

Request for Qualifications Consultant – Expanding B2B for Chicago Entrepreneurs

Background

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) works with a network of Business Development Organizations (BDOs) across Chicago, which provide a wide range of supportive services to small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs. BDOs advance equitable economic development in their neighborhoods, and LISC supports BDOs through networking, capacity building, and training.

Business-to-business or B2B is an undertapped opportunity for diverse small businesses to scale and strengthen their businesses. Many of Chicago's diverse small businesses lack the connections, coaching, and capital that make supplying larger companies realistic and profitable. Meanwhile, large companies are looking for smooth introductions to small suppliers and simple processes for contracting with them. Such contracts often rely on personal networks and one-off contacts, which perpetuates economic inequities. LISC's BDOs have the skilled staff to help bridge these disconnects, but need the knowledge and connections to be effective coaches for their business clients.

In 2024, LISC developed toolkits [for small businesses](#) and [for BDOs](#) focused on the consumer packaged goods (CPG) sector, which provide guidance and tools for getting into this space. While CPG is just a subset of B2B transactions, these resources are part of the foundation that we will build on in this new initiative.

To learn more about the Business Development Organization network, [click here](#).

Description of Services Required

The consultant will work directly with LISC and the BDOs to equip BDO staff to be knowledgeable and effective coaches to small businesses that are seeking wholesaling opportunities or supplier contracts with large corporations or government agencies. The consultant will conduct 1-3 group training sessions for participating BDOs and provide one-on-one coaching to staff of up to 3 individual BDOs.

Some of the topics that the consultant may cover in group or individual training sessions are:

- What is B2B and what is it not?
- Deciphering terms: B2B, wholesaling, consumer packaged goods, etc.
- What should small businesses consider in pursuing B2B opportunities?
- Where can small business owners seek B2B opportunities?

Consultant must:

1. Assess the landscape of B2B resources for small businesses in Chicago, especially those owned by women and people of color.
2. Use LISC's CPG toolkits where appropriate in developing training and coaching resources for BDOs.

3. Create and deliver up to 3 group training sessions for LISC's BDO network staff focused on the processes, best practices, and tools small businesses need to successfully enter the B2B space, and how BDOs can support them in pursuing this.
 - Trainings may be virtual or in-person. If virtual, they will be recorded and shared across LISC's network. Any handouts, presentations, or other materials produced for these trainings will also be made available to LISC partners.
4. Provide 1-1 coaching and consulting to staff at 3 BDOs over the course of 8-10 months, supporting them in the development and execution of their support for businesses entering the B2B/wholesaling/CPG space.
 - Coaching commitment is expected to be ~2 hours/month/BDO, for a total of up to 60 hours of coaching during the program term.
 - The 3 BDOs will be awarded small grants from LISC to facilitate their participation in this coaching.
5. Participate in kickoff and planning meetings with LISC staff in January and February 2025 and thereafter approximately monthly check-in meetings.

Deliverables will include, at a minimum:

- Brief report on landscape assessment
- Up to 3 group training sessions, including all supporting materials (handouts, presentations, etc.)

Qualifications

Consultants must complete the attached RFQ form and submit résumés or biographical descriptions of consultants who would potentially provide services as part of this project. Consultant must meet minimum requirements:

- Demonstrated experience designing interactive & engaging, practitioner-focused training sessions;
- Commitment to using asset-based and racially/socially just language in communicating about the BDO work and the communities that BDOs serve;
- Familiarity with Chicago's small business and entrepreneurship ecosystem;
- Experience working with small business owners and small, community-based organizations
- Location in Chicago or Illinois a plus

LISC and its community partners are committed to working with disadvantaged businesses and encourages proposals from these businesses. Preference may be given to Chicago or Illinois-based companies.

The LISC team will evaluate submissions of qualifications based upon experience, expertise, rate/price, and availability.

The selected consultant will begin work on this project in January 2025.

Selection and Contracting Timeline

Wednesday, 10/16/24	LISC releases RFP
Wednesday, 11/6/24	RFP submissions due by 5:00pm Central

Friday, 11/15/2024
December 2024
January 2025

LISC selects consultant and notifies applicants
LISC and selected consultant complete contract
Consultant commences work

Questions and proposal submissions

Interested consultants should submit their responses according to the format outlined on the following page of this RFQ, with attached resume(s) of consultant(s) who will be providing services under this contract.

Questions and proposal submissions must be sent only to Caroline Rendon, Senior Program Officer, LISC, at ctrendon@lisc.org

Proposals must be submitted by Wednesday, November 6, 2024 at 5:00pm CST.

Request for Qualifications Form

Contact Information

Company Name (if applicable):

Primary Contact:

Email:

Phone Number:

Mailing Address:

Please indicate if you consider your organization to be one of the following.

- Small Business Enterprises (SBEs)
- Minority-Owned Business Enterprises (MBEs)
- Women-Owned Business Enterprises (WBEs)

Qualifications

Provide a description of the deliverables required under this RFQ including an estimated timeline and detailed narrative of the activities. Assume the contract will run approximately January-October 2025.

Please describe your experience relevant to the required qualifications: total years of experience; examples of deliverables and results achieved; other relevant information.

Include a cost estimate including the estimated number of hours required to complete the project. Please note that this is a deliverables-based project and payments will be structured around completion of project objectives.