

**Johnson County, Iowa
Request for Proposals**

ARPA Underestimated Business Finance Program



Procurement Timeline

RFP Publish Date	May 20, 2024
RFP Questions due	May 24, 2024
Proposal Due Date	June 3, 2024 8 am
Project Initiation	August 1, 2024

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

ARPA Underestimated Business Finance Program

According to the [2021 Big Ideas for Small Business: A Five-step Roadmap for Rebuilding the U.S. Small-business Sector, reviving entrepreneurship, and closing the racial wealth gap](#)”, published by Drexel University and Yale, “The COVID-19 crisis has devastated Main Street small businesses across America. Since February 2020, almost a quarter of all U.S. small businesses have closed at least temporarily. In the hardest hit sectors, like restaurants, hotels, and retail, the numbers are far higher. In September 2020, Yelp reported that for businesses on its platform, more than half (60%) of closures were permanent. According to Womply data, it has been estimated that 185,000 small businesses — one in seven nationally — had shut down permanently by the end of August 2020. Those closures have left millions of Americans out of work and transformed lively neighborhoods around the country into retail ghost towns, destroying the wealth built by many families over generations in the process.

In 2021, the Multicultural Development Center of Iowa, Greater Iowa City Inc., (formerly the Iowa City Area Development Group and the Iowa City Area Business Partnership) and GreenState Credit Union commissioned an [Inclusive Economic Development Plan in Johnson County](#). This plan generated baseline data for understanding the impacts of COVID-19 on locally owned, underestimated businesses (‘underestimated’ is used here to include Black, Indigenous, People of Color, People with Disabilities, Immigrants, and LGBTQ+ people), through multilingual, online, and in-person surveys, phone calls, and several locally-lead focus groups. This plan also included federally reported data from two local banks, Midwest One Bank and GreenState Credit Union, to identify and understand lending practices to underestimated businesses, particularly during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. A stark difference identified was the disparity between small businesses that received funding from the federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and those that did not, many of which were underestimated businesses. The state of Iowa received millions of dollars for the PPP and yet, “only \$50,000 was made available to underestimated business owners affected by COVID-19, and only 33% of the county support institutions provided relief funds to business owners. (p.33)” The Inclusive Economic Development Plan provides further information on the barriers and gaps that local underestimated businesses face, such as, high rents, gaps in resource information, and a lack of access and relationships to financial and business support systems, to name a few.

The Johnson County Board of Supervisors recognizes that many small businesses in Johnson County were impacted by COVID-19 and has allocated funding to create an ARPA Underestimated Business Finance Program (AUBFP) to address some of these gaps and barriers.

This program will:

- Utilize the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s definitions to determine eligible small businesses that experienced negative economic impacts or disproportionate impacts of the pandemic.
- Create a program that provides financial resources to eligible small businesses via a program that can include grants to mitigate financial hardship, such as by supporting payroll and benefits, costs to retain employees, and mortgage, rent, utility, and other operating costs.

RFP Q&A

Frequently asked questions are posted to Johnson County’s Bids and Proposals web page: <https://johnsoncountyiowa.gov/bids-and-proposals>. Additional questions should be submitted in writing to staff at the following email address: grants@johnsoncountyiowa.gov, **no later than 4:30 pm on May 24, 2024**. Answers will be posted at the above website by 6 p.m. on Tuesday, May 28, 2024.

RFP Submittal

Electronic copies should be submitted as a PDF with the subject line, “ARPA Underestimated Business Financial Program.” Submissions should be sent to staff, at the following email address: grants@johnsoncountyiowa.gov, **no later than 8 am on June 3, 2024**. All consultants will be notified in writing regarding the results of the selection process.

A summary of the procurement process for this project is as follows:

- May 20, 2024 RFP published
- May 24, 2024 Questions due submitted in writing
- May 28, 2024 Submitted questions answered
- June 3, 2024 Proposal Due Date
- June 3—June 6, 2024 Proposals ranked by selection committee
- June 13—June 28, 2024 Risk Assessments
- July 2024 Contract approval
- August 1, 2024 Project Initiation

*All dates are subject to change.

Evaluation

Each proposal will be reviewed by an evaluation team, composed of Johnson County Board staff and leadership. Each proposal will be scored relative to all other proposals on the basis of the evaluation criteria listed below. Consultants may be contacted during this process to clarify items in their proposals.

Experience:	40%
Methodology:	35%
Capacity and Leveraged Resources:	15%
Cost:	10%

RFP Required Items

The Johnson County Board of Supervisors reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or to waive any irregularities in any proposal if judged to be in the best interest of the county and the planning process. This RFP does not oblige the county to offer a contract to any firm, nor pay any cost incurred in the preparation of proposals submitted in response to this request. All information and material submitted in this request will become property of the Johnson County Supervisors.

The checklist of items required for proposal submission:

1. Company Contact Information
2. Statement of Qualifications
3. Proposed Methodology to Complete Scope of Work
4. Plan Development Milestones and Timeline
5. Proposed Cost of Services

Proposals should respond to each of the items listed in Sections I – V, following the outline presented here.

I. Company Contact Information

1. Provide company name, Tax ID Number, and Unique Entity ID.
2. Include the name, address, email, and phone number for staff designated as the project lead.

II. Statement of Qualifications

1. Demonstration of past work with underestimated businesses, including a description of previous projects and experience. Links to completed plans and projects should be provided.
2. Description of organizational capacity (and sub-consulting staff) to complete all necessary services.
3. Experience with administering federally funded programs.
4. Qualifications and experience of staff anticipated to be assigned work for this project, including total hours and percentage of time committed to the project.
5. References, including contact information from previous clients of related work within the past five years.
6. Evidence of ability to work within tight time constraints and the earliest date available to assume these duties.

III. Proposed Methodology and Scope of Work

At a minimum, the consultant must accomplish the outcomes listed below. Your organization's methodology should explain your planned approach to each of the following:

1. **Identify eligible small businesses** that were negatively impacted by the pandemic or disproportionately impacted in Johnson County, Iowa. The U.S Treasury has outlined these criteria that must be followed:
 - a. “Small Business” definition:
 - i. Have no more than 500 employees, or if applicable, the size standard in number of employees established by the Administrator of the Small Business Administration for the industry in which the business concern or organization operates, and
 - ii. Are a small business concern as defined in section 3 of the Small Business Act (which includes, among other requirements, that the business is independently owned and operated and is not dominant in its field of operation)
 - b. “Impacted Small Business” considerations:
 - i. Decreased revenue or gross receipts
 - ii. Financial insecurity
 - iii. Increased costs
 - iv. Capacity to weather financial hardship
 - v. Challenges covering payroll, rent or mortgage, and other operating costs
 - c. “Disproportionately Impacted Small Business” considerations:
 - i. Small business operating Qualified Census Tracts
 - ii. Small businesses operated by Tribal governments or on Tribal lands
 - iii. Small businesses operating in the U.S. territories

2. **Create a financial program** to address economic disparities for impacted or disproportionately impacted small businesses (the distinction between those categories is listed above). This program can include:
 - a. For Impacted Small Businesses:
 - i. Grants to mitigate financial hardship, such as by supporting payroll and benefits, costs to retain employees, and mortgage, rent, utility, and other operating costs
 - ii. Technical assistance, counseling, or other services to support business planning
 - b. For Disproportionately Impacted Small Businesses:
 - i. Rehabilitation of commercial properties, storefront improvements & façade, improvements
 - ii. Technical assistance, business incubators & grants for start-up or expansion costs for small businesses
 - iii. Support for microbusinesses, including financial, childcare, and transportation costs

3. **Create a project work plan** with SMART goals to reach planned targets by June 30, 2026.

4. **Present periodic findings and work** to the Johnson County Board of Supervisors and staff for final approval of allocated funding.

5. **Administer the financial program** following ARPA guidelines, including 2 CFR 200, by June 30, 2026.

The tasks and deliverables **specifically for the consultant**, to support the scope of work methodology above, are outlined below:

1. Serve as a central point of contact for local small businesses and county staff. Lead, manage, assemble, organize, and compile data as they are developed.
2. Develop program to provide eligible financial assistance to local small businesses impacted by COVID-19.
3. Develop and finalize the AUBFP goals, objectives, actions, and priorities with input from county staff.
4. Present information to the Johnson County Board of Supervisors and staff at agreed upon milestones.
5. Provide opportunities for feedback from the Johnson County Board of Supervisors and staff and incorporate that feedback into the final AUBFP.
6. Prepare and deliver the final AUBFP document and summary PowerPoint presentation.
7. Develop outreach materials in concert with our Communications staff to solicit support and buy-in as well as raise community and public awareness about the AUBFP.
8. Execute the financing program.

IV. Plan Development Milestones and Timeline

The development and execution of this program is expected to take 24 months. Indicate milestones within a timeline that include:

1. Meetings with county staff. Johnson County staff plans to host a kickoff meeting to introduce the consultant to key stakeholders the Board of Supervisors would like included in the process in late summer/early fall 2024.
2. Outreach and engagement with local businesses
3. Draft finance program
4. Final finance program expenditures are expected to be completed on or before June 30, 2026.
5. Presentation to Johnson County Board of Supervisors

V. Proposed Cost of Services

Proposals to Johnson County Board of Supervisors should include the proposed cost to accomplish the scope of work for activities outlined above not to exceed \$500,000.

Bidders are allowed to incorporate 10% to 20% of the project budget for administrative costs. Project cannot reimburse services already supported by federal funding, including the City of Iowa City's Inclusive Economic Development Support for Underestimated Businesses and Entrepreneurs Program.