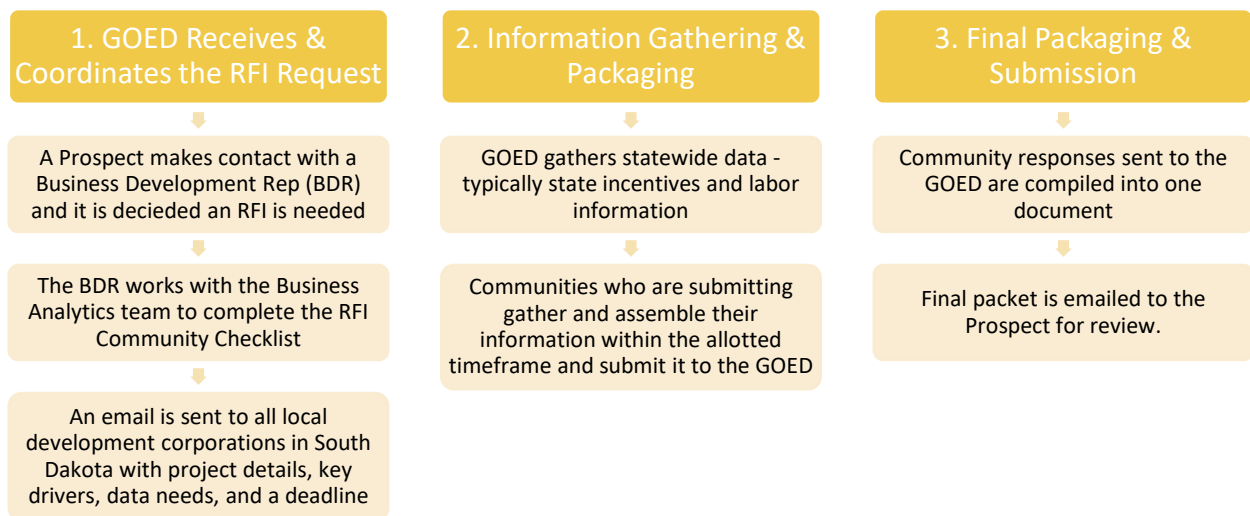# HOW TO RESPOND TO AN RFI

What is an RFI?

An RFI is a formal "Request for Information" from a site selection consultant or company that is looking to expand or relocate operations and is ready to begin identifying viable sites. In the RFI, the site selection consultant or company will detail the key drivers of their project and what information they are seeking.

The RFI Process at GOED

1. GOED Receives & Coordinates the RFI Request	2. Information Gathering & Packaging	3. Final Packaging & Submission
A Prospect makes contact with a Business Development Rep (BDR) and it is decieded an RFI is needed	GOED gathers statewide data - typically state incentives and labor information	Community responses sent to the GOED are compiled into one document
The BDR works with the Business Analytics team to complete the RFI Community Checklist	Communities who are submitting gather and assemble their information within the allotted timeframe and submit it to the GOED	Final packet is emailed to the Prospect for review.
An email is sent to all local development corporations in South Dakota with project details, key drivers, data needs, and a deadline		

RFI Request Email

All economic development professionals in South Dakota should be on GOED's RFI mailing list. The subject line will say "RFI Request: Project 'ABC.'" Please review these emails closely as they will identify:

- The key drivers of the project that determine if a community should respond.
- The GOED Business Development Representative (BDR) who is working the project.
- The GOED Business Analytics staff person who will package the RFI response to send to the prospect.
- The deadline when information MUST be submitted to GOED.
- The "RFI Community Checklist" attachment that offers more detail on the project as well as what information is needed from the community.

Economic development professionals who are not receiving RFI emails should contact GOED to be put on the mailing list. However, before reaching out, verify that RFI emails have not been categorized as spam.

HOW TO RESPOND TO AN RFI

Be Prepared

The timeframe allotted for responding to RFIs will vary by project and is driven by the prospect. Whenever possible, the GOED will advocate for two weeks to respond to an RFI; one week for the communities and one week for GOED to assemble the final packet.

However, it's not unusual for an RFI response to be shortened to one or two days. At the most, you have one week to gather your information. At the least, you will have one day. Because of this short timeframe, **it is important for you to be prepared.**

There are five categories of information most requested in RFIs. They are:

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

Having these five topics prepared ahead of time and kept current will enable you to respond to an RFI request quickly and easily. For more detail on these five categories, please see the "Key RFI Content" document available at https://sdgoed.com/partners/rfis.

Create a Template

We recommend that you take the time up front to create a master document or template that has all the information you would provide for your community. Have all your organization and formatting in place and incorporate unique branding that will set your community apart from other communities.

Keep this document current and when an RFI request comes in it will save you time. Instead of building a new file from scratch, you simply save it as a new file and remove any information that doesn't apply. Occasionally, you might need to add a unique piece of information, but 90% of the content will be ready.

Tailoring Your RFI Response

Every request for information is different. With that in mind, it is important to tailor your response to each prospect's needs so that they can quickly review your submission. A few tips on tailoring your response:

1. **Always include a cover letter**. The cover letter is a tool to open the line of communication with the prospect, so we recommend that you include a cover letter with your response.
   a. When submitting an RFI response through GOED, please **address your cover letter to the lead rep** on the project. However, write the letter as though you are addressing the company.

       b.   Avoid using terms like "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir or Madam."

2. **Address ALL information needs**. It is vital to send a complete RFI response that addresses all topics the prospect has indicated as important to the project. Don't ignore anything.
   a. For instance, if the prospect asks for information on rail and rail is not available in your community, please make note of that in the submission.
   b. Additionally, if rail is a key driver to the project, and rail is not available in your community, make sure that you provide a workable solution on how to provide rail. Maybe rail is only 15 miles over in the next town.
      i. *If you don't have a workable solution for the key drivers in the project, you should not be submitting an RFI response.*

3. **Provide ONLY the information that is requested**. It is tempting to provide more information than what the prospect has requested. Please refrain.
   a. We want to make information within an RFI response easily accessible and consumable. Providing information that is not needed or wanted makes a document less accessible by adding unnecessary bulk. Stick to what the prospect cares about.

4. **Keep RFI responses brief but informative**. It's not necessary to go into extensive detail on a subject unless requested. Get to the point.
   a. Typically, one page (or less) should be enough to address each topic. Of course, there are always exceptions depending on just how much detail the prospect is seeking.
   b. One exception to this is property information. Available property is a topic that you will want to expand on and provide more information because it is key to a project.
   c. Any lengthy external document, such as a letter from a utility, should be excluded from your RFI submission. Instead, please briefly summarize the key points from the document in a section dedicated to the respective subject matter.

Presentation & Formatting

When pulling together your information for an RFI, please keep in mind the response will need to be submitted by email in a format that the GOED can access, preferably a Microsoft Word document or an Adobe PDF document.

A few other things to keep in mind...

Size Limitations
- RFI submissions should be kept to 10 pages or less per community.

- The file size must be limited to 1MB or less (preferably less).
- Photos and graphics will impact the file size most so be sure to resize photos for electronic uses and use other graphics sparingly.

Organizing

When setting up your template there are two common approaches you can take:

- Letter format – where all information is included in a multi-page letter.
- Report format – where your submission opens with a cover letter and is followed by a report detailing the requested information.

Make the Information Accessible

- Utilize headings to section information and make it easier to scan the information and jump to different topics.
- Keep paragraphs brief (3-4 lines max) and sentences short. Goal = Get to the Point.
- Breakup sections of text with tables, bullets or numbering, and graphs or images.
  - Use these features to better communicate your message.

Tools & Resources

Available Buildings & Sites

The following links provide more guidance on the information that is good to have on hand for each available property in a community.

- List Properties with GOED .... https://login.zoomprospector.com/SOUTHDAKOTA/login.html
- Available Building or Land forms... Contact GOED
- GOED Property database .... https://properties.sdgoed.com
- GOED Certified Sites Program .... https://sdgoed.com/tools-resources/find-properties/certified-sites

Photos & Graphics

Below are a few tools that can help you edit and resize existing photos and create unique graphics for your response.

- Compress images and reduce file size .... https://compressor.io
- Remove backgrounds from photos.. https://www.remove.bg
- Create small infographics or visuals.. https://www.canva.com
- Adobe Express (similar to Canva)... https://www.adobe.com/express
- Adobe Photoshop CC (enhance graphics) .... https://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop.html

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Data Resources

- Labor Market Information Center (LMIC) .... http://dlr.sd.gov/lmic
  - Local Labor Force Stats
  - Occupations & Wages
  - Major Employers
  - Industry Mix
- South Dakota Dept. of Transportation .... https://dot.sd.gov
  - Aviation
  - Bridges
  - Highways
  - Public Transit
  - Railroads
- South Dakota Dept. of Revenue .... https://dor.sd.gov/businesses/taxes
- South Dakota Dept. of Health .... https://doh.sd.gov/providers
  - List of Healthcare Providers
- South Dakota Dept. of Education .... http://doe.sd.gov/ofm/statdigest.aspx
  - State & Local Profiles
- South Dakota Dept. of Tourism .... http://www.travelsd.com
  http://www.sdvisit.com
  - Culture
  - Recreation
- U.S. Census Bureau .... https://www.census.gov
  - Population by Age, Race, Sex
  - Household & Family Income
  - Migration data
  - Housing
  - Commute Data
  - NAICS Codes
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis .... https://www.bea.gov/itable
  - Gross Domestic Product by State, MSA, or County
  - Regional Price Parities
  - Personal Income
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics .... https://www.bls.gov
  - Industry data by area
    https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/data_views/data_views.htm#tab=Tables
  - Occupations by Industry
    https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrci.htm

If you have questions about responding to RFIs, please contact:

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SOUTH DAKOTA
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT