Request for Qualifications (RFQ)
Conference Center & Hotel Feasibility Study
Sumner County, Tennessee: Issued by Forward Sumner
Issue Date: 10-19-26 Statements of Qualifications Due:11-19-26 4:00 PM CT

1. Introduction & Background

Forward Sumner is Sumner County's public-private economic development partnership. As part of Sumner County's Three-Star Grant Process with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD), administered locally through the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC), Forward Sumner is undertaking a feasibility study for a proposed conference center and hotel development in Sumner County.

In 2026, Forward Sumner solicited potential development sites from municipalities, property owners, and brokers throughout Sumner County. Several candidate sites were identified through that process. Forward Sumner is now seeking a qualified consultant to evaluate the actual development viability of these identified sites, supply the supporting market and economic data needed to compare them, and help Forward Sumner finalize a preferred location (or short list of locations) for the project.

This is a Request for Qualifications, not a request for open site submissions — the sites to be studied are already identified (5 total) and will be provided by Forward Sumner. Respondents are not asked to identify additional sites unless, in the course of their analysis, none of the identified sites prove viable.

Selection under this RFQ is qualifications-based: Forward Sumner will evaluate and rank firms on experience, approach, and personnel, then negotiate the detailed scope of work, fee, and contract terms with the top-ranked firm. See Sections 6, 8, and 9 for details.

2. Project Vision

This RFQ carries forward the project vision established when Forward Sumner first solicited sites for this initiative:

- A premier conference and event destination serving Sumner County and the greater Nashville region.
- A full-service hotel with 300–350 guest rooms, integrated with a 1,000-person capacity, minimum 15,000 sq ft flexible meeting, conference, and event space.
- A catalyst for tourism, workforce development, and regional economic growth.

This program is a starting reference point; the selected consultant is expected to validate, refine, or revise it based on market findings.

The consultant's work should accomplish three objectives:

- Determine whether a conference center and hotel of viable scale can actually be supported at each identified site, from both a physical/development and a market/financial standpoint.
- Provide the supporting economic, demographic, and market data needed to justify and defend the ultimate site selection to Forward Sumner 's Board, Sumner County government, GNRC, and TNECD.
- Deliver a clear, ranked recommendation that allows Forward Sumner to finalize a preferred site.

3. Scope of Services

A. Site Viability & Suitability Analysis (per site)

- Physical characteristics review: acreage, topography, existing structures, and site constraints.
- Zoning and land use analysis, including entitlement pathway and any rezoning likely required.
- Utility capacity and infrastructure availability: water, sewer, electric, natural gas, and broadband.
- Transportation and access analysis, including arterial access, anticipated traffic impacts, and parking capacity.
- Environmental red-flag screening (e.g., floodplain, wetlands, known contamination), a full Phase I Environmental Site Assessment is not required under this scope, but any obvious environmental constraints should be identified and flagged.
- Order-of-magnitude site development cost considerations (e.g., grading, demolition, site prep).
- A comparative suitability ranking of all sites studied, using a defined and documented scoring matrix, referencing Forward Sumner 's original minimum site criteria (Section 4).

B. Market & Demand Analysis

- Lodging and meetings/conference market analysis for Sumner County and the greater Nashville region.
- Identification of demand generators: corporate, association, SMERF, tourism, and proximity-to-Nashville demand.
- Competitive supply analysis of existing and planned conference and hotel product within the relevant trade area.
- Estimated market penetration and capture for a new facility.

C. Economic & Financial Feasibility

- Supporting economic and demographic data: population, employment, income, tourism trends, and visitation.
- Projected utilization, revenue, and expense pro forma for the conference center and hotel.
- Return-on-investment and public/private funding gap analysis.
- Estimated economic and fiscal impact to Sumner County: job creation, tax revenue, and visitor spending.
- Identification of potential funding and financing mechanisms, including public-private partnership structures,TIF, PILOT, and alignment with state/federal grant programs.

D. Site Recommendation & Final Report

- Side-by-side comparison of all sites studied against consistent criteria.
- A recommended site or ranked short list, with clear supporting rationale.
- A recommended facility program (room count, meeting/event space) calibrated to the market findings.
- A final written report and standalone executive summary suitable for presentation to the Forward Sumner Board of Directors, Sumner County government, and GNRC/TNECD.

- One in-person presentation of findings to the Forward Sumner Board of Directors and/or the Joint Economic & Community Development Board for Sumner County.

4. Sites to Be Evaluated

Minimum Site Criteria (from Forward Sumner 's original site solicitation)

These are the criteria Forward Sumner used to solicit the sites above, provided as background for the consultant's suitability analysis.

Criterion	Requirement
Acreage	Minimum 15 acres; 20+ acres preferred
Zoning / Land Use Designation	Commercial/non-residential or eligible for PUD/rezoning
Water Service	Municipal water connection with 6–8” main capacity
Sewer Service	Municipal sewer connection (septic not viable at this scale)
Electric	3-phase power; capacity for 1.5–2.5 MW peak demand
Natural Gas	Commercial-grade service line
Broadband	Fiber-optic connectivity available or planned
Road Access	Direct access to a state highway, arterial, or interstate interchange

5. Deliverables

- Draft feasibility report, submitted to Forward Sumner for review and comment.
- Final feasibility report, delivered as an editable Word file and a PDF.
- Site comparison and scoring matrix.
- Standalone, board-ready executive summary.
- One in-person presentation of findings to Forward Sumner leadership (virtual is appropriate).

6. Budget

This engagement is capped at a not-to-exceed total of $42,000, inclusive of all professional fees, travel, and reimbursable expenses.

Consistent with a qualifications-based selection process, respondents are not required to submit a detailed price proposal at this stage. Instead, please confirm your firm's ability to complete the scope in Section 3 within the $42,000 cap, and note any tasks that, in your professional judgment, may need to be phased or scoped down to fit that budget. Forward Sumner will negotiate a detailed scope of work, fee schedule, and contract terms directly with the top-ranked firm following qualifications review (see Section 9).

7. Proposed Project Timeline

Dates below are Forward Sumner's proposed schedule and may be adjusted based on the selected consultant's availability.

Milestone	Target Date
RFQ issued	10-19-26
Deadline for written questions	11-05-26
Answers to questions distributed	Within 3 business days
Statements of Qualifications due	11-19-26
Qualifications review complete / Notice of Intent to Award	12-1-26
Contract negotiation and execution	Tentatively 12-31-26
Draft feasibility report due to FSEP	(~60 days from notice to proceed)
Final report and Board presentation	As available

8. Statement of Qualifications Requirements

Respondents should submit a Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) containing the following:

- Cover letter.
- Firm qualifications and relevant experience, particularly comparable conference center / hotel feasibility studies in similarly sized markets.
- Key personnel assigned to this engagement, with resumes.
- Proposed methodology, work plan, and schedule.
- A minimum of three references from similar engagements.
- A statement confirming the firm's ability to complete the scope of services within the $42,000 not-to-exceed budget (see Section 6), a detailed cost proposal is not required at this stage.
- A current W-9 and certificate of insurance.
- A statement of compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other applicable nondiscrimination requirements, consistent with the Three-Star Grant Program's procurement requirements.
- Disclosure of any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

9. Evaluation Criteria

Statements of Qualifications will be evaluated and scored using the following weighted criteria. Cost is not scored at this stage; it will instead be negotiated with the top-ranked firm as part of the contract negotiation process described in Sections 1 and 6.

Criterion	Weight
Relevant experience and qualifications (comparable conference center / hotel feasibility engagements)	**35%**
Proposed approach, methodology, and work plan	**30%**
Qualifications of key personnel assigned to the project	**20%**
References and past performance	**15%**

10. General Terms & Conditions

- Forward Sumner reserves the right to reject any and all Statements of Qualifications and to waive minor irregularities.
- This RFQ does not commit Forward Sumner to award a contract or to reimburse any costs incurred in responding.
- Submitted materials become the property of Forward Sumner.
- Following qualifications review, Forward Sumner will issue a Notice of Intent to Award to the top-ranked firm and proceed to contract negotiation to determine final scope, fee, and contract terms. If negotiations with the top-ranked firm are unsuccessful, Forward Sumner may proceed to the next-ranked firm.
- The selected consultant will be required to enter into a written agreement with Forward Sumner prior to beginning work.
- Because this project is funded through the Sumner County Three-Star Grant Program, the selected consultant must comply with all applicable state grant procurement, recordkeeping, and equal-opportunity/nondiscrimination requirements, and must cooperate with any related compliance documentation requested by Forward Sumner, GNRC, or TNECD.
- The selected consultant will be required to carry commercial general liability and professional liability (errors & omissions) insurance in amounts to be confirmed in the final agreement.

11. Submission Instructions

Statements of Qualifications must be submitted electronically (PDF) no later than the date and time stated on the cover page, to:

Chris Taylor, President/CEO
Forward Sumner
Chris@forwardsumner.org

615-506-4976

Questions regarding this RFQ should be directed in writing to the contact above by the deadline stated in Section 7. Answers to substantive questions will be distributed to all firms that have indicated interest.

About Forward Sumner

Forward Sumner is a non-profit economic development organization dedicated to advancing prosperity in Sumner County through strategic investment, workforce development, infrastructure improvement, and public-private collaboration. To learn more, visit forwardsumner.org.