
KEY RFI CONTENT

Requests for Information (RFIs) are a vital part of the economic development process and are an opportunity to showcase your community to business prospects across the globe. But let's be honest, RFIs are often unpredictable and the timing is rarely convenient. While we aim to give you at least a week to respond to an RFI, at its worst, an RFI might require a response within one day.

Despite their unpredictability, there are five key items that almost always make an appearance in a request for information:

- Available Properties (buildings, land)
- Incentives
- Labor Force
- Transportation (highway, rail, air)
- Utilities (sewer, water/wastewater, electric, natural gas, telecommunications)

If you focus on these five categories, gather the most relevant information for each, and create a master template for RFI submissions, you will set yourself up for a good RFI experience. And the next time you see an RFI email from GOED arrive in your inbox, you'll be able to respond quickly with a tiny bit of effort and minimal stress.

Following is a deeper look at each of the five categories mentioned above to get you started on your RFI preparations.

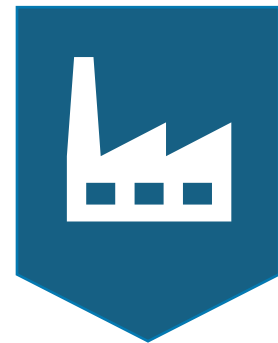
1. Available Properties

If you're receiving an RFI Request email from GOED, it's guaranteed that the prospect is looking for available properties. Therefore, you need to have a current inventory of all available business properties (buildings and land) in your community.

There is a lot of information you can supply on available properties and the best way to capture that information is by using a property listing system (GOED provides one and more details are available on the next page). There are a few key items to address when sharing property information:

Size: always provide a size (square feet and/or acres) and consider other parameters like building or site dimensions, and sidewall heights or ceiling clearance. Also, if talking about a building, break-down the size of the building according to its function; what portion is dedicated to office, manufacturing, or warehousing space. And highlight if a property has unique features such as a lab or refrigeration space.

Price: a price MUST be provided. Prices are always negotiable and a prospect, especially one not familiar with South Dakota, needs a starting point for price negotiations. If a price is not provided it suggests that



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the owner is not serious about selling the property. If a prospect is not provided a price, they will move on to a similar property somewhere else that has a price listed.

Images: Maps and images of the property help the site selector visualize how they will utilize a property. Maps can be used to show proximity to roadways, railways, and airports. Make sure any pictures of the property are marketable and showcase the properties at their best.

When packaging properties for an RFI, building and land information should be easy to read. Bold headings or bulleted lists are a great way to convey important information quickly and clearly. Also, make sure key property features (size, price, or features the prospect has highlighted as important to the project) are easy to pick out of the information you're providing.

The GOED has a free online property database that any of our economic development partners can utilize to list the available properties in their community. The database is a handy tool for tracking your local inventory and provides good insight into the data a prospect wants to know. Plus, it makes the property data easily accessible in a downloadable report. Bonus: the database is accessed daily by property seekers, so it is a great marketing tool.

To learn more about listing properties in the GOED property database:

<http://www.sdreadytopartner.com/list-property.html>

2. Local Incentives

Opening, expanding, or moving is costly and companies are typically looking for incentives to help them offset some of the costs. Incentives are often the tiebreaker between two equally matched communities so expect to provide incentive information in your RFI response.

At this stage of the process, we're only looking for information on the available incentives in your community. We're not asking for you to propose dollar amounts.

When listing local incentives in an RFI response, share the incentives that make the most sense for the project. Don't inundate them with incentives that they wouldn't qualify for or that don't make sense for the project.

Following is a list of several incentives used across the country, including (but not limited to):

- Property Tax Abatements for new construction
- Local Sales Tax Refunds on new equipment
- Workforce Development/Training grants
- Free or Reduced Costs on Land or Buildings



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- Tax Increment Financing
- Other Grants
- Low-Interest Loan Programs
- Relocation assistance with housing
- Helping to find work for a spouse

If you include an incentive program in your RFI submission, it is assumed that you have a program or rules in place for providing the incentive and the authority to offer said incentive.

When responding to an RFI request from the GOED, please do not include incentives that the GOED offers. We will include those in the information we're providing.

3. Labor Force



Available labor force is a key factor company officials look at when choosing where to open or expand their business. For example, a manufacturing facility that wants to employ 300 workers would not move to a sparsely populated community or county unless it could be shown statistically that workers were available for that region.

When the GOED sends out an RFI request, we WON'T ask communities to provide labor data. We will supply labor data to the prospect to keep it consistent and comparable.

If you are fielding an RFI request directly from a prospect, the data available at the [SD Labor Market Information Center](#) will be most helpful.

Labor information that we commonly include are:

- Area population and growth
- Total labor force, number employed, and unemployment rate
- Labor force growth
- Labor supply
- Job applicants/seekers
- Key occupations and respective wages

Other information that can be helpful include educational attainment, commute times, and the distance people are willing to travel in your region for work.

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4. Transportation

A business will often have specific transportation needs such as access to rail, an airport, or a four-lane highway/Interstate and these will be detailed in the RFI request. Cover your bases and have information ready for highways/interstate, rail, and air transportation.

Following are suggestions of questions to answer while collecting transportation information:



Highway/Interstate

- Is the community located near a major highway or Interstate?
- Will it be easy for semi-trucks to travel to and from the site?
- How close are surrounding towns/cities?
- Are the roads in good condition and what are the weight limits?

Rail

- How close is a rail spur to the available property in your community?
- Does it need to be shared with another business?
- What rail provider(s) serve this area?

Air

- Does the community have its own airport and how big is it (runway length/width)?
- How close is a larger airport?
- Are commercial flights available locally? If not, how far is the nearest commercial airport and how many direct flights are available? Where do direct flights go?
- Can I fly in and out of this airport for a reasonable price?
- Can I ship and receive air cargo, and if so, will the cost be acceptable?

Another useful piece of information to include is the distance from your community to some of the major MSAs in the U.S.

Maps are good to include in your RFI responses to show where your community (or the specific site) is in reference to rail, highway, and air services. Maps are a great way to add visual interest while providing a large amount of information. There are several resources for acquiring maps:

- 1) The SD [Department of Transportation's](#) website contains city, county, and state data and maps.
- 2) [Google Maps](#) or [Google Earth](#) are two very common mapping tools.
- 3) You can also contact your local planning district for assistance with your GIS needs.

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5. Utilities

The cost and availability of utilities can be significant factors in selecting a site. If a company requires excessive amounts of water or electricity it must first make sure the community has the resources to handle its needs. Then the company needs to determine if it can afford the costs associated with those needs.

Utility Information to share in your RFI response include:

Water & Wastewater

- Water availability, capacity, quality, and restrictions
- Water rates
- Wastewater system capacity and restrictions
- Wastewater treatment requirements and rates

Electricity

- Electric availability and excess capacity
- Electric reliability/outages
- Alternative energy sources availability/restrictions (ex: Rules about putting wind turbines on the top of a building)
 - Companies are beginning to ask what % of electricity is generated from renewable sources.
- Electric rates

Natural Gas

- Natural Gas Rates

Other

Telecommunications may also be an important factor, especially broadband connectivity, so know your communities' broadband capabilities. Also, share any deals or incentives offered by the utility supplier for new businesses and provide contact information for all utility suppliers in your community (including telecommunications providers).

A good read on utilities in site selection: <https://www.tradeandindustrydev.com/industry/alternative-energy-fuels/utility-costs-considerations-site-selection-proces-13379>

6. Cover Letter

When you have compiled all the above information into your RFI master file, there's one more item we recommend you include; a cover letter. A cover letter is a chance for you to add a personal touch to your RFI



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response. It helps open the line of communication with the prospect and is also an opportunity to showcase your community.

When crafting your cover letter, use statements that are measurable or provide context. For example, instead of saying “ABC is a great community to live, work, and play” say “ABC was recently ranked as the 4th most fun place to live thanks to an eclectic selection of local breweries and restaurants and five kid-friendly city parks connected to the riverfront through 20 miles of bikeable trails.”

Also focus on topics relevant to the prospect. They may be more concerned with business costs versus quality of life, so have statements prepared that highlight your business environment. Maybe labor is a concern; are there workforce initiatives enacted in your community that are addressing this issue? If you’re struggling to showcase your community, highlight activities that are in motion to improve the community. Maybe the water system is being upgraded or your community is getting broadband access.

One final note on cover letters: most of the time we are unable to provide the name of the prospect, so you won’t have a name to address the letter to. Using the terms “To Whom It May Concern” or “Dear Sir or Madam” is discouraged in today’s business writing practices, so to work around this, when you are addressing your cover, please address them to the lead rep for the RFI.