gaps, both public and private.

Desired qualifications of the Contractor:

- 1) Direct experience researching, developing, budgeting, submitting and evaluating state and federal grants.
- 2) Experience assisting others—particularly those with limited experiences and resources—research, develop, budget, submit and evaluate state and federal grants.

- 3) Knowledge of and experience working with New Hampshire’s Regional Planning Commissions and Regional Economic Development Corporations.
- 4) A team with the demonstrated capability of successfully guiding and supporting a wide range of eligible entities who are pursuing funding for an array of infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects.

The Contractor’s deliverables are:

- 1) A minimum of bi-weekly meetings with designated BEA staff.
- 2) An accounting of all staff time and expenses, on at least a quarterly basis, related to State Capacity Grant activities.
- 3) Provide a technical assistance report on projects they have assisted by the end of each 12-month period, with details about the capacity-building services provided and the outcome of the grant process—submission, award, etc.
- 4) Provide a list of projects for potential funding outside of NBRC; and
- 5) Additional reports and data as needed or defined by the State or the NBRC.

Section 4 – Process for Submitting a Proposal

A. Proposal Submission, Deadline, and Location Instructions

Proposals submitted in response to this RFP must be received by the BEA no later than the time and date specified in the Schedule section, herein. Proposals must be submitted electronically and must be addressed to:

State of New Hampshire
Department of Business and Economic Affairs
c/o
dedrfpresponses@livefree.nh.gov

With the SUBJECT: NBRC Capacity Contract

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

RESPONSE TO RFP 2024-06

Rural Economic Development Capacity Contractor

Unless waived as a non-material deviation in accordance with Section 6B, late submissions will not be accepted and will be returned to the proposers unopened. Delivery of the Proposals shall be at the Proposer’s expense. The time of receipt shall be considered when a Proposal has been officially documented by the Agency, in accordance with its established policies, as having been received at the location designated above. The Agency accepts no responsibility for mislabeled mail or mail that is not delivered or undeliverable for whatever reason. Any damage that may occur due to shipping shall be the Proposer’s responsibility.

All Proposals submitted in response to this RFP must consist of at least:

- a) One electronic copy of the Proposal with all Confidential Information fully redacted, as provided for in Section 7E of this RFP.

Proposers who are ineligible to bid on proposals, bids or quotes issued by the Department of Administrative Services, Division of Procurement and Support Services pursuant to the provisions of RSA 21-I:11-c shall not be considered eligible for an award under this proposal.

B. Proposal Inquiries

All inquiries concerning this RFP, including but not limited to, requests for clarifications, questions, and any changes to the RFP, shall be submitted via email to the following RFP designated Points of Contact:

TO: dedrfpresponses@livefree.nh.gov
SUBJECT: NBRC Capacity Contract

Inquiries must be received by the Agency's RFP Points of Contact no later than the conclusion of the Proposer Inquiry Period (see Schedule of Events section, herein). Inquiries received later than the conclusion of the Proposer Inquiry Period shall not be considered properly submitted and may not be considered.

The Agency intends to issue official responses to properly submitted inquiries on or before the date specified in the Schedule section, herein; however, this date is subject to change at the Agency's discretion. The Agency may consolidate and/or paraphrase questions for sufficiency and clarity. The Agency may, at its discretion, amend this RFP on its own initiative or in response to issues raised by inquiries, as it deems appropriate. Oral statements, representations, clarifications, or modifications concerning the RFP shall not be binding upon the Agency. Official responses by the Agency will be made only in writing by the process described above. Vendors shall be responsible for reviewing the most updated information related to this RFP before submitting a proposal.

C. Restriction of Contact with Agency Employees

From the date of release of this RFP until an award is made and announced regarding the selection of a Proposer, all communication with personnel employed by or under contract with the Agency regarding this RFP is forbidden unless first approved by the RFP Points of Contact listed in the Proposal Inquiries section, herein. Agency employees have been directed not to hold conferences and/or discussions concerning this RFP with any potential contractor during the

selection process, unless otherwise authorized by the RFP Points of Contact. Proposers may be disqualified for violating this restriction on communications.

D. Validity of Proposal

Proposals must be valid for one hundred and eighty (180) days following the deadline for submission of Proposals in Schedule of Events, or until the Effective Date of any resulting Contract, whichever is later.

SECTION 5 - Content and Requirements for a Proposal

Proposals shall follow the below format and provide the required information set forth below:

Organization and Experience

- Completed “Contractor Data Sheet” (Attachment A).
- Overview of the company and key personnel.
- A written one-page introductory statement including:
 - Experience in providing services as described in Section 3.
 - Expertise of participating personnel including a description of training and development programs that ensure all personnel assigned to contract are capable and qualified.
- A written one-page narrative detailing the implementation of the identified deliverables, with language speaking to an understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by New Hampshire’s Northern Border Region’s economy as well as how your organization will support rural New Hampshire municipalities and non-profits that may have limited human and financial resources/capacity.
- Provide resumes/portfolios of individuals or subcontractors performing major duties and functions under the proposed contract; include role, responsibility, and qualifications.
- Provide at least three recent client references, with related projects. Include contract/service dates and contact information.

SECTION 6 – Evaluation of Proposals

A. Cost Proposal

The proposal should provide a budget for the two-year contract period, inclusive of all deliverable activities and products required in this Request for Proposals.

B. Criteria for Evaluation and Scoring

Each responsive Proposal will be evaluated and considered with regard to the following criteria:

- Experience and qualifications of key staff and subcontractors as it relates to the activities in Section 3 (30 points)
- Overall strategy, approach, and methodology for achieving goals in Section 3 (30 points)
- Creativity/Innovation in supporting under-resourced non-profits and municipalities in rural New Hampshire (20 points)
- Budget Approach/Cost Effectiveness (20 points)

Grand Total

(100 points)

If the Agency determines to make an award based on these evaluations, the Agency will notify the selected Proposer(s). Should the Agency be unable to reach agreement with the selected Proposer(s) during Contract discussions, the Agency may then undertake Contract discussions with the next preferred Proposer and so on, or the Agency may reject all proposals, cancel this RFP, solicit new Proposals under a new acquisition process, or seek to extend any existing contract for the services outlined within this RFP in order to ensure the continuation of services as part of its ongoing obligations and responsibilities to NBRC program award recipients.

The Agency will select a Proposer based upon the criteria and standards contained in this RFP and from applying the weighting in this section. Oral interviews and reference checks, to the extent they are utilized by the Agency, will be used to refine and finalize scores.

C. Planned Evaluations

The Agency plans to use the following process:

- Initial screening to ensure that the Proposals are in compliance with submission requirements;
- Preliminary evaluation of the Proposals;
- Oral interviews (if necessary);
- Final Evaluation of Technical Proposals and scoring;
- Select the highest scoring Proposer and begin contract negotiation.

D. Initial Screening

The Agency will conduct an initial screening step to verify Proposer compliance with the technical submission requirements set forth in the RFP and the minimum content set forth in Section 5 of this RFP. The Agency may waive or offer a limited opportunity to cure immaterial deviations from the RFP requirements if it is determined to be in the best interest of the State.

E. Preliminary Technical Scoring of Proposals

The Agency will establish an evaluation team to initially score the Technical Proposals. This evaluation team will review the technical proposals and give a preliminary score to the technical proposals under the guidelines set forth in Section 6. Should a Proposer fail to achieve 70 Points in the preliminary scoring, it will receive no further consideration from the evaluation team.

F. Oral Interviews

If the Agency determines that it is appropriate, proposers may be invited to oral interviews. The Agency retains the sole discretion to determine whether to conduct oral interviews, with which proposers; and the number of interviews. Proposers are advised that the Agency may decide to conduct interviews with less than all responsive proposers.

The purpose of oral interviews is to clarify and expound upon information provided in the written Proposals. Proposers are prohibited from altering the basic substance of their Proposals during the oral interviews. The Agency may ask the Proposer to provide written clarifications of elements in their Technical Proposal regardless of whether it intends to conduct Oral Interviews.

Information gained from oral interviews will be used to refine technical review scores assigned from the initial review of the Proposals.

G. Final Technical Scoring of Proposals

Following Oral Interviews, Reference Checks (if appropriate) and/or review of written clarifications of proposals requested by the Agency, the evaluation team will determine a final score for each Technical Proposal.

H. No Best and Final Offer

The Proposal should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms which the proposer can offer. There will be no best and final offer procedure. The Proposer should be prepared to accept this RFP for incorporation into a contract resulting from this RFP. Contract negotiations may incorporate some or all of the Proposal.

I. Final Selection

The Agency will conduct a final selection based on the final evaluation of the initial proposals and begin contract negotiations with the selected Proposer.

J. Rights of the Agency in Accepting and Evaluating Proposals

The Agency reserves the right to:

- Make independent investigations in evaluating Proposals;
- Request additional information to clarify elements of a Proposal;
- Waive minor or immaterial deviations from the RFP requirements, if determined to be in the best interest of the State;
- Omit any planned evaluation step if, in the Agency's view, the step is not needed;
- At its sole discretion, reject any and all Proposals at any time; and
- Open contract discussions with the second highest scoring Proposer and so on, if the Agency is unable to reach an agreement on Contract terms with the higher scoring Proposer(s).

SECTION 7 – Terms and Conditions Related to the RFP Process

A. RFP Addendum

The Agency reserves the right to amend this RFP at its discretion, prior to the Proposal submission deadline. In the event of an addendum to this RFP, the Agency, at its sole discretion, may extend the Proposal submission deadline, as it deems appropriate.

B. Non-Collusion

The Proposer's signature on a Proposal submitted in response to this RFP guarantees that the prices, terms and conditions, and Work quoted have been established without collusion with other Proposers and without effort to preclude the Agency from obtaining the best possible competitive Proposal.

C. Property of the Agency

All material received in response to this RFP shall become the property of the State and will not be returned to the proposer. Upon Contract award, the State reserves the right to use any information presented in any Proposal.

D. Confidentiality of a Proposal

Unless necessary for the approval of a contract, the substance of a proposal must remain confidential until the Effective Date of any Contract resulting from this RFP. A Proposer's

disclosure or distribution of Proposals other than to the Agency will be grounds for disqualification.

E. Public Disclosure

Pursuant to RSA 21-G:37, all responses to this RFP shall be considered confidential until the award of a contract. At the time of receipt of proposals, the Agency will post the number of responses received with no further information. No later than five (5) business days prior to submission of a contract to the Department of Administrative Services pursuant to this RFP, the Agency will post the name, rank or score of each proposer. In the event that the contract does not require Governor & Executive Council approval, the Agency shall disclose the rank or score of the Proposals at least 5 business days before final approval of the contract.

The content of each Proposer's Proposal shall become public information upon the award of any resulting Contract. Any information submitted as part of a response to this request for proposal (RFP) may be subject to public disclosure under RSA 91-A. In addition, in accordance with RSA 9-F:1, any contract entered into as a result of this RFP will be made accessible to the public online via the website Transparent NH (<http://www.nh.gov/transparentnh/>). However, business financial information and proprietary information such as trade secrets, business and financials models and forecasts, and proprietary formulas may be exempt from public disclosure under RSA 91-A:5, IV. If you believe any information being submitted in response to this request for proposal, bid or information should be kept confidential as financial or proprietary information; you must specifically identify that information in a letter to the agency, and must mark/stamp each page of the materials that you claim must be exempt from disclosure as "CONFIDENTIAL". A designation by the Proposer of information it believes exempt does not have the effect of making such information exempt. The Agency will determine the information it believes is properly exempted from disclosure. Marking of the entire Proposal or entire sections of the Proposal (e.g. pricing) as confidential will neither be accepted nor honored. Notwithstanding any provision of this RFP to the contrary, Proposer pricing will be subject to disclosure upon approval of the contract. The Agency will endeavor to maintain the confidentiality of portions of the Proposal that are clearly and properly marked confidential.

If a request is made to the Agency to view portions of a Proposal that the Proposer has properly and clearly marked confidential, the Agency will notify the Proposer of the request and of the date the Agency plans to release the records. By submitting a Proposal, Proposers agree that unless the Proposer obtains a court order, at its sole expense, enjoining the release of the requested information, the Agency may release the requested information on the date specified in the Agency's notice without any liability to the Proposers.

F. Non-Commitment

Notwithstanding any other provision of this RFP, this RFP does not commit the Agency to award a Contract. The Agency reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to reject any and all Proposals, or any portions thereof, at any time; to cancel this RFP; and to solicit new Proposals under a new acquisition process.

G. Proposal Preparation Cost

By submitting a Proposal, a Proposer agrees that in no event shall the Agency be either responsible for or held liable for any costs incurred by a Proposer in the preparation of or in connection with the Proposal, or for Work performed prior to the Effective Date of a resulting Contract.

H. Ethical Requirements

From the time this RFP is published until a contract is awarded, no bidder shall offer or give, directly or indirectly, any gift, expense reimbursement, or honorarium, as defined by RSA 15-B, to any elected official, public official, public employee, constitutional official, or family member of any such official or employee who will or has selected, evaluated, or awarded an RFP, or similar submission. Any bidder that violates RSA 21-G:38 shall be subject to prosecution for an offense under RSA 640:2. Any bidder who has been convicted of an offense based on conduct in violation of this section, which has not been annulled, or who is subject to a pending criminal charge for such an offense, shall be disqualified from bidding on the RFP, or similar request for submission and every such bidder shall be disqualified from bidding on any RFP or similar request for submission issued by any state agency. A bidder that was disqualified under this section because of a pending criminal charge which is subsequently dismissed, results in an acquittal, or is annulled, may notify the department of administrative services, which shall note that information on the list maintained on the state's internal intranet system, except in the case of annulment, the information, shall be deleted from the list.

I. Challenges on Form or Process of the RFP

Any challenges regarding the validity or legality of the form and procedures of this RFP, including but not limited to the evaluation and scoring of Proposals, shall be brought to the attention of the Agency at least ten (10) business days prior to the Proposal Submission Deadline. By submitting a proposal, the Proposer is deemed to have waived any challenges to the agency's authority to conduct this procurement and the form and procedures of this RFP.

Section 8 – Contract Terms and Award

A. Non-Exclusive Contract

Any resulting Contract from this RFP will be a non-exclusive Contract. The State reserves the right, at its discretion, to retain other Contractors to provide any of the Services or Deliverables identified under this procurement or make an award by item, part or portion of an item, group of items, or total Proposal.

B. Award

If the State decides to award a contract as a result of this RFP process, any award is contingent upon approval of the Contract by the Governor and Executive Council of the State of New Hampshire and upon continued appropriation of funding for the contract.

C. Standard Contract Terms

The Agency will require the successful bidder to execute a Firm Fixed Price/Not to Exceed Contract using the Standard Terms and Conditions of the State of New Hampshire which is attached as Appendix A.

The Term of the Contract will be for twenty-four (24) months from the date of approval. The contract term may be extended based on any additional federal funding awarded to the State and in consideration of a new grant period. The term may be extended as the sole option of the State, subject to the parties' prior written agreement on terms and applicable fees for each extended term contingent upon satisfactory vendor performance, continued funding and Governor and Executive Council approval.

To the extent that a Proposer believes that exceptions to the standard form contract will be necessary for the Proposer to enter into the Agreement, the Proposer should note those issues during the Proposer Inquiry Period. The Agency will review requested exceptions and accept, reject or note that it is open to negotiation of the proposed exception at its sole discretion. If the Agency accepts a Proposer's exception the Agency will, at the conclusion of the inquiry period, provide notice to all potential proposers of the exceptions which have been accepted and indicate that exception is available to all potential proposers. Any exceptions to the standard form contract that are not raised during the proposer inquiry period are waived. In no event is a Proposer to submit its own standard contract terms and conditions as a replacement for the State's terms in response to this solicitation.

CONTRACTOR DATA SHEET

(To be completed by Proposer)

1. Years in business: Indicate the length of time you have been in business providing this type of service:

_____ years _____ months

2. References: Indicate below at least three (3) accounts for whom you have provided consultancy services, of which at least two will be related to consortium management/sector organization. Include the date services were furnished and contacts.

Client	City / State	Dates of Service	Contact Name / Phone / E-mail

3. Are you a subsidiary firm? ____ yes ____ no

If yes, list the location of your parent affiliation:

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____

4. List total number of employees:

_____ Full-time _____ Part-time/other

Authorized Signature(s)

This form must be completed and signed by an officer of the company

Name of Firm: _____

Contact: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Date of incorporation: _____

If not a corporation, state the type of business organization, names and addresses of the owners, address and phone of the principle place of business, date business began, and state in which organized.

I certify the accuracy of this information.

Signature: _____

Name and title (print or type): _____

Date: _____