

Small Business Innovation Act (LB345) Nebraska Economic Gardening Program Application Guidelines

The purpose of the Nebraska Economic Gardening Program (NEGP) authorized by the Small Business Innovation Act (SBIA) is to provide technical assistance which may include information tools, state and national demographic trends, competitive intelligence, marketing lists, strategy, analysis, capital referrals and labor analysis, etc, for up to 40 Nebraska-based growth businesses – one half of which are located in counties with population of less than fifty thousand people.

Letters of interest from eligible applicants including a project budget (sources and uses) and narrative addressing the selection criteria will be accepted on an ongoing basis beginning October 15, 2011 until all funds are awarded. Fiscal year 2012-13 funds (\$200,000) will be awarded after July 1, 2012.

Eligible Business – Eligible businesses are Nebraska-based growth businesses defined as high growth, early-stage companies that are developing and commercializing a technology product, process, or service. The eligible business must employ no fewer than five employees and no more than fifty employees. In the applicant's most recent complete fiscal year prior to application, the eligible business's annual sales revenue must not be less than \$500,000 (five hundred thousand dollars) and must not exceed \$2.5 million (two million five hundred thousand dollars). The eligible business must employ or use the services of an eligible Nebraska service provider or Nebraska non-profit.

Eligible Technical Assistance Providers – Eligible Technical Assistance providers are Nebraska service providers and Nebraska non-profits that provide technical assistance to eligible businesses in some or all of the following areas: marketing analysis, industry trends, industry financial data, state and national demographic trends, competitive intelligence, marketing lists, strategy analysis, human capital and talent analysis, capital referrals, finance and fund raising. Eligible technical assistance providers may apply on behalf of eligible businesses for the purposes of providing technical assistance as described in this section.

Eligible Uses of Funds – Funds may be used to support the costs of an eligible technical assistance provider to assist eligible businesses with marketing analysis, industry trends, industry financial data, state and national demographic trends, competitive intelligence, product development, marketing lists, market and product strategy analysis, human capital and talent analysis, capital referrals, finance and fund raising.

NEGP Fund Provisions

- An eligible business employing no fewer than five and no more than fifty employees.
- Applicants must provide matching funds equal to at least 20% of the NEGP funds awarded.
- Maximum grant funding of \$10,000 per eligible business.
- Funds must be spent within 8 months of the contract beginning date or June 30, 2013, whichever is sooner

Application Requirements

- Complete business profile - attached
- Provide a letter of interest including the amount of NEGP funds requested, a project budget (sources and uses) and narrative addressing the selection criteria listed below.

Selection Criteria

The Department of Economic Development (DED) will focus on providing support to eligible businesses that, due to the technical assistance as the proposed NEGP project, are likely to:

- Increase sales
- Lead to new investment
- Expansion of employment
- Support innovation that results in a new product/service development
- Produce other measureable results such as appropriate restructuring of the business plan, restructuring of the business model based on growth analysis, altering production line and other results deemed appropriate by DED.

Each evaluation will be based upon the following criteria:

- Eligible business characteristics – financials, number of employees, products, services, markets
- Eligible technical assistance provider characteristics – business services provided, experience, partial client listing, references from growth-businesses assisted
- Technical Proposal – detailed services and research plan. Time-line for work and implementation of recommendations

Application Timing and Process

Letters of interest with completed business profile will be accepted on an ongoing basis beginning October 15, 2011 until all funds are awarded. Fiscal year 2012-13 funds will be awarded after July 1, 2012.

All applications will be reviewed by DED staff, with final approval given by the Department Director. Applicants will be notified of notice of selection, pending status or non-selection within 45 days of receipt of the application. DED may hold applications in pending status, as needed, to ensure geographic distribution of the NEGP in accordance with the Small Business Innovation Act which requires at least one-half of the eligible businesses that are assisted to be located in counties with a population of 50,000 or less.

DED PROGRAM CONTACT PERSON

For additional information or clarifications of this program, please direct your inquiries to:

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