

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
LENDING PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

ALLIANCE FOR
RURAL IMPACT

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ABOUT THE ALLIANCE FOR RURAL IMPACT

The Alliance for Rural Impact is a nonprofit organization serving rural and tribal communities across America. We are a collective of technical assistance experts focused on community equity for rural and tribal regions. Our team is solutions-focused and adept in financial stabilization and growth, strategic planning and analysis, capacity building and long-term implementation of priorities. Our ultimate goal is to bring about positive changes that result in community prosperity.

In 2016, a group of consulting specialists began a collaboration to change community and economic development service delivery in order to have the greatest impact on communities. After years of providing assistance for strategic planning, financial management, community engagement and implementation, the team realized that rural and tribal communities will continue to struggle without lasting, long-term commitment to achievement. Unless a dedicated team is in place, plans stay on the shelf, financial resources dwindle, citizens become disenfranchised and projects languish.

This is not usually due to a lack of desire by local leaders or citizens. Instead, it is often related to a dearth of resources and expertise to invest in a protracted program of investment necessary to achieve long-term goals and impacts. Governing bodies – especially in smaller communities – are in place to take care of basic services: infrastructure, safety and emergency services. There is no room in their already stretched budgets to take on the many challenges of community and economic development, most of which require expert knowledge in numerous, specialized areas (planning, grant development and administration, data collection and analysis, project management, capital investment, financing, etc.).

The Alliance for Rural Impact is designed to provide all aspects of the community and economic development process utilizing unique and comprehensive delivery methodology. We identify a community's foundational assets and drive progress until outcomes are achieved.

DEVELOPING A LENDING PROGRAM

As a critical component of Alliance for Rural Impact's strategic plan developed in 2017, the Board of Directors identified the need for business development capital through CDFI programming. This is considered a vital step in reaching the organization's mission. In September of 2018, the Alliance for Rural Impact (ARI) was notified that its application for technical assistance from the CDFI grant program was successful. ARI is an emerging CDFI looking for guidance in the development of its lending program to meet the unique aspects of the community and economic development service delivery we offer.

ARI desires to provide a multi-tiered suite of business and community lending products and services to support and inspire economic development in rural communities. Of equal importance in the "bottom line" equation is the social capital involved in the creation of thriving

healthy communities. We are seeking creative ways to partner with businesses and communities to leverage resources and investment for long-term impacts on the overall economic health of the region.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

To this end, ARI is requesting information from qualified candidates – either individuals or firms – who can provide assistance in the development of a lending program. Specifically, we are interested in the development of a recommended approach for moving forward, including:

- Business lines: how we structure our lending programs to meet the needs and fill gaps in lending services within our targeted market area.
- Geography/expansion plan: initially, we've identified a number of counties in Arkansas. However, we believe that an expansion of our geographic boundaries will be quickly needed to encompass the work we are delivering as well as generate enough of a market to ensure sustainability of a lending program. While expansion into other areas of the Mid-South would be preferable in the short term, we would like to consider a national scope over the long term.
- Market entry strategies: recommendations for launching points, potential partners and promotional strategies to generate the most interest.
- Organizational Structure: the ideal structure of the organization, as well as its relationship to ARI.
- Capitalization options: identifying partners and cultivating those relationships to acquire initial seed capital and ongoing investment.

Timeline for Delivery

The above Scope of Services must be completed by December 31, 2019. A schedule of milestones and deliverables should be included in the response to meet that timeframe.

QUALIFICATIONS SOUGHT

- Demonstrated experience in conducting strategy development in the community investing arena.
- Demonstrated experience in exploration and development of business line expansion/business model that include financial products with a service delivery component.
- Demonstrated knowledge of a variety of community investing organizations including CDFI's, community development credit unions, community development corporations, community loan funds and the like, including how they are organized, capitalized, resourced, and how they operate.
- Knowledge of Opportunity Zones, New Market Tax Credits and historic tax credits; knowledge of how a CDFI can be designed to incorporate private investments into the lending structure.

- Demonstrated knowledge of the competitive landscape for community investing at minimum in Arkansas, but ideally the Mid-South as well as nationally.
- Demonstrated experience in the development of start-up lending programs. Extensive knowledge of the best practices for establishing a progressive and impactful program with a range of lending services for small, rural and underserved communities and businesses in those areas.

SUBMITTING A RESPONSE

If Contractor is interested in submitting a proposal, the following requirements should be observed:

- Proposals shall be submitted electronically to the Alliance for Rural Impact by Friday, February 8, 2019, at 5:00 PM Central Time.
- Proposals shall be submitted via email to Jamie Wright at jamie@ruralimpact.org.
- The subject line should be: "Qualification Submittal for Lending Program Development."
- Contractors will be required to interview with Alliance for Rural Impact Board, Loan Committee and staff members. When possible, interviews will be scheduled via video conference.

Questions about the request for qualifications or the project itself may be directed to Jamie Wright at jamie@ruralimpact.org.

All responses should be attached to the email submission in one PDF document. Any examples of previous work should be limited to no more than two additional attachments, also in PDF format.

Response Content

Responses should include the following information:

1. Letter of introduction: provide a summary of Contractor background and experience, especially as relevant to work with small and/or start-up lending programs, as well as work with underserved and/or rural communities or organizations.
2. A detailed summary of experience and background in developing and/or managing lending programs, especially CDFI certified programs.
3. Identification of the person responsible for managing this initiative with a resume to include role with the organization, project experience, and professional credentials.
4. Identification of additional people and their qualifications, who will be staffing this initiative (if applicable).
5. Description of Contractor's approach to the specified scope of work, including any recommended adjustments to what has been outlined.
6. Detailed budget and schedule based on a monthly rate of payment. An estimated timeline of deliverables should be included with an end date no later than December 31, 2019.

7. References from at least three previous projects or work experiences that are relevant to this request.
8. Examples of previous work deliverables, if available and relevant (optional).
9. Any other information you may deem relevant or helpful in Alliance for Rural Impact's evaluation of Contractor.

RESPONSE EVALUATION

Responses will be evaluated on:

- Contractor capabilities related to the required qualifications and work scope as demonstrated in the applicant's response.
- Ability to deliver project results based on demonstrated prior experience.
- Commitment to the project and resources dedicated to the project's success.
- Proposed budget.

Finalists will be contacted with any follow-up questions and scheduled for an interview. Should a final selection be made, a contract will be developed with the chosen candidate.

Alliance for Rural Impact reserves the right to negotiate with respondents on deliverables, timelines and budgets. Alliance for Rural Impact also reserves the right to reject all submissions and repost the Request for Qualifications as-is or with modifications.