

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

GRANT REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

To be eligible as a regional Minnesota Small Business Development Center, an applicant must be a **qualified** higher educational institution or non-profit economic development organization. In accordance with the Congressional intent of the SBDC program, preference will be given to applications made by higher educational institutions.

For-profit enterprises are not eligible for this award.

Proposals are due by 4:30 P.M. C.S.T., Monday, October 13, 2025.

Entities planning to submit a proposal **must first submit a letter of intent** to do so, no later than 4:30 P.M. C.S.T., Wednesday, September 10, 2025.

The intent of the attached Request for Proposals (RFP) is to solicit proposals from qualified organizations to be regional service center hosts and partners of the Minnesota Small Business Development Center (MnSBDC) Network. Regional center service host partners are solicited by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) for a five-year service agreement cycle to deliver Small Business Development Center program services in their respective geographical service areas. DEED will negotiate specific terms of that Grant Contract with regional center host partners each year during the five-year service agreement cycle to specify annual actual budgets, required deliverables and scope of work expectations that are consistent with federal Cooperative Agreements DEED enters into annually with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to deliver the Small Business Development Center program.

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)
180 E 5th St Suite 1200
St Paul MN 55101
<https://mn.gov/deed/>

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-259-7423.

Section 1: Request for Proposals Overview

Grant Overview

- Grant Name: MnSBDC CY 2026-2030 Program Announcement
- <https://mn.gov/deed/business/help/sbdc/>
- Open for Applications: August 21, 2025
- Letter of intent Due Date: September 10, 2025-MUST SUBMIT TO BE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY
- Application Due Date: October 13, 2025

1.1 Introduction

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) program is designed to provide high quality business and economic development technical assistance to small businesses and entrepreneurs to promote business start-up, growth, expansion, innovation, profitability, management improvement, employment and economic development. To accomplish these objectives and meet the specialized and complex needs of the increasingly diverse small business community, SBDCs create a broad-based system of assistance by linking the resources of the federal, state and local governments with the resources and knowledge of institutions of higher education, regional and local economic development organizations and the private sector.

The Minnesota SBDC Network is a partnership program between the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), local regional hosts and other vested stakeholders. DEED has been designated by SBA and the Minnesota Legislature as the “Lead Center” for the Minnesota SBDC Network. Through its authorized representative, the Minnesota SBDC State Director, it has primary responsibility and authority for administering the SBDC program and providing leadership, management, coordination and administrative direction for the network.

The MnSBDC program is the State of Minnesota’s largest and most extensive small business development service delivery network. It offers no-cost business management consultation services, entrepreneurship and small business development education, and assists businesses to secure the capital they need to start, grow and be successful.

The Minnesota SBDC Network has several important characteristics that are defined by federal and state statutes, regulations, policies and strategies. A few of the more important characteristics are highlighted below:

Partnership Model. The Minnesota SBDC Network is a shared partnership among its various vested partners. The partnership concept stresses the equal participation of each partner in the strategic direction, operation, service delivery and benefits to be derived of the network. Shared financial partnering is specifically defined as an SBDC characteristic. Regional host partners are expected to significantly contribute and actively seek funding to meet and exceed the match requirement to support SBDC services and create lasting positive economic impact. [Note that the term “partnership” does not mean the creation of a legal partnership entity, but rather the creation of a relationship that is characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility for the achievement of common goals.]

Higher-Ed Coordination. Federal regulation requires that services are delivered primarily through institutions of higher education. It is the strategic objective of the Minnesota SBDC Network that every regional center has a direct association with the colleges and universities in its respective region as host organizations, satellite centers, and/or contributing partners.

1.2 Authorizing Legislation

The MnSBDC program is sponsored and partially funded by the SBA and DEED. The MnSBDC program is governed by Section 21 of the Small Business Act 15 U.S.C. § 648, federal regulations 13 C.F.R. Part 130, and Minnesota Statutes 116J.68. Although DEED is responsible for the general management and oversight of the MnSBDC program, a partnership exists between SBA, DEED and the regional host partners for the delivery of assistance to the State's small business community. SBDCs, under Section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. § 648), are required to provide consulting and training to small businesses including working with the SBA to develop and provide informational tools to support business start-ups and existing business expansion. In addition, pursuant to 13 CFR Part 130.340(c), SBA may, from time to time, identify certain Special Emphasis Groups to be targeted for assistance by SBDCs.

Per federal regulation, the Minnesota SBDC State Director is granted the authority and is directly responsible for assigning and achieving the goals and objectives of the program. The Minnesota SBDC State Director is also granted the authority and is directly responsible to oversee the budget of the MnSBDC. The State Director is the primary contact for local direction and for monitoring and overseeing the investments and outcomes of the program.

1.3 Project Dates

Applicants selected in response to this RFP will agree to provide host services for five (5) SBDC program years commencing on January 1, 2026, and ending on December 31, 2030. The Minnesota SBDC State Director and applicants awarded funding will negotiate new budgets, performance goals and objectives prior to the start of each program (calendar) year covered by this RFP.

1.4 Eligibility

Applicants must meet the minimum requirements to be considered for this grant opportunity. Federal law prescribes that SBDCs must primarily utilize institutions of higher education (generally, those meeting the definition prescribed in 20 U.S. Code § 1001) in delivering services to the small business community. Consequently, while there is no presumption that institutions of higher education will automatically be selected as regional SBDC host institutions, all things being equal, **proposals received from institutions of higher education shall receive greater consideration** than those from other qualified organizations.

Other qualified organizations may include non-profit economic development groups, foundations, regional development organizations and other non-profit entities that can demonstrate the ability to fulfill the requirements of this RFP.

1.5 Collaboration

Qualified non-institutions of higher education are **STRONGLY** encouraged to collaborate with institutions of higher education in responding to this RFP. For-profit entities are not eligible for this grant award.

1.6 Benefits of Hosting an SBDC

An increasing number of colleges and universities are aligning their organizational missions to contribute to the economic development and vitality of their surrounding community. Institutions of higher education contribute to economic development in a variety of ways. They:

- apply their teaching capabilities to human capital development;
- use their research expertise for technological development;
- provide service to the larger community via policy development;
- serve entrepreneurs by providing business development assistance and expertise.
- enhanced understanding of business community needs;

- enhanced partnership opportunities with other institutions of higher education and economic development organizations in the region and state;
- collaborative opportunities with strategic public and private sector partners;
- availability of special resources through a partnership arrangement;
- leverage of funding from federal and state resources.

The business development role serves a vital function in economic development. At most institutions of higher education, the primary involvement with economic development is through their schools or colleges of business. Therefore, SBDCs generally are hosted as an affiliate of a college of business, though that is not required.

SBDCs are designed to stimulate business formation and contribute to long-term business success and survivability. In addition to assisting a qualified host organization to achieve its mission in education, the benefits of serving as a regional SBDC host partner include:

- opportunity to provide service outreach directly to the business community;
- opportunity to strengthen life-long learning opportunities for students and faculty as well as small business owners;
- credit for direct and measurable economic impact;
- visibility for the organization within the community;

1.7 Program Funding and Financial Requirements

a. Funding Availability

Funding is for calendar year 2026 with optional renewals for 2027, 2028, 2029 and 2030*

DEED intends to continue to fund the Minnesota MnSBDC Network subject to availability of funds. However, an SBDC may not receive continued funding if there has been a clear showing of poor performance, improper activity affecting the operation and integrity of the MnSBDC, and/or a failure to follow the rules and procedures set forth in the statutes, regulations, policies, et. al., as incorporated into the Grant Contract.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) does not constitute a guarantee or commitment by the State of Minnesota, DEED, MnSBDC, or any of its agents to enter a Grant Contract with any organization. Awards granted may be for an amount different than the requested amount. **Final funding amounts will be dependent on the number of proposals received and awarded, and the amount of federal and state funding available.**

Federal funding is appropriated by Congress through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Section 21 of the Small Business Act sets forth a formula by which funds are to be distributed among the states on a per capita basis, subject to the final amount of Congressional appropriation in any given fiscal year. State funding is appropriated by the Minnesota Legislature through DEED on an annual renewal basis. Based on historical appropriations, total annual funding awarded statewide has ranged from \$1.5 - \$2.3 million. Historical regional SBDC annual awards have ranged from \$150,000 - \$450,000.

All recipients receiving a Grant Contract are required to match award funding at a minimum of a 1:1 ratio with non-federal funds.

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process. If selected, you may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract agreement is fully executed, and the grant has reached its effective date.

Funding	Estimate
Estimated Amount to Grant	\$150,000 - \$450,000 per award per year

Funding	Estimate
Estimated Number of Awards	Nine
Estimated Award Maximum	\$450,000 per year
Estimated Award Minimum	\$150,000 per year

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is a solicitation for proposals to serve as a regional SBDC host institution for federal funds **awarded** during a five-year period commencing January 1, 2026, ending December 31, 2030.

b. Matching

Federal law requires the MnSBDC to provide a one-to-one match of non-federal funds for every dollar of federal SBA funding received. In accordance with state policy, regional SBDC host partners are expected to provide much of this required match.

At least 50% of the total match must be in the form of cash. State grant award funds may be used to meet this cash match requirement. The remaining match may consist of additional cash, approved waived indirect costs, and/or in-kind contributions. However, in-kind contributions must be minimal and accompanied by documentation acceptable to the SBA that verifies their value. Matching funds must be applied at approximately the same rate as federal and state funds to ensure that all accounts are drawn down proportionally.

Each host partner is required to contribute at least 25% of the total cash match directly. This may come from the host's own resources or from non-federal funds secured by the host for the regional SBDC program. These contributions must not originate from the MnSBDC Lead Center. The MnSBDC encourages a shared investment model, including support from external (non-state, non-host) partners. As the SBDC benefits the state's economy broadly, all organizations invested in economic growth are encouraged to contribute to the program. To support this collaborative approach, state guidelines require that the host partner's cash contribution represent no less than 25% and no more than 75% of the total cash match for the regional center—unless a waiver is granted by the MnSBDC State Director.

Host proposals that include cash match contributions exceeding the minimum 50% match requirement and demonstrate a diverse mix of funding sources will receive additional points during the RFP evaluation process, reflecting a strong commitment to the SBDC program.

State policy does **not** allow for the recovery of indirect costs from award funding. Indirect costs may, however, be included toward a regional host partner's total match requirement provided those indirect costs are waived by the host institution and they are supported by a current indirect rate cost agreement, issued by a cognizant federal agency or by a letter issued by the SBA. Host partners are expected to provide the full amount of indirect necessary to operate a regional SBDC center.

Match Funding Example:

Funding Description	Match Funds	Total Funds
Total Federal Funding Award		\$200,000
Total Match Requirement		
Minimum Cash Match Requirement	\$100,000	
Other matching funds - Cash, Waived Indirect Match, In-Kind	<u>\$100,000</u>	
Total Match Requirement		<u>\$200,000</u>
Total Regional SBDC Budget		<u>\$400,000</u>

As noted above, proposals where cash match exceeds 55 percent minimum will be awarded additional RFP scoring points.

RFP proposal additional scoring point tiers:

- Proposals with cash match of 55%-60.99%: 5 extra points
- Proposals with cash match of 61%-75.99%: 10 extra points
- Proposals with cash match of 76%-90.99%: 15 extra points
- Proposals with cash match of 91.0% and greater: 20 extra points

SBDC cash match is also considered to be of high quality when:

- it is provided directly from the host partner's general budget and is above the median for host partner contribution (\$50,000 – in the example above), or
- a contributing third-party pledges funding on a long-term (at least the 3-year service agreement period) basis with a formal letter of commitment.

The availability and commitment of the match contribution must be committed in advance and certified by an official of the host partner organization. Host partners wishing to certify indirect costs as waived indirect match must have a current approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement from its cognizant federal agency, or a de minimis award letter issued by SBA. If such agreement is not in place at the beginning of the grant contract period, under no circumstances may indirect costs be committed as a component of match.

Federal and state grant award funding is to be used exclusively to provide direct services to small businesses, i.e., costs for SBDC management personnel and fringe, travel directly related to service delivery, third-party organizational contracts (contractual), and costs of private consultants. Match funding may be used for administrative overhead (e.g., non-client related) travel, supplies, equipment or other costs.

c. Requirements

Financial support of the MnSBDC program is provided by the SBA, DEED, participating SBDC regional service center host partners and public and private network stakeholders. Federal and state funds are provided on a calendar year basis. Federal funding is allocated to states according to a statutory formula based on population.

The exact funding level of each regional SBDC is subject to federal and state appropriations. Each regional center will be eligible for base level funding each program year. Base level funding shall be based on the general population count, potential client market size (i.e., the number of businesses in a particular region), five-year regional business growth and gross domestic product for region, as determined by census data, generally not to be less than \$150,000 annually. Funds remaining after base level funding allocations shall be awarded at the sole discretion of the Minnesota SBDC State Director.

A chart of accounts must be established by the regional SBDC host institution to record and track SBDC program funding and expenses in the following separately identifiable accounts:

- Federal grant award funds
- State grant award funds (including a potential sub-account of state award carryover funds)
- Matching cash funds
- Matching waived indirect funds
- Matching in-kind funds
- Program income funds

All expenses within these accounts must be reported on each invoice submitted for reimbursement. Complete general ledgers, invoices and back-up documentation will be required at the close of each program cycle. All accounting procedures must conform to generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).

Regional hosts are responsible for initial funding of all costs associated with the program. All grant funding is provided on a reimbursement basis only, so hosts should carefully consider their cash flow requirements while waiting for reimbursement. The MN SBDC prefers regional hosts present invoices to the Lead Center for reimbursement on a quarterly basis, but hosts may provide invoices monthly for approval and reimbursement by the Lead Center. There is no reimbursement of matching funds, waived indirect, or in-kind expenses.

d. Program Income

Program income is defined as income earned by the SBDC that is directly generated by an allowable SBDC supported activity or earned as a result of the award. Program income includes, but is not limited to, fees from training events, the sale of publications and usage or rental fees. **Program income cannot be used as match funding.** Program income may only be used to further the objectives of the regional SBDC program including items such as equipment purchases, professional staff development, attendance at the annual MnSBDC or ASBDC conferences, etc. A separately identifiable account must be established to record and track program income. All income and expenses from this account must be reported on an annual report.

At no time may the balance of Program Income exceed 25% of the regional center's annual budget. Any unused program income (up to 25 percent of the center's total annual budget) may be carried over to subsequent budget periods to further program objectives during that next program period. SBA and DEED reserve the right to recover any or all unexpended program income at the conclusion of its funding agreement without express written consent of MnSBDC State Director.

e. Fees

Federal regulation requires SBDCs to provide consulting services to its small business clients **at no charge to the client**. SBDCs are expected to charge reasonable fees for training programs and certain products to recover direct costs incurred. Such fees are considered Program Income and must be used to expand SBDC services to further organizational strategic objectives. Program Income may not be used as required match funding.

f. Budget Management

Federal regulation provides that once funding (including all matching and program income funds) is included as part of the SBDC budget, and approved through the execution of the grant contract, all funds are considered committed to the SBA program and under the direct control of the Minnesota SBDC State Director. The State Director is ultimately responsible but delegates the authority of control of regional center budgets to the SBDC Regional Directors. No other host personnel are authorized to expend program resources without prior written authorization of the SBDC Regional Director or MnSBDC State Director.

State policy affords the Regional SBDC Director the discretion to transfer funds among budget line items so long as cumulative transfers do not exceed ten percent (10%) of the total approved budget. If cumulative budget transfers are expected to exceed 10% of the total approved budget, prior approval by the MnSBDC State Director is required.

g. Additional Funding

From time to time, the Minnesota SBDC and thus the regional SBDC centers, may have the opportunity to participate in additional funding programs offered by the federal or state government. These opportunities will be negotiated in addition to and by separate contract and will likely include additional or different budgets, performance goals, objectives

and requirements than those outlined above. Those programs will be funded separately from the normal MnSBDC program and will require the regional host's ability to track and account for those funds on a separate basis. Matching funds may or may not be a required part of those additional funding opportunities.

h. Fiscal Management

Finalists in this RFP process may be required to submit financial information as outlined below prior to final selection:

- Grant applicants with annual income of under \$50,000 or who have not been in existence long enough to have a completed IRS Form 990 or audit may be required to submit their most recent board-reviewed financial statements.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of \$50,000 or more and less than \$750,000 may be required to submit their most recent IRS Form 990.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of over \$750,000 may be required to submit their most recent certified financial audit.

Each regional SBDC must maintain complete and accurate records and supporting documentation including properly executed contracts, general ledgers, invoices and other documents sufficient to evidence in proper detail the nature and propriety of the expenditures. All accounting procedures must conform to generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). In compliance with federal and state policy, regional SBDCs must participate in periodic financial and program reviews. Centers should expect that the center will be reviewed at least once during each program year by SBA and by DEED or a designated representative of DEED. Centers should also expect that program performance and compliance with SBA and DEED requirements will be monitored by the state office on a continuous basis.

Financial records must adequately identify the source and application of funds and provide for the comparison of actual expenditures to budgeted amounts by cost category and SBDC line item. Centers must establish and maintain separate accounts sufficient to prevent commingling of grant award, matching and program income funds. Unless otherwise authorized by the State Director, the SBDC's accounting system must account for funds by source (i.e., state, federal, or contributed funds). Each regional center must utilize either an existing in-house, automated financial management system or other appropriate financial management software program to maintain accurate and up-to-date financial records.

1.8 Priorities

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making. [Office of Grants Management \(OGM\) Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities or disparities.

- The grant will serve all small businesses in the State of Minnesota including underserved rural populations.
- Grant outcomes will include the grant metric of the number of rural businesses started as listed in the SCORECARD in section 1.9 Performance Expectations below.

a. SBDC Target Services

Federal legislation outlines a number of the services SBDCs must provide. As defined, SBDCs must offer one-on-one business management consulting, training on business management topics, assistance in securing loans and capital, and provide business information to existing and prospective business owners.

The MnSBDC Strategic Plan outlines the following target services model to serve each segment, based on consulting hours provided:

- Business Plan and Marketing Consultation Services (35%)
 - Assistance in business and marketing plan development, including conducting market research and feasibility analysis, identifying and researching competitors, preparing and analyzing sales and financial projections, and developing marketing tools and strategies. Additional planning efforts include cybersecurity, disaster preparedness, business succession, etc.
- Financial and Capital Access Consultation Services (30%)
 - Assistance in accessing capital (aka loan packaging), including assessing and identifying financial needs and options, preparing pro-forma financial statements, loan applications and support documentation, educating and coaching for financier presentations, and responding to financier inquiries.
- Cash Flow Management Consultation Services (15%)
 - Assistance with cash flow and financial management planning to conduct financial analysis health checks, improving profitability and financial literacy, and building financial management solutions.
- Start-up Assistance Consultation Services (10%)
 - Providing guidance and basic business information in the pursuit of establishing or acquiring a new business.
- Other Consultation Services (10%)
 - Defined by the regional network to meet specific regional and local business needs.

Current federal statute further requires the following additional Statutorily Required Services, which SBA may modify from time to time:

- Technology transfer, research and development (including SBIR/STTR)
- Rural assistance
- Export assistance
- Veterans' assistance – particularly related to base closure/recall of active-duty personnel Regulatory compliance
- Cybersecurity assistance
- IP/USPTO assistance
- Manufacturing outreach
- Specific informational needs

SBDCs are expected to tailor services to the needs of small businesses in their service area. To assist in determining needs, the Minnesota SBDC Network conducts periodic formal needs assessments. The results of these needs assessments, together with the program's strategic plan objectives, help define to whom the network will target its services and what targeted services the network will offer.

Minnesota regional SBDCs are also committed to offering advanced entrepreneurial education programs to meet the needs of the State's small business community and accomplish network strategic goals. Minnesota is fortunate to have numerous public and private sector organizations that provide training opportunities for small businesses (e.g., institutions of higher education, customized training units, et. al.). As such, it is the strategic objective of the MnSBDC to not duplicate or compete with existing efforts, but instead to partner in efforts where it makes strategic sense.

To that end, the MnSBDC has identified several core training program offerings committed to developing and enhancing small business management skills. In the spirit of partnership, all regional SBDCs are expected to sponsor and co-sponsor those programs identified as strategically important to the network.

Finally, the SBA and the MnSBDC periodically identify several special focus areas as priorities. These can be short-term or long-term strategic objectives, and they may vary from year to year.

- Promoting an inclusive vision of entrepreneurship, one that draws entrepreneurs of all demographics, backgrounds and locations into the SBDC for business assistance;
- Providing guidance and training to small business on cybersecurity;
- Business succession planning;
- Providing both new-to-export and ready-to-export training and assistance;
- Assisting veterans including support of the “Boots to Business” and the “Boots to Business: Reboot” training initiatives;
- Assisting small businesses to prepare business continuity/disaster readiness plans;
- Providing counseling and training to rural enterprises and small business owners;
- Providing government contracting and procurement assistance, e.g., 8(a) certification.

b. SBDC Target Markets

Federal legislation prescribes that SBDCs must primarily serve for-profit businesses throughout Minnesota that meet the SBA definition of a “small business” AND aspiring entrepreneurs investigating business ownership. The MnSBDC Strategic Plan describes the intention to focus 70% of its limited, high-end professional business development consultation and educational services to meeting the needs of existing businesses and 30% to meeting the needs of aspiring entrepreneurs. The Strategic Plan outlines the following market segmentation model to serve each segment, based on consulting hours provided:

- Pre-venture Individuals (<30%)
 - Individuals seeking information or assistance necessary to start a business enterprise. This includes individuals who are in the concept stage. These clients are interested in basic information concerning business start-up that enables them to assess their interest in and ability to pursue a new business start-up. These individuals have no sales, no employees and have not secured financing for their new venture.
- Emerging and Established Small Businesses (>55%)
 - Early-stage and traditional small businesses who are seeking assistance to overcome an obstacle or specific issue. These businesses have between 1 and 20 full time employees, including self-employed owners, and have demonstrated the ability to generate sales, have hired employees or have acquired capital for business establishment.
- Mid-Sized Businesses (>10%)
 - Early to late-stage businesses have typically been in business for more than three years and have 20 to 50 full time employees.
- Organizations (<5%)
 - Economic and community development organizations, government agencies, trade associations, educational institutions, faith-based organizations and not-for-profit organizations seeking business development assistance which will result in some form of economic impact (job creation, etc.) or contribute to the improvement of the community.

1.9 Performance Expectations

The SBA and MnSBDC are focused on strategic planning, performance and proven results as measured by each SBDC’s achievement of short- and long-term outputs and outcomes. SBA has currently identified the following performance goals for the SBDC program:

- Number of unique clients served;
- Number of new businesses created;
- Number of new rural businesses created;*
- Amount of capital infusion transactions, which includes SBA loans, non-SBA loans and equity investment.

*This performance goal changes based on market needs and SBA guidance.

The MnSBDC will use the additional following measurements that are expected to result in the outcomes the SBA desires:

- Number of Long-Term Clients (clients who receive 5 or more hours of counseling (contact and preparation time) in a single year);
- Number of jobs created or retained;
- Increased sales revenue and taxes generated;
- Dollar amount of capital infusion, which includes SBA loans, non-SBA loans and equity investment.

Regional performance measures are specified in the DEED grant contract and tracked and reported through a “balanced scorecard tool” designed to help SBDCs to progress toward the accomplishment of their SBA and SBDC goals, and additional metrics in the strategic plan.

All economic impacts reported by the SBDC are required to be substantiated by written verification from the client. The verification must clearly indicate that the metric occurred or was achieved and that the SBDC played a significant role in the achievement of the metric. Forms have been developed to assist consultants in collecting this validation and attribution from clients, but this may also be collected electronically by email and through surveys.

Detailed notes regarding the consulting services provided, training events, economic impact and other milestones achieved, as well as client validation and attribution are required to be documented through MnSBDC’s centralized electronic data collection system (currently “Neoserra”). Data integrity, the verification and validation of performance results, and the ability to attest to the quality and impact of the program through Neoserra are MnSBDC priorities.

The Scorecard example below represents the performance outputs and outcome goals regional SBDCs are expected to accomplish based on various funding award levels (note these are estimates only – SBA goals change annually):

Minnesota SBDC Scorecard Example (2025):

	Number of Unique Clients	Number of Businesses Started	Number of Capital Transactions	Number of Rural Businesses Started*
Minnesota SBDC Network Goals	4,497	216	653	130
Typical Range per/center	458-687	22-33	66-100	13-20

* Annual metric, for the number of rural businesses started, may change each year

Throughout this RFP document, the terms “Minnesota SBDC” or “MnSBDC” will generally refer to the statewide network of all Minnesota SBDC offices, currently comprised of the Lead Center and 9 regional SBDC centers. The term “SBDC” will generally refer to a specific regional center. The use of these terms is not absolute and not legal or technical in nature, but merely to provide clarification.

1.10 Selection Criteria and Weight

The review committee will be reviewing each applicant on a 100-point scale.

The scoring factors and weight that applications will be judged are based on the following categories: Experience, Capacity, Personnel, and Delivery. DEED will give greater consideration to proposals which demonstrate the following criteria:

- One where the applicant is an institution of higher education;
- Past and continuing ability to provide professional business consulting and education to small business enterprises in MnSBDC core competency areas;
- Commitment of long-term host partner and community investment exceeding minimum match requirements;
- Ability to leverage host partner assets, including faculty, students and technology in service delivery;
- High allocation of financial resources dedicated toward direct client services;
- Effective and documented linkages with other related business assistance providers, public and private, in the region and state;
- Strong, documented support including financial support from local and area business organizations, chambers of commerce, and local and regional economic development organizations and units of local government;
- Quality center locations and facilities that meet the needs of service delivery and are easily accessible, identifiable, and located in a convenient business-like setting;
- Infrastructure, partnership and strategy to cover geographical area served;
- Credentials of proposed regional director, professional and paraprofessional personnel and/or access to qualified professional business consulting and other contractors;
- Ability to commence operations on January 1, 2026; and
- Overall responsiveness, adherence and compliance with all RFP requirements.

Proposals will be reviewed for sufficiency in meeting RFP requirements. DEED, or its representative, may ask applicants for clarification on the technical and cost aspects of proposals.

MnSBDC program has the following weighted criteria in measurable outcomes and in reaching diverse populations:

1. **Experience** - Nature, level, and success of the organization's past and current experience in direct service delivery to the kinds of clients noted in the RFP's Program Overview (maximum 25 points).
2. **Capacity** - Evidence of the organization's continuing professional and financial capacity to deliver the kinds of services and to engage other organizations in service delivery. In addition, the applicant must demonstrate the ability to meet the Program and Operation Requirements to deliver services at locations and times convenient for proposed clients. (maximum 30 points).
3. **Personnel** - Qualifications of personnel proposed to deliver services (maximum 20 points).
4. **Delivery** - Evidence of the organization's ability to meet the Performance Expectations, including the ability to consistently raise the match funds required to support their annual budget. (maximum 25 points)

1.11 Questions and Technical Assistance

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by email to andrew.donahue@state.mn.us. Questions and answers will be posted within five business days of receipt at <https://mn.gov/deed/about/contracts/open-rfp.jsp>.

All questions and other communications concerning this RFP must be submitted before 4:30 PM (C.S.T.), Wednesday, September 10, 2025. Information, communication and responses pursuant to this RFP will be considered public information under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13.

Section 2: Request for Proposals Submission

Applications must be received no later than 4:30pm Central Time, on Monday, October 13, 2025. Late applications will not be accepted.

2.1 Proposal Submission Details

- Quantity: One digital signed copy sent to deed.mnsbdc@state.mn.us with CC to andrew.donahue@state.mn.us.
- Proposal Deadline: **Proposals are due by 4:30 P.M. C.S.T. Monday, October 13, 2025**
- Letters of Intent: **Entities planning to submit a proposal must first submit a letter of intent to do so, no later than 4:30 P.M. C.S.T, Wednesday, September 10, 2025. Proposal submissions without the required letter of intent submitted by the September 10, 2025, deadline will not be considered.**

Incomplete applications will be rejected and not evaluated. Applications must include all required application materials, including attachments. Do not provide any materials that are not requested in this RFP, as such materials will not be considered nor evaluated.

DEED reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet these requirements.

By submitting an application, each applicant warrants that the information provided is true, correct, and reliable for purposes of evaluation for potential grant award. The submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the award, as well as subject the applicant to suspension or debarment proceedings and other remedies available by law.

All costs incurred in responding to this RFP will be borne by the applicant.

2.2 Application Content and Required Forms

You must submit a Letter of Intent and a proposal consisting of the following eight (8) components in the following in order for the application to be considered complete.

- Proposal Coversheet and Match Certification
- Table of Contents
- Executive Summary
- Program and Operation Requirements
- Program Goals
- Sources of Funding
- Budget Summary
- Attachments, including resumes, etc.

Required Attachments to the proposal:

1. Exhibit A: Capacity Responses – **This exhibit acts as the Letter of Intent and must be submitted no later than 4:30 pm Central Time, Wednesday September 10, 2025.**
2. Exhibit B: Certification that the entity is not suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government
3. Exhibit C: Evidence of Good Standing-for Non-Profits only
4. Exhibit D: Nonprofit grantee as applicable

5. Exhibit E: Certification that no current principals have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years

2.3 Proposal Coversheet and Match Certification

Applicant Information

Name of Applicant Organization _____

Mailing Address (include 9-digit zip) _____

Contact Person's Name _____

Contact Person's Phone number _____ Contact Person's E-mail Address _____

Application

The above-named Applicant Organization hereby submits this proposal to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) for the purpose of serving as a regional Minnesota Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for the period January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2030. The Applicant Organization understands that final decisions will be made by DEED and are subject to the availability of funds and final approval of an application made by DEED to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). If accepted as a regional SBDC, and upon approval of the application by SBA, the Applicant Organization agrees to:

- Diligently work toward accomplishment of strategic outcome and performance goals aimed at significantly improving overall performance, economic impact and stakeholder return-on investment and such additional goals as are determined during the annual planning process;
- Comply with reporting requirements in a timely manner, including but not limited to quarterly milestone, performance, and financial reports, including timely submission of invoices; and
- Agree to be contractually bound by the terms of an annual grant contract for service delivery, program administration, reporting, and compliance with the requirements of the SBDC program.

Signature of Authorized Official _____ Date _____

Print Name and Title _____

Certification of Cash Match

As the authorized representative of the Applicant Organization, I hereby certify that the proposed Small Business Development Center program budget as set forth in this proposal contains actual cash dollars from sources other than the federal government, in the amount and from the sources listed below.

Sources of Cash Match (list individually, add attachment if necessary)	Amount

Sources of Cash Match (list individually, add attachment if necessary)	Amount
Total (must match budgeted cash match funds show on Line 2, Sources of Funding – Section VI for entire 5-year term)	

Signature of Authorized Official_____ Date_____

Print Name and Title_____

2.4 Proposal Table of Contents

Indicate all headings and subheadings with appropriate page numbers. List all attachments by title.

2.5 Executive Summary

Prepare a one to five-page executive summary which provides an overview of the host partner organization and addresses the major points of this RFP, including but not limited to:

- The applicant's experience in providing small business consulting and/or training programs on a region-wide basis;
- Service strategy as related to providing one-on-one consulting to existing small businesses;
- Description of linkages with host partner's other economic development efforts and other related business assistance providers (public and private);
- Description of outside support from local and area business organizations, chambers of commerce, local and regional economic development organizations and local units of government;
- Description of the organization's experience and success in securing contributed resources, including both financial and time contributions (i.e., cash and in-kind support);
- Strategy on covering the greatest extent of geographical coverage of the specified region;
- Description of the organization's experience in assessing small business needs and designing programs that respond to those needs. Describe the success of any such programs;
- Description of any unique characteristics of the organization, such as its organizational structure or area served that is important to understanding and evaluating the proposal (e.g., size and/or population of service area, distribution of population, business demographic, geography, etc.);
- New regional host partners may receive a 2026 MnSBDC Launch Award to assist in the start-up of a new regional SBDC center to prepare for active operation before January 1, 2026, subject to availability of funding. If desired, please include a request for the Launch Award in your proposal and specify how these funds will be utilized. Please note these funds are not assured and if available, are limited to \$15,000 or less.

2.6 Program and Operation Requirements

Prepare a response to the program and operation requirements included in this RFP, including but not limited to:

a. Key Leadership

- Describe the proposed reporting relationship of the SBDC Regional Director, where the SBDC is planned to be placed within host partner organization, and provide a copy of the host partner's organizational chart.
- Provide the name, title, email address and telephone numbers for the following:
 - A. The SBDC Regional Director (if known)
 - B. The individual to whom the SBDC regional director will directly report,
 - C. Others in the chain of command above the SBDC regional director (add additional lines as needed)
 - D. The chief administrator of the host organization.

Name (A):_____ **Title:**_____

Email Address:_____ **Telephone:**_____

Mailing Address: _____ **City**_____ **State**_____ **Zip**_____

Name (B):_____ **Title:**_____

Email Address:_____ **Telephone:**_____

Mailing Address: _____ **City**_____ **State**_____ **Zip**_____

Name (C):_____ **Title:**_____

Email Address:_____ **Telephone:**_____

Mailing Address: _____ **City**_____ **State**_____ **Zip**_____

Name (D):_____ **Title:**_____

Email Address:_____ **Telephone:**_____

Mailing Address: _____ **City**_____ **State**_____ **Zip**_____

b. Service Area

Identify the region that will be served, including a listing of all counties in the region. If regional boundaries do not conform to existing boundaries explain the reason for the variance. Describe the proposed regional network structure which will assure delivery of services throughout the proposed service area. Refer to the map showing the MnSBDC regional boundaries in VIII.A. below.

c. Offices and Accessibility

Identify the location and address of the regional center and all proposed satellite and outreach locations. Provide a description of all proposed service centers, including counseling and training rooms, parking arrangements and facility accessibility. Provide pictures if appropriate. Identify any electronic communication technologies, including but not limited to telephones, e-mail, or audio, video or web conferencing available to the centers to deliver services.

d. Hours and Holidays

Identify the operating hours of all proposed service centers. Identify the holidays the applicant organization is normally closed for business.

e. Staffing

Identify the proposed individual who will serve as the center Regional Director and provide a resume that clearly documents his or her qualifications and current or proposed compensation. If no individual is in place at the present time, list the expected qualifications and level of compensation planned to hire the most qualified individual. [Note: The proposed Regional Director must be approved by the MnSBDC State Director prior to hiring and must be in place by January 1, 2026. The Regional Director must be experienced in administering a geographically dispersed business assistance program, delivering and arranging for the delivery of business consulting and training, and developing regional strategic partnerships.]

Describe the proposed staffing structure of the regional network. If the center is staffed by employee consultants, identify the qualifications and level of compensation planned to hire the most qualified individuals. If the center plans to

SBDC Grant Request for Proposal

utilize independent contract consultants describe how the center plans to acquire consultants and the expected hourly rate of compensation for services.

If known, identify the Regional Associate Regional Director/Program Coordinator.

Provide resumes of the Regional Director, Regional Associate Regional Director/Program Coordinator and all Professional Business Consultants.

f. Staff Development

Provide an outline of a proposed professional development plan for professional staff which contributes to continuous learning and aligns with the MnSBDC's overall strategic objectives (note the 40-hour annual professional development requirement in Sec. 2.11).

g. Marketing and Identity

Provide an outline of the plans to market services to clients and key stakeholders. Provide the website domain that the SBDC will be housed and marketed under (Note: It is recommended to have a separate SBDC domain for accessibility and convenience).

h. Resources

Describe any business library or resource materials available to center personnel and for use by business clients. Provide lists of regional business assistance resources, including governmental, education and private sector resources to which business clients may be referred.

i. Fiscal Management

Describe the fiscal procedures and controls of the applicant organization. Identify staff likely to be responsible for the reconciliation and maintenance of general ledgers for the center. Identify the accounting system used by the applicant organization.

j. Coordination/Cooperation

Describe how the regional center will provide coordinated services to the entire service area. Identify location and number of satellite offices, relationships with other institutions, programs, groups or associations that will be used to deliver consulting or training services.

2.7 Program Goals

Prepare a response to the strategic program goals included in this RFP, including but not limited to:

a. Consulting

Describe the strategies of how the regional center plans to serve the network's target markets and deliver core services. Based on its planned strategies, describe how the center will accomplish appropriate program goals. Indicate the goals the center will accomplish in accordance with the level of award funding requested. See the example Scorecard in Section 1.11 for an example of this information. (If you are a current SBDC center, you may use your current Minnesota SBDC Scorecard for this purpose.)

b. Training

Describe how the regional center plans to assess and respond to the educational training needs of its small business community and how the center will accomplish program goals.

c. Students

Describe how the center plans to integrate the use of students in the delivery of SBDC services for the betterment of business clients, students and host partners. Describe the benefit to center, client, student and host partner organization.

d. Technology

Describe, in detail, how the center could acquire and integrate technology core competencies in service delivery. Describe the human and fiscal resources necessary to accomplish full integration.

2.8 Sources of Funding

Applicants must identify planned or expected resources for matching funding. In keeping with the Minnesota SBDC Network diversified funding strategy, proposals that demonstrate long-term contribution commitments from multiple resources and where cash match exceeds the required minimum amount shall receive additional RFP scoring points. Attach letters of support if appropriate.

Using the format below, describe in detail the nature (e.g., cash, in-kind, indirect costs) and source(s) of matching contributions the applicant proposes to provide for each of the 5 years covered by this RFP. While this chart represents a commitment on the part of the applicant to provide funding for 5 years, remember that actual program budgets will be negotiated annually with DEED based on available funding. A separate document is required to be completed with the information below. Please recreate this document using suitable software such as Microsoft Excel.

	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Award Funds Requested	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

Cash Match

Source	Amount	Amount	Amount	Amount	Amount
Host partner organization	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
1	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
2	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
3	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
4	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
5	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
6	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
7	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total Cash Match	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

In-Kind Match

Source	Amount	Amount	Amount	Amount	Amount
1	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
2	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
3	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
4	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
5	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
6	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total In-Kind Match	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Waived Indirect Match	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total Program Funding	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

Total Program Funding = Award Funds Requested + Total Cash Match + Total In-Kind Match + Waived Indirect Match

2.9 Budget Summary

The proposed budget summary provides the applicant's best estimate of expenditure allocation required to operate the SBDC program annually, based on the requested amount (Award Funds Requested). The budget below is for 2026 only and is divided into four cost categories: award funding, committed cash, in-kind and waived indirect match. The budget must demonstrate sufficient cash and non-cash expenditures to meet the minimum match requirements. Additional RFP scoring points will be awarded to those applicants whose cash match exceeds the required 55 percent minimum.

Using the format below, identify the resources for each of the cost categories and line items. The cost category totals must match the totals included on the Sources of Funding summary in Section VI. However, it is necessary to complete this exercise only for Program Year 2026 since actual budgets are negotiated annually.

It is DEED's intention to maximize the funds awarded under the program for the direct costs of providing counseling to small businesses, i.e., costs of consulting personnel and fringe, travel directly related to service delivery, third-party organizational contracts (contractual) and costs of private consultants. Matching contributions may be used for administrative overhead (e.g., non-client related travel, supplies, equipment or other direct) and indirect costs. A separate document is required to be completed with the information below. Please recreate this document using suitable software such as Microsoft Excel.

Program Year: _____ 2026

Categories	Award Funds Requested	Cash Match	In-Kind Match	Waived Indirect Match	Total
Personnel	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Fringe Benefits	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Travel	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Equipment	N/A	\$	\$	\$	\$
Supplies	N/A	\$	\$	\$	\$
Contractual					
Consultant					
Other Direct	N/A				
Total Direct Costs (Sum of all categories above)					
Waived Indirect Costs	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Grand Total					

2.10 Attachments

- Exhibit A: Capacity Responses: – This exhibit acts as the Letter of Intent and must be submitted no later than 4:30 pm Central Time, Wednesday September 10, 2025.
- Exhibit B: Certification that the entity is not suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government
- Exhibit C: Evidence of Good Standing-for Non-Profits only
- Exhibit D: Nonprofit grantee as applicable
- Exhibit E: Certification that no current principals have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years

2.11 Sample Position Descriptions

The Position Descriptions that follow are for reference purposes only and are designed to provide an example of each position included in a typical SBDC Regional Service Center. Each host has the authority to determine the actual position descriptions within their own Regional Centers.

a. SBDC Regional Center Director

Position Description

I. STRUCTURE

A. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT:

The Minnesota Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network is a program sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and sponsoring host organizations and partners. The Minnesota SBDC is part of a nationwide network of SBDC offices organized as the Association of SBDCs (ASBDC) known as America's SBDC. The primary mission of the Minnesota SBDC is to support economic development in the state by providing technical assistance (professional business consultation and education) in the start-up, successful operation and expansion of small businesses within the state's small business community. In carrying out its mission, the SBDC cooperates with and fully utilizes a broad range of partners, programs and resources in the state, but its primary attention is focused on leveraging the management and technical assistance resources of sponsoring regional partners (primarily institutions of higher education) and state supported resources.

B. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF POSITION:

This executive level position has day-to-day management responsibility for a SBDC Regional Center serving a large multi-county region. There are several (currently 9) regional centers that comprise the statewide SBDC Network. Regional center management may include responsibility for more than one office (e.g., satellite or outreach locations) within the region and may also include special program operational responsibilities. The Regional Director will direct and manage the delivery of SBDC services, including consulting, training/education, research and technical assistance services, and assistance in securing necessary business capital to existing small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs. This position will be autonomous and will manage an increasing resource base (both staff and budget). The regional director is typically an employee of the regional host institution and reports formally to the host institution and informally to the Minnesota SBDC State Director.

C. WORK SCHEDULE:

Regional Directors are expected to devote full-time work to the SBDC and a normal 40-hour week work schedule is expected. Occasional weekend, early morning and evening work hours, however, may be necessary to adequately serve the public and fulfill the SBDC's mission.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES:

1. Administration: (50% of work time) The Regional Director is responsible for administration of the Regional Center's operation.

Specific duties include:

- a. Negotiating and providing oversight of the annual grant to be established with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Department for the delivery of the SBDC program to the regional area;
- b. Developing and implementing a strategic plan that works in concert with the statewide SBDC strategic plan and other SBDC regions to accomplish specified regional and statewide objectives;
- c. Developing the Regional Center's operational budget and managing the budget throughout the delivery process;

- d. Supervising Regional Center personnel, both staff and consultants (some of whom may be independent contractors);
- e. Developing internal and external resources, including financial resources, to accomplish program objectives;
- f. Nurturing the relationship between the regional host institution and the Lead Center host institution. Attending management and other meetings as necessary, including travel throughout the state and sometimes nationally;
- g. Establishing linkages with local small business assistance providers, stakeholders, legislative and elected officials, the SBA and small businesses within the region;
- h. Planning and coordination of training and outreach programs and activities;
- i. Oversight of client consulting records in the SBDC management information system. Regularly reviewing activity, performance and management reports for consultants and the center;
- j. Developing and implementing professional development plans for staff and consultants;
- k. Providing timely and accurate data, financial information and reports to the Lead Center;
- l. Knowing and observing the program requirements as established in state and federal law, the SBDC Operations manual, the Code of Conduct and all other program policies and requirements;
- m. Evaluating program effectiveness and implementing changes for continuous improvement;
- n. Maintaining a current reference library and data;

2. Professional Business Consultation: (Not more than 10% of work time)

The SBDC Regional Director is responsible for managing the consultation activities of the Regional Center. Some direct consulting by the Regional Director is expected but this should not exceed established limits so as not to interfere with other management responsibilities. Consulting responsibility includes direct client contact in one-on-one meetings and through telephone, written and electronic communications. It also includes substantial preparation time, which must be committed to adequately research, prepare materials and recommend courses of action to clients who are consulted.

Much of the work is technically based and requires attention to detail. Absolute confidentiality of client information is required. Regional Directors must have thorough knowledge of the business development process including strategic planning, business plans, marketing plans, cash flow and financial analysis, small business lending, Internet, ecommerce and social media, and entrepreneurial support.

Specific duties include:

- a. Meeting with clients to determine their needs and abilities;
 - b. Undertaking research and developing materials necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of clients;
 - c. Providing advice and technical assistance as needed.
3. Marketing and Outreach: (35% of work time) The Regional Director will have lead responsibilities for promoting the SBDC throughout the multi-country area served by that center. This includes representing the SBDC and host institution at meetings and conferences, making contacts with potential sources of referrals and with prospective groups of clients and developing promotional materials, including internet and social media programs.

Specific duties include:

- a. Making public appearances representing both the SBDC and host institution;
- b. Developing program marketing plans in concert with the SBDC Lead Center (State Director's) office to effectively market the services of the SBDC throughout the region and implementing these plans;
- c. Developing promotional materials in print and electronic form.

4. Training: (5% of work time) The Regional Director will design and deliver training programs sponsored by the SBDC within the region served.

Specific duties include:

- a. Planning and marketing seminars and conferences;
- b. Participating in training events as an instructor or moderator as appropriate;
- c. Evaluating the effectiveness of training events;
- d. Providing documentation and reports as required.

III. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES AND TRAINING & EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS:

A. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES:

1. Broad general knowledge of the principles and practice of small business including financial statements, balance sheet, profit and loss, and cash flow statements;
2. Excellent interpersonal, written and verbal communication and public speaking skills;
3. Strong organizational, budgetary and planning skills to manage the SBDC budget and resource development;
4. Ability to handle multiple assignments in a stress-filled, fast-paced environment, organize work and establish priorities with minimal supervision;
5. Knowledge of computer software, Internet, social media and programs related to cash flow analysis, and business development;
6. Ability to travel often within the region and state and occasionally nationally.
7. Knowledge of human resources principles and practice.

B. REQUIRED MINIMUM TRAINING:

1. Bachelor's degree in business administration, finance, or other related field. Master's degree preferred.
2. Five years of relevant work experience in business management, finance or accounting.
3. Knowledge of SBA loan programs, small business lending practices and gap financing programs.

C. LICENSE OR CERTIFICATION REQUIRED BY STATUTE OR REGULATION:

None required, however the incumbent in this position is expected to meet the Core Competency consulting requirements adopted by the Association of Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC) and by the Minnesota SBDC.

b. SBDC Regional Center Associate Director/Program Coordinator

Position Description

I. STRUCTURE

A. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT:

The Minnesota Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network is a program sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and sponsoring host organizations and partners. The Minnesota SBDC is part of a nationwide network of SBDC offices organized as the Association of SBDCs (ASBDC) known as America's SBDC. The primary mission of the Minnesota SBDC is to support economic development in the state by providing technical assistance (professional business consultation and education) in the start-up, successful operation and expansion of small businesses within the state's small business community. In carrying out its mission, the SBDC cooperates with and fully utilizes a broad range of partners, programs and resources in the state, but its primary attention is focused on leveraging the management and technical assistance resources of sponsoring regional partners (primarily institutions of higher education) and state supported resources.

B. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF POSITION:

This position can function as a professional Associate Regional Director (ARD) or as an administrative Program Coordinator (PC) level position, depending on the needs of the SBDC Regional Center. This ARD/PC position has the responsibility of supporting the Regional SBDC Director by carrying out administrative, reporting and limited financial work for an SBDC Regional Center serving a large multi-county region. There are several (currently 9) regional centers that comprise the statewide SBDC Network. Regional center management may include responsibility for more than one office (e.g., satellite or outreach locations) within the region and may also include special program operational responsibilities. The ARD/PC is typically an employee of the regional host institution and reports formally to the host institution and informally to the SBDC Regional Center Director.

C. WORK SCHEDULE:

ARD/PCs may be either full- or part-time depending on the needs of the SBDC Regional Center. Occasional weekend, early morning and evening work hours, however, may be necessary to adequately serve the public and fulfill the SBDC's mission.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES:

The ARD/PC is responsible for administration of operations within the Regional Center.

1. Provide technical and administrative support for staff and projects of the SBDC Regional Center: (45% of work time)

Specific duties include:

- a. Provide technical assistance to staff and clients and respond to inquiries in written or verbal format with program information, instructions and guidance on general and technical aspects of the program;
- b. Monitor program activities and contracts. Examine, process and track payables/receivables, invoices, expenses and acquisitions to ensure accuracy and prompt payment;
- c. Coordinate logistics for the Regional Director, staff, training events and meetings throughout the region; including arranging travel and meeting logistics, taking and distributing minutes, developing

- and maintaining spreadsheets, databases, PowerPoint presentations, and confidential correspondence;
 - d. Maintain frequent contact with the lead center MnSBDC Executive Administrative Assistant and other Lead Center staff and other ARD/PC personnel throughout the Minnesota SBDC network to assure consistency of practices throughout the network;
 - e. Perform general clerical duties including handling phone lines, voicemail, incoming and outgoing mail, internet inquiries, managing physical and electronic filing systems, etc.; including some communications that will require discretion and confidentiality;
 - f. Providing timely and accurate reports to the Regional Director, Lead Center and regional host institution;
 - g. Take part in SBDC leadership meetings as directed by the Regional Director and provide input for the state and regional strategic plan, marketing plan and operational plan;
 - h. Knowing and observing the program requirements as established in state and federal law, the SBDC Operations manual, the Code of Conduct and all other program policies and requirements;
 - i. Maintaining a current reference library and data.
2. Provide regional administration of the SBDC and various other databases: (40% of work time)

Specific duties include:

- a. Serve as intake coordinator for SBDC clients at the Regional Service Center. This includes timely review of the request for services completed by the client, assigning a qualified consultant who meets the needs of the client and assisting both clients and consultants with operating functions of the MnSBDC database;
 - b. Provide support and maintenance for the electronic SBDC database system to ensure complete and correct information is maintained that complies with SBDC requirements;
 - c. Regularly review activity, compile performance and management reports for consultants and the center including providing training and instruction to consultants on correctly entering information into the database;
 - d. Run reports as necessary to support the organization in its efforts to communicate with stakeholders and the legislature;
3. Design and maintain program promotional materials and coordinate effective communication of services: (15% of work time)

Specific duties include:

- a. Collaborate with the Regional Director and State Lead Center office to develop and execute an effective marketing communications plan (writing weekly updates, newsletters, website content, email blasts, social media posts, press releases, reports, and creating and maintaining instructional informational and marketing documents);
- b. Serve as the regional coordinator in the completion of the SBDC annual report, including obtaining release of information forms signed by the client, photographs and writing and editing success stories;
- c. Serve as the regional coordinator in the completion of the SBDC client satisfaction and other surveys;
- d. Identify and coordinate needed updates or modifications to website, program and marketing materials, and manage the inventory of printed informational materials.

III. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES AND TRAINING & EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS:

A. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES:

1. Broad general knowledge of the principles and practice of small business;
2. Excellent interpersonal, written and verbal communication and public speaking skills;
3. Excellent customer service skills;
4. Analytic and deductive reasoning necessary to manage databases and spreadsheets, modify spreadsheets calculations, sort and extract data, develop forms and charts;
5. Ability to handle multiple assignments in a stress-filled, fast-paced environment, organize work and establish priorities with minimal supervision;
6. Knowledge of or the ability to learn principles of accounting in SWIFT and Fiscal Services procedures and regulations to collect payments and reconcile budgets;
7. Must be well versed with Microsoft Word, Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Office Access, Excel, Power Point and client management information systems. Experience with complex customer relationship management (CRM) tracking/database software is highly desired. Knowledge of specialized software, including social networking websites is desired (Facebook, You Tube, LinkedIn, etc.).

B. REQUIRED MINIMUM TRAINING:

Two years of relevant work experience in business-related field. Bachelor's degree preferred.

C. LICENSE OR CERTIFICATION REQUIRED BY STATUTE OR REGULATION:

None required.

c. SBDC Professional Business Consultant

Position Description

I. STRUCTURE

A. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT:

The Minnesota Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network is a program sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and sponsoring host organizations and partners. The Minnesota SBDC is part of a nationwide network of SBDC offices organized as the Association of SBDCs (ASBDC) known as America's SBDC. The primary mission of the Minnesota SBDC is to support economic development in the state by providing technical assistance (professional business consultation and education) in the start-up, successful operation and expansion of small businesses within the state's small business community. In carrying out its mission, the SBDC cooperates with and fully utilizes a broad range of partners, programs and resources in the state, but its primary attention is focused on leveraging the management and technical assistance resources of sponsoring regional partners (primarily institutions of higher education) and state supported resources.

B. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF POSITION:

This professional level position has day-to-day responsibility for providing business consultation services to clients from a SBDC Regional Center serving a large multi-county region. There are several (currently 9) regional centers that comprise the statewide SBDC Network. A Professional Business Consultant (PBC) may either be an employee of the regional host institution and thereby will typically serve only one SBDC Regional Service Center, or a PBC may be an independent contractor and may serve more than one SBDC Regional Service Center. The PBC will provide the bulk of the delivery of SBDC services to individual clients. The work will include a variety of one-on-one confidential consulting concerning the formation, management, financing or operation of a small business enterprise; training/education; research and technical assistance services; and assistance in securing necessary business capital to existing small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs. Some PBCs are considered generalists that may provide counseling in all those areas, while others may specialize only in specific areas such as accounting, marketing, etc. PBCs typically conduct formal training sessions for the Regional Service Center. This position will be autonomous and typically reports formally to the host institution through the Regional Center Director.

C. WORK SCHEDULE:

Regional SBDC Directors will determine the amount of work for Professional Business Consultants based upon demand for services and budget available to meet that demand. Independent consultants are free to determine their own schedule necessary to accomplish the task. Most work is accomplished during normal business hours, however, occasional weekend, early morning and evening work hours may be necessary to adequately serve the public and fulfill the SBDC's mission.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES:

The SBDC Professional Business Consultant responsibility includes direct client contact in one-on-one meetings and through telephone, written and electronic communications. It also includes substantial preparation time, which must be committed to adequately research, prepare materials and recommend courses of action to clients who are consulted. Some travel may be required to meet with clients at their place of business.

Much of the work is technically based and requires superb attention to detail. Absolute confidentiality of client information is required, as mandated by federal statute. PBCs must have thorough knowledge of the business development process including strategic planning, business plans, marketing plans, cash flow and financial analysis, SBDC Grant Request for Proposal

small business lending, Internet, ecommerce and social media, and entrepreneurial support. PBCs are expected to meet the Core Competencies outlined in the SBDC Operations Manual.

1. Professional Business Consultation: (80% of work time)

Specific duties include:

- a. Meeting with clients to determine their needs and abilities, including assessing a start-up client's readiness to begin a business venture;
- b. Undertaking research and developing materials necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of clients;
- c. Identify and convey to the client the basic steps and considerations for starting or buying a business or franchise and selling, transferring or liquidating a business or franchise. Recommend steps that will result in improvement of profitability, increased savings and enhanced efficiencies of an existing business;
- d. Providing advice and technical assistance as needed including assistance in developing and implementing a business plan, strategic plan, marketing plan, cybersecurity plan, disaster preparedness plan and others as needed;
- e. Assessing the financial health of the client's business and help to increase the client's financial literacy regarding the operation and health of their company using financial tools and data including profit and loss statements, balance sheets, cash flow analysis, etc.;
- f. Develop knowledge of lending programs and maintain relationships with sources of small business capital including SBA, federal, state and local banks, venture capital, angel funding, equity and reward crowdfunding, local, state and federal economic development programs, etc.;
- g. Assist in the preparation of financial pro-formas and financial forecast tools necessary and then assist the client to obtain the required capital for the client's business from those traditional and non-traditional lending sources;
- h. Providing accurate, complete and timely input of consulting activities, notes, outcomes and other pertinent data into the SBDC database. This includes tracking direct consulting time, preparation time and travel time invested by the PBC;
- i. Obtaining written verification from the client for all reported economic impacts and attribution that the outcome was a direct result of services provided by the PBC and the SBDC and entering that validation into the SBDC database;
- j. Knowing and observing the program requirements as established in state and federal law, the SBDC Operations manual, the Code of Conduct and all other program policies and requirements;

2. Administration: (15% of work time) The SBDC Professional Business Consultant is responsible for assisting in the effective administration of the Regional Center's operation.

Specific duties include:

- a. Provide timely invoices for payment of services to the Regional Center in accordance with prescribed practices;
- b. Regularly reviewing activity, performance and management reports with the Regional Director or their delegate;
- c. Attending management and other meetings as necessary, including travel throughout the region, state and sometimes nationally;
- d. Establishing linkages with local small business assistance providers, lenders, stakeholders, legislative and elected officials, the SBA and small businesses within the region;

- e. Developing and implementing a personal plan to meet the minimum 40-hour annual professional development requirement for SBDC consultants, including attendance at the state Knowledge Exchange Program, national ASBDC Fall Conference and other professional development opportunities.
3. Training: (5% of work time) Assist the Regional Director with the design and delivery of training programs sponsored by the SBDC within the region served.

Specific duties include:

- a. Assist in planning training seminars and conferences;
- b. Participating in training events as an instructor, subject matter expert or moderator as appropriate;
- c. Evaluating the effectiveness of training events;
- d. Providing documentation and reports as required.

III. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES AND TRAINING & EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS:

A. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES:

1. Broad general knowledge of the principles and practice of small business including financial statements, balance sheet, profit and loss, and cash flow statements;
2. Excellent interpersonal, written and verbal communication and public speaking skills;
3. Strong organizational, budgetary and planning skills to manage the SBDC budget and resource development;
4. Ability to handle multiple assignments in a stress-filled, fast-paced environment, organize work and establish priorities with minimal supervision;
5. Knowledge of federal, state and local government regulations affecting small business and programs designed to assist small businesses;
6. Knowledge of computer software, Internet, social media and programs related to cash flow analysis, and business development;
7. Ability to travel often within the region and state and occasionally nationally;
8. Knowledge of human resources principles and practice.

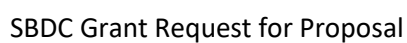
B. REQUIRED MINIMUM TRAINING:

1. Bachelor's degree in business administration, finance, or other related field. Master's degree preferred.
2. Five years of relevant work experience in business management, finance or accounting.
3. Knowledge of SBA loan programs, small business lending practices and gap financing programs.

C. LICENSE OR CERTIFICATION REQUIRED BY STATUTE OR REGULATION:

None required, however the incumbent in this position is expected to meet the Core Competency consulting requirements adopted by the Association of Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC) and by the Minnesota SBDC. PBCs are encouraged to seek out and obtain those certifications that will be of benefit in assisting small business clients, including Certified Business Advisor, Certified Global Business Professional, QuickBooks Certification, Certified Exit Planning Advisor and a host of other certification programs.

Small Business Development Centers Regions



Section 3: Request For Proposals Application Review Process

3.1 Review Process

Awards will be allocated through a competitive process with review by a committee of 4-6 staff reviewers familiar with the SBDC program using the following categories: Experience, Capacity, Personnel, and Delivery. The review committee will use the 100-point scale provided above to evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline. Reviewers will meet and discuss the proposals and then put forth their recommendations. The State Director of the Minnesota SBDC program will make the final award decisions and award notification will be provided by email to applicants.

3.2 Timeline

RFP posted on the DEED web site:	Thursday August 21, 2025
Questions due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time:	Wednesday September 10, 2025
LETTER OF INTENT (exhibit A) due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time:	Wednesday September 10, 2025
Applications due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time:	Monday October 13, 2025
Committee begins review of applications:	Tuesday October 14, 2025
Selected applicants undergo pre-award risk assessment:	Monday October 20, 2025
Selected grantees announced; grant contract agreement negotiations begin:	Friday October 31, 2025
Work plans approved and grant begins:	January 1, 2026

3.3 Conflicts of Interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per [Minnesota Statutes § 16B.98 Subd. 2-3](#) and [OGM Policy 08-01 Conflict of Interest in State Grant-Making Policy](#).

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- a grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the Department due to competing duties or loyalties
- a grantee's or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties

In cases where a conflict of interest is in question or disclosed, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to, revising the grant work plan or grantee duties to mitigate the risk, requesting the grant applicant to submit an organizational conflict of interest mitigation plan, disqualification from eligibility for the grant award, amending the grant, or termination of the grant contract agreement.

3.4 Public Data

Per [Minnesota Statutes § 13.599](#)

- Names and addresses of grant applicants and amount requested will be public data once proposal responses are opened.

- All remaining data in proposal responses (except trade secret data as defined and classified in §13.37) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed. For the purposes of this grant, data will be considered public when all the grant contract agreements have been fully executed.
- All data created or maintained by [State agency] as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret data as defined and classified in §13.37) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed. For the purposes of this grant, Data will be considered public when all the grant contract agreements have been fully executed.

3.5 Pre-award Risk Assessment and Financial Review

In accordance with [Minnesota Statute §16B.981](#) and [OGM Policy 08-06: Preaward Risk Assessment of Potential Grantees](#), it is required to consider a grant applicant's past performance and financial and operational capacity before awarding grants of \$50,000 or more. Granting agencies will request, review, and analyze information, including Exhibits A-E, as referenced in this RFP, as applicable. Note that Exhibit A Capacity Responses is to be submitted as your **LETTER OF INTENT** and must be submitted no later than 4:30 pm Central Time, Wednesday September 10, 2025.

3.6 Grant Contract Agreements

Each grantee must formally enter into a grant contract agreement. The grant contract agreement will address the conditions of the award, including implementation for the project. Grantees should read the grant contract agreement, sign, and once signed, comply with all conditions of the grant contract agreement. No work on grant activities can begin until a fully executed grant contract agreement is in place and the State's Authorized Representative has notified the Grantee that work may start. The funded applicant will be legally responsible for assuring implementation of the work plan and compliance with all applicable state requirements including worker's compensation insurance, nondiscrimination, data privacy, budget compliance, and reporting.

Section 4: Request For Proposals Award Requirements and Grant Management Responsibilities

4.1 Accountability and Reporting Requirements

Minnesota SBDCs are focused on short- and long-term planning, performance and strategic-based budgeting, proven results and impact, and accountability as measured by achievement of goaled activities (outputs) and client-validated actual results achieved (outcomes). SBDCs are expected to provide in-depth, substantive, long-term, outcome-oriented one-to-one consulting resulting in substantial economic outcomes as measured by a set of key metrics. All key metrics reported by the MnSBDC are required to be validated and attributed to the provision of SBDC services in writing by the client who received the service.

4.2 Grant Monitoring

[Minnesota Statutes § 16B.97](#) and [Policy on Grant Monitoring](#) require the following:

- One monitoring visit during the grant period on all state grants over \$50,000
- Annual monitoring visits during the grant period on all grants over \$250,000
- Conducting a financial reconciliation of grantee's expenditures at least once during the grant period on grants over \$50,000

The monitoring schedule will be:

1. An annual monitoring site visit during each calendar year.
2. Financial reconciliation of grantee's expenditures at conclusion of each annual grant project.

4.3 Grant Payments

Per [State Policy on Grant Payments](#), reimbursement is the method for making grant payments. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. The State shall review each request for reimbursement against the approved grant budget, grant expenditures to-date and the latest grant progress report before approving payment. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless DEED through the State's Authorized Representative has given the grantee a written extension.

The invoicing and payment schedule will be:

Invoices must be submitted by the Grantee on a quarterly basis, at the end of the months of March, June, September and December. In order to ensure that all funds are drawn prior to the final reporting date of the grant, all payment requests must be received no later than 45 days after the grant-term expiration date. To allow for the timely closing of the state fiscal year, invoices for the quarter ending on June 30th shall be submitted by the Grantee no later than 25 days after the end of the quarter.

Invoices will be paid within 30 days after submission per State statute, unless a discrepancy in the figures is questioned by the State.

4.4 Authorized Representatives

Pursuant to [Minnesota Statutes §16B.98, subd. 5 \(d\)](#), grantees must clearly post on the grantee's website the names of, and contact information for, the grantee's leadership and the employee or other person who directly manages and oversees a grant contract agreement on behalf of the grantee.

4.5 Contracting and Bidding Requirements

a. Municipalities

Grantees that are political subdivisions or municipalities must use these guidelines:

- A. Municipalities are required to comply with [Minnesota Statutes §471.345, Uniform Municipal Contracting Law](#).
- B. The Grantee and any subrecipients must comply with prevailing wage rules per [Minnesota Statutes §§ 177.41](#) through [177.50](#), as applicable.
- C. Municipalities and any subrecipients must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government: [Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement](#)
- D. The Grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.

b. Nongovernmental entities

Grantees that are nongovernmental entities must use these guidelines:

- A. Any services and/or materials that are expected to cost \$100,000 or more must undergo a formal notice and bidding process.
- B. Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three (3) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.

- C. Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two (2) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.
- D. The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:
 - a. [State Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List](#)
 - b. [Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business Program](#)
 - c. Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: [Central Certification Directory](#)
- E. The grantee must maintain the MnSBDC Code of Conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and administration of contracts.
- F. The grantee must maintain support documentation of the purchasing or bidding process used to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single source bid, if applicable.
- G. Notwithstanding the above, the State may waive bidding process requirements when:
 - a. Vendors included in response to competitive grant request for proposal process were approved and incorporated as an approved work plan for the grant; or
 - b. It is determined there is only one reasonably able and available source for such materials or services and that grantee has established a fair and reasonable price.
- H. The Grantee and any subrecipients must comply with prevailing wage rules per [Minnesota Statutes §§177.41](#) through [177.50](#), as applicable.
- I. The grantee and any subrecipients must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government: [Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement](#)

4.6 Audits

Per [Minnesota Statutes § 16B.98 Subdivision 8](#), the grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the Commissioner of Administration, the State granting agency, the State Auditor, the Attorney General, and the Legislative Auditor as appropriate. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant contract agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

4.7 Grant Provisions

Each regional SBDC host partner must provide all facilities and materials necessary to effectively operate an SBDC regional center. SBDC services must be provided as geographically close as possible to small businesses in the service area by using a variety of service delivery mechanisms, including satellite or outreach locations, traveling counselors and electronic means, as appropriate. Each regional center must operate on a minimum 40-hour a week basis and must be open when and where possible to meet the needs of clients. Each service center must be adequately staffed to meet the needs of the region's small business market. SBDC services must be made available to existing and prospective small business owners without discrimination as to age, race, gender, color, creed, religion, disability, national origin, marital status, or sexual orientation. Upon request, service centers must make arrangements to reasonably accommodate persons with disabilities.

a. Facilities

Each regional SBDC service center shall maintain one or more visible, professional, fully-equipped, office location(s) that complies with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. A dedicated and secured area must be provided to meet with clients and must be adequate to protect client confidentiality. Each service center must have access to adequate conference room facilities to accommodate group training sessions. Each regional center shall maintain a separate and publicly listed SBDC phone number. Each service center facility shall have access to adequate parking for business clients, and signage compliant with policy and current MnSBDC branding guidelines which clearly indicates the service center's location.

b. Accessibility

Each regional SBDC center shall strive to assure that clients do not have to travel more than one hour by motor transportation to receive services. Regional centers can meet this standard by operating satellite centers, making available outreach locations in regional population centers, utilizing circuit-riding consultants, meeting clients at their place of business, and/or using electronic communication technologies to deliver consulting services.

c. Disaster Plan

Each regional SBDC must have a disaster plan to assure delivery of services to small businesses in their area should a disaster occur. Disaster plans must be coordinated with host institution disaster plans. Disaster plans must be kept on file at the regional center and the MnSBDC Lead Center and be available for review.

d. Hours and Holidays

At a minimum, each regional center shall be open on a full-time, 5-days per standard business week basis excluding weekends and holidays. Satellite and outreach centers may operate on a less than full-time basis. All offices may offer extended evening and/or weekend hours. The total number of holidays (days closed) shall not exceed 14 in any one program year. Service centers shall be equipped with an answering device or service to be utilized during working hours when staff is not available, and during non-scheduled hours and closures to explain when and how center services can be accessed.

e. Staffing

To maintain adequate leadership, management and service delivery a host partner organization must employ a full-time SBDC Regional Director, a full- or part-time Associate Regional Director/Program Coordinator and all other personnel necessary to operate an SBDC program. The Regional Director and Associate Regional Director/Program Coordinator must be employees of the host partner organization, and the Regional Director must be approved prior to hiring by the Minnesota SBDC State Director. All staff personnel, including the Regional Director and Associate Regional Director/Program Coordinator should be recruited and selected following the host organization's established hiring process. Compensation shall be based on the level of responsibility and be comparable to salaries for equivalent positions in the area served by the SBDC. In the absence of equivalent positions, compensation shall be comparable, at a minimum, to other Minnesota SBDC Regional Directors and Associate Regional Directors/Program Coordinators.

Regional Directors will have the authority to directly supervise staff and have control of SBDC regional center operations. This includes, but not limited, to overseeing direct staff members, consultants, budgets, marketing and outreach, amongst other SBDC duties.

Host partners must follow their own policy regarding competitive selection of private consultants. In the absence of a policy regarding competitive selection of consultants, the host partner may utilize any reasonable process so long as it results in full and open competition.

Appendix 1 at the end of this RFP includes sample position description templates for each of the 3 primary positions noted above for a typical SBDC Regional Service Center. These are included for reference purposes only and are not to be considered absolute requirements. Host institutions should determine their own requirements for each position.

All regional center personnel, including employees, students, volunteers and private consultants are required to sign the Minnesota SBDC Code of Professional Conduct Statement and Debarment Certification. An authorized representative of the host institution is required to sign the Debarment Certification.

f. List of Vacancies

The grant recipient must comply, if appropriate, with Minn. Stat. §116L.66, which provides that a business or private enterprise must list any vacant or new positions with the state workforce centers if it receives \$200,000 or more a year in grants or loans from the State. This provision must be incorporated into any loan agreements or sub-grants.

If applicable, the grant recipient shall list any job vacancy in its personnel complement with MinnesotaWorks.net at www.minnesotaworks.net as soon as it occurs.

g. Consultants

An SBDC Professional Business Consultant (PBC) is an employee, faculty member, independent contractor, volunteer or student who is engaged by the SBDC to provide individual advice, guidance or instruction to an existing or prospective business owner concerning the formation, management, financing or operation of a small business enterprise. SBDCs are encouraged to leverage all professional competencies available to them.

For purposes of defining each position:

- **Employee Consultant.** An individual who is employed by the SBDC host institution. Employees may include host institution employees assigned to the SBDC and may also include faculty consultants.
- **Faculty Consultant.** An employee of the host institution who is not specifically assigned to the SBDC, but who delivers SBDC consulting services or training in addition to their teaching responsibilities. In keeping with the statutory policy of linking the small business community to resources available in colleges and universities, SBDCs are encouraged to utilize host institution faculty for SBDC consulting and training purposes. In appropriate cases, the value of faculty consultant time may be considered an in-kind matching contribution toward required match.
- **Independent Contractor.** An individual who is self-employed or an employee of an entity other than the SBDC host institution. Independent contractors enter into a contract to provide SBDC services to clients for the host institution. Independent contractors typically are engaged on an hourly basis to provide consulting, training or other services to the SBDC. Independent contractors broaden the range of knowledge and competencies available to SBDC clients. In keeping with the spirit of legislation establishing the SBDC program, the Minnesota SBDC strongly encourages the use of qualified independent contractors to serve the diverse needs of its small business clients. Hosts must pay particular attention to abide by IRS regulations that differentiate work rules and requirements between employees and independent contractors.
- **Volunteer Consultant.** An individual not compensated for performing SBDC services. Regional centers are encouraged to utilize qualified volunteers. Volunteers may be faculty or independent contractors. Volunteers must meet the same standards as other SBDC personnel, including the requirement to sign and adhere to the Minnesota SBDC Code of Professional Conduct Statement and Debarment Certification. As with all professional staff, Regional Directors are responsible for monitoring the work of volunteers to assure the delivery of high-quality service. In appropriate cases, the value of volunteer time may be considered an in-kind matching contribution toward required match.

- Student Consultants. A student who is enrolled in a field of study at the host SBDC institution or institution of higher education associated with a host partner. The use of students in delivering SBDC services is highly encouraged by every regional SBDC (see Section 2.8 below). Students are also required to sign the Minnesota SBDC Code of Professional Conduct Statement and Debarment Certification. Value of student time is not eligible as a matching contribution.

Each regional center shall have on file position descriptions for all personnel, resumes of all employees and private contractors, and a description of the recruitment and selection process. The original signed Minnesota SBDC Code of Professional Conduct Statement shall be on file for all personnel, and a contract and original signed Debarment Certification form shall be on file for all independent contractors. Copies of these documents must be signed annually and filed with the regional office according to policy.

h. Student Engagement

When Congress created the SBDC program they envisioned that SBDCs would create a broad-based system of assistance by linking the resources of the federal, state and local governments with the resources and knowledge of institutions of higher education. In keeping with the spirit of legislation establishing the SBDC program, it is a strategic objective of the Minnesota SBDC Network that centers leverage the asset of students in the support and delivery of services. Engaging students in service delivery allows SBDCs to:

- leverage an efficient resource for service delivery;
- broaden the base of organizational knowledge (e.g., technology, digital tools, AI);
- support the intention of host institutions to provide students life-long learning experiences;
- demonstrate to the small business community the value of the host partner or affiliate host partner;
- most importantly, demonstrate to graduating students the value of entrepreneurship and opportunities for employment in local small businesses.

The long-term retention of young people in rural areas, and their on-going contribution to the community cannot be achieved without action. It is the expectation that through their participation and engagement with SBDC clients, students will recognize the value of local business ownership or employment in an area small business, thus contributing to the economic vitality of Minnesota.

Students must be properly supervised to assure quality service, and the services they perform should be commensurate with their level of skill and expertise. Undergraduate students should not provide direct contact consulting with SBDC clients without proper supervision. They may, however, support SBDC PBCs by performing research, preparing pro forma financial or marketing reports, or engaging in other tasks to support a client engagement. Student time spent supporting a specific consultant who is working with a specific client may be counted as preparation time for that client. Such time must be reasonable in relation to the work performed, and the file must document adequate supervision by the center. Graduate students who are qualified by experience and expertise may provide direct contact counseling under proper supervision.

i. Selection of Independent Contract Consultants

SBDC independent consultants must be selected on a competitive basis and must conform to the federal micro purchasing guidelines. The host institution's policy regarding competitive selection of consultants must be followed. In the absence of such a policy, or if the policy does not apply to the proposed selection, the regional center may utilize any reasonable process, including a request for proposals, so long as it results in full and open competition.

The SBDC must use written contracts, that are fully executed in advance of any service delivery, for all private consultants. The contract must specify deliverables, including but not limited to proper completion of reports and must provide for withholding of final payment until contract deliverables are met.

j. Staffing Level

Based on a 40-hour workweek for 52 weeks per year, total work hours available for a full-time equivalent (FTE) are 2,080 hours. Based on 1,920 hours of work availability, the following structure is recommended.

Staffing for a base-level-funded SBDC are four FTEs:

- one full-time Regional Director who devotes a minimum 10 percent (192 annual hours) of his/her time to direct consulting and 90 percent to managing the center and performing advocacy, outreach, professional development, and other network responsibilities;
- one full-time Associate Regional Director/Program Coordinator/ Intake Specialist who provides general program administration and general in-take consulting (200 annual hours); and
- two FTE PBCs who devote 75 percent (1,440 annual hours) of their time to qualified consulting and 25 percent (480 annual hours) assisting with training programs and other special activities (centers may utilize private consultant equivalents). Note that the total FTE requirement may be distributed among several individuals who provide only a portion of the total time.

k. Staff Development

Regional Directors are required to participate in all meetings designated by the State Director. In addition to monthly Senior Leadership meetings, the State Director may require Regional Directors' attendance at other meetings such as those held by the America's SBDC (ASBDC) – the national trade organization of SBDCs, SBA, or DEED. PBCs and Program Coordinators/Associate Regional Directors are strongly encouraged to attend appropriately scheduled meetings and conferences. Such meetings provide an excellent opportunity for training, networking, planning and the sharing of knowledge.

To remain current in the changing needs of business, all Regional Directors, Staff PBCs and Program Coordinators/Associate Regional Directors must participate in a minimum of 40-hours of professional development each program year, preferably in areas of core competencies identified by MnSBDC. Centers utilizing private consultants are responsible for assuring consultants are adequately qualified to deliver high quality consulting to small business concerns and are encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities.

l. Code of Professional Conduct

All MnSBDC personnel, including management and staff, independent consultants, students, advisory board members and volunteers must abide by a Code of Professional Conduct. This policy requires everyone to receive annual training, acknowledge the policy in writing and to take affirmative steps to perform the required acts, adhere to the requirements of permitted acts and avoid the prohibited acts identified in the policy.

m. Marketing and Identity

Each regional SBDC shall market itself as a member of the Minnesota SBDC Network, and, where required, acknowledge the support of the SBA and DEED on all promotional and training materials printed and/or distributed by the center. Each regional center shall conform to marketing and graphic guidelines set by the Minnesota SBDC Network and SBA, including but not limited to:

- Compliance with the Minnesota SBDC graphic standards, prominent display of the Minnesota SBDC and SBA logos along with acknowledgement of their support at the front of the regional office and any sub-regional service center offices;
- Placement of the SBA and Minnesota SBDC logos, acknowledgement of support and appropriate disclaimers on all regional SBDC web sites;

- Placement of the SBA and Minnesota SBDC logos, acknowledgement of support and appropriate disclaimers on all publications, promotional pieces, informational brochures, training materials, financial projections and similar items;
- Use of the SBDC regional brand (e.g., “Northwest Minnesota Small Business Development Center”) in communication, including but not limited to answering dedicated phones, voicemail recordings, email signatures and web pages.
- Compliance with any mandated SBA or SBDC language that details federal funding and match obligations.

n. Reporting

Each regional center and staff shall maintain records in accordance with program guidelines and policies including the use of the electronic client activity tracking database system (currently “Neoserra”) or other systems as directed by the State Director.

o. Operations Manual

Each regional SBDC shall have a copy or direct access to the Minnesota SBDC Operations and Procedures Manual available on-site and shall comply with all its applicable policies and guidelines. Each regional center shall be responsible for updating the contents of the manual as directed by the MnSBDC Lead Center. Regional Directors are responsible for training all center personnel, including volunteers and independent contractors on its contents and revisions.

p. Resource Library

Federal legislation establishing the MnSBDC program requires SBDCs to provide and maintain or have access to a comprehensive resource library available to the public that contains current information and statistical data needed by small businesses. SBDCs must also maintain current information concerning federal, state and local regulations that affect small businesses.

As a part of its development, each regional SBDC shall compile a listing of all area business assistance resources, including SBA partner organizations SCORE and Women’s Business Centers (WBC), other governmental, educational, tax, legal and private sector resources. When appropriate, a center shall refer small business clients to outside public and private resources. Each regional center shall refer clients equitably to available resources. Such equitable distribution should prevent over-reliance on any one private consultant or professional organization. Center personnel, including independent consultants are strictly prohibited from receiving any award, benefit or compensation for any referral, either directly or indirectly.

Each regional center must participate in MnSBDC and SBA-sponsored activities including National SBDC day, SBA Small Business Week, training events and lending and grant programs as applicable.

q. Confidentiality

All SBDC service centers must preserve the confidentiality of clients’ identity and client communications to the extent allowable by law as dictated by Federal statute (15 U.S.C. § 648(a)(7)). At a minimum, this means not disclosing to any third party (including host institutions, SBA, federal or state agencies, or the media) the identity of, or communications with a client without the client’s prior written consent; delivering consulting in a private and secured area; and storing client records and documentation (including electronic files) in a secure area accessible only to authorized SBDC personnel. Because there may be conflicts between the policy of confidentiality and state and federal data practices laws, any request to disclose client information must be discussed in advance with the SBDC State Director.

r. Files and Records

Each regional SBDC shall maintain client files and records in accordance with federal and state guidelines and policies, whether such files are electronic or physical. This includes the accurate reporting of service delivery and results, reporting of activity, and retention and proper disposal of documents. This requirement will last for a minimum of six

years from the grant agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later

4.8 Ineligible Expenses

As referenced in 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E, SBA Terms and Conditions and SBA (SBDC) Program Terms and Conditions, ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services and payroll taxes
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking violations and traffic violations
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses, unless approved by the State Director of the MnSBDC program. Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state.

4.9 Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified per [Minnesota Statutes § 363A.02](#). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. Minnesota Rules, Part [5000.3500](#).

The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

4.10 Voter Registration

The grantee will comply with [Minnesota Statutes §201.162](#) by providing voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the grantee.

4.11 Right of Cancellation

The State reserves the right to cancel this solicitation if it is considered to be in its best interest. The State reserves the right to negotiate modifications to the application or to reject any and all applications received as a result of this Request for Proposals. The State does not intend to award a grant contract agreement solely on the basis of any response made to this request or pay for information solicited or obtained.

4.12 Attachments

Required attachments to follow.