



Entrepreneurship & Innovation SmartZone 2.0

Facilitator Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Issue Date: April 7, 2026

A.) PURPOSE

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (“MEDC”) is issuing this Request for Qualifications (“RFQ”) to solicit qualifications from experienced individuals or firms to serve as the SmartZone 2.0 Working Group Facilitator.

The selected Contractor will provide facilitation, coordination, and strategic support services to assist MEDC and statewide SmartZone stakeholders in developing governance frameworks, policy recommendations, and potential legislative updates associated with the SmartZone 2.0 initiative.

This RFQ does not constitute a contract or an offer to contract. MEDC reserves the right to reject any or all responses and to waive irregularities in accordance with applicable procurement policies.

B.) BACKGROUND STATEMENT

On June 29, 2000, the State of Michigan enacted Public Act 248 to increase public and private partnership for the facilitation of technology transfer and commercialization efforts. The legislation expanded the authority of the Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA) by allowing the creation of up to ten certified technology parks, known as SmartZones and extended the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to help fund these. Public Act 57 of 2018 recodified the LDFA Act by providing more specific statutory language for the establishment of a certified technology park, authorized the creation of Satellite SmartZones by existing parent SmartZones, and formally closed the application period for new SmartZones and satellites effective September 1, 2016.

The purpose of SmartZones was to create concentrated centers of high-technology innovation by fostering partnerships between the public and private sectors. Each SmartZone is required to be in collaboration between at least one local unit of government and at least one public university, although multiple universities may participate. Representatives from all participating entities must serve on the governing authority, ensuring shared oversight and cooperation. Public Act 248 formalized this by creating the framework designed to leverage university research, encourage commercialization, and stimulate high-technology economic development through structured public-private collaboration.¹

Over the past six months, an internal cross-functional team at the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) has explored potential updates to the State of Michigan’s SmartZone structure and related program administration guidelines. Recognizing that statutory changes require broad legislative support and stakeholder alignment, MEDC is transitioning from internal design to a collaborative co-creation model.

¹ https://ced.msu.edu/upload/reports/SmartZones--final_copy.pdf



The next phase of this effort will launch the SmartZone 2.0 Working Group — a statewide consortium composed of SmartZone leaders, MEDC representatives, and ecosystem partners. This group will jointly refine governance structures, policy frameworks, and operational design to modernize and strengthen Michigan’s innovation ecosystem.

To ensure effective coordination and engagement, the MEDC is seeking a qualified facilitator to lead and manage the SmartZone 2.0 Working Group process.

C.) SCOPE OF WORK

The Contractor shall provide professional facilitation and coordination services, including but not limited to the following:

1.1 Meeting Facilitation

- Plan and facilitate monthly two (2) hour hybrid Working Group sessions (Lansing-based with virtual participation capability).
- Manage meeting flow, engagement strategies, and stakeholder participation.
- Coordinate meeting logistics, materials, and technology.

1.2 Content Development

- Develop agendas, presentations, and collaborative working materials.
- Prepare structured discussion tools (e.g., prompts, polls, draft frameworks).
- Align meeting content with project objectives and timelines.

1.3 Strategic Coordination

- Collaborate with MEDC’s Innovation Team to synthesize stakeholder input.
- Identify emerging themes and recommend agenda refinements.
- Advise MEDC on follow-up actions and stakeholder engagement strategies.

1.4 Documentation and Reporting

- Record decisions and action items.
- Provide written post-meeting summaries and synthesis briefs.
- Maintain documentation within a shared digital collaboration platform.

1.5 Ecosystem Engagement

- Support inclusive participation from diverse SmartZones.
- Collect and transmit relevant materials generated by Working Group participants.



D.) DELIVERABLES

The Contractor shall produce the following deliverables:

- Facilitation of monthly Working Group sessions;
- Written meeting summaries and synthesis briefs;
- Draft governance and policy framework documents;
- Contributions to a SmartZone 2.0 implementation playbook; and
- Input into a legislative strategy outline

E.) MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Respondents must demonstrate:

- Experience in professional facilitation and strategic planning;
- Experience in economic development and/or innovation ecosystem coordination;
- Direct experience working with SmartZones or similar innovation-based economic development entities (required);
- Proficiency in virtual and hybrid meeting technologies and collaborative platforms;
- Strong written and verbal communication skills.

Preferred qualifications include:

- Experience working with public-sector entities;
- Experience supporting legislative or statutory initiatives.

F.) TERM OF ENGAGEMENT

- Estimated Duration: Approximately six (6) months
- Estimated Level of Effort: Approximately twenty (20) hours per month
- Compensation: To be negotiated (hourly or fixed monthly rate)
- Payment Terms: Monthly invoicing, subject to MEDC approval

MEDC reserves the right to extend or modify the term at its sole discretion.

G.) PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Respondents shall submit the following:

1. Cover Letter (maximum two pages) summarizing qualifications and understanding of the engagement.
2. Resume or Organizational Profile detailing relevant experience.
3. Proposed Fee Structure, including hourly rate or fixed monthly fee.
4. References, including at least two (2) professional references for comparable engagements.



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

All proposals must be submitted electronically in PDF format to:

Alison Todak

Vice President, Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Michigan Economic Development Corporation

todaka@michigan.org

Proposals must be received no later than **5 pm on April 14, 2026**.

Late submissions may be rejected.

H.) GENERAL CONDITIONS

- MEDC reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFQ at any time.
- All materials submitted become the property of MEDC.
- Issuance of this RFQ does not obligate MEDC to award a contract.
- The selected Contractor will be required to enter into a written agreement with MEDC and comply with all applicable State of Michigan contracting requirements.



APPENDIX A
SmartZone Business Incubator List

The following entities are serving as SmartZone Business Incubators:

Entity Name
20 Fathoms*
Ann Arbor SPARK
Automation Alley
Battle Creek Unlimited
Central Michigan University Research Corporation (CMURC)
City of Sterling Heights (Velocity)
Economic Development Alliance of St. Clair County
Ferris Wheel dba 100K Ideas*
Grand Valley State University / West Michigan Science & Technology Initiative (WMSTI) / Grand Rapids SmartZone
Headwaters North Corporation
Innovate Marquette SmartZone
Lakeshore Advantage
Lansing/East Lansing SmartZone/Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP)
Lawrence Technological University
Lean Rocket Lab
Lenawee County Economic Development Corporation (Lenawee Now)
Michigan Tech Enterprise Corporation (MTEC) SmartZone
Midland Business Alliance Foundation
Muskegon Innovation Hub at Grand Valley State University
Oakland University Incubator
TechTown
Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine

* While not formally recognized as a SmartZone, the facility effectively serves as a business incubator to address regional economic development needs.