



Request for Proposals

Grundy County Economic Diversification and Resiliency Plan

Release Date: January 16, 2024

Due Date: February 9, 2024

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I. Introduction

A. PURPOSE

The Grundy County Economic Development Council (GEDC) and the Grundy County Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), collectively “the Partners,” are soliciting proposals for a Grundy County Economic Diversification and Resiliency Plan (RFP). This report is the second component of a larger study, *Grundy County Nuclear Host Community Economic Resiliency Strategy*, or the “Grundy Resiliency Project,” funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) and Grundy County.

The objective of this strategic Economic Diversification and Resiliency plan is to identify, recommend, and justify key initiatives, action items, and market-driven opportunities for economic diversification in Grundy County to enhance the County’s economic prosperity and resilience. Upon completion, this diversification and resiliency plan will be actively used as a tool to inform and guide comprehensive planning, business attraction, infrastructure investments, and marketing. Its development should be an inclusive, participatory, and iterative process. The final product should be clear, realistic, comprehensive, and actionable.

B. BACKGROUND

Grundy County, with a population of about 54,000 residents, is located just outside the Joliet MSA and approximately 60 miles southwest of Chicago with Interstate 80 running along the northern portion of the county and Interstate 55 along the eastern side. The county also boasts four class-one railroads and the navigable Illinois River. Although the majority of the land use is agriculture, the county has a long history of industrial, energy, and healthcare facilities. In Goose Lake and Aux Sable townships, the primary energy assets include Constellation Dresden Station, Aux Sable Liquid Products, newly constructed CPV Three Rivers Energy generating station, significant transmission lines including 345kV and 765kV lines, intrastate pipelines, Chevron biofuels, 138 wind turbines, and solar installations. World-class chemical plants are led by LyondellBasell, Nouryon, Reichhold, and others. The top individual employer in the county is Morris Hospital and its auxiliary healthcare facilities. In the last 15 years, the logistics industry has increased its prominence in the region with nearly 15 million square feet under roof, primarily along I-80 in Minooka and Morris. Land, transportation corridors, and energy assets continue to fuel development in the region.

The GEDC and the Chamber applied to the US EDA when the future of Constellation Dresden Nuclear Station (Dresden) was uncertain, and the risk of a plant closure was high.

Dresden is the second largest employer in Grundy County with approximately 800 direct employees and over 865 direct and induced jobs. Dresden is the largest property tax payer in the County, with an annual tax bill estimated at or near \$26 million. In 2022, Illinois enacted the Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA), which provided financial incentives for nuclear plants to remain open for five years. Since that legislation, the federal government has also recognized the importance of nuclear energy and provided further market enhancements for nuclear plant operators. Although the current future of Dresden is positive, the GEDC and the Chamber are working diligently to improve the diversity and resiliency of the local economy for the future, with or without Dresden.

In the spring of 2023, the Partners began the first stage of the Grundy Resiliency Project by contracting with the University of Michigan's Economic Growth Institute (EGI) to develop an economic overview of Grundy County. This Grundy County Economic Overview, completed during the summer of 2023 and [available here](#), offers a robust, baseline study of Grundy County's current economy. The study emphasized the following key features of the local economy:

- Indicators measuring wages, income inequality, SNAP benefits, etc. reinforce that Grundy County is relatively prosperous and residents generally enjoy a high quality of life. Grundy County's GDP is high, especially compared to neighboring Kendall County, as Grundy County's economy is a production economy compared with Kendall County's bedroom community economy.
- The utility industry in Grundy County, with a GDP of \$653M largely generated by Constellation's Dresden Nuclear Station, has a significant impact on the local economy. The outsized influence of this singular industry has rendered the County vulnerable to economic shocks in this sector, thus the need for this diversification and resiliency strategy.
- The study highlighted a growing concern that recently added and future projected jobs do not pay above the current median wage in the County or do not require a meaningful level of skill or education. For example, Grundy County has experienced significant growth in the logistics industry. While Grundy is currently positioned to continue to attract development in this sector, the objective of our organizations via this strategic plan is to explore and position the region for economic diversification opportunities within current industries and new industries that stand to offer higher-value jobs and investment.

This second stage of the Grundy Resiliency Project, the Grundy County Diversification and Resiliency Plan will combine the insights from EGI's Economic Overview on Grundy County's assets, clusters, and strengths with additional data and insights on developing markets and industries that represent realistic and high-value opportunities for economic diversification within the County.

II. Scope of Work, Deliverables, and Services to be Performed

A. SCOPE

The Grundy County Economic Diversification and Resiliency Plan should, in the form of a final strategic plan/report and presentation, provide the following:

1. An analysis of economic development challenges and market-driven opportunities in Grundy County (SWOT and developing industries analysis).
 - a. The SWOT analysis should include but not be limited to existing clusters, growth potential clusters, infrastructure, workforce, and associated financial benefits/market outlook.
 - b. The analysis should evaluate the Dresden/Collins Industrial Corridor and other designated Grundy County industrial corridors as identified by the partners for potential use and reuse to create jobs, industrial tax base, and investment.
 - c. It should be noted that one of the eventual goals of the SWOT analysis will be to meaningfully move forward with concrete steps toward diversification opportunities. For example, the analysis may conclude that physical infrastructure improvements in a specific location are necessary to attract high-value development to a certain area. These conclusions and recommendations can then be leveraged to secure funding and support for said improvements.
 - d. It is anticipated that the SWOT analysis will involve stakeholder input and public engagement; this engagement may involve a survey and up to two focus groups. In support of the development of this analysis, the partners will be able to facilitate connections between stakeholders from key local industries and the selected consultant.
2. Specific short and long-term goals, strategies, and tasks targeted to achieve the overarching objective of greater economic diversity, prosperity, and resilience in Grundy County. The plan should include specific action items and break down overarching goals into actionable, concrete steps.
 - a. The consultant is encouraged to think beyond the obvious “low hanging fruit” opportunities to pursue opportunities in higher-value growth industries and entrepreneurship which will maintain or increase the average wage in Grundy.
3. An implementation plan for these goals, including an accountability matrix (goal, impact, strategy, responsible entity or person, timeline, status).
4. Measures and metrics by which progress toward and achievement of these recommended goals can be evaluated.
5. Explanation of the strategic plan’s development process and approach.

As noted in Part IB, the recommendations of the Economic Diversification and Resiliency Plan should be, in part, informed by and based on the economic overview data collected by the University of Michigan’s Economic Growth Institute during phase one of the Grundy Resiliency Project, [linked here](#).

B. CEDS-Equivalent Product/Document

While the Grundy County Economic Diversification and Resiliency Plan is not, strictly speaking, a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as defined by the US EDA because it will focus only on Grundy County, the partners have been assured by the EDA that should the Grundy County Diversification and Resiliency Plan follow the CEDS process and fulfill the general requirements of a CEDS, this final product will be accepted as a “CEDS-equivalent” document by the EDA for Grundy County. It is thus the expectation that the Grundy County Diversification and Resiliency Plan carefully follow the CEDS process and adhere to its guidelines, outlined here: [CEDS-Content-Guidelines-full.pdf \(eda.gov\)](#).

C. DELIVERABLES

Grundy County Economic Diversification and Resiliency Plan deliverables are to include:

1. A full, **written strategic plan/report** which meets the technical requirements of a CEDS, in PDF format, containing:
 - a. An Executive Summary
 - b. Economic Challenges and Opportunities Analysis
 - c. Goals, Strategies, and Tasks for Economic Diversification
 - d. Implementation Plan with Accountability Matrix including estimated resources to complete plan
 - e. Tools to Evaluate Goal Progress and Performance
 - f. Explanation of Plan Background, Process, and Approach
 - g. An appendix containing any supporting documents, background data, and data sources.
2. Any **raw data** used to inform the recommendations within the final plan should be provided in an electronic format to enable redeployment and manipulation for future studies.
3. A **slide deck presentation** synthesizing the primary findings, recommendations, and action steps from the plan/report, suitable for a general audience.

Printed and electronic copies of deliverables should be provided. Raw data may be provided in electronic format, only.

D. SERVICES and Additional Expectations

1. The consultant should plan for engagement with key industrial stakeholders.
2. It is anticipated that there will also be public engagement to consist of a survey and up to two focus groups.
3. The consultant should plan for two in-person meetings. The first will be a kick-off meeting with a local "steering committee." The second will be to present and explain the semi-final Diversification and Resiliency Plan to key stakeholders in the Grundy Resiliency Project.
4. The consultant should plan to participate in routine, virtual progress meetings to provide updates on the status of the project. The consultant should propose target dates for virtual monthly progress updates in the Project Work Plan of the Proposal.
5. The consultant should plan to provide a preliminary draft of work, subject to at least one round of feedback and revisions from the Partners, prior to delivery of the final report by September 1, 2024.
6. In response to this RFP, consultants are encouraged to suggest any other components, services, or deliverables not specifically outlined within this RFP that the respondent deems appropriate and necessary to the purpose and intended use of the plan.

III. Eligible Applicants

All types of entities are eligible to submit proposals, including public, not-for-profit, and for-profit organizations. The applicant must be able to demonstrate previous experience, the capacity, and the commitment to implement this project. All applicant entities must have been a legal organization for a minimum of one year prior to the start of the contract.

The procurement of proposals is being undertaken in compliance with the federal guidelines set forth in the "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards Final Rule" (also known as the Super-circular or Omni-circular). All contractor(s) selected under this RFP must follow the guidelines set forth in this circular, found at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200>.

In connection with this project, the contractor shall not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The contractor shall take affirmative action to ensure that any involved staff members are treated during employment without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

The expense of preparing and submitting a proposal in response to this request is the sole responsibility of the respondent/consultant/firm.

The Partners reserve the right to award the grant-funded work of the diversification and resiliency plan to respondents as they deem to be in the best interest of the overarching Grundy Resiliency Project, the County, and its residents. The Partners reserve the right to accept or reject any

submissions, including the right to reject all submissions and re-solicit, if deemed necessary, or to cancel in part or in whole this RFP. This solicitation in no way obligates the Partners to award a contract.

IV. Budget

The Partners have budgeted **\$175,000** for the entirety of this diversification and resiliency plan. This project is funded by a grant through the U.S. Economic Development Administration, with additional, local funding provided by Grundy County. For all tasks requested within this RFP, please indicate in your proposal which tasks, if any, may not be feasible within the available budget. Please provide a quote for the additional cost to complete those items.

V. Submission

Proposals will be due **by 4:00 PM CST on February 9, 2024**, to the Partners **via email** to nnorton@gedc.com and christina@grundychamber.com with the subject line **“Grundy Resiliency Project RFP Submission.”** A receipt will be emailed when a proposal is received and viewed. If respondents (proposing entities) do not receive an email receipt, it is their responsibility to contact the Partners to verify receipt of the proposal. No proposals will be accepted after the deadline date. Paper submissions will not be accepted.

VI. Procurement and Project Timeline

The following timetable is proposed:

January 16, 2024: Economic Diversification and Resiliency Plan RFP is issued
February 2, 2024: Any/all questions or requests for clarification due to the partners by 4 PM CST
February 6, 2024: Responses to any questions received posted by 4 PM CST at ResilientGrundy.com
February 9, 2024: All proposals are due to the Partners by 4 PM CST
Week of February 26, 2024: Possible in-person or virtual interviews with the steering committee
March 1, 2024: Deadline by which project contract will be awarded – Project begins
September 1, 2024: Target for delivery of final Grundy County Economic Diversification and Resiliency Plan

Applicants must be prepared to begin the project immediately following the award of a contract.

VII. Proposal Guidelines

A. Format

Submissions must be prepared as a standard 8 ½ x 11, letter-size document, be limited to 20 pages, and submitted in PDF format to nnorton@gedc.com and christina@grundychamber.com.

B. Cover Letter

A statement must be signed by an authorized representative of the firm committing to provide the services within the proposed schedule. Please provide the contact person for this

RFP, their phone number, and their email address. *The attached cover sheet should also preface the proposal.*

C. Background and Experience

Describe the background/experience of the proposing individual or organization including experience providing the same or similar services.

D. Project Work Plan / Program Description

Discuss how services to be performed related to each required component under Section II will be implemented, developed, and completed. This section should identify the methodology and data sources that will be used. An implementation timetable must be included and specify target dates, including the project start date, the data collection phase, routine project updates, the tentative draft report delivery date, and the final report delivery date. *For more information on the implementation timetable, please see item G.*

E. Staffing Plan and Qualifications

Each respondent is required to submit a staffing plan to include the total number of staff assigned to the project, as well as the background and resumes of staff assigned to the project.

Should outside consultants or contractors be proposed to contribute to specific aspects of the plan, please note the areas of the plan to which these consultants would contribute, as well as their names, roles, organizations, and qualifying experience, as available.

F. Fiscal Management Plan and Budget

All proposals should present a budget outlining specific dollar amounts assigned to proposed services. *Each proposal must include the required Budget Form attached herewith, or a similar alternative budget breakdown.*

The financial plan must describe all costs associated with implementing the project that are to be covered with the grant funds. All costs should be necessary and reasonable according to the Federal guidelines set forth in the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in 2 CFR 200, commonly referred to as "Super-Circular" or "Omni-Circular."

The review of cost items may include a comparison of costs among respondents or consultants, comparisons of average costs with previous experience, and a comparison of individual cost items with market prices. Proposals that may score well against program design and effectiveness criteria may not be selected because of unreasonable, excessive unexplained, or unallowable costs.

G. Proposed Timetable

The consultant should provide a proposed project timeline or implementation timetable. The timetable should clearly delineate project tasks and stages, as well as target dates for engagement with the Partners, project updates, delivery of drafts and final products, and any other specific tasks necessary for the successful completion of the planned scope of work.

H. References

Provide the contact name, organization, address, email, and telephone number of three (3) recent clients for whom similar tasks were performed.

VIII. Evaluation Procedures

A committee will evaluate proposals according to the requirements of this RFP. Proposals will first be evaluated for minimum requirements, and those that do not meet minimum standards will be eliminated.

The proposal will be awarded based on the following evaluation criteria:

| Description | Points Awarded |
|---|----------------|
| Experience and background of respondent/organization in providing services requested in this RFP, including a record of past performance, the ability to meet specifications, and the technical skills to accomplish the work | 10 |
| Specific work plan to include collection/analysis of data, development of strategic diversification and resiliency plan, solicitation of feedback, incorporation of feedback, and sharing of final recommendations, including a project timeline of the work to be performed and delivered. | 50 |
| Names, qualifications and experience of personnel to be assigned to the project | 15 |
| A budget and timeline setting forth specific deliverables | 25 |
| Total Points | 100 |

IX. QUESTIONS

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing via e-mail to Nancy Norton at nnorton@gedc.com by 4:00 PM CST on February 2, 2024, with the subject line “Questions and Requests for Clarification” relating to the RFP, and are not RFP submissions. No questions will be accepted after this date. Responses to all questions will be posted on the Grundy Resiliency Project website, www.resilientgrundy.com, by 4:00 PM CST on February 6, 2024.

X. GENERAL ASSURANCES PROVISIONS

- A. Any verbal comments or discussion concerning this solicitation cannot add, delete or modify any written provision of this Request for Proposal. Only changes to the requirements of this RFP issued in writing will have force.
- B. Upon request, respondents may be asked to furnish satisfactory evidence of their ability to successfully provide the services requested by this RFP. This evidence may include copies of reports on prior independent audits of the respondent. The Partners reserve the right to make the final determination as to the respondent's capabilities.
- C. The Partners reserve the right to accept or reject any or all proposals for any reason and to negotiate with any and all respondents on modifications to proposals.
- D. The proposal submitted by the successful respondent, modified as necessary through negotiations, will become part of a contractual agreement between the Partners and the successful respondent.
- E. All data, material, and documentation originated or prepared by the respondent pursuant to a contract award shall be in the public domain, will be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, and may be freely used and disseminated by the Partners as they deem appropriate.
- F. The successful respondent will be required to provide regular and detailed service and expenditure reports to the Partners at a frequency and in a manner prescribed in the contract.
- G. The Partners reserve the right to conduct discussions with respondents. Respondents will be accorded fair and equal treatment concerning any opportunity for discussion of their proposals. Respondents may be required to make oral presentations, participate in negotiations, and to re-write portions of proposals as agreed during negotiations.
- K. The Partners are Equal Opportunity Employers and will give consideration to all qualified applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religions, national origin, ancestry, ages, sex marital status, order of protection status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or unfavorable discharge from military services as those terms are defined in section 1-103 of the Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5/1-103).

Response Cover Sheet

Name of Consultant/Respondent Organization: _____

Type of Organization:

- Public entity
- Private not-for-profit organization
- Private for-profit organization
- Other

Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____ Federal Employer ID Number: _____

DUNS Number: _____

Name of Authorized Representative: _____

Authorized Representative email Address: _____

Statement of Certification

The information contained in this proposal fairly represents the proposed operating plans and budget necessary to conduct the activities described. The consultant/respondent organization assures that it is prepared to implement the activities described in the proposal. This proposal has been duly authorized by the governing body of the consultant/respondent organization. I certify that I am authorized to sign this statement on behalf of the organization submitting this proposal.

Printed Name of Authorized Representative

Title

Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

BUDGET

| LINE ITEM | BUDGET AMOUNT |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Wages – Staff | |
| Fringe Benefits | |
| Staff Travel | |
| Rent | |
| Insurance/Bonds | |
| Supplies | |
| Communications | |
| Copying/Printing | |
| Utilities | |
| Equipment | |
| Other | |
| TOTAL BUDGET | |