



Request for Proposals (RFP)
Consultant to Develop Connecticut Strategic Economic Action Plan
Implementation Period: 2027–2029

Issued by

AdvanceCT Foundation, Inc. (“AdvanceCT Foundation”), in collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (“DECD”) and AdvanceCT.

Point of Contact

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Key Dates

- RFP Release: Feb 3, 2026
- Questions Due: Feb 9, 2026, 5:00 p.m. eastern time
- Responses to Questions Posted: Feb 13, 2026
- Proposals Due: Feb 23, 2026, 5:00 p.m. eastern time
- Shortlist Interviews (if needed): Mar 2-13, 2026
- Selection Announced: Mar 20, 2026
- Project Kickoff: March 2026
- Draft Plan Delivered: Fall 2026
- Final Plan Delivered: By December 31, 2026

I. Purpose

AdvanceCT Foundation seeks proposals from qualified consulting teams to lead development of a statewide Strategic Economic Action Plan for Connecticut, designed for implementation from January 1, 2027 through December 31, 2029 with additional initiatives and results beyond this timeframe.

The selected consultant will produce an implementation-ready action plan, not a purely analytical report, and will help AdvanceCT, DECD, and a Foundation Board–appointed Steering Committee align on a number of high-impact priorities supported by clear business cases, ownership, sequencing, and measurable outcomes.

II. Background and Context

AdvanceCT (when operating as the Connecticut Economic Resource Center) led a major economic strategy process in 2019–2020. The work produced substantial research and stakeholder input, but the plan was revised due to the immediate needs surrounding COVID 19 and funding availability.

This new Strategic Economic Action Plan must explicitly build on and integrate the 2019–2020 CERC work and all accompanying documentation provided with this RFP, updating the fact base and recommendations for present-day conditions.

The work will be funded through the AdvanceCT Foundation and guided by a Steering Committee appointed by the Foundation’s Board.

III. Project Goals

The consultant will develop a Strategic Economic Action Plan that:

1. Defines Connecticut’s economic vision and near-term priorities (2027–2029) grounded in current market realities and competitive positioning with a sense of the longer term impact of the near-term priorities and actions required to achieve those impacts
2. Uses a State/Region/Cluster architecture:
 - a. Statewide economic strategy and value proposition
 - b. Differentiated regional strategies
 - c. Priority industry cluster strategies
3. Centers affordability as a core pillar, including actionable strategies for:
 - a. Housing affordability and supply
 - b. Energy cost, reliability, and transition
 - c. Healthcare affordability and access
4. Creates a robust workforce development pillar aligned to cluster and regional priorities, dovetailing with current efforts, including:
 - a. Sector-based talent pipelines
 - b. Upskilling/reskilling for emerging/high-demand industries
 - c. Inclusion and mobility strategies
 - d. Retention/attraction of talent in Connecticut
5. Prioritizes into a small set of “big bets” with measurable targets and rationale.
6. Provides business cases for each major initiative, including costs/investment logic, @owners, dependencies, and metrics.
7. Includes a practical implementation roadmap and governance model enabling execution by state agencies, regional partners, employers, and education/training systems with a clear understanding of successful work underway and the incorporation of such work into the greater plan.
8. Leaves behind an execution “playbook” that can be reused for future refresh cycles.

IV. Scope of Work

Proposals must align to the following four-phase, iterative approach (reflecting and updating the prior CERC model). Proposers may recommend refinements but must cover all phases and outputs.

Phase 0. Preparation & Project Mobilization (Pre-work)

Objectives

- Launch project with the Steering Committee, DECD, and AdvanceCT
- Establish structure for a disciplined, tiered engagement and decision process.
- Ensure work builds from existing strategy materials rather than restarting from scratch.

Required Activities

- Structured review of all 2019–2020 CERC/AdvanceCT strategy outputs and other provided materials.
- Identify what remains valid, what needs updating, and what gaps require net-new research.
- Develop a tiered stakeholder map (e.g., Tier 1 top businesses/EDOs, Tier 2 sector/region leaders, Tier 3 broader public input).
- Draft Steering Committee and any working-group charters, membership criteria, and meeting cadence.
- Produce a detailed project management plan with decision gates, workshop schedule, and draft engagement instruments.

Deliverable

- Project Mobilization & Prior Work Integration Memo (Includes: synthesis of prior work, research gaps, engagement map, governance/charter drafts, final workplan.)

Phase 1. Baseline Assessment & Competitive Diagnostic

Objectives

- Update Connecticut's economic fact base and competitive position.
- Establish the priority clusters and regions that will anchor strategies.

Required Activities

- Conduct a multi-lens statewide and regional diagnostic, including:
 - Economic performance trends
 - Industry/cluster strengths and weaknesses
 - Innovation/entrepreneurship ecosystem
 - Demographics, labor force, migration
 - Cost-of-living and affordability pressures
 - Peer/competitor benchmarking
 - Public perception of the state's business friendliness

- Refresh and validate priority industry clusters and their geographic/regional footprints.
- Evaluate Connecticut's existing economic development ecosystem, programs, and leverage points.
- Define preliminary metrics and targets to guide prioritization.

Deliverable

- Connecticut Economic Baseline & Competitive Assessment Report (Statewide + regional + initial cluster lens.)

Phase 2. Strategy Development & Value Proposition Design

Objectives

- Build a compelling and evidence-based economic strategy grounded in CT's competitive advantages.
- Create value propositions at the state, region, and cluster levels.
- Narrow to a small number of high-impact priorities.

Required Activities

- Develop:
 - A statewide Connecticut value proposition ("elevator pitch")
 - Region-specific value propositions
 - Cluster-specific value propositions
- Identify competitive advantages/disadvantages and strategic opportunities.
- Generate a longlist of strategic options, then apply a rigorous prioritization framework to arrive at:
 - A small set of "big bets" for 2027–29
 - Supporting quick wins and medium-term actions
- Ensure affordability and workforce pillars are integrated within each state/region/cluster strategy, not treated as separate side chapters.

Deliverables

- Draft Strategic Framework & Value Propositions
- Prioritized "Big Bets" Portfolio (Draft)

Phase 3. Market Testing / Stakeholder Validation

Objectives

- Validate the draft strategy directly with the "voice of the customer" such as CT employers, cluster leaders, and regional stakeholders.
- Refine priorities and actions based on real-world feedback.

Required Activities

- Conduct tiered market testing, including at minimum:
 - ~50 senior business leader interviews statewide (Tier 1)
 - SMB surveys and/or focus groups

- Cluster leader roundtables
- Regional strategy workshops
- Use interactive sessions (labs/working meetings) to test:
 - Value propositions
 - Cluster/regional priorities
 - Candidate big bets and initiatives
- Document feedback and explicitly note which elements changed as a result.

Deliverable

- Market Test / “Voice of the Customer” Findings Report (Consensus areas, refinements, remaining disagreements.)

Phase 4. Final Action Plan, Business Cases & Implementation Playbook

Objectives

- Deliver a final, implementable Action Plan for 2027–2029.
- Provide a roadmap and system for execution.

Required Activities

- Finalize State–Region–Cluster Action Plan
 - Final statewide strategy and big bets
 - Region-specific strategies
 - Cluster-specific strategies
- Produce Business Cases. For each big bet and major initiative include:
 - Need/problem statements
 - Expected outcomes & metrics
 - Cost/investment logic (high-level estimates acceptable)
 - Ownership/partners
 - Dependencies and risks
 - Sequencing for 2027–2029
- Implementation Roadmap & Operating Model
 - 3-year sequencing (Year 1/2/3)
 - Ownership categories (state, regional, private, education/training, nonprofit)
 - Governance recommendation for execution tracking
 - KPI/dashboard framework with cadence and reporting roles
- Execution Playbook
 - A reusable methodology for prioritization, coordination, and refresh cycles beyond 2029.
- Communications Outputs
 - Executive summary
 - Public rollout slide deck
 - One-page strategy-at-a-glance

Deliverables

- Final Strategic Economic Action Plan (2027–2029)
- Initiative Business Case Compendium
- Implementation Roadmap + PMO/Governance Model
- Strategy Execution Playbook
- Public-Facing Summary Materials

V. Required Expertise

Proposers must demonstrate deep capability in:

- Statewide and regional economic strategy development
- Industry cluster competitiveness and growth planning
- Public policy and program design for economic development
- Affordability strategy across housing, energy, and healthcare
- Workforce strategy aligned to priority sectors and geographies
- Quantitative economic/industry analysis and benchmarking
- Large-scale stakeholder engagement and consensus-building
- Purposeful collaboration with academic partners
- Translating strategy into implementable action roadmaps

VI. Proposal Submission Requirements

Proposals must include:

- Cover Letter
 - Firm overview, lead contact, commitment to timeline
- Project Understanding
 - Connecticut context
 - How proposer will explicitly build from 2019–2020 work
 - Key risks/opportunities as seen today
- Technical Approach & Workplan
 - Phase-by-phase plan aligned to Scope of Work
 - Staffing plan by phase/task
 - Timeline with decision gates and Steering Committee touchpoints
 - Description of net-new research vs. prior-work reuse
- Stakeholder Engagement/Market Testing Plan
 - Tiered stakeholder map approach
 - Interview, workshop, lab, and survey methods
 - Equity/inclusion design
 - How feedback will be captured and drive iteration
- Affordability & Workforce Approach
 - How each will be integrated into State/Region/Cluster strategies
 - Proposed data sources and analytical methods
 - Sample frameworks or tools from past work
- Deliverables Confirmation
 - Explicit confirmation of all required deliverables
 - Proposed enhancements (optional)

- Budget & Fee Proposal
 - Not-to-exceed cost by phase
 - Hourly rates by role
 - Assumptions for travel, engagement, data acquisition
 - Any additional expenses
- Relevant Experience & References
 - At least three comparable statewide/region economic strategy projects within past seven years
 - Client references with contact details

VII. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on:

- Alignment to required phased approach and implementation focus
- Demonstrated ability to integrate prior work
- Strength of affordability and workforce expertise
- Quality and realism of engagement/market-testing design
- Experience producing State/Region/Cluster strategies
- Quality of prioritization and business-case methodology
- Project team strength and availability
- Budget realism and overall value

AdvanceCT Foundation and/or its designees may shortlist and interview firms.

VIII. Submission Instructions

- Format: PDF
- Submit to: jbourdeaux@advancect.org
- Subject line: "CT Strategic Economic Action Plan RFP – Proposal"
- Deadline: Feb 23, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. eastern time

Questions must be submitted by Feb 9, 2026, 5:00 p.m. eastern time. Responses will be shared with all bidders.

AdvanceCT Foundation reserves the right to reject any/all proposals, negotiate scope/budget, or reissue this RFP.

IX. Attachments

2019–2020 CERC economic strategy materials and related deliverables: Diagnostic, Compendium, Governor’s Presentation, and Economic Action Plan