

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**Economic Development
Administration**

[Docket No. 990506121-9121-01]

RIN 0610-ZA11

**National Technical Assistance,
Training, Research, and Evaluation—
Request for Grant Proposals****AGENCY:** Economic Development Administration (EDA), Department of Commerce (DoC).**ACTION:** Request for Grant Proposals (RFP) upon availability of funds.

SUMMARY: A total of \$368,379,000 is available to EDA for all its programs in FY 1999 (See Notice of Funding Availability for FY 1999 at 64 FR 9221), of which approximately \$1,601,000 will be available for National Technical Assistance, Training, Research, and Evaluation. EDA is soliciting proposals for the specific projects described herein: (1) Evaluation of EDA's University Center Program; (2) Evaluation of EDA's Local Technical Assistance Program; (3) Identifying Technology Infrastructure Needs in America's Distressed Communities; (4) Handbook for Local Technology Strategic Planning; (5) Reviews of Economic Development Literature and Practice, and (6) Determining a Methodology for Estimating Infrastructure Demand. These projects will be funded if acceptable proposals are received. Remaining funding, if any, may be used to fund additional projects. EDA issues this Notice describing the conditions under which eligible applications for these National Technical Assistance, Training, Research, and Evaluation projects under 13 CFR part 307, subpart C (64 FR 5347, 5428-5429) will be accepted and selected for funding.

DATES: Prospective applicants are advised that EDA will conduct a pre-proposal conference on June 17, 1999, at 10 a.m. EDT in the Department of Commerce, Herbert C. Hoover Building, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20230, Room 1414, at which time questions on these projects can be answered. Potential applicants are encouraged to provide written questions (See Address section below) by June 10, 1999. Prospective applicants unable to attend this pre-proposal conference may participate by telephone conference. Teleconference information may be obtained by calling (202) 482-4085 between 8:30-5 EDT on June 16, 1999.

Proposals for funding under this program will be accepted through July 2, 1999. Proposals received after 5 p.m. EDT, on July 2, 1999, at the address provided below, will not be considered for funding.

By July 21, 1999, EDA will advise successful proponents to submit full applications, OMB Control Number 0610-0094.

Completed applications must be submitted to EDA by August 5, 1999, at the address below. EDA will make these awards no later than September 30, 1999.

ADDRESS: Send proposals to John J. McNamee, Director, Research and National Technical Assistance Division, Economic Development Administration, Room 7019, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, DC 20230.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John J. McNamee (202) 482-4085.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**I Introduction***A. Authority*

The Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended (Pub. L. 89-136, 42 U.S.C. 3121 *et seq.*), including the comprehensive amendments by the Economic Development Administration Reform Act of 1998 (Pub. L. 105-393) (PWEDA) authorizes EDA to make grants for training, research, and technical assistance, including grants for program evaluation and project impact analyses, that would be useful in alleviating or preventing conditions of excessive unemployment or underemployment (42 U.S.C. 3147, section 207). This RFP is dependent upon the availability of funds in FY 1999 for this program. Pub. L. 105-277 makes funds available for this program.

B. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

11.303 Economic Development Technical Assistance.

11.312 Research and Evaluation.

C. Program Description

For a description of this program see PWEDA and 13 CFR chapter III, part 307 (64 FR 5347).

EDA assistance is focused on areas experiencing significant economic distress, defined principally as per capita income of 80 percent or less of the national average, or an unemployment rate that is, for the most recent 24-month period for which data are available, at least one percent greater than the national average.

D. Costs

Ordinarily, the applicant is expected to provide a 50% non-federal share of project costs. However, the Assistant Secretary may waive the required 50% matching share of the total project costs, provided the applicant can demonstrate: (1) The project is not feasible without, and the project merits such a waiver, or (2) the project is addressing major causes of distress in the area serviced and requires the unique characteristics of the applicant, which will not participate if it must provide all or part of a 50 percent non-federal share, or (3) the project is for the benefit of local, state, regional, or national economic development efforts, and will be of no or only incidental benefit to the recipient (See 13 CFR 307.9; 64 FR 5429).

E. Briefings and Reports

Unless otherwise noted, each award includes a requirement that the applicant conduct a total of up to seven briefings and/or training workshops for individuals and organizations interested in the results of this project. Potential applicants should be aware that the completion dates set forth below are for completion of the project and submission of the final written report. Briefings/workshops will take place no later than one year after submission of the final report. Locations and dates of the briefings/workshops are at EDA's discretion. Usually, these consist of at least one briefing in Washington, DC, with the other briefings/workshops held in conjunction with one or more of EDA's regional conferences.

Unless otherwise noted, each award includes a requirement that the applicant submit 200 copies of the final report.

II. Areas of Special Emphasis

- *Evaluation of EDA's University Center Program*

EDA invites proposals to evaluate the effectiveness of EDA's University Center Program.

Background

EDA's University Center Program funds selected colleges and universities to help them address economic development problems and opportunities in the states they serve, especially in distressed areas. The centers provide technical assistance to clients outside the university, conduct applied research, and disseminate information. The centers complement other forms of technical assistance by helping local communities mobilize diverse public and private resources.

Many centers cover an entire state; others cover a substantial portion of the state's population or geographic area.

The proposed research is intended to evaluate the degree to which EDA's University Center Program has helped centers identify local needs, alleviate economic distress, disseminate information, and increase local economic development capacity. This research examines the overall program and should not be confused with the evaluation of individual university centers required under section 506 of PWEDA. It may be necessary to examine and consult with individual centers in order to determine overall program effectiveness.

EDA will not accept proposals for this project from current EDA-funded centers or their representatives. Other organizational units within universities and colleges hosting centers may be funded, providing they demonstrate independence between themselves and the center.

Scope of Work

The successful applicant will: (1) Evaluate the effectiveness of EDA's University Center Program in addressing economic development problems and opportunities in the centers' service areas; (2) make recommendations as needed for improving the University Center Program; (3) review the EDA evaluation guidelines (currently under development) that will be used to assess individual centers, as required under Section 506 of PWEDA; and (4) conduct briefings and/or training workshops as set forth in I.E. above.

In its evaluation of the University Center Program, EDA anticipates the successful applicant will examine output, client satisfaction, cost-effectiveness, and ability to leverage other sources of funding for economic development. Potential measures of output may include numbers of short and long-term services provided, number of clients served, newsletters published, conferences held, etc.

In evaluating EDA's University Center Program, relevant questions include (but are not restricted to):

- Is the number and distribution of centers appropriate given overall budget constraints?
- Are the centers effective in meeting economic development needs?
- Does the University Center Program serve a unique role, or is it duplicative of programs offered by other federal agencies?
- Does the program effectively target distressed areas?

Cost

The total EDA share of the cost of this project may not exceed \$200,000.

Timing

The project should be completed and the final report submitted by September 30, 2000.

• *Evaluation of EDA's Local Technical Assistance Program*

Background

EDA's Local Technical Assistance Program provides funding to help communities solve specific economic development problems, respond to development opportunities, and build and expand local organizational capacity in distressed areas. Often, Local Technical Assistance projects consist of feasibility studies, support for other economic development providers, or similar projects necessary to prepare a community for further EDA support. In recent years, funding for the program has been approximately \$1.5 million per year, with the average grant size approximately \$25,000. The program was last evaluated in 1990.

Scope of Work

The successful applicant will: (1) Examine selected projects funded in FY's 1996-1997, provided they have been completed no later than September 30, 1998, to identify common and variable features of representative projects; (2) where appropriate, make site visits to obtain more detailed project information; (3) evaluate the effectiveness of the Local Technical Assistance Program in fulfilling its goals; (4) make recommendations as needed for improving the program; and (5) conduct briefings and/or training workshops as set forth in I.E. above. In evaluating program effectiveness, relevant questions include (but are not restricted to):

- Has the program helped communities undertake or eliminate specific economic development projects from their overall strategy?
- Has the program influenced the design, implementation, or timing of local projects?
- Has the program helped communities build long-term economic development capacity?
- Has the program supported innovative approaches and/or given local officials needed expertise?
- To what extent has the program targeted distressed areas?
- Were projects completed in a timely and cost-effective fashion?
- Were there common features that contributed to project success or failure?

Cost

The total EDA share of the cost of this project may not exceed \$150,000.

Timing

The project should be completed and the final report submitted by August 31, 2000.

• *Identifying Technology Infrastructure Needs in America's Distressed Communities*

EDA seeks proposals to assess the technology infrastructure needs of America's distressed communities to support critical economic development activities, including: Integration of new technologies into existing economic activities; ongoing technology and skills upgrading at the local level; development and commercialization of new technologies; and dissemination of information about new technologies.

Background

Most experts agree that the future prosperity of American firms and workers will depend on their abilities to identify, develop, assess, manage and integrate new technologies. However, some communities have far greater cumulative resources to undertake these tasks than others. We refer to these resident, cumulative community resources as "technology infrastructure," recognizing that they are as important to future economic development as sewers, roads, schools and other traditional forms of infrastructure. EDA is committed to helping distressed communities pursue technology-led economic development. To pursue this goal most effectively, the agency must understand the technology infrastructure needs of these communities as precisely as possible. Possible examples of technology infrastructure include fiber optic networks; geographic information systems; smart buildings; specialized training facilities; smart water supply systems, water and waste water treatment systems, transportation systems, etc. This project will complement and build on, but should not duplicate, current EDA-sponsored research to assess technology infrastructure needs in Native American and Alaska Native communities, and to identify best practices of technology transfer and commercialization.

Scope of Work

The successful applicant will: (1) Broadly outline the types of technology infrastructure needed for ongoing economic development in U.S. communities; (2) determine which types of technology are most needed by, and

appropriate for, America's distressed communities; (3) identify the major constraints to improving the state of technology infrastructure in America's distressed communities; (4) prepare a final written report of findings, including recommendations regarding how EDA can most effectively use its limited resources to help distressed communities upgrade their technology infrastructure; and (5) conduct briefings and/or training workshops as set forth in I.E. above.

As part of Task (1), EDA anticipates the successful applicant will develop a working definition of technology infrastructure, as well as a list of representative types of technology infrastructure. These should include cutting-edge technology improvements to traditional forms of infrastructure. In Task (2), EDA expects the researchers may wish to conduct case studies in communities that meet EDA's definitions of distress. The researchers would consider the resources and skills available in these communities, as well as acknowledged weaknesses in such economies that would have an impact, either positively or negatively, on the various types of technology infrastructure that are identified. In Task (3), the successful applicant should consider barriers to both private and public investment.

Costs

The total EDA share of the cost for this project may not exceed \$200,000.

Timing

The project should be completed and the final report submitted by August 31, 2000.

● *Handbook for Local Technology Strategic Planning*

EDA seeks proposals to create a handbook for use by local economic development practitioners in preparing technology strategic plans.

Background

In recent years, state and local economic development agencies have implemented a rapidly growing number and variety of technology-based economic development policies. As a result, it is becoming increasingly important that these policies be integrated smoothly into overall economic development planning (including EDA's required Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy). Among other things, economic development practitioners need to: identify technology-based economic development needs and opportunities; determine which kinds of

projects are most appropriate for their community; recognize possible constraints on technology-based development strategies; and understand how technology strategies affect other aspects of economic development. In accordance with section 502 of PWEDA, EDA seeks to support the efforts of practitioners by developing a handbook that will help them undertake strategic planning for technology-based economic development. The handbook should provide practitioners with information regarding: what is typically included in a technology plan; how this content might vary in different contexts; how to prepare these plans; how to integrate these plans with other local or regional development plans, such as EDA's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy; and how to maximize the likelihood the plan will be implemented. The handbook should also identify potential sources for funding and technical assistance for preparing technology strategic plans. This project builds on earlier EDA-sponsored research which identified best practices and assessed the general status of technology strategic planning at the state level.

Scope of Work

The successful applicant will: (1) Review prior literature and other materials documenting practical experience with technology strategic planning for economic development; (2) consult with experts in developing the contents and organization of the handbook; (3) prepare a detailed outline of the handbook's contents and circulate it among the experts for comment; (4) prepare the handbook; and (5) conduct briefings and/or training workshops as set forth in I.E. above.

Costs

The total EDA share of the cost for this project may not exceed \$150,000

Timing

The project should be completed and the final handbook submitted by July 31, 2000.

● *Reviews of Economic Development Literature and Practice*

EDA seeks proposals to review the literature and practical experience regarding issues of critical importance to economic development practitioners nationally.

Background

One of EDA's main functions is to disseminate information about economic development policies, issues, strategies, and techniques to

practitioners. EDA fulfills this function by a number of means, including newsletters, conferences, use of the Internet, and targeted research. This project would help present important and emerging theoretical issues to practitioners and policy makers. Compared to most other EDA research, this project also gives researchers greater latitude to choose the topic of study.

As appropriate, EDA expects that the reviews selected will describe and critically analyze: key debates in the literature, analytical techniques of broad importance to practitioners, and the range of experience with specific economic development strategies. Where possible, reviews should identify important policy implications of the research. The subject, content, and writing style of proposed reviews should be targeted at practitioners and policy makers rather than academics. EDA expects proposals to be for original research, and proposed reviews should not have been submitted for publication elsewhere.

EDA is especially interested in reviews of literature on issues related to EDA's core programs. Examples include: Costs of job creation; economic development in Native American and Alaska Native communities; innovative public infrastructure financing; and international trade impacts on regional economies. EDA, however, welcomes a broader range of topics of importance to domestic economic development.

EDA expects researchers to demonstrate familiarity with the proposed topic and ability to conduct a timely, thorough, and objective review. EDA anticipates making multiple awards, but will not make multiple awards to any individual researcher.

Scope of Work

Successful applicants will: (1) Prepare a paper of length and quality suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, and (2) conduct one presentation as described in I.E. above. Authors are encouraged to submit the final review paper for publication.

Cost

EDA may provide funding up to \$100,000 for all reviews funded under this RFP. The total EDA share of the cost for any single review may not exceed \$20,000. EDA anticipates that most proposals will be in the range of \$10,000 to \$15,000.

Timing

EDA anticipates that most reviews will take 6 months or less, but recognizes that this will vary with the

nature of the research. A presentation may take place up to one year after the final paper is submitted.

● *Determining a Methodology for Estimating Infrastructure Demand*

EDA requests proposals to determine whether a methodology exists to estimate the nature and approximate cost of the infrastructure that is needed for the economic development of distressed areas.

Background

Under its Public Works program, EDA grants assist distressed communities generate long-term, private sector jobs and diversify local economies by growing new industry, and by encouraging private investment and business expansion. EDA funds critically-needed infrastructure such as water and sewer facilities and modern technological improvements for industry and commerce, access roads to industrial sites, business incubators, and skill training facilities. EDA is cognizant of the fact that infrastructure investment needs grow out of a local planning process where the community or region identifies, among other needs, the type of infrastructure that is needed for the economic development of the area. Under this request, EDA is interested in determining whether there is a methodology for assessing the infrastructure needs of these economically-distressed areas that is valid and cost-effective. The availability of comprehensive data on local infrastructure investments and the causal relationship between the level of infrastructure investment and regional development must be established.

Scope of Work

The successful applicant will: (1) Bring together a roundtable panel of experts to determine whether there is a valid and cost-effective methodology to determine the demand for economic development infrastructure; (2) prepare

a report on the findings, conclusions, and recommendations; and (3) conduct up to two presentations as described in I.E. above.

Cost

The total EDA share of the cost for this project may not exceed \$25,000.

Timing

The project should be completed and the final report of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations submitted by December 31, 1999.

III. How To Apply

A. Eligible Applicants

See EDA's interim final rule at 13 CFR § 300.2 (64 FR 5347). Eligible applicants are as follows: areas meeting requirements under 13 CFR 301.2; Economic Development Districts; Indian tribes; consortiums of Indian Tribes; states, cities or other political subdivisions of a state; consortiums of political subdivisions of states; institutions of higher education, consortiums of institutions of higher education; public or private nonprofit organizations or associations acting in cooperation with officials of a political subdivision of a state, for-profit organizations, and private individuals.

EDA encourages submission of proposals by a broad spectrum of potential applicants, including minority institutions and individuals.

B. Proposal Submission Procedures

Proposals submitted by potential applicants should include: (1) A description of how the researcher(s) intend(s) to carry out the scope of work (not to exceed fifteen pages in length); (2) a proposed budget and accompanying explanation; (3) resumes/qualifications of key staff (not to exceed two pages per individual), and (4) a proposed time line. EDA will not accept proposals submitted by FAX or email. Proposals received after 5 p.m. EDT, on

July 2, 1999, at the address provided above, will not be considered.

IV. Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will receive initial review by EDA to assure that they meet all requirements of this announcement and 13 CFR Chapter III (64 FR 5347), including eligibility and relevance to the specified project as described herein. All proposals must meet EDA's statutory and regulatory requirements. If a proposal is selected, EDA will provide the proponent with an Application for Federal Assistance (OMB Control Number 0610-0094). EDA will carry out its selection process using the following criteria:

(1) The quality of a proposal's response to the scope of work proposed; and

(2) The ability of the prospective applicant to successfully carry out the proposed activities.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.

V. Additional Information and Requirements

See 64 FR 9221-9226, Part II for additional information and requirements (available on the Internet at <http://www.doc.gov/eda/html/notice.htm>, under the heading "Economic Development Programs—Availability of Funds").

Dated: May 24, 1999.

Phillip A. Singerman,
Assistant Secretary for Economic Development.

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