

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
FOR
SCRCOG FORWARD – AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN
(2027-2032)

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<u>Issue Date</u>	Tuesday, September 1 st , 2027
<u>Deadline for Questions</u>	Thursday, September 17 th , 2027 at 12:00 P.M. ET
<u>Response Date/Time</u>	Tuesday, October 6 th , 2027, at 12:00 P.M. ET

1.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Introduction

SCRCOG is seeking a qualified consultant to lead a comprehensive strategic planning process that will establish organizational priorities and a clear direction for the next five [5] years.

The process should help SCRCOG define what it should be, what services and functions should receive the greatest emphasis, how it can best serve its member municipalities, and how its organizational and financial resources should be aligned with those priorities. Qualified firms with demonstrated experience in organizational strategic planning, organizational development, public administration, municipal and regional government operations, and intergovernmental collaboration and service delivery are encouraged to submit proposals. Experience working with councils of governments, regional planning organizations, municipalities, or other public sector entities is highly desirable.

The resulting Strategic Plan should be practical and implementation-oriented, with clearly defined goals, strategies, actions, responsibilities, timelines, and performance measures.

All work performed under this contract must be managed by professionals with demonstrated subject matter expertise. Firms must be registered and in good standing with the Connecticut Secretary of State unless operating as sole practitioners.

A selection panel, comprised of SCRCOG staff and municipal representatives, will review and evaluate all submissions. The final contract will be subject to approval by the SCRCOG Board. The study is expected to be completed no later than, June 30, 2026.

1.2 Issuing Organization

SCRCOG is a regional planning organization representing fifteen (15) municipalities in South Central Connecticut. The municipalities within the region are Bethany, Branford, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, Madison, Meriden, Milford, New Haven, North Branford, North Haven, Orange, Wallingford, West Haven and Woodbridge. The primary focus of SCRCOG is to coordinate planning on a regional basis while fostering communication and collaboration among its member municipalities in identifying and addressing regional issues. SCRCOG provides municipal services and serves as region's Metropolitan Planning Agency (MPO), which plans and manages the region's transportation planning and investments.

1.3 Information & Inquiries

Updates and addenda to this RFP will be posted at <https://scrcog.org/>

Inquiries regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing and sent by **Thursday, September 17th at 12:00 P.M. ET** through email to:

Laura Francis, Executive Director

South Central Regional Council of Governments

127 Washington Avenue, 4th Floor West, North Haven, CT 06473

scrcog@scrcog.org

SCRCOG will post written responses and/or any supplementary instructions in the form of written addenda at <https://scrcog.org> by **Thursday, September 24th at 12:00 P.M. ET.**

1.4 Response Deadline

Responses to this RFP must be received by **Tuesday, October 6th at 12:00 P.M. ET** and be addressed to:

South Central Regional Council of Governments

Attn: **Laura Francis, Executive Director**

127 Washington Avenue, 4th Floor West

North Haven, CT 06473

SCRCOG is requesting six (6) printed copies of the proposal. In addition, respondents must submit an electronic copy via email to purchasing@scrcog.org containing a single PDF file of the proposal, not to exceed thirty (30) total pages, and a PowerPoint presentation for the interview process not to exceed ten (10) slides. Both the required physical submission materials and electronic submission materials must be received for a proposal to be considered responsive to this RFP.

1.5 Submission of Responses

All physical submissions must include six (6) printed copies. In addition, respondents must submit an electronic copy via email to purchasing@scrcog.org containing a single PDF file of the proposal that is not to exceed 30 total pages, inclusive of all submission materials identified in Sections 3.0 & 4.0, including Letters of Interest, resumes, organizational charts, schedules, and additional materials, and the PowerPoint presentation for the interview (10 slides maximum):

South Central Regional Council of Governments

Attn: **Laura Francis, Executive Director**

127 Washington Avenue, 4th Floor West

North Haven, CT 06473

All subsequent communications, including shortlist notifications and interview invitations, will be conducted via email.

The physical submission and electronic email subject must be clearly marked:

"RFP #027-04: SCRCOG Forward – An Organizational Strategic Plan (2027-2032)"

SCRCOG reserves the right to accept or reject, in whole or in part, any response and may waive any informality.

1.6 Cost of Response Preparation

No reimbursement will be made by SCRCOG for any costs incurred in the preparation of a response or during the selection process.

1.7 Proposal to be in Effect

The proposal shall state that it is valid for a period of not less than ninety (90) days from the date of receipt by SCRCOG. No changes or additions to the original response will be allowed after the final deadline for submission.

1.8 Primary Project Responsibility

The Respondent responding to this RFP will be considered the lead party. It must be clearly understood that the lead party will enter a contract with SCRCOG. All other parties will be considered sub-consultants to the lead party. The lead party is ultimately responsible for the performance of all contract work.

1.9 Ownership Information

All responses submitted will be the property of SCRCOG and its member municipalities. All confidential business information protected from disclosure under the State of Connecticut Freedom of Information Act must be clearly identified as such.

1.10 Equal Opportunity Requirements

Respondents must meet all Municipal, State and Federal affirmative action and equal employment opportunity practices. This includes compliance with E.O. 11246, "Equal Employment Opportunity," as amended by E.O. 11375, "Amending Executive Order 11246 Relating to Equal Employment Opportunity," and as supplemented by regulations at 41 CFR part 60, "Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, Equal Employment Opportunity, Department of Labor."

2.0 SCOPE OF SERVICES

The consultant will lead a comprehensive organizational strategic planning process to assess SCRCOG's current role, programs and services, governance, organizational capacity, workforce, partnerships, and future opportunities, and establish a clear strategic direction for the organization over the next five years.

The process will culminate in SCRCOG Forward: An Organizational Strategic Plan (2027–2032), providing a focused set of strategic priorities, measurable goals, and an actionable framework to guide organizational decision-making, investment, and performance.

2.1 Project Kickoff

The consultant will conduct a project kickoff meeting with SCRCOG Staff that will:

- Confirm the project schedule, major milestones, meetings, workshops, decision points, and deliverables;
- Establish a coordinated stakeholder engagement approach for the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, SCRCOG leadership and staff, member municipal officials and staff, and other key stakeholders, as appropriate;
- Identify appropriate methods for engagement, which may include interviews, surveys, focus groups, workshops, and facilitated discussions;
- Demonstrate how the individual tasks will be integrated into a cohesive organizational strategic planning process.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The consultant will conduct an existing conditions and environmental assessment to establish a clear understanding of SCRCOG's current position and the internal and external factors likely to influence its role and strategic direction over the 2027–2032 planning period.

At a minimum, the consultant will:

- Review relevant governing documents, statutory responsibilities, organizational structure, work programs, plans, major initiatives, and other relevant organizational materials;

- Identify, using the above documents and materials, significant trends and emerging issues, including changes in federal and state policy and funding, municipal fiscal conditions, workforce, technology, demographics, regional needs, and expectations placed upon COGs; and
- Assess key governmental, institutional, regional, and other relationships that influence SCRCOG's role.
- Assess SCRCOG's current organizational strengths, challenges, opportunities, risks, and capacity as a foundation for the strategic planning process.

2.3 Member Coordination and Stakeholder Engagement

The consultant will conduct stakeholder engagement using an appropriate combination of interviews, surveys, focus groups, workshops, and/or other methods. Engagement will include the SCRCOG Board of Directors and Executive Committee, SCRCOG leadership and staff, member municipal chief elected officials and appropriate municipal staff, and selected external partners, as appropriate.

The engagement process will assess:

- Perceptions of SCRCOG's organizational role, effectiveness, responsiveness, and value;
- Programs and services that provide the greatest member value and those that should be strengthened, modified, expanded, or reconsidered;
- Unmet and emerging municipal needs and opportunities for new or enhanced regional services; and
- Expectations and priorities for SCRCOG's role and organizational direction over the next five years.

2.4 Strategic Direction and Visioning

Mission, Vision, Core Values and Organizational Value Proposition (2.4.a)

The consultant will review SCRCOG's existing mission and organizational statements and facilitate a process with the Board of Directors, leadership, and staff to develop or refine, as necessary:

- A concise mission statement that clearly communicates SCRCOG's purpose and role;

- A vision statement describing the organization's desired future role and impact;
- Core organizational values to guide decision-making, operations, and relationships; and
- A clear organizational value proposition articulating SCRCOG's unique role and the value it provides to its member municipalities.

Governance (2.4.b)

The assessment should consider:

- Roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, Executive Director, staff, committees, and working groups;
- Appropriate distinction between Board governance and organizational administration; and
- Board orientation, education, and continuity as municipal leadership and Board membership change.

Workforce Development and Succession Planning (2.4.c)

The assessment should consider:

- Opportunities to develop and retain internal talent;
- Recruitment and retention challenges and strategies;
- Succession planning for executive leadership and other key positions;
- Opportunities for cross-training, knowledge transfer, documentation, and backup capacity and continuity to strengthen continuity of operations.

Inter-COG Collaboration and Strategic Partnerships (2.4.d)

The assessment should consider:

- Existing inter-COG and strategic partnerships and opportunities to strengthen or expand successful collaborations;
- Functions or initiatives where collaboration could provide greater capacity, expertise, efficiency, economies of scale, or member value;
- Opportunities for joint procurement, technical resources, training, and other organizational capabilities; and

- Opportunities for joint programs, studies, regional initiatives, or service delivery.

Financial Sustainability and Resource Strategy (2.4.e)

The consultant will assess SCRCOG's financial structure and resource model to determine its ability to sustainably support current responsibilities, programs and services, and future strategic priorities. This assessment is intended to be strategic in nature and not a financial audit.

The assessment should consider:

- The sustainability and potential vulnerabilities of SCRCOG's current funding structure, including reliance on governmental, grant, member, and other revenue sources;
- Alignment of financial resources with programs, services, staffing, organizational capacity, and future strategic priorities;
- Financial risks and long-term implications associated with existing and new programs, grant-funded initiatives, and changing governmental funding conditions; and
- Opportunities to strengthen financial resilience, diversify or better leverage resources, and support future priorities through grants, cost recovery, fees for services, cost-sharing, partnerships, or other appropriate funding mechanisms.

Strategic Priorities, Goals and Organizational Direction (2.4.f)

Drawing upon the findings and recommendations developed through the preceding tasks, the consultant will facilitate a process with SCRCOG leadership, staff, Executive Committee, and Board of Directors to establish a focused set of organizational strategic priorities, goals, and objectives for the 2027–2032 planning period.

The consultant will:

- Synthesize the major findings, opportunities, challenges, risks, member needs, and program and service considerations identified through the strategic planning process;
- Establish a focused and manageable set of strategic priorities, including priorities for SCRCOG's future programs and services, aligned with SCRCOG's mission, member needs, organizational capacity, and financial resources;

- Identify key actions, responsibilities, timelines, milestones, and resource considerations for each strategic priority; and
- Prioritize and sequence strategic initiatives based on member value, urgency, organizational readiness, capacity, financial sustainability, dependencies, and anticipated impact.
- Articulate SCRCOG's desired organizational direction and how the organization should evolve to remain effective, sustainable, responsive, and prepared for future needs.

Organizational Identity, Brand Strategy and Communications (2.4.g)

The assessment should consider:

- Clarity and consistency of SCRCOG's organizational identity and messaging across programs, initiatives, and communications;
- A tagline or organizational descriptor;
- Opportunities to strengthen organizational recognition, visibility, and understanding of SCRCOG's programs, services, accomplishments, and impact; and
- Key messages and communications approaches appropriate for SCRCOG's primary audiences.

SCRCOG Strategic Decision-Making Framework (2.4.h)

The consultant will develop a practical Strategic Decision-Making Framework to assist SCRCOG leadership and the Board of Directors in evaluating significant organizational opportunities, investments, commitments, and emerging responsibilities.

The framework should provide clear criteria for evaluating new or expanded programs and services, grant opportunities, staffing and organizational investments, partnerships, shared services, and other significant commitments. Criteria should include:

- Alignment with SCRCOG's mission, vision, core values, and strategic priorities;
- Alignment with SCRCOG's organizational role and value proposition;
- Demonstrated member need and value;
- Organizational and workforce capacity;
- Financial feasibility and long-term sustainability;
- Opportunities for collaboration or alternative delivery approaches; and

- Organizational impact, risk, and anticipated outcomes.

The framework should provide a practical and readily usable method for determining whether opportunities should be pursued, further evaluated, delivered collaboratively, deferred, or not pursued.

Implementation, KPIs and Performance Management (2.4.i)

The consultant will develop a practical implementation and performance management framework to translate SCRCOG's strategic priorities into measurable action and support ongoing monitoring, accountability, and organizational decision-making.

The framework will:

- Establish a focused and manageable set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and/or other measures to evaluate progress, organizational effectiveness, and member value;
- Identify appropriate baselines, targets, data sources, and reporting frequency, where practical;
- Provide a simple dashboard or scorecard for tracking implementation, accomplishments, challenges, and initiatives requiring attention;
- Establish a process for annual review of the Strategic Plan and adjustment of priorities, timelines, or resources in response to changing conditions; and
- Recommend how the Strategic Plan could be integrated into SCRCOG's annual work program, budgeting, staff goals, Board oversight, and organizational decision-making.

The implementation and performance management approach should be practical, scalable, and readily maintained by SCRCOG staff without significant ongoing consultant support.

2.5 Final Plan

The consultant will integrate the findings, recommendations, strategic priorities, implementation strategies, and performance measures developed through the preceding tasks into an actionable **SCRCOG Forward: An Organizational Strategic Plan (2027–2032)**.

At a minimum, the consultant will:

- Prepare a draft Strategic Plan, including a concise executive summary, that summarizes the planning process and key findings and clearly presents SCRCOG's mission, vision,

core values, organizational value proposition, organizational direction, strategic priorities, goals, and intended outcomes;

- Incorporate key recommendations related to member value, programs and services, organizational effectiveness, governance, workforce and succession, financial sustainability, collaboration, and organizational identity and communications;
- Incorporate the implementation framework, KPIs, performance monitoring approach, and Strategic Decision-Making Framework developed through preceding tasks;
- Present the draft plan to SCRCOG leadership, Executive Committee, and Board of Directors and facilitate review and discussion; and
- Incorporate appropriate revisions and prepare a final Strategic Plan for consideration and adoption by the Board of Directors.

The final Strategic Plan should synthesize the work completed throughout the engagement rather than present individual task reports as separate studies. Detailed implementation tools and supporting analyses may be included as appendices or companion materials to maintain a concise and usable primary document.

2.6 Project Budget

SCRCOG has budgeted up to **twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000)**, inclusive of all labor and incidental expenses, for this project.

2.7 Project Timeline

This project will begin when a contract between SCRCOG and the Consultant is executed, with a final completion date by **June 30, 2027**.

3.0 REQUIRED INFORMATION

Respondents are asked to submit responses in four parts and in this order: (1) Firm Introduction, (2) Firm Experience, (3) Project Team Qualifications, and (4) Additional Materials

3.1 Firm Introduction

The Letter of interest must specify the following:

- The name and address of the lead firm;
- Names and addresses of any proposed sub-consultants;
- Name, title, telephone number, and email address of the individuals within the firm authorized to commit to a contract;
- Name, title, telephone number, and email address of the individual SCRCOG should contact regarding questions and clarifications;
- A statement that the Respondent's proposal will remain in effect for ninety (90) days after the Respondent's proposal is received by SCRCOG;
- This section should not exceed three (3) pages.

3.2 Firm Experience

- Past successful project experience will be a key selection factor. This section should specifically identify experience in similar projects, and work with SCRCOG, other councils of governments, or municipalities.
- A detailed project approach is not required in this submission; however, summary information relating to the approach used in similar studies may be provided as an indication of your overall qualifications.
- This section should not exceed twelve (12) pages in length.

3.3 Project Team Qualifications

- Identify a Project Director who will serve as the primary contact for SCRCOG staff and will direct overall consultant efforts and allocation of resources. No more than two (2) page resume for the Project Director should be included.
- You may provide up to twelve (12) resumes total for those key staff members (including both prime consultant and subconsultant staff) who will perform leading roles. Resumes

for key staff should be in a one-page format and should identify years of experience, years with the current firm, and specific roles and assignments.

- An organizational chart should also be provided indicating the structure of the project team and a Project Manager for each assignment. This chart may include an identification of additional supporting staff, as appropriate. Staff members may serve in a supporting role for more than one assignment, but each study should have a designated Project Manager.
- The Project Manager and team leaders for the project must be current full-time employees of either the prime consultant or their respective subconsultant firms.

3.4 Additional Materials

Organizational Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Respondents must complete and submit the Organizational Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form as part of their proposal submission. The disclosure shall identify any real or apparent organizational conflicts of interest, including circumstances involving impaired objectivity, unequal access to information, or biased ground rules related to proposed services. Failure to disclose relevant conflicts may result in disqualification or termination of the contract award.

4.0 SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES

Submissions must include six (6) printed copies of the proposal. In addition, respondents must submit an electronic copy via email to purchasing@scrcog.org containing a single PDF of the full proposal, not to exceed 30 pages. The physical proposals must be mailed to:

South Central Regional Council of Governments

Attn: **Laura Francis, Executive Director**

127 Washington Avenue, 4th Floor West

North Haven, CT 06473

Submission must be received no later than **Tuesday, October 6th, 2026 at 12:00 P.M. ET**. Late submissions will not be considered.

The physical submissions must include:

- The Respondent's name and mailing address
- Primary contact name, title, phone number, and email address
- A clear attachment of all required materials

The email submission to purchasing@scrcog.org must include:

- A single PDF of the full proposal
- A PowerPoint presentation for the interview process, not to exceed ten (10) slides

The outer packing of the physical submission and email subject of the submission must be clearly labeled:

"RFP #027-04: SCRCOG Forward – An Organizational Strategic Plan (2027-2032)"

SCRCOG reserves the right to reject or accept, in whole or in part, any response and may waive any informalities or minor technical deficiencies in a submission.

5.0 EVALUATION AND SELECTION

5.1 Evaluation Criteria

The Selection Panel will evaluate all responses using the following core criteria, which will inform necessary evaluation decisions of the review process. The criteria are below:

- Prior related project expertise;
- Professional experience of the team; and
- Completeness and quality of response outlined in Section 3.0 Required Information

5.2 Selection Process

A selection panel shall assist SCRCOG in choosing the successful firm for this contract.

Respondents submitting the most responsive proposals may be invited to an interview with the selection committee. Respondents are not guaranteed an interview. It is anticipated that interviews will be conducted for approximately 30 minutes; however, this is not guaranteed and may be subject to change. It is anticipated that interviews will take place the week of October 13th, 2026. As part of the interview process, respondents shall submit a PowerPoint presentation, not to exceed ten (10) slides. There are no required elements for the PowerPoint presentation; what is included is within full discretion of the Respondent.

Responses to this RFP will be reviewed against criteria listed above in Section 5.1. SCRCOG anticipates conducting interviews in-person or hybrid and executing a contract shortly thereafter or in a manner as needed; however, the schedule is subject to change at SCRCOG's discretion.

SCRCOG reserves the right to: (1) reject any or all responses, or parts thereof, for any reason, (2) negotiate changes to proposal terms, and (3) waive minor inconsistencies within the RFP.

SCRCOG reserves the right to make selections based on qualifications, experience in providing similar services, and the Respondent's responsiveness to the RFP requirements.

6.0 GENERAL PROVISIONS

- A. All work shall be performed in accordance with all Federal, State, and Municipal laws and regulations
- B. The Selected Consultant shall uphold the highest professional standards in all dealings with elected officials, public officials, SCRCOG employees, municipal volunteers, contractors, vendors, and all others when representing SCRCOG.
- C. The selected Consultant shall be responsible for identifying, certifying, and adhering to any changes in Federal, State, and Municipal laws and/or provisions that occur throughout the term of the Contract issued pursuant to this RFP and the performance of the work.
- D. The selected Consultant shall provide all necessary office space, office supplies, copy and fax machines, communication devices, computer software, hardware and equipment, vehicles, and all other items necessary to successfully complete the work contemplated in this RFP.

6.1 Amending or Canceling Request

The Selection Panel will evaluate all proposals using the following core criteria, which will inform necessary evaluation decisions of the review process.

6.2 Insurance Requirements

The respondent shall, at its own expense and cost, obtain and keep in force during the entire transition and contract period the following insurance coverages covering the respondent and all of its agents, employees and sub-contractors and other providers of services. The Consultant shall maintain and produce evidence throughout the term of this Agreement of required insurance coverage not less than the following:

- 1) Commercial General Liability Insurance written on an ISO Occurrence Form or its equivalent relating to work performed under the Agreement providing a limit of not less than \$1,000,000 in the aggregate and not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence for the bodily injury, personal injury and property damage and \$1,000,000 products/completed operations and contractual coverage which will remain in effect for the period of this agreement;
- 2) SCRCOG must be named as additional insured on all policies listed in the foregoing subparagraph (A) pursuant to endorsements to each of such policies and the

Consultant must be named as additional insured on all such policies obtained by its subcontractors;

- 3) Consultant will also maintain Statutory Workers' Compensation and Employer's Liability Insurance covering all the Contractor's employees engaged in the work performed under this Agreement; and,
- 4) Certificates of insurance in the ISO Occurrence Form must be supplied for review and approval prior to the Consultant's commencement of work under this Agreement. The Contractor shall release and waive all rights of subrogation against SCRCOG possessed by the Consultant's insurers with respect to the assumption and discharge of the obligations of the Consultant pursuant to this paragraph, and the Consultant represents and warrants that it is authorized to make such release and waiver under its policies of insurance. Each issuer of each insurance policy required to be maintained under this Agreement shall evidence its agreement that each such policy shall not be cancelled without not less than 30 days prior notice to SCRCOG.

6.3 Independent Contractor Status

The Consultant shall perform all services under the contract as an independent contractor and not as an agent, employee, or partner of SCRCOG. Nothing in this agreement shall be construed to establish a joint venture, agency, or employment relationship.

6.4 Ownership of Work Product

All data collected, materials prepared, and other deliverables produced under the agreement shall become the sole and exclusive property of SCRCOG. No materials may be copied, disclosed, or used by the Consultant for any purpose other than fulfilling obligations without express written permission from SCRCOG.

6.5 Records and Audit Rights

The Consultant shall maintain complete and accurate records related to performance and costs for a period of six (6) years following final payment. SCRCOG reserves the right to audit, examine, and make copies of such records at any time.

6.6 No Equipment Purchases Without Approval

No equipment purchases shall be made using project funds without the prior written consent of SCRCOG.

6.7 Disclaimer

SCRCOG makes no representation or warranty and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information set forth in this RFP. Further, SCRCOG does not warrant nor make any representations as to the quality, content, accuracy or completeness of the information, text, graphics, links or other facets of this RFP once it has been downloaded or printed from this or any server, and hereby disclaims any liability for technical errors or difficulties of any nature that may arise in connection with the website on which this RFP is posted, or in connection with any other electronic medium utilized by Respondents or potential Respondents in connection with or otherwise related to the RFP.