

Request for Proposals

Five-Year Economic Development Strategy For Queen Anne's County, Maryland

Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development (QACETD) is soliciting proposals from qualified professional consultants to conduct an economic development analysis, lead stakeholder engagement, and develop a strategic action plan for the Queen Anne's County Economic Development Commission (EDC). The successful candidate will use recommendations from relevant studies for reference, conduct a robust data analysis to inform strategies, conduct stakeholder engagement activities, evaluate the county's capacity for additional growth, and deliver a five-year Economic Development Strategy for Queen Anne's County. This plan will establish specific goals and objectives for growing and diversifying Queen Anne's County's economy over the target period, and a detailed action plan for how to achieve them.

Posting Date: February 7, 2024

Letters of Intent Due by: February 20, 2024

Questions Due by: February 23, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.

Due Date: March 11, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.

Department of Economic & Tourism Development Overview

The Department of Economic & Tourism Development elevates [Queen Anne's County](#) as an economically vibrant, welcoming and diverse place for business and recreation by:

- Delivering exceptional customer service and timely, relevant resources;
- Proactively cultivating business attraction, retention and expansion;
- Developing and strengthening destination amenities;
- Promoting visitor opportunities and experiences;
- Forging intern and apprentice partnerships; and
- Skillfully managing County resources to fuel economic growth.

A valued resource, connector and catalyst, the Department strengthens Queen Anne's County's economic and community vitality, showcases the county's culture and character, and supports sustainable growth opportunities for residents, businesses, and visitors.

For more information on Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development, visit www.choosequeenannes.com

Background

When it comes to economic development, rural communities can sometimes struggle to reach the critical mass required to attract employers and sustain economic growth. This, coupled with infrastructure challenges in our main growth areas and a push toward directing growth to municipalities over the next ten years will require a fresh perspective on our economic development strategy. Queen Anne's County will be utilizing an asset-based economic development approach in order to attract, retain and expand business; focusing on how our county and municipalities can build on their natural and working landscapes, local institutions, existing infrastructure, historic and cultural resources, industry clusters and human capital. Central to that perspective is a two-pronged approach that began with a Strategic Asset Evaluation and Industry Competitiveness Analysis, completed in February 2024. Now complete, the information from the analyses will inform the second part of the project: an updated five-year Economic Development Strategy for the County's Economic Development Commission. This plan will represent a unified economic development strategy, integrating business growth and land use choices, as well as analyzing how the State's infrastructure can best support the strategy.

The selected firm will work with the stakeholders to strengthen the momentum of economic investment in Queen Anne's County and facilitate an integrated planning process that incorporates custom research and analysis, stakeholder engagement, a comprehensive market study and sector-specific insights that will position the County for sustained economic growth; laying the foundation to help its leaders direct efforts and resources toward a clearly defined vision for the future.

For Brief Economic Facts on QAC, please click [here](#). Our datastory can be found [here](#).

Letter of Intent

Interested applicants should submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) on or before February 19, 2024 via email to Rebecca Clark, Economic Development Coordinator, at rclark@qac.org

Request for Proposals

The contract will be awarded to the consulting firm that offers the most beneficial proposal encompassing all possible criteria established within this Request for Proposals, as well as the cost for the proposed services and timeframe needed to complete the data collection and recommendation summary. Proposals will be reviewed privately and evaluated by a panel of public and private stakeholders who make the award recommendation to the Queen Anne's County Commissioners for final approval.

Scope of Work & Deliverables

The consultant will provide professional services to support the tasks listed below. Along with expanding upon knowledge garnered during the analysis, as much as possible, this work plan should draw on and be informed by the county's comprehensive strategic plan. QACETD will work jointly with the selected consultant to develop a final, comprehensive scope of work and schedule for the project. The Five-Year Economic Development Strategy must:

- Include strategies to enhance equitable economic development practices
- Use a process that draws on both quantitative and qualitative data to inform strategies
- Use a process that prioritizes broad and inclusive stakeholder outreach
- Use a process that engages county departments and local organizations or programs that contribute to QAC's economic well-being and engagement of its businesses
- Utilize existing, relevant studies specific to QAC industries and economic development for reference
- Set a vision and mission for economic development in Queen Anne's County that can be communicated to a variety of audiences that aligns with the QAC Comprehensive Plan and QACETD vision and mission.
- Include an implementation plan that aligns, organizes, prioritizes, and sequences economic development efforts in a series of program chapters with short-term and medium-term strategies. Longer-term strategies beyond the five-year implementation period should be included for future consideration or opportunity
- Include strategies for business attraction and competitiveness, business retention and expansion, entrepreneurship and small business support, industry cluster development, enhancing liveability, and leveraging community partnerships
- Specifically identify what strategies are to be implemented by QACETD staff, other departments or external partners.
- Include associated implementation budget range for identified strategies
- Define Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for QACETD

Task 1: Project Management

The consultant will be expected to work closely with QACETD staff to ensure the project is executed in a manner that makes the most efficient use of time and resources. To accomplish this, we anticipate at a minimum, the following deliverables:

- Kickoff meeting
- Bi-weekly check-in meetings (can be virtual)
- Core team coordination meetings (minimum of two, but more as-needed)
- Leadership and Commission briefings and presentations

Task 2: Data Analysis

The consultant will be expected to provide a quantitative data analysis in order to develop a comprehensive picture of Queen Anne's County's economy and to help inform strategies. The data should include, but is not limited to:

- Industry cluster analysis
- Economic diversity and occupational diversity
- Employment growth by business sector and industry
- Commercial real estate analysis

- Small business and entrepreneurship analysis
- Workforce analysis
- SWOT analysis that focuses on QAC's economic competitiveness, business climate, state and regional reputation
- Affordability and income inequality analysis

Deliverable:

- a. Report of findings with graphic illustration and narrative*

Task 3: Stakeholder Engagement

The consultant should conduct stakeholder interviews in the community and with industries to inform their work. Focus groups designed for certain topical areas should be conducted to inform strategic development. Additional methods of outreach including a survey of the business community is recommended. The consultant will work closely with QACETD to identify stakeholders.

Deliverables:

- a. Engagement Plan with methodology and approach*
- b. List of stakeholder, organizations, and contact information*
- c. Presentation materials for meetings with stakeholders*
- d. Summary of interview findings*
- e. Interview summary notes*
- f. Survey results and analysis*
- g. Community Engagement Analysis and Findings*

Task 4: Economic Development Strategy Analysis

The consultant will conduct an analysis of proposed economic development strategies to assess the effort, cost, outcomes, and risks associated with potential strategies.

- Develop a customized suite of potential strategies for QAC
- Evaluate outcomes and risks associated with each strategy
- Estimate costs to QAC to implement and manage each strategy
- Based on Queen Anne's County's unique identity, evaluate who is best to implement the strategy (economic development staff, other county departments, external partners, or outside consultants)

Strategic areas for development and analysis should include:

- Business attraction and competitiveness
- Business retention and expansion
- Entrepreneurship and small business support
- Workforce development
- Industry cluster development

Deliverables:

- a. Written report explaining analysis*
- b. Documentation of detailed methodology and ranking*
- c. Suggested implementation schedule*

Task 5: Final Economic Development Strategic Action Plan

The final report should include an executive summary, vision, mission, summary of the analysis, and recommended strategic action plan organized in chapter form by topic area. The final plan should be structured as a five-year implementation plan that aligns, organizes, prioritizes, and sequences economic development efforts in a series of program chapters with short-term and medium-term strategies. Longer-term strategies beyond the five-year implementation period should be included for future consideration or opportunity.

Additionally, the final report should define the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for QACETD.

Deliverables:

- a. Final report document*
- b. Slide deck and supporting digital assets from all presentations made to QAC's Economic Development Commission and other community stakeholders.*

Subconsultants

QACETD will allow subcontracting on this work.

Term

QACETD intends to enter into an agreement from March 2024 through November 2024 with no option for renewal.

Budget

The budget for this project shall not exceed \$50,000.

Payment will be made upon approval of deliverables at 25% (upon execution of the agreement) and 50% (when study and recommendations have been drafted). The final 25% will be paid upon completion and approval of all deliverables.

Draft Timeline

Date	Task
April - May 2024	Project kick-off, data analysis
June - August 2024	Stakeholder interviews, preliminary analysis
September - November 2024	Draft development
November 2024	Five-Year Economic Development Strategy delivered and presentation made to QAC Economic Development Commission

Project Timeline

The following table outlines the anticipated schedule for this RFP process. Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development reserves the right to modify or reschedule milestones as necessary.

Schedule Item	Date
RFP Announced	February 7, 2024
Letters of Intent Due	February 20, 2024
Questions Due	February 23, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.
Proposals Due	March 11, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.
Evaluation of Proposals	March 11 to March 15, 2024
Interviews (optional, at QACETD discretion)	March 19, 2024
Consultant selected	March 19, 2024
Commissioner Review	March 27, 2024
Project Timeframe	April to November 2024

Proposal Due Date/Time

12:00 p.m. (noon EST) on Monday, March 11, 2024. Proposals received after this time will not be considered.

Questions about the Request for Proposals

Questions about the scope of work, requests for additional information, and/or concerns about the submission of the proposal should be directed to Rebecca Clark at rclark@qac.org by 12:00 p.m. (noon) February 23, 2024. Questions via telephone or other methods will not receive responses, as email provides the best opportunity for tracking and accountability. Questions and answers will be posted in the form of an Addendum to the original post on <https://emma.maryland.gov> and www.choosequeenannes.org tentatively on February 27, 2023.

Proposal Format, Content, and Submission Requirements

Email a digital version of the application with all documentation in one PDF to Rebecca Clark at rclark@qac.org. Applicants must also provide one original and five hard copies in one sealed, company-marked envelope and clearly labeled "Economic Development Strategy for Queen Anne's County, Maryland" to Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development no later than 12:00 pm on March 11, 2024. The proposal should be addressed to:

Rebecca Clark - rclark@qac.org
Economic Development Coordinator
Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development
425 Piney Narrows Road
Chester, MD 21619

There is no expressed or implied obligation for Queen Anne's County to reimburse organizations for any expenses incurred in preparing proposals in response to this request. Queen Anne's County reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted and to use any ideas in a proposal regardless of whether that proposal is selected.

Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the organization of the conditions contained in this Request for Proposals, unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract.

Proposals must include all information requested and meet all specifications and requirements outlined in this RFP. The following submittals must be part of your proposal; if any are not included, your proposal may be judged as non-responsive. A committee will evaluate the submitted proposals. During the evaluation process, QACETD reserves the right to request additional information or clarification from firms responding to this RFP.

A complete response will not exceed ten pages and include:

1. Cover letter of not more than one page stating:
 - a. Brief overview of firm
 - b. Reason for interest
 - c. List of services offered by firm, in alignment with the scope of work
 - d. Firm's point-of-contact name, position, and contact information

2. Summary of approach - Explain your approach to assisting QAC EDC in advancing its goals and priorities described in this RFP. Summarize your proposal and methodology.
 - a. Describe your project management approach with a focus on managing scope, schedule, and budget.
 - b. Describe your experience with conducting effective business outreach and community engagement and approach to qualitative and quantitative research and analysis.
 - c. What analysis tools would your team use?
 - d. How will the team effectively coordinate with QACETD staff?
3. Hours - Provide hour estimates for recommended approach(es) that include number of hours by task and project team members for tasks identified in this RFP, and any proposed alternatives.
4. Project Schedule - Include a proposed timeline for completion of each deliverable. The work schedule will be confirmed during contract negotiation. A preliminary summary schedule is provided in this RFP.
5. Project Lead & Team Qualifications - Describe the team's experience and capabilities/expertise. Identify the individual you propose to assign as principal and any associate(s); include resume and relevant work experience for each member. *Resumes can be included as an Appendix.*
6. Subconsultants - If any service is to be supplied by a partner or third party, identify the provider(s) and provide relevant work experience.
7. Business Name - Proposals must be made in the official name of the firm or individual under which business is conducted (showing official business address) and must be signed by a person duly authorized to legally bind the person, partnership, company, or corporation submitting the proposal. A corporation must indicate place and date of incorporation.
8. References - Include a list of references, with contact information of at least three (3) contracts within the last three (3) years. QACETD reserves the right to contact references without prior notification. *Can be included as an Appendix.*
9. Work Samples - Provide samples of documents your firm has produced that are similar to the documents your firm would provide under this contract. The consultant selected for this project must provide work samples that highlight an ability to design technical processes that support policy evaluation, draw strong and supported inferences from their observations, and effectively communicate outcomes and recommendations that can reasonably be implemented. *Can be included as an Appendix.*
10. Cost - Provide a detailed budget for the requested services, including expenses, billing rates, and expected hours from all members of the team. The budget for this contract is \$50,000. Staff resources from QACETD are available to assist the consultant with outreach and other identified tasks, within reason and at the discretion of its Director.
11. Signed Acknowledgement of RFP Terms and Conditions. *This is considered an Appendix.*

Rating of Proposals

Each proposal will be rated and ranked in accordance with by following criteria:

- Approach for conducting the study
- Specific methodologies for completing various aspects of the study
- Demonstrated ability, capacity, creativity, and experience
- Technical qualifications of individuals assigned to the project
- Ability to meet the proposed timeline
- Ability to complete the study within budget

Queen Anne's County reserves the right to award a contract based solely on the proposals or to negotiate with one or more consultants. During the evaluation process, Queen Anne's County may request additional information or clarification from applicants. The selected consulting firm will be chosen on the basis that it is the best fit for the County, and may not necessarily be based on the lowest price. The chosen consultant must agree to execute a contract within 30 days after the Notice of Award. No contract may be assigned, in whole or in part, without the prior approval of Queen Anne's County.

Acceptance of Consultant Proposals

The Queen Anne's County Commissioners reserve the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive any nonmaterial irregularities in the proposal, to accept or reject any item or combination of items and accept any proposal which best benefits the people of Queen Anne's County.

Queen Anne's County reserves the right to negotiate with any, none, or all of the proposing vendors.

Equal Opportunity

All qualified persons, firms and proposers will receive consideration without regard to age, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), Women-Owned Enterprises (WBE), and Veteran-Owned Enterprises are encouraged to apply.

Queen Anne's County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Queen Anne's County Standard Operating Policies

Procurement Policy #400-010

It is the responsibility of the proposer to review and adhere to all of Queen Anne's County Procurement Policies, #400-010. The policies can be located at <https://www.qac.org/593/Procurement>

Debarred, Suspended and Ineligible Contractors

The consultant certifies by submission of a proposal that it is not a debarred, suspended or ineligible contractor by any Agency of Federal or State government. No proposal received from a debarred, suspended or ineligible contractor will qualify for an award.

Acknowledgement of RFP Terms and Conditions

The proposer, as part of its response, must submit this signed document by an authorized representative that obligates the proposer to perform the commitments contained in its response.

Acknowledged and Agreed:

Signature

Signature

Printed Name

Printed Name

Title

Title

Company Name

Company Name

City, State

City, State

Phone Number

Phone Number

Date

Date

Advertisement

[Queen Anne's County](#) is soliciting proposals from qualified consulting teams to develop a comprehensive economic development strategy to guide the county's economic development activities for the next five (5) years.

Interested applicants should submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) on or before February 20, 2024 via email to Rebecca Clark at rclark@qac.org

An electronic copy of the information package may be downloaded <https://emma.maryland.gov> or www.choosequeenannes.com

Each proposal received in response to this RFP will be evaluated on the approach to analysis, methodology, outreach, capacity, experience and cost outlined in the RFP.

All proposals must be sealed, clearly marked "Economic Development Strategy for Queen Anne's County, Maryland," and must include all elements described in the information package.

Email a digital version of the application with all documentation in one PDF to Rebecca Clark at rclark@qac.org. Applicants must also provide one original and five hard copies in one sealed, company-marked envelope and clearly labeled "Economic Development Strategy for Queen Anne's County, Maryland" to Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development no later than 12:00 pm on March 11, 2024. Information and questions should be directed to Rebecca Clark at rclark@qac.org

Bid Opening will occur at 12:15 p.m. on March 11, 2024 at the Chesapeake Heritage Visitors Center, located at 425 Piney Narrows Road, Chester, MD 21619.