

Workforce Solutions for North Central Pennsylvania/North Central Workforce Development Board Request for Quotes

Advancing the Forest and Wood Products Industry in Pennsylvania: A Roadmap for Economic Growth and Workforce Development.

Workforce Solutions for North Central Pennsylvania (North Central Workforce Development Board) referred to as Workforce Solutions throughout the remainder of this document is currently seeking quotes for the implementation of a comprehensive, collaborative strategy to strengthen and enhance the Forest and Wood Products Industry's future in Pennsylvania.

The project is being implemented through a collaboration of partners including the Allegheny Hardwoods Utilization Group (AHUG), PA Department of Agriculture's Hardwoods Development Council (HDC) North Central PA Regional Planning and Development Commission (NCRPDC), the Strategic Early Warning Network (SEWN), Department of Labor and Industry Rapid Response Unit (DL&I RR) and Workforce Solutions for North Central PA.

Responses to this RFQ are due by 3:00 pm on Friday, September 20, 2024.

Questions regarding this RFQ will be accepted until 4:00 pm on Thursday 29, 2024 and should be directed to Pam Streich via email – pstreich@ncwdb.org. Responses to all questions will be compiled and sent to all inquirers to this RFQ on Wednesday, September 4, 2024.

Electronic submissions of the detailed quotes are required and should be submitted to pstreich@ncwdb.org with "RFQ Submission for Advancing the Forest and Wood Products Industry in PA" in the subject line.

Bidders must follow exactly, and be responsive to ALL requirements of this RFQ. It is the bidders' responsibility to provide all specified materials in the required form and format.

Introduction: As one of the legacy industries, Pennsylvania's agriculture sector, specifically the forest and wood products industry, serves as a cornerstone of economic prosperity and job creation within the state. With 16.62 million acres of forestland, Pennsylvania has the most abundant hardwood forest in the United States and has consistently led the nation in hardwood lumber production and export. The forest products industry employs over 60,000 Pennsylvanian's and accounts for 10% of the agricultural workforce in the state, annual contributing \$21.8 billion direct and \$39.1 billion total impact to the state's economy.¹

As the partnering agencies identified in the introduction continue to interact with one another, engaging this industry in delivering their various outreach services and programs, it has become apparent that there is need for a comprehensive, collaborative strategy to strengthen and enhance the industry's future in Pennsylvania's forest and hardwood industry.

Background: While Pennsylvania's forest and hardwood industry continues to lead the nation in hardwood production and exports, it has not been insulated from the sharp decline in demand for traditional hardwood lumber products that has plagued the US hardwood industry in recent decades, driven largely by volatile housing markets and by the growth of low-cost substitute products like luxury vinyl tile (LVT) and composite

cabinets.² Further, anticipated climate- driven changes in Pennsylvania’s forest composition will necessitate development of new markets and associated workforce sectors to facilitate and support sustainable adaptive forest management strategies. Furthermore, it's essential to acknowledge the company's historical employment trends. Prior to the 2008/2009 recession, this industry’s workforce boasted a robust 90,000 employees. The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented hurdles, leading to a reduction in the workforce to approximately 62,000-63,000 employees. This historical perspective underscores the industry’s ability to adapt and endure in the face of economic adversity.

See Attachment 1 – Statement of Work for additional details.

1. The Economic Impact of Agriculture in Pennsylvania: 2021 Update https://teampa.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/TeamPA_Agriculture2020EISUpdate_FINAL-1.pdf
2. Source: Hardwood Market Report, February 2023 (see Statement of Work, Attachment 1))

It is also important to note that Pennsylvania is predominately a hardwood forest type and while we do not want to exclude softwood opportunities, it is recognized that softwoods make up only 10% of Pennsylvania forests. Bidders should keep this in mind and address this in their responses to all of the following deliverables.

Deliverables:

A. Conduct a Detailed Assessment of the Current Landscape of the Wood Industry in Pennsylvania and its Economic Impact On the state.

As part of this project, the collaborative effort seeks to assess and document the current economic landscape (primary markets and workforce sectors) of Pennsylvania's forest and wood products industry. The study should highlight the significant impact of this industry on Pennsylvania's economy and emphasize the importance of supporting and strengthening companies to enhance their operations, workforce, and standing as a global leader in the forest and wood products industry.

B. Perform a Regional Assets Analysis that will address the current/future nuanced challenges facing the wood industry including:

1. Differentiating between hardwood and softwood market opportunities
2. Production constraints and costs
3. Necessity of fully understanding the supply chain infrastructure
4. Explore emerging trends and developing market opportunities for sustainably produced products such as biofuels, mass timber, building materials and biochar
5. Emerging opportunities in venture capital and associated funding mechanisms as well as the type of data required to compete for these non-traditional investment vehicles

C. Prepare a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis of Pennsylvania’s forest and wood products industry, addressing prevailing challenges and weaknesses and capitalizing on strengths and emerging opportunities.

D. Prepare A Regional Targeted Industry Attraction Strategy

As detailed in the introduction, the forest and wood products industry in Pennsylvania plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth and job creation with businesses in all 67 counties.

A comprehensive, focused and implementable 3 -5 year economic and workforce development strategy that maximizes the economic potential of the Pennsylvania forest and wood products industry should be prepared

that contains a roadmap for future economic growth and workforce development, including a salary scale analysis.

Timeframe

It is anticipated that the deliverables for this project will take no longer than 4 months from the time of award. A kick-off meeting will be held with the selected vendor who will provide an overview of the project layout.

Each deliverable is expected to be completed during a 4-week period. Additionally, during each 4-week period the vendor will hold a meeting with the project team to discuss the progress made for each deliverable as well as to answer any questions that may arise throughout the process. At the end of the project a closeout meeting will be held at which time the vendor will provide the group with the final report as well as a presentation that summarize the details of the report.

If more time is needed to complete the project, the vendor must submit a request for an extension to Workforce Solutions for North Central PA.

The final report, presentation and all data collected throughout the process is the property United States Department of Labor and Industry, the PA Department of Labor and Industry, PA Dept. of Agriculture, The Steel Valley Authority (SEWN), the North Central Workforce Development Board (dba Workforce Solutions for North Central PA), the Allegheny Harwood Utilization Group (AHUG) and other funding partners.

Cost: It is anticipated that this project cost will not exceed \$80,000.

Response Requirements (minimum requirements)

For ease and efficiency of review, Workforce Solutions has specified the numbering protocol for bidders. Please follow this numbering protocol exactly, and do not re-number, insert numbers, or otherwise modify the sequence.

1. Company Profile

- Name of the business, contact person, and contact information: Provide address, telephone, mobile telephone number, e-mail address, and web address, as applicable.

2. Qualifications

- Provide a brief description of your firm, including; number of employees, service/expertise areas and any awards or other forms of recognition received.
- Describe your experience with and knowledge of the forest and wood products Industry in PA.
- Describe your professional experience with similar work.

3. Work Plan

- Describe your process of information gathering, and how information will be validated.
- Provide a timeline that outlines the project from start to finish.

4. Experience and Ability to Perform this Work

- Provide examples of relevant work.
- Provide a minimum of three (3) client references.
- Provide a list of personnel who would be assigned to work with our team, along with their credentials and experience.

5. Pricing

- Provide a breakdown of costs.

6. Other Requirements: The agency awarded the work in this RFQ must agree to the Assurances and Certifications in the attached document. The Assurances and Certifications are included as Attachment 2 to this document.

7. Evaluation Criteria

CRITERIA	POINTS
Company Profile	10
Qualifications	30
Work Plan	20
Experience and ability to perform this work	20
Pricing	20

Award

Workforce Solutions reserves the right to determine the timing of the start of any work described above, to not proceed with some or all of the work, and to contract with more than one vendor for services described within this RFQ. Workforce Solutions reserves the right not to award a contract for the RFQ, and will not reimburse the cost incurred by bidders who respond to this notice. If awarded, a contractual agreement will be entered into between the qualified provide and Workforce Solutions.

Equal Opportunity Employment Program
Auxiliary Aids and Services are available to individuals with disabilities

Funded in whole or in part by Federal Funds. Detailed information can be found at: <https://www.workforcesolutionspa.com/categories/resources/pages/stevens-amendment>