

**TALBOT COUNTY PUBLIC NOTICE  
INVITATION TO BIDDERS**

**TITLE:           REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: TALBOT COUNTY ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN**

**BID NO.:       24-11**

**Sealed Bids** for this proposal shall be accepted by the Office of the Talbot County Manager, South Wing, Talbot County Courthouse, 11 N. Washington Street, Suite 13, Easton, Maryland 21601 until **10:00 a.m.** local time on **September 10, 2024**, at which time they shall be opened and read aloud. E-mailed or faxed bids will not be accepted.

**The Scope of Work for the Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan project** includes working with community stakeholders to understand economic development and tourism interests and concerns, guiding the discussion about available resources, and helping determine what is feasible for Talbot County. The strategic plan should leverage both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a robust framework for future initiatives. Questions should be directed to Cassandra Vanhooser, Director, Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism at (410) 770-8000.

**Bid Documents** may be obtained in person or by mail from the Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism, 215 Bay Street, Suite 6, Easton, Maryland 21601. A Zoom meeting for this project will be held on Monday, August 19, 2024, at 1:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada) via Zoom; advance registration is required. Please call 410-770-8000 for registration details.

**The County Council of Talbot County** reserves the right to reject any or all bids, or to accept any bid, alternate, or any portions thereof, when in their judgment, the public will be better served.

**TALBOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**



**BID NO. 24-11**  
**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
**TALBOT COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**  
**STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism is seeking a professional contractor(s) to prepare an Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan that builds on the efforts already underway, furthers the work of the department, and introduces new strategies of proven success. The contractor(s) will work with community stakeholders to understand economic development and tourism interests and concerns, guide the discussion about available resources, and help determine what is feasible for Talbot County with respect to economic development and tourism. The strategic plan should leverage both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a robust framework for future initiatives.

- I. Scope of Work
- II. Standard Proposal Information
- III. Evaluation Criteria and Selection Process
- IV. General Contract Information
- V. Contract Award
- VI. Contract Period
- VII. Attachments

## **I. SCOPE OF WORK**

The plan will accomplish the following:

- Provide a historical study of the growth of the community, including how its natural resources, workforce, tax structure, and leadership have evolved to meet the needs of Talbot County.
- Evaluate strengths, opportunities, and challenges faced by the community.
- Identify opportunities and obstacles for private-sector growth and development.
- Assess and make recommendations for building relationships with workforce and business development groups, utility companies, and other stakeholders.
- Evaluate existing business assistance programs and determine if they can be leveraged, expanded, or modified to fit the needs of local businesses and governments.
- Ensure diverse representation and inclusion of voices from all areas of Talbot County.

When the bid is awarded and all agreements signed, the team will have a kickoff meeting with County staff to review the scope, schedule, and deliverables for the project. In addition, the consultant will review goals, identify potential challenges or issues, and community involvement strategies.

#### **A. Review of Policies and Procedures**

The contractor(s) will conduct a thorough review of existing economic and tourism data for Talbot County, including historical trends, current conditions, and future projections. They must become familiar with pertinent economic development and tourism policy documents and initiatives related to Talbot County, its five incorporated municipalities, and its 22 villages. Policy documents for review include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Previous Talbot County Economic Development Plans
2. Maryland Tourism Economic Impact Study
3. Talbot County Comprehensive Plan
4. Comprehensive Plans for Easton, Oxford, St. Michaels and Trappe
5. Tilghman Island and Cordova Master Plans
6. Talbot County Zoning Laws
7. Talbot County Permit Processes
8. Tax Policies for the County and Towns
9. Mid-Shore Regional Council Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
10. Delmarva Index

In addition, the contractor(s) will conduct one-on-one meetings with each Talbot County Council member and launch a public process that includes public meetings in each of the county's municipalities and meetings with town elected officials. Documentation of public meetings must be included in the appendix to the strategic plan.

#### **B. Countywide Demographic and Economic Analysis**

The contractor(s) will provide a comprehensive situational analysis that offers a conclusive summary of Talbot County's economic competitiveness and includes quantitative and qualitative analysis. This will provide the local and regional context for preparing the economic development and tourism strategic plan. Required elements include:

1. **Review of Existing Data.** The contractor(s) will review current demographic and socioeconomic data, employment data, labor force characteristics, tax revenue, and other pertinent economic and market data studies. Talbot County's business sector by employment size, wages, tax generation, educational attainment levels, and other relative metrics should be included.
2. **Business Sector Analysis.** The contractor(s) will provide a detailed analysis of Talbot County's economy that includes a comparison to the Eastern Shore, the Delmarva Peninsula, the State of Maryland, and the country. This element should include preparation of a market segmentation of the county's commercial and

industrial sectors, with a focus on healthcare, finance, hospitality, retail, and manufacturing.

**3. Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Analysis.** Identify the strengths and challenges of the existing entrepreneurial ecosystem, including an assessment of the impact of remote workers and non-employer establishments on the economy.

**4. Stakeholder Focus Groups.** The contractor(s) will facilitate and record group meetings with business sector and community leaders, including but not limited to the following:

- County and Town Leadership
- Mid-Shore Regional Council
- Chesapeake College
- University of Maryland Shore Regional Health
- Talbot County Chamber of Commerce
- Healthcare Representatives
- Financial Services Representatives
- Hospitality Industry Representatives
- Retail Industry Representatives
- Manufacturing Representatives

**C. Tourism Assessment**

An assessment of the hospitality and tourism industry must be completed as part of this process, either as a part of the overall strategic plan or as a standalone plan. The contractor(s) will assess the current state of the tourism economy in Talbot County, including visitor demographics and tourism infrastructure. The team will identify key tourism assets and attractions within the county, municipalities, and villages and will recommend strategies to enhance the visitor experience, increase tourism revenue, and promote sustainable tourism practices.

**D. Deliverables**

To complete this project, the contractor(s) will deliver the following work products:

- a) A final Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan with an executive summary and a detailed implementation plan outlining the steps needed to achieve strategic goals and objectives.
- b) Using data collected through qualitative and quantitative analysis, recommend a set of key performance indicators that can be presented in dashboard format and monitored over time to assess Talbot County's economic health.
- c) Presentation of the final strategic plan to the County Council at a work session or council meeting as determined by the County Manager.
- d) Draft of recommended Economic Development and Tourism chapters for Talbot County's updated Comprehensive Plan.
- e) At least one digital copy and six (6) hard copies of the final plan, executive summary, and draft chapters for the Talbot County Comprehensive Plan.

## **SCHEDULE FOR BID NO. 24-11 – Request for Proposals: Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan**

- RFP Issued August 2024
- Q&A Zoom Meeting\* 1 p.m. on August 19, 2024
- Deadline to Submit RFP September 10, 2024
- Interviews September - October 2024
- Award Contract to Winning Bidder October - November 2024
- Kickoff Meeting November 2024

### **\*Zoom Meeting Information:**

When: Monday, August 19, 2024 at 1:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)  
Registration Required

### **Register in advance for this meeting:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZIsdOyrqTMvHNG6yIfb5FejaMW7qvC9RaLG>

**After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.**

## **II. STANDARD PROPOSAL INFORMATION**

Proposals that do not address the items listed in this section may be considered incomplete and may be deemed non-responsive by the Department.

1. **Title Page (not to exceed one page).** At a minimum, the title page shall show the name of the project, the business name, address, telephone number, name of contact person, and the date.
2. **Cover Letter.** Letter should identify the project, briefly convey your understanding of the services to be provided, make a positive commitment to provide the services specified, and give the name, title, address, and phone number of the person(s) authorized to make representations. The letter must be signed by an individual authorized to bind the publisher.
3. **Statement of Qualifications.** The following should be covered in narrative form and organized as deemed appropriate to convey the information clearly and succinctly. Note: In the event a subcontractor is to be used for any portion of the work indicated in this RFP, a complete response to the statement of qualifications by the subcontractor will be required.
  - a. **General Background/Experience:** Size of business, ownership, and location(s).

- b. Personnel: Staff members with overall and day-to-day responsibilities who will be assigned to this project.
  - c. Capability: Type of equipment to be utilized.
  - d. Samples: Examples of previous projects (include comparable samples) that demonstrate ability to provide the services requested in this RFP.
  - e. References: A minimum of three (3) references with contact information that can verify the ability to perform the work outlined in this RFP.
  - f. Other: Any additional information pertinent to your proposal.
4. **Proposal Schedule.** Submit a proposed budget and timeline to perform the Scope of Work described herein. Any minimum financial expectation on the part of the County must be included. Provide an exact statement of the services to be provided within the fee proposal to be used in billing for services, including out-of-scope services. Provide a fee schedule for the professional and personnel/subcontractors assigned to project tasks. Advance billings are not acceptable.
5. **Standard Proposal Requirements.**
- a. Interested firms shall submit one sealed copy of the completed proposal, as well as six (6) copies, clearly marked as: Bid No. 24-11, Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan Proposal dated September 9, 2024. *Note: E-mailed or faxed bids will not be accepted.*
  - b. No oral changes will be made to the proposal documents. Addenda will be issued when questions arise which might affect the proposals or the course of contracted work. The County will make certain that all known bidders receive any addenda via fax, first-class mail, e-mail, or by hand. If an addendum is issued less than five (5) working days before the time for receipt of proposals, the addendum will provide for a new proposal date, which will be at least five (5) working days after the normal receipt of the addendum by the prospective bidder. Receipt of addenda by the bidder must be acknowledged as part of the proposal.
  - c. Any proposal may be withdrawn prior to the RFP deadline or authorized postponement thereof. Any proposal received after the time and date specified for the bid opening shall not be considered and will be returned unopened. No bidder may withdraw a proposal within 60 days after the actual date of the opening thereof. Should there be reasons why the work cannot be awarded within the specific period, the time may be extended by mutual agreement between the Department and the bidder.

### III. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SELECTION PROCESS

1. The Department will utilize several criteria in evaluation of proposals received in response to this RFP including, but not limited to:
  - Responsiveness to guidelines provided.
  - Experience of firm and quality of previous projects.
  - Experience of individuals designated for project management.
  - Overall costs.
  - Commitment to work cooperatively with the Department and other contractors participating in this project.
2. Detailed proposal information will be held in confidence during the evaluation process and prior to submission to the Department. The Department reserves the right to ask for modifications or other alterations from any or all bidders after the RFP closing date. After the selection of the winning proposal, with the exception of trade secrets and confidential business or financial information, all other information included in the proposals may be considered public information under the Maryland Public Information Act, in which case it may be subject to public production upon request.
3. The County reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to accept the proposal it considers most favorable to the interest of the Department after conducting interviews with the highest ranked firms.

### IV. GENERAL CONTRACT INFORMATION

1. **Contract Approval.** Following review of proposal summaries and consideration of staff recommendations, the County anticipates the awarding of a contract for the project. The County assumes no responsibility for work done, even in good faith, prior to approval of the contract and final negotiations.
2. **Proposal as Part of the Contract.** The successful proposal will become an integral part of the contract, and its contents may become obligations if deemed necessary by Talbot County, Maryland. It shall not, however, be considered the total binding obligation. Those conditions shall be inclusive of a final negotiated and approved contract. Failure of the successful bidder to accept these obligations may result in cancellation of the award.
3. **Costs.** In the event a formal contract is entered into between the County and a bidder, all costs proposed for the provision of the specified services must be firm for the period of the proposed contract.

4. **Changes of Key Members.** The County reserves the right to approve any change in the successful bidder's project team members whose participation in the project is specifically offered in the proposal. This is to ensure that the prime contractor does not arbitrarily remove persons with vital experience and skill from the project.
5. **News Releases.** News releases pertaining to this request, the service, study, or project to which it relates shall not be made without prior approval by, and then only in cooperation with, the Department.
6. **Independent Price Determination.** By submission of a proposal, the bidder certifies that the prices in the proposal have been arrived at independently and without consultation, communication, or agreement with other respondents.
7. **Rejection of Work.** The successful bidder shall be responsible for the quality, accuracy, and proper performance of the work identified in the contract. The County may reject any work found to be defective or not in accordance with the specifications contained in the RFP, proposal, and resulting contract, regardless of the state of completion and the time or place the error was discovered. The County may also reject defective work that was previously approved because of an oversight during inspection/approval.
8. **Ownership of Documents.** All designs, drawings, logos, specifications, notes, artwork, photographs, digitized information, and other work developed in the performance of the contract are produced for hire, will remain the sole property of the County, and may be used by the Department for any other purpose without additional compensation to the Contractor. The Contractor agrees not to assert any rights and not to establish any claim under the design patent or copyright laws. All digitized information, film negatives, and hard copies related to the Strategic Plan should be turned over to the Department within ninety (90) days after final payment under this contract.

## V. **CONTRACT AWARD**

1. The bidder receiving the notice of award shall be required to provide insurance in a form and amount acceptable to the County, which insurance shall name "Talbot County, Maryland, a political subdivision of the State of Maryland" as an additional insured. Proof of such insurance shall be required prior to project launch.
2. The bidder to whom the work is awarded shall be required to execute an agreement within ten (10) calendar days from the date when notice of award is delivered to the bidder. In case of failure of the bidder to execute the agreement, the County may consider the bidder in default and disqualify the bidder from the project and award the work to the next lowest, or most qualified, bidder.



3. Upon receipt of the agreement signed by the party to whom the agreement was awarded, the County shall sign the agreement and return to such party an executed duplicate of the agreement.

## **VI. CONTRACT PERIOD**

1. Following contract award, all parties shall sign a contract and the contractor will be given a Notice to Proceed that will include a final product delivery date.
2. The Notice to Proceed shall be issued by the County once the agreement has been executed by both parties. Either party may cancel the written contract by giving a minimum 10-day notice, in writing, to the other party.

## **SUBMITTING PROPOSALS**

**Sealed bids MUST be delivered to:**

Office of the Talbot County Manager  
Courthouse, South Wing  
11 North Washington Street  
Easton, MD 21601

**Deadline:**

**Tuesday, September 10, 2024  
10 a.m.**

Envelopes MUST be marked: **"Bid No. 24-11 "Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan"** in the lower left corner.

*\* Proposals not received by the time and at the place indicated will not be considered and will be returned unopened.*

### **The following should be included in the proposal:**

- An original and six (6) copies of the proposal.
- Date.
- Service provider name.
- Contact name.
- Phone numbers.
- Resumes of principal and working team.

- Concise description of the services proposed for the work.
- Estimated costs of services and total project costs.
- Description of experience with at least three (3) examples of similar efforts.
- At least three (3) references for similar projects.
- A master schedule that includes milestones, reviews, and delivery dates.
- *NOTE: E-mailed or faxed bids will not be accepted.*

### INQUIRIES CONCERNING THIS PROPOSAL

Please direct any questions or comments to:

Cassandra M. Vanhooser  
Director, Economic Development and Tourism  
Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism  
215 Bay Street, Suite 5  
Easton, MD 21601

Email: [cvanhooser@talbotcountymd.gov](mailto:cvanhooser@talbotcountymd.gov)

Telephone: 410-770-8000

*The County Council of Talbot County reserves the right to accept or reject, in whole or in part, any and all proposals received in response to this **Request for Proposal**, to waive or permit cure of minor irregularities; and to conduct discussions with any or all qualified Service Providers in any manner necessary to serve the best interests of the County. This Request for Proposal creates no obligation on the part of the County to award a contract.*

## Request for Proposal Summary

**Project:** Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan

**Total Cost of Project** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please submit additional information on the services you will provide as an attachment.

**To be considered, please submit sealed bid by: 10 a.m. on Tuesday, September 10, 2024**

Office of the Talbot County Manager  
Courthouse, South Wing  
11 North Washington Street, Suite #13  
Easton, MD 21601

Envelopes **MUST** be marked: **"Bid No. 24-11, Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan"** in the lower left corner.

*Proposals not received by the time and at the place indicated will  
not be considered **and will be returned unopened***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Company Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Name Telephone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

*Your signature will guarantee the proposed quote will be effective for 120 days.*

TALBOT COUNTY BID FORM  
BID NO. 24-11

Talbot County Manager  
Talbot County Courthouse  
11 N. Washington Street, Suite 13  
Easton, Maryland 21601

**TITLE: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: TALBOT COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN**

**OPENING: Tuesday, September 10, 2024**

**TIME: 10:00 AM**

Proposal of \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter called "BIDDER"), organized and existing under the laws of the State of \_\_\_\_\_ doing business as \_\_\_\_\_\*.

**BIDDER** hereby submits proposal for the above-titled project. Having carefully examined the specifications and drawings for the named project, and having received clarification on all items of conflict or upon which any doubt arose, the undersigned hereby agree(s) to furnish all labor, material and equipment required for complete work in strict accordance with the contract documents. BIDDER also understands that the County Director of the Department of Corrections or his/her assignee has the right to delete any portion of the work herein described, and BIDDER shall perform the other approved items of the contract accordingly. BIDDER acknowledges receipt of the following addenda:

BIDDER hereby agrees to perform all the work described in the specifications and shown on the plans for the stipulated sum of:

TOTAL BASE BID:

\_\_\_\_\_ DOLLARS (\$ \_\_\_\_\_)  
(WRITTEN) (FIGURES)

NOTE: Bids shall include sales tax and all other applicable taxes and fees.

\*Insert "a corporation," "a partnership," or "an individual" as applicable.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGN FOR IDENTIFICATION:

**AFFIDAVIT I**  
BID NO. 24-11

TALBOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM  
215 BAY STREET, SUITE 5  
EASTON, MARYLAND 21601

COUNTY OF \_\_\_\_\_

STATE OF \_\_\_\_\_

Before me, the undersigned, a Notary Public, in and for the County and State aforesaid, personally appeared \_\_\_\_\_ and made oath in due form of law that the Proposer herein, his agents, servants and/or employees, to the best of his/her knowledge and belief, have not in any way colluded with anyone for and on behalf of the Proposer, or themselves, or obtain information that would give the Proposer an unfair advantage over others, nor have they colluded with anyone for and on behalf of the Proposer, or themselves, to gain any favoritism in the award of the Contract herein.

\_\_\_\_\_

Notary Public

\_\_\_\_\_

SIGN FOR IDENTIFICATION



**AFFIDAVIT II**  
BID NO. 24-11

TALBOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM  
215 BAY STREET, SUITE 5  
EASTON, MARYLAND 21601

**DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST BY PERSONS DOING BUSINESS WITH TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND**

The undersigned does hereby declare that no officer or employee of Talbot County, Maryland (the "County"), whether elected or appointed, has in any manner whatsoever any interest in or has received prior to, hereto, or will receive subsequent hereto, any benefit, monetary or material consideration from the profits or emoluments of this contract, job, work or service for the County. No officer or employee has accepted, or received, or will receive, directly or indirectly, any part of any fee, commission or other compensation paid or payable by the County in connection with this contract, job, work or service for the County excepting, however, the receipt of dividends on corporation stock.

I/We do solemnly declare and affirm under the penalties of perjury that the contents of the foregoing affidavit are true and correct to the best of my/our knowledge, information and belief.

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ TITLE \_\_\_\_\_

PRINTED NAME & TITLE \_\_\_\_\_

FIRM \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGN FOR IDENTIFICATION