

- 1) What is goal of the application/purpose with Montan Healthcare Foundation?
  - MCDC has conducted research on rural grocery store distribution, highlighting risks and aging store owners. Insights from past conversions in Montana demonstrate the vital role these stores play in community health and vitality. The Montana Healthcare Foundation supports these efforts through funding, emphasizing the importance of sustaining and improving rural grocery infrastructure to enhance overall community well-being.
- 2) What is the relationship with the Cooperative Development Foundation (CDF)
  - We were one of 10 Cooperative Development Offices selected to participate in a national collaboration for USDA Rural Development Rural Cooperative Development Grant. The work being done on our rural grocery store is partially included in an overall contract that we have with CDF and will feed into others work and collaboration on rural food access, distribution and processing.
  - MCDC is also engaged in informal collaboration with counterparts in Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. This project will work into a presentation we are scheduled to do in May at the National Rural Grocery Summit.
- 3) What are the target numbers for the completion of the project?
  - We will review specific embedded numbers within our funding agreements with the selected contractor. Although these figures are important, there is flexibility, so target numbers are not the primary focus during selection. Instead, they will be finalized during contract development, incorporating the contractor's input and collaborative process to determine appropriate targets.
- 4) What are the Travel expectations related to this project?
  - Though we do expect there to be 2 to 3 trips related to this project all travel will be coordinated with the MCDC staff. The trips are expected to be 2 to 3 nights each, and will occur mostly in rural Montana areas as defined and identified as the project proceeds forward.
- 5) How many hours ideally is MCDC expecting?
  - MCDC is not dictating any specific hour requirement as much as focusing on quality of work and completion of work.
- 6) What is the timing of payments to the contractor?

- Ideally MCDC would like payment to match the deposits from the funders but there is flexibility and will be dependent upon the final agreement with selected contractor.

7) Will there be required check-ins on the project?

- We plan to establish a regular communication schedule with the selected contractor, focusing on check-ins and collaborative project management. Coordination with MCDC staff will be integral to the process. Currently, we aim for bi-weekly meetings, with a minimum of monthly check-ins, adjusted based on project progress and flow.

8) How does this project fit within the overall digitalization program that MCDC is working on?

- The MCDC team will prioritize developing digital materials for the project. Coordination is required to integrate these materials into the existing program, though the contractor is not expected to handle coding or design tasks. Instead, the contractor will focus on creating content and collaborating with MCDC staff to finalize a program for grocery store conversion. Additionally, the contractor will support MCDC in identifying potential conversion projects and initiating the process, which may involve utilizing the new digital program once it is operational. This approach ensures a streamlined development process and effective project implementation.

9) Does MCDC have a policy related to AI?

- MCDC has a policy regarding AI use. Outfacing materials may incorporate AI services, but proprietary or client-related content requires explicit authorization before using AI. While outward-facing communications are permitted, sensitive or priority information must not be processed with AI tools without approval.

Contract \$ -

10) Does the contract amount include mailing and postage, flyer/materials?

- Our primary goal is to ensure funds are allocated for paying contractors based on completed work. We can explore using MCDC resources for printing, postage, and mailings if and when needed. All travel arrangements will be made in advance and funded through additional MCDC resources, ensuring clear planning and proper resource management.

11) What type of format would MCDC like referrals?

- Please include referrals' name and phone number and/or email.

12) Can MCDC clarify what Independent contractor license is required?

- Yes, MCDC will require the contractor go either have or receive a contractor's independent license through the Montana Dept. of Labor prior to first payment.

13) How important is the Kansas University Training in this RFQ?

- The Kansas University Training outlined in the RFQ is a preferred skill set that we value, as it provides a foundation for building expertise. However, it is not a mandatory requirement for contractors. We will consider other skills and experiences that demonstrate relevant capabilities and qualifications for the project.