



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: BUSINESS MARKET ANALYSIS ATTRACTION AND RETENTION STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Town of Whitecourt is a young, vibrant and proactive community located 170km northwest of Edmonton on Highway 43 via Highway 16. With a population of approximately 10,000, Whitecourt is a scenic community offering a small town feel with all the benefits of urban services, including an extensive park and trail system, modern recreational facilities, and countless outdoor leisure opportunities.

The Town of Whitecourt has recently been awarded funding through the Small Community Opportunity Program (SCOP) to support a Business Market Analysis Attraction & Retention Strategy. The SCOP program provides grants to tackle challenges and tap into opportunities in rural areas, for local projects that build capacity in the agriculture industry and small business.

The Town of Whitecourt is hereby seeking proposals for a Business Market Analysis Attraction & Retention Strategy. The insights gained from a market analysis and business environment scan will be essential for strategic economic planning by providing a foundation for setting goals, defining strategies, and developing action plans, and helping to allocate resources efficiently by focusing on areas with the highest potential for growth and return on investment.

PROJECT SCOPE & SERVICES REQUIRED

The Town of Whitecourt is requesting proposals to conduct a comprehensive market analysis of the local business environment and to identify consumer spending, service leakage, gaps in the market, and opportunities for business retention, expansion and attraction. The project will highlight detailed findings on the agriculture sector to better understand future opportunities. In addition, the project will include the development of 3 business cases to provide a ready-made package to market to entrepreneurs looking at investing in the community. The business cases will be relevant to Whitecourt, support a consumer need and represents a gap in the market.

The following information is available as resource materials for the project.

1. Business Directory (currently 670 local businesses registered)
2. Municipal Development Plan
3. Land Use Bylaw
4. COVID-19 Impact Assessment
5. 2012 Business & Consumer Survey Report
6. 2019 Situational Analysis and Target Industry Study
7. Project Manager to arrange access to files, systems and scheduling of other personnel for interviews as required.

The consultant requires business development, attraction, and retention knowledge; access to market research data; and experience working with businesses and consumers in order to conduct a comprehensive business market analysis, develop tailored attraction and retention strategies relevant to Whitecourt, and provide recommendations to support further business development opportunities.

As part of the analysis process, regular monthly meetings are expected with the Town. The consultant will be required to attend these meetings (in-person and/or virtual meetings will be available) to provide reporting on progress, status, and other updates. Presentations may also be required from the Consultant where Council check-ins and/or updates may be required.

The successful consultant will be responsible for all information gathering, background research, data collection, stakeholder input, identifying expanding business operations, compiling contacts and/or other associated work required to complete the project.

DELIVERABLES

Deliverables for this project include:

1. Situational Analysis – an economic snap shot of Whitecourt and an assessment of Whitecourt’s business environment, its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to identify areas for growth and improvement.
2. Updated business and industry database of employers, their workforce needs, anticipated future skills gaps, and current product and service offerings.
3. Information gathered on the agricultural sector and potential consumer and producer direct links, challenges, and potential opportunities.
4. An economic gap analysis indicating the leakage resulting from the loss of consumer spending and the retail and commercial gaps identified.
5. Final report outlining targeted attraction and retention and/or recommendations for improvement to support further business development opportunities including the downtown core and agriculture opportunities.
6. Development of three marketable business case proposals for attracting or expanding products and services relevant to Whitecourt.

The consulting firm will be responsible for compiling all of the text and information pertaining to the economic resiliency and community diversification plan into interim and final documents. The final documents shall be submitted to the Town in one bound hard copy, separate PDF copies, as well as copies of the Word documents in an editable format.

CONTENTS OF PROPOSALS

Proponents are to submit informative proposals that include detailed and sufficient information on the following:

1. Past experience with similar projects.
2. Qualifications and experience of principle staff and qualifications and experience of proposed affiliated associates for specialized tasks, if required.

3. Proposed fee structure that contains an upset cost for the project at no more than \$90,000. All prices shall be quoted in Canadian dollars with GST identified separately.
4. Proposed work plan and study creation process. Proponents are to include a detailed implementation plan. The implementation plan will include a project timeline and identify major project tasks, milestones, resources, and duration required to successfully complete the tasks.
5. Proponents are requested to provide references from three similar sized or types of projects completed within the previous five years. Each reference should include the reference company's name, address and telephone number; name and title of who may be contacted; and, date, description and relevancy of the work. The Town reserves the right to contact these references without prior notification to the Proponent.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROPOSAL SELECTION

As a general framework, all Proposals will be evaluated in the context of the overall value they bring to the Town. The criteria to be considered by the Town will include a combination of expertise, qualifications, fee and such other criteria as determined by the Town at its sole and unfettered discretion. The Town shall use the Evaluation Criteria listed below as the basis for its evaluation of submitted Proposals:

• Qualifications/Experience of Project Team	20%
• Experience on Similar Past Projects & References	20%
• Business Attraction/Retention Strategies and Knowledge of the Region	20%
• Proposed Stakeholder Consultation Process	20%
• Innovated Approaches & Value Added	10%
• Proposed Timeline/ Price & Cost	10%

PROJECT TIMELINES

Proponents are to include a detailed implementation plan. The implementation plan will include a project timeline and identify major project tasks, milestones, resources, and duration required to complete the tasks and successfully complete the Business Market Analysis Attraction and Retention Strategy Project. It is anticipated that the contractor will complete the project in a timely manner, no later than August 1, 2025.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

All proposals must be received by **4:00 p.m. MST on Tuesday, August 27, 2024**. Any proposals received after the due date and time will not be considered. Submissions can be sent to the following address:

Town of Whitecourt
 Rhonda Woods, Economic Development Officer
 Re: Town of Whitecourt Business Market Analysis Attraction and Retention Strategy
 Box 509, 5004 52 Avenue
 Whitecourt AB T7S 1N6
 780-778-2273
rhondawoods@whitecourt.ca

Electronic submissions will be accepted. Interested Consultants will submit their proposal in **PDF format via email** to Rhonda Woods at rhondawoods@whitecourt.ca with the subject line of the email clearly marked RFP – Business Market Analysis Attraction & Retention Strategy.

Proposals will not be considered if received after the submission deadline or if lacking any predetermined requirements. Proponents are cautioned that the closing time is based on when the proposal is received by the Town and NOT when a proposal is submitted by the proponent. It is the sole responsibility of the proponent to be mindful of the length of time for the proposal to be transmitted and the Town shall not be responsible for any failure to receive email submissions sent by the proponent. All proponents are encouraged to ensure their proposal has been received in advance of the above noted deadline.

Note that Proposals greater than 5MB will NOT be accepted by the Town of Whitecourt email server. Arrangements for proposal submissions that exceed this file size are to be made with the contact for this RFP and may include delivery to the Town office on a USB and/or alternate secure electronic transmittal (i.e. ftp, dropbox, etc.).

It is the respondent's responsibility to ensure that it has all the necessary information concerning the intent and requirements of this RFP.

The Town reserves the right to modify specified target dates and to reject any or all submissions (with the lowest proposal not necessarily being accepted) or to cancel or withdraw the RFP for any reason without incurring any cost or liability for costs and damages incurred by a respondent, including, without limitation, any expenses incurred in the preparation of the submission. The Town also reserves the right to request additional information from respondents, to waive any formality or informality in the selection, and to accept the proposal deemed most favorable to the interests of the municipality.

A bidding firm may contact Rhonda Woods by email at rhondawoods@whitecourt.ca to clarify any matters relating to this request for proposals. Inquiries must be received by August 22, 2024.

FOIP ACT

1. Confidentiality of Request for Proposals:

The access and privacy provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act govern all documents submitted to the Town. While this Act allows persons a right of access to records in the Town's custody or control, it also prohibits the Town from disclosing your personal information or confidential business information. This prohibition takes effect if disclosure would be significantly harmful to your business interests or would be an unreasonable invasion of your personal privacy as defined in Sections 15 and 16 of the Act. Firms are encouraged to identify those portions of their submissions which they are submitting in confidence and which, if revealed, would harm the business interest of the company.

2. Rating and Evaluation Records:

Assessment criteria and allocation formulas for this Request for Proposals are public information. Individual assessments of bidders are considered confidential and of interest to competitors or other bidders under this Request for Proposals. Individual assessment information will be provided, upon request, to the submitter/bidder to whom it relates, and to others, only in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

3. Personal Information about the Provider Employees or Agents:

The purpose of collecting the personal information that must be provided in this Request for Proposals is to enable the Town to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the proposal, and to enable the Town to evaluate your response to this Request for Proposals.

CLOSING INFORMATION

1. The Town of Whitecourt is not liable for any costs or expenses or to reimburse or compensate the Proponents in any manner whatsoever or under any circumstances including, without limitation, in the event of rejection of all proposals or cancellation of the project.
2. The Town of Whitecourt reserves the right to request that any or all proponents clarify and make revisions to their proposal. The Town may choose to meet with one, several, or all proponents to discuss aspects of their proposal. The Town of Whitecourt is not obligated to seek clarification from any proponent with regard to any aspect of its proposal.
3. The Town is not bound to accept any proposal. Further, the Town reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal in whole or in part, waive any irregularities in the proposal process, and to discuss different or additional items to those included in this RFP, at its sole discretion. The Town may invalidate this RFP and may issue a second RFP at its sole discretion.
4. The Town reserves the right not to consider award of any contract or purchase order to any party that is or has in the past three years been engaged in litigation or arbitration with the Town, or any party with an outstanding debt owed to the Town.
5. Amendments to a Proposal may be submitted if delivered in writing prior to the Closing Time in a sealed envelope or package, marked with the Proponent's name and the RFP title.
6. Proposals already delivered to the Town may be withdrawn with written notice only, provided such notice is received prior to the Closing Time.

Thank you for your anticipated response.