**Creating an Equitable Innovation Accelerator**

**RFQQ: EIA2021-2**

**Title: Creating an Equitable Innovation Accelerator**

To create & implement an “Equitable Innovation Accelerator” (EIA), to target technology startups in the information & communication technology industry sector & at technology-enabled companies in other industry sectors.

**QUESTION AND ANSWERS**

**ADDENDUM #1**

Q. As part of a response, is there a requirement to provide a budget with total costs for the duration of the contract?  (The RFQ refers to line item costs and hourly rates in the Quotations section, and indicates that Responses in excess of $750,000 will be deemed non-responsive, but doesn't seem to mandate a Quotation with total costs.  Overall, the team will suggest workflows and a schedule in the Qualifications section that will describe how resources will be applied, but wanted to get some clarification on the request for a contract budget with total costs.)

A. Yes, responses should include weighted hourly rates and a budget for total costs that broadly aligns with the scope of work outlined in Section 1.2.

Q. What is the duration of the contract?  (RFQ refers to a 24 month contract as well as an expected duration of February 21, 2021 – October 30, 2022)

A. The contract will begin on February 21, 2021 and last for 24 months.

Q. Is the Department currently working with an external consultant in connection with the described scope or in preparation of the RFQ?

A. No

Q. Fundraising: Section 1.2 indicates the successful bidder must raise at least $1M to provide cash grants, but then describes "$100K in philanthropic grants, startup programming, coworking space, and access to mentors and capacity-building coaching."  Is the $1M to be cash only? Or can it in fact include in-kind services such as coworking space, or, discounts and credits (such as for cloud services, etc)?

A. Fundraising efforts must be able to provide at least $100K in cash awards to each startup in the cohort, not including in-kind resources.

Q. Time frame:  Section 1.1 refers to a 24 month contract, yet period of performance is listed as 2/21/21- 10/30/22.  Are we to understand that the contract provides for additional billable work after the conclusion of the accelerator, i.e.,  post-accelerator review of program and continuing work with the startups on performance milestones and associated grant awards?

A. The contract will begin on February 21, 2021 and last for 24 months. The contract primarily includes time to support pre-accelerator fundraising, accelerator setup, execution, and evaluation.

Q. Time frame: Is Commerce committed to running a single accelerator for 10 companies for a full year? If so, does that mean one year of curriculum or does that include curriculum and post-program milestone assessment?  Is Commerce open to considering running multiple shorter accelerators during the contract period?

A. The funding is intended to support an accelerator that can at the very minimum offer curriculum, mentorship, and minimum cash awards of $100K to 10 startups. Curriculum may not need to span a year, and multiple cohorts can be supported (such as 3 cohorts of startups receiving curriculum for 4 months), but the minimum requirements must be met for cash awards and mentorship over the 12 the month period for 10 startups. The contract period is 24 months to allow for fundraising, launch of accelerator, and post-program evaluation.

Q. Coworking space: Given the goal is to provide access to entrepreneurs across the state (with a focus on rural areas outside the Puget Sound), is it a *requirement* to provide coworking space? If 10 startups are located in 10 areas across the state, does that suggest 10 coworking spaces? If so, this would not provide any benefits of in-person peer-community enabled by co-location. Or in fact is the vision that the 10 participating companies would convene in a single coworking space? And if so, can contract funds be used for travel and accommodations for participating founders?

A. The funding provided by the RFQQ cannot be used to support travel, accommodations or workspace for founders. Many founders, especially those in marginalized communities, may not be able to reliably operate or launch their startup from home. Depending on the effects of the pandemic, we expect the accelerator to operate a hybrid virtual and physical space accelerator to support the initial cohort. Depending on the location of the startups, the contractor may be able to leverage one coworking space to support several startups. A list of coworking spaces across Washington state can be found here: <http://startup.choosewashingtonstate.com/resources/work-spaces/>.

Q. Advertising: Noting the prohibition of using contract funds for advertising (section 1.2), the prioritization of an open and inclusive application process, and the suggestion that "Commerce can partner with the selected contractor on outreach and awareness," does that allow for the possibility that Commerce itself could provide budget to support advertising in diverse media across the state?

A. EDA funds cannot be used to ‘advertise’ for a specific business, but they can be used for ‘public awareness’ to inform businesses about services that are available under the grant. Commerce may provide in-kind resources to support outreach across the state. No additional budget has been committed at this time.