

Madras Small Business Development Needs Assessment and Feasibility Project

Professional Services- Consulting project management, public engagement, needs assessment, and feasibility study.

RFQ Released: August 5, 2020

Response due: August 25, 2020

Notice of Intent to Award: September 2, 2020

BACKGROUND

Most of the Central Oregon region's economic prosperity has been concentrated in urban areas, primarily Bend and Redmond. Madras and other small rural communities continue to lag behind on employment, wage growth, and investment.

The 2017 solar eclipse brought an unprecedented number of visitors to Madras and inspired city staff and local business owners to work together toward new economic development and revitalization activities in the downtown area. This coordination of efforts led to the creation of a new Madras Downtown Association. With the support of the City and COIC, the Downtown Association has coordinated a series of successful downtown events that have boosted the revenues of existing businesses and drawn hundreds of community members and visitors to downtown Madras over the past two years. At the same time, the city created a matching grant and loan program for the industrial zone, the Chamber of Commerce continues their efforts to support commercial business outside the downtown core, and The Bean Foundation has acquired the option to purchase the old Westside School and desires to develop a community campus, a component of which is the development of a small business incubator.

Despite all these new efforts to support economic growth and revitalization, Madras continues to show signs of economic distress. This includes vacant buildings, high rates of business turnover, and deferred building maintenance. The grant program designed to attract new businesses to the industrial zone is not being utilized, and the school redevelopment project is moving slowly.

By combining local resources to undertake a small business needs assessment and feasibility study, this project will help COIC, along with City of Madras and Jefferson County staff, the Madras Downtown Association, Madras Redevelopment Commission, Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce, and the Bean Foundation better understand the current needs of local small business owners, and create a framework for developing new, collaborative programming to support a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem and achieve shared economic revitalization goals.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Definitions:

For the purposes of this project, the following definitions apply:

“Small Business” means primarily businesses with 10 or fewer employees, and includes home-based businesses, sole proprietorships, and other non-traditional business models.

Project Goals

- a. Better understand the needs of small business owners in Madras, with a goal of supporting new economic development in the downtown core, adjacent commercial districts, and industrial zone.
- b. Better understand the needs of certain sub-populations of business owners in Madras and improve the capacity of local government and community partners to meet identified needs through new or expanded services, or by addressing barriers to access of existing programs. Specific populations of interest are: Latinx and Tribal business owners, women business owners, home-based business owners, low-income business owners, and agricultural/value-added producers.
- c. Assess the feasibility of new programs to support a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem in Madras; develop an action plan for implementation of one or more of the following new services:
 - New loan or grant program(s) to catalyze business property ownership
 - Restructuring of COIC small business loan program
 - Co-working facility/small business incubator
 - Shared commercial kitchen to support value-added processing
 - Expanded small business support services (possibly in conjunction with incubator space) such as: business planning, financial planning, marketing and branding, public wi-fi access and more useful broadband resources, additional public computer access, legal advice, etc.
 - New or different business financing options, outside of traditional financial institutions.
 - Or, other programs identified through the Needs Assessment process.

Project Scope of Work

This project has two deliverables with three phases of work, outlined below. The Consultant will be the lead entity responsible for developing the Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study, with the support of the Project Steering Team.

Deliverable 1: Preliminary needs assessment of small business owners in Madras. The selected Consultant should be prepared to incorporate virtual or other non-traditional methods of engagement, in light of current COVID-19 restrictions. The needs assessment will utilize focus groups and other types of community outreach to answer the following questions:

- What are the current types of need?
- What is the current scale of need?
- Which new services would current small business owners be most likely to utilize?
- Which new services would be most beneficial to catalyze new small business entrepreneurship?

- Are there barriers that are limiting access to existing programs for any sub-populations of small business owners, or may limit access to new programs in the future? (i.e. Latinx Business Owners face language barriers)
- How can project partners assist home-based businesses to transition to a brick and mortar space in downtown Madras?

Deliverable 2: Feasibility Study to develop the framework for new Small Business Support Program(s) in Madras. The Feasibility study will accomplish the following:

- Definition of the problems/needs currently experienced by small business owners, as identified in the needs assessment
- Analysis of the effectiveness of existing small business support programs; overview of opportunities to better coordinate services between providers; and an explanation of any existing barriers to access
- Feasibility of no less than 3 potential new services, taking into consideration factors such as: cost of implementation and potential funding sources, opportunities for partnership, implementation timeline, and
- Proposed action plan for implementation of new services or program(s), including lead partners and potential funding sources

Phase 1: Project Kick-off and Contracting

The needs assessment and feasibility study will be developed by a contractor with expertise in small business development and prior experience working with diverse populations. Community outreach for the needs assessment will be carried out in partnership with community groups that have established relationships with target populations. COIC will convene a project steering committee to guide procurement and select the most qualified consultant. COIC will enter into a contract with the selected consultant and work with the steering team to establish a schedule for regular project check-ins.

Phase 2: Project Management and Development

COIC will work with the project steering team and consultant to complete the needs assessment and feasibility study, providing project guidance, managing communication between local partners, and facilitating regular progress check-in meetings. During this phase, the consultant will be responsible for organizing and facilitating focus groups, community meetings, or other outreach strategies to gather feedback from target populations. This general feedback will be collected and summarized in a Needs Assessment Report. The Consultant will then use the feedback in the Needs Assessment to analyze the feasibility of a range of potential strategies to meet the identified needs, culminating in a Feasibility Study that outlines no less than 3 potential strategies/services, and a proposed plan of action to achieve them.

Phase 3: Next Steps & Action Plan

After completion of the feasibility study, COIC will coordinate and facilitate a meeting (or meetings) to discuss outcomes of the feasibility study and review the Consultant's proposed

action plan. In addition to the steering team and participating community partners, COIC will invite regional partners and funders to participate in this meeting to enhance potential funding opportunities, regional peer-to-peer learning, and opportunities for regional coordination on program implementation.

Project Evaluation/Definition of Success

1. A broad cross-section of business owners have participated in the project.
2. Project partners have gained NEW information about challenges/barriers affecting small businesses that we didn't have before the project.
3. Project partners understand how local organizations, agencies, governments, etc. can help address identified barriers.
4. The consultant has identified clear implementation strategies that community leaders can use to take direct action.

Project Management

The project will be served by a Project Steering Team, who will provide overall project oversight and troubleshooting, and will help the selected Consultant facilitate information flow and manage barriers to support the overall process.

The Project Steering Team currently includes:

- Janel Ruehl, COIC
- Maria Antonia Botero, Latino Small Business Owner, Latino Community Association Staff
- Bartt Brick, Madras City Councilor, Madras Redevelopment Commission
- Dave Golda, St. Charles Healthcare, Madras Jefferson County Chamber Board, Jefferson County Economic Development Board
- George Neilson, The Bean Foundation
- Kelly Simmelink, Jefferson County Commissioner
- Morgan Greenwood, City of Madras Community Development Department, Madras Downtown Association Board
- Nick Snead, City of Madras Community Development Director

Additional strategic partners that could assist with outreach and engagement of local business owners from within target populations include:

- Small Business Development Center
- Economic Development of Central Oregon (EDCO)
- Central Oregon Community College (COCC)
- St. Charles Health System

Regional partners and organizations that could assist with implementation following the feasibility study include:

- USDA Rural Development
- OSU-Cascades Innovation Co-Lab
- Small Business Development Center
- EDCO

- COCC
- Regional Solutions Team

ESTIMATED PROJECT TIMELINE

The overall time frame for this project is September 2020 through March 2021- with an extension possible if deemed necessary and approved by the EDA.

Task 1: Project kick-off and Contracting

- August 1- September 1, 2020: Steering Team formation, RFP development, and solicitation period.
- September 1 – September 15, 2020: Contractor selected, contract executed.

Task 2: Needs Assessment, Feasibility Study, and Project Management

- September 15, 2020- January 30, 2021: Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study in development.
- February 1- March 1, 2021: Final report complete, delivered to COIC and Project Steering Team.

Task 3: Next Steps

- March 1 - March 13, 2021: COIC convenes steering team and other community and regional partners to discuss outcomes and next steps.

COMPENSATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

Minimum Qualifications: Respondents must meet the following minimum qualifications in order to be considered for any contract award resulting from this Solicitation.

- Experience planning, coordinating and facilitating community focus groups and other types of outreach events, including success in achieving participation with online and other non-traditional formats (given COVID-19 constraints).
- Training or demonstrated expertise in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion best practices in public engagement processes.
- General experience and familiarity with small business development, community development, and main street revitalization concepts, terms, methods, and strategies.
- Demonstrated project management expertise.
- Desired (but not required): At least one successful Feasibility Study project for a government, non-profit or private sector client.

Estimated Potential Value of Contract

COIC has secured up to \$30,000 to support the work of the Consulting Scope of Services described in this RFP. The maximum potential value of contracted services and proposed budgeted items resulting from this procurement for Consulting Services is not anticipated to exceed \$30,000. Depending on the experience and qualifications of respondents, COIC and the steering team may offer to split the contract

between two consultants (for example, if one consultant has significant experience with business development and feasibility studies, but lacks expertise in diverse community engagement).

The funding source for payments of any contract resulting from this RFQ will be grant funds from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) as well as local matching funds from the City of Madras, Madras Redevelopment Commission, Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, COIC and The Bean Foundation.

HOW TO SUBMIT A BID

Responses should be submitted electronically by email to Janel Ruehl, COIC CED Program Administrator, at jruehl@coic.org by August 25, 2020.

Responses submitted after that date and time will not be accepted.

Your response should not exceed 10 pages total, and include all of the following components:

- Short narrative (not to exceed 2 pages) that conveys your understanding of the project's purpose and goals, including the Scope of Services, and how you will assist COIC and the Project Steering Team in meeting those goals.
- Identification of key personnel who will be involved with this project, their qualifications and responsibilities.
- Summary of relevant experience, including any experience with public engagement processes and especially any relevant experience engaging with historically disadvantaged populations including non-English speakers.
- At least 2 references for prior clients including one for whom you delivered a feasibility study.
- Fee Estimate for the work as described in the statement of work. The fee estimate will not be solely used to select the consultant. COIC and the Project Steering Team will seek the services of the most qualified consultant for this project.
 - Include the hourly rate for all personnel that will be working on the project
 - Describe all estimated fees, including time, materials, travel, and related expenses

Questions can be sent to Janel Ruehl, at jruehl@coic.org or 503.740.8625.