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December 23, 2024

Request for Qualifications (RFQ) #2024-22, North Valley THRIVE (NVT) Research Consultant

Merced Community College District (MCCD) invites qualified and experienced individuals or firms to submit their qualifications to provide subject matter research expertise for three priority sectors:

- Circular Bioeconomy
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Clean Energy (including Carbon Management)

The selected research entity will collaborate with the North Valley THRIVE (NVT) Administrative Team and three sector coordinators to develop Activation Plans aligned with the NVT Strategic Plan and support development of the related Enabling Strategies from the NVT Strategic Plan.

Background:

NVT is committed to fostering sustainable, equitable, and high-road economic development in the North San Joaquin Valley (NSJV). Our strategic focus includes enabling strategies to address challenges in innovation, talent development, infrastructure, and governance.

Building on the comprehensive NSJV Baseline Regional Assessment and the subsequent NVT Strategic Plan, the NVT Administrative Team is seeking a research entity to delve deeper into the key value propositions identified during that earlier work. The consultant will refine and prioritize these value propositions, ensuring they align with the strategic goals and regional priorities outlined in the NVT framework. This effort will support the development of actionable strategies and investment priorities to advance the plan's objectives. The research entity's expertise will support development of actionable Activation Plans for the priority sectors and cross-cutting "enabling" strategies outlined in the NVT Strategic Plan. A copy of the *Activation Plan Content Guide* and the *Executive Summary of the NVT Strategic Plan* are attached to this RFQ. (The complete NVT Strategic Plan is available at: https://northvalleythrive.org/images/NVT_SP_public.pdf)

Scope of Work:

The work of the research team for the NVT Catalyst phase should include the following:

A. Sector-Specific Expertise

1. Provide in-depth analysis on Circular Bioeconomy, Advanced Manufacturing, and Clean Energy (including Carbon Management).
2. Identify regional competitive advantages, challenges, and growth opportunities.
3. Support the development of metrics and goals for sector outcomes.

B. Enabling Strategies Development

1. Conduct analyses on innovation ecosystems, workforce development, infrastructure, and governance.
2. Recommend strategies to strengthen cross-cutting enabling strategies.

C. Activation Plan Support

1. Collaborate with sector coordinators to convert strategies into actionable tasks.
2. Assist in the creation of Tactical Workplans, including timelines, budgets, and key performance indicators (KPIs).
3. Identify dependencies, risks, and mitigation strategies.

D. Collaborative Engagement

1. Participate in regular meetings with the NVT Administrative Team and sector coordinators.
2. Provide presentations, reports, and guidance to inform stakeholder decision-making.
3. Integrate stakeholder inputs into analyses and recommendations.

Deliverables

1. Activation Plan Components: Sector overviews, Tactical Workplans, and resourcing strategies. *Initial Advanced Manufacturing and Clean Energy Activation Plans are due to the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (Go-Biz) June 30, 2025 (Note: Initial Circular Bioeconomy Activation Plan will be submitted to Go-Biz by January 31, 2025, and is not part of this scope of work).*
2. Updated Sector Analysis Reports: Detailed reports for each priority sector with actionable insights. *These will follow the submission of the initial Activation Plans.*
3. Enabling Strategies Reports: Recommendations for regional innovation, talent, and enabling strategies. *The timing, level of detail and content of these will be determined in consultation with the NVT Administration team.*

Estimated Budget

- The budget for this project is estimated at \$250,000. Respondents should provide a budget within this limit.

Project Timeline

- The project is expected to begin on 2/1/2025 and conclude by 6/30/2026.

Proposal Submission:

Interested parties are invited to submit their proposals by 10:00 A.M. January 13, 2025. Late submissions will not be considered. Email Proposals to: purchasingbids@mccd.edu

Proposal should include the following:

1. Overview of qualifications and relevant experience in priority sectors and enabling strategies
2. Proposed approach and strategies for achieving the outlined objectives.
3. Timeline for the completion of the scope of work.
4. Description of the proposed team and subject matter expertise, including summaries of key personnel, outlining their roles, relevant expertise, and professional experience as it relates to the project.
 - a. Important Note: For proposals involving multiple entities, a lead entity must be designated. This lead entity will serve as the sole contractee, holding full responsibility for the execution of the scope of work and acting as the primary point of contact.

Proposals should be a maximum of five pages, excluding attachments (e.g. examples of past projects, client references).

Evaluation Criteria:

Proposals will be evaluated on:

- Relevance and depth of research expertise.
- Demonstrated success in economic strategy development.
- Feasibility and quality of proposed methodology.
- Alignment with NVT goals and California Jobs First priorities.
- References and past performance.

Additional Information:

Interviews with proposers may be scheduled as part of the selection process.

Selected vendors will be required to meet all MCCD vendor requirements.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to receiving your proposals and working together to strengthen community-industry collaboration through North Valley THRIVE.

Sincerely,

Merced Community College District
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