

Smart Zone Incubator Operator Request for Proposals

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# Smart Zone Incubator OPERATOR PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

## INTRODUCTION

The City of Grand Rapids (City), through its Economic Development Department and SmartZone Local Development Finance Authority (SmartZone LDFA), has a long history of supporting and growing business enterprises and improving the City's economy. The City's vision and strategic accomplishments have helped foster early-stage startups, small businesses, workforce development, educational programming and community development.

Pursuant to the provisions of Part 4 of Public Act 57 of 2018 (Act 57) and its Development and Tax Increment Financing Plans (the "Plans"), the Authority seeks to (a) to promote, encourage, advance and cause high technology activity (as defined in Act 57) entrepreneurship throughout the Authority District (as identified in the Plans) within the Authority's Certified Technology Park (as identified in the Plans) and (b) encourage the coordination and collaboration of new entrepreneurship throughout the West Michigan region.

By definition, in pertinent part, "business incubator" means real and personal property that is located in a certified technology park, is subject to an agreement, and is developed for the primary purpose of attracting 1 or more owners or tenants who will engage in activities that would each separately qualify the property as "eligible property" as that term is defined in Act 57.

"Eligible property" must be located within an authority district and its primary purpose and use must be a high technology activity. "High-technology activity" means that term as defined in section 3 of the Michigan Economic Growth Authority Act, 1995 PA 24, MCL 207.803.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MCL 207.803 Michigan Economic Growth Authority Act:

(m) "High-technology activity" means 1 or more of the following:

(i) Advanced computing, which is any technology used in the design and development of any of the following:

(A) Computer hardware and software.

(B) Data communications.

(C) Information technologies.

(D) Film and digital media production.

(ii) Advanced materials, which are materials with engineered properties created through the development of specialized process and synthesis technology.

(iii) Biotechnology, which is any technology that uses living organisms, cells, macromolecules, microorganisms, or substances from living organisms to make or modify a product, improve plants or animals, or develop microorganisms for useful purposes. Biotechnology does not include human cloning as defined in section 16274 of the public health code, 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.16274, or stem cell research with embryonic tissue.

The SmartZone LDFA is inviting proposals from qualified respondents and/or collaborators with an established entrepreneurship support network, proven business development success and real estate asset management experience to partner with the SmartZone LDFA in the operation of our Incubator. Examples of possible offerings include: (1) Entrepreneurs gain access to resources in areas such as how to protect intellectual property, pivot business models to address anticipated conditions, build teams, enter markets and scale; (2) Workshops that blend networking opportunities with industry stakeholders and practical training using digital platforms to provide immersive support and one-on-one mentorship; (3) Entrepreneurs participate in showcases to demo their innovations to industry catalysts and investors, and benefit from contacts that provide real-time support and foster the innovator and entrepreneur community; (4) Engaging production-ready businesses, and provide them with training and support to scale their solutions; (5) Engaging a variety of investors and stakeholders to smooth businesses' paths toward commercialization. The program should identify and convene investors and other funders that meet the needs of hi-tech entrepreneurs and advanced manufacturers and explore new investment models that remove

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(iv) Electronic device technology, which is any technology that involves microelectronics, semiconductors, electronic equipment, and instrumentation, radio frequency, microwave, and millimeter electronics, and optical and optoelectrical devices, or data and digital communications and imaging devices.

(v) Engineering or laboratory testing related to the development of a product.

(vi) Technology that assists in the assessment or prevention of threats or damage to human health or the environment, including, but not limited to, environmental cleanup technology, pollution prevention technology, or development of alternative energy sources.

(vii) Medical device technology, which is any technology that involves medical equipment or products other than a pharmaceutical product that has therapeutic or diagnostic value and is regulated.

(viii) Product research and development.

(ix) Advanced vehicles technology, which is any technology that involves electric vehicles, hybrid vehicles, or alternative fuel vehicles, or components used in the construction of electric vehicles, hybrid vehicles, or alternative fuel vehicles. For purposes of this act:

(A) "Electric vehicle" means a road vehicle that draws propulsion energy only from an on-board source of electrical energy.

(B) "Hybrid vehicle" means a road vehicle that can draw propulsion energy from both a consumable fuel and a rechargeable energy storage system.

(x) Tool and die manufacturing.

(xi) Competitive edge technology as defined in section 88a of the Michigan strategic fund act, 1984 PA 270, MCL 125.2088a.

(xii) Digital media, including internet publishing and broadcasting, video gaming, web development, and entertainment technology.

(xiii) Music production, including record production and development, sound recording studios, and integrated high-technology record production and distribution.

(xiv) Film and video, including motion picture and video production and distribution, post production services, and teleproduction and production services.

financing barriers for the program's participating startups and high-tech businesses.

The Incubator shall be dedicated to serving diverse companies addressing business development needs and services for high- tech high-growth opportunities located within the City of Grand Rapids. There is the possibility to expand the CTP boundary, but the initial Incubator location must be located within the current CTP boundary. The Incubator operator will provide state-of-the-art facilities and high-value resources and programming for start-ups and small businesses, preferably in partnership with educational institutions, to develop and grow these businesses into sustainable enterprises.

Applicants are encouraged to regularly check the [RFP website](#) for updates to written questions.

### PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goals of the Incubator are to:

- Implement targeted programs and initiatives that support entrepreneurship and innovation as a pathway to prosperity and wealth creation in historically marginalized communities and populations that are underrepresented in the high-technology industry.
- Help diversify and enhance the City's economy by supporting entrepreneurship and innovation for high tech startups and small businesses that qualify under the requirements of Act 57 and that create high-quality jobs and wealth creation throughout the City.
- Continue to cluster life science, advanced manufacturing, and information technology sector companies, research, and programming into a connected community
- Create and nurture high -tech small business enterprises from proof of concept to commercialization
- Attract and facilitate targeted investment in business ownership and employment opportunities within communities of interest, specifically in underrepresented communities with a focus on equitable economic development outcomes.

### RESPONDENT PROFILE

The lead respondent may be a non-profit organization, industry group, academic or research institution, co-working space, private company, venture capitalist, real-estate developer, or facility manager, so long as it meets the requirements of Act 57.

While the lead respondent must be a single organization, the SmartZone LDFA encourages joint ventures and partnerships, as there are multiple elements to the proposal that require specific areas of expertise. Applicants with joint ventures and partnerships plans will be scored more favorably and may access increased financial support.

FUNDING AND BUDGET

The SmartZone LDFA will fund the initiative using its tax increment revenues. Specifically, the SmartZone LDFA may make an initial capital investment in the program to prepare it for operation up to \$1M. In order to be eligible, capital investments must meet the legal requirements for eligibility within Act 57 and the Plan and such eligibility shall be reviewed and determined on a case-by-case basis at the complete discretion of the Board but may include services, and the purchase of real estate, renovation of existing facilities, and office and equipment furnishings. In addition, the City may provide up to \$1.5M per year, for a total of 3 years, to the successful applicant for eligible operations for a total potential contribution of \$4.5M.

Respondents should carefully consider all funding requests and provide detailed budgets for each of the strategic priority areas provided below. The SmartZone LDFA intends to achieve outcomes in all of its strategic priority areas through this RFP. The strategic priorities are as follows:

1. Inspiration, Mentoring, and Access to Resources
  - Desired Outcome: An active and vibrant physical space that is easily accessible for all and results in significant and measurable development support of high-tech, high-growth companies that results in product development or intellectual property.
2. Infrastructure and Physical Resources
  - Desired Outcome: Provide support for infrastructure related projects that impact attractiveness of the SmartZone for high-tech, high growth, company investments to retain or locate their business in the City of Grand Rapids.
3. Connection and Awareness
  - Desired Outcome: Market and promote the benefits, opportunities, and successes of the SmartZone as a global location for high-tech, high-growth, companies and related entrepreneurial ecosystem support activities.
4. Talent
  - Desired Outcome: Lead and facilitate strategies related to talent retention, recruitment, and development for K thru Career for existing and future needs of high-tech, high-growth, companies located in Grand Rapids.

Proposals that do not clearly define strategies, detailed work plans and measured outcomes in each strategic priority will not be considered. Budgets should be organized around the strategic priority areas and the SmartZone LDFA reserves the right to negotiate contracts based on portions of a respondent's proposal.

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) TIMELINE

The table below presents the major RFP solicitation milestones and related time periods:

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Major Milestones</b>
March 1, 2021	RFP Released
March 15, 2021, 5:00 PM	Deadline to submit written RFP Questions
March 19, 2021	Final Responses for all written RFP Questions posted
March 19- April 16, 2021	Blackout Period
April 16, 2021, 5:00 PM EST	Submission Due Date for Proposals
Weeks of May 3, 2021 & May 10, 2021	Finalist Interviews with Review Panel
May 19, 2021	Announcement Made at SmartZone LDFA Board Meeting
June 2021	Soft Launch of selected Incubator

## **SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS**

### FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND CAPACITY

In addition to the City's initial contribution of up to \$1M for startup costs and up to \$1.5M annually for three years of eligible operating expenses, Respondents must submit an annual cash flow analysis for three years, starting from the official launch date, and presenting: (1) the amounts Respondent will invest to cover start-up and operating costs, and (2) the amounts they will seek to raise from other sources to cover start-up and operating costs, and identify which funds are secured and which are prospective.

The annual cash flow analysis must include capital and operating budgets detailing expenses for space layout, any capital improvements, other upfront and on-going expenses (including repairs and maintenance), rents incurred by the Operator (actual lease to be provided to the LDFA upon request), rents or other fees charged to Tenants (actual leases to be provided to the LDFA upon request), and any other potential funding sources for operating expenses funding gaps.

If applicable, Respondents should include letters of commitment or prospective interest from potential financial partners.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CONTRACTING

The City is strongly committed to equal opportunity in the solicitation of business contracting to assure that persons or businesses doing business with or receiving funds from the City are equal opportunity businesses and employers. The City endeavors to do business with firms sharing the City’s commitment to equal opportunity and will not do business with any firm that discriminates. The City strongly recommends that persons and businesses doing business with the City take positive steps toward diversity, expanding their sub-contracting solicitation base and offering opportunities to all eligible persons, businesses and organizations in alignment with its Inclusion Plan subject to applicable law. The Inclusion Plan’s purpose is to increase contracting opportunities in Grand Rapids for Minority-owned Business Enterprises (MBE), Woman-owned Business Enterprises (WBE), and Micro-Local Business Enterprises (MLBE), with the overall goals of 1) reducing racial and gender gaps that exist in the construction industry, and 2) increasing economic prosperity and wealth creation by providing greater access to contracting opportunities.

STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS AND RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Each Respondent submitting a proposal must demonstrate sufficient financial resources/capacity and relevant experience to manage and operate the Incubator.

**PROPOSAL ELEMENTS**

**Application Summary (1 page limit)**

- Name of Lead Organization
- Project Name
- Total Amount Requested
- Type of Lead Organization- Non-Profit, Higher Education, Private Sector, etc. and Articles of Incorporation, by-laws, or other evidence of entity status
- Co-Applicants-Principal Members of the Respondent Organizations
- Primary Contact Information- Address, Phone, Email.

**Project Summary (1 page limit)**

## **Project Narrative (10 page limit)**

### **Section A. Organizational Background/Qualifications**

- List organization's mission, vision and core value statements.
- Provide information pertinent to your organization's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion with regard to ownership, staff, board membership, constituents, customers, and program content.
- Self-reported racial/ethnic and gender demographics of your organization.
- What populations do you serve? (Women, Veterans, Black, Latinx, Immigrants, Youth, Returning Citizens, LGBTQ, Other).
- Details of the types and stages of entrepreneurs you have experience serving.
- Experience you have with life science, advanced manufacturing, and information technology sector companies.

### **Section B. Facilities Management Experience**

- Provide a description of your experiences in managing workspaces, incubators, accelerators, and similar ventures.
- How will you maintain effective resource provision for an industry with rapidly evolving needs?
- Provide a description of workspace(s) needed for managing operations and provide a description of dedicated workspace for entrepreneurs, startups, and small companies.
- What specific resources will be provided in the Incubator (i.e., office equipment, wet-labs, specific technology), and under what circumstances will they be available to users/tenants? (i.e., free for all to use, only under certain restrictions, etc.)
- Please list any experience with real estate asset management and lease arrangement, including marketing and tenant management.

### **Section C. Financial Capacity**

- Describe how you will leverage additional financial resources to support entrepreneurs and your organization.

- Describe your experience managing grants, seed capital, loan funds, and other types of funding.
- Describe your experience in securing project funding, including a list of current funding partners, type of funding, amounts and purpose.
- Have you managed specific funds for an incubator or accelerator before? If yes, describe how the funding flowed from your organization to the start-up, if relevant.
- Does your institution maintain separate accounting of funds for different projects through a fund accounting system?
- Does your institution have written accounting policies and procedures?
- How do you allocate costs that are shared by different funding sources, such as rent and utilities?
- Are your financial reports prepared on an accrual basis?
- Is your institutions' accounting system capable of recording transactions, including date, amount, and description?
- How will your institution's accounting system detect errors in a timely manner?
- Are reconciliations between bank statements and accounting records performed monthly and reviewed by an accounting professional?
- Briefly describe your institution's system for filing and keeping supporting documentation.

### **Section C. Project Description**

- Include a detailed description of your current/proposed core business model.
- Describe your plan, including but not limited to staffing, information management, organizational structure, governance structure, operations information, services offered and hours of operation.
- Discuss how the proposed project is not duplicative of, but additive to, other efforts to support incubation of high-tech, high-growth companies in the Smart Zone and Grand Rapids and West Michigan area.

- Describe all partner organizations involved with the implementation of the project, including the entity's role, financial, or in-kind commitment and capacity to successfully execute their duties as they relate to the project. Discuss prerequisite activities undertaken by the collaborating parties and clearly document any partner's knowledge of and commitment to the project.
- Describe how the partnership is structured to address those supports, including mechanisms and strategies for managing the collaborative work, monitoring activities, and evaluating progress toward outcomes.
- Provide a Letter of Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding from each collaborating organization that explains their role and is signed by the top executive(s) of that organization.
- Describe how you will develop or work with local networks of professionals or partners to serve as coaches, mentors, accounting support, marketing support, legal support, etc.
- Describe any major barriers to successful implementation and other associated risks along with a plan to overcome them. Describe mitigation strategies to overcome them.

### **Project Timeline and Milestones (2 page limit)**

- Describe Project Timeline, Activities, and Specific Project Milestones that will be utilized to track project progress and fund disbursement.
- The Activities and Milestones should identify the project's primary and sub activities and responsible staff, timelines for completion, and anticipated outputs and milestones.
- Provide a detailed description of the performance metrics that will be used to quantify success, both quantitative and qualitative and how the metrics were developed. *Examples include: Increased skills and knowledge and awareness of accessing business resources, increased capacity to build and maintain social capital, borrowers will have increased access to growth capital, jobs created and retained, capital raised, rentable private office spaces, flexible shared office space, etc.*

### **Budget and Budget Narrative (2 page limit)**

- Provide a detailed project budget aligned to our four priority areas.

- Provide an overview of your estimated annual budget for Years One, Two and Three. Budget must be organized with the SmartZone Fiscal Year that runs from July 1 –June 30 of each year.
- Please provide a budget narrative explaining each line item in the budget. Include clarification of any expenses listed as Other.
- List the specific expenses included in your indirect cost line. If expenses exceed revenue, please explain.
- In addition to the City's initial contribution of up to \$1M for startup costs and up to \$1.5M annually for three years of eligible operating expenses, submit an annual cash flow analysis for three years, presenting: (1) the amounts Respondent will invest to cover start-up and operating costs, and (2) the amounts they will seek to raise from other sources to cover start-up and operating costs, and identify which funds are secured and which are prospective.

**Letters of Support** -Respondent may attach up to 3 letters of support from investors, funders, and community partners.

## **CRITERIA**

In order to provide insight on the evaluation criteria, below is a guide to the criteria that will be used to evaluate Respondents and their proposals:

### **Qualifications and Experience- 30 points**

- Quality of information submitted in response to the RFP
- Credentials of the Respondent team, both lead and partners relevant professional experience, business acumen, level and depth of professional network with the Entrepreneurship Support industry, such as universities, investors, technology organizations, youth and veteran services, industry groups etc. specifically as it relates to the high-tech industry.
- Evaluation of past projects and performance.
- Organizational capacity to implement proposed activities.
- Demonstrated experience and approach to participant equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Past experience in public-private partnerships with an Incubator or similar ventures, highlighting those in the high-tech industry.

- Real estate asset management experience with ground lease arrangements, marketing, leasing and tenant management.
- Demonstrated commitment to comply with the City's Equal Opportunity Contracting Program and Conflict of Interest Code.

### **Financial Management Experience-15 points**

- Respondent's financial resources and business acumen.
- Experience in receiving and managing grant, seed capital and loan funds.
- Demonstrated ability to secure independent project funding and sponsorships, including current relationships with major private lenders, philanthropy, and academia.
- Demonstrated ability to timely expend funds and implement programs.
- Level of committed and prospective funding that will be invested in the Incubator in addition to the City funds.

### **Proposed Incubator Program, Impacts, Business Model-30 points**

- Strength, creativity, and feasibility of the overall Incubator programs and business model.
- Presentation of Incubator workspace management, strategies, and equipment/operational support.
- Project consistency with Act 57, the Plan, and the [City's Strategic Plan](#) (specifically, but not exclusively, the Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 2 (page 15)).
- Project's overall alignment with the goals of the [Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan \(EEDMSP\)](#). Applicants shall reference specific components of the EEDMSP (minimally Strategy 5.2) and detail how their scope of work contributes to the equitable outcomes defined in the EEDMSP.
- Support and education for high-tech startups, including access to industry partners.
- Level of potential economic impact to the immediate community such as the number, type and quality of jobs the Incubator will produce, and economic impact dollars to be created.
- Extent and level of engagement regarding workforce development, employment placement and educational opportunities.

- Level of integration/synergy of the project with the immediate neighborhood (both businesses and residents), from both physical and economic development perspectives.

**Budget and Budget Narrative-25 points**

- Budget demonstrates clear connection between costs and project activities
- Costs are within funding restrictions as outlined in the RFP
- There is justification for all budget items in sufficient detail
- Leveraged Investment demonstrated by matching funds and in-kind resources

## **RFP CONDITIONS, TERMS & LIMITATIONS**

All information in a bidder's response and the subsequent contract is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, P.A. 442 of 1976, as amended, MCL 15.231 or the latest revision thereof. Companies shall note that pricing methodologies, cost and fee proposals, and any other response information related to pricing shall not be considered confidential information.

The SmartZone LDFA reserves the right to declare as non-responsive and reject any proposal in which material information requested is not furnished or where indirect or incomplete answers of information are provided, or if departments are contacted prior to bid opening. All proposals submitted shall be in the format requested; any submitted proposal not in the form of the SmartZone LDFA's request may be rejected as non-responsive.

No separate agreements shall be recognized unless they are included in the proposal for analysis and review, prior to contract award. The SmartZone LDFA "General Conditions and Instructions to Bidder" are hereby incorporated by reference. The SmartZone LDFA shall not be bound by any part(s) of any Company's response to the RFP which contains information, options, conditions, terms, or prices not requested nor required in the RFP unless such conditions are agreed to by both parties prior to entering a contract.

All documents and submittals provided with the RFP response shall become the property of the SmartZone LDFA and shall be subject to public inquiry and dissemination as required by law. Any response that is submitted in full as "confidential" or "proprietary" shall be rejected as non-responsive, no exceptions.

All costs proposed shall remain firm for one-hundred twenty (120) days from the date of the RFP opening.

### **Communication Restriction:**

The City of Grand Rapids Economic Development Department shall be the sole point of contact for purposes of information concerning this RFP. From the date that this RFP is issued until the date the Contract is awarded, interested parties should not contact any official or employee of The SmartZone LDFA or the City of Grand Rapids for additional information concerning this RFP, except in writing directed only to the contact listed herein. Any requests for clarification or additional information regarding this RFP shall be directed in writing. If a

prospective Proposer engages in any unauthorized communication, The SmartZone LDFA may reject that Respondent's proposal(s).

**Cost of Preparation:**

The Respondent shall be responsible for any and all costs incurred in the development and submission of any response. The SmartZone LDFA assumes no contractual obligation as a result of the issuance of the solicitation, the preparation or submission of a response by a Respondent, the evaluation of an accepted response, or the selection of finalists. The SmartZone LDFA shall not be contractually bound until the LDFA and the successful Respondent have executed a written Contract for performance of work.

**Discrepancies or omissions:**

If a Proposer should find discrepancies or omissions in these documents, he/she should at once notify the contact listed herein. The Proposer is required to furnish any information regarding any additional costs not covered herein by the SmartZone LDFA with their proposal. It is the LDFA's intent for all costs to be included herein. Any costs not included herein may not be considered allowable costs under any contract.

**Non-Collusion:**

By signed submittal and completion of this document, the Proposer certifies that this proposal response is made without prior understanding, agreement, or connection with any corporation, firm, or person submitting a proposal for the same product and that this proposal is in all respects bona fide, fair and not the result of any act of fraud or collusion with another person or firm engaged in the same line of business or commerce. The Proposer understands collusive bidding is a violation of Federal Law and that any false statement thereunder constitutes a felony and can result in fines, imprisonment, as well as civil damages.

**RFP/Solicit Cancellation:**

The SmartZone LDFA reserves the right to cancel this solicitation and/or any planned award for any or no reason as it deems in its own best interests, at no additional costs to the LDFA. Such cancellation notice shall be provided to all respondents prior to final contract execution.

**Economy of Responses:**

Responses and presentations should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward and concise description of the Proposer's capabilities to satisfy the requirements of the solicitation. Emphasis should be placed on completeness and clarity of content.

**Multiple Responses:**

Multiple responses or solutions, defined as the submission by the same Proposer of two or more responsive responses offering an alternative which meet the requirements of the solicitation, will be considered. Multiple responses shall be submitted separately and will be evaluated as independent responses.

**Reserved Rights:**

The Grand Rapids SmartZone LDFA reserves the right to request any additional information which might be deemed necessary after responses are submitted as it deems in its own best interests to do so.

Further, the LDFA, as it deems in its own best interest, reserves the right to:

1. Reject any or all bids.
2. Issue subsequent RFPs.
3. Postpone opening for its own convenience.
4. Remedy technical errors in the RFP process.
5. Approve or disapprove the use of particular subcontractors.
6. Solicit best and final offers from all or some of the Proposers.
7. Award an agreement in its own best interests.
8. Waive informalities and irregularities in responses and/or services proposed.

The SmartZone LDFA reserves the right to check all references furnished and consider responses received in determining the award. The SmartZone LDFA reserves the right to perform investigations as may be deemed necessary by the SmartZone LDFA to assure that competent persons will be and are utilized in the performance of any Agreement and to verify the accuracy of the contents of responses. The SmartZone LDFA reserves the right to use responses to this

solicitation request, including “No Bid” responses, for the development and selection of future competitive bidder lists.

**Questions:**

Any formal requests for clarification, questions, or additional information regarding this solicitation shall be submitted via email to [econdevshrd@grcity.us](mailto:econdevshrd@grcity.us) no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 15, 2021.

Any questions received after March 15, 2021, 5:00 pm will not be considered. Questions received prior to the stated deadline will be collated at [www.grandrapidsmi.gov/SmartZoneRFP](http://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/SmartZoneRFP) which should be checked often. Any and all questions, requests for clarification or additional information received by the SmartZone LDFA regarding this RFP will not be considered confidential in any way, shape, or form.

**Submittals Deadline:**

The SmartZone LDFA requires submission of an electronic version of the RFP response as an attachment via email to [econdevshrd@grcity.us](mailto:econdevshrd@grcity.us). Hard copies, electronic copies via flash drive, or any other methods of delivery other than what is specified here will not be accepted.

All responses, documents, terms, and information related to the proposer’s response to this RFP shall be submitted with the response package prior to the submission deadline. No separate schedules, agreements, terms, conditions, etc. shall be recognized or accepted if not initially submitted with the response to this RFP.

Proposal responses and submittals must be received by 5:00 P.M. EST on April 16, 2021.

**Late Proposals, Modifications, or Withdrawal**

Proposals received after the date and time indicated will not be accepted or considered.

Proposals may be withdrawn or modified in writing prior to the proposal submission deadline by contacting [econdevshrd@grcity.us](mailto:econdevshrd@grcity.us). Following the deadline date of April 16, 2021 at 5:00 pm, proposals will be considered final.

**Price Quotations:**

All costs and prices shall be quoted in U.S. dollars. Pricing/Rates proposed for complete services as described herein shall be inclusive of all overhead, all fuel costs, mobilization, labor, materials, equipment, scheduling, parking fees, setups, incidentals, profit, mailing and postage costs, and all other miscellaneous cost borne by the contractor throughout the life of the contract. Any required travel costs shall be provided as an estimate at standard rates (i.e. coach airfare, standard room rental, etc); any travel costs above standard rates shall be at the Contractor's cost. In case of error in the extension of prices in the response, the unit prices shall govern.

**Solicit Evaluation/Award:**

The SmartZone LDFA reserves the right to award to any proposer, or multiple proposers, for these services as it deems in its own best interests to do so.

The SmartZone LDFA reserves the right to award in total, to reject any and all responses in whole or in part, and to waive any informality or technical defects, if, in the LDFA's sole judgment, the best interests of the SmartZone LDFA will be served. The solicitation file shall contain the basis on which the award is made. The award of this RFP and any subsequent contract shall be at the sole discretion of the SmartZone LDFA.

*Review for Defects:* Submitted responses will be reviewed for their timeliness, format, and completeness. Responses may be rejected by being late, incomplete, or incorrectly formatted. This review may waive any defects or allow vendors to submit a correction if determined in the best interest of the LDFA. If a late response is rejected, the response will not be opened or evaluated for format or completeness.

*Evaluation and Review:* An evaluation committee, formed at the SmartZone LDFA's sole discretion, will evaluate and numerically score each response that has passed Review for Defects. The evaluation and award for this solicitation shall be made to the responsible offer whose response is determined in writing to be the best value for the City, taking into consideration current policies and the evaluation factors set forth in this document.

The evaluation team will develop a composite rating indicating the collective ranking of the highest rated responses in descending order. The evaluation team will then conduct interviews and presentations with the top ranked responses. The

evaluation committee may request a Best and Final Offer(s) (BAFO) and/or make a recommendation for the Contract award, at the committee's sole discretion.

Negotiations may then be conducted with responses so selected. The SmartZone LDFA reserves the right to award multiple contracts for these services as it deems in its own best interests to do so.

*Interview/ Presentation:* Proposers who are selected for an interview and presentation by the evaluation committee will be provided the opportunity to clarify or elaborate on the proposal. This is a fact finding and explanation session only and does not include negotiation. The SmartZone LDFA desires presentations to take place virtually at a date and time to be determined. The SmartZone LDFA will schedule the time for the selected Respondents in advance, including exact date and time, as well as any specific questions or requirements.

The commencement of discussions or the scheduling of presentations does not signify a commitment by the SmartZone LDFA to award or to continue discussions with the Respondent. Oral presentations are an option of the SmartZone LDFA and may or may not be conducted. The evaluation team reserves the right to re-rank proposals based on the results of the presentations in consideration of the final award. Failure to comply with the presentation request shall result in the bid being rejected as non-responsive.

*Negotiations:* The SmartZone LDFA reserves the right to select the response that best fits the requirements of the LDFA, and upon recommendation for award, enter into contract negotiations, and/or request revised responses from the recommended Proposer. If the SmartZone LDFA and the recommended or selected Proposer cannot negotiate a successful contract, the LDFA may terminate said negotiations and begin negotiations with another recommended selected Proposer. This process will continue until a contract acceptable to the SmartZone LDFA has been executed or all selected responses are rejected. No Proposer shall have any rights against the SmartZone LDFA arising from such negotiations or termination thereof.