



Request for Proposals (RFP)
Entrepreneurial Events/Meet-ups

Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments

ISSUE DATE:

May 1, 2023

PROPOSAL DEADLINE:

May 19, 2023

Submit Proposals to:

Lindsay Naughton, Regional Planner
Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments
1000 Lafayette Boulevard, Suite 925, Bridgeport, CT 06604

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1 | INTRODUCTION

The Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG) intends to hire a consultant or organization to host a series of training workshops and networking meet-ups for small businesses, with particular emphasis on minority- and women-owned businesses and businesses located in Opportunity Zones. The selected consultant or organization will organize and host a series (up to five (5) or until grant funding is exhausted, whichever comes first) workshops and meet-ups for local businesses in the Greater Bridgeport Region. The workshops and meet-ups can be held virtually and in-person, or hybrid with virtual and in-person attendance options.

MetroCOG will procure consultant services in accordance with the established policies of MetroCOG, the requirements of the EDA, and the terms and conditions of the grant award. It is anticipated this project will commence in early Summer 2023, however, this will depend on the timing of consultant selection and issuance of a notice to proceed.

2 | BACKGROUND

MetroCOG is the Regional Council of Governments for Greater Bridgeport Region, which consists of the City of Bridgeport and the Towns of Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull. MetroCOG will work cooperatively with the selected consultant or organization, MetroCOG's six member municipalities, the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and the United States Economic Development Administration (U.S. EDA) for the duration of the project contract on all tasks and may, at its discretion, perform certain tasks.

3 | INQUIRIES

Respondents to this RFP should represent a firm, company, organization, team, or individual possessing experience and expertise hosting educational events (e.g. webinars, in-person workshop activities, etc.) for small businesses, particularly entrepreneurial events, and the professional standards thereof, to undertake and successfully complete the Scope of Services outlined in Attachment A.

General Questions

Please direct questions to Lindsay Naughton in writing at the address noted on the cover page, or via e-mail to lnaughton@ctmetro.org no later than **4:00 PM EST** on Wednesday, May 10, 2023. Inquires and responses will be posted at www.ctmetro.org no later than Friday, May 12, 2023.

Please note that it is MetroCOG's policy to respond only to technical questions. Under no circumstances will MetroCOG provide interpretive guidance. No oral interpretations shall be made to any respondent as to the meaning of any of the documents, and phone calls will not be accepted. Written approval of MetroCOG is required prior to any public disclosure of the cost proposal submitted in response to this RFP or any other subsequent awards. It is the responsibility of interested parties to periodically check the MetroCOG website for amendments to this RFP and responses to inquiries.

4 | SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Prospective consultant(s) are asked to submit responses in two parts:

- (1) Letter of Interest, and
- (2) Technical Response.

(1) Letter of Interest shall specify the following:

- Name and address of the lead firm
- General information on the firm and any proposed sub-consultants
- Name, title, e-mail, and telephone number of the individual(s) authorized to commit the firm to this contract
- Name, title, e-mail, and telephone number of the individual MetroCOG should contact regarding questions and clarifications
- If applicable, please note any Small and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Certifications with the State of Connecticut (e.g. M/WBE, etc.)
- A statement that the consultant's proposal will remain in effect for ninety (90) days after the consultant's proposal is received by MetroCOG.

(2) Technical Response shall describe the consultant's proposed approach to the following:

- Project understanding and Scope of Services (Attachment A), including any recommendations to improve/support the project and any special service(s) and/or accommodation(s) requested.
- Name and proposed services of any subcontractors with a description of the relationship to the contractor, such as previous relationship or collaboration
- Project schedule
- Resumes of the proposed key personnel who will work on the project, including descriptions of relevant recent experience hosting workshops and meet-ups for small businesses.
- Descriptions of three (3) comparable project experiences, including project budget, services completed, and current project status.
- Three (3) references. References should be from comparable project experience completed in the past five (5) years. Please include project title, date completed, location, services provided, and primary client contact information (e-mail address and telephone number).
- A Project Budget including all personnel and sub-consultants to be utilized for this project. **Project Budget Guidance** is as follows:
 - Please provide a cost estimate for each type of event proposed (cost per event type should be inclusive of all curriculum development, event preparation, planning, outreach, and event follow-up activities outlined in Attachment A - Scope of Services). A total of up to five (5) events is anticipated, or the number of events which maximizes available grant funding available for the project.

Each consultant must submit one (1) paper copy and one (1) digital copy (USB Flash Drive) of their proposal in a sealed envelope bearing on the outside the name of each firm, full address, name of the project for which the proposal is submitted, and the date and time the proposal is due. If forwarded by mail, the sealed envelope containing the proposal must be enclosed in another envelope. *Address proposals to:*

Lindsay Naughton, Regional Planner
Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments
1000 Lafayette Boulevard, Suite 925
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604

MetroCOG must receive the proposal no later than **4:00 PM EST** on Friday, May 19, 2023. Proposals received after the date and time prescribed will not be considered for contract award. No partial submittals will be accepted.

5 | SELECTION PROCESS

Consultants or teams of consultants will be asked to demonstrate expertise and experience in all skill areas appropriate for the work anticipated for the planning project. All RFPs received by MetroCOG will be reviewed and evaluated by a selection committee determined by MetroCOG.

Up to three (3) prospective consultants will be selected for a short-list and each will be requested to participate in an interview and presentation to the selection committee. Following consultant interviews, a recommendation of the preferred consultant will be made by the selection committee and MetroCOG will be authorized to notify the selected consultant of their selection and begin contract negotiations.

Proposals and Consultants will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Experience and capacity
- Project understanding of the work to be performed
- Project organization and staff commitment
- Professional expertise of team
- Prior related project experience
- Completeness, feasibility, and quality of Scope of Services and Project Schedule
- Clarity and conciseness of presentation
- Project Budget Proposal

The selected consultant will be notified within fourteen (14) days of the decision by the selection committee and contract negotiations will commence immediately upon notification via e-mail. A 60-day fee negotiation period will be provided for the selected consultant and MetroCOG to finalize the contract fees, Scope of Services, and legal agreement. At the end of the 60-day negotiation period, the contract shall be awarded. If a negotiated fee cannot be mutually agreed to by both parties, MetroCOG will terminate negotiations and begin negotiation with the second rated firm.

The firm awarded the contract as a result of being pre-qualified under this RFP, must meet all Municipal, State and Federal affirmative action and equal employment opportunity practices. This will include compliance with E.O. 11246, "Equal Employment Opportunity," as amended by E.O. 11375, "Amending Executive Order 11246 Relating to Equal Employment Opportunity," and as supplemented by regulations at 41 CFR part 60, "Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, Equal Employment Opportunity, Department of Labor."

The selected consultant will be required to prepare project documents in a timely manner and submit monthly status reports indicating work completed to date and any problems that have affected the project schedule. To this end, the consultant will be expected to assign sufficient staff to complete the Scope of Services within the established and agreed upon schedule.

6 | OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Additional Services

If you believe that additional services to those requested in Attachment A - Scope of Services are necessary, please identify those services and your reasons for recommending such services.

Insurance

MetroCOG requires consultants provide and maintain adequate general liability and automobile liability insurance. Proof of insurance must be included in the bid application.

Personnel

The Consultant shall provide the professional services identified in the Scope of Services (included as Attachment A - Scope of Work) and requested by MetroCOG. The proposal must identify the person or persons who will be responsible for conducting the work as listed in the Scope of Services, and include a copy of each person's resume, experiences with hosting events for small businesses and listing of references, including persons of the sub-contractor, if any. MetroCOG is requesting that a senior experienced person be the primary representative of the consultant in performing the services.

Length of Service

It is expected and required that the work covered by this Scope of Services shall be completed in an expeditious manner. The proposal should include a detailed project timeline that indicates an approximate date for completion of the project (anticipated September 25, 2023).

Contract/Agreement

The successful bidder shall enter into a contract with MetroCOG and agree to abide by all state and federal contractual requirements. By signing the agreement with MetroCOG, the Consultant agrees to perform work as specified in the Scope of Services and accepts the terms and conditions set forth in the contract.

7 | TERMS & CONDITIONS

Freedom of Information Act

Respondents are advised that any and all materials submitted in response to this RFP shall become the sole property of MetroCOG and shall be subject to the provisions of Section 1-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes (re: Freedom of Information).

Incurred Costs

This Request for Proposal does not commit MetroCOG to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this request. MetroCOG will not be liable in any way for any costs incurred by respondents in replying to this RFP.

Severability

If any terms or provisions of this Request for Proposals shall be found to be illegal or unenforceable, then such term or provision shall be deemed stricken and the remaining portions of this document shall remain in full force and effect.

Acceptance or Rejection by the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments

MetroCOG reserves the right to accept and or reject any or all responses submitted for consideration or to negotiate separately in any manner necessary to serve the best interests of MetroCOG.

Amending or Canceling Request

MetroCOG reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP, prior to the due date and time, if it is deemed to be in its best interest to do so.

Waiver of Informalities

MetroCOG reserves the right to accept or reject any and all responses to this RFP, or any part thereof, and waive any informalities and/or technicalities that are deemed to be in its best interest.

Work Products

All reports, data, and other documents prepared by the consultant shall be submitted to MetroCOG for review and approval. Resulting work products of the Consultant pursuant to this solicitation shall be provided in both print and digital format and shall become the property of MetroCOG in which the consultant is contracted with.

No such approval shall in any way be construed to relieve the consultant of responsibility for technical adequacy or operate as a waiver of any of MetroCOG's rights. The consultant shall remain liable according to applicable laws and practices for all damages to MetroCOG caused by the consultants negligent performance of any of services furnished relative to any agreements resulting from this solicitation.

Subcontracting

Consultants may team as they deem necessary to respond to this RFP. In their response, the prime consultant and all subconsultants should be clearly identified along with the responsibilities of each. The successful respondents may utilize the services of specialty, currently unidentified subconsultants on those unforeseen portions of the work that under normal practices are performed by specialty firms. In this event, the consultant shall obtain and make available fee proposals from qualified sub-consultants for those services.

The successful respondent shall not award any portion of the work to a firm that is not on the selected project team without prior written approval of MetroCOG. The acceptance of any and all subconsultants shall reside with MetroCOG and their decision shall be final. The successful respondent shall be fully responsible for the performance, finished products, acts, and omissions of his subcontractors and persons directly or indirectly employed thereby.

Assigning/Transferring of Agreement

Any successful firm is prohibited from assigning, transferring, conveying, subletting or otherwise disposing of the resulting agreement or its rights, title, or interest therein or its power to execute such an agreement to any other person, company or corporation without prior consent and approval in writing from MetroCOG.

Termination

MetroCOG may terminate a consultant's status on the on-call list due to cause, default or negligence on the part of the consultant; or if the consultant fails, in the opinion of MetroCOG or its member municipalities, to meet the general terms and conditions of any resulting contract or to provide a level of service that is deemed to be in the best interest of the MetroCOG or its member municipalities.

A | SCOPE OF SERVICES

MetroCOG will hire a contractor to host a series of educational workshops and networking events for local businesses and entrepreneurs. These events will be targeted at small businesses with a particular emphasis on minority-owned, women-owned, and disadvantaged business enterprises (MBE/WBE/DBE). The workshops and meet-ups can be held virtually and in-person, or hybrid with virtual/in-person attendance options.

Please indicate your organization's a) capacity to facilitate in-person events in Greater Bridgeport and b) proposed format (virtual, in-person, or hybrid virtual and in-person) for the following tasks:

Curriculum Development Activities

- Coordinate with regional stakeholders and analyze pandemic impact reports to develop a curriculum of workshop topics, likely to include:
 - E-commerce
 - Loan and grant assistance programs
 - Marketing
 - Digital transition

Event Planning, Facilitation, Outreach, and Follow-up Activities

- Coordinate with regional stakeholders to identify content experts for presentations
- Identify hosts and moderators for meet-ups
- Coordinate with municipalities, chambers of commerce, community groups, and others to identify potential participants
- Host up to five (5) workshops/meet-ups, or the number of events which exhausts the allocated funding (whichever occurs first)
- Develop outreach materials to publicize events, including:
 - Maintaining a list of attendees for follow-up communications on event topics, and
 - Developing and distributing a survey to gauge success of events

Project Success

- Project Success will be measured using the following metrics:
 - Number of participants at each event
 - Number of repeat attendees at events
 - Survey results from event participants

Schedule

- Events are planned to take place beginning in June 2023 for a duration of approximately 4 months. Project progress will be measured by the number of events held, up to five (5) workshops/meet-ups, or the number of events which exhaust allocated funding (whichever occurs first).

Deliverables

- Event/workshop materials
- A database (Microsoft Excel or equivalent) of small businesses/entrepreneurs participating in the events.
- Survey results from event participants

Project Outcomes

- Small businesses and entrepreneurs will gain valuable information about business assistance programs, e-commerce, marketing, transitioning to digital, and other topics identified as valuable, which will lead to increased resilience for the Greater Bridgeport small business community.
- Networking opportunities will increase connectedness among local small businesses and entrepreneurs.