

AMERICAN
COMMUNITIES
TRUST

Building Social Impact

Cooking Up Business

Technical Assistance Program for culinary entrepreneurs

Request for Proposals

(re-issued May 22, 2015; original date of issue May 1, 2015)

Due Date: Friday June 5, 2015, 4pm

American Communities Trust is looking for proposals to assist with implementation of the Cooking Up Business program, a local technical assistance program focused on culinary entrepreneurs in Baltimore City, Maryland.

BACKGROUND

American Communities Trust (ACT) is a Baltimore-based not-for-profit organization founded in 2008 and dedicated to “building social impact” in urban and low-income communities across the U.S. One of ACT’s key areas of focus is food-system projects, and ACT has worked on several kitchen incubators, food hubs, and culinary workforce projects across the U.S. These projects include the Baltimore Food Hub, Howard County Food Hub, Triad Community Kitchen (Winston-Salem, NC), Louisville Food Hub, and Elm City Market (New Haven, CT). ACT specializes in nontraditional and hard-to-finance projects. ACT’s team includes a staff, board, and advisory board that include leaders in innovative real-estate, tax credit finance, and an array of programmatic specialty areas.

The **Baltimore Food Hub** is a social impact project, being developed by ACT and driven by a team of private and nonprofit partners, and supported by elected officials, universities and major institutions, with the mission of transforming Baltimore’s food economy.

The project entails a 3.5 acre campus of food workforce and economic development uses planned for a low-income community in East Baltimore. The historic Eastern Pumping Station complex located at 1801 E Oliver St offers a major redevelopment site. On the site are three two-story, late 19th century buildings, each about 10,000 sf. which will be renovated with Historic Preservation Tax Credits. The project will also include a new construction facility to house the Kitchen Incubator component and the balance of land will be utilized by an urban farming operation which will include a farm stand.

This historic preservation and brownfield reuse project will have significant community, economic development, and job creation impacts. The project will create hundreds of jobs, bring new life to a disinvested urban area, and provide substantial opportunities for microenterprise, workforce development, community education, and economic opportunity. The campus seeks to cluster synergistic uses in order to capitalize on the potential of the food industry—one of the top growth sectors nationally, and a robust opportunity for creating an array of workforce and entrepreneurship opportunities locally.

Kitchen Incubator: One of the major barriers for culinary micro-entrepreneurs is the requirement of producing product in a licensed commercial kitchen. To overcome this hurdle, the Food Hub will include a kitchen commissary, with commercial kitchens for rent by the hour to culinary entrepreneurs and food truck operators. The commissary will also provide business technical assistance programming, access to affordable start-up capital, and contract opportunities to help community-based food entrepreneurs legitimize and grow their businesses.

The **Cooking Up Business** technical assistance program for culinary entrepreneurs will provide critical resources and support for Baltimore entrepreneurs who seek to launch or grow a food-

related business. The program is based on a multi-step approach focused on graduating entrepreneurs to the next tier. The steps are as follows:

- Client prospecting, intake and business assessment;
- One-on-one counseling focusing on licensing, certifications, insurance, and basic business skills;
- More advanced counseling and group learning focused on industry-specific topics and skill sets, product development and marketing, and referral to partner micro-finance intermediaries (if required);
- Graduation from core technical assistance and transition to technical assistance focused on building industry relationships to connect entrepreneurs with institutional, wholesale, and retail buyers;
- Graduation out of program into self-sufficiency;
- Creation of a detailed resource guide for culinary entrepreneurs.

The model is based on a rotating client base, where as entrepreneurs graduate, new clients are brought into the program. Currently we have identified at least 178 potential clients in Baltimore who have expressed interest in receiving assistance with their culinary business enterprise.

The model will interface with the Baltimore Food Hub (kitchen incubator) by providing ongoing business technical assistance for entrepreneurs utilizing commercial kitchen spaces.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Client prospecting, intake and business assessment
 - a. Evaluate and assess existing list of potential program participants provided by ACT. Initial lists includes 178 clients that expressed interest in Baltimore Food Hub and the Kitchen Incubator
 - b. Prospect for additional clients in Baltimore Area
 - c. Develop client intake and business assessment forms
 - d. Provide high level business and needs assessment
2. Develop group learning sessions focused on industry-specific topics and skill sets, product development and marketing
3. Provide technical assistance focused on building industry relationships to connect entrepreneurs with institutional, wholesale, and retail buyers
4. Provide one on one business counseling focusing on licensing, certifications, insurance, and basic business skills
5. Develop a detailed resource guide for culinary entrepreneurs

PROPOSAL CONTENT

All proposals must contain the following:

1. Explanation of proposed methodology and general approach to deliver the RFP scope of work described above.
2. Relevant examples of past work demonstrating firm/team's experience with business incubators, food manufacturing, and/or culinary programs.
3. Project timeline and staffing plan.
4. List of key staff proposed for this assignment and their qualifications, including resumes.
5. Total project cost. Include projected number of hours to complete and staff hourly rates.
6. Hourly rates for additional consulting beyond initial project scope.
7. References that include three previous clients.

QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES

Direct all questions, in writing, regarding this request for proposal to:

ATTN: Yaroslav Kovaliv
Phone: 410-870-9285
E-mail: yaroslav@actimpact.org

All questions shall be received no later than Friday, May 29, 2015.

TIMELINE OF SUBMITTAL PROCESS

RFP Distribution Date: 5/22/2015
Bidders Questions Due: 5/29/2015 at 4:00 PM
Proposals Due: 6/5/2015 at 4:00 PM
Award Made: 6/12/2015

Each firm must submit (1) one electronic .pdf file of the complete proposal to the following email addresses no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday June 5, 2015 addressed to:

Yaroslav Kovaliv yaroslav@actimpact.org
Gregory Heller greg@actimpact.org

RESERVATION OF RIGHTS, FINAL SELECTION, AND AWARD

1. ACT reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals and to waive any defects in any proposal.
2. ACT reserves the right to award to more than one vendor and to other than the lowest-priced vendor.
3. ACT reserves the right to ask for a “best and final” proposal.
4. ACT at its sole discretion may decide to take no procurement action as a result of this RFP and may request new-proposals on all or portions of this RFP.
5. ACT will make a decision of award within 10 days of RFP due date and notify winning bidder.
6. The vendor(s) receiving the contract(s), is required to sign the Contract Agreement Form or appropriate contract developed by ACT.
7. The final award is dependent upon negotiation of agreement terms conditions that are acceptable to ACT. Proposal responses and contents provided by the Bidder will be considered contractual obligations.
8. Vendor shall maintain minimum general liability and professional liability insurance of \$1 million and list ACT as additional insured on all appropriate policies.