



# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Appalachian Partnership, Inc. (API) and Appalachian Partnership for Economic Growth, LLC (APEG and dba OhioSE) are soliciting proposals for grant development assistance.

API/OhioSE anticipates contracting with a single firm (Consultant) to develop a grant proposal in response to the federal administration's Good Jobs Challenge. The Lead firm may include third-parties in its project team, however the lead firm must remain accountable for the entire project and all payments under the contract will be made to the lead firm.<sup>1</sup> The anticipated timeline calls for API/OhioSE to complete proposal review and let a contract no later than October 31, 2021 and for the Consultant to complete all activities no later than January 19, 2022.

As non-governmental organizations, API and OhioSE are not subject to formal governmental bidding and procurement rules or regulations. API and OhioSE reserve the right to modify or cancel this RFP, negotiate any and all elements of the project with proposer(s) and to use whatever subjective and objective criteria they deem appropriate to evaluate proposals.

The targeted budget for this project is \$15,000 - \$20,000. API and OhioSE reserves the right to modify this amount as appropriate given the specifics of the proposals received, negotiations with prospective Consultants, and any options or enhancements included in the final contract.

***Proposals are due by 5:00 p.m. Friday, October 8, 2021.*** API and OhioSE have not identified a preferred vendor for this project. All qualified parties are invited to respond to this RFP.

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. Organizational Structure and Mission

Appalachian Partnership, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in August, 2011.

API has two single-member LLC subsidiaries: Appalachian Partnership for Economic Growth, LLC (APEG, dba OhioSE), formed in 2011 to serve as the JobsOhio network partner for 25 Appalachian Ohio counties, and Appalachian Growth Capital, LLC (AGC), formed in 2017 to increase the availability of credit for small and mid-sized businesses across all 32 Federally designated Appalachian Counties of Ohio.

The mission of API is "to promote enduring, widely-shared economic prosperity in Appalachian Ohio by improving the private-sector business economy." An early and ongoing focus within this mission is to dampen the boom and bust cycles the region has experienced from resource extraction by helping diversify the economy and by capturing more value from the region's natural resources through manufacturing or processing that utilizes those resources within the region.

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<sup>1</sup> API/OhioSE recognizes that services of certain highly qualified individuals may be sought out by multiple proposers to serve on their project team. Nothing in this RFP prohibits a prospective team member from participating in multiple proposals.

The mission of OhioSE incorporates the overarching mission of API “to foster enduring, widely-shared prosperity in Appalachian Ohio.” OhioSE’s mission is more limited in that it does this by serving as the JobsOhio partner for 25 counties, helping to retain, expand and attract businesses in the traded sectors of the region’s economy, market and improve the region’s inventory of development sites, and help retain and attract talent to the region.

While API and AGC serve all 32 officially-designated Appalachian counties of Ohio, the primary focus of this project is the 25-county region served by OhioSE.

## B. History and Impetus for the Project

In 2021, the Biden administration announced several major federal funding opportunities through the U.S. Economic Development Administration. This project will focus on the Good Jobs Challenge opportunity and strive to better connect workers and employers in the region.

# III. PURPOSE, GOALS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

## A. Purpose of the Strategic Planning Process

To develop and submit a competitive and potentially award-winning grant application to attract technical assistance funding.

## B. Goals for the Project

The goals of the project are to:

1. Engage regional workforce stakeholders and other key constituencies in the planning process and retain their buy-in for execution of the strategies
2. Ensure API/OhioSE’s efforts are prioritized so that our limited time and resources yield the highest results
3. Ensure alignment between OhioSE-driven elements of the plan and JobsOhio priorities
4. Develop a shared regional vision for:
  - a. The region’s potential to improve workforce and talent development
  - b. Basic goals, objectives and strategies derived through the planning process
  - c. Define roles of external partners to address workforce and talent development-
5. Identify existing and necessary resources to implement the plan

## C. Desired Outcomes

1. Assist to solve employers’ in the region’s workforce and talent challenges
2. Develop upwardly mobile strategies to help high school youth obtain training and employment
3. Rebranding of OhioSE without “Appalachia” in the title.<sup>3</sup>
4. A financial model for OhioSE that is less dependent upon JobsOhio for funding (such as a

real estate development model that will generate cash flow in the long term). The consultant will be asked to provide input from experience and knowledge of financial models that work in similar regions.

#### D. Additional Considerations

Due to the nature of the region and structure of the organizations, several other major considerations must come into play in developing a plan that achieves the desired purpose, goals and outcomes. These include:

- While the region served by API and OhioSE has a population of around one million people, residents are dispersed in small cities, towns and rural areas. No large city or population cluster serves to unite the region. Like many rural regions with historic natural resource extraction and manufacturing economic bases, many parts of the region have suffered from decades of job and population loss. This has also resulted in a loss of hope or belief that economic development efforts can improve the future.
- API and OhioSE generally view the region as having two distinct sub-regions: eastern and southern Ohio. A primary differentiator of these sub-regions is the rich Utica and Marcellus shale play in eastern Ohio, but there are other elements of their economies that differ and location quotients for some industries can vary significantly. It will be necessary for the research to take note of these differences and for the plan to differentiate between region-wide and sub-regional strategies.

### IV. SCOPE, TIMELINE AND DELIVERABLES

#### A. Scope of Project

The Consultant's overall responsibility will be to provide an original grant application containing goals, objectives, a strategic implementation plan and implementation measures that meet the U.S. EDA's requirements. The consultant will also provide meeting facilitation services and supporting materials, as well as assistance to OhioSE's president and team.

#### B. Timeline & Deliverables

API and OhioSE anticipate that RFP review and the planning process will take place on the approximate timeline outlined below. Respondents that require substantial deviation from this schedule should contact API/OhioSE to discuss the feasibility of their proposed changes prior to submitting a proposal.

***RFP Responses Due:*** 5:00 p.m. 10/11/2021

***Initial Proposal Review and Scoring:*** 10/11/2021 – 10/15/2021

***Interview Top Candidates:*** 10/18/2021 – 10/20/2021

***Draft Grant Application Due:*** 11/30/2021

***Stakeholder and Partner Dissemination for Feedback:*** 12/01/2021 – 12/31/2021

It is assumed the deliverables be in the form of a single written grant report as required by the U.S. EDA for submission.

## V. RESPONDING TO THE RFP

### A. Method and Format of Response

Proposals in pdf format should be emailed to [jdunnington@apppart.org](mailto:jdunnington@apppart.org) by the deadline. Submitters will receive confirmation of receipt.

Proposals should not exceed 10 pages.

### B. Deadline for Submission

The deadline for proposal submission is 5:00 p.m. Monday, October 11, 2021. Proposers should allow adequate time for delivery by this deadline and send via a method that allows delivery tracking. If you do not receive a receipt, please follow up by calling Jane Dunnington at 740-753-5359.

### C. Contents of Proposal

Responses to this RFP should incorporate the following elements:

1. Transmittal letter or e-mail identifying the firm, point of contact, e-mail and phone
2. Proposed work-plan responsive to the scope outlined in Section IV, above
3. Proposed project schedule
4. Statement of Consultant qualifications including resumes of key personnel
5. Budget/fees differentiated between core and optional elements of the proposal
6. At least three client references, with emphasis on:
  - a. Similar projects
  - b. Projects focused on a rural or largely rural region
  - c. Projects with a high degree of participation in the planning process

7. Disclosure of any known or potential conflicts of interest with API, OhioSE, JobsOhio or their board and staff members (API and OhioSE staff and board lists are available at [www.ohiose.com](http://www.ohiose.com) and [www.apppart.org](http://www.apppart.org)).

Respondents are asked to provide a concise submission of sufficient detail to evaluate in comparison to other proposals.

#### D. Pre-Proposal Communications

Pre-proposal communications are permitted through API/OhioSE's designated contacts.

Designated contact for this RFP is OhioSE President Mike Jacoby.

Mike Jacoby: [mike@ohiose.com](mailto:mike@ohiose.com)

API/OhioSE expect all communications regarding this planning process and RFP to flow through Mike Jacoby. API/OhioSE Board members, project steering committee members, investors in the planning process or others involved in the selection process, should not be contacted regarding this RFP. Proposers that make such contact may be removed from consideration.

## VI. PROPOSAL EVALUATION PROCESS

API/OhioSE staff will conduct a preliminary review of proposals to ensure their completeness. Complete proposals will be scored by senior staff at API/OhioSE. A single firm will be selected and, subject to successful contract negotiations, hired to conduct the work. The anticipated schedule for review is listed in Section IV. B., above.

At a minimum, the evaluation process will consider:

1. Completeness and responsiveness of the proposal
2. Qualifications, capabilities and experience of firm and assigned staff
3. Proposed methodology and timelines
4. Consultant's experience and track record working with similar rural and/or Appalachian regions
5. Performance reported by references and other third-parties familiar with Consultant's work
6. Value delivered for the project budget and for any selected optional services

## VII. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

API and OhioSE make no commitment to any respondent to this RFP beyond consideration of its written response. Proposers will not be compensated in any way for the preparation of a proposal or participation in the proposal review or interview process. API/OhioSE will not discriminate against any firm or individual on the bases of race, creed, color, sex, age, disability or national origin in the proposal review and award process. API and OhioSE reserve the right to discuss the details of proposals submitted with any third parties whose input they believe may be useful for proposal review.

As non-governmental organizations, API and OhioSE are not subject to formal governmental bidding and procurement rules or regulations. API and OhioSE reserve the sole right to modify or cancel this RFP, waive irregularities in any proposal, negotiate any and all elements of the project with proposer(s) and to use whatever subjective and objective criteria they deem appropriate to evaluate proposals. In addition, API/OhioSE will consult with investors underwriting the planning

process and other stakeholders prior to making a final contractual commitment for the work.

Specific terms of any resulting contract will be negotiated between API/OhioSE and the successful proposer. The executed contract will include progress payments based on completion of designated project elements and a hold-back until all project elements are successfully completed. The contract will also specify that the resulting deliverables are “works made for hire,” and as such are the intellectual property solely of API and OhioSE, not to be shared by the Consultant with third parties without express written consent.

The qualifications of each member of the Consultant’s project team are important criteria in the selection process. The selected Consultant may not substitute any team member without prior approval by the API/OhioSE. API/OhioSE, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to accept or reject proposed changes to the team. Team members may participate in multiple proposals.