

Request for Proposal (RFP) for Consulting Services Aerozone Economic Catalyst Plan Development

Issued by: Aerozone Alliance
Date: November 18, 2025

1. Introduction

The Aerozone Alliance (www.aerozonealliance.org), in collaboration with key regional stakeholders, is seeking qualified consulting services to develop an Economic Catalyst Plan for the Aerozone District in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. This Plan aims to harness economic growth potential by leveraging two pivotal regional anchors: Cleveland Hopkins International Airport and NASA Glenn Research Center. This initiative is supported by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and seeks to address long-standing economic development needs in the region by creating a tangible, actionable strategy to align local resources, stakeholders, and opportunities.

2. Background

The Aerozone District, a strategic regional hub for aerospace, aviation, advanced manufacturing, and logistics innovation, possesses unique assets yet has not achieved its full economic potential. The area is rich with infrastructure, skilled labor, and world-class community assets, but there has been limited aerospace growth over the past decade. This planning initiative will address this gap by aligning public entities, private sector leaders, and community stakeholders to pursue shared economic opportunities.

The Plan will build upon and integrate insights from prior assessments and plans, including:

- [Aerozone Land Use Mapping](#): Inventory of properties adjacent to anchor institutions.
- [2022 Aerozone Current State Assessment](#): Overview of existing economic, workforce, and infrastructure assets.
- [Youngstown Airport Aviation Industry Mapping](#): EDA-funded data study vital for understanding industry demands.
- [Northeast Ohio Aerospace Study](#): Strategic analysis of underutilized regional aerospace opportunities.
- [NOACA Regional CEDS](#): Regional economic development strategy prioritizing aerospace industry support.
- [Cleveland Hopkins International Airport Master Plan](#): Provides the vision for airport growth and regional connectivity.

The Aerozone Economic Catalyst Plan will analyze these resources, propose strategies for removing barriers to growth, and present a business case for future development to enhance the region's economic base.

3. Beneficiaries

This Plan will create tangible benefits for:

1. Local Residents: By expanding access to well-paying jobs and career advancement pathways.
2. Local Industry Leaders: Through enriched supply chain capabilities and expanded business opportunities.

3. Local Public Entities: By increasing the economic base through tax revenue growth and new investments.

4. Objectives

The primary objectives of this project are:

- Conduct an in-depth regional analysis to develop a baseline of aerospace economic opportunities within the Aerozone.
- Benchmark against comparable regions to understand successful strategies for driving aerospace sector growth.
- Engage industry stakeholders to validate market potential and assess barriers to entry.
- Develop a structured roadmap to support business attraction, economic expansion, and workforce development.

5. Scope of Work and Approach

The Plan will proceed in four structured phases:

Phase 1: Develop Economic Development Baseline (10% of effort)

- Data Analysis: Analyze Aerozone market data to formulate a baseline of economic potential in aerospace and related industries.
- Local Real Estate Assessment: Evaluate the Aerozone real estate assets.
- Industry Clusters: Identify current industry clusters and employment trends in aerospace.
- Impact Analysis: Assess potential economic impacts and identify barriers to growth, with initial cost estimates for interventions.
- Based on this assessment: Identify which aerospace businesses should be targeted for attraction.

Phase 2: Benchmark the Baseline (20% of effort)

- Regional Benchmarking: Compare Aerozone with four high-performing regions: two with federal research centers (e.g., Goddard Space Center, Marshall Space Center) and two with mid-market airports (e.g., Kansas City, and Nashville).
- Best Practices: Identify best practices, incentives, zoning, and other economic drivers. Refine the baseline using these findings.
- Steering Committee Input: Incorporate Aerozone Alliance Steering Committee insights on local strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

Phase 3: Market Test the Refined Baseline (30% of effort)

- Industry Validation: Identify and interview a minimum of 30 private sector aerospace businesses across sub-segments (e.g., space, aviation; commercial, civil, etc.). Consider conversations with national and multinational real estate brokers who may have a pulse on market trends.
- Refinement: Adjust baseline assumptions of what are the challenges and opportunities to enable the region to attract the businesses. Refine the projected impacts based on industry feedback.

Phase 4: Develop the Aerozone Aerospace District Economic Catalyst Plan (40% of effort)

- Plan Development: Create a comprehensive Catalyst Plan outlining business growth and attraction opportunities.

Please note: Stakeholder Engagement: Aerozone Alliance staff will manage local stakeholders and a Steering Committee to ensure local context and alignment.

6. Deliverables

The consultant will provide the following final deliverables:

1. Industry Validation Report: A market analysis of the aerospace industry's potential expansion in the region.
2. Barrier Mitigation Plan: Identification of systemic barriers, including infrastructure and organizational constraints, with estimated mitigation costs.
3. Land Access and Ownership Report: Identification of key sites within the Aerozone, land ownership details, and availability.
4. Economic Business Case: Quantification of potential job creation, payroll growth, tax revenue, capital investments, and estimated ROI.
5. Tactical Implementation Plan: A 24-month roadmap detailing specific tasks, responsible parties, and milestone dates. This includes a stakeholder alignment plan (RACI) to support coordination across agencies and entities.

7. Project Timeline and Milestones

The Aerozone Economic Catalyst Plan is scheduled for a 12-month completion with major milestones as follows:

- Months 1-2: Economic Development Baseline (10% of total effort)
- Months 3-4: Benchmarking Analysis (20% of total effort)
- Months 5-8: Market Testing and Validation (30% of total effort)
- Months 9-12: Final Plan Development (40% of total effort)

Monthly updates should be provided to the Steering Committee to maintain alignment and address any emerging requirements.

8. Allocated Budget

The EDA Grant designated up to \$90k for the consultant to conduct the project. To help offset the cost, the consultant may request specific areas where local teams can provide support. (e.g. data collection, research, etc.)

9. Consultant Qualifications

The selected consultant should have:

- Extensive experience in economic development planning, specifically within aerospace, advanced manufacturing, or logistics.
- Proven track record of conducting regional market analysis, feasibility studies, and benchmarking.
- Strong skills in stakeholder engagement, survey design, and analysis.
- Familiarity with the aerospace sector, federal research center dynamics, and public-private partnerships.

10. Proposal Requirements

Proposals should include:

- Project Approach: Describe methodology for each phase and data collection techniques.
- Relevant Experience: Summarize previous projects of similar scope with client references.
- Key Personnel: Identify project team members and their experience in similar initiatives.
- Timeline Adherence: Confirm ability to meet the project schedule.
- Budget Estimate: Provide detailed cost estimates for each project phase.

11. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Experience and qualifications in similar projects.
- Quality of methodology and project approach.
- Team expertise and qualifications.
- Alignment with the proposed timeline and budget requirements.

12. Submission Instructions

Proposals are due by [January 15, 2025] and should be submitted to [Hrishue Mahalaha, hmahalaha@aerozonealliance.org]. Any questions about this RFP should be directed to [Hrishue Mahalaha, hmahalaha@aerozonealliance.org].

We will hold 2 consultant calls on Monday, December 2nd and Monday, December 9th at 1pm EST. Please email Hrishue Mahalaha for dial-in details.