



Request for Proposals

Comprehensive Labor Analysis And Workforce Recovery Plan

Greater Peoria, Illinois

Greater Peoria Economic Development Council
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Summary

The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC) is requesting proposals from interested, highly qualified firms to conduct a comprehensive labor analysis and provide recommendations regarding workforce development strategies for the Greater Peoria region of Illinois, composed of five Central Illinois counties: Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford, Mason, and Logan (with the recognition that “labor sheds” expand to neighboring counties).

Background and Rationale

GPEDC is seeking a consulting firm to assist in developing and launching workforce development initiatives through data-based recommendations. Three-plus years after the COVID pandemic, the region’s employment situation has still not fully recovered. According to the Illinois Department of Economic Security (IDES), there are nearly 4,000 fewer employed people in April 2023 than in February 2020 (the month before the onset of the pandemic). The employment situation has also fluctuated wildly in the three years post-pandemic, with nearly 6,000 more people reporting employment in July 2022 (171,150) than April 2023 (171,461). The April 2023 unemployment rate for Greater Peoria was 4.5%, more than a half percentage point higher than the Illinois rate of 3.8% and more than a percentage point higher than the national unemployment rate (3.4%), which represents a disconnect. (GPEDC tracks local unemployment and jobs information at <https://data.greaterpeoria.us/workforce>.)

There is also a disconnect between the high unemployment rate and the struggle of local employers to fill jobs. Interviews with businesses reveal that the primary barrier to growth and productivity has been a need for more available and skilled workforce. The recently launched Greater Peoria Job Board (<https://jobs.peoria.org>), an online aggregator of job openings from some of the region’s largest employers, lists over 1,100 open positions at 101 different companies. This represents only a fraction of the total positions open in the region.

Various stakeholders have been working to address this mismatch and move unemployed people into jobs and employed people from low-paying jobs into higher-paying ones. Regional educational institutions, particularly Illinois Central College (the region’s community college), have retooled programs and developed new initiatives with these goals. Social service agencies have worked tirelessly to prepare individuals for work and funnel them into training programs. Employers have redesigned their human resource processes and been creative about outreach and hiring processes. Federal, state, and local governments have increased funding for more robust workforce development programming.

In response to the need, separate segments of the workforce development system have collaborated to address gaps and issues, especially for untapped, underrepresented, disadvantaged, diverse, and low-income populations, through the Regional Workforce Alliance (RWA). Co-chaired by the President of the Peoria CEO Council and the President of Illinois Central College, the RWA works to align efforts in three areas: developing career pathways that connect youth and young adults to jobs, upskilling low-income workers so they can obtain jobs that pay family-sustaining wages; and addressing the multiple barriers that often keep low-income individuals from being fully employed. While those efforts have gained momentum and seen success, the RWA and its members need to root future initiatives and programming in data-driven information and outcomes. The RWA seeks data on regional workforce capacity and trends to address current talent gaps better and develop solutions that connect more individuals—especially low-income and disadvantaged populations—with employment opportunities.

More information on Greater Peoria and GPEDC can be found at www.greaterpeoriaedc.org.

Scope of Work

GPEDC, a foundational member and partner in the RWA and the economic development planning organization for Greater Peoria, is seeking a consultant who will analyze the current state of the regional workforce and make recommendations to adjust or develop new programming to improve workforce outcomes. The consultant, under GPEDC’s guidance, will utilize data tools, stakeholder and employer interviews, community engagement, and program review to provide the following information:

1. Document the current strengths and weaknesses of the workforce.
2. Quantify the labor supply and quality.

3. Quantify hidden labor resources, including employable individuals disengaged with the labor force and displaced worker pools.
4. Identify workforce skills gaps.
5. Identify current commute patterns to define the region's labor shed better and to determine the factors that would influence current commuters to stay and work in the region.
6. Define emerging employment trends and economic opportunities.
7. Utilize data that allows the RWA and its partners to assist existing businesses in finding qualified workers.
8. Provide data that allows educators to address workforce needs better and to support existing employers, especially those in key sectors.
9. Utilize data to inform business attraction efforts, such as identifying industry sectors that could be supported by the region's labor pool.
10. Provide data that guides training providers in preparing the workforce for existing and emerging employment opportunities.
11. Identify key workforce skills and supply needed by existing employers as foundational data to support new training and talent recruitment programs.
12. An analysis of current wages and benefits in the region as they compare to the wages and benefits in nearby regions.
13. Provide comprehensive workforce information to share with existing business, business prospects, and site selection consultants.

Based on the data, the consultant will be asked to present a set of recommendations around how education and workforce development programs can be adapted, aligned, and developed to improve employment outcomes. The project will also result in labor market information that can inform business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts.

Engagement Deliverables:

- Comprehensive Final report including:
 - Outline of steps used in the process
 - Presentation of data gathered and discovered, with observations on their value and usefulness
 - Recommendations on how data and observations can be used to adjust and/or develop workforce development policies and programs
- Public presentation of findings and recommendations, with a slide deck that can be used by GPEDC and its partners for further publication
- Complete data sets on key topic areas delivered in manipulatable format (i.e., Excel spreadsheets) that can be utilized for internal and external activities

Proposal Response/Submittal Requirements

- *Project Approach:* Describe how your firm/team will accomplish the tasks outlined in this RFP. Provide a statement describing the scope of work as you understand it. Provide a detailed data-driven plan to achieve the necessary requirements and plan for accomplishing the work. This plan should describe the approach, methodology, and procedures to be employed to gather the data, analyze findings, and develop recommendations.
- *Firm Information:* Provide a detailed description of the firm's/individual's experience in providing training, system thinking, and participating directly in workforce development activities related to economic and community development. Include the type and number of clients served, as well as the size, scope, and nature of the projects involved. Include as attachments at least two (2) samples of similar work conducted for other clients.
- *Assigned Staff:* For firms other than sole proprietors, provide information on each staff member that will

be assigned to the project. Information should be summarized and include the staff member's name, credentials, years of experience, and number of years spent with the firm. Clearly identify the team leader. Please attach or include as appendices the resumes of the proposed team members.

- *Schedule:* Provide a timeline indicating tasks required and the anticipated completion date based on an August 1, 2023 start date for the project. The timeline should include specific milestones. GPEDC strongly desires to have this work completed by the end of 2023.
- *Cost:* Outline the cost to accomplish the project deliverables. GPEDC strongly prefers to enter into a lump sum contract with the selected firm vs. a contract based on time and materials. Please note that this project is being funded by a grant provided by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) that does not exceed \$140,000. If the proposer's price exceeds \$140,000, please provide an alternative proposal that limits the scope to match the grant amount and then further identifies the price(s) for additional work. If there are areas that proposers believe should have been included in the scope of work but were not or additional services that could be offered, please identify those opportunities and the associated costs. GPEDC will only consider such options if (1) the base scope is covered and (2) financial resources are available.
- *References:* Submit three (3) references of agencies for whom your firm has performed similar studies. Include the name of the agency, contact person, and summary of work performed (please include hyperlinks to any publicly available examples of work.)

Selection Criteria

Proposals submitted will be reviewed by GPEDC for completeness and qualifications. Selection of a firm will be made on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Understanding of the project goals and objectives and the described approach to accomplish them.
2. Demonstrated expertise and experience of the firm and proposed team members.
3. Prior experience in performing similar projects.
4. Total cost. (Note that GPEDC is funding this work with an Illinois DCEO grant that cannot exceed \$140,000 but will consider alternatives.)
5. Project schedule. (GPEDC prefers to have the work completed before the end of 2023.)

Submission Timeline and Process

Firms interested in being considered for this work should submit all materials to Christopher Setti, CEO, via email at csetti@greaterpeoriaedc.org no later than **5 pm (Central) on Thursday, July 13, 2023**. Proposals should include a narrative response to the items listed in the RFP; a cover letter signed by an officer or employee having the authority to bind the company; and any attachments, including sample projects and staff resumes, that support the proposal. GPEDC plans to expedite the review of submissions and may arrange for follow-up interviews with any or all of the qualified firms. Questions regarding this RFP or the work should be directed to Chris Setti **in writing** at the same email address. GPEDC reserves the right to publish any questions, answers or clarifications for other proposers to see.

GPEDC encourages the submission of proposals from disadvantaged business enterprises and companies owned by minorities, women, immigrants, and veterans. GPEDC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ancestry, national origin, disability, or veteran status in consideration of this award.

Other Items

- GPEDC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals submitted, to void this Request and the review process and/or terminate negotiations at any time, and to select a final party/parties from among the proposals received in response to this Request.

- Any and all Request elements, requirements, and schedules are subject to change and modification.
- GPEDC reserves the unqualified right to modify, suspend, or terminate at its sole discretion any and all aspects of this Request process, to obtain further information from any and all respondents, and to waive any defects as to the form or content of the Request or any proposal.
- This Request is not and shall not be construed to be an offer and does not commit the GPEDC to award a contract or to defray any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal. All submitted proposals become the property of the GPEDC.
- As noted above, this work is funded by a grant provided by the Illinois DCEO. As such, GPEDC is beholden to grant provisions around compliance with state and federal laws and regulations that will flow to the eventually contracted party. These are routine and ordinary provisions that include, but are not limited to, ensuring that parties are not barred from receiving government funds; will not use funds to conduct lobbying activities; are in compliance with nondiscrimination laws; etc. A full list of these items is available upon request.