



Request for Qualifications (RFQ): Accounting Technical Assistance for Small Business Owners

Purpose

With this Request for Qualifications (RFQ), Southeast Neighborhood Development (SEND) seeks to acquire the services of a qualified accounting firm or expert to provide accounting technical assistance to small businesses owners (microenterprises) participating in SEND's Microenterprise Cohort. The ideal firm/person will have expertise in business accounting principles, specifically regarding how accounting methods can impact both a business' company valuation and its ability to access capital. The ideal firm or expert will have capacity to provide services to and serve clients who speak Spanish. The services provided may include group (workshop/educational) and/or individual one on one sessions.

Background Information

Southeast Neighborhood Development (SEND) is a non-profit community development corporation created by neighbors and serving the southeast side of Indianapolis. SEND advocates for housing, economic, and social equity by collaborating with residents, business owners, and community partners to create and maintain inclusive, healthy, and vibrant neighborhoods in southeast Indianapolis. SEND accomplishes this mission through creating, maintaining, and sustaining quality affordable housing, economic development, and community building.

SEND was awarded funding through Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Microenterprise Navigator Program, which will strengthen microenterprises owned by low-income individuals from under-resourced and underserved communities. This support will allow these microenterprises to compete in the market and grow, overcoming historic and systemic barriers.

While Indianapolis has a diverse population, disparities in business ownership have persisted for businesses owned by people of color. While Black and Latino(a) residents make up 29% and 11% of the population, they only own 4% and 2% of all businesses, respectively. (Data from Small Business Ecosystem Assessment, Winter 2020).

The same study found that minority owned businesses were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, compared to white owned businesses. Considering that even prior to the pandemic, underserved minority and immigrant-owned businesses have not had the same access to resources and business support services, LISC Indianapolis saw a need to create a program that address this issue.



In 2021, LISC created the Microenterprise Navigator Program, along with the City of Indianapolis, with the objective to serve low-income, minority, and immigrant microenterprise owners by providing them coaching and technical assistance services. In 2023, SEND was one of four sites selected, and the only site designated to serve as the bilingual (Spanish/English) Microenterprise Program service provider.

Scope of services

Through interviews with the previous microenterprise navigators, LISC Indianapolis found that many microenterprises prepare financial statements that prioritize the payment of the least amount of taxes. This has the effect of showing the business as having low levels of profitability, which in turn makes the business ineligible to access capital and can negatively impact the valuation of their business.

As such, SEND is seeking an accounting firm or professional who can provide a workshop and/or 1:1 services addressing these concerns. Workshop or 1:1 consultation would educate business owners on topics related to profitability, taxes, valuation of the business, and how these topics can impact, positively or negatively, a business' ability to access capital and grow.

All accounting technical assistance services rendered will need to be completed by May 31, 2024.

Qualifications

The ideal accounting firm or individual will demonstrate the following qualifications and skills:

- The selected firm or individual will be responsible for familiarity with all applicable federal and state accounting laws, regulations, and rules in the development of their response to this RFQ.
- Entities or individuals that are presently suspended, declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any federal department or agency are not eligible to respond to this RFQ nor will they receive a contract.
- The selected firm/individual must be authorized to provide accounting services in the state of Indiana and must provide proof of certification as a CPA for the respondent or for someone on their team.
- The selected firm or individual must have a minimum of 2 years of experience providing relevant accounting expertise and counsel to Indiana-based small businesses.
- The selected firm or individual should have demonstrated success working with small business owners/microenterprises that may be early in their business growth cycle and/or have limited accounting knowledge and experience.



- The selected firm/individual must have demonstrated ability to serve Spanish speaking small business/microenterprises through bilingual staff and/or a language access plan that displays the firm's/individual's ability and commitment to serving Spanish speaking clients.
- Firms/individuals should have the capacity and demonstrated experience of assisting small business owners/microenterprises overcome barriers. Experience working with undocumented business owners a plus.
- The selected firm/individual must be available to perform technical assistance within the time frame required.

Submission instructions and requirements

Submitters must follow exactly, and be responsive to, ALL requirements of this RFQ. It is the submitter's responsibility to provide specified information in the required form and format.

Provide one (1) electronic copy, submitted via email to Emily Djabi (emily@sendcdc.org) and Alex Balbuena (alex@sendcdc.org) by March 31, 2024.

Submittals should contain the following information:

- A one-page letter of interest that includes a synopsis of the respondent's qualifications, primary specialties of the respondent, the primary contact, and the principal representing the contractual authority of the respondent.
- A profile of the respondent, including number of employees, location, and relevant experience working on similar projects within the last five (5) years, including relevant experience of working with underrepresented, minority, and immigrant communities.
- A brief narrative, no more than three (3) pages, that explains why your firm/you is/are well qualified to provide the services outlined in the Scope of Services. Include your process and strategy of providing bilingual services to Spanish speaking small business owners/microenterprises.
- Three (3) references from small business owners/microenterprises that your firm/you has/have provided services to. Include the following information for each reference:
 - Name of the client and contact information. Please note the primary language of the client.
 - Key personnel involved and the year the project was completed.
 - Scope and length of project contracted by client.
- Disclose any material agreements, relationships, or employment you, your firm, or team members have with SEND that may create a conflict of interest or the appearance thereof.

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- Describe your proposed fee structure (e.g., hourly, fixed fee per assignment/event, etc.) and include proposed rates and/or an itemized list of services. Please also note if extra fees would be required should SEND desire to record workshops/educational sessions for future use.

Any contract awarded in response to this RFQ will be awarded without discrimination on race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, or national origin.

Questions regarding this RFQ should be submitted to Emily Djabi (emily@sendcdc.org) per the due date in the timeline below.

Timeline

RFQ Released	Tuesday, March 12, 2024
Questions (Optional) Submitted	Tuesday, March 19, 2024
Questions Answered	Friday, March 22, 2024
RFQ Submittals Due	Sunday, March 31, 2024
Firm/individual Selected/Notified	Week of April 1, 2024

The contract period specific to the selection made as a result of this RFQ process will end no later than May 31, 2024. Based on performance and need, the contract may be extended without further solicitations for information or bids.

Review Process

SEND shall be the sole judge as to which applicant(s) meet the selection criteria. SEND reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any or all responses received, to waive any submission requirements contained within this RFQ, and to waive any irregularities in any submitted response.

The selected contractor will be required to assume full responsibility for all services included in the contract. The contractor may not assign, transfer, or otherwise dispose of any portion of a contract in whole or in part, to any third party, without the prior written approval of SEND.

SEND also reserves the right to verify the accuracy of all information submitted.