

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Regional Growth Through Automation; How communities can support expansion and growth of the local tax base

October 2, 2023

Cornerstone Alliance, a Michigan-based 501(c)3 organization, in coordination with Economic Development organizations representing Southwest Michigan, including Market Van Buren and Battle Creek Unlimited, have initiated a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify a vendor qualified to plan, execute and deliver a study that details the economic and tax implications to include but not limited to effects on tax base, wages/payroll, medium household income, direct and indirect spending within local municipalities with private-sector investment in automation for the seven (7) counties in Southwest Michigan (Region 8).

The Partnership requires a vendor who has demonstrated experience and understanding of: Industry 4.0, economic development, local and state tax growth, manufacturing, supply chain and logistics, wages/payroll, direct and indirect economic analysis, or other relevant fields.

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

Cornerstone Alliance, Battle Creek Unlimited and Market Van Buren are economic development organizations representing Michigan's Region 8, and serve the Counties of Berrien, Van Buren, Cass, and Calhoun.

This partnership has financial support from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), with the intent to create higher-wage, higher-skill jobs for Southwest Michigan residents. This study aligns with MEDC's strategic focus areas, and will strengthen Southwest Michigan's competitiveness by ensuring sustained, long-term growth of private-sector investment in automation, as well as the growth of Automation companies in Southwest Michigan.

This partnership will utilize and disseminate the study to other EDO's throughout the region, in order to better educate leaders on the benefits of automation in the face of a declining working-age population.

SCOPE OF WORK REQUIRED ELEMENTS

Historically, the success of economic development projects has largely been based upon two metrics; 1) the number of jobs created and, 2) the amount of capital investment that will grow a local tax base.

As the workforce landscape changes, Michigan leaders must be advised on the benefits of automation, as well as the realities of regional demographics. The acceleration of remote work opportunities, Michigan's aging workforce and declining population, are just a few examples of

external pressures that have forced Michigan companies to embrace automation at the expense of new job creation. The future fate of many Michigan companies lies primarily on a company's ability to become more efficient, with less employees, while growing sales.

The acceptance of automation has been a significant benefit to Region 8 companies, and will continue to benefit those companies willing to automate processes. Automation has allowed many Michigan companies to expand and profit in a global economy. Additionally, Southwest Michigan has become a global hub for companies in the Automation industry. Companies like JR Automation, Eagle Technologies and Edgewater Automation are just a few of these companies employing Michiganders, while selling automation products in all parts of the globe. The Collaborative seeks a study that will identify how Southwest Michigan communities can grow and benefit by supporting automation investments their companies.

The study should include, but not be limited to the following:

- Identify industry sectors that have substantial operations in Southwest Michigan, that are best equipped to grow through automation.
- Identify companies in Southwest Michigan that have used automation to expand in recent years.
- Detail the economic, tax, wages/payroll, medium household income, direct and indirect spending benefits/impacts of companies that choose to automate in a community with a declining labor participation rate.
- Identify Automation companies in Southwest Michigan and their capabilities.
- Identify types of automation capabilities that may be missing in Southwest Michigan – identifying an opportunity to attract to the region.
- Detail the regional economic, tax, wages/payroll, medium household income, direct and indirect spending impacts of automation companies operating in Southwest Michigan.
- Provide examples of how Southwest Michigan automation companies can provide solutions to other Michigan-based companies that are in the infancy stages of using automation.
- Provide examples of training programs that can be implemented by area community colleges to support careers in automation.

Additional Deliverables:

- A map that identifies existing Automation companies in Southwest Michigan.
- The selected firm must also deliver a 2-page (front-and-back) marketing piece. The piece will highlight the economic benefits/implications to local municipalities of business expansion through automation, with limited or no job creation.
- Should be created so that it can be branded by individual EDOs, the MEDC, and communities within Southwest Michigan.
- Can be edited up to three (3) times before delivery to the partnership. Additional revisions will be done at the cost of the partnership.
- All source files, and collateral developed as a part of the project, will be packaged and delivered upon completion of the project.

- Will be considered intellectual property, and owned by the partnership.

QUALIFICATIONS

Evidence of the firm's qualifications to provide the above services:

1. Experience in economic development, Industry 4.0, automation, state and local tax analysis, supply chain and logistics, or other related industries.
2. References and contact information from at least two comparable economic development clients, including the names and key contact people at those firms.
3. Additional consideration will be given to firms with a stated Diversity, Equality and Inclusion initiative or pledge.

TIMEFRAME

The Study and Marketing piece should be completed no later than eight (8) weeks following an executed agreement.

PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

All proposals should be received by ***Monday, October 30, 2023, at 5 p.m. (EDT)***.

As part of your proposal, please address the following:

- Sample Project Plan
- Project Budget (not to exceed \$40,000).
- Team Roster Including Relevant Experience and Credentials

All proposals and questions should be submitted to Rob Cleveland, Cornerstone Alliance, rcleveland@cstonealliance.org. The subject of the email should read, "Southwest Michigan Automation Proposal," followed by your company name. Upon receipt of your proposal, Cornerstone Alliance will confirm receipt within two business days.

A committee of leaders from Market Van Buren, Battle Creek Unlimited, Cornerstone Alliance, and MEDC will review all proposals, with a decision to be made no later than November 10, 2023.