



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Business Retention, Expansion and Entrepreneurial Services

Northwest Colorado Innovation Center (NCIC)

Proposals Due: 10/16/26

Questions and submissions by email: Beth@northwestcolorado.org and Christine@northwestcolorado.org

BACKGROUND

Northwest Colorado is a rural tri-county region, undergoing coal transition. The region's two coal-fired power plants and four coal mines will close over the next 4 years. Subsequently, the tri-county region will lose up to 1,000 direct and indirect jobs and nearly 22% of its regional GDP. To address this devastating economic disruption, the Northwest Colorado Development Council (NWCDC), an intergovernmental agreement with nine counties and municipalities, developed a transition strategic plan and established the Northwest Colorado Innovation Center (NCIC), a 501c3 rural development hub serving Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt County, Colorado communities.

PURPOSE

NCIC seeks proposals from a qualified **BR&EE Specialist (independent contractor)** or consulting firm to provide Business Retention, Expansion, and Entrepreneurship (BR&EE) services throughout Moffat, Rio Blanco, and portions of Routt counties. NCIC's Business Retention, Expansion, and Entrepreneurship (BR&EE) program is a proactive economic development strategy focused on growing existing local businesses and supporting entrepreneurs. Its goals are to help companies stay competitive, prevent them from leaving the area, and encourage local growth rather than only attracting new outside businesses.

The BR&EE specialist will proactively meet in-person and virtually with local businesses and entrepreneurs to connect them to resources, financing, workforce and incentive programs, and provide business coaching, marketing, digital skills, entrepreneurial training, and other related services. This is a hybrid role with both in-person and virtual delivery of services. This program is provided in partnership with NCIC's parent organization, the Northwest Colorado Development Council (NWCDC).

This solicitation is for **contracted professional services only and is not a staff or employee position**. The selected BR&EE Specialist will perform services pursuant to an independent contractor agreement and approved Scope of Work and work plan.

The goal of the BR&EE program is to strengthen existing businesses, identify expansion and retention opportunities, connect businesses with resources and training, and provide NCIC with timely information regarding regional economic conditions.

SERVICE AREA

The BR&EE Specialist will primarily serve:

- City of Craig and Moffat County, population 13,185
- Towns of Meeker and Rangely, and Rio Blanco County, population 6,476
- Towns of Hayden, Oak Creek, Yampa, and portions of Routt County in coordination with existing economic development partners, population 25,091

Outreach should be reasonably distributed based on business activity, community needs, and coordination with regional partners.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The selected BR&EE Specialist will provide services that include:

Existing Business Engagement

- Conduct approximately **50-80 unique, in-person business visits** with major employers, small business owners and entrepreneurs. Based on the BR&EE visit, develop a proactive follow-up plan that provides solutions or assist with expansion efforts. Follow-up consulting with the business or startup can be virtual; however, routine emails, event attendance, or brief introductions do not count toward substantive follow-up engagement.
- Schedule in person visits with majors employers to understand business challenges, expansion opportunities, workforce needs, and potential risks for downsizing or relocation in order to monitor the health of the local economy and identify economic barriers.
- Schedule small business BRE&E visits to identify and provide solutions to common challenges such as workforce, business succession and ownership transition needs, and market growth, with a goal toward identifying expansion opportunities and proactively follow-up.
- Develop relationships with business owners and key decision-makers.
- Connect existing businesses with financing, workforce, technical assistance, and other appropriate resources and partners to grow their business.
- Provide business coaching to small businesses to solve their pain points, create new business opportunities, and maximize their operations to expand jobs and revenue.
- Track engagements and key performance indicators (jobs created or retained, capital investment, wages and payroll) with existing businesses in CRM.
- In Rio Blanco County, identify and connect businesses with Rural JumpStart.
- Develop outreach events that target businesses community needs.

Entrepreneurial Support and Training

- Provide one-on-one in-person or virtual coaching and technical assistance to entrepreneurs and startups.
- Conduct or coordinate a minimum of four entrepreneurial or small-business training workshops annually, based on identified needs.
- Assist entrepreneurs with business plans, marketing plans, financial projections, financing readiness, digital skills, and other business-development needs.
- Connect entrepreneurs with appropriate financing, technical assistance, workforce, and partner resources.
- Track businesses assisted, referrals, financing pursued or secured, businesses started, jobs created/retained, and other measurable outcomes.

CRM, Technology and Business Data Knowledge

- Maintain and update business information in Executive Pulse or another system designated by NCIC.
- Document business contacts, visits, follow-up activities, referrals, and outcomes.
- Maintain confidentiality of business information.
- Proficient in Windows (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams), Google Applications (Doc, Sheets, Slides, and Meet), Zoom, and QuickBooks

Regional Coordination

- Coordinate periodic Business Walks (drop-in business engagement to Main Street businesses) and outreach activities.
- Collaborate with chambers, municipalities, counties, economic development organizations, and other regional partners.
- Refer significant and complex business retention, expansion, or development opportunities to the NCIC Executive Director.

Reporting

- Attend weekly team meetings to report potential expansions, closures, ownership transitions, site/building needs, financing needs, workforce issues, and other emerging risks to the Executive Director and team members.
- Provide monthly activity and progress reports during the NCIC and NWCDC meetings.
- Identify significant trends affecting regional businesses.
- Provide information for NCIC Board and funding reports.
- Complete agreed-upon referrals and follow-up activities.

EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

Anticipated annual performance goals include:

- 50-80 unique, in-person business visits with major employers, smaller business owners, and entrepreneurs
- Proactively follow up with businesses and entrepreneurs who express a need or opportunity. Follow-up engagements can be virtual; however, emails, attendance at events and brief introductions do not count toward substantive follow-up engagement.
- Four coordinated Business Walks or similar outreach activities
- Four in-person entrepreneurial trainings
- Ongoing maintenance of the regional business database/CRM
- Weekly virtual team meetings
- Monthly activity reports to NWCDC and NCIC Boards virtually
- Business climate and BR&EE trend reporting
- Timely referrals and follow-up activities to NCIC Executive Director and partners
- Annual BR&EE summary/report
- Other key performance indicators as established by NCIC Executive Director

Final performance measures will be incorporated into the negotiated Scope of Work.

QUALIFICATIONS

NCIC seeks proposals demonstrating experience or qualifications in areas such as:

- Business retention and expansion
- Small-business technical assistance
- Rural economic development
- Business outreach and relationship development
- CRM/database management
- Business research and reporting
- Colorado economic development programs and resources
- Marketing, including digital and social media marketing, and basic digital skills training
- Grant writing
- Financial and financing knowledge, including capital stacking, creating and reviewing financial statements
- Business plan and marketing plan writing
- Technology expertise (Windows and Google Applications, QuickBooks, Zoom)

Knowledge of Northwest Colorado and experience working across rural communities are preferred. The candidate should have at minimum a bachelor's degree in a related field, and we prefer a Certified Economic Developer or Entrepreneurial Development Professional certification from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) or similar credentialing organization. The candidate must have a valid driver's license, auto, commercial liability, and

professional errors and omissions insurance policies with a \$100,000 per occurrence and \$300,000 aggregate limit.

The BR&EE Specialist is responsible for independently planning, organizing, and carrying out assigned BR&EE activities throughout the service area. The Specialist must be self-motivated, highly organized, a good communicator, writer, and relationship builder with the ability to manage their own workload and schedule, coordinate and facilitate meetings with businesses and community partners, travel as required, maintain confidentiality, track activities and follow-up needs, and complete agreed-upon deliverables accurately and on time.

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR RELATIONSHIP

The successful proposer will NOT be an employee of NWCDC or NCIC and will not be eligible for employee wages, benefits, paid leave, retirement, or other benefits provided to NWCDC/NCIC employees.

The BR&EE Specialist is an Independent Contractor who will be responsible for their own business operations, taxes, insurance, equipment, transportation, and other obligations associated with operating as an independent contractor, subject to the final professional services agreement.

The NCIC Executive Director will establish required outcomes, deliverables, reporting requirements, deadlines, contract performance standards, and oversee the performance of the contract. The BR&EE Specialist will independently determine the appropriate methods and scheduling necessary to accomplish the Scope of Work, subject to required meetings, deadlines, and coordination activities. The BR&EE Specialist can use the NCIC office at 600 Yampa Ave., Office #108, Craig, Colorado 81625 for confidential meetings but is not required to work out of the NCIC office.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals should be concise and limited to ten pages.

Please include:

- Brief cover letter will include contact information and the specific BRE&E specialist who will be assigned to NCIC.
- Contractor or firm qualifications, including bio and relevant experience for all persons assigned to the contract.
- Proposed approach to delivering business retention, expansion and entrepreneurial services
- Proposed annual work plan and deliverables
- Proposed contract price and fee structure (see below)
- Identification of anticipated travel or reimbursable expenses to be included in the not-to-exceed price.

- Three professional references

PROPOSED CONTRACT COST

Proposers shall submit their proposed not-to-exceed price along with a fee structure for completing the Scope of Work described in this RFP. NCIC established a **\$60,000** budget for the BR&EE contract. NWCDC/NCIC may interview one or more proposers before making a final selection.

The proposal should clearly identify the proposed pricing structure, which may include:

- Fixed annual contract amount
- Monthly retainer with a not-to-exceed contract amount
- Hourly professional rate with a not-to-exceed contract amount
- Deliverable-based pricing with a not-to-exceed contract amount
- Another clearly defined professional services arrangement

The proposal must clearly identify what services and expenses are included in the proposed price and separately identify anticipated travel or other reimbursable expenses, which will be part of the not-to-exceed price.

NCIC reserves the right to negotiate the final Scope of Work, deliverables, contract amount, and payment structure with the selected proposer based upon organizational needs and available funding.

EVALUATION

Proposals will be evaluated based upon the following rubric.

Relevant BR&EE and economic development experience	30%
Understanding of Northwest Colorado and rural business needs	15%
Proposed approach and ability to achieve deliverables	15%
Demonstrated past performance and references	15%
Ability to provide in-person geographic coverage	10%
Proposed cost and overall value of services	10%
CRM, data-management, and technical capabilities	5%

CONTRACT TERMS

The anticipated initial contract term is **for one (1) year**, subject to available funding and satisfactory performance. NCIC may extend the contract an additional year, subject to funding. The contract may be renewed or extended at the discretion of NWCDC/NCIC, subject to continued need, satisfactory performance, and funding availability.

The final independent contractor agreement will address:

- Scope of Work and deliverables
- Contract compensation and payment schedule
- Invoicing procedures
- Performance reporting
- Confidentiality
- Conflicts of interest
- Insurance requirements
- Ownership and protection of program data
- Contract termination
- Renewal or extension provisions

All BR&EE information, records, and data collected under the contract will remain the property of NCIC.

SUBMISSION & SELECTION

RFP Issued: 9/21/2026

Questions Due: 10/02/26

Proposals Due: 10/16/26

Interviews, if necessary: 10/19 - 10/23

Anticipated Selection: 10/30/2026

Email proposals as a pdf document to:

Beth Cascaddan, Executive Director

Northwest Colorado Development Council / Northwest Colorado Innovation Center

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and

Christine Rambo, CEcD, Project Manager

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NWCDC/NCIC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive minor informalities, request clarification or additional information, negotiate the Scope of Work and contract terms, or cancel this solicitation when determined to be in the organization's best interest.