

PUBLIC NOTICE
“Innovate, Sustain, and Compete”

Sonoma-Mendocino Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
Call for Projects Solicitation

Proposals Due September 15, 2016

The Sonoma-Mendocino Economic Development District Board of Directors invites organizations located in Sonoma County or Mendocino County to submit project proposals for consideration as priority items in the region’s first-ever Sonoma-Mendocino Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

What is the Sonoma-Mendocino Economic Development District?

The Sonoma-Mendocino Economic Development District is a two-county partnership, created through a joint powers agreement in 2015, to engage in regional economic development planning. County leaders recognized an important opportunity to coordinate and pool resources in areas where joint planning can accomplish more for the region’s development than either county’s independent efforts. The District is responsible for overseeing completion and implementation of the Sonoma-Mendocino CEDS.

What is a CEDS?

A CEDS is a federally-required regional economic development plan that must be completed in order to become eligible for various funding programs under the Economic Development Administration (EDA), an agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce. A copy of the draft Sonoma-Mendocino CEDS is available on the [CEDS website](#). Information about the role of the CEDS with respect to EDA eligibility can be found on pgs. 7-9. However, a CEDS should not be viewed solely as a mechanism for qualifying for federal funding. It should serve as a roadmap for regional economic development in general—linking, leveraging, and aligning local assets and stakeholders to achieve regional goals.

Why is a Call for Projects necessary?

The draft Sonoma-Mendocino CEDS includes goals and strategies organized under four key themes: (1) economic diversification (resilience); (2) human capital; (3) innovation and entrepreneurship; and (4) inclusive economic development. This Call for Projects is intended to solicit ideas from the community that align to the goals and strategies in the CEDS—i.e. the action items in a plan explaining “how” the goals will be achieved during implementation.

What are the goals in the CEDS?

The goals in the draft CEDS, organized by theme, are:

Economic Diversification (Resilience)

- Expand the non-tourism/real estate share of regional GDP to bolster Sonoma-Mendocino’s resilience to economic downturns.

- Grow the region’s green economy—renewable energy, clean tech, and related enterprises—to become a national leader in sustainability.

Human Capital

- Exceed the US rate of population growth in the primary working age cohort (25-64) to achieve healthy and sustainable expansion of the Sonoma-Mendocino labor force.
- Raise the postsecondary completion rate for the 25-64 age cohort until Sonoma-Mendocino again exceeds the US rate.
- Close the postsecondary completion gap between Sonoma County and Mendocino County in the age 25-64 cohort.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship

- Continue to exceed the US average on the Kauffman Foundation’s core measures of entrepreneurial activity.¹

Inclusive Economic Development

- Reduce the number of economically distressed communities in the region, as defined by EDA investment eligibility criteria.
- Close the gaps in earnings by race/ethnicity to ensure that all workers can compete for living wage jobs that make housing affordable.
- Achieve parity with US average earnings.

Who is eligible to submit a project for consideration?

Any organization, or team of organizations, based in Sonoma County or Mendocino County is eligible to submit a project under this solicitation. Private, for-profit companies and individuals are welcome to submit proposals in response to this solicitation, but they are not eligible to receive EDA funding. As a result, private, for-profit companies and individuals interested in responding to this solicitation are encouraged to submit proposals as members of teams led by an EDA-eligible applicant. EDA-eligible applicants include states, political subdivisions of states, district organizations, Indian tribes, institutions of higher education, and non-profits acting in coordination with political subdivisions of states. More information about EDA eligibility is available on the agency’s [website](#).

Why should I submit a project for consideration?

If your project is selected to be included in the CEDS, it does not guarantee that you will receive funding from EDA, county governments, or any other source. However, there are many benefits to having your project included in the CEDS. For example, priority projects found in a CEDS are one of several criteria EDA considers when making decisions on grant applications. In addition to EDA, other federal agencies (and some foundations and other private sector entities) recognize the CEDS as an important source of

¹ See p. 24 of the draft CEDS for definition.

information on regional priorities and can be used as background or justification for substantiating how a project aligns to regional goals, opportunities, and/or challenges.

What types of projects are eligible for consideration?

Any project that helps the Sonoma-Mendocino region achieve the goals in the CEDS can be submitted for consideration. There are no pre-determined types of projects, funding levels, or any other criteria. Applicants are encouraged to read about [EDA's funding programs](#) for guidance on typical investments, understanding EDA is only one of many possible funding sources for initiatives.

How do I submit a project for consideration?

Please submit a brief (two pages maximum) overview of the project with the following information:

- Name of project or initiative
- Location of project (physical location and location of people served, if applicable)
- Contact person's name, address, phone number, and email address
- Description of project, impact, and how it helps the region achieve the goals in the CEDS
- Estimated budget, funds committed (and sources), and additional funding needed

New projects and existing projects that could be scaled to reach more residents (e.g., a program serving one county expanded to serve both counties) are eligible.

Please email your proposal to Steve Sharpe (Sonoma County) at steve.sharpe@sonoma-county.org or Steve Dunncliff (Mendocino County) at dunnicl@co.mendocino.ca.us.

How will proposals be evaluated?

Proposals will be evaluated on a 100-point scale according to the following criteria:

1. Regional Strategy 35 points
 - Specific support of goals and strategies in the CEDS
 - Range of impact across both counties

2. Economic Impact 25 points
 - Business formations or expansions
 - Jobs created or retained
 - Exports and sales increased
 - Wages increased
 - Wealth created

3. Project Readiness 20 points
 - Percent of secured funding
 - Project design and permitting (if applicable) complete

- Leadership and/or ownership commitment in place
4. Resource Leverage 10 points
- Additional funds attracted by the project
 - Additional people and resources involved
 - New public-private collaboration created
5. Operational Sustainability 10 points
- Existing and projected market
 - Length of life or term of project
 - Financial plan

Who will evaluate proposals?

County staff and CEDS consultants will review and score the proposals and make recommendations to the Sonoma-Mendocino Economic Development District Board of Directors. The District Board will be responsible for making final selections for the CEDS.

How many projects will be included in the CEDS?

There is no pre-determined number of projects to be included in the CEDS. EDA's CEDS guidelines state that [high priority activities of regional significance](#) should be highlighted and clearly linked to the goals and strategies in the plan. The highest scoring projects will be highlighted in the Sonoma-Mendocino CEDS as priority activities.

When is the deadline for submitting proposals, and when will applicants be notified of selections?

Proposals are due by September 15. Applicants will be notified in October.

Will there be future opportunities for submitting proposals?

The District Board intends to use the completed CEDS to support an application to EDA for designation as a federally-funded Economic Development District (EDD), a process that is expected to begin in fall 2016. If designation is awarded, then the District Board expects to conduct future solicitations like this one, in accordance with the EDA CEDS update guidelines, but no schedule has been established yet.

If my project is selected, will the District or county staff be available to provide technical assistance with further developing the project and/or submitting an application to EDA or other potential funders?

Not at this time. After the District becomes a federally-funded EDD under EDA's Planning Program, then technical assistance may be available at that time.

Questions: Please send your questions to Steve Sharpe (Sonoma County) at steve.sharpe@sonoma-county.org or Steve Dunicliff (Mendocino County) at dunnicl@sco.mendocino.ca.us.