REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) – NO. 2023-AFF-01

Tech Affiliate – Program Announcement 2023

ISSUED BY
Northern California SBDC Lead Center
a program of
Cal Poly Humboldt Sponsored Programs Foundation

IMPORTANT DATES:

Issuance Date:	**February 1st**
Proposals Due:	**March 10th**
Notification of Winning Bidders/Notice Posted:	**March 13th**
Start date of contract and work commences:	**March 15th**

Questions about this RFP should be directed to:

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Section 1. Introduction

1. Overview
   - Funder – Cal Poly Humboldt – Sponsored Programs Foundation
   - Prime Funders – U.S. Small Business Administration and California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development
   - Announcement Type: Initial – Open
   - RFP Number: 2023-AFF-01
   - CFDA Number: 59.037
   - Closing date for submissions: Proposals are due by 3 PM PST on February 22nd
   - Funding Amount: Up to $150,000 is available for contracts
   - Number of awards: It is anticipated that up to 3 individual awards may be made, between $25,000 and $100,000
   - Funding Period: Funding will be available for programs starting March 1st, 2023, through September 30, 2023 (6 months). Contracts may be renewed for an additional 12 months at CPHSPFs discretion.
   - Funding Instrument: Cost Reimbursement Contracts

2. Purpose

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is being issued from the Northern California Small Business Development Center Program (Norcal SBDC) hosted by Cal Poly Humboldt Sponsored Programs Foundation (CPHSPF) which, through a shared cooperative agreement with the United States Small Business Administration (SBA), serves as host to the Northern California Lead Center. This RFP is intended to identify Strategic Partners or Affiliates, local partners to participate in the delivery of high-quality services to small businesses and new entrepreneurs allowing them to start and grow businesses, create jobs, increase sales, and gain capital and investment. The goal of this RFP is to utilize a competitive process to leverage resources and partnerships in a manner that will ensure the greatest outcomes for the small business community in northern California while ensuring accountability, transparency, and impact for the state and federal taxpayer dollars used to fund the program. It is a requirement of CPHSPF to regularly issue competitive RFPs to ensure innovative services, exceptional customer service, and maximum economic impact for the state and federal government while ensuring the highest levels of accountability for the public funds it receives.

3. Background Information

Established during the Carter administration, the SBDC program is the largest federally-designated technical assistance program focused on supporting startup and growing small businesses in all 50 states and U.S. territories. The Norcal SBDC Network is the collaborative partnership between the SBA and CPHSPF, supporting businesses in the northernmost 36 counties in California, stretching from Santa Cruz to Crescent City, and from Stockton to Alturas including the San Francisco Bay Area, Silicon Valley, and the entire Sacramento metro region. The Norcal SBDC Network provides technical services (consulting and training) to existing and emerging small businesses with a focus on growth industries in the region.

The administrative headquarters for Norcal SBDC is called the Lead Center. The Lead Center is the entity that is engaged via a Cooperative Agreement with the SBA to administer the network. The Lead Center for the Norcal SBDC Network is hosted by the Sponsored Programs Foundation of Cal Poly Humboldt, the northernmost university in the CSU system. The office of the Norcal SBDC Lead Center is in Eureka, California and Kristin Johnson is the Northern CA SBDC Executive Director.

Per federal regulation, the Norcal SBDC Executive Director is granted the authority and is directly responsible for assigning and achieving the goals and objectives of the program. The Executive Director is the primary contact for local direction and for monitoring and overseeing the investments and outcomes of the program.

4. Strategic Initiatives Background Information

Strategic Initiatives is a division of the Norcal SBDC Network that supports program areas like the Affiliate Program, specialty regional advising, industry specific program offerings, and other program expansions not necessarily included as part of core SBDC services. One major facet of this program is working with affiliate organizations. Affiliates are independent entities, formally engaged, that are already doing work similar to the SBDC. The Affiliate program is not intended to train organizations to support small businesses, it is to engage with organizations that are already providing high level technical support to small businesses in northern California and help them extend their reach.

Strategic Initiatives is seeking affiliate organizations to contribute to our regional Technology Program, Tech Futures Group (TFG). The tech-centric programming of TFG empowers tech startups in Northern California to excel, with expertise in Ai, Bio-tech, SAAS, iOT, Med-tech, Green energy, education, hardware, and blockchain. We are looking for business organizations that can offer specialized advising in the areas of access to capital, government innovation funding, intellectual property, startup strategy, branding, financial projections, manufacturing, building Angel & Venture Capitalists networks, and pitch competitions.

Serving a region that is home to global leaders in technology and innovation, hub of creativity and development, and industry-defining thought leadership, the Northern California Small Business Development Center Program (Norcal SBDC) is seeking affiliate organizations that can contribute to the success of tech entrepreneurs of the region. This work will amplify work being done supporting traditionally underserved small businesses, including businesses owned by women, people of color, veterans, and businesses located in rural and/or low-income communities.

Work will be carried out by the Affiliate by offering consulting, training, and workshops. All work supported by the Norcal SBDC must be focused on clients with their primary address in the region stated above, the northern 36 counties in California.

The goal of this RFP is to utilize a competitive process to leverage resources and partnerships in a manner that will ensure the greatest outcomes for the small technology-focused business community in northern California while ensuring accountability, transparency, and impact for the state and federal taxpayer dollars used to fund the program. It is a requirement of CPHSPF to regularly issue competitive RFPs to ensure innovative services, exceptional customer service, and maximum economic impact for the state and federal government while ensuring the highest levels of accountability for the public funds it receives.

5. Authorizing Legislation and Funding Sources

The SBDC Program is authorized through Congress and partially funded by the U.S. SBA and by the California Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz). The Norcal SBDC is governed by Section 21 of the Small Business Act 15 U.S.C. § 648, federal regulations 13 C.F.R. Part 130, and California Government Code Section 12100-12100.69. Although the Lead Center is responsible for the general management and oversight of the Norcal SBDC program, a partnership exists between SBA, GO-Biz, the Lead Center, and the regional host partners for the delivery of assistance to the small business community in the region. SBDCs, under Section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. § 648), are required to provide consulting and training to small businesses including working with the SBA to develop and provide informational tools to support business start-ups and existing business expansion. In addition, pursuant to 13 CFR Part 130.340(c), SBA may, from time to time, identify certain Special Emphasis Groups to be targeted for assistance by SBDCs. The Norcal SBDC Network maintains a strong working relationship with the SBA District Offices located in San Francisco and Sacramento, California.

All SBDC services are provided pursuant to the Norcal SBDC Network Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. SBA; Federal OMB circulars; U.S. SBA Guidelines and Regulations; the Grant Agreements between GO-Biz and CPHSPF; and the CPHSPF Policy and Procedures Manual. In addition, local host organizations receive fiscal and programmatic examinations/reviews each year or as necessary, pursuant to the Norcal SBDC Network, SBA, and CPHSPF audit procedures.

6. Applicant Eligibility

This RFP is seeking organizations, not individuals or independent contractors, to serve as Affiliate partners. Applicants may be for profit or non-profit entities, there is no categorical restriction on business entity type besides that they must be able to demonstrate that they are qualified to conduct business in the State of California and be in good standing with the Secretary of State. Applicants should have established accounting processes and ideally, prior experience with federal or state grants, which is necessary to manage and report on federally- or state-funded programs/activities in accordance with the applicable regulations.

7. Term of Award and Subsequent Terms

This RFP is for proposals to serve as SBDC affiliates for a six-month period beginning March 1, 2023, and ending September 30, 2023. Contracts may be renewed for an additional 12 months subject to performance achievement, compliance with the terms of the contract, a successful renegotiation of metric goals for the extended period, and fund availability.

The Lead Center reserves the right to terminate the contracts of organizations for noncompliance or nonperformance according to the terms of the contracts issued, as well as to add affiliate organizations, regardless of RFP participation, during program years as needed to meet service delivery goals.

8. General RFP Information

The bidding process for this procurement of services is competitive and proposals will be judged based on their compliance with RFP guidelines, and each respondent's ability to meet stated requirements in Section 3, Application Instructions and Evaluation Criteria. Only those proposals that meet these requirements will be evaluated according to the criteria set forth. Further review may occur through interviews and/or site visits to one or more applicant. Oral communications with CPHSPF officers and employees shall be non-binding on CPHSPF and shall in no way exclude the bidder of obligations as set forth in this package.

CPHSPF reserves the right to amend, alter or change the rules and conditions contained in this RFP prior to the deadline for submission of proposals. CPHSPF reserves the right to negotiate with any qualified bidder, or to modify or cancel in part or in its entirety contract provisions if it is in the best interest of CPHSPF to do so. CPHSPF reserves the right to extend the submission deadline should this be in the best interest of CPHSPF. CPHSPF reserves the right to not award any awards. Proposing organizations will have the right to revise their proposals in the event that the deadline is extended.

Upon award of contracts to the successful bidders, the contract will be between CPHSPF and the applicant organization. The applicant organization does not have a direct contract relationship with the Small Business Administration or the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development.

9. Bidder's Costs

Costs for developing proposals are entirely the responsibility of the bidder and shall not be reimbursed by CPHSPF.

Section 2. Scope of Work and Reporting

1. Scope of Work and Reporting Overview

The Affiliate will be engaged to provide high level support to small businesses. Applicants will be engaged to provide no-cost consulting and training to meet the needs of small businesses in Northern California. Provided it is within the specified framework, the Affiliate will have some autonomy to design its program and service delivery mechanisms, however the Lead Center will maintain oversight of all activities via periodic reporting and monthly check-ins.

The core service provided via SBDC funds is consulting and training. All service and performance goals for the Affiliate will be based on consulting and training activities. The Affiliate shall design and provide quality consulting services to improve the skills and knowledge of existing and prospective small business owners/managers. All consulting shall have an identified and measurable goal that is agreed upon by consultant and client. Consulting is a process of in-depth, two-way communication between client and counselor. This process includes identifying and analyzing the client's needs and problems.

The Affiliate will assist businesses with many areas of needs, such as in management, marketing, financing, strategic planning, capital formation, venture capital, procurement, succession planning (selling or transitioning), operations, economic and business data analysis, new product development or commercialization, exporting and foreign direct investment, or any other areas of assistance required to promote small business growth, expansion and productivity. Fees may not be charged for SBDC consulting. All individuals providing consulting to clients must successfully pass the Norcal SBDC Business Advisor certification. Certification training is provided by the Lead Center on a quarterly basis.

Additionally, the Affiliate partner may offer trainings/workshops that are relevant to groups of small business owners/entrepreneurs. Affiliates are encouraged to arrange for co-sponsored training with the private sector and other organizations, to extend outreach and productivity. Workshops must be offered free of charge to all attendees. Events can be held both virtually and/or in-person, and must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and guidance regarding COVID. All events must be ADA compliant, and the Lead Center can provide further guidance and best practices.

The Affiliate partner will be expected to provide these consulting and training services to the SBDC at the rate of $100 per hour. Up to 20% of the contracted amount may be used for non-client research and/or marketing, and the remaining 80% or more must go towards counseling, training, curriculum development, and preparation time for client interactions. Prior to awarding of the contract, all successful Affiliate organizations will negotiate a set of Economic Impact Goals, which are defined in Section 3.

2. Client Activity and Performance Tracking

The Affiliate will participate in measurement of services delivered and client successes through use of a proprietary online tracking system named NeoSerra. Training on use of this system will be provided by the Norcal SBDC Lead Center to the Affiliate personnel.

3. Performance Reports

Affiliate will be expected to submit a quarterly report within 14 days after the quarter end for standard US calendar quarters. A template may be given, but lacking such, Affiliates should anticipate summarizing project activities, noting any successes or challenges, and offering plans to address any shortfalls in goal achievement.

4. Financial Reporting

The Affiliate will be functioning in a full reimbursement program, with no cash advances. Affiliates will be expected to pay for expenses incurred and then submit monthly invoices for reimbursement. Applicants must have cash on hand to account for invoicing with net 60 days for payment (from the point of invoice and approval of any required supporting paperwork). Invoices will be due no later than the 1st of the subsequent month for all billable services provided and approved expenses incurred in the prior month. Invoices submitted late will be honored but may take longer to reimburse.

5. Documentation and Record Keeping

The Affiliate will be required to maintain and preserve all records relative to this agreement for three (3) years after receipt of final reimbursement. The Affiliate will be required to permit the SBA and CPHSPF's duly authorized representatives to have access to and to examine and audit all pertinent books, documents, papers, and records related to this agreement, given appropriate notice and direction.

Additionally, a copy of all training and/or information materials developed in connection with this agreement such as online course and tools, videos, CD-ROMs, publications, training guides, training handouts, cybercast presentations, websites, etc., shall be readily available to the SBA, GO-Biz, and CPHSPF for other purposes upon request.

Section 3. Application Instructions and Evaluation Criteria

1. Required Components and Scoring Criteria
   - (Not Scored) A signature page bearing the signature, title, and full contact information of the authorized representative of the respondent, including email address and phone number.
     - On this page, please also provide the name, title, and full contact information for:
       - Fiscal authority responsible for tracking expenses and carrying out reporting.
       - (If different from above) Program authority, responsible for developing and carrying out program work, training, and programmatic reporting.
     - Total budget request as a single number.
   - A Narrative Proposal, no more than 4 pages, single spaced, 12-point font, addressing the following areas:
     - (40 points) Describe unique capacities, abilities, and service delivery plans for providing support to small businesses, and what the organization's and advisors area(s) of expertise may be.
     - (25 points) Describe how your organization will target underserved small business sectors:

Underserved Small Business Sectors	
● Women-owned businesses	● People of Color-owned businesses
● Black-owned businesses	● Veteran-owned businesses
● Businesses in low-income communities	● Businesses in rural communities

     - (5 points) Describe any previous experience receiving funding from the SBDC, the State of California, or the Federal Government.
     - (5 points) Provide a brief summary of the organization's fiscal oversight process. How will the fiscal authority named above track, verify, and report financial data to the SBDC? What processes/policies are in place to ensure proper oversight and risk management?
     - (10 points) Resumes/bios of at least three experts/advisors that would provide technical services. A staffing plan would also be appropriate in support of the submitted resumes. (Not subject to four-page limit)
   - (15 points) Proposed Metric (goal) sheet. Although winning applications can expect to negotiate final goal/metric amounts, based on available funding, past performance, and the Norcal SBDC Lead Centers expertise and experience, a starting point for the conversation is an important piece of the evaluation process. It is not required for the applicant to list all the metrics, but it is expected that the applicant would suggest four to eight bullet points below with proposed goals.

Metric	**Appropriate ranges for a $50k contract**
Number of Training Events	3 to 6 events
Number of Clients Counseled	50 to 100 clients

Number of Jobs Created (full and part-time)	20 to 50 jobs
Number of Clients Trained	10 to 20 clients, per training event
Number of New Businesses Started	10 to 30 businesses
Number of Jobs Retained (full and part-time)	50 to 100 jobs
Capital Infusion (Loan, Equity, Grants)	$5,000,000 to $25,000,000
Increase in Sales	$1,000,000 to $10,000,000

- (Not Scored) Additional Required Application Docs – current affiliate organizations do not need to resubmit these
    a. Business license
    b. Business entity documentation (articles of organization)
    c. Website and/or brochure that explains services provided

PROPOSALS MUST BE PREPARED AND SUBMITTED IN THE FOLLOWING FORMAT TO ENSURE ACCURATE EVALUATION.

- Proposals are to be submitted digitally in a Word document (.doc or .docx) or in a .pdf format no later than 3 PM PST on February 17, 2023, to kendra.higgins@humboldt.edu.
- Must be submitted on equivalent of 8.5 x 11 sheet.
- The minimum font size for body text is 11, captions and headers/footers can be smaller.

2. Selection Process
    a. After the period has closed for receipt of proposals, each proposal will be evaluated to determine compliance with general RFP guidelines and specific requirements of this RFP. Proposals will be considered nonresponsive and rejected without being evaluated if they are submitted by ineligible organizations or they are illegible or materially incomplete due to an Applicant's failure to include all required components and/or provide the required level of detail.
    b. The evaluation committee will then review all responsive proposals against the evaluation criteria listed below. Proposals will be ranked based upon score.
    c. The evaluation committee reserves the right to designate one or more members of the committee to perform oral interviews with one or more finalist. The oral interviews will confirm information presented in the proposal. Further, the oral interview will allow finalists to demonstrate their understanding of the project objectives, and to articulate their capability to meet or exceed requirements of this RFP.
    d. The evaluation committee reserves the right to designate one or more members of the committee to perform in-person site visits with one or more finalist. The site visits will confirm information presented in the proposal and oral interviews.
    e. A contract will be awarded to the applicants with highly scored proposals, a high level of cost-effectiveness of proposed services to be offered, a demonstrated ability to provide sufficient fiscal and programmatic oversight of a federally funded program, and any additional information gathered from oral interviews and/or site visits, if deemed necessary. Not every program priority will be served by an affiliate, and some program priorities may be served by multiple affiliates
    f. CPHSPF reserves the right not to award any awards.
    g. Upon selection of proposed recipients, a Notice of Intent to Award will be posted online

at www.norcalsbdc.org. Winning bidders will be notified verbally or in writing as to their selection as the proposed contract awardee at the time CPHSPF posts the Notice of Intent to Award.

h. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing on the date CPHSPF posts the Notice of Awards.

3. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed and scored by an evaluation committee. Evaluation of proposals will be based on the criteria shown. While criteria headings align with narrative sections, the entire proposal's content will inform scoring in each of these areas.

Criteria	**Points**
Unique capacities, abilities, and service delivery plans for providing support to small businesses, and what the organization's and advisors area(s) of expertise may be.	Up to 40
How organization will target underserved small businesses or SBDC program priorities	Up to 25
Any previous experience receiving funding from the SBDC, the State of California, or the Federal Government	Up to 5
A brief summary of the organization's fiscal oversight process. How will the fiscal authority named above track, verify, and report financial data to the SBDC? What processes/policies are in place to ensure proper oversight and risk management?	Up to 5
Resumes/bios of at least three experts/advisors that would provide technical services. A staffing plan may also be submitted in support of, but not in lieu of, three resumes.	Up to10
Proposed Metrics	Up to 15
Total Points Possible	**100 points**

4. Grounds for Rejection
   a. CPHSPF reserves the right to waive any immaterial deviation in a proposal; however, the waiver of an immaterial deviation in a proposal shall in no way modify the document or excuse the bidder from full compliance with the proposal requirements after the bidder is awarded the contract.
   b. A proposal shall be rejected if:
      1) The proposal package is received after the exact time and date set for receipt of proposals.
      2) The proposal contains false or misleading statements or references which do not support an attribute or condition contended by the bidder; and if, in the opinion of CPHSPF, such information was intended to erroneously misleads CPHSPF in its evaluation of the proposal.
      3) The proposal is confidential (excluding bidder's financial information), conditional, incomplete or if it contains any irregularities.

5. Oral Interview Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation committee may conduct oral interviews with one or more bidder. The evaluation committee reserves the option of conducting the interview via teleconference, or at the finalist's and/or the proposed subcontractor's site, or other designated site. The following criteria will be used for assessing oral interview(s).

Criteria	**Points**
Quality and completeness of answers to questions regarding the proposed activities.	Up to 10
Bidder's awareness of and ability to comfortably discuss concepts and approaches to small business development, economic development and measurement of economic impact. Understanding of the local business community, prominent growth industries and key partners/stakeholders in the economic development field, local growth industries and partnership opportunities.	Up to 10
Bidder's ability to tie ideas presented in the work plan to overall program objectives for the Northern California SBDC Network.	Up to 5
Bidder’s ability to understand and articulate fiscal management of federally funded programs/contracts.	Up to 5
Total Points Possible	**Up to 30**

6. Debriefing

Written debriefings of the evaluation results will not be provided to unsuccessful proposals. Oral debriefings may be provided at CPHSPF's discretion.