



**Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FACILITATOR**

**Release Date: Friday, October 9, 2020  
Due Date: Friday, October 23, 2020 – by 4:30 p.m.**

**Request Issued by:  
ARDC**

ARDC is seeking to contract with an individual or firm to facilitate a public engagement process in support of the Northeast Minnesota Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) planning process taking place across Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis Counties.

**Background:**

ARDC is the federally designated planning organization for the Northeast Minnesota Economic Development District. ARDC is charged with developing the CEDS, a locally based, regionally driven economic development planning process. The CEDS sets regional goals and objectives for economic development, creates action plans and priorities, and identifies partnerships and funding sources. The CEDS must address community resilience, diversity, equity and inclusion, and COVID-19 recovery. The CEDS should connect and align with local, regional, state, non-profit, tribal, and federal plans and resources.

The Public Engagement Facilitator will be responsible for convening and conducting a broad-based engagement process across ARDC's service region reaching a large number of communities (geographic and demographic), conducting a business roundtable in coordination with APEX, and dialoguing with tribal communities.

The outcomes of the public engagement process will be used by the CEDS Strategy Committee to guide the planning process. A SWOT conducted by the CEDS Strategy Committee will be provided to the Facilitator to use in the process. The Facilitator will document the process in a written report and present to the CEDS Strategy Committee.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Facilitator must be prepared to facilitate meetings following State of Minnesota and CDC guidelines for public events and be prepared to conduct the process in an online, virtual environment. The Facilitator must be prepared to involve communities (geographic and demographic) that are hard to engage during the pandemic.

**Timeline:**

The engagement process must be completed by Mid-March 2021 to present to the CEDS Strategy Committee.

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*EOE/AA/M/F/Vet/Disability Employer*

**Proposal:**

Interested parties should submit a brief proposal to ARDC containing the following:

1. Description of proposed process sufficient to reach many communities (geographic and demographic) across ARDC's seven county service area, conducting a business roundtable in coordination with APEX, and dialoguing with tribal communities. Proposal must include alternate methods to engage all required stakeholders safely and adequately during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Succinct qualification descriptions of the key personnel that would be working on the project.
3. Descriptions of two similar projects the proposer has completed previously.
4. Listing of contact information for one reference, preferably a client for a similar project.
5. A budget showing costs for personnel, travel expenses, directly related office supplies and administrative costs – note that the budget should not exceed \$35,000. If a respondent feels the project cannot be completed within that amount, please communicate with ARDC to explain why.

Proposals should be emailed to Josh Bergstad at [jbergstad@ardc.org](mailto:jbergstad@ardc.org) by 4:30pm on *October 23, 2020*. Questions should be sent to the same address. Answers to any questions received will be made available to all proposers at: [www.ardc.org/ceds](http://www.ardc.org/ceds).

**Decision:**

ARDC, with assistance from a committee of knowledgeable regional partners, will determine a project awardee in November 2020. The decision will be made primarily on demonstrated ability rather than cost. Check [www.ardc.org/ceds](http://www.ardc.org/ceds) for decision updates. ARDC reserves the right to not award the project to any respondents if none are able to meet the project's terms or other circumstances arise.

All parties to this contract are subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Chapter 13 of the Minnesota Statutes, including Section 13.05, Subd. 11.