

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

SHARED-KITCHEN INCUBATOR PROGRAM HAZLETON, PA

While the Covid-19 Pandemic has been destructive to the local economy in Luzerne County it has been even more so to the Greater Hazleton Area as our region has been struggling for years with higher levels of poverty and unemployment, and lower incomes and educational attainment than the County as a whole. The City of Hazleton has been hit hardest, with 54% of its population considered Low-Moderate Income (LMI) and more than 20% below poverty--prior to the pandemic.

Typical “Main Street” businesses, especially retail, restaurant, and service-based businesses, are most vulnerable. Many small businesses, especially immigrant businesses that make up more than half of Hazleton’s downtown economy, may not recover due to lack of financial solvency, limited financial literacy, and inability to secure government-assisted emergency grant and loan programs. Language and cultural barriers further contribute to communication difficulties during this critical time.

When the pandemic hit, the Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress, together with the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, CAN DO, the city and local and regional economic development partners, proactively formed the COVID-19 Recovery & Resiliency Task Force to help coordinate small businesses recovery efforts and identify new initiatives and programs to help them rebound. Based upon the results of our Greater Hazleton Small Business COVID-19 Impact Study, we implemented the Hazleton Area Small Business Emergency Relief Microgrant Program, which provided privately funded financial relief to 85 local businesses.

We have also identified the need for several business recovery initiatives, which are designed to supplement the broader “Get Businesses Back on Their Feet” initiative being undertaken in cooperation with the Greater Wilkes Barre Chamber of Commerce and other partners.

This Request for Qualifications is for the development of a comprehensive shared-kitchen incubation program designed to assist entrepreneurs prepare and sell food products wholesale, delivery, and/or online to meet the changing consumer habits associated with the low-touch/low-contact Covid-19 economy. This program will make use of a new shared-kitchen incubator located within the Hayden Family Center for the Arts located at 31 W. Broad Street, as well as available retail space located within The HUB Welcome Center located at 15 W. Broad Street in Downtown Hazleton (co-located with the Hazleton LaunchBox).

Selected consultants will be responsible for developing an operational, educational, and marketing plan for the shared kitchen incubator and developing recommendations for program content and educational delivery within the context of existing entrepreneurship and food entrepreneurship programs already available via Penn State Extension, the Hazleton LaunchBox, the Wilkes and Scranton SBDCs, and the for-credit culinary degree and certificate programs already offered through Luzerne County Community College and Lackawanna College.

Funding for this initiative is being provided by the Luzerne County Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act grant via the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce.

SCOPE OF SERVICES SUMMARY

The anticipated scope of work for this project is expected to consist of the following tasks. However, the final scope of services will be negotiated with the selected consultant and may include modified tasks to meet project goals:

1. Consultant will be responsible for meeting with local and regional food/entrepreneurship and culinary education providers and partners to review existing programs and make recommendations for coordination and delivery within the Greater Hazleton Area, considering local and regional demographics. While this will not involve development of new educational content, it should identify gaps or the need for additional content development if deemed necessary.
2. Using the results of a Shared-Kitchen Incubator Survey already released, consultant will conduct follow-up phone interviews with at least ten respondents to better understand community interest and need.
3. Consultant will work with the Hazleton Art League, as manager of the shared kitchen incubator, to develop a business and operations plan for the shared-kitchen based upon the kitchen equipment available, projected demand/use of the kitchen, projected operating costs and revenue, a sample operating budget, tenant rules/requirements, lease agreement considerations, retail food licensure requirements, sanitation protocols, and any other factors to be considered in accordance with best management practices for shared kitchen incubators. The operations plan will include the necessary forms, agreements, and other documentation needed for use by the kitchen manager and tenants in an appendix.
4. Consultant will review existing equipment and storage space and make recommendations for projected dry and cold storage needs, as well as additional specialty equipment.
5. Consultant will discuss with the Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress its desired use of the HUB Welcome Center as short term or temporary pop-up retail space (600 SF). Consultant shall make operational recommendations for how this space can best be used to support kitchen incubator tenants and/or Hazleton LaunchBox clients as a means to complement the broader food entrepreneurship program.
6. Consultant will develop recommendations for how best to market the shared-kitchen and broader educational program to the public, and more specifically to identified target tenants. This will include consideration of the space and equipment available, the local and regional demographics of the Greater Hazleton Area, educational providers, and other partners. Note: These recommendations will be incorporated into a printed brochure and website specifically for marketing the program (to be developed by others).

Deliverable will be in the form of a written report addressing the anticipated scope items, above.

Note: Consultant will be responsible for setting appointments to view the kitchen and retail space and meet with program partners and educational providers in accordance with PA Department of Health COVID-19 safety guidelines.

Consulting services and all deliverables must be completed by December 23rd, 2020.

COMPENSATION

Consultant compensation for services may be as a lump sum or as maximum amount not-to-exceed. The maximum amount not-to-exceed method of compensation will utilize hourly billing rates of the consultant.

QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY

All respondents should submit a written Qualifications Summary to include information about the consultants team directly related to the selection criteria outlined below.

1. Description of consultant. Provide all information for the primary contact person, along with any other key people that will be a part of the consultant's team and their proposed role.
2. Describe the consultant's related experience. Present a summary of experience with regard to the anticipated scope of work.
3. Describe the consultant team's familiarity with the City and region.
4. List at least two references for services provided, similar to this proposed initiative.
5. Include a disclosure of any known competing interests or potential conflicts of interest for the consultant and any subcontractor(s).
6. Hourly rate of consultant performing desired services.
7. Signed Contractor Acknowledgment agreeing to abide by federal and state statutes and regulations governing use of federal funds (Exhibit A).

SUBMITTALS

Qualification Summaries must be received no later than 3:00 PM on October 13, 2020. Electronic submittals are preferred (PDF format).

Questions regarding this RFQ may be submitted via e-mail to Krista Schneider at kschneider@downtownhazleton.org.

It is the responsibility of the prospective consultant to ensure that their submittal is received prior to the deadline. Any submittal received after the deadline may not be considered.

Qualification summaries shall be addressed to:

Krista Schneider, Executive Director
Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress
8 W. Broad St., Suite M-1490
Hazleton, PA 18201
Or sent via email: kschneider@downtownhazleton.org

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE (please note this may be subject to change)

- October 13, 2020: Qualification Summaries due
- October 15, 2020: Consultant interviews via Zoom (if needed) to discuss approach/schedule.
- October 16, 2020: Consultant selection/contracting
- October 19, 2020: Project begins
- December 23, 2020: Project ends

CONTRACTOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (EXHIBIT A)

By signing this acknowledgment, consultant(s) agree to abide by the following federal and state statutes and regulations governing use of federal funds (Article V of the Luzerne County COVID-19 Relief Block Grant Contract #C000074007: Compliance with Applicable Statutes and Regulations), attached as Exhibit A, and including but not limited to:

- Prohibition of Illegal Alien Labor on Assisted Projects Act (P.L. 173, No. 43)
- Nondiscrimination and Sexual Harassment Provisions and its applicability to all subcontractors
- State Contractor Responsibility Program regarding suspension, debarment and tax liabilities
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Reimbursement for Travel
- Contractor Integrity Provisions
- Right to Know Law Provisions
- Federal Contracting Provisions regarding Small and Minority Businesses, Women’s Business Enterprises, and Labor Surplus Area Firms (2 CFR 200.321)
- Termination Provisions (2 CFR Par 200 Appendix II (B))

By (signature): _____

Name (printed): _____

Title: _____

Date: _____