

Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments
(Serving Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee and Sumter counties)

Request For Proposal for Economic Forecasting Services
for One-Year Contract Period

RFP #1

September 2011

Proposals' Due Date: Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2011, 5 p.m. (ET)

Economic Forecasting Services
for Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments

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Attachment: Proposal Rating Sheet

Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments (hereinafter SLRCOG) will be accepting written proposals for economic forecasting services for a one-year contract period.

A: Description of entity

SLRCOG is one of 10 regional sub-state planning districts established by South Carolina state legislation in 1970. The agency, a public, non-profit corporation, has provided economic forecasting services to the four-county Santee-Lynches Region since 1999. The four counties in the region are Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee and Sumter. Economic forecasting services were previously provided by the Office of Economic Analysis at the College of Charleston for 2010-'11. Prior to this, forecasting services were provided by the BB&T Center for Economic and Community Development at Coastal Carolina University (2007-'10) and by the Center for Economic Forecasting at Charleston Southern University (1999-2007). The intent of the forecast services for the Santee-Lynches Region is to aid local governments and business leaders in planning for growth or shortfalls in the economy.

SLRCOG has a Research Analyst on staff who would work directly with the selected proposer and provide an extensive database of regional economic indicators as a baseline for forecasting. The agency has an Economic Outlook Board (EOB) that meets quarterly with the economic forecaster, reviews the forecast report and provides any necessary local inputs on the regional economy before the forecast is finalized. The EOB and Research Analyst also provide the forecaster local inputs to be used in later forecasts. The Research Analyst will be available to meet with the selected proposer at the beginning of the contract period to discuss the database, trends and any necessary startup concerns. The Research Analyst will also be available periodically to discuss any pertinent concerns or issues.

B: Assistance available to forecaster

The Research Analyst on the SLRCOG staff will provide the selected proposer with a database of economic indicators dating back to the mid-1990s and updated quarterly as a baseline for forecasting. Recent economic announcements and activity news in the region will also be made available quarterly to the selected proposer. Additionally, previous quarterly economic forecast reports and annual two-year forecast reports that have been produced will be available as resources.

SLRCOG will provide the facility for quarterly meetings and the annual two-year forecast meeting. SLRCOG will also pay for the cost of publishing the quarterly reports and the two-year forecast booklet.

C: Contractual arrangements

1. The contract shall run for a period of one year beginning with the contract signing date in 2011 through the same date in 2012.
2. The successful proposer and SLRCOG may renew such contract for up to two succeeding years without the necessity of the formal proposal process if mutually agreeable arrangements can be developed, and provided that a maximum fee increase doesn't exceed five percent per year.
3. This RFP will comprise the integral part of such contract and will be incorporated therein.

D: Forecasting standards and requirements

1. The economic forecast for the Santee-Lynches Region is to be conducted with an established economic model and is to be maintained and updated as appropriate.
2. The indicators to be used in the forecast should include the following: employment, labor force, unemployment rate, gross retail sales, residential and non-residential building permits and dollar values, manufactured/mobile home building permits, CPI inflation rate, FHA mortgage rate, 10-year Treasury Bond Yield, and 91-day Treasury Bill Yield. Collection of regional data is the responsibility of SLRCOG; whereas, collection of state and national data is the responsibility of the forecaster and his/her agents. (A copy of prior regional economic forecasts as samples will be made available to proposers upon individual request.)
3. The forecaster shall produce three quarterly regional forecasts consisting of graphical presentations for the next quarter and at least three years of historical quarterly regional data for a perspective. The forecaster will then present each forecast to members of the Economic Outlook Board at a quarterly meeting in Sumter County. During the process of the quarterly meeting, the EOB will provide any necessary local inputs before the forecast is finalized. SLRCOG will retain ownership of the quarterly reports and may publish and distribute them at will at its own expense. It's the intention of the parties that the quarterly forecast meetings would occur at the end of the preceding quarter or near the beginning of the current forecasted quarter. Confidentiality of information and material presented at the quarterly meetings will be maintained if deemed appropriate by all parties. Also at the quarterly meetings, the EOB and Research Analyst will provide inputs and insight on the regional economy that the forecaster should use in developing future forecasts.
4. The forecaster shall also produce a two-year regional economic forecast annually. A forecast booklet will contain both historical data and information as well as the actual forecast and will be a collaborative effort of both the forecaster and SLRCOG. Compiling the booklet's historical data and information will be the responsibility of SLRCOG; while the forecaster will be primarily responsible for just the forecast. At least one week before being published, a draft report of the

forecast shall be made available for review by the Research Analyst and any EOB members if deemed appropriate. After publishing, the report is to be presented formally by the forecaster during an annual Regional Economic Forecast Meeting to be held in Sumter County in the spring of the year to EOB members and various other business and governmental leaders in the region. The Research Analyst will assist the forecaster in the presentation as deemed appropriate. Costs associated with the annual meeting and the forecast booklet shall be the responsibility of SLRCOG. SLRCOG will retain ownership of the annual two-year forecast report and may distribute the report at will at its own expense.

5. During the quarterly regional forecast meetings and the annual regional forecast meeting, the forecaster shall answer to the best of his/her ability any questions from EOB members relating to forecasting and the regional, state, national or international economy.
6. The SLRCOG's Economic Outlook Board (EOB) of 15 to 20 business people from the Santee-Lynches Region will be assembled by SLRCOG. The choice of Board members will be made by SLRCOG, but the forecaster may render advice on the Board's composition.
7. The forecaster shall converse periodically as necessary with the Research Analyst on topics related to forecasting and the regional, state, national or international economy.
8. The forecaster may provide phone interviews to any media that requests such interviews, as long as SLRCOG doesn't object and sufficient notice is given.

E: Time considerations and requirements

The Research Analyst and the successful proposer will mutually agree on acceptable dates for the quarterly meetings and the annual two-year forecast. These dates will be finalized generally three weeks before the event for planning purposes. Proposers should include assurances in their proposal of a firm commitment to meeting deadlines in the preparation of forecast materials.

F: Revisions to the RFP

SLRCOG reserves the right to revise, cancel or reissue the RFP in whole or in part prior to final award of a contract. In the event it becomes necessary to revise any part of the RFP, addenda will be provided to all who receive the RFP.

G: Most favorable terms

Although SLRCOG reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposal submitted, it's the agency's intention to contact the top-scoring proposer for a formal interview. Nevertheless, the proposal should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms possible. SLRCOG does reserve the right to contact a proposer for clarification of its proposal.

H: Proposal procedure

One (1) sealed original and three (3) sealed copies of the proposal are required. The original of each proposal received should have original signatures and dates by an official of the entity authorized to contractually commit to the provisions of this RFP. The original should be clearly identified as "ORIGINAL" on the outside of the cover or cover page/sheet. Unsigned proposals will be rejected as being non-responsive.

Proposals will be accepted at the Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments office at 36 W. Liberty St., Sumter, SC 29150 or may be mailed to Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments, P.O. Box 1837, Sumter, SC 29151, Attn.: Bruce Mills, Research Analyst.

Proposals must be submitted by 5 p.m. (ET) Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2011, to the attention of Bruce Mills, Research Analyst. Any proposals received after the scheduled date and time will be immediately disqualified in accordance with SLRCOG's Procurement Policy.

All proposals will become part of SLRCOG's official file. All proposals shall remain confidential until a contract is awarded.

I: Suggested proposal format

In order to simplify the review process and obtain the maximum degree of comparison, the following is the requested format of all proposals:

1. Letter of transmittal (limit: two pages)
 - A. Briefly state the legal status of the proposer (sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, public university, private university, etc.) The proposer should also provide his/her understanding of the scope of work to be done and make a positive commitment to perform the work within the necessary time structure. A statement of readiness to proceed with the project should also be included.
 - B. State the facility location where the proposer would operate from.
 - C. State the all-inclusive fee that the described work will be completed for and a brief budget narrative to include a daily rate, number of days for initial model development, number of days for preparation of the three quarterly forecasts, number of days for preparation of the annual two-year forecast, and travel expenses for each of the four required trips to Sumter County. Also state the fee for a first renewal contract year and a maximum inflationary percentage adjustment for a second renewal contract year.
 - D. List the names of the persons who will be authorized to make representations for the proposer, their titles, addresses and telephone numbers.

- E. State that the person signing the letter will be authorized to legally bind the proposer to a contract relationship.
2. Title page – Include the name, address, principal place of business, telephone number, FAX number, and email address of the legal entity or individual with whom the contract would be written. Also include the date of submittal.
 3. Table of contents – Include a clear identification of the material by section and page number.
 4. Technical proposal
 - A. Project approach / Methodology – Include a complete description of the proposer’s proposed approach and methodology for the regional forecasting services. This section of the proposal shall contain sufficient detail to convey to members of the rating and ranking team the proposer’s knowledge of the subjects and skills necessary to successfully complete the regional forecasting project. The proposer may also include any additional forecast indicators that might be appropriate and may provide any pertinent supporting documentation in this section.
 - B. Work plan – Include time estimates for each segment of the work (initial model development, the development and presentation of three quarterly forecast reports, and the development and presentation of an annual two-year forecast) and staff to be assigned to accomplish the scope of the project. Also include a description of any internal controls and reviews to be used in forecasting. Any planned use of consultants should be specified.
 5. Management proposal
 - A. Staff qualifications / Experience related to the project – Identify staff, including any consultants, who will be assigned to the potential project, indicating their responsibilities with the project. Provide resumes (not to exceed two pages per person) for the named staff, which include information on the individual’s particular skills related to this project, education, experience, significant accomplishments and any other pertinent information. Describe and evidence the proposer’s previous economic forecasting experience at a regional sub-state level and/or state level as a service project or for public- and private sector clients. Also include the experience of any consultants related to economic forecasting. Include a list of any regional sub-state level and state-level economic forecasting service contracts, memorandums of agreement, memorandums of understanding or similar type instruments the proposer has had during the last five years, or previously if not an ongoing operation, for public- and private-sector clients. Additionally, include who within the forecasting team will have prime responsibility

and final authority for the work. Also identify who on the staff will make the forecast meeting presentations to the Economic Outlook Board.

- B. Other relevant qualifications – Describe and evidence other relevant experience that illustrates the range of qualifications of the proposer and any consultants for the performance of the potential contract. This experience would not be directly related to economic forecasting services but would still illustrate the proposer’s ability to perform the services needed under the RFP.
 - C. Recommendations – Include written recommendations from at least three agencies, organizations, or clients who have had a business relationship with the proposer that demonstrate the proposer’s ability to conduct regional sub-state level economic forecasting and analysis. Each recommendation should include a detailed description of the type of service provided and, in the reference’s opinion, the quality and timeliness of the proposer’s work. The proposer shall grant permission to SLRCOG to contact any reference if a clarification of material presented in a recommendation is necessary. [If, technically, the proposer hasn’t had three clients to provide recommendations, written professional recommendations should be provided supporting the work of a proposed forecasting team member(s).]
 - D. Related information – If the proposer has had a service contract, memorandum or other instrument terminated for default in the last five years, describe such incident. Submit full details of the terms for default including the other party’s name, address and telephone number. Present the proposer’s position on the matter. SLRCOG will evaluate the facts and may reject the proposal on the grounds of the past experience. If no such termination for default has been experienced by the proposer in the last five years, so indicate.
6. Mandatory criteria – The proposer must meet the following requirements:
- A. Affirm the proposer has a Doctor of Philosophy in Economics or its equivalent.
 - B. Affirm the proposer has demonstrated ability to conduct regional sub-state level economic forecasting and analysis.
 - C. Affirm the proposer is employed within, or adjacent to, the Columbia Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Area.
 - D. Affirm the proposer has a wide range of knowledge of the economy to include the rural and urban areas of South Carolina, the national level and international level.
7. Such other information as the proposer considers relevant.

J: Evaluation procedure

Proposals received by SLRCOG by the 5 p.m. (ET) Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2011, deadline will be evaluated in accordance with the requirements stated in this solicitation and any addenda issued. A rating and ranking team, to be designated by SLRCOG, will determine the ranking of the proposals. The top-scoring proposer will be contacted for a formal interview. The weighting and points assigned to the proposal for evaluation purposes are listed in the attached Proposal Rating Sheet.

PROPOSAL RATING SHEET

Assigned points:

A. Technical proposal

1. Project approach / Methodology (0-15) _____

2. Quality of proposed work plan (0-10) _____

B. Management proposal

1. Staff qualifications / Experience related to project (0-35) _____

2. Other relevant qualifications (0-10) _____

3. Evaluation of written recommendations (0-10) _____

C. Cost of the proposal (0-20) _____

TOTAL POINTS (0-100) _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____