

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Area Business Coach Program

New Business Coach Program

The McCook Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is launching an exciting new program to provide business coaching services to area entrepreneurs. The MEDC is making a Request for Qualifications from interested contractors to develop and execute this program.

Background & Introduction

The McCook Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is launching an exciting new program to provide Business Coaching services to area entrepreneurs. MEDC is making a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) from interested contractors to develop and execute this program. This document contains information necessary to submit a proposal in response to this Request for Qualifications.

Summary of Desired Qualifications

We are seeking four sets of qualifications from prospective contractors:

1. Capabilities to provide business coaching (BC) services to area entrepreneurs.
2. Capabilities to assist the MEDC in building an Entrepreneurial Development System (EDS).
3. Capabilities to perform as a contractor for the MEDC.
4. Commitment to community.

Additional information on each of these qualifications is provided in the following pages.

Business Coaching Capabilities

- ▶ The contractor need not be a “business expert” but relevant experience as an entrepreneur or working with entrepreneurs is strongly desired. Please provide a detailed summary of relevant business experience either related directly to owning and/or operating businesses or working with business owners.
- ▶ Please detail any relevant experience you have had with (1) growth-oriented businesses, (2) aspiring and start-up businesses, (3) businesses in transition, (4) businesses in crisis, (5) entrepreneur attraction, and (6) youth entrepreneurs.
- ▶ Identify specific person(s) who would be involved as business coach(es) and outline their personal/professional abilities to listen to entrepreneurs, evaluate needs and opportunities, and facilitate assistance.
- ▶ Share information on your (or your team’s) networking experience with business assistance providers (both public and private). Please be specific regarding your personal/professional relationships with area and state level business resource providers.

EDS Building Capabilities

- ▶ The contractor will be expected to help the MEDC build an Entrepreneurial Development System or EDS. Additional information on an EDS is contained in the next section. We would like you to address your experience in building, supporting and managing comprehensive networked systems of support either directly related to business assistance or to other fields.
- ▶ Networked systems of support require collaborative and team building skills. Please share information on your experience and abilities related to working with teams, volunteers and within collaborative situations.

Contractor Capabilities

- ▶ Please provide detailed examples and references regarding relevant contract experience. Please provide up-to-date contact information including phone numbers and email addresses for references.
- ▶ Detail your preferences for working as a contractor. MEDC wishes to build a constructive working relationship with our business coach contractor and we are interested in your perspectives on how this relationship should work.
- ▶ Business coaching is a relatively new field. We understand that there will be a likely need for training and support for our business coach contractor. We are looking for a contractor who is very open to learning our preferred system and who will actively cooperate in a training and support program.

Community

- ▶ The MEDC is committed to the long-term and sustainable development of McCook, Red Willow County and Southwestern Nebraska. Our mission is centered on creating community prosperity through business development. We are looking for a contractor who is equally committed to this community and its region. Please share your perspectives with respect to community commitment.
- ▶ A key element to community commitment is experience and familiarity with McCook and its region. Please share relevant background that demonstrates your understanding of McCook and its region as it pertains to your ability to work with area business owners.

Submitting a RFQ Proposal

What is a RFQ Proposal? A RFQ proposal enables us to identify and review potentially interested and qualified contractor candidates. Following this review stage, top candidates will be invited into a negotiated process to execute a specific contract for services and fees. We are only seeking seriously interested candidates. Submittal of a RFQ proposal does not obligate you to accept an invitation to negotiate a contract.

RFQ Proposal Deadline: *DATE*

Compensation. The MEDC is prepared to provide competitive compensation for time and expenses associated with a negotiated contract for services. Actual compensation will be negotiated during the second step in this selection process.

Invitation Deadline: The MEDC will review each RFQ proposal and conduct due diligence on references. We anticipate invitations to enter into contract negotiations will begin 30 to 45 days following the submittal of RFQ proposals. It is possible that more than one RFQ proposal submitter will be invited into this contract negotiation process.

Questions & Additional Information: The MEDC welcomes questions from prospective contractor applicants. We are prepared to provide clarifying information to ensure each applicant can be optimally responsive to this RFQ.

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Business Coach Program Funding

Contracting Period: We envision this contract to cover 18 months beginning January 1, 2008 and terminating July 31, 2009. The MEDC's intent is to create a long-term and sustainable Business Coaching Program. Based on funding availability and performance, extension of this contract may be possible after July 31, 2009.

Training & Support Services: The MEDC in partnership with the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship and HomeTown Competitiveness is prepared to provide a comprehensive training and support program. The Center has extensive North American experience with business coaching. Such assistance will be explored and determined as part of the contract negotiation process.

Business Coaching: Business coaching is a proven, but emerging economic development strategy that focuses on business development through assisting entrepreneurs. One objective of this program is to create an Entrepreneurial Development System (EDS). An EDS provides customized program support for partner entrepreneurs. This approach provides varying levels of support based on the entrepreneur's potential contribution to the local and area economy. We are primarily interested in identifying and supporting two groups of entrepreneurs - growth and attractions:

Growth entrepreneurs are those seeking to expand their businesses through better business models, new products/services or new markets. Ultimately we are most interested in growth entrepreneurs that pursue markets outside of the immediate economy generating new wealth for the community.

Attraction entrepreneurs are those seeking to potentially locate in McCook or this area and bring or establish a business that fits the characteristics of the growth entrepreneur.

In addition to growth and attraction entrepreneurs, we anticipate that this system of support would provide assistance to aspiring, start-up, transition and struggling entrepreneurs.

Key elements of our EDS include:

- 1) A close strategic working relationship with the MEDC, the Chamber of Commerce and other key development groups (both public and private) in McCook and its region.
- 2) Development of an Area Resource Team (ART). The ART would include area resources such as bankers, attorneys, CPAs, Community College, Chamber of Commerce, City of McCook, Red Willow County and other relevant resource providers. The ART would work closely with the business coach to (a) advise and guide the program and (b) provide confidential guidance and assistance through the coach to partner entrepreneurs.
- 3) Development of an External Resource Network (ERN). The ERN would create effective linkages between partner entrepreneurs and outside resources (e.g., state, federal, regional, higher education) on an as-needed basis. The coach and the program would serve as brokers between the ERN and partner entrepreneurs.
- 4) Development of a portfolio of partner entrepreneurs that meet the strategic targeting of the program. Management of this portfolio would be a primary responsibility of the coach.
- 5) Development of a strategic and aggressive identification, outreach and assistance program to targeted entrepreneurs. This is relationship-based customized assistance. The creation of a strong and trusting relationship between the program and partner entrepreneurs is essential for desired impact.
- 6) The MEDC is committed to developing the necessary private and public infrastructure to provide a robust business climate for entrepreneurs. A key objective will be to learn from engaged entrepreneurs and gain deeper insights into their needs and opportunities. This market research is needed to guide the development of this infrastructure and the overall business climate.

Ultimately, the EDS creates a robust set of networks that can effectively connect entrepreneurs that have specific needs and opportunities with optimal resources.

For more information on “business coaching” and “Entrepreneurial Development Systems” check out the Center’s Web site www.energizingentrepreneurs.org.

Questions & More Information

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The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship's mission is to help community leaders build a prosperous future by supporting and empowering business, social and civic entrepreneurs. With our roots and hearts in rural America, we help communities of all sizes and interests by bringing empowering research, community engagement and strategy development to you through our many Solution Areas. Our **Solution Area Teams** empower communities to discover their own answers to the challenges and opportunities they face:

- **Community Development Philanthropy:** Providing research and community engagement strategies that help communities build philanthropic capacity and create development resources now and in the future.
- **Youth Engagement:** Providing tools and a framework for communities to engage young people now and to bring them home in the future.
- **Measurement Research Policy:** Providing the tools to help communities define development goals, measure success and improve outcomes.
- **Entrepreneurial Communities:** Providing a roadmap for communities to design and deliver entrepreneur-focused economic development strategies that work.

To learn more about us, go to www.energizingentrepreneurs.org.

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