



## Request for Proposals

### *Student-led, Consultant-Guided Feasibility Study for Electrified Trails*

#### **Description**

The Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development (CUPPAD) Regional Commission and Innovate Marquette (IMQT) are seeking proposals for a consultant project leader capable of organizing and engaging a team of students for the purpose of developing an electrified trails feasibility study in the Central UP. This project is one component of a recently funded grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to develop an Outdoor Recreation Industry Innovation Growth Strategy, focusing on the counties of Alger, Delta, Dickinson, Marquette, Menominee, and Schoolcraft.

The Outdoor Recreation Innovation Action Network (ORIAN) is a recently appointed public-private committee that will serve as the steering committee for the overall project to create a strategic growth plan for the region, focusing on electrified outdoor recreation and mobility. This *Student-led* project component will supplement the plan, while providing practical research opportunities for regional students and further establishing the concept of an outdoor recreation industry-focused innovation district.

To accomplish this component, CUPPAD is seeking a higher education partner, economic or planning consulting firm, or qualified individual to assemble a team of university students to carry out the task of developing the feasibility study. The electrified trails feasibility study, which is focused on electrified mobility, will identify potential trail segments from around the central upper peninsula, then assess them against a variety of factors to determine the strengths, challenges, and estimated costs of developing a pilot trail segment, then provide recommendations for the preferred alternative. The selected consultant will guide, manage, and support the student team from project initiation to completion, beginning with developing a scope of work and ending with a presentation and report to the ORIAN committee.

Proposals should demonstrate knowledge of the Central Upper Peninsula of Michigan, strong connections to institutions of higher education, broad familiarity with electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and outdoor recreation mobility.

#### **Background**

CUPPAD, a regional planning organization, is the U.S. EDA's designated Economic Development District for the central upper peninsula's six-county region. As part of that role, CUPPAD maintains a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which describes general priorities and development projects of the region and is one factor in enabling local partners to be eligible for federal funding. Two key priorities discussed in the CEDS include the need for greater economic diversification and supporting the transition away to more sustainable sources of energy. In 2019, the Presque Isle Power plant, located in Marquette County ceased operations while taking approximately 70 jobs with it, enabling the region to become eligible for *Assistance to Coal Communities funding*, which this project is primarily funded by.

Recent economic planning has pointed to the outdoor recreation sector as a key regional strength which presents new unique opportunities for the Upper Peninsula as we begin to see the emergence of electrified vehicles. By developing a growth strategy that analyzes this emerging industry and provides detailed insights on the environment of the region, the region can learn what actions government and economic leaders can take to build the foundations that support growth and educate decision-makers about electrified mobility as it relates to outdoor recreation.

Innovate Marquette offers access to critical resources, mentorship, funding, talent and network collaboration to entrepreneurs, existing businesses and startups. As one of 20 SmartZones designated by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Innovate Marquette works with partners to create a thriving local entrepreneurial ecosystem. With an emphasis on technology-focused ventures in outdoor innovation, creative technology, and sustainable technology Innovate Marquette aims to draw economic opportunity to the region and sustain an inclusive and approachable business community. Through a customized innovation journey and partnerships with the MEDC, City of Marquette, Northern Michigan University and other local economic development organizations, Innovate Marquette helps create a comprehensive network to support current and future economic development in the region.

### **Expectations**

The selected consultant will be responsible for enlisting a team of university students who will be the primary study team for this project. The project allows for flexibility in its structure, such that the students may be part of an internship, as employees paid by the consultant, or in coordination with a university over the course of a semester. Students should be selected based on their qualifications, such as programmatic area of study, research and work experience, and ability to participate in the project to completion. Students may be selected from a single university, or they may come from a variety of institutions. This program will require travel for a final report presentation in May 2025, and so it is advised that the students should be located within a 500-mile driving range of Marquette, Michigan.

The consultant will be responsible for selecting and managing the student team, which includes assisting in developing a scope of work that shows understanding of the project, ensuring milestones are met, providing advisory support and guidance in research activities, taking necessary steps to mitigate project barriers, and reviewing and providing constructive comments on draft documents.

After the consultant selects the student team, they will work together to develop a draft scope of work for the electrified trails feasibility study, which will show a clear understanding of the project and the expected deliverable. Students should be assigned clear roles and responsibilities relating to the scope, for example: *writer, editor, GIS coordinator, and communications and outreach*. The team will then attend an ORIAN committee meeting to make introductions and present their scope of work while inviting feedback from ORIAN. Factors to investigate include EV charging stations along trail segments, Wi-Fi connectivity, and smart lighting. Upon an agreed upon scope, the team will commence the project phase. Virtual presentations will be accommodated. After completion of the draft feasibility study, students will present their findings to ORIAN and again invite final comments on the draft. The expectation is that the project will be completed no later than May 2025, so that the feasibility study may be presented alongside the Outdoor Recreation Innovation Growth Strategy at the U.P. Outdoor Recreation Summit in May 2025.

This is a work for hire project. All materials prepared by the contractor for this package of services will be the property of the funders.

## Goals

- Identify existing motorized trail network in the six-county Central UP region.
- Interview key leaders including those from local government, DNR and other trail owners, energy providers, and recreational vehicle clubs; solicit suggestions on trail segments.
- Develop maps which identify the location of trail segments to be studied.
- Assess trail segments against various factors, such as strategic location, land use compatibility, difficulty of implementation, and estimated costs.
- Develop a ranked list of preferred options using a weighted criteria.
- Develop a brief report that summarizes the results and provides recommendations for the top options; coordinate recommendations with the development of the Outdoor Recreation Innovation Growth Strategy.
- Present findings.

## Deliverables

- Develop a complete scope of work that will guide the project.
- A complete report that summarizes project methodology, feasibility analysis, segment ranking, recommend top projects for the region to consider, and include citations to any outside sources of information.
- A final PowerPoint presentation that summarizes the findings of the report, to be presented in-person at the UP Outdoor Recreation Summit in May 2025.

## Timeline

Timeline is estimated and deliverable focused. The project timeline is expected to be an approximately four-month program of work which may take place between the dates of September 2024 and May 2025.

- RFP Released: Tuesday, August 6, 2024
- RFP closes: Friday, August 30, 2024 at 5:00 PM EST
- Consultant selections made and applicants informed: Friday, September 6, 2024
- Consultant and student team introduced to the ORIAN committee to explain scope and gain feedback: January 2025
- Development of Electrified Trails Feasibility Study: January 2025 – May 2025
- Presentation on completed feasibility study at the UP Outdoor Recreation Summit: May 2025

## Budget

This project is financed with funds provided through the U.S. EDA. The contract for this project may be subject to approval by the U.S. EDA. CUPPAD has budgeted not to exceed \$60,000 for this component of the project.

Please be sure to include a basic outline of the program budget in the Cost Proposals section of the proposal.

## Proposal Submission

CUPPAD will accept submissions from contractors who demonstrate a clear understanding of the proposed project in the context the Central U.P.

A complete proposal packet should include the following headings:

1. **Organization Overview/ Summary:** General information about your organization, including legal name, year of establishment, and organizational experience and success directly related to the RFP content.
  - **Project Staff:** Identify the lead contact person for project implementation and including their applicable skills. Acknowledge that key staffing changes must be discussed/approved by Ryan Soucy, CUPPAD Senior Planner. The student team may be selected after the contract is awarded.
  - **Experience Type:** Description of types of experience and how it relates to current project. Provide a reference that can speak to the consultant’s experience.
2. **Project Approach:** Describe how you will operationalize the RFP deliverables and how they directly inform the goals of the project. Describe how you will work with the ORIAN Committee and Strategy Consultant.
3. **Cost Proposal:** Present a draft budget including a breakdown of costs related to the deliverables and project oversight/administration. Budget should be broken down by task.
4. **Schedule and Required Information:** Include a project timetable for completion.

Please submit proposals electronically to Ryan Soucy, Senior Planner at [RSOUCY@CUPPAD.ORG](mailto:RSOUCY@CUPPAD.ORG). **The deadline for the submission of proposals is Friday, August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 5:00 PM EST.** If there are any questions regarding this RFP, please contact Ryan Soucy by Monday, August 26<sup>th</sup>. An email confirming receipt of your submission will be sent within 24 hours. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals early to avoid any technical difficulties. Late submissions will not be accepted, no exceptions.

**Selection Process and Evaluation**

Proposals will be evaluated according to the quality of the responses to the sections identified in the Proposal Submission section. Proposals will be evaluated by content addressing our unique regional circumstances, experience of the consultant, and ability to meet project expectations. Please ensure that your proposal is complete.

Proposals will be evaluated among a team of local partners the week of September 2<sup>nd</sup>. A selected applicant will be contacted on September 6<sup>th</sup>. Firms not selected will be contacted the following week. Please do not call to check on the status of your proposal.

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Criteria	Points
Ability to meet project expectations	20
Consultant’s capacity and experience, including demonstrated ability to manage students	30
Expertise related to outdoor recreation and electrified mobility	15
Clarity and focus of project approach relative to deliverables	20
Consultant’s familiarity with the Central Upper Peninsula	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>