

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Technology-Based Economic Development: Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Technical Assistance

| Key RFI Events | Date & Time |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Issue Date: | September 17, 2021 |
| Questions Due: | September 24, 2021, by 1:00 pm EST |
| Responses Due: | October 8, 2021, by 1:00 pm EST |

Please be advised all notifications, releases, addenda associated with this RFI will be posted at the following website referencing the same RFI title:

<https://accd.vermont.gov/about-us/bidding-opportunities>

The State will not notify interested parties with updated information. It is the bidder's responsibility to periodically check the web site above for all notifications, releases and addenda pertaining to this RFI.

State Contact: Sharon Welch
email: [Accd.contracts @vermont.gov](mailto:Accd.contracts@vermont.gov)

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1 PURPOSE

This Request for Information (RFI) is issued for the Vermont Department of Economic Development to gather input and obtain information and cost estimates in proceeding with proposals to provide Vermont small businesses with technical assistance for federal Small Business Innovation Research / Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR / STTR) grant applications.

The Vermont Department of Economic Development intends to evaluate the submissions by respondents to explore how they would meet their needs and understand the cost associated with proposed solutions. The Vermont Department of Economic Development shall not be held liable for any costs incurred by the vendors in the preparation of their submission, or for any work performed prior to contract issuance.

1.1 LIABILITY

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) ONLY. This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes – it does not constitute a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a promise to issue an RFP in the future. This request for information does not commit the State to contract for any materials or service whatsoever. Further, the State is not at this time seeking proposals and will not accept unsolicited proposals. Respondents are advised that the State will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in response to this RFI; all costs associated with responding to this RFI will be solely at the interested party's expense. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation in any future RFP, if any is issued. If an RFP is released, it will be posted on the <https://accd.vermont.gov/about-us/bidding-opportunities>

1.2 CONFIDENTIALITY

The Vermont Department of Economic Development retains the right to promote transparency and to place this RFI into the public domain, and to make a copy of the RFI available as a provision of the Vermont access to public records laws. Please do not include any information in your RFI response that is confidential or proprietary, as the Vermont Department of Economic Development assumes no responsibility for excluding information in response to records requests. Any request for information made by a third party will be examined in light of the exemptions provided in the Vermont access to public records laws.

The solicitation of this RFI does not commit the Vermont Department of Economic Development or the State of Vermont to award a contract. This RFI is for information gathering purposes only and no vendor will be selected, pre-qualified, or exempted based upon their RFI participation.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Vermont Department of Economic Development recently received authorization and funding to implement a Technology-Based Economic Development program. One aspect of this program is to provide Vermont small businesses with assistance in applying for federal SBIR/STTR grants.

3 RFI DESCRIPTION

The State is seeking information to develop a program to provide technical assistance to first time SBIR/STTR applicants, educate applicants on grant proposal best practices, and advise on an application process for businesses seeking technical assistance along with a methodology for determining if the applicant is ready to apply for an SBIR/STTR grant.

The RFI has two key objectives:

- Provide prospective respondents with information regarding the business need, and,
- Solicit respondent information to assist the State in determining if identified requirements can be met in a cost-effective manner.

The State is seeking feedback on the information in this RFI and will consider any information, including partial responses, received in response to this RFI. If the State moves forward in the development of an RFP, the RFP process will be open to all respondents regardless of their decision to participate in this RFI.

The State envisions that the solution will support the following high-level goals:

- Increase Vermont’s number of successful SBIR/STTR applications
- Increase the amount of federal dollars awarded to Vermont businesses
- Increase the number of Vermont businesses commercializing research
- Provide first-time applicants with constructive feedback on applications
- Development of an application process for technical assistance

4 CURRENT STATE

Vermont is currently one of a handful of states that does not provide any technical assistance to SBIR/STTR applicants.

5 STATEMENT OF WORK

5.1 ANTICIPATED REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this RFI is to determine if there are solutions capable of meeting the State’s anticipated requirements and to determine alternatives for meeting those requirements that are consistent with the overall vision for the Vermont Department of Economic Development and the State.

The State’s discovery efforts to date have resulted in a desire to obtain access to solutions with the following attributes:

5.1.1 Business Requirements

- SBIR/STTR grant writing technical assistance. (Technical assistance means reviewing the businesses SBIR/STTR application and providing constructive feedback on how the applicant can improve the quality of their application)
- Technical assistance provided by an expert with federal agency and subject matter specific experience.
- Pricing on a per hour basis
- Application for businesses seeking technical assistance and a methodology for determining if a company is ready to successfully apply for SBIR / STTR grants.

5.1.2 Technical Requirements

- Ability to provide technical assistance via video conference (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or other comparable system.)
- Ability to work with up to 50 to 100 applicants per year.

6 REQUESTED INFORMATION

Each submission prepared in response to this RFI must include the elements listed below, in the order indicated. The vendor, when presenting the response, must use the following outline:

- Cover Page
- Vendor Information
- Cost Estimates
- Business and Technical Requirements

6.1 COVER PAGE

The first page of the vendor's RFI Response must be a cover page displaying at least the following:

- Response of RFI Title
- Vendor's Name
- Contact Person
- Telephone Number
- Address
- Email Address

All subsequent pages of the RFI Response must be numbered.

6.3 CONTACT INFORMATION

SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT: All communications concerning this RFI are to be addressed in writing to the State Contact listed on the front page of this RFI. Actual or attempted contact with any other individual from the State concerning this RFI is strictly prohibited and may result in disqualification.

6.4 EXPLANATION OF EVENTS

1. Issuance of RFI

This RFI is being issued by the Department of Economic Development. <https://accd.vermont.gov/about-us/bidding-opportunities>

2. Question and Answer Period

Any vendor requiring clarification of any section of this RFI or wishing to comment on any requirement of the RFI must submit specific questions in writing no later than the deadline for question indicated on the first page of this RFI. Questions may be e-mailed to the point of contact on the front page of this RFI. Questions or comments not raised in writing on or before the last day of the question period are thereafter waived. At the close of the question period a copy of all questions or comments and the State's responses will be posted on the State's web site <https://accd.vermont.gov/about-us/bidding-opportunities>. Every effort will be made to post this information as soon as possible after the question period ends, contingent on the number and complexity of the questions.

3. Changes to this RFI

Any modifications to this RFI will be made in writing by the State through the issuance of an Addendum to this RFI and posted online at <https://accd.vermont.gov/about-us/bidding-opportunities>. Verbal instructions or written instructions from any other source are not to be considered.

4. Submission of Responses

- a. **CLOSING DATE:** Responses must be received by the State by the due date specified on the front page of this RFI. Late responses will not be considered.

- i. The State may, for cause, issue an addendum to change the date and/or time when responses are due. If a change is made, the State will inform all bidders by posting at the webpage indicated on the front page of this RFI.
- ii. There will not be a public bid opening. However, the State will record the name, city and state for any and all responses received by the due date.

b. BID DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS:

- i. E-MAIL BIDS. Responses will only be accepted via email submission to accd.contract@vermont.gov. Responses must consist of a single email with a single, digitally searchable PDF attachment containing all components of the response. Multiple emails and/or multiple attachments will not be accepted. There is an attachment size limit of 40 MB. It is the Respondent’s responsibility to compress the PDF file containing its bid if necessary in order to meet this size limitation.

5. Review and Evaluation of Responses

The review and evaluation of responses to the RFI will be performed by Vermont Department of Economic Development and their designees. The evaluation process will take place the week following the response due date. During this time, the State may, at their option, initiate discussion with respondents for the purpose of clarifying aspects of their responses.

8 APPENDIX A: COST ESTIMATE WORKSHEET

8.1: COST ESTIMATE TABLE

| Item | General Requirements Description | Cost |
|------|---|------|
| 1 | SBIR/STTR Technical Assistance (please provide per hour cost) | |
| 2 | Technical assistance application and selection methodology (Please provide flat fee cost) | |

8.2 ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Please provide any other materials, suggestions, cost, and discussion you deem appropriate.