**Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation and Bennington County Regional Commission
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

for assistance in the development of a

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
for the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone

Issued:   December 27, 2017

Due Date:   January 26, 2018

Send to:
Sarah Lang
Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
76 Cotton Mill Hill
Brattleboro, VT  05301

**Background information:** The Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC), on behalf of its affiliate the Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies Group (SeVEDS), and the Bennington Regional Planning Commission (BCRC), and in conjunction with the area’s Regional Economic Development Group (RED Group), is seeking proposals from qualified professionals knowledgeable in data analysis, comprehensive planning, and public outreach, to create a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone (Zone). Throughout this RFP, the Zone comprises the service areas of BDCC and BCRC: all municipalities in Bennington County and Windham County, as well as the Town of Weston in Windsor County.

**About BDCC, SeVEDS, BCRC and the RED Group (Partner Organizations):**

* BDCC is a private, nonprofit economic development organization that serves as a catalyst for industrial and commercial growth throughout Southeastern Vermont, including Windham County and the Vermont towns of Readsboro, Searsburg, and Weston. BDCC serves as the State of Vermont’s certified Regional Development Corporation (RDC) for the greater Windham County area. BDCC is one of 12 RDCs throughout Vermont.

For more information visit: <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/>

* Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) is an affiliate of BDCC that grew from a 2008 grassroots effort, initiated by BDCC, to reverse the economic decline of the Windham Region and plan for the economic impacts from the closure of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant. In 2014, after multiple years of regional input, education and data gathering, SeVEDS submitted the Windham Region’s federally recognized [S.M.A.R.T. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](http://seveds.com/windham-region-comprehensive-economic-development-strategy-ceds/) for federal approval.

For more information visit: [www.seveds.com](http://www.seveds.com)

* The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) was created by the seventeen towns and villages it serves and works on behalf of those municipalities to build strong, resilient and sustainable communities, to foster economic prosperity, and to promote a high quality of life for residents of the region.  Since early 2016, it has provided the staffing and operational capacity for the Bennington County Industrial Corporation, the certified RDC for southwestern Vermont.

For more information visit [www.bcrcvt.org](http://www.bcrcvt.org)

* The Regional Economic Development Group (RED Group) is a volunteer body committed to increasing the shared prosperity and quality of life for the seventeen municipalities in southwestern Vermont.  The group has a diverse membership that reflects the varied community, business, workforce, and demographic characteristics of the region.  The RED Group focuses on the internal and external economic development issues that affect the Bennington County region as a whole; the regional implications of local economic development issues; the process of regional economic development from local, state, and federal perspectives; and options for future initiatives.

**About the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone:** The Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone, created by the Vermont General Assembly in 2015, directed organizations devoted to economic development within the Zone to collaborate on broad initiatives addressing shared issues. As a result of this directive, BDCC and BCRC have been awarded a planning grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to develop a CEDS for the Zone. Following the creation and implementation of the CEDS, the organizations intend to pursue Economic Development District designation from the EDA for the Zone.

**About the CEDS for the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone:** The CEDS is a locally initiated planning process designed to provide a mechanism for directing the efforts of individuals, municipalities and organizations in the Zone concerned with economic development. It is intended to serve as a guide in the continuation of successful economic development projects; to foster the creation of new projects based on analysis of the region’s economic situation; and to prepare and maintain a comprehensive inventory of infrastructure and job creation prospects in the region, in a dynamic platform accessible to the broader public.

Within the Zone, a number of significant economic development efforts are ongoing: the first Southern Vermont TIF has been awarded; an EB-5 project is underway; massive public and private reinvestment in roads and businesses since Tropical Storm Irene continues; a tri-state, four county green building cluster analysis, a 2014 CEDS implementation project, has recently been completed; the resulting “Ecovation Hub” is currently in the process of organizing for future development; developing shared workspaces are being developed to support a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem; and a number of organizations are working on young professional and workforce retention efforts. Furthermore, many rural school districts have either recently completed or are in the process of state mandated governance consolidations, and several municipalities are contemplating last mile telecommunications build out planning.

The Zone CEDS will serve as the 5-year update to the 2014 Windham CEDS. The partner organizations begin the 2019 Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone CEDS with all the knowledge and experience gained in the development and implementation of the 2014 Windham CEDS. The partners will bring much more CEDS development direction to the 2019 CEDS than was possible in the 2014 CEDS; including town and region-specific data, a portfolio/active list of development strategies underway, and a deeper understanding about the existing economic and demographic conditions.

With an active CEDS for the Windham region in its final year, and regional economic development conversations ongoing throughout the Bennington region, a primary focus of the CEDS will be to identify the best ways that BDCC, SeVEDS, BCRC and the RED Group can add value to the numerous current regional programs. The hired consultant will: work with BDCC and BCRC staff; meet with the SeVEDS and RED Group boards in the preparation and development of the proposed CEDS; provide detailed economic analysis, process management, and provide public meeting facilitation services.

**Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone CEDS Goals and Strategies**

The completed CEDS will:

* Include data and implementation work from 2014 Windham CEDS and Bennington Region projects (Partner organizations’ responsibility);
* Include background and historical information about economic development (Partner organizations’ responsibility); and
* Generate new economic data, including a regional assets inventory, to evaluate alongside existing economic data for outlining the economic conditions of the Zone (Partner organizations’ responsibility).
* Define regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges concerning economic development (Consultant’s responsibility);
* Identify the goals and visions for the region through a series of regional stakeholder meetings (Consultant’s responsibility);
* Evaluate and expand on the existing SeVEDS Objectives and Strategies outline (Consultant’s responsibility);
* Delineate an implementation timeline (Consultant’s responsibility);
* Determine benchmarks and evaluation measures for determining success of strategies (Consultant’s responsibility); and
* Assess external funding strategies and opportunities for dual and joint implementation (Consultant responsibility).

Upon completion of the CEDS, all data maps and reports shall be the joint property of BDCC and BCRC.

**Proposal Content**

BDCC and BCRC employ personnel familiar with CEDS development and data analysis. Consultant services are desired for public meeting facilitation, economic analysis, strategy development, outside perspective, and timeline management and coordination in the CEDS development. Responses to this RFP should:

* Include a detailed work plan that addresses the overall timeline and milestones necessary to complete the CEDS development work identified in the RFP;
* Identify specific activities that will be accomplished;
* Identify staffing that will be devoted to each activity; and
* Describe the work product that will be produced.

It should also include the following:

1. A process for communicating with BDCC and BCRC staff;
2. A public involvement plan including facilitation of three weeks of public meetings, as well as attendance at Draft Plan public meeting and Southern Vermont Economic Development Summit (See schedule);
3. A budget outline;
4. A timeline for status reports, draft report, and hard copy and electronic delivery of draft CEDS document;
5. A minimum of two similar projects completed by consultant; and
6. Reference contact information (is there a convention for how many?).

**Evaluation Criteria**

Responses to this proposal will be evaluated on the following criteria:

* Qualification/experience of prime consultant with studies of similar scope and size.
* Qualification/experience of sub consultants with studies of similar scope and size.
* Demonstrated knowledge of economic development principals and trends, especially in rural communities and New England markets.
* Sufficient staff for all work required in the study.
* Past record of performance on similar projects.
* Proposed cost of the study and demonstration of commitment for meeting the project schedule. Completeness and quality of the project submission.

**Proposed Schedule**

* RFP issue date: December 27, 2017
* Deadline for proposals: January 26, 2018
* Review by RFP Committee: February 12, 2018
* Consultant Interviews: Week of February 26, 2018
* Consultant recommendation determined: March 7, 2018
* Consultant Selection approval: March 13 - 15, 2018
* Start Date for consultant: April 1, 2018
* Attend Southern Vermont Economy Summit May 30, 2018
* End Date: December 1, 2018

**Contract**

Under the terms of the EDA Short Term Planning Assistance Award, the total approved budget for contractual services is not to exceed $40,000 and is inclusive of all travel costs and per diems.**Certification(s) / Contract Requirements (Pass Thru Provisions)**

BDCC and BCRCs current projects, and the provisions of specific Financial Agreements include requirements that all contracts with Contracted Subordinates, Subcontractors’, Agents and Consultants shall contain such provisions as are appropriate and necessary to meet the requirement as set forth in the agreements. This certification shall accompany all bidding documents, contracts, agreements and scope of work.

Certification of the following will be required as part of any final contract:

1. Contractor is in good standing with respect to, or in full compliance with a plan to pay, any and all federal, state and local taxes, to the extent Contractor is subject to taxation;
2. Contractor is current on, or is in full compliance with a plan to pay, any and all debt financing;
3. There are no liens, judgements or other encumbrances, other than those of record, or disclosed prior to the full execution of the Sub Grant Agreement, Contract, Agreements or Scope of Work;
4. Contractor’s representations with respect to the financial and operational aspects of the business in written documents previously provided, if any, remain accurate and not misleading;
5. Contractor certifies, as of the date of execution of its Sub Grant Agreement, Contract, Agreement or Scope of Work, the Contractor is not listed in the Exclusions portion of Performance Information in the System for Award Management (“SAM”) at [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov) ; nor named on the State’s debarment list at: <http://bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing/debarment>; and
6. Contractor, and all of its contracted subordinates, subcontractors, agents, consultants shall comply with Section 3 requirements in accordance with 24 CFR 135 to provide economic opportunities in connection with this Project, to the greatest extent feasible, to low and very low income persons residing within the area in which the Project is located and to Section 3 businesses. Section 3 requirements shall be included in bid documents:<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/24-Cfr-Part-135-Section-3-Regulations.pdf>

Additionally, the following provisions shall be included in all contracts related to a project, and shall be binding for the duration of said project:

RETENTION OF RECORDS: The Contractorshall maintain those books, records, and other documents, including but not limited to payroll records, accounting records, and purchase orders that are sufficient to document that activities carried out were in accordance with the contract**,** and any other applicable laws and regulations. Such records shall contain all information pertaining to grant awards, authorizations, obligations, unobligated balances, assets, liabilities, outlays and income. Such records are to be maintained for a period of seven (7) years from the date of expiration of the contract**,** or if such records become the subject of audit findings, they shall be retained until such findings have been resolved, whichever is later.

ACCESS TO RECORDS: All books, accounts, records, reports, files, and other papers, things or property, that relate to its activities under this contract shall be made available at all reasonable times for inspection, review, and audit by the BDCC or their authorized representatives.

NON-DISCRIMINATION: The Contractorshall adhere to the requirements set forth in the following statutory provisions:

*Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d et seq.) and DOC implementing regulations published at 15 C.F.R. Part 8 prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin under programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance;*

*Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §§ 1681 et seq.) prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex under federally assisted education programs or activities;*

*The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 et seq.) prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability under programs, activities, and services provided or made available by state and local governments or instrumentalities or agencies thereto, as well as public or private entities that provide public transportation;*

*The Age Discrimination Act of 1976, as amended (42 U.S.C. §§ 6101 et seq.), and DOC implementing regulations published at 15 C.F.R. Part 20 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance; and*

*Any other applicable non-discrimination law(s).*

The Contractor shall not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. The Contractor shall take affirmative action to insure that applicants for employment are employed, and employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. Such action shall include, but not be limited to, the following: employment, upgrading, demotion, or transfer; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship. The Contractor shall post in conspicuous places, available to employees and applicants for employment, notices setting forth the provisions of this non-discrimination clause. The Contractor shall state that all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap or national origin.

PROCUREMENT STANDARDS: The Contractor shall adhere to relevant regulations, procedures and guidelines with respect to standards governing procurement, and any applicable provisions of State laws and regulations relative thereto, including but not limited to: 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.318 (General procurement standards) through 200.326 (Contract provisions). This includes the requirement that non-Federal entities maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the performance of their employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.

All procurement transactions without regard to dollar value shall be conducted in a manner that provides maximum free and open competition. It is national and state policy that the recipient take affirmative steps to award a fair share of contracts taken to assure that small and minority businesses are utilized when possible as sources of supplies, equipment, construction and services. The Contractor shall maintain records sufficient to detail the process for procurement.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: The Contractor shall adhere to the mandates of the State laws and regulations relative thereto, and the federal Conflict of Interest Provisions at 24 CFR 570.489 and the federal Hatch Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 1501 et seq.

CERTIFICATION OF DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE: The Contractor certifies that it has implemented an appropriate policy in accordance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, 45 CFR Part 76, Subpart F.

CERTIFICATION AGAINST LOBBYING: The Contractor certifies, to the best of its knowledge and belief that it is in compliance with Title 31USC1352, entitled *Limitation on Use of Appropriated Funds to Influence Certain Federal Contracting and Financial Transactions,* and that:

1. No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of all Grantees, Sub-Grantees, contracted subordinates, subcontractors, agents, and consultants, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.
2. If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, VE shall complete and submit Standard Form – LLL, *Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying,* in accordance with its instruction.
3. The **Contractor** shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all sub awards at all tiers and that all sub recipients shall certify and disclose accordingly.

SUBRECIPIENT PROVISIONS: The Contractor shall require all sub-contractors, including lower tier sub-contractors, under the Grant Award to comply with the provisions of the award, including applicable provisions of the OMB Uniform Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 200), and all associated terms and conditions.

**Responses**

Please submit 8 sealed proposals to the address below and a pdf version of the proposal to the email address provided below. Materials and documents submitted in response to this RFP become the property of BDCC and BCRC and will not be returned to the bidder.

Responses must be received by mail or delivered to:

Sarah Lang
Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
76 Cotton Mill Hill
Brattleboro, VT  05301

Inquiries may be directed in email form to:

Sarah Lang
E-mail: slang@brattleborodevelopment.com

Any additional clarifications and materials provided to respondents will be posted at: (webpage to be listed)