



## Montana's Next Generation of Economic and Community Development Tools

Dear MEDA Members:

This Friday we have the pleasure of interviewing three top consulting firms who have each submitted outstanding proposals to execute our scope of work for the analysis of the “next generation” of community and economic development tools. We hope to have a recommendation for the Board shortly after the interview process and begin this project early November. This is exciting!

Over the next three weeks project leaders will be reaching out, asking for your help with this effort. We can't do this work alone. We need your active participation, critical thinking and resources to do the work outlined in the scope of work (see Summary). Our goal is that this analysis will provide the data and thoughtful evaluation needed to support consideration of key policy and priority decisions that will be debated and considered at the local and state levels over the next two years. We hope to confirm the value of what is working well for Montana's economic future, but we also want to discover the essential tools that are needed for community and economic development across the state of Montana for the next generation. This will be a non-partisan effort simply intended to learn from ourselves and our peers what are the “best practices” and how might they work for Montana. It is our goal to begin the analysis work this fall (2019) so that we are all ready to consider the findings and next steps early 2020.

It is with those common goals in mind, that I respectfully ask that you consider making whatever contribution works for your organization (perhaps \$100 to \$500 for smaller organizations, and \$1,000 to \$5,000 for larger organizations). We need an additional \$50,000 to \$60,000 to meet the financial needs of this project, so your contribution, at a level that works for you, does matter. Also know that MEDA Board members are reaching out to potential partner organizations to gain their support as well. Those conversations are going well and will add to our resources for this project.

It is likewise important that MEDA members remain active participants, engaging in and supporting the success of this project. So, in that spirit, on behalf of the Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) Board of Directors, we encourage you to champion this effort with your time and expertise as well. Together we'll do the homework that will support a responsive and proactive approach to the future community and economic development of Montana.

Please feel free to contact me directly with questions regarding the scope of work and schedule for this project. I would be honored to personally address your questions.

This important strategic initiative can only be achieved with the help of all our members. Thank you for your partnership.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Arveschoug", written over a white background.

Steve Arveschoug  
MEDA Board President, 2018-2020



## Montana's Next Generation of Economic and Community Development Tools

### Summary

#### **Background**

In 1999, Montana, with both administration and legislative support, developed a set of programs and funding tools to encourage the economic development of our state. Those tools have served Montana well - impacting businesses statewide. While our efforts have been important and impactful, in many ways these programs have been the minimum necessary, and they are limited in their response to current and future economic conditions and market forces influencing Montana.

With heightened regional competition for private investment, business attraction, and workforce demands, Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) believes now is a critical time to evaluate and create a new forward-looking strategic approach for the economic development game-plan for Montana. A game plan that acknowledges technology innovations and changing market forces in our diverse urban, rural, and native economies. We believe that thriving communities mean a successful, growing Montana economy.

Now is a critical time for Montana to create a forward-looking economic development plan that will support the needs of our communities and will build capacity to enhance the impact of our local and statewide efforts.

#### **Purpose/Invitation**

MEDA and its partners seek to retain a qualified entity(s) to perform original work in the analysis and development of a plan that would articulate and support a proposed Next Generation of Economic and Community Development Tools. The plan should outline the current set of tools available for Montana's economic and community development, evaluate the emerging economic and community development opportunities and challenges facing Montana communities, assess our competition to understand the best practices that are influencing economic and community development outcomes among our regional and aspirational peer states/communities. With that analysis in hand, the plan should offer guidance and recommendations for the Next Generation of Economic and Community Development Tools (proposed programs, policies, or resource commitments at the state and local levels) that would effectively encourage Montana's economic growth, with analysis of how such tools might be developed, funded, and deployed and what the potential outcomes may be for Montana.

This RFP invitation is seeking proposals from qualified entity(s) to meet the Scope of Work, including the stated objectives and deliverables. MEDA and its partners will support this effort by helping to engage key stakeholders from throughout the state in the analysis and appropriate input/dialogue processes. It is our hope that this work will be forward-thinking, better match the current and emerging challenges and opportunities facing Montana and provide a fresh perspective on the necessary tools for the thoughtful economic and community development for the communities we all serve and thereby all of Montana.

Respondents to this RFP will provide all of the services to MEDA as described in the Scope of Work below.

#### **Scope of Work**



### **Montana's Next Generation of Economic and Community Development Tools**

The objectives of this planning effort include, but are not limited to:

1. Identify and define the challenges facing Montana's economic and community development.
2. Identify and define the opportunities facing Montana's economic and community development.
3. Research the current economic and community development strategies that are driving growth and how those strategies impact Montana's economic future.
4. Analyze, evaluate, and benchmark the current economic and community development strategies that are driving growth and how those strategies impact Montana's economic future.
5. Identify best practices among our progressive regional and national competitors relevant to economic development in Montana.
6. Identify the essential economic and community development tools, programs and funding mechanisms that best respond to Montana's future opportunities and challenges for economic growth.
7. Define how these "best practices" (identified in No. 5 above) are initiated and supported.
8. Identify key findings from the analysis and propose Montana's Next Generation of Community Development and Economic Tools recommendations.
  - a. Include support materials and or examples of how the recommended tools work and implementation strategies that will work within the state of Montana.

### **Deliverables**

The deliverables of the planning effort include, but are not limited to:

1. Key findings of the challenges facing Montana's economic and community development.
2. Key findings of the opportunities facing Montana's economic and community development.
3. A conditions assessment that highlights the current development strategies, tools, programs, and funding mechanisms.
4. Key findings of best practices / competitive analysis on our regional / national competitors relevant to economic development in Montana. Include compelling examples, data and case studies.
5. Articulation of roles within successful EDOs, local communities and state economic development teams.
6. Key findings followed by recommendations (MT NextGen) that give future guidance to MEDA, its partners and key decision makers for strategic community and economic development programs, practices, funding structures for both near-term and long-term initiatives.
7. Provide an implementation strategy for recommendations (6) that offers an appropriate timeline, considers a phasing approach, identifies essential partners and "immediate next steps".