



Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development
Department of Tourism & Marketing
Office of the Chief Marketing Officer
C. Davis Building, 6th Floor
One National Life Drive
Montpelier, VT 05620-0501
www.cmo.vermont.gov

Notice of Funds Available (NOFA)

SMALL BUSINESS RECOVERY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Key NOFA Events	Date & Time
Issue Date:	July 20, 2020
Questions Due:	July 24, 2020 by 1:00 PM
Proposals Due:	August 3, 2020 by 1:00 PM

Please be advised all notifications, releases, addenda associated with this NOFA will be posted at the following website referencing the same NOFA title:

<https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/rfp>.

The State will not notify interested parties with updated information. It is the applicant's responsibility to periodically check the web site above for all notifications, releases and addenda pertaining to this NOFA.

State Contact: Sharon Welch
email: Accd.contracts@vermont.gov



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1. OVERVIEW:

Through this Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (hereinafter the “State”) seeks expert concierge services to assist small businesses assess challenges and utilize technical experts to address those challenges.

- 1.1. **Background:** To emerge from the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, small enterprises, especially brick and mortar businesses, need to fortify their infrastructure with mechanisms that facilitate a nimble response to a fragile market.

This NOFA aims to construct a pool of no more than five (5) non-profit partners to provide concierge services that help businesses evaluate and implement best business practices to emerge from the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Agency will use \$2.5 million of federal CARES Act funding to deploy recovery concierge services and a network of public and private sector business to provide technical assistance services across the state.

- 1.2. **Single Point of Contact:** All communications concerning this NOFA are to be addressed in writing to the State Contact listed on the front page of this NOFA. Actual or attempted contact with any other individual from the State concerning this NOFA is strictly prohibited and may result in disqualification.
- 1.3. **Question & Answer Period:** Any vendor requiring clarification of any section of this NOFA or wishing to comment on any requirement of the NOFA must submit specific questions in writing no later than the deadline for question indicated on the first page of this NOFA. Questions may be e-mailed to the point of contact on the front page of this NOFA. Questions or comments not raised in writing on or before the last day of the question period are thereafter waived. At the close of the question period a copy of all questions or comments and the State's responses will be posted on the State's web site <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/rfp> Every effort will be made to post this information as soon as possible after the question period ends, contingent on the number and complexity of the questions.
- 1.4. **Changes to this NOFA:** Any modifications to this NOFA will be made in writing by the State through the issuance of an Addendum to this NOFA and posted online at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/rfp>. Verbal or written instructions from any other source are not to be considered.

2. DETAILED REQUIREMENTS/DESIRED OUTCOMES:

Per Section 6 (b) (2) of H. 966 of the 2020 Vermont Legislative Session, this funding shall be used to “make available to businesses, professional and technical assistance through qualified Recovery Navigators, including:

- (A) business operations, financial management, and grant writing;
- (B) digital strategies;
- (C) architecture and physical space design;

(D) reconfiguring manufacturing equipment and processes and incorporating safety measures;

(E) technology and software consulting; and

(F) legal and other professional services.”

- 2.1. The program should provide businesses with free resources that can help them make significant changes to their business to overcome the impacts of COVID-19. As an example, a proposal might include free online retail platforms for businesses to expand their ability to sell goods during a stay home order, consulting services to a restaurant on how to redesign a kitchen or dining area for safe operations or increase the profitability of take-out service, marketing assistance to reach new customers, or new product development work to broaden a company’s viability during the crisis. Respondents are encouraged to develop plans to hire or contract the needed specialized providers and qualified technical expertise to assist these businesses. Proposals should include a detailed plan to quickly identify and deploy these experts

3. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

- 3.1. **Standard State Provisions for Contracts & Grants:** Awarded applicants will be required to adhere to the “Attachment C-Standard State Provisions for Contracts and Grants” (revision version dated December 15, 2017). The provisions contained therein constitute part of this Agreement and is hereby incorporated by reference as if fully set forth herein and shall apply to the purchase of all goods and/or services by the State under this Agreement. A current copy of this document is available online at <https://bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing-contracting/forms>.
- 3.2. **Subgranting.** In accordance with the State of Vermont Administrative Bulletin 5 § subsection 4, Specific Requirements for Subaward Agreements, Subrecipients may pass through funds they receive to their own subrecipients only with prior written approval of the pass-through entity. They must advise their subrecipients of requirements imposed on them by federal laws, regulations, and the provisions of contracts or grant agreements as well as any supplemental requirements imposed by the pass-through entity. They must also set up a plan for monitoring those subrecipients’ use of the funds in accordance with Subpart F of the Uniform Guidance.
- 3.3. **Statement of Rights:** The State shall have the authority to evaluate Responses and select the Applicant(s) as may be determined to be in the best interest of the State and consistent with the goals and performance requirements outlined in this NOFA. The State of Vermont reserves the right to obtain clarification or additional information necessary to properly evaluate a proposal. Failure of vendor to respond to a request for additional information or clarification could result in rejection of that applicant’s proposal. To secure a project that is deemed to be in the best interest of the State, the State reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals, in whole or in part, with or without cause, and to waive technicalities in submissions. The State also reserves the right to make purchases outside of the awarded contracts where it is deemed in the best interest of the State.
- 3.4. **Coronavirus Relief Fund Requirements and Conditions (Ref. VT H.966 as passed)**

3.4.1. Grant Recipient Requirements; Reversion and Reallocation Schedule

- 3.4.1.1. All appropriations made from the State’s Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) in this and other bills passed after March 1, 2020 as part of the 2020 legislative session are made with the knowledge that the statutory and regulatory context is constantly changing. Additional federal legislation may further change the potential for and appropriateness of CRF usage. As a result:
- 3.4.1.2. Appropriations from the CRF are subject to changes in source of funds that may occur as the result of subsequent legislation or through administrative actions, where permissible by law.
- 3.4.1.3. Specific CRF uses may need to change based on changes to federal laws or on revised or updated federal guidance.
- 3.4.1.4. It is the responsibility of all entities receiving CRF monies to ensure compliance with all federal guidelines as to CRF spending and use.
- 3.4.1.5. Unless otherwise authorized by the Commissioner of Finance and Management, any monies appropriated from the CRF shall revert to the CRF to the extent that they have not been expended by December 20, 2020 to enable reallocation.

3.4.2. Coronavirus Relief Fund Grants Conditions

- 3.4.2.1. Any person receiving a grant comprising monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund shall use the monies only for purposes that comply with the requirements of Sec. 5001 of the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136 and related guidance.
- 3.4.2.2. Any person who expends monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund for purposes not eligible under Sec. 5001 of the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136 and related guidance shall be liable for repayment of the funds to the State of Vermont; provided, however, that a person shall not be liable for such repayment if the person expended the monies in good faith reliance on authorization of the proposed expenditure by this agreement or specific guidance from the agency or department administering the grant program.
- 3.4.2.3. The Attorney General or a State agency or department administering a grant program established or authorized under this act may seek appropriate criminal or civil penalties as authorized by law for a violation of the terms or conditions of the applicable program, grant, or award.

3.4.3. Coronavirus Relief Fund Record Keeping & Compliance Reports

- 3.4.3.1. In order to ensure compliance with the requirements of Sec. 5001 of the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136, as herein interpreted and applied, and related guidance, and to assist the State in demonstrating such compliance:

- 3.4.3.2. Any agency or department, and any subrecipient of a grant, that is authorized to disburse grant funds appropriated by this act shall include standard audit provisions, as required by Agency of Administration Bulletins 3.5 and 5, in all contracts, loans, and grant agreements; and
- 3.4.3.3. Each grant recipient shall report on its use of the monies received pursuant to this act to the agency or department administering the grant as required by that agency or department and shall maintain records of its expenditures of the monies for five years, or for a longer period if so required by State or federal law, to enable verification as needed.
- 3.4.3.4. On or before August 15, 2020 and October 1, 2020, each State agency or department administering a grant program pursuant to this act shall provide information to the legislative committees of jurisdiction, including the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, regarding its distribution of grant funds to date, the amount of grant funds that remains available for distribution, and its plans for awarding the available funds by December 20, 2020.

3.4.4. **Coronavirus Relief Funds Administrative Costs**

- 3.4.4.1. Pursuant to the U.S. Department of Treasury Coronavirus Relief Fund Guidance entitled “Coronavirus Relief Fund Frequently Asked Questions Updated as of June 24, 2020” which states that “a State may expend Fund payments on necessary administrative expenses incurred with respect to a new grant program established to disburse amounts received from the Fund. . .” Subrecipient may use distributed funds on necessary administrative expenses incurred for program implementation

- 4. **Evaluation Criteria:** The best plans will include an assessment of local, regional and statewide business skills gaps and include a plan to address the greatest unmet needs that if addressed, could make our businesses more resilient. Preference will be given to multi-region and statewide proposals and providers with experience running statewide and multi-region programs. Respondents should have knowledge of a wide range of business types, sizes, industries and sectors, and the ability to understand and quickly assess current business needs.

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria. Proposals must be submitted in a format that clearly responds to the criteria.

- 4.1.1. **Experience.** Demonstrated success providing technical assistance to businesses. How has the organization successfully provided direct technical assistance to businesses in the past? Preference will be given to those organizations that have existing relationships with businesses, municipalities, industry groups, and other partners that can help deploy technical assistance efficiently and effectively.
- 4.1.2. **Strategy.** Feasibility of the plan. What will you do and how will you do it? When will you start?

- 4.1.3. **Innovation.** This grant program exists to fill a clear gap in direct technical assistance to businesses. How is your plan innovative or different from services that already exists?
- 4.1.4. **Engagement.** Private sector engagement. How does your proposal demonstrate private sector engagement in building your team of technical service providers and attracting customers?
- 4.1.5. **Budget.** A budget shall accompany the proposal. Proposals with reasonable costs that provide businesses with the most direct benefit will score better. How will you ensure this funding is used by December 30, 2020?
- 4.1.6. **Leverage.** There is no required match. However, those proposals that bring additional resources, either in pro-bono services, reduced hourly rates of the private sector partners, or include funding from other sources will score better. How will you leverage these funds to benefit businesses?
- 4.1.7. **Impact.** Impact and outcomes. How many businesses will be served? How will you measure their success? How will Vermont’s economy will be stronger in the short and long-term as a result of the work?

Criteria	Consideration
Experience	10%
Strategy	15%
Innovation	20%
Engagement	10%
Budget	10%
Leverage	10%
Impact	25%

4.2. Additional Considerations

- 4.2.1. All funding must be spent by December 30, 2020. Any unspent funding as of December 20, 2020, will be returned to the State of Vermont.
- 4.2.2. Proposals must only provide services to businesses impacted by COVID-19.
- 4.2.3. The Agency encourages collaboration among technical assistance providers.
- 4.2.4. A technical assistance provider may only participate in one application.
- 4.2.5. Letters of commitment from any service provider mentioned in the application are required.
- 4.2.6. Resumes of any service providers should be included in the proposal.

5. **CONTENT AND FORMAT OF RESPONSES:**

The content and format requirements listed below are the minimum requirements for State evaluation. These requirements are not intended to limit the content of a Applicant’s proposal. Applicants may include additional information or offer alternative solutions for the

State's consideration. However, the State discourages overly lengthy and costly proposals, and Applicants are advised to include only such information in their response as may be relevant to the requirements of this NOFA.

5.1. **Technical Response:** In response to this NOFA, a Applicant shall:

- 5.1.1. **Scope of work / Strategy.** Describe in 500 words or less how your organization-would create a network of technical assistance resources for businesses impacted by COVID-19 and establish recovery guides or navigators to help business access resources.
- 5.1.2. **Experience.** In 500 words or less, describe your organization's past-experience providing state-wide or regional technical assistance to businesses in different sectors and of different sizes/structures.
- 5.1.3. **Timeline.** Provide a timeline from a start date representing the hiring and deployment of recovery guides and creation and deployment of private technical assistance providers to the end of the execution of the work plan.
- 5.1.4. **Budget.** Provide a detailed budget that includes the costs for administering the program, hiring recovery guides/navigators, and contracting with a private network of business service providers. Include any leverage/match your proposal will generate. The Agency intends to make fewer than five awards not to exceed \$750,000 each. However, the Agency will entertain larger proposals that have a statewide impact.
- 5.1.5. Include any partner organizations and subcontractors that will be necessary for your proposal's success, including letters of commitment.
- 5.1.6. **Impact / Measurements.** Include a list of metrics on how you will measure the success of your proposal, such as including the number of businesses served, the cost per business served, the number of employees businesses have before and after your program intervenes, the gross sales of a business before and after engagement with your program, and other metrics you deem valuable. The Agency is interested in both short- and long-term metrics.

5.2. **Resumes:** Provide the resumes of any staff, consultants, technical assistance providers or business service providers that will be funded under your proposal.

5.3. **Budget:** The budget needs to identify allocable administrative costs, program marketing and programmatic expenditures. This budget shall remain firm for the entirety of the program until December 20, 2020. The budget model submitted must (i) be clearly structured, accountable, and auditable and (ii) cover the full spectrum of materials and/or services required.

5.4.

6. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

6.1. **Closing Date:** Proposals must be received by the State by the due date and time specified on the front page of this NOFA. Late proposals will not be considered.

6.2. **Proposal Delivery Instructions:** All proposals must be submitted in digital format as described below. No hard copies or faxes will be accepted.

(During the pendency of the State emergency relating to Covid-19, State office buildings are locked or otherwise closed to the public. Therefore, proposals will not be received by means of courier or in-person delivery.)

6.2.1. Applicants may send their proposal in PDF file format as—an attachment to or download link within—an email: ACCD.Contracts@vermont.gov.

6.2.2. The email subject line must read **“Recovery TA Proposal”**

6.2.3. The email with the viable download link must be received by the closing date and time found on the cover of this NOFA.

6.2.4. The proposal document must be a single digitally searchable PDF with the following naming convention <<**Vendor Name- Recovery TA**>> . The PDF attachment must contain all components of the proposal. Multiple emails and/or multiple attachments will not be accepted.

6.3. **Proposal Submission Checklist:**

Proposal Contents	✓
Technical Response	
Resumes	
Budget Proposal	