



Joe Lauro, CPPO/CPPB  
Director

February 29, 2016

To All Non-Profit Organizations and Academic or Research Institutions

Request for Letters of Interest for the Pinellas County Business Incubator Operator

Pinellas County Economic Development Authority (PCEDA)

A. Introduction

Targeted job growth is a strategic initiative for the PCEDA. In addition to attracting and retaining businesses, the PCEDA is committed to new business development - an opportunity to foster and grow companies locally, growing a skilled labor force and providing future jobs for those entering the workforce. The PCEDA has committed funding and/or space for new business incubator and accelerator activities since 2003 and through this request for Letter of Interest continues to encourage this activity. The PCEDA plans to secure \$10-12M to design and construct an approximate 50,000 square-foot business incubator to facilitate and support new business enterprises in the Tampa Bay region.

B. Background

In October 2013, a Feasibility Study was conducted, by Greenwood Consulting Group, Inc., on behalf of the Tampa Bay Innovation Center (TBIC). The preferred recommendation of the study concluded that a 40,000-50,000 square-foot mixed-use business incubator facility in the City of St. Petersburg, FL (City) would be feasible with an optimized funding plan. The facility could potentially support research, innovation and entrepreneurial activity in the technology, life sciences, marine sciences and/or advanced manufacturing sectors.

Following the feasibility study, the City made a vacant 2.5-acre MOL parcel available to TBIC, via a long-term ground lease, for the development of a business incubator. The zoning and land use has been changed to support the business incubator. The parcel is located at on the southwest corner of 11 Ave. South and 4<sup>th</sup> Street South.

The PCEDA and TBIC agree that to best secure funding for the new business incubator, it would be preferable for the PCEDA to take the lead. The plan is to coordinate with the City and TBIC to transfer the ground lease to the PCEDA. The PCEDA would dedicate funding towards the construction of the business incubator and seek grant funding from the United States Economic Development Agency (USEDA) and request legislative appropriation from the State of Florida.

PLEASE ADDRESS REPLY TO:  
400 South Ft. Harrison, Sixth Floor  
Clearwater, Florida 33756  
Phone: (727) 464-3311  
FAX: (727) 464-3925

Website: [www.pinellascounty.org/purchase](http://www.pinellascounty.org/purchase)



PCEDA is in the process of selling one of their properties and expects to make a portion of the sale proceeds (\$2 million to \$4 million) available to fund the construction of the business incubator. The PCEDA expects funds to be available by June 2016.

In the spring 2016, the PCEDA plans to submit a grant application for design and/or construction of the business incubator. The amount of the grant request will be a minimum of \$2 million. Previous discussions with the regional USEDA confirmed that the project had a high probability of being funded, but \$2 million is generally the limit. However, the USEDA has recently awarded grants of \$4 million and \$8 million for business incubator programs.

Pinellas County Government is in the process of developing and submitting their legislative request to the State of Florida. An appropriation of \$6 million is being requested, based on the leveraging of funds from PCEDA, the USEDA and the City's land donation. If appropriated, the funds would be available in July 2016.

C. Objective

The goal is for the PCEDA to design and construct an approximate 50,000 square-foot business incubator space and outsource the operation to a third party operator. The incubator shall provide two primary functions: (1) support programs and services such as business mentoring/coaching, idea validation, strategy development, marketing assistance, network opportunities, workforce development, access to capital, access to b-schools and interns, and standard office resources; and (2) a dedicated workspace that is a combination of affordable leased spaces and flexible collaborative workspaces.

The business incubator shall leverage local and regional entrepreneurship and innovation programs/activities to best support start-ups and small businesses that create high salaried jobs throughout the County and the region. The business incubator shall support targeted industry clusters, and help the County become a leader in sustained entrepreneurship.

The responsibilities of the third party operator include, but are not limited to:

1. Assist PCEDA and advocate for Fiscal Year 2017 State legislation appropriation and possibly future fiscal years, as well.
2. Assist PCEDA with grant applications, including to the USEDA.
3. Assist PCEDA with soliciting partners and sponsors for business incubator project.
4. Assist PCEDA with the space programming, design, and selection for fixtures/furniture/equipment (FF&E) of the business incubator. The facility should provide free Wi-Fi, conference/training room(s), teleconferencing capabilities, and a kitchen/lounge.
5. Assist PCEDA to recruit an anchor tenant for the facility, preferably one that is collaborative or symbiotic with the business incubator.
6. Develop a strategic plan for the business incubator.
7. Develop a financial plan for the business incubator. The plan should be a multi-year plan demonstrating self-sustainability based on the use of building space revenues, event revenues, program fees, sponsorships and grants.
8. Prepare a management and staffing plan.
9. Develop a client recruitment plan emphasizing target industry sectors, with consideration given to diversity and veterans' status.

10. Develop vetting criteria to improve the probability of success.
11. Provide dedicated and shared space for clients at rates less than or equal to market rates.
12. Provide programs and services such as;
  - a) business mentoring/coaching
  - b) idea validation
  - c) market research and marketing assistance
  - d) strategic planning and business plan development
  - e) access to intellectual property and other legal services
  - f) funding strategies and access to capital markets
  - g) leadership training
  - h) network opportunities
  - i) access to interns and other workforce development assistance
13. Develop client metrics and incubator program outcomes that are aligned with Pinellas County's Strategic Plan and comply with performance measures required by funding agencies. At a minimum, this would include the tracking of new high-wage direct job creation and the number of companies served and graduated.
14. Develop marketing and branding to promote the incubator and services provided.
15. Encourage local and regional collaborations to enhance economic development successes with business assistance, attraction, retention, expansion and creation.

#### D. Mandatory Submittals

While the lead respondent may be a single entity/organization, partnerships are welcome. All interested parties shall submit a Letter of Interest which includes but is not limited to the mandatory information requested below:

1. Respondent(s) Information (name, address, telephone, and website), Respondent(s) management/staff information describing individual qualifications for those principals involved in the launch and ongoing operations.
2. Respondent(s) additional information/documentation evidencing strength in its ability to manage the business incubator. Documentation detailing financial capacity to operate the facility and reach positive cash flow within a reasonable period of time; the USEDA generally expects three (3) years.
3. Mission and vision statements for the business incubator
4. Business assistance plan that outlines the various types of programs and services that the incubator will provide to incubator and/or accelerator clients and start-up firms, including how the incubator will support tenants/clients with access to capital markets needed to successfully grow their businesses; include any proposed educational, training, networking, revenue generating events.
5. A marketing plan that is focused on branding, client recruitment, and a sponsorship strategy
6. A plan demonstrating management and operations strategy, including a staffing plan that details the talent and resources that will be dedicated to supporting the specific types of companies proposed for incubation.
7. A plan that describes proposed workspace offerings.
8. A client vetting/selection strategy/plan that includes a description of the types of businesses sought and any established selection criteria, and proposed client/program performance metrics.

9. Proposed sample tenant lease agreement that enumerates the shared services to be provided; delineates the incubator's business assistance policy, including the provision of management, technical, and training assistance and the incubator's graduation policy; and establishes periodic access to the tenant's business records to permit assessment of the health of the tenant's business.
10. Tenant graduation policy that will be included as a provision of the tenant lease agreement with clear requirements for tenant graduation from the facility or services of the incubator.
11. Incubator performance plan that includes how the incubator will track the success of incubator tenants/clients, specifically identifying what performance measurement data the incubator proposes to collect from tenants/clients and for what period of time during and after the service period the data will be collected. This should also include information on who will serve on the oversight policy board for the incubator. This board will be responsible for setting goals of the incubator, selecting staff, establishing and reviewing policy, and monitoring performance.
12. A plan that demonstrates a collaborative role with local and regional partners to enhance economic development success pertaining to business incubator/accelerator development.

**E. Evaluation of Letters of Interest**

Responders shall include all of the mandatory information requested above and any other information deemed necessary to allow Pinellas County the ability to thoroughly evaluate each submittal. For area(s) where the respondent lacks experience, the respondent should provide information how it will address the gap through staffing, partnership(s) and/or outsourcing. Evaluation of submittals to this Letter of Interest will be focused on the following criteria including but not limited to:

1. Respondent(s) qualifications and experience across the following areas;
  - a) Respondent(s) management/staff information describing individual qualifications for those principals involved in the launch and ongoing operations of the business incubator
  - b) Respondent(s) information/documentation evidencing strength in its ability to manage the business incubator
  - c) Professional networks with research and learning institutions, investors, technology companies, and industry groups
  - d) Collaboration experience with local and regional business development partner associations/organizations
  - e) Experience(s) demonstrating ability to work with government partners
  - f) Respondent(s) financial resources demonstrating ability to launch and sustain operations
  - g) Business acumen
  - h) Experience(s) in business incubator space layout, programming, and design for office, manufacturing and/or co-working spaces.
2. Proposed business incubator concept/model
  - a) Mission and Vision
  - b) Strategy and approach to attain PCEDA program objectives outlined in this solicitation
  - c) Quality of programs and services available to clients
  - d) Innovative and/or creative programs, services, and/or events

3. Operational and financial feasibility/capacity
  - a) A management and staffing plan
  - b) A partnership and/or outsourcing plan to meet all program objectives
  - c) Financial plan to demonstrate financial sustainability
  - d) Workspace plan and offerings
  - e) A client recruitment and vetting strategy/plan
  - f) Marketing plan
  - g) Proposed client/program performance metrics
4. Economic and community impact
  - a) Potential economic impact of the incubator, such as number of jobs, average salaries, overall economic impact, return on investment of any public assistance/funding, workforce development, and number of client businesses within PCEDA target industry areas
  - b) Community impact such as partnerships with research and learning institutions, networking with local businesses, supporting development and growth of the 'Innovation District'

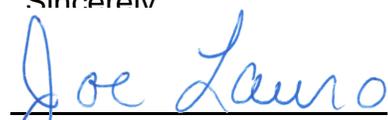
F. Purchase Information

Letters of interest will be received by the Pinellas County Purchasing Department located at 400 South Fort Harrison Ave (6<sup>th</sup> Floor Annex), Clearwater, Florida 33756 until **June 2, 2016 at 3:00 PM**. One hard copy and one electronic copy of the submittal (letter of interest and required information) are required. For information or questions concerning any information contained in this letter of interest please contact Sue Steele, Procurement Analyst Lead [ssteele@pinellascounty.org](mailto:ssteele@pinellascounty.org) or 727-464-4776. Questions submitted to any other person in any other County department will not be addressed.

Submission of a letter of interest does not constitute an award commitment nor eligibility for any costs incurred in the preparation or submission of such letter.

Pinellas County reserves the right to reject any and all letters of interest received and to negotiate the terms of the contract with the selected applicant(s) prior to entering into a written agreement

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Purchasing  
Director of Purchasing