



Pacific NorthWest Economic Region

Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Consultant to assist with outreach to Rural Small, Women, and Black, Indigenous, People of Color-owned businesses (S/W/BIPOC) in Washington State

Introduction

Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) will leverage the recently successfully completed Congregate Solutions Accelerator (<https://www.congregate.resiliencefoundry.org/>) project and begin a new phase focused on underserved rural communities. PNWER will focus on assisting rural Small, Women, and Black, Indigenous, People of Color-owned businesses (S/W/BIPOC) in Washington State. Through this project PNWER will facilitate new business relationships between technical assistance solution providers and small under-resourced businesses to provide direct financial support, mentorship and industry expertise. The purpose is to accelerate post-pandemic recovery in these under-resourced businesses and communities and provide needed guidance and services to help them expand and grow their businesses. Connecting S/W/BIPOC businesses with technology and technical assistance providers based on their needs will help to increase revenue and jobs for participating small businesses and increase tax revenue in rural areas.

Project Overview

The project will include the following tasks:

- Develop a recruitment strategy and an advisory team that will identify rural S/W/BIPOC businesses and solutions providers for the accelerator project. Consultants will be selected to help with this effort.
- Hold virtual and in-person events to promote the program and answer any questions about the accelerator project and follow-on pilot projects. PNWER will work with the Washington State Department of Commerce and consultants to market the program to S/W/BIPOC businesses in rural areas of the state.
- Assist in selection of the cohort of rural S/W/BIPOC businesses for the project based on a scoring criteria with input from the advisory and consultant team.
- Host those selected S/W/BIPOC businesses in an 8-week accelerator program focused on how to best utilize innovation and technology for business growth and pandemic recovery efforts. Contractor support will be used to execute the accelerator and start the initial work for developing pilot projects for the S/W/BIPOC businesses with solutions providers.
- Facilitate and support the pilot projects between the S/W/BIPOC businesses and solutions providers.

- Develop a report with lessons learned and actions the state could adopt to promote S/W/BIPOC businesses.
- Provide project reporting related to S/W/BIPOC small rural businesses as defined by the State of Washington. (RCW 39.26.010 (22))

PNWER will make available statewide an application process for rural S/W/BIPOC businesses to apply for funding. Successful applicants will be interviewed and scored to assess their particular needs and seek a match with the Congregate cohort companies and other solution providers (cohorts 1, 2, and 3).

Consultant Assistance

PNWER is looking for qualified consultants to assist with outreach and recruitment efforts to find qualified S/W/BIPOC businesses to participate in this program and to shepherd them through the opportunities available through the accelerator.

PNWER seeks qualified partners to provide assistance to the SBIF Grant for S/W/BIPOC recruitment, communication, and outreach regarding PNWER SBIF Grant participation. The partner will work with PNWER staff and other consultants to convene meetings, establish contacts, provide outreach to up to five potential businesses which are selected in the cohort, and provide assistance in the selection of S/W/BIPOC owned businesses and an assessment of their needs to grow and contribute to their communities and the PNWER SBIF program.

The partner should have well established contacts and relationships that can be leveraged for outreach to leaders within the rural counties that fall under the scope of this project. The partner will work with PNWER to facilitate recruitment, develop in-person outreach events, assist in the selection of S/W/BIPOC businesses for this project, monitor progress of each business selected in the cohort, and assess needs throughout a 4-month project.

The consultant must be licensed to do business in the State of Washington.

PNWER is assembling a roster of qualified consultants who might work on this project or in future work. Selection does not guarantee a contract. Projected timeline is to begin work in February with an end date of May 30, 2023.

Qualifications Submission Information:

- 1. Introductory letter describing your relevant experience and overview of qualifications interfacing with the groups listed above. Provide past related project examples, and outcomes that could be leveraged. (3 pages max, standard format 8.5x11 with 1 inch margins)**
- 2. Resumes or extended Curriculum Vitae (no page limit)**
- 3. Hourly rate**
- 4. A minimum of 3 references from past projects (1 page max)**

Deadline

Submissions will be accepted until **February 26 at 11:59 pm Pacific Time**. Submissions will only be accepted by email. Late submissions will not be accepted. Please send proposals by email to Steve Myers, Senior Program Manager at Steve.Myers@pnwer.org.

PNWER is an equal opportunity employer and will not discriminate against any employee or applicant on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any classification protected by federal, state, or local law.