

Request for Qualifications for Professional Services for Planning (RFQ)

Jay County, Indiana Comprehensive Plan

In order to assure compliance with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) and related requirements regarding competitive negotiation of planning services, Jay County is seeking Statements of Qualifications for the provision of planning technical assistance services relating to a comprehensive plan.

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| Date Issued: | April 1, 2026 |
| Submission Deadline and Time: | May 1, 2026, Noon |
| Notification of Finalists: | Week of May 4, 2026 |
| Finalist Interviews: | Week of May 11, 2026 |
| Consultant Selection: | TBD – pending award |
| Contact Information: | Ceann Bales (260) 726-9311 cbales@jaycodev.org |

I. Description of Services Needed

To assure compliance with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) and related requirements regarding competitive negotiation of Comprehensive Planning services, Jay County, Indiana is seeking proposals with statements of qualifications from interested consulting firms to update and amend our existing comprehensive plan, which was completed in 1990. Proposer should review and take into account previously enacted plans at the town and municipal level as well. The plan should enhance what is working, address current and future needs and incorporate additional planning goals that are forward thinking and knits the county into one wholistic county under one vision.

The Comprehensive Plan is expected to serve as a long-term guiding document that:

- Establishes a shared community vision for growth and development that promotes quality-of-life, quality of place, and quality of opportunity initiatives
- Guides updates to zoning, land use policy, and development regulations
- Provides a strategic framework for community investment
- Aligns county and municipal planning priorities
- Offers guidance and support and development of the county’s incorporated towns
- Supports sustainable growth while protecting Jay County’s agricultural heritage
- Promotes the health, safety, and welfare of residents

- Serves as a reference point for amending, replacing, or developing the county's
 - Economic-development strategic plan,
 - Tourism strategic plan,
 - Housing plan
 - Entrepreneurial-development plan, or
 - Any of the above, as determined to be necessary

II. Federal Requirements

Prospective offerors should note the successful proposer must meet the following terms and conditions:

1. 24 CFR Part 85.36.
2. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
3. Conflict of Interest (24 CFR Part 570).
4. Access to records.
5. Executive Order 11246 - Equal Employment Opportunity
6. Executive Order 12138 - Women Business Enterprise Policy.
7. Architectural Barrier Act of 1968.
8. Age Discrimination Act of 1975.
9. Section 3 Clause - Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968.
10. Section 504 - Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
11. Retention and Custodial Requirements (24 CFR Part 85.42).
12. Executive Order 11063.
13. Affirmative Action Program / Plan.
14. Davis Bacon and Related Acts.

The Indiana Office of community and Rural Affairs has a 10% MBE/WBE goal for all projects funded with Community Development Block Grant Funds.

III. Description of Scope of Services

The intent of the Scope of Services described herein is to serve as a framework of major tasks as currently envisioned by Jay County for the consultant's information. This is not a comprehensive list.

The plan should be designed to incorporate the following:

- 1. Public Participation Process:** A full range of stakeholders encompassing citizens, city council, advisory boards, staff, and community members (such as local schools, businesses, and neighborhood representatives) shall contribute to this effort by means of an effective public participation process. The planning process should be designed and implemented to ensure the community is actively involved in the planning effort, identifying methods to provide meaningful input and expected points of engagement.

2. **Background Research and Analysis:** The plan will look at previous studies, existing conditions, regional and adjacent jurisdictional initiatives, trends, and forecasts, as well as market and economic realities. The plan should include a socio-demographic profile of the community analyzing how Jay County has progressed as well as a snapshot of land uses, transportation, and infrastructure.
3. **Community Vision Statement:** Establish a vision for Jay County’s future.
4. **Key Planning Principles, Themes, or Topic Areas:** The plan should identify topic areas or planning principles, which reflect themes identified from gathering public input. Each topic area should be supported by a goal and several objectives that serve to organize the specific actions detailed in the plan.
5. **Goals, Objectives, and Actions:** Goals should provide intended outcomes expressed in simple terms for the plan’s topic areas or planning principles. Objectives will provide subthemes within the goal that serves to organize actions. Actions will identify a project, policy, or program, indicating the reasonable timeframe for completion and the party or parties responsible for each action.
6. **Future Land Use and Character:** In addition to the traditional Future Land Use Map, the plan should identify desired character traits for different focus areas (future growth areas, downtown) throughout Jay County. The plan should highlight the intent, uses, and preferred development standards for unique areas to help define the desired character.
7. **Project Website:** Maintain a project website related to comprehensive plan efforts. The website will, at a minimum, provide project specific information as well as an interface for the public to solicit and gain knowledge regarding the public process associated with the creation of the plan.

IV. Background on Jay County

Jay County is located in east-central Indiana along the Ohio border with a population of 20,164 (2024) residents, which reflects a -1.5% decline (314 individuals) since the 2020 census. Communities within Jay County include Portland (County Seat), Bryant, Dunkirk, Pennville, Redkey, and Salamonina. Jay County’s economy is supported by manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare, and regional workforce connectivity. The county also benefits from proximity to larger regional economic centers including Muncie and the Fort Wayne metropolitan area. Like many rural communities, Jay County faces challenges and opportunities including housing availability, workforce attraction, redevelopment of underutilized sites, infrastructure improvements, and economic diversification.

V. Rate of Qualifications

The Statement of Qualifications must include sufficient information regarding qualifications and determine that the respondent is qualified and has relevant experience. Do not include a proposed fee as this is a qualification-based selection process. The statement of qualifications should include the following:

1. A description of expertise, experience and resources directly relevant and available for the proposed project.
2. A list of similar projects previously completed.
3. A list of references.
4. Resumes of professional staff members that will work on this project.
5. Name of person to be in charge of project.
6. Description of scope of services as per “Description of Services Needed”.
7. A project timeline.

The statement of qualifications shall also provide the following information: name, title, address and telephone number of individuals with authority to negotiate and bind the proposer contractually, and who may be contacted during the period of evaluation.

VI. Award of Contract

Evaluation criteria shall include:

1. Specialized experience or technical expertise of the organization and its personnel in connection with the scope of services to be provided and complexity of the project (Rating 1-5; Weight 10 = Possible 50 pts).
2. Past record of performance on contracts, including quality of work, timeliness and cost control (Rating 1-5; Weight 10 = Possible 50 pts).
3. Capacity of the organization to perform the work within time limitations, taking into consideration the current planned workload of the firm (Rating 1-5; Weight 10 = Possible 50 pts).
4. Familiarity of the organization with this type of project or problems applicable to the project (Rating 1-5; Weight 10 = Possible 50 pts).
5. Reference check (Rating 1-5; Weight 10 = Possible 50 pts).

VII. Selection schedule:

After a review of the proposals received on May 1, 2026, the top-performing firms will be invited to an interview the week of May 11, 2026, before making the final selection of a consultant for the project. The number of firms invited to interview will be determined based on the total number of submissions and how closely firms score in the proposal-review process. Once a firm has been selected, and contract negotiation has occurred, the firm will be recommended to the Jay County Board of Commissioners for its consideration and contract approval. The contract is tentatively scheduled to be awarded following the announcement of OCRA’s 2026 Planning Grant Awards.

VIII. Disclaimers

County Obligation: There is not expressed or implied obligation for the County to reimburse firms for any expenses incurred in preparing proposals in response to this request.

Late Submissions: Any proposal received after the deadline will not be accepted or considered.

Withdrawal of Proposal: Respondents may withdraw all or any portion of a proposal at any time during and after the review and awarded process, up to the ratification of an agreement between the County and the designated firm.

Withdrawal of Request for Qualifications. The County retains at all times the right to cancel or withdraw this RFQ, to refuse to accept a proposal from any respondent and to modify or amend any portion of this RFQ. Notification will be provided to all consultants involved in the RFQ process.

Applicable Laws Shall Apply: The contract awarded shall be governed in all respects by the laws of Indiana, and the firm awarded the contract shall comply with applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations.

Contract: The contract will be awarded to a single Firm. The contract for services is anticipated to begin on a date to be determined based on the commitment of grant funding. The contract will be reviewed by the County Attorney. Jay County will execute either a firm, fixed-price contract, or a cost-reimbursement contract for these services that is contingent on the final commitment of grant funding. Jay County may or may not negotiate the fee schedule with one or more offers, pending grant funding. The County reserves the right to reject any and/or all responses. Jay County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

IX: Submittal Instructions

If you are interested in providing the required services, please submit six (6) copies of the Statement of Qualification to Jay County, Auditor's Office, 120 N. Court Street, Portland, Indiana 47371 no later than 12:00 p.m. (Noon) local time on May 1, 2026. Each Statement of Qualification will be reviewed for completeness and clarity according to the above criteria. Interviews are expected to be held the week of May 11, 2026. Offerors may desire additional information, a site visit or clarification regarding the Statement of Qualification. If so, please contact Ceann Bales between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. local time at (260) 726-9311.

