

**Request for Proposals for
Accelerator/Pre- Accelerator
related to the
Oklahoma City Rescue Program**



Important Dates:
RFP Date of Release: June 13, 2022
RFP Responses Due: Continuous

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:
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And/or
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Introduction

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 is 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 City of Oklahoma City has been allocated \$122,507,590 from the SLFRF to respond to the public health emergency and its negative economic impacts by providing assistance to households, small businesses, nonprofits and severely impacted industries, such as tourism, travel, and hospitality.

On September 14, 2021, City of Oklahoma City Council (the 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 (the Alliance) to administer \$20,250,000 from the SLFRF to aid small businesses and nonprofits, assist minority and disadvantaged businesses, and provide workforce development and job training/upskilling programs.

The City agreement for administering ARPA funds directed the Alliance to allocate funding for small business/nonprofit support programs like technical assistance. The scope of small business/nonprofit technical assistance support includes business pre-accelerator and accelerator programs designed to assist early- and mid-stage firms by bolstering access to professional mentoring and training, networking, and capital resources.

Project Overview

In a study conducted by Ernst & Young for The Alliance, titled “Oklahoma City Community Economic Recovery & Resiliency Study” (the Study), the need for Oklahoma City to make an effort to provide small businesses access to mentorship, pre-accelerator and accelerator programs was identified.

The study “found there to be some significant challenges that appear to be inhibiting the potential of entrepreneurs of color to move to the next level. These obstacles include—but are not limited to—the absence of a platform for minority founders to connect with investors; and a distinct absence of technical assistance resources and programs that are marketed to underrepresented founders. Also noteworthy is the apparent cultural and communication divide between black founders and the angel investment community, which is predominately white. Oklahoma City has an opportunity to become a global leader in entrepreneurship, but must assume a thoughtful and systematic approach to building an ecosystem that is markedly more supportive of entrepreneurs of color, and also provides education and guidance for angel investors to help them overcome unconscious bias.”

The study recommended partnership with existing programs and other entities as a means to improve access to funding, technical assistance, and professional networks for underrepresented entrepreneurs and founders.

To fulfill this direction from the City and recommendation from the study, we are seeking qualified consultants to provide small business owners access to a slate of programs specifically designed to meet these gaps and support founders/entrepreneurs of diverse backgrounds.

Project Goals

The Alliance and their partners are looking to improve the type and breadth of founder mentorship, pre-accelerator, accelerator and related programs available in Oklahoma City to specifically support growth companies of several types as we look to fill existing gaps in the market.

Types of programming consultants should be willing to provide as part of a program cohort could include but are not limited to:

Mentorship/Pre-Accelerator Programs:

- Education for early and growth stage businesses on:
 - Sound business practices and/or business plan review
 - Product/product line analysis and evaluation
 - Building effective management structures and teams
 - Personal growth coaching as a founder/business owner or manager
 - Employee engagement
 - Best practices of accounting and financial management
 - Choosing and evaluating financial partnerships
 - Contracting best practices
 - How/when to consider taking products to market
 - Networking and relationship building
 - Conducting market analysis and customer evaluations/expansion
 - Honing a business “elevator speech”

Business Accelerator Programs:

- Expanding customer bases
- Refining/launching products and/or product lines
- Managing expanding businesses (building long-term management teams)
- Founder/business exit strategies
- Business supply chains,
- Evaluating growth capital mechanisms, and business partnerships
- Seeking equity and dilutive capital

All programs should be able to demonstrate:

- Specific staff dedicated to the operation of this program
- Outreach throughout the Oklahoma City community, specifically diverse communities
- Willingness to be an active partner and participant in the existing Oklahoma City innovation/entrepreneurship ecosystem including looking at ways to create complimentary resources for founders, owners and businesses interested in participating in programs
- Connections to best-in-class resources including local and external resources
- A physical location or locations in Oklahoma City from which to operate programming
- Staff office hours to support business founders and business managers

- Access to connections with industry professionals
 - Demonstrated experience supporting diverse founders/businesses
- *If requesting business grant provision for individual founders/businesses as part of a specific cohort program model, please describe the amount/use of funds in detail. Please note that the provision of direct equity or revolving loan funds are not eligible uses of funds.

Program Participant Eligibility Requirements

Project funding can only serve accelerator cohort applicants who meet all of the following criteria:

- Applicant business registered in the State of Oklahoma prior to March 3, 2021.
- Business is able to demonstrate economic or financial hardship incurred during and due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As well as at least one of the following criteria:

- Businesses located in Qualified Census Tract (see [map](#)).
- Business is minority-owned.
 - Minority is defined, for the purposes of OKC Rescue Program participants, as Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic/Latino.
 - Minority-owned, for the purposes of OKC Rescue Program participants, as 51% or more of the controlling and management interest of the owner/ownership group identifying as a minority.

Programs are permitted to serve participants that do not meet the above eligibility requirements, but must practice due diligence to reserve any allocation of accelerator/pre-accelerator funding from the Alliance for use by participants that meet the above criteria.

Organizational Experience

The Alliance is seeking RFP Respondents who meet the following criteria:

- Minimum of 3 years of experience in providing access to professional mentoring and training, networking, and capital resources in a short-term and cohort based format.
- A strong understanding of the barriers and challenges that inhibit the prosperity of historically underrepresented, marginalized, and disinvested entrepreneurs.
- A proven ability to deliver a cohort structure that is additive and impactful to the larger entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Relationships with professionals, leaders, and investors across multiple industry sectors.

Project Timeline

Project funds are allocated for use through December 2024. Priority will be placed on programs that are capable of:

- Implementing and initiating with expediency
- Structuring multiple cohorts in 2-6 month timeframes
- Closing prior to December 2024

Policies and Regulations

RFP Respondents 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.

Submittal Requirements

Respondents will submit information about proposed programs to the Alliance in a single PDF. Response packets will include the following:

- Respondent's name, address, email and telephone number.
- Designate the legal structure of the Respondent (e.g., 501(c)(3) nonprofit),
 - Provide a concise description and history of the organization, and
 - Articulate an “elevator pitch” for why the Respondent is best qualified to execute the project outlined in this RFP.
- Previous experiences with respect to mentorship, pre-accelerator or accelerator programs serving historically underrepresented, marginalized, and disinvested entrepreneurs.
- Describe the program’s structure, eligibility requirements, intake/applicant screening process, partners, and goals/outcomes, to include descriptions of:
 - Length of time required for applicants to complete training program or programs (short-term or long-term or both).
 - Expected enrollment, graduation, and placement numbers (estimates).
 - Engagement & recruitment strategy
 - Engagement in the Oklahoma City innovation/entrepreneurship ecosystem
 - Method of differentiating between eligible and ineligible cohort applicants
 - Outreach to be conducted in diverse and marginalized communities (ethnic and demographic groups, women, veterans, individuals with criminal backgrounds, individuals with recent COVID 19 related job loss, etc.).
 - Community partners participating and supporting engagement (please list and describe partnerships).
 - Metrics to measure outreach methods and outcomes.
- Proof of active registration with the U.S. System for Award Management (<https://SAM.gov>).

- Clearly state if this is an existing program (with no changes to structure and/or eligibility), modified program (with changes to structure and/or eligibility), or an entirely new program being proposed.
- Cost proposal to support the project outlined in the RFP and fully encompass all activities in the Respondent's proposal, including cost of program-by-program participant, outreach costs, and administration/overhead.
- Cost/use of any grant funds allocated or directed at specific businesses, founders or owners.

Evaluation Criteria

Respondents will be evaluated based on overall experience and depth of resources.

Respondents will be evaluated on understanding of the project, 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.