

Request for Proposals

Preparation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Five-Year Regional Economic Development Strategy for Shasta, Siskiyou, Modoc, and Trinity Counties

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Request for Proposal Document:	https://sced.org/2026cedsrfp

1. Introduction

Superior California Economic Development (SCED) seeks proposals from qualified consulting firms to prepare its next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The CEDS will serve as the region's economic development roadmap and will guide strategic action, investment priorities, collaboration, and resilience planning across the Superior California Economic Development district.

The selected consultant will work closely with staff, board leadership, and a designated CEDS Strategy Committee to produce an EDA-compliant CEDS consistent with 13 C.F.R. § 303.7 and the 2025 EDA CEDS Content Guidelines. The work should be grounded in meaningful stakeholder engagement, current and relevant data, practical implementation planning, and a format that can support future annual performance reporting and five-year updates.

2. About Superior California Economic Development and Project Background

Superior California Economic Development is a regional economic development organization serving Shasta, Siskiyou, Modoc, and Trinity Counties in Northern California. The organization supports regional planning, capital access, project implementation, and works with local governments, tribes, lenders, chambers, employers, educational institutions, and other partners to advance economic opportunity throughout the district.

Located at the northern end of the Sacramento Valley and extending into the far northeastern corner of California, the District borders both Nevada and Oregon. It also connects westward to Del Norte and Humboldt Counties and south to Tehama County. Shasta County, and the City of Redding in particular, functions as the primary commercial hub for the region. The District includes 13 incorporated cities, as well as numerous unincorporated communities, many of which lack formal municipal governance structures.

Spanning approximately 11.3 million acres, the District is home to a population of approximately 244,000 residents and a labor force of roughly 99,000. The regional economy is diverse, with a mix of service-producing, goods-producing, and government sectors, though many communities face persistent economic challenges related to rurality, infrastructure, and workforce capacity.

This project will result in a five-year CEDS that meets the requirements of the U.S. Economic Development Administration and provides a clear, actionable framework for regional priorities. The plan is expected to support future grant applications, strengthen regional coordination, identify priority projects, and help align local, state, tribal, and federal economic development efforts.

The CEDS should reflect current economic conditions and emerging opportunities across the region, while also addressing economic resilience, infrastructure, workforce, housing, business development, and the distinct needs and assets of rural communities.

3. Scope of Work

The selected consultant will be expected to complete, at a minimum, the following tasks:

Project Management

- Conduct a project kickoff meeting with Superior California Economic Development staff and the CEDS Strategy Committee.
- Support the structure, documentation, and facilitation of the CEDS Strategy Committee, ensuring representation of public, private, nonprofit, tribal, workforce, and educational stakeholders, consistent with EDA guidance.
- Document the composition of the CEDS Strategy Committee in the final CEDS, including member categories, participating organizations, and how the Committee broadly represents the principal economic interests of the region, including public, private, tribal, nonprofit, workforce, educational, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Prepare a detailed work plan, schedule, communication protocol, and list of information needed from Superior California Economic Development.
- Manage the project through final adoption and provide regular progress updates.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Design and implement a broad-based and inclusive stakeholder engagement process that documents how input was solicited and incorporated.
- Engage a diverse set of regional stakeholders including local governments, tribes, private sector employers, lenders, workforce boards, educational institutions, utility and infrastructure partners, chambers and other economic development entities, nonprofit organizations, community groups, and other relevant interests.
- Use a mix of engagement methods such as interviews, focus groups, surveys, workshops, Strategy Committee meetings, and public meetings, as proposed by the consultant.
 - SCED has procured a community engagement platform (StratSimple) to support the stakeholder input phase of the CEDS update. The platform is web-based with no software installation required. StratSimple provides AI-assisted qualitative survey tools, automated thematic analysis, and presentation-ready reporting in standard Microsoft PowerPoint format. The platform supports

multiple survey instruments for different stakeholder populations and produces comparative cross-group analysis.

- The consultant's proposal should describe how they will integrate StratSimple into their engagement approach, including survey design, stakeholder outreach strategy, and how platform-generated analysis will feed into the CEDS framework. SCED will manage the StratSimple platform relationship directly. The consultant will collaborate with SCED and StratSimple on survey design and will receive all raw data and automated analysis outputs in standard Microsoft office formats for incorporation into the final CEDS document.
 - Proposers may learn more at <http://www.stratsimple.com> or contact Mike Burns at mike@stratsimple.com with platform questions.
- Document outreach methods, participant types, key themes, and evidence of stakeholder input and support for inclusion in the final CEDS.
 - Clearly document in the final CEDS how stakeholder input was solicited, what methods were used, what themes emerged, how that input informed the SWOT analysis, strategic direction, and action plan, and how Superior California Economic Development intends to continue stakeholder engagement during implementation and future annual CEDS updates.

Review of Existing Conditions and Relevant Plans

- Review prior CEDS documents, California Jobs First North State Regional Plan Part I and Part II, California Jobs First State Economic Blueprint, and other relevant local, regional, tribal, state, and federal plans, including plans related to transportation, housing, workforce development, hazard mitigation, disaster resilience, broadband, infrastructure, land use, and natural resource management.
- Identify areas of alignment, gaps, opportunities for stronger regional coordination, and opportunities to leverage local, tribal, state, federal, and private resources.

Data Collection and Analysis

- Compile and analyze current, relevant demographic, socioeconomic, workforce, housing, infrastructure, industry, and fiscal data for the region.
- Include, as appropriate, analysis of natural and cultural assets, environmental conditions, infrastructure systems, emerging or declining industry clusters, and the region's relationship to the broader state, national, and global economy.
- Present data in a concise and accessible format, including disaggregated data where practicable, and connect findings clearly to the SWOT analysis, strategic direction, and action plan.
- Review long-term economic trends and the factors shaping regional competitiveness, resilience, and opportunity.
- Identify and analyze economic disparities across populations and geographies, including income, employment, and access to opportunity, and clearly connect findings to the SWOT analysis and strategic direction.

CEDS Development

- Prepare a draft CEDS that complies with EDA requirements and is consistent with the 2025 EDA CEDS Content Guidelines.
- Incorporate strategies that strengthen regional economic development capacity, including partnerships, institutional coordination, and systems that support long-term economic growth.
- Include, at a minimum, an executive summary; summary background; documented stakeholder engagement process; SWOT analysis; strategic direction with a vision statement, prioritized goals and specific, measurable objectives; action plan that includes metrics and responsibility; evaluation framework; economic resilience component; workforce development component; and a regional project inventory or appendix.
- Ensure that goals and objectives are directly linked to the SWOT analysis and that objectives are measurable, outcome-oriented, and aligned with performance metrics in the evaluation framework.
- Ensure the action plan is more than a project list and includes high-priority activities, implementation steps, lead and supporting organizations, timelines, potential costs or cost ranges, funding opportunities, and benchmarks or performance measures.
- Ensure the action plan includes reasonable estimated costs or cost ranges and integrated funding sources and financing opportunities across local, tribal, state, federal, private, and nonprofit partners for high-priority implementation actions.
- Identify opportunities to align and leverage local, state, federal, and private funding sources to support implementation of CEDS priorities.
- Ensure that performance measures focus on outcomes (e.g., job quality, income, wages, industry growth, or economic diversification), not just outputs, and are clearly tied to goals, objectives, and actions.
- Integrate economic resilience throughout the CEDS and/or as a distinct section, including both steady-state resilience (long-term economic diversification and capacity building) and responsive resilience (coordination systems, information networks, and pre-disaster recovery planning), as appropriate for the region.
- Explicitly identify the region's principal economic vulnerabilities and risks, including those related to industry concentration, infrastructure, workforce, environmental conditions, natural hazards, housing, fiscal constraints, and other relevant stressors or shocks, and connect those vulnerabilities to resilience-building goals, strategies, and actions.
- Integrate workforce development into the summary background, SWOT analysis, strategic direction, action plan, and evaluation framework. Workforce strategies should be employer-informed and support the creation of quality jobs, including measurable outcomes such as employment, earnings, wages, career pathways, or credential attainment where applicable.
- Include a concise narrative suitable for general audiences and appendices for detailed data that support, but do not overwhelm, the strategy.

- Provide recommended goals, strategies, actions, partners, timelines, implementation considerations, and opportunities to align the CEDS with other plans and funding sources.

Public Review and Finalization

- Prepare a public review draft suitable for a 30-day public comment period and any other review process required by Superior California Economic Development or EDA.
- Support Superior California Economic Development in documenting, responding to, and summarizing public comments through a comment log or response matrix.
- Revise the document based on feedback and prepare a final CEDS for board consideration, adoption, and EDA submission, if requested.
- Present the draft and final recommendations at meetings identified by Superior California Economic Development, including the governing body and Strategy Committee as needed.

Final Deliverables

- Final CEDS in editable Word format and PDF format.
- Concise executive summary, ideally 3 to 5 pages, suitable for external distribution.
- Appendices with supporting data, methodology notes, stakeholder engagement summary, public comment documentation, and project list.
- All supporting data tables, graphics, maps, and editable source files created for the project.
- A short presentation deck summarizing key findings and recommendations.
- A simple template or recommended format for annual performance reporting and future CEDS check-ins.
- A concise matrix or crosswalk identifying alignment between CEDS goals and other relevant local, tribal, regional, state, and federal plans, along with associated implementation partners and potential funding sources.

4. Desired Content of the CEDS

The final CEDS should be practical, visually clear, and organized for both implementation and external funding use. To align with EDA's current guidance, the consultant's proposed approach should show how the final document will connect the summary background, SWOT analysis, strategic direction, action plan, evaluation framework, economic resilience, and workforce development into one coherent strategy.

At a minimum, Superior California Economic Development expects the final CEDS to:

- Clearly define the region, planning context, and relationship to other relevant plans and funding opportunities.
- Present a concise but well-supported summary background that explains key economic conditions, assets, disparities, and trends relevant to regional decision-making.

- Use an asset-based SWOT analysis that identifies competitive advantages, constraints, opportunities, threats, and resilience considerations.
- Include a strategic direction with a regional vision, prioritized goals, and measurable objectives.
- Include an action plan with responsible parties, timetables, implementation steps, funding opportunities, and performance benchmarks.
- Include an evaluation framework with clear measures that can support annual updates and ongoing implementation tracking.
- Describe the region's relationship to the broader state, national, and global economy, including major interregional linkages, competitive advantages, and external trends affecting regional economic opportunity and resilience.
- Be written for both technical and general audiences through the use of a concise executive summary, readable graphics, and appendices for supporting detail.
- The main body of the CEDS should be concise and strategy-focused, with detailed supporting information placed in appendices. Superior California Economic Development generally expects a document length that remains readable and practical for public officials, partners, and funders, with a concise executive summary and appendices used to avoid unnecessary bulk in the main strategy document.
- Use charts, maps, graphics, and other visual tools where appropriate to clearly communicate economic conditions, disparities, trends, strategic priorities, and implementation responsibilities to both technical and general audiences.

Superior California Economic Development encourages consultants to recommend enhancements that improve usability, provided those additions support the function of the final document and remain within budget.

5. Proposal Requirements

- **Cover Letter:** Include the firm's name, primary contact, office location, and a brief statement of interest.
- **Firm Qualifications:** Describe the firm's background, relevant expertise, and experience preparing CEDS documents or similar regional economic development strategies, especially for rural or multi-county regions.
- **Project Team:** Identify the proposed project manager and key team members, including their roles and qualifications.
- **Relevant Experience:** Provide examples of comparable work completed within the last five years and include links or samples, if available. At least one example should demonstrate a strong action plan and evaluation framework.
- **Project Approach:** Describe the proposed methodology, engagement approach, data strategy, project schedule, and how the firm will ensure consistency with the EDA CEDS requirements and content guidelines.
- **References:** Provide at least three client references for similar work.

- Cost Proposal: Provide a proposed cost, including a breakdown by task, phase, or deliverable.

6. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals may be evaluated using the following criteria. Superior California Economic Development reserves the right to adjust the weighting before issuance of the final RFP. The intent is to select a firm that can produce a usable, EDA-aligned strategy document, not just a narrative report. Demonstrated commitment to developing an original strategy that avoids boilerplate or generic content, and instead results in a tailored, actionable CEDS that can serve as a long-term regional planning and implementation tool.

- Relevant experience of the firm and project team: 25 points
- Quality of proposed approach and stakeholder engagement plan: 25 points
- Understanding of EDA CEDS requirements and rural regional economic development: 20 points
- Cost competitiveness and overall value: 20 points
- Quality of work samples and communication ability: 10 points

7. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted electronically in PDF format to nikki@scedd.org no later than May 15, 2026 at 5:00pm. Late submissions may be rejected. Superior California Economic Development may request interviews, clarifications, or supplemental information from one or more respondents.

Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing to nikki@scedd.org by May 8, 2026. Responses to all submitted questions will be compiled and shared with all prospective respondents by email.

8. Anticipated Timeline

RFP issued	April 20, 2026
Questions due	May 8, 2026
Responses to questions released	May 12, 2026
Proposals due	May 15, 2026
Interviews and selection, if needed	May 18 - May 29, 2026
Notice to proceed	June 1, 2026
Project Kickoff	June 2026
Draft CEDS due	December 2026
Public Comment Period	December 2026 - January 2027
Final CEDS completion	March 2027

9. Additional Terms

- Superior California Economic Development reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, request additional information, waive minor informalities, and negotiate with the selected firm.
- All materials submitted in response to this RFP become the property of Superior California Economic Development, subject to applicable public records requirements.
- The selected consultant will be expected to enter into a professional services agreement acceptable to Superior California Economic Development.