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Regional Innovation Clusters RFP Webinar

July 15, 2010

U.S. Small Business Administration



Announcements

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- Please submit questions to: clusters@sba.gov
- Questions will be answered on a first-come, first-serve basis
- At the end of the call, answers to any remaining questions will be posted on SBA's website
- An audio recording of this session will be posted on the SBA website
- Deadline to submit questions is 5:00 PM EDT July 23, 2010
- Intention to amend ADT RFP:
 - Delete Section C Heading (top of page 3), and replace with, "Section C – Statement of Work (SOW) for Advanced Defense Technologies Clusters
 - Clause L.4 Number of Solicitations (page 27): Delete "Advanced Defense Technology Clusters" and replace with "Regional Innovation Clusters".

- July 8: Issue RFPs
- July 15: 1:00-2:00 PM EDT: RIC Webinar
- July 19: 1:00-2:00 PM EDT: ADT Webinar
- July 23: 5:00 PM EDT: Deadline to submit questions
- August 16: 4:00 PM EDT: Final RFP submissions due



SBA's Regional Cluster Initiative

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- Focus on accelerating small business opportunities in existing regional clusters across the country.
- Two programs:
 - Regional Innovation Clusters (RIC)
 - Advanced Defense Technologies (RIC)
- Aiming to work with 10 – 15 existing clusters, in total (RIC + ADT), nationwide in FY2010, with an additional one-year government option for FY2011.
- The price for the base term and/or option period should not exceed \$600,000 *per year*.
- These clusters will create and follow roadmaps that enhance their region's ability to compete on a national and global scale, attract further business investments, and create sustainable job growth.
- SBA support will be targeted towards the needs of entrepreneurs and small businesses.

- Geographic concentrations of interconnected firms and supporting organizations that draw productive advantage from their mutual proximity and connections.
- Over the past several years, RIC's have developed to:
 - Identify active channels (industries/technologies) for business transactions, communications, shared specialized infrastructure, labor markets and services
 - Draw on expertise of local universities/colleges, government research centers and other R&D resources
 - Develop a regional economic strategy that integrates tech transfer, commercialization innovation, business growth and job creation
- Economic studies suggest that clusters stimulate economic growth:
 - Business creation
 - Job creation
 - Higher paying jobs
 - More robust regional economies

Definition of “Existing Regional Cluster”

A regional cluster is a geographically-bounded, active network of similar, synergistic or complementary organizations engaged in or with a particular industry sector, with active channels for business transactions, communications, and dialogue that share specialized infrastructure, labor markets and services and that are located within a defined geographic region.

Geographic Area:

- May cross municipal, county, and other jurisdictional boundaries.

Partnerships:

- Often encompasses local universities, government research centers, and/or other research and development (R&D) resources, which serve as catalysts of innovation and drivers of regional economic growth.
- Participants in the cluster may have strategic partnerships with entities outside of the cluster’s geographic region.

Purposes:

- Leverage the region's unique competitive strengths
- Find ways to nurture networks for business financing, business-to-business sales, education, and workforce development.
- Networks work with local governments, venture capitalists, private banks, private investors, workforce investment boards, non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education (including community colleges), and other public and private agencies and institutions.

- SBA is seeking proposals from entities that lead regional cluster projects.

- Interested in proposals that:
 - Support the growth of an existing regional cluster
 - Demonstrate strong regional, bottom-up support
 - Are market-driven
 - Demonstrate high potential for success
 - Involve public-private partnerships that align federal resources with existing state and local resources,
 - Leverage regional strengths
 - Create opportunities for economic growth in communities.

Offerors should address how they will provide at least one of the following services to small businesses involved in the cluster:

- Business training
- Business counseling
- Mentoring
- Technology transfer counseling
- Commercialization of existing research and development (R&D) counseling
- Export readiness counseling
- Support for underserved communities
- Other services relevant to small businesses

Offerors should also address how they will link small businesses with technology, development and financing opportunities. This may include, but is not limited to, the following services:

- Manage business growth
- Build customer bases
- Build networks and partnerships
- Assist in market development
- Facilitate opportunities for accessing new resources and markets

Factor 1: Cluster Qualification Subfactors

1. The Offeror is an established regional cluster, or the lead entity (or team) of an established cluster, with a defined management structure, and the authority to bind the cluster to deliver, or to itself deliver, the offered services;
2. The Offeror is recognized as such by key cluster partners and stakeholders;
3. The Offeror currently represents and convenes, and has a history of representing and convening, a variety of stakeholders in a designated region; and
4. The Offeror is devoted to implementing a strategic plan for the region, centered on a particular industry, technology or product.

Factor 1: Cluster Qualification (continued)

Type	Document	Qualification Sub Factor
Required Documents	Mission statement	1, 2, 3, 4
	List of cluster partners and stakeholders	1, 3
	DUNS number	1
	Outline of management structure	1, 2, 3
	Regional strategic plan	4
	Tax status	1
	Year founded	2
Recommended Documents (as applicable)	Articles of Incorporation	1, 2, 4
	By-laws	1, 2, 3, 4
	Operating guidelines	1, 2, 3, 4
	Memorandums of Understanding	1, 2, 3
	List of Board of Directors	1, 2
	Principals' Biography	1

Factor 2: Technical Approach

- Technical Assistance :
 - Meets documented market gaps (innovation and creativity in providing assistance to small businesses is encouraged)
 - Measurable, reportable and effective outcomes
 - Ability to deliver services to the cluster region
 - Engagement of partners in delivering services and supporting cluster efforts

- Economic Benefit:
 - Small businesses
 - Innovation
 - Regional economy

- Commitment, competency and track record of personnel

- Commitment to underserved markets

Factor 3: Experience

- Cluster organization and focus area
- Existing regional assets
- Cluster partnerships
- Cluster needs

Factor 4: Past Performance

- Evaluation of past performance on up to three completed projects in the past two years
- Should discuss (if applicable):
 - Compliance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations;
 - Quality and timeliness of the Offeror's work;
 - Reasonableness of its prices, costs, and claims;
 - Reasonableness of its business behavior-its willingness to cooperate and helpfulness in solving problems;
 - Concern for the interests of the customer; and
 - Integrity

Frequently Asked Questions

Please email all questions to clusters@sba.gov

Q: Where can I find a listing of SBA clusters?

- SBA is not providing a list of clusters.

Q: Who can tell me if I'm an existing cluster?

- Please see the definitions, qualifications, and requirements section of the RFP to determine if you meet the criteria.
- SBA will not opine, prior to the evaluation period, on whether a particular submission (or proposed submission) meets specific criteria.

Q: How can we be certified as an existing cluster?

- There is no "certification" for cluster existence
- Please refer to the RFP to determine whether you are an existing cluster under the definitions, qualifications, and requirements sections.

Q: Is it true that we can only apply as a Regional Innovation Cluster *or* an Advanced Defense Technology Cluster?

- Yes. A cluster (including the lead entity or team submitting an offer on behalf of a cluster) may submit an offer under only one of the solicitations.

Q: Is there a formal designation of cluster type that can tell us what kind of cluster we are?

- No. There is no "formal designation" of cluster type. It is up to each cluster to determine whether it will submit a proposal as an RIC or an ADT.

Q: Can a non-profit be the lead for a cluster proposal?

- Yes. Any entity, including a non-profit, meeting all requirements within the RFP is eligible to serve as a cluster lead.

Q: If we are a non-profit, university or government entity, do we have to submit a small business subcontracting 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.



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