



Request for Qualifications: Regional Land Use Planning and Economic Development Framework

Issued 26 September 2019 by the [Central Mississippi River Regional Planning Partnership](#).

[Members](#) are the Cities of Becker, Big Lake, and Monticello, Townships of Becker and Big Lake, and Counties of Sherburne and Wright.

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Background, Context

The [Central Mississippi River Regional Planning Partnership](#) is seeking a Consultant to create a regional economic development and land use planning framework. The Partnership currently includes the Cities of Becker, Big Lake, and Monticello, Becker and Big Lake Townships, and Sherburne and Wright Counties.

These communities formed a coalition in 2016 that established a collaboration among the jurisdictions for the benefit of the region. The group adopted its first joint powers agreement in 2017 with organizational and funding principles, and updated it in September 2019 to reflect the Partnership's evolving priorities.

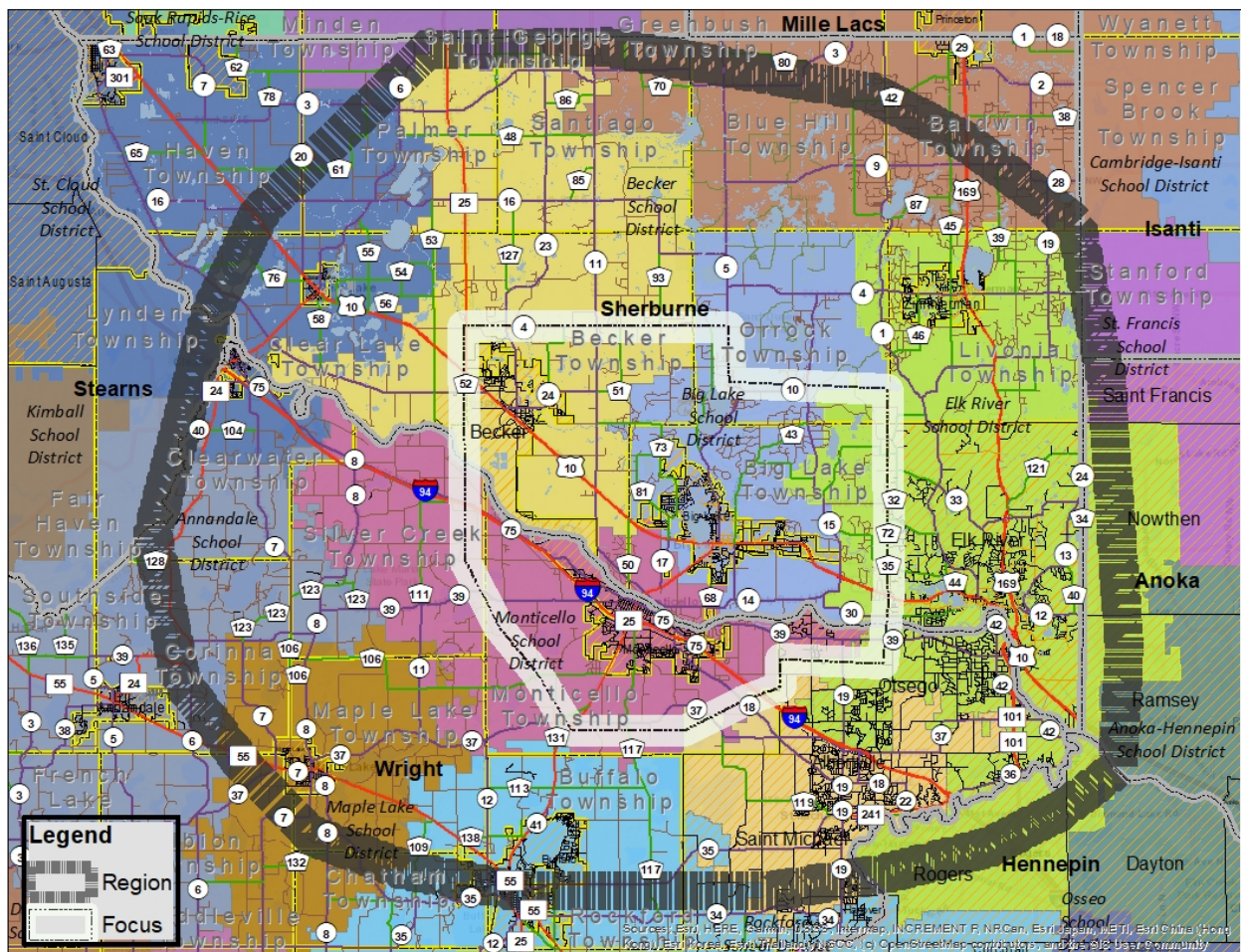
Each of the communities within the Partnership has its own unique history, vision, and values, and each retains local control over land use and economic development; there is no appetite for a regional planning authority. At the same time, the Partnership understands that our robust growth presents challenges and opportunities that require regional coordination.

- The regional population is approximately 200,000 and the area is a hub for commercial and industrial commerce.
- The regional planning area includes both fully urban and suburban development, as well as undeveloped and agricultural areas -- see map on the next page.
- The Partner counties, cities, and townships are experiencing renewed growth and development pressure following several years of slow growth after the 2008 recession; and anticipate continued growth.
- The region is facing the planned decommissioning of two major Xcel Energy plants -- Sherco in Becker (Sherburne County) and Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant in Monticello (Wright County).
- Residents of each of the Partner communities visit the other communities to work, shop, and socialize. People and commercial goods move across multiple communities in this region and beyond using local roads, US Highway 10, MN TH 25, Interstate 94, and rail lines.
- TH 25 is the only bridge crossing over the Mississippi River and has seen increased congestion in recent years; the Partnership's 2017 transportation study clarified assumptions and provided initial recommendations, and will be among various studies provided to the Consultant.

What makes this project unique is the Partnership's demonstrated commitment to a collaborative and consensus-based approach to *regional* planning and decision making that optimizes regional and local benefits to maintain a high quality of life for area residents, businesses, and visitors. This means access to nature, development that brings high-paying jobs and other amenities to the region, the range of housing that people need, and a robust infrastructure that supports critical transportation, technology, and utility requirements.

Planning and improvements developed from a *regional* perspective have the potential to create incredible, dynamic, and long-lasting benefits that support the Partner communities long into the future. The anticipated land use and economic development framework will provide critical guidance to support that success.

The map on the following page shows the larger region for context, and the Partnership's initial thoughts on the specific project area.



Planning Framework

The desired planning Framework will not be a regional comprehensive plan, per se, but rather a document enshrining a unified set of regional goals, policies, and priorities that Partner communities commit to honoring. The Framework is expected to both describe and illustrate the collective regional direction. It should also include guidance developed with Partner communities on how they can refine their local approaches, policies, plans, projects, and regulations over time to harmonize them with the regional direction.

The Partnership has outlined *examples* of desired project elements below, and looks forward to working with the selected Consultant to develop a detailed scope and collaboratively implement and refine it over time.

- **Critical issues:** Review and assess context and existing conditions; agree on critical issues.
- **Regional trends, challenges, options:** Conduct assessments, studies, analyses, and similar as needed to address existing conditions, trends, and future conditions for the region, along with challenges, impacts, needs, and options from a regional perspective.

- **Scenarios:** Develop a range of growth scenarios or similar that incorporate and explain best practices around growth management and land use planning and frame challenges, opportunities, impacts, and options for the region’s future and quality of life.
- **Action items:** *Throughout* the project, the selected Consultant will identify and provide as deliverables short-, medium-, and long-term projects for the Partnership’s consideration and possible action. The particular focus would be efforts across multiple jurisdictions (within and beyond current Partnership) that advance key regional priorities as well as avoid or prevent critical challenges or problems.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** The Partnership has determined that engagement efforts for this project should align with the International Association for Public Participation Core Values (www.IAP2.org). The Partnership’s process consultant will lead the engagement design process *with* the Partnership and the selected Consultant. Implementation will be in collaboration with Partnership members and staff plus organizations and community partners throughout the region. For more on the process consultant and stakeholder engagement, see [References: Project Resources and Supports](#).
- **Results, Recommendations:** This project will benefit significantly from the Consultant providing a number of interim deliverables, organized and developed in close coordination with staff and others. It is anticipated that most of these will be informed by stakeholder input or feedback and submitted to the Partnership for review and guidance/support. Specific deliverables will be agreed as part of the joint scoping process and refined as the project progresses.

Project Process, Structure

- **Timeline:** This project is expected to run from October/November 2019 through early 2021.
- **Partnership-Consultant Relationship:** The Partnership meets monthly and more often if needed, and the Consultant will be expected to attend most meetings in person to ensure the Partnership’s full engagement and clear direction. Most Partnership members and staff review materials in advance, regularly attend, and actively participate in these meetings held at the Sherburne County Government Center in Elk River.

To support this project, the Partnership appointed a Liaison Team of four planners to work directly with the selected Consultant: Marc Schneider of Sherburne County, Angela Schumann of Monticello, Michael Healy of Big Lake, and Jacob Sanders of Becker. The Partnership also hired process consultant Anne Carroll of Carroll, Franck & Associates to support Partnership work such as goal setting, alignment, and stakeholder engagement. This group led development of this RFQ and during the project will help keep other staff and the Partnership members informed and engaged. See more in [Reference: Project Resources and Supports](#).

Note: The Partnership recognizes that many consulting firms have existing relationships with one or more Partner communities. The Partnership appreciates that expertise and those connections, while also welcoming submissions from firms offering a fresh look at these regional issues. The Partnership has agreed to a process for ongoing consultation with the elected bodies the Partners represent (see more at [Reference: Project Resources and Supports](#), item 7), and assumed responsibility for addressing and mitigating issues among Partners to protect relationships, including those between consultants and Partners/clients.

- **Project budget:** Based on the Partnership’s current membership and budget, the *actual* final costs for this project may not exceed \$200,000 for the Consultant’s time and expenses. The Liaison Team and selected Consultant will jointly manage the work to remain within this maximum.

Submission Requirements, Process

Process and Schedule

This project’s selection process and aggressive schedule described below is to support initial stakeholder engagement in Fall 2019 so the Partnership can immediately begin building awareness, knowledge, interest, and momentum to launch and sustain this important regional planning effort. The Partnership reserves the right to reject any or all submissions, to waive technical specifications or deficiencies, and to accept any submission that it may deem to be in the best interest of the Partnership.

1. **Due date and format:**
 - Submissions must be received no later than **noon Central time on 17 October 2019**. Send to regionalplanningpartnership@gmail.com. Late proposals will not be considered.
 - Submission has a 15-page limit, not including any title page or table of contents
 - Contents must use a standard Word font, minimum 11 points, and minimum 0.75” margins for body copy
 - Submit in PDF format
2. **Questions:** Email Marc Schneider at regionalplanningpartnership@gmail.com
3. **Initial Review, Interviews:**
 - Lead Partnership staff will review the submissions (see Review and Selection Criteria below) and identify the firm(s) to be interviewed before the end of the day 18 October.
 - We hope to conduct interviews the afternoon of 22 October or on 23 October, at mutually agreed-upon times. The interview team will include selected Partnership members, staff, and the Partnership’s process consultant; more details will be provided in the notice to invited Consultants.
4. **Selection and Scope/Contract Negotiations:** Following the interviews, the Partnership hopes to notify the recommended Consultant by close-of-business on 23 October and to bring that recommendation to the Partnership for decision at their regular meeting on 24 October. Scope development and contract negotiations will begin upon approval using a collaborative process to yield a mutually beneficial agreement; this will include a scope and framework refinement workshop with the Partnership soon after selection. The final contract and scope agreement will be brought to a special Partnership meeting for approval and the Consultant will be invited.

Contents

Within the 15-page limit, consultants are encouraged to add content/sections as needed and to present the information in the order that works best for you.

1. **Cover letter:** Succinctly explain the firm’s interest in the project and key credentials. Include contact information for the firm and the anticipated project manager. The cover letter must be signed by a person with the authority to make commitments for the firm.
2. **Approach and team:**
 - Explain your firm’s interest, approach, and commitment to this project.

- Provide highlights of your proposed team members, probable roles on this project, and how their expertise and experience align with the Partnership’s needs and priorities.
 - Describe your experience and learnings collaborating with groups similar to this multijurisdictional Partnership.
 - Describe how your team is uniquely positioned to jointly develop and deliver a scope that includes:
 - A range of complex technical issues
 - Robust and inclusive stakeholder engagement *in collaboration with* Partner communities
 - Means and methods to help a diverse range of people, perspectives, and ideas coalesce into a compelling regional planning framework that all members of the Partnership can embrace
 - Explain your approach to differentiating between what your team must do, and what can or should be done by members of the Partnership or others to ensure the project addresses regional issues and priorities, and stays within budget.
3. **Resumes:** Include resumes for key project personnel, focusing on how their experience and expertise will support the work for this project.
 4. **Experience:** Provide project descriptions that highlight work similar or related to this collaborative regional planning project.

Review and Selection Criteria

At a June 2019 workshop, Partnership members and staff provided guidance on their priorities for the regional planning project Consultant. This comprehensive list illustrates how the Partnership thinks about this project, the Consultant selection process, and collaborative project implementation with all stakeholders.

Subject-matter expertise, perspective, open-mindedness

- Content experts with a proven track record on comparable projects; experience with regional planning
- Balanced combination of empirical and visionary/subjective perspectives
- Coherent, open-minded, creative approach that encourages idea-generation
- Big-picture thinkers; able to thoughtfully explore other/opposing perspectives
- Balanced and impartial; able to provide guidance without preconceived notions, desires, outcomes

Stakeholder engagement, communications

- Strong skills in authentic engagement design and implementation
- Experience partnering with groups and organizations successfully engage key stakeholders
- Ability to dig deeply into regional nuances to bring forward the full range of stakeholder ideas and perspectives; good listeners who seek first to understand and who value stakeholder contributions
- Strong oral and written communication skills

Transparency, consensus-orientation, focus

- Creates “safe” place for facilitated discussions; comfortable with different opinions and conflict; addresses challenges in a way that doesn’t feel like conflicts but rather ideas to explore; ability to represent different opinions and build consensus
- Candid and honest -- says what needs to be said, heard

- Works toward Partnership’s goals; helps us stay focused on data to guide our decisions; keeps the vision in focus for cohesive discussions; helps us stay on track
- Seeks win-win solutions which help balance Partner goals
- Responsive, timely, productive, engaged; maintains alignment with the Partnership as the work evolves
- Deliverables, documentation, results, and recommendations are valuable, clear, timely, and useful

Reference

Project Resources and Supports

The Partnership members (elected officials) and staff were actively involved in preparing and approving this RFQ and will support the project as the work progresses. Specifically:

1. **Liaison Team:** The Partnership has appointed a Liaison Team of four planners to work directly with the selected Consultant throughout the project (Marc Schneider of Sherburne County, Angela Schumann of Monticello, Michael Healy of Big Lake, and Jacob Sanders of Becker). Along with the process consultant (see below) they led development of this RFQ and during the project will help keep other staff and the Partnership members informed and engaged.
2. **Staff:** The Partnership has engaged a broad range of staff resources to assist in this effort; a list of staff and Partners is provided on the final pages of this document.
3. **Process consultant:** The Partnership hired an outside process consultant in May 2019 to support their ongoing planning and governance work (Anne Carroll of Carroll, Franck & Associates); she will facilitate strong Partnership support and alignment throughout this project and also provide direct consulting services related to stakeholder engagement in collaboration with the selected Consultant.
4. **Pre-work:** Staff have begun assembling local plans, data, and similar, and throughout the project will contribute their expertise and perspectives and respond promptly to requests.
5. **Engagement:** To support robust and inclusive stakeholder engagement across the region, Partnership members and staff will provide direct leadership and assistance during planning and implementation. Based on content provided by the selected Consultant, this is expected to include finding local engagement partners and other volunteers, logistics, communications mechanisms and delivery, and similar, with details jointly determined.
6. **Website:** The Partnership has a new, comprehensive [website](#) explicitly to improve stakeholder communications. It is the public repository for all information about the Partnership and its work, and will be a critical tool for this project. The website is managed by in-house staff and the process consultant to provide maximum flexibility. This project has its own [page](#) and child pages will be added as the project progresses. The selected Consultant will have streamlined access to the project pages to expedite communications with key stakeholders and the general public.
7. **Elected bodies:** One of the challenges for such a complex and lengthy project is the gap that could emerge between the Partnership representatives and their elected bodies. To ensure the elected bodies stay fully informed, appropriately influence the project direction, and “own” the work as it progresses, the Partnership and the elected bodies have agreed on the following:

- On a regular basis, each Partnership representative and staff will make a formal presentation to their elected body on work to date, issues/challenges/opportunities, and interim results; they will then gather input, feedback, or guidance as needed.
 - The elected body is then asked to vote on a resolution of concurrence. If that does not pass, the *Partnership* commits in advance to working with them to address their concerns so the work can continue with all Partner communities on board.
 - The selected Consultant will not participate in these local meetings, but will contribute content for these and other communications and engagements.
8. **Communications tools:** The Partnership will provide the following:
- Project web pages as described above, with the Consultant regularly contributing content
 - Tele/video communications platform for project meetings and for remote access to Partnership meetings (available to project team members and the general public)
 - Online survey tool (SurveyMonkey professional account)
 - Project file repository and live collaboration via Google Drive

Partnership Members and Staff (current to 9/26/19)

Gray rows indicate voting members of the Partnership.

First	Last	Rep	Title
Tracy	Bertram	Becker	Mayor
Marie	Pflipsen	Becker	Community Development Director
Greg	Pruszinske	Becker	City Administrator
Jacob	Sanders	Becker	City Planner
Brian	Kolbinger	Becker Twp	Township Board
Seth	Hansen	Big Lake	City Council
Michael	Healy	Big Lake	City Planner
Hanna	Klimmek	Big Lake	Community Development Director
Layne	Otteson	Big Lake	City Engineer
Clay	Wilfahrt	Big Lake	City Administrator
Larry	Alfords	Big Lake Twp	Township Board
Phil	Forst	FHWA	Environmental Specialist
Claudia	Dumont	MnDOT	Project Manager
Matt	Leonard	Monticello	PW Director/City Engineer
Jeff	O'Neill	Monticello	City Administrator
Angela	Schumann	Monticello	Community Development Director
Brian	Stumpf	Monticello	Mayor
Bob	Idziorek	Monticello Twp	Township Board
Tim	Dolan	Sherburne County	County Board
Marc	Schneider	Sherburne County	County Planner
Dan	Weber	Sherburne County	Assistant County Administrator
Andrew	Witter	Sherburne County	Public Works Director
Virgil	Hawkins	Wright County	County Highway Engineer
Lee	Kelly	Wright County	County Administrator
Darek	Vetsch	Wright County	County Board

+ Partnership process consultant: Anne Carroll of Carroll, Franck & Associates