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REGIONAL INNOVATION SPECIALIST PROGRAM

2012 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

(NYSTAR 12-1 RISP)

RFP Released: November 20, 2012
PROPOSALS DUE: DECEMBER 13, 2012 BY 5:00 P.M.

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I. Program Overview and Requirements

A. Program Goals and Objectives

The foundation of the state's economic development efforts can be found in the ten Regional Economic Development Council strategic plans developed in 2011. The need to encourage innovation, increase new business startups and develop an entrepreneurial culture was a consistent finding in these plans.

The Regional Innovation Specialist Program (RISP) is designed to address this need by assisting Regional Councils in achieving their strategic goals focused on innovation and entrepreneurship. In addition, the RISP will assist New York State innovators and companies in every region of the state accelerate the process of shepherding ideas from concept to final product. This new program is the next generation of the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Regional Specialist Program.

RISP will provide funds to support entrepreneurship, technology acceleration and other activities to assist start-up and existing small and medium sized manufacturers with commercializing technology or incorporating technology into their systems.

Each Regional Innovation Specialist will be hosted by a designated Regional Technology Development Center (RTDC). Each specialist under the RISP will provide assistance described in Section I.E.1. to clients located in their respective Innovation Regions defined in Section I.C.2 of this RFP.

The Program's objectives are to: 1.) create jobs by assisting the growth of start-up companies and existing companies through innovative products or processes; and 2.) assist Regional Councils with their entrepreneurial and innovation efforts.

B. Eligibility and Program Requirements

Any RTDC may apply to host a Regional Innovation Specialist in one of the regions outlined in subsection I.C.2 of this section. An RTDC can only apply to support the region in which it is located. Only one application may be submitted per RTDC, herein referred to as Applicant.

1. General Requirements

- a. The Applicant's Proposal must identify one individual who will serve as the Regional Innovation Specialist. This individual will be the primary provider of the services described in Section I.E.1. of the RFP.
- b. The Applicant must demonstrate the ability to meet the matching funds requirements explained in Section I.D. An award recipient must provide all matching funds demonstrated in its Proposal in the ensuing contract.

2. General Limitations

- a. Any Proposal that does not comply with all of the requirements of this RFP, including submission of all required documentation, may be rejected without review.
- b. ESD/NYSTAR funds will be granted to support the activities and items described in Section I.E. unless non-specified activities or items are otherwise approved by ESD/NYSTAR.
- c. ESD/NYSTAR funds **may not** be provided to any for-profit organization other than for material and supply purchases, travel, professional services, and consultants for clients, etc.

C. **Contract Period and Award Amounts**

1. Designation and Contract Periods

Applicants awarded from this RFP will be designated to host a Regional Innovation Specialist for a period beginning January 1, 2013 and ending June 30, 2016.

If ESD/NYSTAR finds an RTDC's contractual performance as the host of a Regional Innovation Specialist to be unsatisfactory, the contract and designation may be terminated before the end of the designation period. In such a case, ESD/NYSTAR may administer a competitive process open to all RTDCs in the Region to designate another RTDC to host the region's Regional Innovation Specialist or to continue the Regional Innovation Specialist who had been providing services in the Region.

2. Regions and Award Amounts

ESD/NYSTAR has divided New York State into four Innovation Regions, each of which consists of two or more RTDC regions. The RTDC regions described in this section are consistent with the ten economic development regions established pursuant to §230 of the Economic Development Law. These regions are the same as Governor Cuomo's Regional Economic Development Councils regions.

The chart below lists the four Innovation Regions, the RTDC regions contained therein, along with the estimated amount of annual funds available; and, matching fund requirements under this RFP. The matching fund requirements for these funds and the activities that are eligible for funding are further described in Sections I.D. and I.E of this RFP.

Innovation Regions and Annual Allocations

Innovation Region (RTDC Regions within Innovation Region)	Program Funds
Downstate New York (Long Island, and New York City RTDC Regions)	\$75,000
North Eastern New York (Capital, Mohawk Valley, and Mid-Hudson RTDC Regions)	\$75,000
Central New York (Central New York, North Country and Southern Tier RTDC Regions)	\$75,000
Western New York (Western New York and Finger Lakes RTDC Regions)	\$75,000
Leadership Position Grants — such as business plan, technology showcases, etc.	\$47,000
Total Estimated Funds	\$347,000

Annual funding for each Innovation Region is allocated equally. Actual award amounts will be subject to the availability of funds as well as qualifying matching funds. ESD/NYSTAR may adjust award amounts and/or distribute additional funds that may become available to the RISP.

The Leadership Position Grants are funds available for leadership in the formation or operation of statewide entrepreneur and innovation events/activities, such as, but not limited to: technology showcases, business plan and venture competitions and other methods of highlighting New York State Innovation subject to the approval of ESD/NYSTAR. One Regional Innovation Specialist will be designated as the administrator of the Leadership Position Grants. As such, this specialist will be required to work with the other Innovation Specialists, CATs, COEs and Regional Councils to establish events/activities across the state, subject to the approval of ESD/NYSTAR. These grants are to be used to create or enhance events/activities focused on innovation and technology commercialization.

D. Matching Funds Requirements

Each RTDC hosting a Regional Innovation Specialist must meet matching funds requirements to be eligible for reimbursement. For the RTDC to receive its full annual allocation, total expenses submitted must demonstrate an adequate match where required and be approved by ESD/NYSTAR. The annual funding for the Regional Innovation Specialist Program carries a minimum 1:1 match requirement.

1. Categories of Acceptable Match

There are three categories of eligible matching funds to match the ESD/NYSTAR funding awarded from this RFP:

- a. Private Funds—Matching funds contributed from non-government sources.

- b. Federal Funds—Federal funds awarded and expended by the Applicant (RTDC).
- c. In-Kind (not to exceed one-half of the match requirement)—Quantifiable goods and services including, but not limited to, professional services and time, and materials and supplies provided for use by the Applicant in furtherance of the objectives of this RFP and for which there is no monetary remuneration. Discounted prices or rates are not eligible as in-kind. A specific item or service must be completely donated to qualify as an in-kind contribution.

2. General Match Requirements and Limitations

- a. ESD/NYSTAR reserves the right to make determinations concerning the extent to which funds, goods and services qualify as matching funds. All proposed matching funds must be approved by ESD/NYSTAR before it is credited. The Award Recipient is required to document and maintain detailed records for any financial and in-kind match, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.
- b. No funds allocated pursuant to the 2011 RTDC RFP or any other New York State government funds are eligible to be used as matching funds. State funds granted directly to a company but used by the company to pay for Regional Innovation Specialist Program services are not eligible as match.
- c. Cash qualifies as match only when it is expended by the RTDC for Innovation activities under this program. In-kind qualifies as match only during the period in which it is received.
- d. Matching funds contributions must be provided for, and traceable to, allowable items and activities as defined in Section I.E.

E. Use of Funds

1. General Provisions

ESD/NYSTAR and matching funds may generally be used for the following activities:

- a. Working with New York State's Regional Councils to achieve the region's innovation and high technology goals;
- b. Increasing applications for and awareness and knowledge of the Federal SBIR and STTR programs across the State, in universities, business development and economic development organizations, especially in the small business sector;
- c. Providing technical assistance, hosting events and seminars, and other activities that will foster an innovative environment in New York State. ESD/NYSTAR reserves the right to determine if an activity matches the purpose of this program.

- d. Collaborating with RTDCs, ESD/NYSTAR funded contractors, and other economic development organizations in the region to identify resources and opportunities and to ensure that clients throughout the region receive the assistance needed;
- e. Enhancing awareness and understanding of New York State technology assets, such as Regional Technology Development Centers (RTDCs), Centers of Advance Technology (CATs), Centers of Excellence (COEs), High Performance Computing (HPC) and other strategic partners in an effort to make the innovation process in New York State more efficient and easier to navigate;
- f. Highlighting New York State innovation within the state and across the nation to attract seed, angel and venture investments in our state;
- g. Assisting with technology acceleration, technology matching, innovation engineering and other activities to improve innovation in New York State;
- h. Providing support structures and networks for science and technology-based start-up and small and medium sized businesses;
- i. Driving and promoting innovation through regional programs such as business plan, innovation and entrepreneurial competitions;
- j. Increasing economic benefits to New York State companies and the State and national economies resulting from CAT, COE, HPC and SBIR-funded technology research and commercialization; and
- k. Increasing the knowledge of New York State technology assets (programs and contractors funded by NYS) and companies about Innovation Engineering and tools available to assist with economic development.

2. Use of ESD/NYSTAR Funds

ESD/NYSTAR Regional Innovation Specialist funds may be expended on items that directly support the above activities, such as:

- a. Salaries and fringe benefits for the Applicant's employees or consultants who are performing ESD/NYSTAR approved innovation activities;
- b. Materials and supplies;
- c. Travel to clients, conferences, competitions, showcases and/or ESD/NYSTAR meetings;
- d. Services subcontracted to partner organizations or other third parties;
- e. Staff training, marketing, and outreach; and
- f. Other items explicitly approved by ESD/NYSTAR prior to being incurred.

3. Prohibited Uses of ESD/NYSTAR Funds

- a. There are no indirect costs allowed pursuant to this RFP.

- b. Program funds are not to be used to support the operational costs of the Applicant.

F. Reporting and Monitoring Requirements

1. General Provisions

- a. Award Recipients must submit quarterly progress and financial reports to ESD/NYSTAR using specific reporting guidelines and forms.
- b. Award Recipients will report on companies served and assist ESD/NYSTAR in tracking companies in New York State's Innovation pipeline and provide technology success stories as required.
- c. Award Recipients must maintain an accounting system in conformance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) that permits identification of all expenditures, matching funds and revenues.
- d. Contract payments are contingent on ESD/NYSTAR's receipt and review of required reports and may be impacted by the Award Recipient's compliance with other ESD/NYSTAR contracts.

2. Economic Impacts

Impacts generated by the Regional Innovation Specialist Program will be measured by means deemed appropriate by ESD/NYSTAR to assess the success of the Program and each Regional Innovation Specialist, and to satisfy ESD/NYSTAR reporting requirements. For example, projects that can be surveyed will be surveyed using NIST MEP survey process with company impacts collected, including: jobs retained; jobs increased; increased sales; etc. Other measurements that will be tracked are: amount of funding leveraged; number of referrals to and from strategic partners; number of referrals served; etc.

G. Sample Contract

A sample ESD/NYSTAR contract can be found at the [Requests for Proposals \(RFPs\) Webpage](#). Terms and conditions of an executed contract may vary.

II. Submission Information

A. Timetable

2012-2013 Competition TIMETABLE	
Regional Innovation Specialist Program RFP released	November 20, 2012
Written questions on proposals accepted through	December 7, 2012
Proposals due by 5 pm to ESD/NYSTAR	December 13, 2012
Contract expected to begin on	January 1, 2013

B. Questions on the RFP

Questions regarding this RFP may be submitted via email to: rpfqa@esd.ny.gov

ESD/NYSTAR will email questions and responses regarding this RFP to all applicant and non-applicant RTDC Directors or designees.

C. Submission Instructions

All narrative sections not on ESD/NYSTAR forms must be single-spaced, in 12-point font, on 8½" x 11" paper with one-inch margins. Number pages and include tabs to identify major sections and appendices. Use the forms included in Appendix B to this RFP which are located at the [Requests for Proposals \(RFPs\) Webpage](#), and adhere to the specific instructions that follow. Do not edit any formatting or text on the templates aside from inserting additional space.

Two bound copies of the proposal must be received by ESD/NYSTAR by the deadline. Applicants are **required** to use a medium of delivery that allows for tracking ESD/NYSTAR's receipt of the proposal. Submit proposals to:

Contract Manager
ESD/NYSTAR
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12245

Receipt will be determined by physical receipt of the proposal. Failure to submit on time shall result in the proposal being rejected without review, unless it is clearly shown that the delay was not in any way caused by the Applicant.

In addition to the hard copies, the Applicant must submit an identical electronic version of the proposal in MS Word/Excel or compatible editable format to rfpinfo@esd.ny.gov within 24 hours of the Proposal deadline. Electronic copies are used for administrative purposes and do not fulfill the requirement to submit the hard copies by the deadline. Zip files cannot be accepted.

ESD/NYSTAR reserves the right to contact partners and other individuals identified in the proposal to validate or elaborate on the information presented.

D. Proprietary Information

Some information contained in a Proposal may be considered sensitive and the Applicant may wish it not to be disclosed if possible. If this is the case, the Applicant must identify the information it wishes to protect and request that it be protected.

ESD/NYSTAR will take efforts to safeguard proprietary, confidential and sensitive information as allowed under the law, including the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)

(see Article 6 of the Public Officer's Law). However, all information will be made available to those who are conducting the review of the proposals.

To request an exception to FOIL, an Applicant must submit a letter included as **Appendix 5** to the Proposal specifically identifying the sensitive information and reasons it should be protected. The Applicant must identify the information with a CONFIDENTIAL, PROPRIETARY or SENSITIVE stamp in the margin of each paragraph containing proprietary information and check the appropriate box on the cover page.

III. Proposal Components

Applicants must ensure that proposals have been thoroughly reviewed for clarity and professional presentation.

A. Proposal Cover Forms

Complete the Proposal Cover Page, Checklist, and Certification.

B. Table of Contents

Include a table of contents delineating major headings, sub-headings, and required appendices.

C. Glossary of Terms Used

Include an alphabetized glossary of acronyms and technical terms used in the proposal and a brief definition of each.

D. Executive Summary (up to one page)

Include an Executive Summary that sets forth a self-contained description of the activities and benefits that would result if the Proposal were funded.

The Executive Summary must not contain any proprietary information and must be suitable for publication.

E. Proposal Narrative (up to 7 pages excluding required forms and appendices)

Address the specific review criteria presented in Section IV.A. and elaborated on below. All visual materials (such as charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations), footnotes, endnotes, and citations must be included within the 7-page proposal narrative. Follow the outline presented below:

1. Economic Opportunity

- a. Describe the plan to foster innovation in the region including how it aligns and assists the specific Regional Council's innovation goals and objectives.
- b. Discuss the projected economic benefits to the region to be derived from the activities described in the Proposal.
- c. Describe the current base of clients and the plan to attract and serve more clients in each of the Innovation regions.
- d. Provide and discuss past economic impacts for clients that received similar assistance by the Applicant and/or the proposed Regional Innovation Specialist. Provide as **Appendix 1** five one-page letters from clients previously served by the proposed Regional Innovation Specialist describing the assistance provided and the economic impact to the client resulting from the assistance provided. Examples of such impacts include, but are not limited to, funds acquired, increased and retained sales, jobs created and retained, the number of clients assisted by the Applicant, and the number of clients referred to another New York State Asset.
- e. If applying to be the administrator of the Leadership Position Grants, discuss the plan to work with the Regional Councils, CATs, COEs and other state assets to host events/activities in an effort to foster innovation in New York State.

2. Quality of Assistance

- a. Detail fully the qualifications and relevant experience of the Applicant's proposed Regional Innovation Specialist. Attach a resume for the proposed Regional Innovation Specialist in **Appendix 2**.
- b. Describe the services and programs to be provided by the Regional Innovation Specialist.
- c. Describe the support to be provided to the Regional Innovation Specialist by the Applicant and any employees or consultants assisting the Regional Innovation Specialist.
- d. Discuss the Applicant's ability to coordinate the provision of assistance with other RTDCs and ESD/NYSTAR -funded contractors located in the Region.
- e. Provide the Applicant's plan to address a vacancy in its Regional Innovation Specialist position.

3. Use of Funds

- a. Provide a justification for the requested funding. Describe how both the requested ESD/NYSTAR funds and matching funds will support the activities described in the Applicant's proposal.
- b. Describe the sources of matching funds the Applicant intends to use to match its ESD/NYSTAR expenditures.

F. Budget

Use the budget form provided in Appendix B to this RFP. Complete the yellow highlighted portion and submit as **Appendix 3** to the Proposal.

1. Budget Form One – List any staff to be paid in whole or in part from ESD/NYSTAR and/or matching funds. List each subcontractor and any other expenses on a separate line. For all other categories, indicate ESD/NYSTAR and matching funds budgeted.
2. Budget Form Two – List sponsors for all committed matching funds, the amount and a description. Ensure that descriptions are adequate for In-Kind.

G. Non-Discrimination and Contractor Diversity

ESD/NYSTAR's Non-discrimination and Contractor Diversity policy will apply to the Project. The Recipient shall be required to use good faith efforts to achieve an overall Minority and Women Business Enterprise ("MWBE") Participation goal of 20% of the total value of ESD/NYSTAR's funding and to solicit and utilize MWBEs for any contractual opportunities generated in connection with the Project. Use the MWBE forms provided in Appendix B to this RFP. Complete the required portions and submit as **Appendix 4** to the Proposal.

H. Appendices to the Proposal

Include the following required appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Client Impact Letters
- Appendix 2 – Regional Innovation Specialist Resume
- Appendix 3 – Budget Forms
- Appendix 4 – MWBE Forms
- Appendix 5 – Proprietary Information Exception Request (if applicable)

No sections, appendices, and/or supporting information to the Proposal beyond those items required by ESD/NYSTAR in this RFP will be accepted or reviewed.

IV. Review Criteria and Process

The Applicant must submit a Proposal by the deadline that meets each requirement of this RFP. Failure to do so may result in the Proposal being rejected without review. Any questions regarding the Regional Innovation Specialist Program or this RFP must be submitted by email to rfpfaq@esd.ny.gov. Answers to questions related to the RFP will be posted on the FAQ Web page. All Applicants are required to monitor the FAQ Web page for responses to questions as well as for any information ESD/NYSTAR may post concerning this RFP.

For the review of eligible proposals, ESD/NYSTAR has established the following criteria to be applied in accordance with the review process set forth in Section IV.B. In addition to

addressing the review criteria stated below, refer to the proposal instructions in Section III of this RFP for specific items that must also be addressed.

A. Review Criteria - Regional Innovation Specialist Program

1. Economic Opportunity (50 percent)

- a. The depth to which the Applicant's plan addresses the Regional Council's innovation and entrepreneurial goals. (15 points)
- b. The quality of the Applicant's plan to foster innovation and entrepreneurialism and engage companies in the innovation process. (10 Points)
- c. The breadth and magnitude of the Applicant's current customer base of potential clients and the Applicant's plan to attract and serve more clients. (10 Points)
- d. Past economic impacts for clients served by the Applicant and the proposed Regional Innovation Specialist. (10 Points)
- e. The projected economic benefits to the region to be derived from the proposed activities described in the Proposal. (5 Points)

2. Personnel (30 percent)

- a. The quality and relevant experience of the proposed Regional Innovation Specialist with respect to the ability of the proposed Specialist to perform the activities described in Section I.E.1 of the RFP. (10 Points)
- b. The quality of proposed services and programs and how well the proposed services and programs corresponded to the activities to be supported as described in Section I.E.1 of the RFP. (10 Points)
- c. The quality of support provided by the Applicant for the proposed Regional Innovation Specialist. (5 Points)
- d. The ability of the Regional Innovation Specialist and the Applicant to interact with and deliver assistance to potential clients throughout the region and coordinate the provision of services with other RTDCs, ESD/NYSTAR -funded contractors and strategic partners located in the Region. (5 Points)

3. Budget (15 percent)

- a. Degree to which the uses of ESD/NYSTAR funds are reasonable and justified. (5 Points)
- b. The demonstrated ability of the Applicant to satisfy the matching fund requirements of the Program. (5 Points)
- c. The ability to leverage RISP funding (5 points)

4. Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise Utilization (5 percent)

- a. The quality of the applicants' Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise utilization plan. (5 Points)

B. Review Criteria - Leadership Position Grants

For applicants applying to administer the Leadership Position Grants, scoring will be done separate and apart from the Regional Innovation Specialist proposals. The maximum amount of awarded points awarded will be 25 with the review criteria being:

Leadership Position Grants (25 points)

- a. The quality of the Applicant's plan to engage the Regional Councils, CATs, COEs and other strategic partners. (15 points)
- b. Examples of and budget for Innovation fostering events/activities that should be considered by ESD/NYSTAR. (10 points)

C. Review Process

The Review Panel will consist of ESD/NYSTAR staff and/or partners. The reviewers will adhere to the process described in this section and will apply the review criteria detailed above.

The Regional Council Co-Chairs (or their Regional Council designee) will be sent proposals of the applicants that are seeking to represent their area. The Co-Chairs will be asked to share their comments and concerns with the review team. The reviewers will receive the proposals and response from the Regional Council Co-Chairs (or designee). A group discussion of the proposals based on the criteria identified in the RFP will take place and include a discussion of any technical explanations or issues about proposals drawn from the knowledge and expertise of the individual reviewers and will identify strengths or weakness of the proposals as they relate to the RFP criteria. If questions arise during the reviewers' discussion, a conference call with the applicant, other RTDCs, ESD/NYSTAR-funded contractors (including CATs and COEs) and strategic partners located in the Region may be arranged. At the conclusion of the discussions, each reviewer will independently score each proposal assigned based upon the panel's discussions.

Reviewers' final scores will be combined to provide an *average score* for each proposal.

ESD/NYSTAR reserves the right to reject any and all proposals. ESD/NYSTAR reserves the right to request clarification and revision to a proposal and reserves the right to not proceed with an award. ESD/NYSTAR may recall this RFP at any time prior to award announcement and may also reject proposals for deficiencies; waive technicalities, irregularities and omissions; or solicit new proposals.

ESD/NYSTAR will provide Applicants with the verbatim written summaries for reviewed proposals with the reviewers' names and affiliations omitted.

V. Appendices to this RFP

Appendix A – Glossary of terms used

Appendix B – Forms (Proposal Cover Page-Checklist-Certification; Budget; MWBE)

APPENDIX A: Glossary of Terms Used in the RFP

The following definitions apply to the terms as used in this RFP:

Applicant: A Regional Technology Development Center.

CATs: ESD/NYSTAR funded Centers of Advanced Technology.

COEs: ESD/NYSTAR funded Centers of Excellence.

HPC: ESD/NYSTAR funded High Performance Computing program.

Partner Organization: An organization selected by the Applicant to provide specified services to the Applicant's clients in coordination with the Applicant.

Regional Technology Development Center (RTDC): One of ten organizations designated pursuant to the 2011 RTDC RFP to serve as the RTDC in the region in which it submitted a proposal for designation.

Regional Innovation Specialist: The individual identified by the Applicant to provide the services described in Section I.E of this RFP.

Regional Councils: There are 10 Regional Economic Development Councils which are public-private partnerships composed of local experts and stakeholders from business, academia, local government, and non-governmental organizations.

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program: Coordinated by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the SBIR Program is a highly competitive three-phase award system which provides qualified small business concerns with opportunities to propose innovative ideas that meet the specific research and development needs of the Federal Government.

Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) initiative: Funds cooperative (R&D) projects involving a small business and a university.