

USDA

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principles against the expressions of interest locations including USDA travel requirements, labor force statistics, work hours most compatible with all USDA office schedules.

Also, using the high-level criteria posted in the Federal Register (transportation logistics, workforce, community/quality of life, and capital and operating costs), USDA has defined criteria including:

- **Quality of Life:** Subcategory examples include diversity index, residential housing costs, access to health-care, and home and community safety ranking.

- **Costs (Capital and Operating):** Subcategory examples include cost-of-living adjustment, commercial real estate costs, land costs, and wage growth rate.

- **Workforce:** Subcategory examples include labor force growth rate, unemployment rate, and

the labor force population.

- **Logistics/IT Infrastructure:** Subcategory examples include lodging availability, proximity to stakeholders, and travel time to and from D.C.

"We will be saving money for the taxpayers and improving our ability to retain more employees in the long run. And we are increasing the probability of attracting highly-qualified staff with training and interests in agriculture, many of whom come from land-grant universities," Perdue said in December.

For both locations in Georgia, the Georgia Department of Economic Development is one of the partners, according to the USDA. In Griffin, the other partners include the Griffin-Spalding Development Authority, University of Georgia and Rooker. In Athens it's also the Athens-Clarke County Development Authority and Nichols Land & Investment Company, but not UGA.

Griffin and Athens in running for USDA sites

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Griffin and Athens remain in the running to become the new homes of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Back in August, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced that most ERS and NIFA personnel would be moving to outside the National Capital Region by the end of 2019 and invited interested parties to submit proposals.

Griffin, Athens, Tifton and Statesboro were among 136 initial expressions of interest that was pared down to 68 earlier this month.

"The announcement of this middle list shows that we are committed to the important missions of these agencies and transparency in our selection process. USDA will make the best choice for our employees and customers," Perdue said. "Relocation will help ensure that USDA is the most effective, most efficient, and most customer-focused agency in the federal government, allowing us to be closer to our stakeholders and move our resources closer to our customers."

For this initial down-select, the USDA applied a set of guiding

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