

Forest County Business Alliance
(FCBA)
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
FOR
Forest County Maker Space Feasibility Study

INQUIRIES AND PROPOSALS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

Amanda Hetrick
E-mail Address: ahetrick@forestareaschools.org

Forest County Business Alliance
PO BOX 528
Marienville, PA 16239

Deadline for submittal: December 22, 2021



**Forest County Business Alliance (FCBA) is an
Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer.**

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Purpose

The Forest County Business Alliance has recognized an opportunity to build on previous creative community growth and an existing tourism industry as a driver of economic growth and is investigating the feasibility of developing a maker space facility in Tionesta, Forest County, PA, and the most feasible variation on the maker space concept for this small, rural community. Upon determination that a maker space would be feasible, an implementation plan is to be prepared.

This Request for Proposal (RFP) is to contract a consultant to conduct a “Forest County Maker Space Feasibility Study” focusing on economic development in Forest County and specifically the Tionesta area.

The Forest County Business Alliance is requesting that consultants responding to this RFP research and analyze the support for and most feasible variation on the maker space concept for this small, rural community, followed by developing a strategy-driven plan for implementation that will create regional economic development in Forest County. Our Scope of Work will provide a detailed description of the types of information we are requesting.

B. Who May Respond

Any organization or individual with appropriate strategic planning and/or economic development expertise may respond. Experience in development of cultural tourism projects and development of the creative community is preferred. The Forest County Business Alliance encourages the prime consultant to engage in teaming arrangements with subject matter experts to satisfy all elements of this Request for Proposal.

C. Description of Community/Organization

The contracting agency will be the Forest County Business Alliance, a 501(c)(6) non-profit membership organization which serves the businesses/entrepreneurs of Forest County and nearby communities in Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Jefferson, Venango, and Warren counties.

The FCBA is Forest County’s county-wide “chamber of commerce”, organized to bring local businesses together to work collectively toward their common goals of stronger, healthier businesses and a stronger local economy. The FCBA has a contracted part-time Executive Director and a 9-member volunteer Board of Directors. The “Project Committee” consists of two members of the Board and five from local and regional partner organizations. More information on the FCBA can be found at <http://www.fcbusinessalliance.com>.

The project area includes Tionesta, located on the western edge of Forest County, and nearby communities in Forest, Venango, Clarion, Crawford, and Warren counties. Those communities within the projected service area include western Forest County, Tidioute, Pleasantville, President, and Leeper.

Forest County is a rural area 420 square miles in size in northwestern Pennsylvania 1.25 hours southeast of Erie and 2.5 hours northeast of Pittsburgh. Tionesta (the county seat) and Marienville are the population centers of Forest County, with approximately 500 residents each. The county's permanent resident population is just 5,000. Some 6,000 seasonal camps/homes add to the population considerably during the summer months and hunting season. Approximately 51% of the county is occupied by the Allegheny National Forest, Corps of Engineers/Tionesta Dam, a State Fish Hatchery, State Game Lands, State Forests, and State Parks.

The county's primary industries are tourism, timber, and oil/gas production, as well as small manufacturing, retail, and service enterprises. The local artist/maker community is large for the rural nature of this region and varied. Some are engaged in teaching classes/workshops, and several are selling their work/products locally, regionally, or online.

Two large manufacturing employers closed in the 1990s, which have been replaced by several small manufacturers producing a variety of products. Forest County is the only county in Pennsylvania categorized as "distressed" by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

More information on Forest County can be found at <http://www.forestcounty.com>.

D. Project Background

The concept of establishing a maker space in Tionesta stemmed from discussions between FCBA members with arts, tourism, education, and retail backgrounds and a retired community member who recognized a need for some form of maker space facility. The success of previous creative community/industry development and the potential for its further growth led to concept research and discussions with local economic development partners. The need for workforce development/education and manufacturing growth are also evident and the FCBA believes that collaboration between the creative sector and existing small manufacturing can be a catalyst for business growth and the creation of family sustaining jobs.

While the FCBA believes that a maker space has the potential to strengthen community by encouraging disciplines, age groups, and population groups to interact and collaborate, could spur growth in tourism, develop new creative enterprises, and help grow existing small manufacturing through creative collaborations, an objective third-party consultant with experience in these areas is needed to investigate the feasibility of this concept. There is also an opportunity to provide workforce development through training and mentorships, and partnerships with Northern Pennsylvania Regional College and Penn State Extension, among others.

The FCBA is a small organization with limited human and financial resources available to dedicate to this project. The Project Committee is comprised of FCBA Board members and community partners, all of which are volunteers, who will support the consultant.

Forest County is located on the south-west edge of the Pennsylvania Wilds Region. The Wilds Cooperative (formerly PA Wilds Artisan Trail) serves the same 12.5 counties in north central PA. While Tionesta has attempted to participate in the Wilds Cooperative, it lacked sufficient attractions to effectively draw visitors exploring the Wilds. Forest County is also part of the 5-county PA Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau tourism promotion region.

Only preliminary research has been conducted and ideas formed by committee members for how a maker space might achieve the goals and meet the needs mentioned above. Preliminary discussions have been held with some, but not all, potential partners regarding the concept and benefits of developing a maker space. These include Forest Area Schools, PA Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau, Forest Area Arts Council, and Forest Scientific Corporation.

E. Proposal Information

1. Closing Submission Date

Proposals must be received no later than 4:00 PM on December 22, 2021.

2. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted in electronic format to the following:

Amanda Hetrick, FCBA Secretary

E-mail Address: ahetrick@forestareaschools.org

It is the responsibility of the consultant to ensure that the proposal is received by the Forest County Business Alliance by the date and time specified above. Late proposals are not guaranteed review by the Committee.

3. Inquiries

Inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to Amanda Hetrick at ahetrick@forestareaschools.org.

4. Conditions of Proposal

All costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal responding to this RFP will be the responsibility of the consultant and will not be reimbursed by the Forest County Business Alliance.

5. Right to Reject/Accept

The Forest County Business Alliance reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received in response to this RFP. A contract for the accepted proposal will be based upon the factors described in this RFP. If only one proposal is received, the Forest County Business Alliance may accept it if:

- the proposal is complete
- the consultant can perform the required work

- the consultant meets minimum RFP qualifications
- the cost is reasonable and within the project budget

6. Small and/or Minority-Owned Businesses

Efforts will be made by the Forest County Business Alliance to utilize small businesses and minority-owned businesses. A consultant qualifies as a small business firm if it meets the definition of “small business” as established by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.201) by having average annual receipts for the last three fiscal years of less than six million dollars.

7. Notification of Award

Upon conclusion of final negotiations with the successful consultant, all consultants submitting proposals in response to this RFP will be informed, in writing, of the name of the successful consultant.

The Forest County Business Alliance will prepare a written agreement for execution between the successful consultant and the Forest County Business Alliance. The general provisions of this agreement, the final work study and requirements placed on the project, shall be made a part of this agreement. The consultant shall have authorization to proceed upon a written notice from the Forest County Business Alliance.

F. Contract Information

1. Type of Contract

The project budget must include all fees and the negotiated contract will be a fixed price not to exceed \$17,000. In addition, consultant’s travel (airfare, hotel, car rental) will be reimbursed, not to exceed \$6,780.

2. Period of Performance

The period of performance for this project will be from January 20, 2022 – October 31, 2022. It is expected that the feasibility study to take no longer than 7 months to complete, and the implementation plan take no longer than 2 months to prepare. Submittal of the feasibility study results is required no later than July 15, 2022. Submittal of the completed implementation plan is required no later than October 1, 2022. Final printed and electronic copies of these documents must be delivered to the Forest County Business Alliance by October 31, 2022.

3. Payment

Payments will be made in a timely manner after approval of contractor invoice. Invoices shall be submitted no more than once per quarter, with invoices detailing work performed that allows the FCBA to determine that satisfactory progress is being made. Upon delivery of the final copies to the Forest County Business Alliance and its acceptance and approval, the consultant may submit a bill for the balance due on the contract.

Should the FCBA reject the products, the FCBA's authorized representative will notify the consultant in writing of such rejection giving the reason(s) and opportunity to correct. The right to reject the document shall extend throughout the term of this contract and for thirty (30) days after the consultant submits the final invoice for payment.

4. Options

At the discretion of the FCBA, this contract can be terminated at any time or extended beyond the specified contract period.

II. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

A. Proposal Format

Proposals should not exceed 15 pages in length and must be typed on 8.5 X 11-inch pages with margins no smaller than one inch. Font size must be no smaller than 12-point.

The FCBA's Project Committee may also require a prospective consultant to attend a meeting and/or participate in a video conference to discuss their proposal.

B. Proposal Outline

1. Understanding of Work to be Performed

The consultant should demonstrate their understanding of why this feasibility study is needed and how it will meet the needs of our organization and community. The consultant should not repeat the scope of work, but rather fully explain the consultant's value and the experience of the consultant's organization in the planning, implementation, and completion of the study.

2. Service Delivery Process

The proposal must describe how the consultant proposes to complete all tasks identified in the Statement of Work included in Section IV of this RFP. The consultant must also include a timeline that denotes the completion of each task within the limits of the specified period of performance.

Include value-added components associated with the proposal that will be provided by the consultant over and above the Scope of Work requirements.

3. Organizational Experience/Past Performance

The consultant should describe its organization, size, and structure. Indicate, if appropriate, if the consultant is a small or minority-owned business. The consultant should describe any prior experience that qualifies the consultant's organization to fill the

role. Include any prior experience with the operation of projects financed by the State or Federal Government. The consultant must identify any sub-consultants and their qualifications.

The consultant should provide a list of at least four prior clients/employers for whom related work was performed. The list shall include the company name, contact person's name and title, and the full mailing address, telephone, and e-mail address for the contact person.

4. Staff Qualifications

The consultant should identify all personnel that will be assigned to the project, including leading staff contact information including address, phone number and e-mail address. The consultant should also describe the relevant qualifications of staff to perform the proposed service, including technical, educational, and work background. This section of the proposal should include descriptions of staff team makeup, overall supervision of staff, and prior experience of the individual team members. Once the contract period starts, the consultant may not change staffing for the project unless agreed upon by the Forest County Business Alliance. The consultant must submit the requested staffing change to the Forest County Business Alliance in writing.

5. Performance Measurement

Explain the mechanisms within the consultant's organization to track, monitor, and ensure the attainment of work elements and deadlines within the project timeline.

6. Administrative Assurances

Administrative Assurances are included in Section V of this RFP. Proposals must contain a statement verifying that the consultant will agree to these assurances if selected for award.

7. Cost Proposal

The consultant is required to submit a budget with its proposal detailing how funds will be spent for the tasks listed in Section IV, Statement of Work.

- a. A budget by task and total budget for the entire project
- b. Itemized direct, indirect, and subcontract expenses where applicable
- c. An explanation of how cost estimates were obtained

8. Confidentiality

Information pertaining to the organizations (Forest County Business Alliance and its partners) obtained by the Consultant as a result of participation in this project is confidential and must not be disclosed without written permission from the organizations.

9. FCBA/Partners' Level of Participation

The Consultant will be responsible for conducting research, facilitating public meetings, conducting stakeholder meetings, and implementing other investigation strategies necessary to determining the feasibility and writing of the Implementation Plan.

The FCBA and its project partners will:

- Contribute to the research as appropriate
- Provide the Consultant with local contacts and information as needed

- Participate in, make arrangements for, and advertise the meetings
- Print/copy any materials needed for public meetings/events
- Assist with public education on maker space models
- Handle all public relations/marketing/press releases related to the project
- Identify and visit successful maker space facilities similar in scope/model to gather information on best practices for operations and programming

III. PROPOSAL EVALUATION

A. Proposal Contents

All proposals must follow the specified format and include all required elements listed in Section II of this RFP.

B. Non-responsive Proposals

Proposals may be judged non-responsive and removed from further consideration if any of the following occur:

1. The proposal is not received by 4:00 pm on **December 22, 2021**.
2. The proposal does not follow the specified format.
3. The proposal does not include a statement of agreement with Administrative Assurances.

C. Review Process

All prospective bidders must provide an email address to which responses to questions may be sent. Should the consultant have questions concerning the RFP, they must be in writing and received by the Forest County Business Alliance (ahetrick@forestareaschools.org) no later than December 13, 2021. All responses to questions will be in writing. The Forest County Business Alliance will make every effort to provide the written responses in a timely fashion, but failure to do so will not affect the sole authority of the FCBA to complete the RFP process.

IV. STATEMENT OF WORK

Forest County Maker Space Feasibility Study

Background and Context

The Forest Area Arts Council was formed in 2000 and had considerable success in bringing the arts to this rural county and encouraging the growth and development of many local artists. This 501(c)(3) organization has sponsored a broad spectrum of programming including art festivals, a speaker series, musical performances, visual arts workshops, field trips to arts venues/destinations, a public art project, artist residencies in the Forest Area Schools, and more.

In 2013, the Tionesta Market Village was developed by the Forest County IDA/IDC, creating an outlet for creative entrepreneurs/artists in the form of tiny shops on a vacant lot in downtown Tionesta. This tourism asset has also prompted the growth and development of several artists and creative enterprises. The combination of the Market Village and the community's quality of life has attracted several artists/artisans to move to the community.

Initial growth in the creative industry has been successful in Tionesta, and further development appears to have the potential to grow this fledgling industry, as well as tourism and small manufacturing. Identified hurdles to the growth of the creative industry include:

- Limited outlets for artists
- Lack of year-round tourism due to lack of winter tourist attraction
- Need for space and equipment for artists/artisans and makers to establish/grow their businesses
- Appropriate space (facility) needed for holding art/maker classes and workshops
- Guidance and education for creative entrepreneurs

In general, FCBA's goals while creating economic development include creating more small manufacturing (and other) employers; creating economic growth while maintaining the area's current character, which is critical to tourism; creating a new generation of local entrepreneurs; and development that has the support of the community.

Scope of Work:

General Scope of Work: The consultant shall execute this scope of work and collaborate with the staff and Project Committee of the FCBA to complete a Maker Space Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan. The final Maker Space Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan documents must be completed and ready for formal presentation no later than **October 1, 2022**.

The 'FCBA Project Committee' (as mentioned under FCBA/Partners' Level of Participation) will serve as the voice of and support for the consultant throughout the project.

Detailed Scope of Work:

The Consultant is expected to have/gain an understanding of the various maker space concepts and operations, existing facilities in the region, and the costs for both creating and sustaining such a facility. The Consultant is expected to utilize a variety of approaches to gather

information on the interest and needs of the various local stakeholders in relation to establishing a maker space in Tionesta. The Consultant is expected to “think outside the box” and utilize web platforms as well as interactive non-digital tools and in-person individual and group discussions.

The Consultant is expected to visit Forest County at least three times for multiple-day fact-finding missions and presentations: 1) after completing general maker space and local/regional information research to gather local stakeholder input, 2) to present the final Feasibility Study findings and begin Implementation Plan research, and 3) to present the final Implementation Plan and Project Impact Summary Report.

The scope of work for this project will include:

- Maker space variations and regional competition research
- Stakeholder consultation (public, in-person, or telephone/web meetings)
- Market demand assessment
- Determination of project feasibility based on market demand, project support (industry, community partners and residents), financial projections, etc. OR proposal for a different type of project
- Determination of key physical space requirements (supporting a phased/demand-initiated growth approach)
- Determination of operating model best practices (governance, operating, financial, etc.)
- Identification of financial and material support sources for implementation
- Development of an Implementation Plan

The products of this project will include the following documents, developed from a combined approach of research and community consultation.

- 1) A feasibility assessment report to include:
 - a. Most feasible maker space concept for Tionesta
 - b. Identification of and level of interest from all stakeholder groups (what they want)
 - c. Interest in supporting development (cash, equipment, materials, property, etc.)
 - d. Interest in volunteering (time, expertise)
 - e. Type of facility and equipment needed
 - f. Opportunities for programming and revenues
 - g. Regional competitors
 - h. Sustainability hurdles anticipated
 - i. Potential for creative community growth
 - j. Potential for tourism growth
 - k. Potential for business and industry development/growth
 - l. Potential for job growth
 - m. Potential for partnerships (existing and new)
 - n. Potential for strengthening community
- 2) If feasibility is considered favorable* (self-sustaining), a business case and work plan for creating a makerspace is to be developed, including:
 - a. Target market(s)
 - b. Governance model
 - c. Partnerships (for development, governance, operations, programs)
 - d. Physical space requirements, proposed location, purchase/lease and renovation costs

- e. Equipment needs and proposed sources/costs
- f. License/certification requirements and other government regulations
- g. Operating and financial model (staff, volunteers, programs, revenue streams)
- h. Development and Operating cost projections (5-year plan)
- i. Potential funding sources
- j. A 5-year workplan and timeline for development

*Alternately, if a maker space is found to not be feasible in Tionesta, the consultant will develop a business case and work plan for creating an alternate, more feasible project option.

- 3) A Project Impact Summary Report including:
 - a. A tally and description of all project participants, including all stakeholders attending public meetings, interviewed, responding to surveys, commenting on or reacting to social media posts, etc.
 - b. Project Committee participation in the Feasibility Study project
 - c. A list of all new/additional project partnerships formed and the rolls each may play in development and/or operation of the maker space
 - d. A summary of the events held, feasibility findings, and recommendations
 - e. The determination of the Project Committee

†Note that all reports resulting from the project may be made available for public use.

Deliverables:

- 1. Monthly progress report meetings with the FCBA Project Committee via video conference
- 2. A minimum of one public meeting on-site for community input
- 3. Presentation of Forest County Maker Space Feasibility Study report to the project partners by July 15, 2022
- 4. One electronic copy and 25 hardcopies of the final Feasibility Report
- 5. One PowerPoint presentation that summarizes relevant details of the Feasibility Report
- 6. Presentation of Forest County Maker Space Implementation Plan to the project partners by October 1, 2022
- 7. One electronic copy and 25 hardcopies of the final Implementation Plan
- 8. One on-site public meeting for presentation of the Study Report and Implementation Plan to the public by October 31, 2022
- 9. One electronic copy and 25 hardcopies of a one-page Project Impact Report (Summary)

V. ADMINISTRATIVE ASSURANCES

The purpose of emphasizing the following assurances is to highlight specific requirements and does not limit the consultant's other responsibilities in any way. The consultant is required to ensure that all state and federal laws, regulations, and policies are adhered to.

The consultant assures that:

- The consultant will follow and agree to all policies and regulations detailed in the attached Exhibits of this RFP.
- The consultant will designate a Project Manager to be responsible for the overall implementation of the project, direct interaction with all project partners, resolution of all issues and concerns, and attendance at required meetings.
- The consultant-designated Project Manager will attend project meetings and address any related issues or concerns raised by the project participants. The Project Manager may send a representative to attend meetings in his/her place as long as prior arrangements have been made with Amanda Hetrick, Forest County Business Alliance.
- The consultant will submit monthly progress reports to the Forest County Business Alliance that document the work performed during the past month, work planned for the next month, and all issues or concerns that are pertinent to the project. These reports and invoices will be submitted electronically to Amanda Hetrick, Forest County Business Alliance, before the fifth day of each month.

Exhibit A

NONDISCRIMINATION/SEXUAL HARASSMENT CLAUSE

During the term of the contract, Consultant agrees as follows:

1. In the hiring of any employee(s) for the manufacture of supplies, performance of work, or any other activity required under the contract or any subcontract, the Consultant, subconsultant, or any person acting on behalf of the Consultant or subconsultant shall not, by reason of gender, race, creed, or color, discriminate against any citizen of this Commonwealth who is qualified and available to perform the work to which the employment relates.
2. Neither the Consultant nor any subconsultant nor any person on their behalf shall in any manner discriminate against or intimidate any employee involved in the manufacture of supplies, the performance of work, or any other activity required under the contract on account of gender, race, creed, or color.
3. Consultants and subconsultants shall establish and maintain a written sexual harassment policy and shall inform their employees of the policy. The policy must contain a notice that sexual harassment will not be tolerated and employees who practice it will be disciplined.
4. Consultants shall not discriminate by reason of gender, race, creed, or color against any subconsultant or supplier who is qualified to perform the work to which the contract relates.
5. The Consultant and each subconsultant shall furnish all necessary employment documents and records to and permit access to their books, records, and accounts by the contracting agency and the [Bureau of Contract Administration and Business Development], for purposes of investigation, to ascertain compliance with provisions of this Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Clause. If the Consultant or any subconsultant does not possess documents or records reflecting the necessary information requested, the Consultant or subconsultant shall furnish such information on reporting forms supplied by the contracting agency or the [Bureau of Contract Administration and Business Development].
6. The Consultant shall include the provisions of this Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Clause in every subcontract so that such provisions will be binding upon each subconsultant.
7. The Forest County Business Alliance may cancel or terminate the contract and all money due or to become due under the contract may be forfeited for a violation of the terms and conditions of this Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Clause. In addition, the agency may proceed with debarment or suspension and may place the Consultant in the Consultant Responsibility File.