

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

**Economic Impact Analysis and
Technical Assistance**

Deadline: May 7, 2021

July 1, 2021-December 1, 2021



Rural Maryland Council
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401

PURPOSE

The Rural Maryland Council is seeking a qualified vendor to provide technical assistance in estimating the economic impact of our grant programs using a set of models that will allow us to model complex economic events and activity over time.

RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent State agency located within the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The Council's mission is to bring together citizens, community-based organizations, federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to collectively address the needs of Rural Maryland communities. We provide a venue for members of agriculture and natural resource-based industries, health care facilities, educational institutions, economic and community development organizations, for-profit and nonprofit corporations, and government agencies to cross traditional boundaries, share information, and address in a more holistic way the special needs and opportunities in Rural Maryland.

Our goals are to:

- Encourage healthy, connected communities throughout Rural Maryland through convening of stakeholders, education, public relations, and advocacy.
- Support the development and growth of vibrant economies in Rural Maryland.
- Foster stewardship of Maryland's natural resources.
- Maximize RMC outreach, resources and mission through financial and organizational development.

As a collaborative partnership, the RMC operates in a nonpartisan and nondiscriminatory manner. Policy-makers and managers from stakeholder agencies and organizations at all levels of government and the private sector are valued participants. Where practical, the decision-making undertaken by the RMC is made by reaching consensus.

RMC's vision is a future where all of Rural Maryland is prosperous with thriving resources, vibrant economies, and healthy, connected communities.

The Council administers the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) and the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF).

MAERDAF provides grants to rural-serving nonprofit organizations that promote statewide and regional planning, economic and community development, agricultural and forestry education. Also eligible are rural community colleges that provide enhanced training and technical assistance to support agricultural and small businesses. The Fund's goal is to increase the overall capacity of rural-serving nonprofit organizations and community colleges to meet a multitude of rural development challenges and to help them establish new public/private partnerships for leveraging non-state sources of funding.

The objective of RMPIF is to help raise the overall standard of living in rural areas to a level that meets or exceeds statewide benchmark averages by 2030, while preserving the best aspects of pastoral heritage and rural way of life. Resources provided to RMPIF are designed to facilitate significant targeted investments in important economic and community development programs to promote regional and intergovernmental cooperation.

SOLICITATION

The Rural Maryland Council is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit a qualified entity to provide technical assistance in estimating the economic impact of the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund and the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund using a set of economic data to model complex economic events and activity over time.

SCOPE OF WORK

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is seeking technical assistance from a qualified vendor to estimate the economic impact of the Council's investments on the state's economy and to create an economic model that can be updated on an annual basis. Specifically, RMC is requesting proposals that:

- Analyze the economic impact of activity resulting from investments made by and resulting from RMC-funded projects and programs using an industry accepted model;
- Other resources may be called upon to supplement that analysis, such as industry and employment data available from public secondary sources;
- The analysis will focus and report on the following impact data points:
 - Total employment, including direct, indirect, and induced jobs
 - Wages
 - Output (as value-add or GDP)
 - Municipal, local and state taxes
 - Impacts will be reported for regions across the state that are counties or county aggregates
 - estimated aggregate employee compensation
 - estimated aggregate state and local income taxes
 - estimated aggregate tax revenue
- A template that can easily be used in the future to model economic impacts of RMC investments.

Proposals should indicate the economic model(s) to be used and the data required by RMC to conduct the analysis and format (Excel for example).

DELIVERABLES

The selected bidder shall provide all necessary services and deliverables as outlined below:

- Identify economic data and economic models to be utilized.
- Determine and utilize metrics to track trends over time.
- Development of template to be used in future years.
- Report on results of the project using predetermined metrics.

DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

The development schedule should be based on the following dates provided by the Rural Maryland Council.

- Questions regarding the RFP are due no later than 5:00pm on April 19, 2021 and should be emailed to rmc.mda@maryland.gov. Anonymous inquiries will not be answered.
- All questions and answers will be posted on the RMC website on April 23, 2021 no later than 5:00pm
- **Proposals are due May 7, 2021 at 5:00 pm at rmc.mda@maryland.gov.**
- **Selected vendor announced on May 21, 2021.**
- Contract year begins on July 1, 2021.
- Initial report on progress of project due on September 1, 2021.
- Delivery of product to Rural Maryland Council on November 1, 2021.
- Final report including results, analysis, and recommendations on the project due on December 1, 2021.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Submission of a cohesive, comprehensive, and well researched work plan for Council review and approval. The work plan shall clearly describe logical, achievable strategies for organizing, implementing, and accomplishing all deliverables, with a clear rationale, timelines, and explanation of how the proposed materials will meet the goal and objectives of the work plan.

All materials developed shall remain the property of the State of Maryland. All design and production related fees must be included in the final bid price.

Final products must be available for the perpetual use of the Council for future use at no additional cost.

ELIGIBLE BIDDERS

To be eligible to receive funds to provide technical assistance, the entity must be (a) a public, private, or nonprofit entity or (b) a consortium of public, private, or nonprofit entities. Eligible entities include:

- An institution of higher education;
- A community-based organization, nonprofit organization, or intermediary;
- A private for-profit entity;
- A government agency;
- Another interested organization or entity.

SELECTION PROCESS

Each vendor will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Qualification of the staff who will provide the technical assistance
- Experience in economic modeling
- The level of modeling and data sets
- Cost on an annual fixed price fee.

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CANCELLATIONS

The Council reserves the right to cancel this RFP, accept or reject any and all Proposals, in whole or in part, received in response to this RFP, to waive or permit the cure of minor irregularities, and to conduct discussions with all qualified or potentially qualified Offerors in any manner necessary to serve the best interests of the State. The Council also reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to award a Contract based upon the written Proposals received without discussions or negotiations.

INCURRED EXPENSES

The Council will not be responsible for any costs incurred by any Offeror in preparing and submitting a Proposal, in making an oral presentation, in providing a demonstration, or in performing any other activities related to submitting a Proposal in response to this solicitation.

PROCUREMENT OFFICER/INFORMATION CONTACT

The sole point of contact for purposes of this solicitation prior to the award of any Contract is the Procurement Officer at the address listed below:

Charlotte Davis
Maryland Rural Council
50 Harry S Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401
Phone Number: 410-841-5744
E-mail: charlotte.davis@maryland.gov

ECONOMY OF PREPARATION

Proposals should be prepared simply and economically and provide a straightforward and concise description of the Offeror's Proposal to meet the requirements of this RFP.

PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT NOTICE

An Offeror should give specific attention to the clear identification of those portions of its Proposal that it considers confidential and/or proprietary commercial information or trade secrets, and provide justification why such materials, upon request, should not be disclosed by the State under the Public Information Act, Md. Code Ann., General Provisions Article, Title 4. (Also, see RFP Section 4.4.3.2 "Claim of Confidentiality"). This confidential and/or proprietary information should be identified by page and section number and placed after the Title Page and before the Table of Contents in the Technical Proposal and if applicable, separately in the Financial Proposal.

Offerors are advised that, upon request for this information from a third party, the Procurement Officer is required to make an independent determination whether the information must be disclosed.

ORAL PRESENTATION

Offerors may be required to make oral presentations to State representatives. Offerors must confirm in writing any substantive oral clarification of, or change in, their Proposals made in the course of discussions. Any such written clarifications or changes then become part of the Offeror's Proposal and are binding if the Contract is awarded. The Procurement Officer will notify Offerors of the time and place of oral presentations.

MANDATORY CONTRACTUAL TERMS

This RFP is subject to the following terms and conditions:

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- RMC expressly reserves the right to modify or withdraw this RFP at any time, whether before or after any responses have been submitted or received.
- RMC reserves the right to adjust the timetable for the RFP as RMC deems necessary.
- In the event the respondent does not enter into the required contract to deliver the services described in this RFP, RMC reserves the right to reject the respondent and to offer a contract with another respondent.
- In no event will any obligations of any kind be enforceable against RMC unless and until a written agreement is executed.
- RMC reserves the right to waive informalities and minor irregularities in proposals received.
- RMC reserves the right to negotiate price or other factors included in any proposal submitted to the RMC. If the RMC is unable to negotiate a mutually satisfactory arrangement with the successful respondent under this RFP, RMC may, in its sole discretion, negotiate with another respondent or cancel this RFP and not select any proposal or RMC may select another proposal.

A Proposal that takes exception to these terms may be rejected.

Proposals and any modifications to Proposals will be shown only to State employees, members of the Evaluation Committee, or other persons deemed by the Council to have a legitimate interest in them.

DELIVERY

Offerors must e-mail proposals to rmc.mda@maryland.gov by 5:00 pm on May 7, 2021.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

The Proposal shall include the following documents and information in the order specified as follows.

- **Title Page and Table of Contents** - The Proposal should begin with a Title Page (**ATTACHMENT A**) bearing the name and address of the Offeror and the name of this RFP. A Table of Contents shall follow the Title Page for the Technical Proposal, organized by section, subsection, and page number.
- **Claim of Confidentiality** - Any information which is claimed to be confidential is to be noted by reference and included after the Title Page and before the Table of Contents, and if applicable, also in the Offeror's Financial Proposal. An explanation for each claim of confidentiality shall be included. The entire Proposal cannot be given a blanket confidentiality designation. Any confidentiality designation must apply to specific sections, pages, or portions of pages of the Proposal.
- **Executive Summary** - The Offeror shall condense and highlight the contents of the Technical Proposal in a separate section titled "Executive Summary." The Summary should include a description of the services to be provided. The Summary shall also identify any exceptions the Offeror has taken to the requirements of this RFP, or any other attachments. Exceptions to terms and conditions may result in having the Proposal deemed unacceptable or classified as not reasonably susceptible of being selected for award. If the Offeror has taken no exceptions to the requirements of this RFP, the Executive Summary shall so state.
- **Minimum Qualifications Documentation** The Offeror shall submit any Minimum Qualifications documentation that may be pertinent.
- **Offeror Technical Response to RFP Requirements and Proposed Work Plan**
The Offeror shall address each Scope of Work requirement in its Technical Proposal and describe how its proposed services, including the services of any proposed subcontractor(s), will meet or exceed the requirement(s). Any paragraph in the Technical Proposal that responds to a Scope of Work requirement shall include an explanation of how the work will be done. Any exception to

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a requirement, term, or condition may result in having the Proposal classified as not reasonably susceptible of being selected for award or the Offeror deemed not responsible.

The Offeror shall give a definitive description of the proposed plan to meet the requirements of the RFP, i.e., a Work Plan. The Work Plan shall include the specific methodology and techniques to be used by the Offeror in providing the required services. The description shall include an outline of the overall management concepts employed by the Offeror and a project management plan, including project control mechanisms and overall timelines. Project deadlines considered contract deliverables must be recognized in the Work Plan.

The Offeror must provide a draft Problem Escalation Procedure (PEP) that includes, at a minimum, titles of individuals to be contacted by the Council's Contract Monitor should problems arise under the Contract and explain how problems with work under the Contract will be escalated in order to resolve any issues in a timely manner. Final procedures must be submitted as indicated in this RFP.

- **Experience and Qualifications of Proposed Staff** The Offeror shall identify the number and types of staff proposed to be utilized under the Contract. The Offeror shall describe in detail how the proposed staff's experience and qualifications relate to their specific responsibilities, including any staff of proposed subcontractor(s), as detailed in the Work Plan. The Offeror shall include individual resumes for the key personnel, including key personnel for any proposed subcontractor(s), who are to be assigned to the project if the Offeror is awarded the Contract. Each resume should include the amount of experience the individual has had relative to the Scope of Work set forth in this solicitation. Letters of intended commitment to work on the project, including letters from any proposed subcontractor(s), shall be included in this section. The Offeror shall provide an Organizational Chart outlining personnel and their related duties. The Offeror shall include job titles and the percentage of time each individual will spend on his/her assigned tasks. Offerors using job titles other than those commonly used by industry standards must provide a crosswalk reference document.
- **Offeror Qualifications and Capabilities** The Offeror shall include information on past experience with similar projects and/or services. The Offeror shall describe how its organization can meet the requirements of this RFP and shall also include the following information:
 - The number of years the Offeror has provided the similar projects and/or services and identify whether any of these similar projects and/or services specifically concerned creating/developing/updating economic impact analysis and modeling;
 - The number of clients/customers that the Offeror currently serves;
 - The names and titles of personnel who may be involved with supervising the services to be performed under this Contract.
- **References** At least three (3) references are requested from customers who are capable of documenting the Offeror's ability to provide the services specified in this RFP. References used to meet any Offeror Minimum Qualifications may be used to meet this request. Each reference shall be from a client for whom the Offeror has provided services within the past five (5) years and shall include the following information:
 - Name of client organization;
 - Name, title, telephone number, and e-mail address, if available, of point of contact for client organization; and
 - Value, type, duration, and description of services provided.

The Council reserves the right to request additional references or utilize references not provided by an Offeror.

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- **List of Current or Prior State Contracts** Provide a list of all contracts with any entity of the State of Maryland for which the Offeror is currently performing services or for which services have been completed within the last five (5) years. For each identified contract, the Offeror is to provide:
 - The State contracting entity;
 - A brief description of the services/goods provided;
 - The dollar value of the contract;
 - The term of the contract;
 - The State employee contact person (name, title, telephone number, and, if possible, e-mail address); and
 - Whether the contract was terminated before the end of the term specified in the original contract, including whether any available renewal option was not exercised.Information obtained regarding the Offeror's level of performance on State contracts will be used by the Procurement Officer to determine the responsibility of the Offeror and considered as part of the experience and past performance evaluation criteria of the RFP.
- **Fee Structure** - Please provide a fixed annual fee for development of the economic model(s) and the cost of yearly technical assistance and data updates for up to an additional 2 years.
- Completed conflict of interest affidavit and disclosure – Attachment B

Maximum page limit of 20 pages with a minimum font size of 11.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Proposal Review

All proposals will be reviewed and rated by the Rural Maryland Council Executive Committee. The Rural Maryland Council Executive Committee reserves the right to accept other than lowest cost proposals and to reject any or all proposals or parts thereof. The Evaluation Committee will review Proposals, participate in Offeror oral presentations and discussions, and provide input to the Procurement Officer. The Council prefers an Offeror's response to work requirements in the RFP that illustrates a comprehensive understanding of work requirements and mastery of the subject matter, including an explanation of how the work will be done.

Service providers not selected for contract negotiations shall be notified in writing no later than two weeks after award date.

Proposal Requirements and Evaluation

The criteria to be used to evaluate each Proposal are listed below in descending order of importance. Each proposal will be evaluated, assessed and ranked based on the required project narrative which must include the following sections:

- **Implementation** - Offeror's Technical Response to RFP Requirements and Work Plan. List the duties you select to bid on and how you plan to perform those services. Describe your ability to immediately begin providing the services beginning July 1, 2021.
- **Organization** - Offeror's Qualifications and Capabilities Describe your organization. Why is your organization in the best position to deliver the requested services? What experience do you have in working economic modelling?

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If a consortium is responding to this RFP, describe the makeup of your group: who is included? How will decisions be made? How will duties be divided? How will payments be directed? What happens in the event of a disagreement amongst consortium members?

- Past experience - Provide examples of relevant experience providing similar services. Describe past experience, if any, with economic impact analysis. You may include reference letters related to your experience.

Financial Proposal Evaluation Criteria

All Qualified Offerors will be ranked from the lowest (most advantageous) to the highest (least advantageous) price based on the Total Proposal Price within the stated guidelines set forth in this RFP and as submitted.

Selection Procedures

The Contract allows for the conducting of discussions and the revision of Proposals during these discussions. Therefore, the Council may conduct discussions with all Offerors that have submitted Proposals that are determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for contract award or potentially so. However, the Council reserves the right to make an award without holding discussions. In either case (i.e., with or without discussions), the Council may determine an Offeror to be not responsible and/or an Offeror's Proposal to be not reasonably susceptible of being selected for award at any time after the initial closing date for receipt of Proposals and prior to Contract award.

Proposals are evaluated for technical merit and ranked. During this review, oral presentations and discussions may be held. The purpose of such discussions will be to assure a full understanding of the Council's requirements and the Offeror's ability to perform the services, as well as to facilitate arrival at a Contract that is most advantageous to the State. Offerors will be contacted by the Council as soon as any discussions are scheduled.

Offerors must confirm in writing any substantive oral clarifications of, or changes in, their Proposals made in the course of discussions. Any such written clarifications or changes then become part of the Offeror's Proposal. Proposals are given a final review and ranked.

The Fee Structure of each Qualified Offeror (a responsible Offeror determined to have submitted an acceptable Proposal) will be evaluated and ranked. After a review, the Evaluation Committee or Procurement Officer may again conduct discussions to further evaluate the Offeror's Proposal. When in the best interest of the Council, the Procurement Officer may permit Qualified Offerors to revise their initial Proposals and submit, in writing, Best and Final Offers (BAFOs). The Council may make an award without issuing a request for a BAFO.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Timeline

Economic Impact Analysis RFP Timeline	
April 16, 2021	Release of RFP
April 19, 2021	Deadline to submit questions via email
April 23, 2021	Responses to submitted questions
May 7, 2021	Proposal deadline 5:00 pm

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May 21, 2021	Vendor selection announced
May 28, 2021	Service providers not selected notified of selection
July 1, 2021	Contract year begins
September 1, 2021	Interim report due
November 1, 2021	Model and economic impact analysis due
December 1, 2021	Final report due

QUESTIONS

To ensure a fair competitive process, all questions related to this RFP must be submitted electronically to rmc.mda@maryland.gov. Written questions will be accepted through 5:00 pm on April 19, 2021. Written responses to questions will be posted on the website <http://rural.maryland.gov> no later than 5:00 pm April 23, 2021. It is the respondent's responsibility to check the website on a regular basis for updates.

Interested bidders are strictly prohibited from contacting board members of the Rural Maryland Council regarding this RFP.

DEADLINE

In order to be considered for funding beginning on July 1, 2021, **proposals MUST be received by May 7, 2021 no later than 5:00 pm at the email address provided.** Proposals received after this deadline will not be considered for funding for Fiscal Year 2022.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All respondents must complete the attached *Conflict of Interest Affidavit and Disclosure*.

TERM

It is the intent of the Rural Maryland Council to award a single contract for the identified services. The expected contract term under this solicitation will be from July 1, 2021 through December 1, 2021, provided that measurable outcomes are successfully achieved and that sufficient funds for the contract term remain available.

The Rural Maryland Council will have the option to renew the contract for two additional one-year periods as follows:

- Optional Renewal One – July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023
- Optional Renewal Two – July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

Note: the option to renew is not guaranteed.

AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

Funding for contracts awarded as a result of this process shall be contingent upon continued state authorization for program activities and is subject to amendment or termination due to lack of funds or authorization. Proposals submitted under this RFP may be considered for funding for the period beginning July 1, 2021 based on funding availability, program performance, and the agency's training needs.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Any bidder dissatisfied with the determination of this RFP may appeal in writing within ten days of notification of non-award. The Chair of the Rural Maryland Council Executive Board will adjudicate any disputes relating to the award of this contract. The Chair will determine if the proposals were evaluated

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in accordance with the Proposal Requirements and Evaluation criteria. Based on that investigation the Chair of the Rural Maryland Council will make a final decision on the merits of the dispute. The decision of the Chair of the Rural Maryland Council is final.

VOLUMN I – TECHNICAL PROPOSAL
ATTACHMENT A: ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS TITLE PAGE SHEET

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Person: _____ Title: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Location(s) of program operation: _____

Organization type: Non-Profit Government Private For Profit

Number of Applicants: Individual entity Consortium of ____ entities

Total funding amount requested: _____

PROPOSAL DETAILS

Indicate the services included in your proposal:

Description of economic model(s) and data sets used

Up to five samples of work products, including work for economic development organizations in Maryland

Client list and references, including contact information

Resume and work samples from person specifically identified in your agency to manage the account, as well as contact information

Description of capacity to perform the work

Relevant experience (years of experience) in economic modeling

Fee structures

I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge all information contained in this proposal is accurate and complete, that this is a valid proposal and that I am legally authorized to sign and to represent this organization.

Authorized Signature

Date

ATTACHMENT B: ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONFLICT OF INTEREST AFFIDAVIT AND DISCLOSURE

- A. "Conflict of interest" means that because of other activities or relationships with other persons, a person is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the RMC, or the person's objectivity in performing the contract work is or might be otherwise impaired, or a person has an unfair competitive advantage. Activities are defined as board membership, employment or a vendor in any capacity. Relationships are defined as any person who is related by blood or marriage, or whose relationship with the employee is similar to that of persons who are related by blood or marriage.

- B. "Person" has the meaning stated in COMAR 21.01.02.01B (64) and includes a bidder, offeror, Contractor, consultant, or subcontractor or sub consultant at any tier, and also includes an employee or agent of any of them if the employee or agent has or will have the authority to control or supervise all or a portion of the work for which a bid or offer is made.

- C. The bidder or offeror warrants that, except as disclosed in D below, there are no relevant facts or circumstances now giving rise or which could, in the future, give rise to a conflict of interest.

- D. The following facts or circumstances give rise or could in the future give rise to a conflict of interest (explains in detail--attach sheets if necessary):

- E. The bidder or offeror agrees that if an actual or potential conflict of interest arises after the date of this affidavit, the bidder or offeror will immediately make a full disclosure in writing to the Chair of the Rural Maryland Council of all relevant facts and circumstances. This disclosure shall include a description of actions which the bidder or offeror has taken and proposes to take to avoid, mitigate, or neutralize the actual or potential conflict of interest. If the contract has been awarded and performance of the contract has begun, the Contractor shall continue performance until notified by the Chair of any contrary action to be taken.

I DO SOLEMNLY DECLARE AND AFFIRM UNDER THE PENALTIES OF PERJURY THAT THE CONTENTS OF THIS AFFIDAVIT ARE TRUE AND CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION AND BELIEF.

Printed Name

Authorized Signature

Date