

# Whitman County Commissioners

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## Request for Proposals Associate Development Organization Application and Designation

### I. Introduction

Whitman County, Washington (hereinafter referred to as “County”) is requesting proposals from qualified public entities and non-profit organizations to be designated as the Whitman County Associate Development Organization (ADO) for the two-year period of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2025. Whitman County will decide on the designee on April 10, 2023.

### II. Background (from Washington Dept. of Commerce)

Washington’s Department of Commerce (Commerce) maintains a contracted partnership with 35 Associate Development Organizations (ADOs), serving 39 counties, through both technical assistance and funding for local economic development activities. Each county in the state has designated an organization as their ADO to partner with Commerce and serve as the lead on local economic development activities in their county. The broad role of an Associate Development Organization is that of advocacy and leadership, serving as the point of contact for local economic activities, recruiting/hosting new businesses, and coordinating business retention and expansion efforts within its service area. The ADO serves as the principal contact for Commerce regarding economic activity in their area. ADOs help Commerce gather data about community profiles, industrial sites, plans for business development and retention, reports on business activities, and proposals for other economic activities in their service areas.

### III. Specific Expectations of the ADO under current law:

- a. Partner with Commerce: The designated ADO organizations shall partner with Commerce as the lead local economic development organization in their service area to deliver economic development services at the local level. Through a contracted partnership, Commerce determines the scope of services delivered under the ADO grant/contract in collaboration with the ADO. The ADO works closely with Commerce to develop and carry out strategies and show potential for long-term sustainable growth.
- b. Contracting Organizations (ADOs) in each Community or Regional Area Must Be “broadly representative of community and economic interests... capable of identifying key problems....and mobilizing broad support for recommended initiatives.”

#### The code lists key players as:

- local governments
- chambers of commerce
- workforce development councils
- port districts
- labor groups
- institutions of higher education
- community action programs
- other appropriate private, public, or nonprofit community and economic development groups.

- c. Best Practice Sharing: ADOs must meet and share best practices with other ADOs at least two times a year.
- d. Resources and Services Provided to Local Businesses: ADOs shall provide direct assistance, including business planning, to companies throughout the county who need support to stay in business expand, or relocate to Washington from out of state or other countries. Assistance must comply with business recruitment and retention protocols established in RCW 43.330.062.
- e. Regional Planning: Support for regional economic research and regional planning efforts to implement target industry sector strategies and other economic development strategies including cluster-based strategies.
- f. Reports to Commerce: ADOs report quarterly on activity outcomes, i.e., Business Retention and Expansion assistance; Business Recruitment, Entrepreneurial Business Start-ups, etc. They also provide information on how they coordinate and collaborate with other organizations and jurisdictions in their counties, as well as other significant accomplishments. Timelines for reporting are in each grant/contract.
- g. Formal designation by County: The County's Board of Commissioners must formally designate an organization to serve as its ADO, providing Commerce with a signed statement of designation along with a certification of eligibility.

IV. Funding:

- a. Funding from the Washington State Department of Commerce for the Whitman County ADO was \$70k/yr for the 21-23 biennium and can change depending on the final State Budget Allocation to the program.
- b. Whitman County will contribute an additional \$20k per year expecting that at least 1 FTE will be working on behalf of Whitman County as ADO.
- c. Whitman County may ask ADO designee to act as an advisory committee to Whitman County as to expenditures of our .09 funds limited to authorities designated in RCW 82.14.370

V. ADO Contract:

The actual ADO contract is a contract negotiated between the Washington Department of Commerce and the ADO designated by Whitman County. The responding entity also agrees by submission of their response to additional requirements made by Whitman County. Those requirements are:

- i. Provide at least 1 FTE to act in the role of ADO for Whitman County

VI. Scope of Work and Deliverables to Whitman County:

- a. Each entity responding to this RFP must include:
  - i. An Introduction
  - ii. A brief narrative of your understanding of the role of an ADO
  - iii. A description of your approach and methodology in fulfilling the role of ADO.
  - iv. Names and qualifications of key personnel assigned to the role of ADO. If specific people have not been identified please include the job description you will use for hiring.
  - v. A designated contact person and contact information for your entity.
- b. Each entity responding to this RFP must submit a specific "Work Plan" for the next two years rather than broad overarching goals. A discussion must include specific goals, prioritized objectives, and the action plan to achieve them for Whitman County. It should detail current needs, new opportunities, approaches, new challenges and how to overcome them. It should include how and who you will interact with among other local organizations to attract and maintain business.
- c. Each entity responding should include in their Work Plan some of the opportunities they envision that may require the use of additional .09 Funds.
- d. One County Commissioner or their designee shall be on the Board of Directors if the respondent is a non-profit corporation or as the ADO liaison if the respondent is a quasi-governmental or governmental entity. A meeting schedule shall be proposed to provide the County representative with regular updates and to allow for input on the Work Plan.

- e. Each entity responding shall also schedule quarterly meetings with the BoCC (or as the BoCC deems necessary) to give progress reports on the Work Plan described above.

VII. Submittal Date:

All applications must be received by close of business on March 31, 2023 at the Whitman County Commissioners office. Applications should be delivered to: Whitman County Commissioners c/o Corey Mitzimberg, Clerk of the Board, 400 N. Main, Colfax, WA 99111. Submittals may be emailed to [CoreyM@whitmancounty.net](mailto:CoreyM@whitmancounty.net) if below 10MB. Electronic format (PDF) is preferred and may be delivered on a USB drive if too large to email.

VIII. Evaluation of RFP applications:

The Whitman County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) will evaluate the RFP submittals for completeness, awareness of the current conditions, regular and innovative approaches to provide economic development opportunities for new and existing businesses, cooperation and collaboration with other entities, and the vision for projects that can best utilize some of the .09 Economic Development funds. The three commissioners will evaluate responses individually and then as a group make a determination as to which respondent will best represent Whitman County as ADO. It is Expected that the valuations by the BoCC will take place the week of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 and a designation as the Whitman County ADO will be made by the BoCC April 10, 2023.

IX. Special Conditions:

A. General Terms. This request for proposals does not commit the County to enter into an agreement, to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of the proposal or to contract for the position of ADO. All information furnished in this request for proposals was gathered from sources deemed to be reliable. No representation or warranty is intended as to the accuracy or completeness of the information contained herein and the County reserves the right to alter or cancel this request for proposals.

B. Reservation of Rights by the County. The issuance of this request for proposals does not constitute an agreement by the County that any agreement will actually be entered into by the County. The County expressly reserves the right to:

1. Waive any immaterial defect or informality in any proposal.
2. Reject any or all proposals.
3. Reissue the request for proposals.
4. Invite additional respondents to the request for proposal.
5. Request additional information and data from any or all respondents.
6. Extend the date for submission of proposals.
7. Supplement, amend, or otherwise modify the request for proposals and cancel this request with or without the substitution of another request for proposals.

D. Right to Disqualify. The County reserves the right to disqualify any respondent who fails to provide information or data requested herein or who provides inaccurate or misleading information or data. Further, the County reserves the right to disqualify any respondent on the basis of any real or apparent conflict of interest. By responding to this request for proposals, the respondent agrees that any finding by the County of any fact in dispute related to this request for proposals or the responses thereto shall be final and conclusive except as provided herein.

E. Preparation Costs. Each respondent will be responsible for all costs incurred in preparing a response to this request for proposals. All materials and documents submitted by the respondents in response to this request for proposals will become the property of the County and will not be returned. As such, they constitute public

records which may be delivered to a person making an appropriate request for public records.

F. Affirmative Action Requirements. Respondent, by submission of a response, agrees to not discriminate against any worker, employee, subcontractor, or any member of the public because of age, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), race, color, religion, creed, marital status, familial status, national origin, honorably discharged veteran or military status, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability, or use of a service animal by a person with disabilities, or otherwise commit an unfair employment practice and further agrees to comply with all Federal, State, and County equal employment opportunity requirements.

X. RCW references relevant to ADO duties and requirements:

RCW 43.330.080

Coordination of community and economic development services—Contracts with county-designated associate development organizations—Scope of services—Business services training.

(1)(a) The department must contract with county-designated associate development organizations to increase the support for and coordination of community and economic development services in communities or regional areas. The contracting organizations in each community or regional area must:

- (i) Be broadly representative of community and economic interests;
- (ii) Be capable of identifying key economic and community development problems, developing appropriate solutions, and mobilizing broad support for recommended initiatives;
- (iii) Work closely with the department to carry out state-identified economic development priorities;
- (iv) Work with and include local governments, local chambers of commerce, workforce development councils, port districts, labor groups, institutions of higher education, community action programs, and other appropriate private, public, or nonprofit community and economic development groups; and
- (v) Meet and share best practices with other associate development organizations at least two times each year.

(b) The scope of services delivered under the contracts required in (a) of this subsection must include two broad areas of work:

(i) Direct assistance, including business planning, to companies throughout the county who need support to stay in business, expand, or relocate to Washington from out of state or other countries. Assistance must comply with business recruitment and retention protocols established in RCW **43.330.062**, and includes:

(A) Working with the appropriate partners throughout the county including, but not limited to, local governments, workforce development councils, port districts, community and technical colleges and higher education institutions, export assistance providers, impact Washington, the Washington state quality award council, small business assistance programs, innovation partnership zones, and other federal, state, and local programs to facilitate the alignment of planning efforts and the seamless delivery of business support services within the entire county;

(B) Providing information on state and local permitting processes, tax issues, export assistance, and other essential information for operating, expanding, or locating a business in Washington;

(C) Marketing Washington and local areas as excellent locations to expand or relocate a business and positioning Washington as a globally competitive place to grow business, which may include developing and executing regional plans to attract companies from out of state;

(D) Working with businesses on-site location and selection assistance;

(E) Providing business retention and expansion services throughout the county. Such services must include, but are not limited to, business outreach and monitoring efforts to identify and address challenges and opportunities faced by businesses, assistance to trade impacted businesses in applying for grants from the federal trade adjustment assistance for firms' program, and the provision of information to businesses on:

(I) Resources available for microenterprise development;

(II) Resources available on the revitalization of commercial districts; and

(III) The opportunity to maintain jobs through shared work programs authorized under chapter **50.60** RCW;

(F) Participating in economic development systemwide discussions regarding gaps in business start-up assistance in Washington;

(G) Providing or facilitating the provision of export assistance through workshops or one-on-one assistance; and

(H) Using a web-based information system to track data on business recruitment, retention, expansion, and trade; and

(ii) Support for regional economic research and regional planning efforts to implement target industry sector strategies and other economic development strategies, including cluster-based strategies. Research and planning efforts should support increased living standards and increased foreign direct investment, and be aligned with the statewide economic development strategy. Regional associate development organizations retain their independence to address local concerns and goals. Activities include:

(A) Participating in regional planning efforts with workforce development councils involving coordinated strategies around workforce development and economic development policies and programs. Coordinated planning efforts must include, but not be limited to, assistance to industry clusters in the region;

(B) Participating with the state board for community and technical colleges as created in RCW 28B.50.050, and any community and technical colleges in the coordination of the job skills training program and the customized training program within its region;

(C) Collecting and reporting data as specified by the contract with the department for statewide systemic analysis. In cooperation with other local, regional, and state planning efforts, contracting organizations may provide insight into the needs of target industry clusters, business expansion plans, early detection of potential relocations or layoffs, training needs, and other appropriate economic information;

(D) In conjunction with other governmental jurisdictions and institutions, participating in the development of a countywide economic development plan.

(2) The department must provide business services training to the contracting organizations, including but not limited to:

(a) Training in the fundamentals of export assistance and the services available from private and public assistance providers in the state; and

(b) Training in the provision of business retention and expansion services as required by subsection (1)(b)(i)(E) of this section.

### **RCW 43.330.082**

#### **Contracting associate development organizations—Performance measures and summary of best practices—Remediation plans—Report.**

(1)(a) Contracting associate development organizations must provide the department with measures of their performance and a summary of best practices shared and implemented by the contracting organizations. Annual reports must include the following information to show the contracting organization's impact on employment and overall changes in employment: Current employment and economic information for the community or regional area produced by the employment security department; the net change from the previous year's employment and economic information using data produced by the employment security department; other relevant information on the community or regional area; the amount of funds received by the contracting organization through its contract with the department; the amount of funds received by the contracting organization through all sources; and the contracting organization's impact on employment through all funding sources. Annual reports may include the impact of the contracting organization on wages, exports, tax revenue, small business creation, foreign direct investment, business relocations, expansions, terminations, and capital investment. Data must be input into a common web-based business information system managed by the department. Specific measures, data standards, and data definitions must be developed in the contracting process between the department and the contracting organization every two years. Except as provided in (b) of this subsection, performance measures should be consistent across regions to allow for statewide evaluation.

(b) In addition to the measures required in (a) of this subsection, contracting associate development organizations in counties with a population greater than one million five hundred thousand persons must include the following measures in reports to the department:

(i) The number of small businesses that received retention and expansion services, and the outcome of those services;

(ii) The number of businesses located outside of the boundaries of the largest city within the contracting associate development organization's region that received recruitment, retention, and expansion services, and the outcome of those services.

(2)(a) The department and contracting associate development organizations must agree upon specific target levels for the performance measures in subsection (1) of this section. Comparison of agreed thresholds and actual performance must occur annually.

(b) Contracting organizations that fail to achieve the agreed performance targets in more than one-half of the agreed measures must develop remediation plans to address performance gaps. The remediation plans must include revised performance thresholds specifically chosen to provide evidence of progress in making the identified service changes.

(c) Contracts and state funding must be terminated for one year for organizations that fail to achieve the agreed upon progress toward improved performance defined under (b) of this subsection. During the year in which termination for nonperformance is in effect, organizations must review alternative delivery strategies to include reorganization of the contracting organization, merging of previous efforts with existing regional partners, and other specific steps toward improved performance. At the end of the period of termination, the department may contract with the associate development organization or its successor as it deems appropriate.

(3) The department must submit a final report to the legislature by December 31st of each even-numbered year on the performance results of the contracts with associate development organizations.