



INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY CORPS PROGRAM- RESEARCH + SYSTEMS MAPPING PARTNER

RFP Released: February 18, 2026

Proposals Due: March 3, 2026

PURPOSE

IEDC seeks a qualified research partner to conduct structured interviews, cross-ecosystem analysis, and systems mapping for the Economic Recovery Corps (ERC). As the inaugural cohort concludes, this engagement will distill insights on effectiveness, implementation factors, and scalability, translating findings into clear, actionable lessons to inform replication, strengthen the model, and communicate impact to funders and policymakers.

WHO MAY RESPOND

IEDC seeks a contractor with demonstrated experience conducting multi-site qualitative research, synthesizing interview-based data, applying systems thinking and ecosystem mapping, and translating findings into actionable insights for funders and policymakers. Experience in community and economic development—particularly in underserved, rural, Tribal, or distressed communities—is preferred, along with strong analytical rigor and clear communication skills.

The contractor must not be barred from receiving federal funding. To be considered responsive, all submissions must include a statement indicating that the respondent is not on the US General Services Administration's System for Award Management's (SAM's) list of excluded entities.

1. About the Organization

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) is a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization serving economic developers. With more than 5,000 members, IEDC is the largest organization of its kind.

In 2022, IEDC launched the Economic Recovery Corps (ERC)—a \$30M national fellowship placing 65 mid-career Fellows in underserved communities across the United States, Tribal Nations, and territories. The program embeds capacity directly into communities to advance equitable, locally driven economic development and to strengthen implementation of regional economic strategies.

More information:

www.iedconline.org

www.economicrecoverycorps.org

2. Purpose of this RFP

IEDC seeks a research partner to:

- Distill insights from the ERC fellowship model
- Identify what is working, where barriers remain, and what implementation factors drive results
- Surface patterns across ecosystems
- Conduct systems-level analysis
- Translate findings into clear, compelling insights for funders, policymakers, and the field

We are particularly interested in:

- Cross-ecosystem pattern identification
- Identification of enabling conditions and barriers
- Network and ecosystem mapping
- Actionable insights related to scaling, replication, and sustainability

The total budget for this engagement is up to \$50,000.

3. Scope of Work

The selected contractor will work with IEDC to conduct structured interviews and analyze findings across selected ERC ecosystems.

Core Deliverables (Base Scope – within \$50,000)

A. Interview Design & Execution

- Design structured interview protocol in collaboration with IEDC
- Conduct structured interviews across approximately 7–10 ERC ecosystems
- Interview Fellows, host organizations, local officials, economic actors, community partners, and other relevant stakeholders
- Provide concise written synopses of each interview

B. Cross-Ecosystem Analysis

- Conduct qualitative thematic and content analysis across interviews

- Identify recurring themes, implementation factors, barriers, and ecosystem dynamics
- Surface cross-site patterns and differences
- Distill findings into actionable insights

C. Final Insights Report

Provide a written synthesis that includes:

- What is working
- Where barriers remain
- Key enabling conditions and implementation factors
- Scalability and replication considerations
- Implications for economic development practice and policy

D. Visual Ecosystem Representation

- Provide, at minimum, a conceptual ecosystem map or systems framework illustrating relationships, actors, partnerships, and enabling conditions across ERC communities.

4. Optional Add-On Scope (Price Separately)

Proposers may suggest enhancements beyond the base scope, with separate pricing.

Examples may include:

- Interactive or searchable online insights platform
- Web design and hosting
- Public-facing narrative synthesis
- Multimedia storytelling
- Engagement event (policy or funder briefing)
- Interactive or digital systems visualization
- Development of taxonomies and searchable database structures
- Optional components must be clearly separated from the base scope budget.

5. Timeline

IEDC anticipates the following timeline:

- Project Start: Week of March 16, 2026
- Initial Interviews Complete: Within 6–8 weeks of project launch
- Full Interview Completion: Within 3–4 months
- Final Deliverables: Within 5–6 months

Proposers may recommend refinements to this timeline.

6. Contractor Qualifications

The ideal partner will demonstrate:

- Experience conducting qualitative research and systems-level analysis
- Experience synthesizing insights across multiple communities or ecosystems
- Experience in community or economic development contexts
- Strong narrative synthesis and communication skills
- Experience translating research into actionable insights for funders and policymakers
- Ability to visualize complex systems clearly

- Experience in rural, Tribal, and underserved communities is strongly preferred.

7. Proposal Requirements (5-Page Maximum, Excluding Attachments)

Proposals must not exceed five (5) pages, excluding work samples and attachments. Please include:

A. Organizational Overview (1 page)

- Lead organization
- Key team members
- Primary point of contact

B. Relevant Experience (1 page)

- Description of similar projects
- Links to or attachments of work samples (not counted toward page limit)
- At least three (3) client references (name, title, email, phone)

C. Approach & Methodology (1 page)

- Understanding of the engagement
- Interview methodology
- Analytical framework
- Approach to identifying cross-ecosystem patterns
- Approach to systems mapping
- How rigor and credibility will be ensured

D. Work Plan & Timeline (1 page)

E. Budget (1 page)

- Total base scope cost (not to exceed \$50,000)
- Line-item breakdown
- Separate pricing for optional add-ons (if applicable)

8. Ownership & Confidentiality

- All intellectual property produced under this contract shall become the property of IEDC. All data collected remains the sole property of IEDC. The contractor must maintain appropriate safeguards for confidential or sensitive data and comply with applicable data protection and privacy requirements.
- If the bidder deems any material submitted to be proprietary or confidential, this must be clearly indicated in the relevant section(s) of the response.

9. Federal Funding Compliance This project is supported in whole or in part with federal funding.

The selected entity will be engaged as an independent contractor providing professional services to IEDC. This engagement does not constitute a federal subaward, and federal compliance requirements will apply only to applicable contractual provisions associated with federally funded procurements rather than full subrecipient compliance under 2 CFR Part 200.

The selected contractor must comply with all applicable federal requirements, including

but not limited to:

- Contractors must comply with applicable federal requirements incorporated into this contract, including relevant provisions of 2 CFR Part 200 where applicable to federally funded procurements.
- Debarment and Suspension certification requirements
- Equal Employment Opportunity and nondiscrimination provisions
- Contractors must comply with applicable federal workplace requirements where required under federally funded contracts.
- Record retention requirements (minimum three years after final payment unless otherwise required)
- Byrd Anti-Lobbying Amendment certification, if applicable

Contractors may be required to execute additional federal compliance certifications prior to contract award.

10. Process for Proposal Submission and Evaluation

IEDC is conducting this procurement through a competitive process consistent with its procurement policies and applicable federal grant requirements.

a) Closing Submission Date

Proposals are due by 5:00 PM Eastern on March 3, 2026.

b) Inquiries

Inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to:

Nicole Manapol, Vice President, Emerging Practices
nmanapol@iedc.org

Inquiries must be submitted no later than 5:00pm Eastern, February 23, 2026.

c) Conditions of Proposal

All costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFP are the responsibility of the bidder and will not be reimbursed by IEDC.

d) Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted in PDF format via email to:

Darnesha Tabor, Monitoring, Learning, and Evaluation Specialist
dtabor@iedc.org

If the file is too large for email, a link to the file may be provided.

Late arrivals will not be accepted. Mail submissions will not be accepted.

It is the responsibility of the bidder to ensure that the proposal is received by IEDC by the closing submission date. A response may be judged nonresponsive and excluded from consideration if it is not received by the deadline or does not follow the specified format.

11. Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Demonstrated experience conducting similar research

- Strength and clarity of methodology
- Quality and relevance of prior work samples
- References
- Budget reasonableness
- Cost reasonableness and alignment with proposed methodology will be evaluated in accordance with federal procurement standards
- Ability to translate research into actionable field insights
- Proposers must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest related to this engagement.

IEDC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals.

The award will be given to the qualified bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to IEDC based on the above criteria. IEDC may, in its sole discretion, reject any and all proposals without providing a detailed explanation for decisions.

IEDC, in its sole discretion, may request proposal presentations by meeting with any or all bidders to clarify or negotiate modifications to proposals. However, IEDC reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposals submitted. Therefore, proposals should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms, from both technical and price standpoints, that the bidder can propose.

12. Notification of Selection and Timeline

It is expected that a contractor will be selected within two weeks of the closing submission date, although this timeline is subject to change. IEDC reserves the right to cancel this RFP at any time. Upon conclusion of negotiations, all bidders will be notified in writing of IEDC's selection decision.

- RFP Released: February 18, 2026
- Proposals Due: March 3, 2026
- Vendor Interviews: March 9-11, 2026
- Vendor Selection Made: March 12, 2026
- Project Begins By: March 16, 2026