



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Inventory of Resources and Best Practices Analysis

To Develop “Regional Solutions for Entrepreneur and Small Business Success” for Manistee, Mason and Benzie Counties

Supported in part by a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture

July 17, 2008

Coordinated by

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I. Summary and Purpose

This Request for Proposals (RFP) seeks responses by Monday, September 1, 2008 from qualified organizations to complete an Inventory of Resources and Best Practices Analysis (the Project) under a grant funded by the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop “Regional Solutions for Entrepreneur and Small Business Success in Manistee, Mason and Benzie Counties (the Region). The project is being coordinated and administered by the Manistee-based Alliance for Economic Success (AES) in collaboration with partners in Manistee, Mason and Benzie Counties and in other locations.

The primary purpose of this project is to design, test and develop a plan to sustain a regional system to deliver services to entrepreneurs and small businesses that will enable them to succeed and prosper. The RFP will provide financial support for a consultant to complete an inventory of resources and best practices that should be included and considered in designing the regional delivery system.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to read the narrative for the grant application to the USDA entitled “Regional Solutions for Entrepreneur and Small Business Success” that is on the AES web site at www.allianceforeconomicsuccess.com.

II. Process

The Alliance for Economic Success is administering the grant from the USDA and will facilitate the review, screening and selection of a contractor to provide the services requested. The AES is performing this work under an agreement with the Manistee County Community Foundation that was the applicant for the USDA grant. A Project Development Team, consisting of interests from Manistee, Mason and Benzie Counties, has been formed to approve this RFP, review proposals and select the contractor.

III. Submission and Contacts

Only complete responses will be considered. A total of seven copies of the response must be provided in hard copy. Responses must be limited to no more than 30 pages, including attachments and cover letter. Responses must in a font size of not less than 11 point, with no less than a one inch margin at the top, bottom and side of each page. Responses to this application must be received by 5 p.m. on Monday, September 1, 2008, delivered by mail or in person to:

Alliance for Economic Success
ATTN: Ms. Betsy Keson
11 Cypress Street
Manistee, Michigan 49660

For more information about this RFP, contact Tim Ervin at:

Alliance for Economic Success, 11 Cypress Street, Manistee, MI 49660
PH: 231-723-4325
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IV. Schedule

The estimated schedule is as follows:

<u>Milestone</u>	<u>Month</u>
Formation of Project Development Work Team	June 2008
Completion of RFP	July 2008
Issuance of RFP	July 2008

Deadline for RFP Responses	September 1, 2008
Potential Respondent Interviews	September 16, 2008
Selection of Consultant	September 19, 2008
Completion of Project	February 2009

V. Project Background

Using conventional measures, Michigan’s economy ranks close to the bottom of all states in the nation. For many in northern, rural Michigan, starting a business as an entrepreneur has become and will continue to be one of the most viable ways to support a living wage and a sustainable future for families. Typically, the economic performance in Manistee, Mason and Benzie Counties that are the focus of this project lag even further behind Michigan’s economic indicators.

Further, because of the emergence and implications of our global economy, there is a new national emphasis upon encouraging, supporting and developing entrepreneurs, small businesses and a climate that will enable those ventures to succeed.

The origin of this project, funded in large part by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, is out of the shared recognition in Manistee, Mason and Benzie Counties of the need to place priority on:

- Reducing unemployment and poverty
- Diversifying the mix of businesses that contribute to the economy
- Reducing the region’s dependence upon a seasonal economy
- Reversing the downward trend in year-round population and school enrollment by keeping more people in these three counties supported by living wage jobs

- Leveraging resources and assets in a regional system to support entrepreneurs and start up businesses

The priority for this project is also recognized nationally. There are more than 24 million micro enterprises in the U. S., representing 18% of all private employment and 87% of all businesses. One out of six private sector employees in the U. S. work for a small business. In the three counties covered under this RFP, micro-business employment as a percentage of total county employment is: Manistee – 23.5%; Mason – 20.7%; and Benzie – 30.6%.

VI. The Project

The project is entitled “Regional Solutions for Entrepreneur and Small Business Success.” It will be carried out in four phases:

Phase 1 will expand an existing pilot micro-business initiative that began in 2007 to help entrepreneurs develop micro-businesses. The pilot project involved Manistee and Benzie Counties and was managed by the Alliance for Economic Success in partnership with Manistee-Benzie Community Mental Health. It focused on individuals who were recovering from mental illnesses. Under Phase 1, the project will be expanded to provide support for all populations in the three county area. Please read the grant narrative to learn more about this pilot project.

Phase 2 is a “Resource Inventory” and is the phase of the project that is to be carried out under this RFP. This phase will be carried out in collaboration with and the guidance of the Project Development Team.

This phase has two objectives:

- 1. To inventory local, regional, state or national assets and resources that may be integrated or aligned with an entrepreneurial/small business support delivery system.**

2. To identify national best practices that should be considered in designing the delivery system.

Accordingly, the consultant selected to perform this project will:

Existing Resources

Complete an inventory of existing resources, programs and services that should be integrated into the delivery system, including an identification of:

- A. Type and content of programs, services or tools
- B. The contact information for the organization or entity that owns, administers and/or owns the resource(s)
- C. Limitations involving the delivery of the resources that should be considered in system design
- D. Processes involving the delivery of the resources that should be understood and accommodated in system design
- E. How the resource, program or service should be integrated into a delivery system

This inventory must encompass programs and services available through:

- Governmental agencies or units of government at all levels
- Nonprofit organizations
- Private corporations
- Higher education
- Other forms of organizations
- Public or private foundations
- Others

Best Practices

Complete a national best practices analysis to identify high-performing, integrated delivery systems in the U. S. that have demonstrated success in supporting entrepreneurs and start up businesses. That analysis must identify specific programs, services and resources that should be considered for incorporation into the design of the delivery system under this project. Further, the analysis must specify how programs, services and resources are integrated and delivered to produce desired results. The analysis must contain specific recommendations on how the system designed under this project should incorporate national best practices. The consultant must be mindful that best practices are to be defined in part based on the success that entrepreneurs and start up businesses have realized as a result of the practices.

Phase 3 of the project will involve the design of the system. A Design Team will be formed to help accomplish this phase. The design process will:

- Be outcome based
- Delineate resources, services and programs that should be included based on Phase 2
- Reflect national best practices identified in Phase 2
- Integrate resources, services and programs into a defined delivery system
- Include a three to five year business plan for system implementation
- Recommend processes for system evaluation and improvement
- Establish the purpose and scope of a feasibility study to test the system

Phase 4 of the project will be a feasibility study to test the system. This phase will serve as a basis to identify and secure resources to fully implement the delivery system.

VII. Submission Requirements

Responses to this RFP must include the following:

- A. The Organization. The name, contact information and summary of the vision, mission and goals and objectives of the responding organization.
- B. History. A brief review of the history of the organization.
- C. Project Team. A review of all organizations, groups or institutions to be involved in the project, including contact information for each. An identification of the name and qualifications of the project manager must also be provided, including enumeration of professional credentials.
- D. Project Experience. Detailed information about prior similar projects that illustrate the capability of the respondent to perform this project.
- E. References. At least three references for similar work or project
- F. Project Management. This includes: the project management approach; the proposed process and method for maintaining contact and accountability with the Project Design Team; communications on progress; schedule management; quality control.
- G. Project Description. A complete description of the goals, objectives and steps that the respondent will undertake to complete all elements of the project as described in this RFP.
- H. Schedule. A schedule for project completion, including significant milestones that are included in the project description.
- I. Project Budget, including an estimated budget that encompasses costs included in:
 - 1. Personnel expenses
 - 2. Fringe benefits
 - 3. Contract services
 - 4. Supplies and materials
 - 5. Travel
 - 6. Indirect or overhead costs

The total budget for all phases of the project is \$80,000. Respondents should consider this in submitting their proposals and budgets in response to this RFP that covers one phase of the project.

- J. Proof of Insurance for the respondent as well as any subcontractors.

VIII. Selection Process

Proposals will be evaluated as follows:

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Points</u>
Qualifications of the respondent	20
Prior experience of the respondent	20
Project Management approach	10
Project description	40
Project budget and schedule	10
Total	100

All respondents will be informed if: a) they are the consultant selected; or b) they are not the consultant selected. Ratings of proposals will not be shared.

IX. Cancellation of RFP

This RFP may be cancelled or any bids or proposals may be rejected in whole or in part. Proposals that do not comply with all criteria set forth in this RFP are subject to disqualification.