



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Director of Economic Development & Coordinator Support
Houston County, Minnesota

Introduction and Intent

Houston County is soliciting proposals from qualified individuals to support the County's external initiatives, fostering community and economic development, managing intergovernmental and regional partnerships, and coordinating external communications.

Background

Houston County is a rural county located in the southeastern corner of Minnesota along the Mississippi River. The County serves a diverse and growing mix of agricultural communities, small towns, and regional commercial centers. As the County continues to expand partnerships, economic development opportunities, and public-facing initiatives, the County seeks contracted professional support to strengthen its external engagement capacity.

This contract position will enhance the County's ability to coordinate regional efforts, develop and execute economic development strategies, streamline public communication, and support the County Coordinator in advancing Board priorities. With increasing demands for intergovernmental collaboration, business recruitment and support, the County aims to ensure sustained progress while maintaining high levels of transparency and service to residents.

Demographics

Houston County, located in the southeastern corner of Minnesota along the Mississippi River, is home to approximately 18,800 residents. The County is characterized by a blend of small towns, agricultural landscapes, and scenic bluff country, creating a unique combination of rural charm and regional economic activity.

The County's median age is about 44, reflecting a balanced mix of young families, working-age adults, and a significant population of older residents. About one-fifth of residents are under the age of 18, and a similar proportion is 65 or older, which influences long-term planning needs related to housing, healthcare, childcare, and workforce availability.

Economically, Houston County maintains a diverse base that includes agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, education, and tourism. Many residents also commute to



nearby regional centers, particularly La Crosse, Wisconsin, highlighting the County's strong cross-border economic ties. Median household income is approximately \$73,000, and labor force participation remains around 63 percent. Housing stability is a defining characteristic of the area, with a homeownership rate near 81 percent and a median home value of roughly \$233,000.

The County continues to face regional challenges shared across rural Minnesota, including the need for childcare capacity, and ongoing business retention and recruitment. These demographic and economic trends demonstrate the importance of coordinated regional partnerships, strategic economic development, and strong public engagement, all core functions of the position described in this RFP.

Scope of Services

The successful respondent will provide services including, but not limited to:

1. Economic & Community Development

- Serve as the County's primary contact for business retention, expansion, and recruitment efforts.
- Coordinate with chambers of commerce, regional development commissions, and state agencies to attract and retain businesses.
- Assist cities and townships in identifying funding opportunities.
- Develop and manage countywide economic development plans and incentive programs.
- Prepare and administer grant applications for community and economic development projects.
- Track metrics related to job creation, housing development, and tax base growth.

2. Intergovernmental & Regional Partnerships

- In conjunction with the County Coordinator, represent the County in regional meetings.
- Act as liaison to cities, townships, and local school districts on shared initiatives.

3. Public Engagement & Communications

- Serve as the County's external communications lead, community updates, and outreach.
- Facilitate public information sessions on County initiatives, grants, or projects.
- Assist in maintaining the County's social media presence for transparency and outreach.
- Develop promotional materials to market the County to potential investors, residents, and visitors.

4. Strategic Planning & Project Management

- Support long-term strategic planning efforts by gathering data, facilitating public input, and drafting reports.
- Assist departments in identifying grant opportunities and managing deliverables.
- Coordinate implementation of County Board goals related to development, housing, tourism, and partnerships.
- Manage special projects assigned by the Coordinator or County Board, particularly those requiring regional collaboration.

5. Administrative & Coordinator Support

- Prepare presentations, reports, and recommendations for the County Board on development and partnership initiatives.
- Substitute for the Coordinator at meetings or functions when necessary.
- Provide administrative support for Board planning sessions.

Key Skills and Competencies

- Strong understanding of local government operations in Minnesota.
- Knowledge of economic development tools (TIF, tax abatement, grants, Opportunity Zones).
- Excellent communication and relationship-building skills.
- Ability to work independently under a contract model with limited direct supervision.
- Experience with project management and grant administration.

Reporting Relationship

- Reports directly to the County Coordinator.
- Works closely with County Department Heads and external partners.
- Provides regular updates to the County Board as assigned.

Contract Term

The County anticipates awarding a one-year professional services contract beginning January 1, 2026, with annual renewals based on performance and need.

The selected firm must ensure that the assigned personnel provide an average of 32 hours per week dedicated to Houston County services. This contract role is structured as a part-time but ongoing weekly commitment.



Minimum Qualifications

The respondent must demonstrate experience and capacity to perform the services described in this RFP. In addition, the individual assigned to provide services to Houston County must meet the following minimum qualifications.

1. Education

The assigned project lead must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited University

2. Experience

The respondent's assigned personnel must have a minimum of five (5) years of experience in local government, economic development, community development, intergovernmental relations, or related professional work.

3. Technical Knowledge

The respondent's assigned personnel must demonstrate knowledge of Minnesota economic development tools (e.g., TIF, tax abatement, grants) and familiarity with regional development practices.

4. Skill and Competencies:

The respondent's assigned personnel must exhibit strong communication skills, the ability to build effective regional partnerships, and the capacity to work independently within a contract-based structure.

5. Availability:

The respondent must ensure that the assigned personnel are available to provide services as required and can attend meetings in person or virtually, depending on the project needs.

Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include:

1. Cover Letter.
2. Qualifications and Experience.
3. Proposed Scope and Approach.
4. Three References.
5. Cost Proposal (hourly rate or retainer).



Evaluation Criteria

Relevant Experience and Qualifications	30%
Understanding of County Needs	25%
Regional Knowledge	20%
Cost Proposal	15%
References	10%

Submittal Instructions

Submit proposals electronically in PDF format to:

Brent Parker, County Coordinator

Email: brentp@hocomn.gov

Subject Line: RFP – EDA

Proposal Deadline: **Friday, December 19th, 2025, at 4:30 PM Central Time.**

General Conditions

- The County reserves the right to reject any or all proposals.
- Proposers are responsible for all preparation costs.
- The selected proposer must execute a professional services agreement compliant with Minnesota Statute 16C.08.
- This is a contracted role and does not create an employee relationship.

Questions

Questions must be submitted to bparker@hocomn.gov no later than December 17th, 2025