

**Request for Proposals for
Phase II of Community Economic Recovery
& Resiliency Study and
American Rescue Plan Program Evaluation**



Important Dates:

RFP Date of Release: November 8, 2023

RFP Responses Due: December 15, 2023

The Alliance for Economic Development
105 N. Hudson Street, Ste. 101, Oklahoma City, OK 73102

Proposals must be submitted as PDFs sent via email.
Proposals and/or questions may be submitted via email at:

Joseph.Laws@theallianceokc.org

Introduction

In December of 2020, the Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City hired EY to conduct a community economic recovery and resiliency study for The City of Oklahoma City. The objective of the study was to evaluate Oklahoma City's economic development ecosystem and identify potential means to accelerate overall economic growth, bolster entrepreneurial support, and improve equitable access to economic opportunities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. On September 30, 2021, EY published their analysis and findings in the *Oklahoma City Economic Recovery and Resiliency Study* (linked below).

After conducting extensive statistical analysis and qualitative evaluation of the Oklahoma City economic ecosystem, EY uncovered a number of disparities and inequities stunting Oklahoma City's growth and economic potential. Namely, many business owners, especially business owners of color, continued to face challenges accessing capital, utilizing incentives, and participating in expanding economic opportunities.

While EY was compiling its analysis of the Oklahoma City economy, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 was signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021. The legislation established the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF), which was intended to support state and local governments as they address the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 on their communities, residents, and businesses.

The United States Department of Treasury allocated \$122,507,590 from the SLFRF for The City of Oklahoma City to respond to the public health emergency and its negative economic impact by providing assistance to households, small businesses, nonprofits and severely impacted industries, such as tourism, travel, and hospitality. EY included several recommendations for how to strategically utilize SLFRF funding to address the disparities identified.

On September 14, 2021, the City Council of The City of Oklahoma City allocated \$37,000,000 from its SLFRF apportionment towards addressing the negative economic impacts of COVID-19; and on February 14, 2022, The City entered into an Operation Agreement with the Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City to develop and manage the Fiscal Recovery Funds Business Support Program. The Operation Agreement further specified funding into three separate categories of assistance:

- A. Job Training/Upskilling Workforce Development – this includes projects to assist small businesses and individuals to obtain upskilling, training, education, and coaching with a focus on areas such as contractor support, hospitality/customer service, retail, healthcare, digital skills, and manufacturing.
- B. Minority/Disadvantaged Business Support and Technical Assistance – this includes projects to provide assistance to minority businesses with technical assistance with the goal of providing growth among minority owned businesses.
- C. Small Business/Non-Profit Support – this includes projects to assist small businesses and non-profits with ongoing business needs, including but not limited to, loans, grants, technical assistance, “Streeteries”, business retrofits, and legal clinics. This also includes projects intended to build the future capacity of communities for development, including but not limited to, DEI Best Practice training, business district technical assistance, and financial literacy training.

The Alliance has used the programmatic and policy recommendations from the study to inform how to execute the Operation Agreement, what projects and programs to recommend for funding, and how to place equity at the center of the COVID-19 economic recovery. To date, the Alliance has executed or subcontracted for eighteen different projects as part of the Fiscal Recovery Funds Business Support Program, many were initially proposed in EY's Community Economic Recovery and Resiliency Study. Additional SLFRF-funded programs are currently in development.

Purpose and Summary

The City has directed the Alliance to continue the work that started in EY's *Oklahoma City Community Economic Recovery and Resiliency Study*, specifically to identify potential means to accelerate overall economic growth, bolster entrepreneurial support, and improve equitable access to economic opportunities. Additionally, The City would like to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of its projects and programs that assist small businesses and individuals impacted by COVID-19 conducted as part of the Fiscal Recovery Funds Business Support Program. The Alliance is seeking a qualified consultant ("Consultant") to perform the following activities:

- Assess the trajectory of existing community economic recovery and resiliency efforts by and within The City of Oklahoma City.
- Evaluate effective service delivery and program outcomes.
- Measure economic impact of the Fiscal Recovery Funds Business Support Program projects.
- Identify potential funding to continue projects and programs beyond SLFRF funding.
- Propose recommendations on which programs and projects of the Fiscal Recovery Funds Business Support Program should be continued beyond SLFRF funding.
- Develop a five-to-ten-year action strategy for continued post-pandemic recovery, economic resiliency, equity within the local business community and economy, and assistance to disproportionately impacted classes, groups, populations, and individuals that faced preexisting disparities before the pandemic.

The estimated budget for the program evaluation will be no more than \$150,000.

In accordance with regulations governing expenditure and obligations of ARPA funds, the study will need to be completed no later than December 31, 2024.

Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables

Goals and objectives of this project include:

- Assess efforts and progress made towards an equitable economic recovery in response to and since the publication of the *Oklahoma City Community Economic Recovery & Resiliency Study* (2021).
- Evaluate effectiveness and outcomes of programs within Fiscal Recovery Funds Business Support Program.
- Measure economic impact of the Fiscal Recovery Funds Business Support Program.
- Determine projects and programs that should continue beyond the Fiscal Recovery Funds Business Support Program.
- Produce an action strategy to guide and inform post-pandemic economic recovery and resiliency activity in Oklahoma City.

Deliverables include, but are not limited to:

- An analysis of the implementation of recommendations from the *Oklahoma City Community Economic Recovery & Resiliency Study* (2021); and identification of continued barriers to implementation.
- A quantitative and qualitative evaluation and analysis of the impact all projects within Fiscal Recovery Funds Business Support Program. Analysis will focus on what outcomes were produced by the projects; to what degree the projects remediated preexisting disparities within the Oklahoma City community (e.g., the unequal distribution of business ownership which was

not proportional to the city's racial population distribution, as identified by the *Oklahoma City Community Economic Recovery & Resiliency Study*, 2021, by EY); and what were the economic effects of the projects.

- Recommendations for which specific projects and programs of the Fiscal Recovery Funds Business Support Program should continue beyond SLFRF funding; how The City of Oklahoma City can continue to support and fund those programs; and what resources The City of Oklahoma City can leverage to further support those identified projects and programs.
- An action strategy plan to implement a revised strategy for post-pandemic community economic resiliency in Oklahoma City; identification of specific resources and tactics to guide economic resiliency development; and development of guidelines for continuously assisting disproportionately impacted groups.

Supporting Documents

- [*Oklahoma City Community Economic Recovery & Resiliency Study*](#) (2021)
- [*Overview of the 2022 Final Rule*](#) (2022)
- [*Overview of the 2023 Interim Final Rule*](#) (2023)

Consultant Qualifications

The selected Consultant must be able to demonstrate a proven record of accomplishment in the disciplines of economic and community development, program evaluation, policy analysis, and strategy development and consultation. Additionally, Consultant should possess a demonstrated background in:

- Statistical and economic analysis of program data and outcomes.
- Critical, systems thinking and consulting.
- Policy management and administration guidance.
- Development of successful innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem building.
- Business diversification.
- Equity-centered programming for small business and workforce development.

The Consultant must be willing and fully capable of working closely with relevant program partners, project subcontractors, beneficiaries, City departments and other partner organizations and community members through this effort. The Consultant must show strong project management skills, demonstrate the ability to meet project budgets and deadlines, and be willing to build upon the body of work that has previously been completed and that is currently underway. Time is of the essence in this effort and the performance schedules provided by the Consultant will be considered carefully.

Proposal Format

Respondents must submit complete responses to all of the information requested in this RFP. Respondents who do not respond to the entire content of the RFP may be disqualified.

Proposals should identify the Respondent's economic development planning approach, program evaluation approach, data and information needed to conduct analysis, and staff expected to be involved in the work. The proposal should also note how the plan and supporting information will be presented to the Alliance, The City of Oklahoma City leadership team, and other relevant public and private organizations as appropriate.

Written proposals should include, at a minimum, the following information in the order requested:

1. Cover Letter. A letter signed by an officer of the firm or individual, binding the Respondent to all of the commitments made in the proposal. The cover letter should be addressed to Kenton Tsoodle, President and CEO at The Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City.
2. Contact Information. The name, address and contact person of the Respondent submitting the proposal. Please include telephone number, email address and website address.
3. Statement of Qualifications and Experience. Additional information can be in narrative form.
 - Give the Respondent's professional history, background and relevant experience.
 - The names, business addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of firms and individuals proposed to participate in all tasks identified in the scope of work.
 - The background, education and relevant experience of all team members proposed to participate in all tasks identified in the scope of work. The principal in charge and project manager shall be identified along with the roles of other significant project participants.
 - Experience with economic development planning and program evaluations of similar size, scope and relevance. Provide a minimum of three references for similar work, giving the name of the project, description of project, project period, and project cost and links to plan documents. (Include the names of clients, primary contact person and phone number).
4. Scope of Work. Proposed approach to the scope of work with an emphasis on the respondent's approach to equitable economic development planning and program evaluation. The statement of approach should show that the Consultant has experience with each task in the scope of work.
5. Project Schedule. Proposed project schedule in accordance with basic requirements of this RFP, as stated in the Purpose and Summary above. The schedule should include phasing and key benchmarks that will be accomplished in the execution of the project. Project schedule should not extend beyond December 31, 2024.
6. Fee Proposal. The fee proposal shall include costs associated with the delivery and provision of finished product(s), costs associated with carrying out all tasks specified in scope of work contained in this RFP, and a proposed schedule of payment based on clearly defined milestones. The fee proposal should include:
 - A complete rate schedule and pricing for staff to be utilized in this project,
 - Total costs per task, itemizing personnel, subcontractors and direct expenses (such as travel, printing, etc.),
 - Total costs for the project, itemizing personnel, subcontractors, and direct expenses, and
 - Timeline for payment.
7. Proposed Subcontractors. The selected Consultant will assume sole responsibility for the complete project as described in this RFP. The Alliance will consider only one individual/firm/company as the sole point of contact with regard to contract matters, whether or not subcontractors are used for one or more parts of this project. Respondents who intend to subcontract one or more elements of this project to other firms/individuals shall identify those work elements to be subcontracted and the firm/individual subcontractor. All subcontractors shall be included in the respondent's statement of qualifications.

Subcontractors may not be substituted, nor any portions of the contract assigned to other parties, after contract award without the written consent of The Alliance. The Consultant may utilize the services of specialty subcontractors on those portions of the work that under normal contracting practices are performed by specialty subcontractors. The Consultant shall be fully responsible to The Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City for the performance, finished products, acts, and omissions of its subcontractors and persons directly or indirectly employed thereby. The Alliance will not pay an administration fee to the prime contractor for any subcontracted work.

8. Insurance Documents. Documentation of insurance coverage required for this Request for Proposal, including Proof of Professional Liability Insurance, General Liability Insurance, Workers Compensation and Auto Insurance.

RFP Timeline

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Compensation of Services

The City of Oklahoma City plans to spend no more than \$150,000 of ARPA funding for continued economic resiliency planning and program evaluation.

Policies and Regulations

The Consultant providing services under contract must follow all regulatory guidance pertaining to the SLFRF issued by the U.S. Department of Treasury, including the [Final Rule](#) and [Compliance and Reporting Guidance](#). Furthermore, any other federal, state, or local legislation that dictates requirements for spending ARPA funds must be adhered to as well. Respondents are strongly encouraged to read these regulations prior to submitting their response to this RFP.

The Alliance shall, in compliance with federal law and regulations, require each contracted organization provide regular reports, backup documents, or information in regards to any ARPA grant award, including information about funds expended, the population served, and/or narratives or statistics demonstrating program success. Such reports, backup, or other information may be necessary for the Alliance and The City of Oklahoma City to comply with federal regulations and reporting requirements under the American Rescue Plan Act and Part 200 of the Uniform Requirements for federal funding.

The Alliance reserves the right to withhold any disbursement of funds if any requests for reports, backup, or other information are delinquent. More information on reporting will be provided at the time of award.

Evaluation Criteria

Respondents will be evaluated based on overall experience and depth of resources. It is imperative that responses contain all information requested.

Respondents will be evaluated on understanding of the requested services, technical proposal, adequacy and adherence to all rules and regulations governing the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) as established in Sections 602 and 603 of the Social Security Act, and the provisions of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200) (the Uniform Guidance), including the cost principles and restrictions on general provisions for selected items of cost.

The Alliance reserves the right to reject any and all responses, to amend this RFP and the process itself, or to discontinue the process at any time.

Right to Reject

The Alliance reserves the unconditional right, at their sole discretion, to reject any or all proposals submitted for any reason or no reason. They may, at their discretion, waive any informalities, minor defects, or technical inaccuracies in the proposals. They reserve the right to request and obtain any additional information necessary to complete evaluation of the proposals.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, creed, religion, sex or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Anti-Lobbying

Respondents and selected Consultant agrees that it or any agent or agency thereof, will not and has not used Federal appropriated funds to pay any person or organization for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with obtaining any Federal contract, grant or any other award covered by 31 U.S.C. § 1352.

Conflicts of Interest

Consultant and no other officer, employee, or agent of Consultant who exercises any functions or responsibilities in connection with the planning or carrying out of the Scope of Work, shall have any personal financial interest, direct, or indirect, in this Agreement. Respondent shall take appropriate steps to assure compliance with this Section.

Responses may be submitted via email at joseph.laws@theallianceokc.org.