

Warren County, PA Request for Proposals (RFP) For Business Liaison Services

RFP Release Date: Tuesday, August 4th, 2020
RFP Due Date: Monday, August 10, 2020 by 11:45 am

Contact:

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1. Background Information

a. CARES Act/County Assistance Block Grant

The Board of Warren County Commissioners applied for COVID19 County Relief Block Grant funding on Tuesday, June 16th in the form of an application through DCED (Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development) which requested \$3,539,294. This amount was prescribed by DCED and is the amount allocated to the county, based on population, as a part of the CARES act funding given to the states by the federal government. The application was approved, and the \$3.5 million grant deposited with the County on July 13th, 2020.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020. The \$2 trillion economic relief package aims to protect the American people from the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19. The CARES Act provides economic assistance for local governments and American workers, families, and small businesses.

Act 24 of 2020 was signed by Governor Wolf on May 29, 2020. This legislation provides \$625 million in CARES Act funding by means of block grants for counties in the commonwealth through the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). This funding is strictly for support of COVID-19-related activities to offset the cost of direct county COVID-19 response; assist businesses and municipalities; provide behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment services; fund nonprofit assistance programs; and deploy broadband to unserved or underserved areas.

Through review and deliberation regarding documentation provided by DCED it has been determined by the Commissioners that a majority of the money, initially \$2 million, would be allocated to a Small Business Grant (Warren-SBG) program to provide support to local non-governmental business and nonprofit organizations. This program would run until the end of the year, December 31st, 2020, and provide three rounds of funding with the first round totaling \$1 million and finishing up by the end of August 2020.

b. Program Overview

This Request for Proposal is for development agencies and individuals with a background in business management, public relations and general business operations to review and generate a proposal to outline how they'd preform as a Business Liaison Agency (BLA). The BLA is outlined in the Business Grant Summary which can be acquired from the County's Office of Finance and Administration (OFA) or downloaded from the County website (<http://warrencopa.com>).

Fundamentally, BLA will be the main point of contact and essential manager of the application and review portions of the Warren-SBG Program. The BLA will monitor the application portal, receive applications from the application management system and review the paperwork based on the parameters provided by the County. There will be no paper copies provided. All applications will be in a digital format.

The BLA will be responsible for working with the FRAs (Financial Review Agencies outlined in the Business Grant Summary) to provide applications to them, follow up with the FRAs to make sure reviews are being finished in a timely manner, gather any additional documentation from applicants or have questions answered and provide that additional information to the FRAs,

coordinate with the FRAs on producing a summary report that will be used to approve the applications and recommend grant amounts.

A principle responsibility of the BLA will be to work with local businesses and nonprofits to make sure they are able to apply, understand the application process, help organizations format and manage documentation they intend to submit, follow up with any requests for additional documentation or to answer questions, notify organizations of their approval or denial of their application, and at the end of each grant round make sure each agency receives the granted amount approved by the Commissioners.

There will be three grant windows in which the BLA will be required to review applications and coordinate with applicants. Each grant round is outlined in the schedule provided in this RFP. At the end of each grant window, the BLA and FRA(s) will work to produce a report which will be provided to the Commissioners for a vote. The Commissioners may follow up with the BLA with specific questions about their recommendations.

After each grant window, the BLA will meet with the FRA(s) and the Commissioners to determine the outcome of the previous grant window and define any changes that need to be made to ensure the program is more effective in the following round.

Once the entire program is completed and all grant windows are closed, the BLA will collect all emails and data (not gathered via the application system) from the FRA(s) and combine it with the application data generated from the application system, as well as the BLAs own documentation into a comprehensive archive of all data generated as part of the program. The BLA, as part of the program's commitment to transparency, must be prepared to provide any emails or additional documentation related specifically to the program and the BLAs review to the County Right-to-Know officer in the case of an open records request.

2. Scope of Work

a. Application Receipt and Organization

Grant applications will come through an online, cloud-based system created by the County to both the FRA and the BLA. All cases will have a case number, which is shared between all entities involved in the program. The BLA will be responsible to organize those files in their system according to case number. All files will be digital. The BLA will forward application data to the FRA(s) so they can do their own review.

b. Application Review

The BLA will review documents provided on all cases in their que over the course of each grant window according to the timelines outlined in the schedule, and determine using the parameters outlined in the Business Grant Summary and the individual/agency's own experience to determine if the applicants can demonstrate a COVID-related loss or expense.

c. Coordination with the FRA(s) (Financial Review Agency)

The BLA will work closely with the FRA(s), and the BLA will be the point of contact for applicants. If there is a lack of documentation, or a need for additional documentation on a specific case, the BLA will communicate with the applicants to request those specific documents (which may be requested by an FRA as well). The BLA and FRA are generally equal parts of the review process.

d. Report Generation

Once the applications have all been reviewed, the BLA will coordinate with the FRA(s) on a joint report which will include all cases, as prescribed in the Business Grant Summary, and make recommendations on approval or disapproval of applications and what the recommended grant amount should be. If the BLA and FRA have similar perspectives on an applicant, they may unify their information included in the report on that applicant. If they disagree on any aspect of the applicant, both perspectives must be included in the report and parsed out in an applicant-by-applicant basis. It will be up to the BLA and FRA to determine the format of the report, but the elements of the report must follow the minimum requirements outlined in the Business Grant Summary.

e. Right-to-Know Accommodation

The FRA(s) will work directly with the BLA on all records management issues. Due to open records law, it is possible that the BLA/FRA(s) will be asked to provide emails or correspondence as part of a right-to know request. No proprietary, personnel, or sensitive information related to the agency will be disclosed; however, all general correspondence and any ancillary documents that are generated by the agency will be subject to open records requests. The BLA will notify the FRA(s) of any right-to-know request, the FRA(s) will turn the needed records over to the BLA who will in turn provide the records to the County Right-to-Know Officer and the County Solicitor who will review the documents and properly redact any information not applicable either to the request or is outside the scope of the Open Records Law.

f. Final Records Collection

The BLA/FRA(s) will be required to keep complete and detailed records of their deliberation and review of applications and any correspondence with each other, the Applicants or the Commissioners Office. All records generated by the FRA(s) must be turned over to the BLA for storage (of a minimum of 7 years). "All records generated" would be any record (includes but not limited to email, receipt, letter, written notes, policy or work instructions generated internally, etc.) that is generated for the purpose of carrying out the program.

3. Proposal Requirements**a. Title Page**

A title page showing the firm's name, the date of proposal, point of contacts, business address, telephone numbers, and email addresses.

b. Letter of Interest and Experience

A signed letter of transmittal from the firm or individual submitting the proposal explaining briefly the experience, licenses, and general capabilities to perform the scope of work outlined in the RFP. The letter should state that said individual or agency agrees to perform all of the work outlined in the County's RFP within the time periods established by the County and can exhibit the highest standards of honesty and integrity. The letter must also contain a certification that the person signing the proposal is entitled to represent the firm or individual, empowered to submit the bid, and authorized to sign a contract with the County on behalf of the audit firm.

c. Fee Schedule

Agencies/Individuals interested in making a proposal to provide services should include a general fee schedule for all clerical/review work to be done. Although in *Section 3.d.* we'll be requesting a per-application estimate, there's a variety of ancillary work requirements that will

be conducted via an hourly rate (transfer of files at the end of the project, meetings with Commissioners and the FRA(s), special correspondence, etc.) and it's important for everyone involved to have an idea of your expectations of compensation.

d. Per Application Estimate

Using the Fee Schedule and the scope of work outlined in the Business Grant Summary, please attempt to estimate your overall cost to review an **average application**. Understanding that the applications may take one to two hours to review and that there may be as many as 100 applications overall. Applications may consist of any combination of tax returns, accounting reports, income and loss statements, receipts and a variety of other paperwork used to outline a loss or expense.

4. Responding to the RFP

Five copies of your proposal must be received no later than Monday, August 10 at 11:45 am to be considered as an FRA for the first round of grants. Proposals may be received after that deadline and those proposals will be reviewed and the related agencies or individuals may be approved and then hired as additional FRAs for future grant rounds. Proposals may be emailed to ehern@warren-county.net (in PDF format or Microsoft Word) or mailed/messangered to the County Office of Finance and Administration, addressed as follows:

Warren County Office of Finance and Administration
Attn: Eric Hern, Director
204 4th Avenue
Warren, PA 16365

No faxed materials will be accepted. Postmarks are not considered proof of delivery. Emailed proposals shall not be deemed received until a confirmation email sent by the County Office of Finance and Administration is received in reply to the submitted proposal, confirming the emailed proposal was received and the format was readable by the County. If the proposal is hand delivered, it must be delivered to and stamped by personnel at the County Office of Finance and Administration on the 1st floor of the County Courthouse at 204 4th Avenue in Warren.

Any amendments to this RFP will be in writing and will be issued to all persons or businesses that have indicated an interest to receive RFP amendments. No proposal will be considered that is not responsive to any issued amendments.

5. Schedule

a. Schedule for RFP Process

This RFP will be open and available for potential BLAs until August 10th at 11:45 am.

RFP Released:	Tuesday, August 4th
Deadline for BLA Proposals:	Monday, August 10th at 11:45 am
Review and Selection:	Monday August 10th at 12:00 pm Comm. Work Session
Contracts Finalized:	Wednesday, August 12th at 12:00 pm Comm. Meeting

b. Program Schedule

Grant Round	Description	Start Date	End Date
1st Round	Application Period	August 17, 2020 at 8:00 am	August 28, 2020 at 4:30 pm
	Application Review Period (by BLA and FRA)	August 17, 2020	September 4, 2020 at 4:30 pm
	Report Generated by BLA and FRA	N/A	September 4, 2020 at 4:30 pm
	Review of Report by Commissioners	September 4, 2020 at 4:30 pm	September 9, 2020 at 12:00 pm
	Vote on First Round Grants by Commissioners	N/A	September 9, 2020 at 12:00 pm at Commissioners Public Meeting in the Jackson Courtroom at the Courthouse
	Checks to Be Issued to Grantees (within 10 day period)	September 9, 2020 after public meeting	September 19, 2020
2nd Round	Application Period	September 14, 2020 at 8:00 am	September 25, 2020 at 4:30 pm
	Application Review Period (by BLA and FRA)	September 14, 2020	October 2nd, 2020 at 4:30 pm
	Report Generated by BLA and FRA	N/A	October 2nd, 2020 at 4:30 pm
	Review of Report by Commissioners	October 2nd, 2020 at 4:30 pm	October 14, 2020 at 12:00 pm
	Vote on First Round Grants by Commissioners	N/A	October 14, 2020 at 12:00 pm at Commissioners Public Meeting in the Jackson Courtroom at the Courthouse
	Checks to Be Issued to Grantees (within 10 day period)	October 14, 2020 after public meeting	October 24, 2020

3rd Round	Application Period	October 19, 2020 at 8:00 am	October 30, 2020 at 4:30 pm
	Application Review Period (by BLA and FRA)	October 19, 2020	November 6th, 2020 at 4:30 pm
	Report Generated by BLA and FRA	N/A	November 6th, 2020 at 4:30 pm
	Review of Report by Commissioners	November 6th, 2020 at 4:30 pm	November 11th, 2020 at 12:00 pm
	Vote on First Round Grants by Commissioners	N/A	November 11th, 2020 at 12:00 pm at Commissioners Public Meeting in the Jackson Courtroom at the Courthouse
	Checks to Be Issued to Grantees (within 10 day period)	November 11, 2020 after public meeting	November 21, 2020

6. Proposal Evaluation

The County intends to select the most qualified firms or individuals that exhibit the strongest ability to provide the highest quality service, based upon the following criteria:

- Firm/Individual's understanding of the engagement and the County's needs.
- Firm/Individual's local municipal audit expertise/experience including references from similar engagements.
- Experience and qualifications of individuals to be assigned to the County's engagement including resources available for the timely completion of the application review and scheduling of work.
- Overall cost of services.

The selection team shall be the Warren County Board of Commissioners with assistance provided by the County's Director of Finance and Administration as well as input from the County Solicitor. Final selection will happen at the Commissioners Work Session at 12:00 pm on August 10th in the Commissioners Conference Room in the Courthouse.

7. Contract Duration

The selected individual or agency shall be designated as a County BLA (for the purpose of the Warren SBG Program) for term commencing on August 12, 2020 and ending January 31st, 2021. Either party may cancel the contract by 30-day written notice. The County reserves the right to extend the contract beyond the original period, negotiating each subsequent period separately as to price and work performed.

8. Acceptance or Rejection and Negotiation of Proposals

The County reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive any irregularities in the request for proposal, to accept or reject any item or combination of items in a proposal, to request additional information or clarifications from respondents, and to negotiate or hold interviews with any one or more of the respondents. By requesting proposals, the County is in no way obligated to award a contract or to pay expenses of the proposing firms in connections with the preparation or submission of a proposal. Furthermore, the County reserves the right to reject any and all proposals prior to execution of a contract, with no penalty to the County of Warren.