



Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

John R. Kasich
Governor
Kevin L. Miller
Executive Director

Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired
Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation
Division of Disability Determination

May 11, 2016

Dear Vendor:

This letter is to announce the release of the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency's (OOD) Request for Information (RFI) number OODRFI-VR-2016-01 Self-Employment Consultant, for the purpose of obtaining information from professional businessmen and entrepreneurs that have the background to assess the feasibility of the self-employment plans of individuals with disabilities and provide technical assistance toward the achievement of those goals. OOD is seeking suggestions and comments from firms, individuals, or organizations that offer such services, specifically related to the service described in section II of this RFI. If there are alternatives which fall outside of the parameters listed, but could achieve the stated goals of the service, OOD would be interested in those as well.

Any information submitted in response to this RFI would be used to assess whether improvements in efficacy, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of OOD's procedure would be realized by use of methods other than those currently employed. While no contract for the purpose of any services or products will result directly from this RFI, a formal competitive procurement will be developed and released in order to identify the vendor most capable of fulfilling the agency's specific needs at the most reasonable cost. **Also, whether any vendor decides to respond to this RFI will neither increase nor decrease that vendor's chances of being awarded a contract from any competitive solicitation, if any is subsequently made.**

If you are interested in submitting a response to this RFI, please obtain the RFI through the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) website at <http://procure.ohio.gov>:

-) Choose "for the Public" from the menu on top;
-) Choose "Bid Opportunities" from the drop down;
-) Choose "All Opportunities";
-) Then select "Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities" from the Agency drop down menu
-) Then click "Search."

If you experience problems opening this URL, please contact the Finance Manager at 614-433-8279. We ask that responses be prepared and submitted in accordance with the direction and time frames given in the RFI. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Greg Dormer

Greg Dormer

Assistant Deputy Director, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation

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The Opportunity for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency (OOD)
Request for Information
Number OOD-VR-2016-02

Self-Employment Consultant

Section 1 –General Information

The Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency (OOD) releases this Request for Information (RFI) for the purpose of obtaining information from community businesses, businesspersons, and entrepreneurs that have knowledge and experience in small business development. This may include proven success as a small business owner, experience working in the banking industry, specifically around small business loans and development, experience in consulting with other entities – public or private – in the development and sustainability of small businesses. OOD has the responsibility of assisting Ohioans with disabilities with achieving quality employment and independence by providing the needed services and supports to help them attain their employment goals. Having this information will assist OOD in evaluating the feasibility of self-employment goals and identify needed technical assistance in achieving them. Accordingly, OOD is releasing this RFI to the vendor community that offer expertise in the development of small businesses.

Suggestions and comments from firms, individuals, or organizations (referred collectively in this RFI as ‘vendors’) that offer assessment and technical assistance for developing self-employment options as described in Section II of this RFI are invited. The objective of this RFI is to gather feedback from vendors that provide business development services that would meet OOD specifications. OOD would then consider those comments for the possibility of making necessary improvements to its current process for self-employment assistance.

If there are alternatives which fall outside of the parameters listed, but could achieve the stated goals of the service, OOD would be interested in those as well. OOD recognizes the depth of knowledge and experience present in the vendor community and understands that it could provide valuable information that would help in OOD’s ability to assess the capacity of individuals with disabilities to pursue self-employment. This RFI is an effort to draw on that expertise.

If OOD learns of the existence and availability of methods and skills that enhance its ability to provide supportive and effective assistance to individuals with disabilities in realizing their self-employment goals and decides to acquire such services, a formal competitive procurement will be developed and released in order to identify the vendor most capable of fulfilling the agency’s specific needs at the most reasonable cost. In that event, the competitive opportunity would be open to any vendor that meets the requirements that would be defined in that procurement, and participation in this RFI

process would NOT be a requirement. Also, whether any vendor decides to respond to this RFI will neither increase nor decrease that vendor's chances of being awarded a contract from any competitive solicitation, if any is subsequently made.

However, if OOD determines that inadequate competition among vendors offering such services currently exists to warrant an open competitive opportunity, but a single solution is identified, OOD may decide to negotiate a contract with the vendor offering that solution.

IMPORTANT: Vendors are NOT to include ANY trade secret information as the contents of their response to this RFI will be considered public information and will be made available upon request. Responses to this RFI are to contain general descriptions of methods, technological solutions, or services that would serve the agency's needs; OOD seeks nothing as detailed as the sort of information that might be considered proprietary in nature.

Question and Answer Process

Interested parties may ask clarifying questions regarding this RFI, using the following internet process:

-) Access the DAS Procurement Home page at <http://procure.ohio.gov>;
-) Choose "for the Public" from the menu on top;
-) Choose "Bid Opportunities" from the drop down;
-) Choose "All Opportunities";
-) Then select "Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities" from the Agency drop down menu
-) Then click "Search."

In submitting a question, please provide the contact person's name, the organization's name, email address and business phone number. OOD will make every effort to post responses back on the DAS website within two (2) business days. Interested respondents will be able to access the questions and answers during the time the RFI is posted. OOD will not respond to questions submitted after 8:00 AM on the date the Q&A period closes (as identified in the following section).

Questions will be answered only if they are submitted using this process, and are received before 8:00 AM on the date the Q&A period closes (as identified in the following section). In the event of any technical difficulties with this Q&A process, vendors may seek assistance by contacting the Finance Manager at 614-433-8279. This number is provided exclusively to assist with technical difficulties accessing the Q&A process; no content questions will be accepted.

Anticipated Timetable

DATE	EVENT/ACTIVITY
05/12/2016	OOD releases the RFI to the vendor community on DAS website; Q&A period opens. Responses will be posted on the DAS website.
05/27/2016	Q&A period closes at 8:00 AM. No further inquiries will be accepted.
06/03/2016	Deadline for interested parties to submit responses to OOD (5:00 PM).

Section II – Outline of OOD Needs, Specifications, and Assumptions

The purpose of the RFI is to gather information on the range of vendor methods for evaluating and assisting individuals with disabilities interested in pursuing self-employment, either as a business owner or an independent contractor. OOD is particularly interested in potential outcomes which would:

-) Identify criteria and tools that vocational rehabilitation counselors must use to assess the individual's ability to perform the work, the financial stability of pursuing self-employment, and the capacity to undertake the complexity of self-employment.
-) Create a simplified business plan template.
-) Develop a training course for OOD staff.
-) Identify the short- and long-term technical assistance needed to directly assist individuals with disabilities in the development of a proposed business plan to ensure their success.
-) Identify availability of other financial support if the individual cannot be the sole investor of the business.
-) Advise OOD on the proposed business plan that includes:
 - Analysis on the return on investment
 - Commercial and technical viability
 - Business model sustainability
 - Management structure
 - Economic and financial model
 - Exit strategy
 - Accountability/Going concern metrics

OOD will only consider proposals that demonstrate that they have knowledge and experience in small business development. This may include:

- 1) Proven success as a small business owner;
- 2) Experience in working in the banking industry, specifically around small business loans & development;
- 3) Experience in consulting with other entities, public or private, in the development and sustainability of small businesses.

Section III – Content and Format of Response

General Response Guidelines:

-) Responses should be limited to 10 pages in length, including any charts, graphs or information display tools
-) Responses should briefly describe the vendor's organization, including its products and services and its industries and customers.
-) Responses should briefly describe how its suggested approach would be better for OOD than another possible solution.
-) Responses should briefly describe the services it could provide or develop in order to meet the OOD needs referenced in Section II.
-) Responses should provide an estimate of the implementation time needed.
-) Responses should include any suggestions to changes that would benefit or could improve the service.
-) Responses should include a status reporting procedure for reporting work completed, and resolution of unanticipated problems.
-) Responses should include any other information the vendor deems beneficial to this service.

Responses to this RFI are to be submitted electronically (in a secure .PDF document format) to the Finance Manager at jenny.jones@ood.ohio.gov.

Thank you for your efforts to provide OOD with your suggestions, comments and relevant information to assist with this service.