

Envision East Central Iowa Request for Professional Services

Introduction

The East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG) is the designated Economic Development District (EDD) for Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn and Washington counties. ECICOG is seeking proposals from qualified professionals to support implementation of the region’s comprehensive economic development strategy, known as *Envision East Central Iowa (EECI)*.

Interested parties can respond to one or both of the following projects:

- **Project 1: Strategic Doing Training**
- **Project 2: Project Management and Facilitation Support to Accelerate EECI Implementation.**

Background

Envision East Central Iowa is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. EECI engages the private sector, non-profit sector, local governments, educational institutions, and other economic development entities to build and implement a common vision for the region. More detailed information on EECI can be found at: www.envision-eastcentraliowa.org.

EECI outlines seven strategic pillars necessary for regional success:



Leveraging matching funds from the Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, United Way of East Central Iowa, Alliant Energy and Greater Iowa City, Inc., the East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG) successfully obtained an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant to accelerate work related to EECl. The overarching goal is to create a shared problem-solving framework throughout the region (*Strategic Doing*: www.strategicdoing.net) and to advance the work of the EECl action teams by assisting with team development, meeting facilitation and/or accountability structures.

ECICOG will use consultants selected from this RFP process to deliver the services identified in the grant. Grant funding is for two years. Regular progress reports and detailed timekeeping will be required to meet the terms of the grant. The project timeline and related deliverables are summarized on page 5.

Project 1: Strategic Doing Training and Mentorship

Strategic Doing is an open source discipline for designing and guiding complex collaborations by following simple rules. It enables people in loosely connected networks to form action-oriented collaborations quickly, moving towards measurable outcomes with 30-day action plans.

The consultant selected for this project will train and coach at least two cohorts (24 total trainees) of *Strategic Doing* “volunteer facilitators”. The volunteer facilitators are community leaders who have the interest and time available to provide occasional facilitation support to cross-organization collaborative efforts. After the training is completed, the consultant would provide ad hoc coaching/mentoring to the volunteer facilitators as they begin to practice their skills. The consultant will also assist with marketing and outreach for the *Strategic Doing* training opportunity. Respondents must be certified workshop leaders through the Strategic Doing Institute.

The budget for Project 1 is \$35,000, inclusive of licensed *strategic doing* training materials, meals, lodging and travel. A minimum of 100 hours must be dedicated to outreach and follow-up mentorship.

Consultants responding to the Project 1: Strategic Doing Training and Mentorship RFP should provide the following information (limit 4 pages excluding resumes):

- Name and address of firm, name of primary contact and list of any subcontractors,
- Description of firm’s qualifications and capabilities related to *Strategic Doing* training including list of similar recent engagements,
- The resumes of the individuals responsible for executing the project.
- Outline of the proposed outreach plan to recruit potential volunteer facilitators,
- Outline of proposed follow-up mentorship plan to ensure that trainees continue to practice and grow their facilitation skills,
- Describe any experience working in and/or knowledge of the East Central Iowa region.
- Three references from comparable projects within the last five years. Describe the project and the role your firm played.

Project 2: Project Management and Facilitation Support to Accelerate EECl Implementation.

Action teams are cross-organization groups that have come together for the purpose implementing strategies related to EECl. Several action teams exist already, but many are struggling with getting

effectively organized to ensure the most effective use of their participant's time. In other areas, action teams do not exist or may not have all of the right players at the table to affect meaningful change.

The consultant will work with EECI Strategy Committee members to:

- Assess status/needs of existing action teams and offer *strategic doing* facilitation and accountability support with the goal of self-reliance by the end of the grant period.
- Identify existing groups and/or potential stakeholders doing work related to the Envision East Central Iowa strategic pillars and invite them to join in regional efforts,
- Offer support and *strategic doing* facilitation services to groups seeking to develop and implement plans at the regional or local level using the EECI framework,
- Conduct outreach and facilitate the formation of actions team for strategies where action teams do not exist,
- Conduct outreach and invite participation from underrepresented groups in action teams,
- Partner with volunteer *strategic doing* facilitators when delivering facilitation services to grow regional capacity and ensure progress/self-reliance after the grant period ends,
- Conduct, at a minimum, quarterly follow-ups with existing action teams and offer additional support as needed,
- Develop and execute a strategy for sharing knowledge, publicizing successes and building excitement for EECI, and
- Organize and facilitate quarterly meetings for EECI Strategy Committee.

Since the purpose of the grant is to build the problem-solving capacity of cross-organizational teams throughout the region, it will be important that the consultant is an experienced facilitator and skilled in *strategic doing*, or willing to become proficient in *strategic doing* within the first few months of the grant period.

The two-year budget for Project 2 is \$90,000, inclusive of office supplies and equipment, meals, lodging and travel. An additional small budget exists for expenses related to meetings and events.

Consultants responding to the Project 2: Project Management and Facilitation Support to Accelerate EECI Implementation RFP should provide the following information (limit 5 pages excluding resumes):

- Name and address of firm, name of primary contact and list of any subcontractors,
- Description of firm's qualifications and capabilities related to facilitation (including any experience with *Strategic Doing*), project management and leading cross-organization initiatives, including list of similar recent engagements,
- The resumes of the individuals responsible for executing the project.
- Brief outline of the proposed outreach plan to connect with existing action teams, assist with the formation of new action teams, and to recruit missing organizations or underrepresented groups.
- Brief outline of proposed mentorship plan to ensure that volunteer facilitators continue to practice and grow their facilitation skills and the action teams move towards self-reliance.
- Brief outline of proposed plan to increase accountability and follow-through by members of action teams.
- Brief outline of approach for capturing and celebrating EECI successes.
- Describe any experience working in and/or knowledge of the East Central Iowa region.
- Three references from comparable projects within the last five years. Describe the project and the role your firm played.

Submission and Selection Process

Proposals and questions should be submitted electronically to Jessica Walker, Community Development Specialist at jessica.walker@ecicog.org. To ensure consideration, please respond by 5pm CST on June 10, 2024. An email confirming proposal receipt will be sent within 24 hours. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals early to avoid any technical difficulties.

Proposals will be evaluated by a committee based on the following factors:

- Experience of the consulting team and firm,
- Understanding and/or experience in our region,
- Experience with similar projects, including project management, cross-organization facilitation, and *strategic doing*.
- Portfolio of previously completed projects,
- Proposed engagement process, and

Respondents should anticipate a follow-up interview as part of the selection process.

Project Timeline and Deliverables

Quarter	Task	Deliverable	Responsible Party
1	Hire and onboard consultant teams	RFP	ECICOG
	Publicize opportunity for <i>strategic doing</i> volunteer facilitator training	Flyer/social media posts. Distribution and outreach plan	ECICOG/Project Team 1
2	Identify and train first strategic doing cohort	Training Session	Project Team 1
2	Conduct outreach to underrepresented communities and/or populations to encourage participation.	Outreach plan	Project Team 1 & 2
2	Connect with existing EECI Pillar Teams, assess status and offer assistance accordingly.	Status report to Strategy Committee	Project Team 2
2-8 Quarterly	Coordinate and facilitate quarterly Strategy Committee meetings	Quarterly Strategy Committee meetings	Project Team 2
3 – 8 Ongoing	Identify where gaps exist with respect to regional implementation and EECI’s seven strategic pillars.	Status report to Strategy Committee	Project Team 2
3-8 Ongoing	Activate regional teams where implementation gaps exist utilizing the strategic doing methodology.	Status report to the Strategy Committee	Project Team 2
3 – 8 Ongoing	Partner with volunteer facilitators to conduct 3+ <i>strategic doing</i> sessions with EECI implementation teams.	Status report to the Strategy Committee	Project Team 2
3-8 Quarterly	Conduct quarterly check-ins with existing implementation teams and assess if additional support is needed.	Status report to the Strategy Committee	Project Team 2
3	Publicize strategic doing facilitation services to teams who want to advance EECI within a local community or county.		Project Team 2
4	Publicize opportunity for <i>strategic doing</i> volunteer facilitator training.	Flyer/social media posts. Distribution and outreach plan	Project Team 1 & 2
4-8 Ongoing	Develop and execute strategy for sharing knowledge, publicizing successes and building excitement for EECI.	Communication Plan	Project Team 2
5	Identify and Train second Strategic Doing Cohort	Training materials	Project Team 1
7	Conduct refresher training for volunteer facilitators. Develop materials to address any challenges encountered in the field.	Refresher training	Project Team 1
8	Deliver final project report and develop transition plan for project end	Project report and transition plan	Project Team 2