



Proposal for Economic Development Strategic Plan (2025–2030)

Submitted to: Fayette County Development Authority

Submitted by: Seeds of Change Consulting

Date: April 15, 2025

Executive Summary

We believe collective liberation is possible.

We know that none of us are free until all of us are free.

We empower change-makers with the tools they need to succeed.

Since 2019, Seeds of Change (SoC) has worked with individuals, foundations, faith-based groups, farmers, grassroots organizations, nonprofits, and businesses of every size to promote racial equity within their space in the community. SoC is a Black-owned, woman-owned firm, rooted in liberatory, justice-driven principles. Our firm is comprised of sector experts and rising stars — a diverse community of professionals with shared values and a deep commitment to social and economic justice. Our consulting partners are skilled in building relationships and drawing connections between individual lived experiences and broader systems in our communities. Combined with creative data collection and analysis methods, SoC empowers our clients with the tools and knowledge they need to shift themselves and their organizational culture towards equity and collective liberation.

The SoC team has extensive experience with strategic development projects, including hundreds of hours of equity-based, non-hierarchical skilled facilitation. Our core competencies include racial-justice practice, community action for navigating criminal legal entities, and liberation-based change work.

Our team has witnessed, firsthand, the power of cross-racial organizing to transform people, organizations, and community coalitions. We believe that a cross-racial approach and working in collaboration are critical to any successful initiative for racial justice and community growth. By working as a team in these ways, we seek to model and honor our mentors. Our approach to consulting has grown out of being called on by our respective communities to step into roles as advisors and thought partners. We focus on listening, documenting, reflecting, and coordinating to bring out the best in groups and collaborations.

Our work centers on relationship and relational accountability and applies equity throughout as both a process and an outcome. These ways of operating are reflected in our practices, processes, and the products we design and create. We work together regularly, co-facilitating as part of the SoC team, as well as facilitating multiple community organizing projects. Our collaborative style combines individual expertise and passions while utilizing an asset-based framework for pairing consultants with client projects.

Seeds of Change Consulting (SoCC) is honored to submit this proposal to partner with the Fayette County Development Authority (FCDA) in the development of a bold and comprehensive five-year **Economic Development Strategic Plan**. This plan will equip FCDA and its stakeholders with a forward-thinking roadmap tailored to Fayette County's unique strengths, recent success stories, and dynamic business climate.

Our team brings a proven track record in building strategic plans for public-private economic development organizations across the Southeast. We combine rigorous data analysis, deep community engagement, and creative policy design to deliver actionable, measurable results.

1. Project Team Overview



LaShauna Austria, a visionary leader, nurtures change through her dual roles as the driving force behind Seeds of Change Consulting and the heart of Kindred Seedlings Farm. Her journey, rooted in Alamance County, NC, embodies a commitment to rural life, advocating for land preservation and Southern food traditions. With a rich tapestry of experiences in both for-profit and nonprofit sectors, LaShauna's passion converges on advancing racial equity and reshaping food systems. Her adeptness in leadership, management, and community engagement fosters collaborations that address race, food justice, and land ownership with both secular and faith-based communities. LaShauna leverages her spiritual calling as an ordained minister to inspire anti-racism work within congregations. As Minister of Becoming and Belonging at Land of the Sky, United Church of Christ, she cultivates spaces for dialogue, reflection, and action, steering the ship of racial justice and reparations initiatives. In synergy with the Culture Mill Lab, LaShauna co-creates Barn Church—a sanctuary of multiracial fellowship and artistic expression in Saxapahaw, NC. Here, voices are amplified, diversity is celebrated, and bonds are forged over food and creative arts, embodying a vision of inclusive community activism. LaShauna's consultancy offers various services, from fostering farmers of color to organizational development, research, and racial equity training. Her holistic approach, which blends facilitation, conflict resolution, and strategic analysis, empowers individuals and organizations to embed equity into their core missions. With unwavering dedication, LaShauna sows seeds of change, nurturing communities to blossom into equitable, resilient ecosystems, one harvest at a time. ([Resume](#))



Min Jae Kim, MDiv, MSW Candidate, is a 1st-generation queer Korean immigrant-settler on Turtle Island. Her work as consultant, advocate, spiritual director, and leader in the Christian faith draws from her firm belief that the return, healing, and restoration of the self, collective, and Earth are only possible through returning the land to indigenous hands, care, spirit, and participation. Thus, she seeks to collaboratively build alternative paths that lead towards a thriving, equitable, and decolonized futures. She is working on her Master of Social Work degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). She holds a Master of Divinity from Duke University and a Bachelor of Science in Biology from UNC-CH. ([Resume](#))



Yasmeen Lee, MPH, is a health policy professional, project manager, researcher, and evaluator. She has experience in qualitative and mixed methods research. Her research expertise includes study design, recruitment, data collection, analysis, synthesis, and dissemination for varied audiences. Her mixed-methods experience includes survey development, analysis, and interpretation. She also has experience in decolonized research frameworks such as Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory, as well as experience with decolonized research methodology such as community-based participatory research (CBPR) and participatory action research (PAR). Some of her previous research includes co-authoring and collaborating on research related to breastfeeding, universal postpartum home visiting, Medicaid reimbursement for doula services, an evaluation of federal and global agency programs, and an evaluation of local and statewide food systems. Yasmeen received a bachelor's degree in Public Health from Elon University. She also received her MPH with a concentration in health policy from the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. ([Resume](#))



Lexy Roberts is a seasoned professional with a strong public health, public policy, and equity background. She has held leadership positions within collective impact nonprofits, specializing in evidence-based research, co-designed community engagement, and data-driven systems change evaluations to enhance community health and foster more excellent systems connectivity. Lexy's training in Results-Based Facilitation and Liberatory Design equips her with the skills to guide groups toward equitable action and facilitate equity-focused, data-driven policy and practice adjustments. Furthermore, she is a dedicated trainer and organizer with the Racial Equity Institute. She offers comprehensive training sessions that delve into the cultural and historical dimensions of structural and systemic racism, engaging diverse participants across various industries. Lexy is actively involved in the Health Equity Collective in Alamance County, a Community-Based Participatory Research Partnership, and contributes her expertise to the Health Equity and Racism (HER) Lab at Elon University. Beyond her professional commitments, Lexy is passionate about nurturing a community centered on anti-racism principles and creating opportunities for young professionals to further their anti-racism initiatives. ([Resume](#))



Breana van Velzen, MDiv, MSW, is an ordained Baptist minister, spiritual director, and non-profit consultant, currently the executive director of Durham Congregations in Action, hailing from the swamps of Eastern NC and the golden slopes of the Sierra Mountains. Breana holds a Master of Divinity (M.Div) from Duke Divinity School and a Master of Social Work (M.S.W) from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Bre has authored an article in Christianity Next and a chapter in World Christianity and COVID-19 (vol.2) and presented a TEDX-style talk at Duke University in 2019, utilizing slam poetry and spoken word in homiletics and immigrant identity. Bre has presented at multiple conferences around issues of restorative justice, circle practices, conflict transformation, and de-polarization. Bre believes the sacred can be found anywhere but especially in the ordinary, and our sacred task is mutuality with one another and all of creation—a belief founded in Bre's culture. This informs Bre's ministry, work, and activism on all levels. Bre's roots are in grassroots community organizing—especially for racial and LGBTQ+ justice and in providing formal and informal education to/alongside their community. ([Resume](#))

2. Experience & References

Merry Davis, Director of Healthy Food BlueCross BlueShield of NC Foundation Merry.Davis@bcbsncfoundation.org	<i>Relevance: Seeds of Change Consulting led a scan of Food is Medicine in NC, creating a detailed outline of the ways community based organizations and institutions engage in this work to foster more equity in this space by facilitating listening sessions, surveys and focus groups that resulted in funding generation for several local community organizations doing Food is Medicine work in NC.</i>
Board Chair Alamance Racial Equity Alliance alamanceraciaequity@gmail.com	<i>Relevance: Seed of Change Consulting worked with A.R.E.A to guide and facilitate a 3 year Strategic Plan for the organization. A.R.E.A is a Community Based Organization of local community organizers and activists. Their mission is to end racism.</i>
Kenya Joseph, Board Chair Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council kjoseph@charlottefoodpolicy.com	<i>Relevance: Seeds of Change Consulting finished a project with Mecklenburg County, NC, to create a three-year strategic roadmap for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council.</i>
Patience Kabwasa, Executive Director Food To Power patience@foodtopowerco.org	<i>Relevance: Seeds of Change Consulting worked with Food To Power to develop a 3 year strategic roadmap for the organization, centering racial justice and food sovereignty in Colorado Springs, Co.</i>

3. Methodology & Approach

Our approach is grounded in **data, collaboration, and actionability**. We propose a five-phase project structure:

Phase 1: Discovery & Research

- Review existing plans, demographic and economic trends
- Benchmark peer counties (statewide and national)
- Assess performance of existing target sectors

Phase 2: Sector Validation & Market Positioning

- Validate current sectors; identify gaps or emerging opportunities
- Conduct SWOT and location quotient analysis
- Apply cluster and value-chain analysis

Phase 3: Engagement & Community Visioning

- Facilitate public forums, town halls, and business roundtables
- One-on-one interviews with key stakeholders (50+ expected)
- Online surveys for broader community input

Phase 4: Strategic Planning

- Develop plan pillars: Business Attraction, Retention, Workforce, Entrepreneurship, Community Development
- Integrate real-time feedback into working drafts
- Identify funding mechanisms, partners, and policies

Phase 5: Delivery & Presentation

- Deliver final Strategic Plan document with supporting data tools
- Present to FCDA, county commissioners, and public audiences
- Provide Implementation Dashboard + KPI matrix

4. Deliverables

- Full **Economic Development Strategic Plan (2025–2030)**
- Executive Summary (print + digital)
- 5-Year **Action Roadmap** with timelines, responsibilities, funding
- Sector Validation Report
- Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report
- Implementation Dashboard with KPIs
- Presentations: 1 internal board briefing, 1 public unveiling

5. Project Timeline & Milestones

Phase	Timeline	Key Deliverables
Discovery & Research	Weeks 1–4 (May 2025)	Research Memo, Peer Benchmarking
Sector Validation & Market Scan	Weeks 5–7 (June 2025)	Sector Report, SWOT Matrix
Engagement & Community Input	Weeks 8–11 (July 2025)	Stakeholder Report, Survey Results
Strategic Plan Drafting	Weeks 12–15 (Aug 2025)	Draft Plan, Action Framework
Finalization & Presentation	Weeks 16–17 (Sept 2025)	Final Plan, KPI Dashboard, Presentations

Project Duration: ~4 months || Final Delivery by: September 30, 2025

6. Budget and Cost Breakdown

Phase / Task	Hours	Rate	Cost
Phase 1: Discovery & Research	60	\$175	\$10,500
Phase 2: Sector Validation	40	\$175	\$7,000
Phase 3: Engagement (incl. facilitation)	70	\$175	\$12,250
Phase 4: Plan Drafting & Recommendations	80	\$175	\$14,000
Phase 5: Final Presentation & Delivery	30	\$175	\$5,250
Travel & Local Meeting Costs (3 trips)	N/A	N/A	\$3,000
Survey Design + Tools + Printing	N/A	N/A	\$1,500
Subtotal			\$53,500
Contingency (5%)			\$2,675
Total Project Cost (Not to Exceed)			\$56,175

Payment Terms:

- 30% deposit upon contract signing
- 30% after stakeholder engagement phase
- 30% upon delivery of draft plan
- 10% upon final presentation

7. Conclusion

Seeds of Change Consulting is uniquely equipped to help the Fayette County Development Authority create an ambitious yet grounded strategic plan that empowers growth across all five municipalities. We believe Fayette County is poised for transformational development—and we are excited to support that vision with our proven tools, experienced team, and community-first methodology.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit this proposal and look forward to next steps.

Warm regards,

Organization Name: **Seeds of Change Consulting (SoC)**

LaShauna W. Austria

By (Signature):

Name Printed: LaShauna W. Austria

Date: 4/15/25

Title: Owner/Principal

FEDERAL TAX I.D. NO: 82-3574444

Organizational Profile:

- Minority-Owned Business
- Black, Latina, American Indian, Asian American
- People with Disabilities
- LGBTQIA+
- Woman-Owned Business
- Veteran-Owned Business
- Small Business