



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

2012/2013 Florida Economic Gardening Statewide Initiative Regional and Local Awards Available

WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

In anticipation of the funding the State of Florida has providing to serve second-stage growth entrepreneurs, this RFP process seeks to identify partner organizations that are local entrepreneur support organizations (ESOs) or a team of ESOs that will partner with the Florida Economic Gardening Institute (GrowFL) to deliver economic gardening programs in the local community. Up to 10 awardees will be selected as part of this program. Any organization or teams of organizations, in Florida that meet the criteria set forth in the Entrepreneur Support Organization description below are encouraged to apply.

BACKGROUND

Background on the Florida Economic Gardening Institute

Economic gardening is a philosophy that embraces strategies to grow existing businesses in a community, region or state and is the basis for the entrepreneurship programs at the Florida Economic Gardening Institute.

Initially created in 2009 as a pilot program, the Florida Economic Gardening Institute (GrowFL) at the University of Central Florida is now a permanent part of economic development programs in Florida. The Institute focuses on efforts that support and strengthen Florida's entrepreneurial ecosystem, entrepreneur support organizations and, through a variety of programs, help second-stage growth entrepreneurs prosper.

OVERVIEW/PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Overview

Economic gardening is an innovative entrepreneur-centered economic growth strategy that offers balance to the economic development service offerings in Florida. It was pioneered by Chris Gibbons in 1989 in the City of Littleton, Colorado, in conjunction with the Center for the New West. While it was introduced as a demonstration program to deal with the sudden erosion of economic conditions following the relocation of the largest employer in the city at that time, it has emerged as a prototype for a rapidly expanding movement of like-minded economic developers looking for additional methods to generate truly sustainable economic growth for their communities, regions or states.



The three basic elements of Economic Gardening are:

1. Provide critical information needed by businesses to survive and thrive.
2. Develop and cultivate an infrastructure that goes beyond basic physical infrastructure and includes quality of life, a culture that embraces growth and change, and access to intellectual resources, including qualified and talented employees.
3. Develop connections between businesses and the people and organizations that can help take them to the next level — business associations, universities, roundtable groups, service providers and more.

Economic Gardening builds on the experiences and insights of experts, across the nation, who are working at the cutting edge of public-sector business development policies and practices.

- 7 Relies on providing knowledge and expertise to companies through direct technical assistance and peer-to-peer learning environments.
- 7 Focuses on small companies that have the capacity and intent to grow.
- 7 Emphasizes a market-based role for the public sector, rather than one that focuses principally on providing services.
- 7 Acknowledges that the economic strategy to provide targeted support to skilled entrepreneurs is aligned with quality-of-life and place-making strategies.

The **Florida Economic Gardening Statewide Initiative** is funded through the 2012 Florida Legislature for the fiscal year 2012/2013 and offers an opportunity for individual local and regional teams of entrepreneur support organizations to develop a year-long program for second-stage growth entrepreneurs to participate in Economic Gardening technical assistance and roundtables.

Program Description

The Florida Economic Gardening Institute (GrowFL) intends to contract with multiple (up to 10) Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESO), seeking to expand entrepreneur initiatives and support for second-stage growth entrepreneurs.

Individual local and regional teams of ESOs are invited to submit proposals to fund support for a minimum of twelve (12) CEOs of second-stage growth companies, who will participate in a one-year program to include technical assistance, roundtables and forums. Proposals must pre-identify the participating companies and all companies must meet the state criteria as set forth in Florida Statute 288.1082.



Entrepreneur Support Organization Description

There are a vast number of organizations that drive the infrastructure and culture needed to build entrepreneurial communities. Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESO), for the purpose of this request for proposal are organizations that serve, or have an ability to serve, second-stage businesses, and are devoted to the Economic Gardening philosophy of growing their economies from the "inside out." ESOs make a fundamental decision to devote significant resources to growing the already established companies that reside within their local areas.

ESOs include organizations that directly affect entrepreneurs and/or the culture and infrastructure in which they do business. ESOs work in concert with the public and private sector to provide the resources, both tangible and intangible, to help second stage businesses grow and succeed. ESO's can include economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, or small business development centers. Regional teams may include multiple ESO's, with a single ESO identified as the lead contractor.

Eligibility Requirements for Participating Companies

To be eligible for assistance under this program, a business must be a for-profit, privately held, investment-grade business that:

- 7 Employs at least 10 persons but not more than 50 persons;
- 7 Maintained its principal place of business in Florida for at least the previous 2 years;
- 7 Generates at least \$1 million but not more than \$25 million in annual revenue
- 7 Qualifies for the tax refund program for qualified target industry businesses under s. 288.106; This includes the following industries as identified by NAICS code prefix:
 - NAICS 31-33 – Manufacturing
 - NAICS 52 – Finance and Insurance Services
 - NAICS 42 – Wholesale Trade
 - NAICS 51 – Information Industries
 - NAICS 54 – Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
 - NAICS 55 – Management Services
 - NAICS 56 – Administrative and Support Services
- 7 During 3 of the previous 5 years, has increased both its number of full-time equivalent employees in this state and its gross revenues;
- 7 Be able to enter into an agreement with the Florida Economic Gardening Institute at the University of Central Florida to establish the business's commitment to participate in the GrowFL program;
- 7 Over the course of a year (From July 2012 through June 2013) participate in Technical Assistance and CEO Roundtables requiring regular meeting attendance and participation (up to 6 to 8 hours per month); and
- 7 Provide financial data and report job creation data as prescribed in both the online application and post-performance evaluation.



Technical Assistance Description

Technical Assistance matches businesses with the GrowFL team of specialists that help to analyze a company's overall business strategy to positively affect sales and marketing efforts. Technical assistance uses high end corporate level tools and cutting edge scientific concepts to help entrepreneurial growth companies (known as 2nd Stage companies) identify markets, monitor competitors, track industry trends, locate customer clusters on maps, and use search engine optimization/social media for marketing and various customized research. The goal is to help improve a business' marketing and sales efforts to increase revenues resulting in business growth and sustainable job creation.

Technical Assistance tools support database searching, geographic information systems, search engine optimization, web marketing, social media strategy, and network mapping. It focuses on front end, strategic issues of business including core strategy, market dynamics, marketing, teams, and finance that draw on scientific theories based on complexity science, network theory, temperament of individuals, and systems thinking.

A typical Technical Assistance project is initiated with a 1 to 2 hour kickoff call with the CEO/President of the company. The CEO/President is interviewed about the business and their current business issues. During the call the FEGI team will probe into the issues and establish a task list of activities that it will be performed for the client. Tasks are worked over a multi-week period involving the team's research effort and subsequent telephone and email communications with the CEO/President to review and confirm the client's understanding of the information provided. It is anticipated that a CEO will have multiple encounters with the GrowFL Technical Assistance team throughout the course of the year.

Services may include:

- 7 Core business strategy review
- 7 Market research
- 7 Competitive intelligence gathering
- 7 Internet strategy
- 7 Social media strategy
- 7 Website analysis and search engine optimization
- 7 Referrals - inclusive but not limited to accounting, trademark and licensing, process design, information technology, business valuation, lean manufacturing, and international trade.



CEO Roundtable Description

CEO Roundtables give participants the opportunity to discuss business practices and management strategies with peer CEOs who deal with similar growth challenges. CEO roundtables bring groups of entrepreneurs together 10 times over a one-year period for collaborative problem-solving sessions that address issues important to business owners. Led by a trained facilitator, these ongoing discussion groups are structured to provide CEOs with timely advice to problems they are currently experiencing. Participants discuss ways to overcome their company's obstacles in areas such as finance, employee relations, legal compliance and marketing. Unlike a traditional networking group, the CEOs in the roundtable don't sell to each other; but instead provide each other with insight and new perspective on management techniques. The confidential nature of the roundtable allows peer executives to openly share their company's struggles so that other participants can learn from both their achievements and their mistakes. In addition to serving as peer mentors, CEOs in the roundtable group become referral sources to potential business partner relationships and other ventures, and often say they learn about their own business from hearing about each other's challenges.

CEO Forum Description

CEO Forums take place twice a year and allow experienced CEOs to share "lessons learned" with second-stage growth entrepreneurs. The forums are intended for CEOs to learn from entrepreneurs who have grown successful businesses, network with other entrepreneurs and build a stronger entrepreneurial culture in the community or region.

AWARD DESCRIPTION

Core Components of Award

All regional and local award recipients will agree to implement a one-year program that will:

- A. Recruit a minimum of twelve (12) CEOs of qualified second-stage growth companies per the State criteria.
- B. Organize, in conjunction with the Florida Economic Gardening Institute, one (1) CEO Roundtable in the service area for the twelve (12) CEOs.
- C. During their participation in the CEO Roundtable, each CEO will receive one (1) engagement of technical assistance, provided by the GrowFL Technical Assistance Team which includes multiple encounters throughout the year including an initial kickoff call to be scheduled within the first 3 months of the program.
- D. Hold a minimum of two (2) CEO Forums.
- E. Market and promote the GrowFL program.



- F. Report to the Florida Economic Gardening Institute required performance measures achieved by participating companies including, but not limited to, the number of employees, new job creation, and new revenue growth resulting from participating in the GrowFL program.
- G. Achieve Level 1 or Level 2 Economic Gardening Certification, if not already certified.
- H. Monthly program activities report submitted to the Florida Economic Gardening Institute.
- I. Demonstrates willingness to invest in economic gardening by augmenting awarded funds through this program with other local funding or activities.

In order to ensure that organizations and communities of all sizes in diverse geographic regions in Florida have an opportunity to participate, proposals will be awarded in the following categories:

1. Regional Awards

Awarded to an existing regional team of entrepreneur support organizations consisting of two-or-more organizations in multiple counties working together to support economic development and entrepreneurs in Florida. Priority will be given to proposals that can demonstrate dedicated funding to economic gardening programs in the service region. For regional awards, a lead organization must be identified and the lead organization must identify other partners/participant organizations included in the proposal. All organizations in this category must achieve Level 1 Economic Gardening Certification by December 31, 2012.

2. Local Awards

Awarded to a single entrepreneur support organization serving one county, which has demonstrated an expertise in serving second-stage growth entrepreneurs in their community. Priority will be given to proposals that can demonstrate dedicated funding to economic gardening programs in the local service area. All organizations in this category must achieve Level 1 Economic Gardening Certification by December 31, 2012.

ELIGIBILITY / AWARD AMOUNTS / USE OF FUNDS

Eligibility

All economic development organizations, Regional economic development organizations, multi-county consortiums formed for award purposes, or any other organization that matches the criteria as an entrepreneur support organization will be eligible to submit proposals. Multiple ESO's coming together as regional teams are also allowed as long as one ESO is identified as the lead contractor.



Award Amount

- Up to 10 awards are anticipated
- Individual award amount is anticipated at \$30,000

The anticipated period of performance will be from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013 and will be performance-based.

PROPOSAL PROCESS

Proposal Process

The objective of this RFP is to allow local and regional teams of entrepreneur support organizations to apply for funding under the Florida Economic Gardening Statewide Initiative.

1. All interested organizations – through a single point of contact – should provide a Proposal to the Florida Economic Gardening Institute by the RFP deadline. (See “RFP Deadline”).
2. A Selection Committee will review and evaluate the Proposals based on the Selection Criteria listed below.
3. Notification of award is anticipated in Mid June 2012.

Recipients will be required to sign an Agreement with the Florida Economic Gardening Institute outlining the performance and reporting requirements of the award prior to the disbursement of funds. See Performance Measures in following section.

SELECTION CRITERIA / PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Selection Criteria for Regional and Local Awards (generally prioritized as follows):

Contracts will be awarded on a competitive basis, pending approval of state funding. Evaluation of proposals will include the degree to which they address the following criteria:

1. Has submitted a list of a minimum of 12 companies that have been completed a Company Pre-Qualification Form (see below) which demonstrates a CEO's ability to commit the time to participate and that the company meets the eligibility requirements of the program.
2. Potential for this one-time funding to establish an ongoing Economic Gardening program. For example, this can be demonstrated by showing a plan for local investment of funding or activities as part of the local or regional strategy.
3. Level I or II Nationally Certified Economic Gardening Organization.
4. Organization with a staff member who has been through Economic Gardening training with the Edward Lowe Foundation.
5. Incorporates partnerships with other existing local, regional, and/or statewide entrepreneur support organizations.
6. States deliverables expected at the conclusion of the initiative.



7. Targets industries identified by Enterprise Florida as high value-added industries. *Please refer to the Enterprise Florida website at: <http://eflorida.com> for details on these sectors.*
8. Budget outlining use of award funds
9. Innovative aspects of the program being proposed.
10. Proposed program's synergy with the State's economic development programs.
11. Geographic dispersion of ESOs will be a consideration in the selection process.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Please submit Proposal in electronic format, preferably in a Microsoft Office Suite program or as a PDF. The Proposal should not exceed 5 pages (not including support letters from CEOs). The following information should be included:

Part 1: Organization / Proposal Team Background

- A. General information to be included for submitting organization or **each member** of the proposal team (as applicable):
 - a. Organization name, individual contact name and title, address, phone, fax, email, website, general description of each organization, and Federal ID#.
- B. For teams with multiple participants, **please identify the contracting entity and the single, primary point-of-contact regarding contract coordination and facilitation.**
- C. For teams with multiple participants, please include the following statement, **signed by each of the proposal team members:**

"The following organizations and participants submit this proposal under the coordination and facilitation of (name of primary point-of-contact organization). The members understand and agree that all communications, reports, and fund disbursement will be handled by (name of primary-point-of contact organization)."

Part 2: Program Outline

This section should provide enough detail about your program for the Selection Committee to evaluate the proposal based on the Selection Criteria outlined in this RFP. The following questions / issues should be addressed in each proposal.

- A. Please provide a brief overview of your organizations' current entrepreneurial support activities.
- B. Geographic market that will be targeted.
- C. Experience in working with target industry sectors.



- D. Expected outcomes/deliverables.
- E. A list of staffing dedicated to this proposal, along with their economic gardening professional training or experience.
- F. Is the organization certified in Economic Gardening at a Level I or Level II?
- G. A list of twelve (12) eligible companies with a letter from each agreeing to participate in the program and dedicate the necessary time to attend meetings and conference calls. Provide supporting documentation from GrowFL showing the company meets the eligibility criteria identified on page 3 of this document.

Part 3: Budget

- A. Using the template provided, please provide a budget outlining how the award funds will be utilized.

RFP DEADLINE/SUBMISSION

RFP Deadline

Please ***email an electronic copy*** to:

Fran Korosec, Director of Client Services
Florida Economic Gardening Institute at the University of Central Florida (GrowFL)
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 200
Orlando, FL 32826
Fran.Korosec@UCF.edu
By: June 1, 2012, 5:00pm ET

QUESTIONS/CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact:

Tammie Nemecek, Director of Partner Development
Florida Economic Gardening Institute at the University of Central Florida (GrowFL)
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 200
Orlando, FL 32826
239-253-1688
Tammie.Nemecek@ucf.edu



BUDGET TEMPLATE

Description	Program Award Funds	ESO Investment Beyond Program Award Funds	Description of ESO Investment Items
Personnel (labor & fringe benefits)	\$	\$	
Outreach/Marketing (non-labor)	\$	\$	
CEO Forums (non-labor)	\$	\$	
CEO Roundtables (non-labor)	\$	\$	
Other* (non-labor)	\$	\$	
Total	\$	\$	

*Please provide details for other costs:

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COMPANY PRE-QUALIFICATION FORM

Complete and sign this form for each of the twelve (12) companies you are submitting as part of the RFP response. This will ensure that each company meets minimum eligibility requirements and has agreed to commit the necessary time to participate in the program.

Company name:	
Name of CEO participating:	
Year Company Formed:	Headquarters Location:
Public or privately held:	For profit or not for profit:

Industry – check one

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> NAICS 31-33 – Manufacturing | <input type="checkbox"/> NAICS 54 – Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NAICS 52 – Finance and Insurance Services | <input type="checkbox"/> NAICS 55 – Management Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NAICS 42 – Wholesale Trade | <input type="checkbox"/> NAICS 56 – Administrative and Support Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NAICS 51 – Information Industries | |

Revenue History

2011	2009	2007
2010	2008	2006
Number of Employees (Full Time) History		
2011	2009	2007
2010	2008	2006
Number of Employees (Part Time) History		
2011	2009	2007
2010	2008	2006

CERTIFICATION OF QUALIFICATIONS BY ESO

I certify the company listed above meets the following requirements:

- Employs at least 10 persons, but not more than 50 persons.
- Has maintained its principal place of business in Florida for at least the previous 2 years.
- Generates at least \$1 million, but not more than \$25 million in annual revenue.
- Qualifies for the tax refund program for qualified target industry businesses under s. 288.106.
- During 3 of the previous 5 years, has increased both its number of full-time equivalent employees in Florida and its gross revenues.
- Will be able to enter into an agreement with the Florida Economic Gardening Institute at the University of Central Florida to establish the business’s commitment to participate in the GrowFL program.
- Over the course of a year (From July 2012 through June 2013) will participate in Technical Assistance and CEO Roundtables requiring regular meeting attendance and participation (up to 6 to 8 hours per month).
- Will provide financial data and report job creation data as prescribed in both the online application and post-performance evaluation.

Name/Signature of CEO Date: _____

Name/Signature of ESO Representative Date: _____