

### **RIC FAQ's (August 2)**

1. *Where can I find a list of existing regional clusters?*
  - While there is no existing list of clusters, the RFP contains a description of what constitutes an existing regional cluster.
  
2. *Is there a formal RIC designation required to be eligible to bid?*
  - No. There is no formal designation required. Offerors must simply demonstrate their qualifications in their proposals.
  
3. *Who can tell me if I'm an existing cluster?*
  - SBA is not able to say, prior to the evaluation period, whether a particular submission or proposed submission meets its criteria. Please refer to the RFP to determine whether you are an existing cluster under the definitions, qualifications, and requirements sections.
  
4. *Do you have any examples of past cluster initiatives/projects that received funding from SBA?*
  - This is a new initiative. As such, there is no list of existing clusters. Additional information on the requirements, including links to RFPs, can be found at: <http://www.sba.gov/clusters/index.html>.
  
5. *Is it true that we can submit a proposal as either a Regional Innovation Cluster **or** an Advanced Defense Technology Cluster?*
  - Yes. A cluster (including the lead entity submitting an offer on behalf of a cluster) may submit an offer under only one of the Solicitations. While an ADT cluster meets the basic definition of a RIC (regional cluster focused on innovation), and some RIC technologies may have tangential defense applications, the purpose of the ADT Solicitation is to award contracts to clusters that focus on technologies with specific defense applications. Meanwhile, the purpose of the RIC Solicitation is to award contracts to clusters that have a more commercial focus.

6. *We are a partner on a submission for another agency's cluster program. Can we be a partner on a response for either the RIC or ADT?*

➤ Yes. The limitation only applies to SBA's cluster Solicitations.

7. *Can we be a team member on multiple proposals of either type?*

➤ You may not be the *lead* entity on more than one cluster proposal. It is permissible to be a non-lead member of multiple cluster proposals. For example, if an entity has offices in multiple regions, each of those offices may be a member of separate cluster proposals. However, each *cluster* may submit only one proposal.

8. *Is there a size preference in cluster evaluation? Is it better to cover a wide geographic area?*

➤ The size of clusters varies. The focus should be on diversity of stakeholders, integration of stakeholders, economic benefit to small businesses in the region, jobs created and other regional economic impact, and other factors identified in the Solicitation

9. *What is the anticipated award date for this contract?*

➤ We intend to make awards in mid-September, with a start date on or before September 30, 2010.

10. *Will SBA only be accepting offers from existing RICs or ADTs?*

➤ Any entity can submit an offer, but it will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria, and the qualifications and experience of a cluster are important evaluation criteria.

11. *Will there be a recording of each webinar? Will there be a transcript?*

➤ Yes. A recording and transcript of each webinar will be posted on [www.sba.gov/clusters](http://www.sba.gov/clusters).

12. *We have more than one industry cluster in our region. Can our offer help more than one industry in our region?*

- An offer should pertain to one specific primary industry. The same cluster organization should not submit more than one offer. Clusters in the same region with separate and distinct organizations and technology/industry focuses may submit separate offers.

13. *Are there any other considerations for defining a cluster's qualifications, beyond what is listed in the RFP?*

- No, there are no requirements beyond what is contained in the RFP for evaluating a cluster's qualifications.

14. *Can a non-profit be the lead entity of a cluster? Can a non-profit submit an offer?*

- Yes. Any entity may submit an offer. Please consult the required documentation section of the RFP to determine your eligibility.

15. *Do we have to be a small business in order to submit a proposal?*

- No. This is a full and open competition.

16. *If we are a non-profit, university, or government entity, do we have to submit a small business contracting plan?*

Yes. All offerors (other than small business concerns) must submit a small business subcontracting plan. For more information on subcontracting plans, see Federal Acquisition Regulation § 19.704 and FAR clause 52.219-9 (which is referenced in the Solicitation).

17. *How much detail is needed for the Small Business Subcontracting Plan?*

- Please see Federal Acquisition Regulation § 19.704 and FAR clause 52.219-9 (which is referenced in the Solicitation) for further information on small business subcontracting plans.

18. *May the RIC or ADT dollars be used as seed money (i.e. in a grant, loan, competition, or prize)?*

- No. SBA is soliciting offers to provide services such as business development, workforce training, counseling, and other services identified in the Solicitation to small business concerns associated with the cluster. RIC dollars may not be used as “seed money” (i.e. a grant or loan program). However, SBA places no restrictions on the use of non-SBA funds for innovative enhancements for small businesses in the cluster (i.e. grants, loans, competitions, prizes, etc.).

19. *Must we have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number, be registered in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database, and complete the Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA) in order to submit an offer?*

- Yes. See Federal Acquisition Regulation clauses 52.204-7 (which is referenced in Section I of the Solicitation, page 14), 52.204-6 and 52.204-8 (which are in Section K of the Solicitation, pages 21-25).

20. *When will my question be answered?*

- Answers to all questions will be posted to [www.fbo.gov](http://www.fbo.gov) by Friday, August 6. SBA has already posted answers to Frequently Asked Questions on [www.fbo.gov](http://www.fbo.gov) and at [www.sba.gov/clusters](http://www.sba.gov/clusters), and may add answers to additional Frequently Asked Questions on those sites. In order to ensure a fair and open process, SBA is not able to provide individual or private responses to questions.

21. *Why can't we include the project manager in our price for the services?*

- You can. See Amendment 4, Clause C.5.

22. *Can we include the cost of travel in our proposal?*

- Yes. See Amendment 4, Clause G.4

23. *Is there a budget template or format?*

- No specific budget template or format is being provided or required.

24. *Is there a limit on indirect rates? Does our indirect rate have to be approved prior to offer?*

No. SBA will evaluate prices and costs in accordance with Clause M.3 and M.4. In addition, offerors are subject to the applicable costs principles and procedures in Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 31.

25. *Are there limits on the number of awards in a region?*

- No. There are no geographic limits or quotas.

26. *How important is demonstrating “sustainability” of the cluster efforts beyond the 1 – 2 year funding window?*

- Sustainability is a consideration. See Clause L.8 of the Solicitation.

27. *How many awards will there be in each category---Regional and Defense?*

- SBA anticipates that it will award between 10-15 contracts combined under the RIC and ADT Solicitations, and may award more or less depending on the offers received.

28. *Where can I find a recording of the ADT or RIC Webinar?*

- Recordings of both webinars are available at [www.sba.gov/clusters](http://www.sba.gov/clusters)