



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

Inviting qualified individuals and organizations to develop and operate a business incubator that will serve Half Moon Bay and the surrounding Coastside communities.

Date of Issue: November 15, 2023

Due Date: January 5, 2024

Project Overview

The Coastside region of San Mateo County is located twenty miles South of San Francisco and is mostly rural. It consists of one incorporated city as well as a handful of other unincorporated communities. It is an area of immense natural beauty and an area with persistent socio-economic challenges, which was true even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The region is lacking in economic diversity with tourism, agriculture, and fishing being vital industries of the past but that now are under immense pressure. It is a tale of two regions. More affluent residents commute “over the hill” to jobs in the greater Silicon Valley area that provide higher wages, better benefits, and opportunities for advancement while less affluent residents are stuck in the low-wage jobs that dominate the local economy. The Coastside is also part of San Mateo County which bears the distinction of being one of the least affordable places to live in the United States. There are very few affordable housing options, and the exorbitant cost of living puts even more burden on low-wage workers. The region is more isolated and like other rural communities, there is a lack of services and infrastructure, both essential for a vibrant and healthy economy.

The Coastside Recovery Initiative (CRI) was created by the City of Half Moon Bay in partnership with the Half Moon Bay Coastside Chamber of Commerce and County of San Mateo to address the challenges described above. It launched in 2021 with the purpose of providing immediate relief to individuals and businesses impacted by COVID and positioning the Coastside economy for long-term resiliency.

Led by a diverse, multi-sector Recovery Task Force, the CRI produced a set of strategic recommendations detailed in a public report, *Building a More Equitable, Vibrant and Resilient Coastside Economy*. Since the release of the report in March 2022, the County of San Mateo Board of Supervisors approved a \$5 million funding allocation to support the development of economic advancement centers on the Coastside (\$2.5 million for the Opportunity Center of the Coastside “OCC”) and the unincorporated area of North Fair Oaks, modeled after a similar center in South San Francisco. The centers would provide supportive services for job seekers, small businesses, and entrepreneurs/startups.

The City of Half Moon Bay is now actively engaged in efforts to create the OCC that will serve the Coastside region. A physical location has been identified for the OCC in the heart of Downtown Half Moon Bay, with access to public transit and proximity to City Hall, local nonprofits and service providers, and the College of San Mateo’s new facility. Professional service agreements have also been executed with the Half Moon Bay Coastside Chamber of Commerce and Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center that will provide much needed support to small businesses and entrepreneurs in the area. In addition, a business incubator, another recommendation from the CRI, will be housed at the OCC to provide early-stage support for startups and entrepreneurs as they move their work from idea to market. The combined job seeker, small business and entrepreneurial/start up services are necessary to ensure that the Coastside economy is resilient and creates opportunities for everyone.

Coastside Venture Studios

The business incubator (Coastside Venture Studios) will be designed to spur regional innovation, build entrepreneurship capacity, and support business and job growth in a region hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, extreme drought, and wildfires. The extraordinary coastal environment is poised for innovation and growth in key opportunity industries such as ag-tech and regenerative farming, sustainable fishing, renewable energy, disaster mitigation and natural resource conservation, among others. This effort is well timed as climate science, consumer, and corporate interests, decreasing technology (software) costs and the policy environment all point toward opportunity for innovative climate technology projects. The City and its partners believe Coastside Venture Studios is uniquely positioned to be the only incubator-through-accelerator program in the nation entirely dedicated to climate resiliency and resiliency tech.

Coastside Venture Studios is well positioned to support pre-seed and seed-stage startups in climate resiliency and resiliency tech sub-sectors of food, water, buildings / built environment. Each year, a new cohort of startups chosen through a competitive process will be invited to participate in the Coastside Venture Studios. The full cohort will consist of 3 or 4 highly regarded startups in each of the three focus areas (food, water, and the built environment), and 3 or 4 slots will also be set aside for local startups with Coastside ties, leading to a total of 12 to 16 startups. Entrepreneurs and start-up founders will be selected based on shared values around a social ethos of people, planet, and profit – a triple bottom line.

Recognizing that 80-90 percent of startups and small businesses fail in the first 10 years of operation, Coastside Venture Studios will address the challenges that all entrepreneurs face with a sharp focus on women, immigrants and minority-led start-up and early-stage businesses. These businesses are not yet competitive for venture funding, but still have needs that go beyond capital such as workspace, legal, accounting, human resource, marketing, and other business planning services. Our model will also provide industry-specific programming and services keeping work adjacent issues in mind like the need for flexible scheduling and childcare.

Other benefits to Coastside Venture Studio participants include but are not limited to:

- Unrestricted use of state-of-the-art facilities and support staff, including headquarters located in the business district on historic Main Street.
- Direct exposure to the leading edge of extreme weather in a living local laboratory.
- Integration with local and regional agriculture and water systems and coastal infrastructure to stage pilots, proof-of-concepts, and customer discovery in real-life (not simulated) conditions.
- An organization-wide commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Ready access to nearby world-class institutions and thought leaders.

Qualifications

The City of Half Moon Bay seeks to identify a service provider poised to help lead the design and execution of Coastside Venture Studios. The ideal provider is expected to have direct experience working with (or at) startups, venture capital, or accelerator programs. Relevant industry knowledge and experience working on climate solutions is a plus. The City is also looking for a provider that will bring passion, energy, and drive to this first-of-its-kind effort with exceptional interpersonal skills, proven ability to work optimally in a nimble, flexible, and fast-paced environment. It will also be critically important for the provider to demonstrate an understanding of how justice, equity and inclusion relate to climate work. The provider should demonstrate commitment to a strategic plan for sustaining Coastside Venture Studios beyond building the initial infrastructure.

Scope of Services

The City seeks a qualified provider for the following services:

- Help establish a Coastside Venture Studio Advisory Board that shall have at least 5 members with experience in supporting entrepreneurs, investing in, or creating startups and/or other relevant business, industry, or social impact experience.
- Identify and solicit venture investors to financially support Coastside Venture Studios.
- Develop an incubator work plan that includes key objectives, strategies and tactics, deliverables, and timelines.
- Work with third-party public relations and strategic communication experts to brand and promote Coastside Venture Studios with local, regional, and national audiences.
- Work with the Coastside Venture Studio advisors to target and recruit top startups in climate resiliency and resiliency tech sub-sectors of food, water, and buildings/built environment.
- Lead due diligence and cohort participant selection process, including applicant correspondence, coordination, due diligence documentation, and subsequent onboarding processes.
- Establish and launch a professional upskilling program that provides coaching and placement opportunities.
- Directly support Coastside Venture Studios problem-solve with entrepreneurs to help them achieve key milestones, facilitate introductions where relevant.
- Identify, evaluate, and analyze potential funding opportunities, including market research and risk assessments.
- Collaborate with City and Opportunity Center teams to address and resolve questions, requests, and challenges related to the Coastside Venture Studio programs and events.
- Work with City staff to provide performance reports on incubator and cohort progress that will include, but not be limited to, descriptions of the businesses being developed, progress toward launch of such businesses, and all available performance data.

Term of Program

Depending upon funding (as described below), the term of services provided under this RFQ shall be for up to two years.

Funding Assumptions

The City has received a grant from the County of San Mateo’s American Rescue Plan Act allocation, which will partially fund the start-up of Coastside Venture Studios through September 30, 2024. The City will work with the County to demonstrate the need for, and hopefully secure, a second year of funding support from October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025. The City is also actively pursuing additional funding from local philanthropies as well as other sources. The selected provider will be expected to fundraise, working with the City to identify, apply for, and comply with funding opportunities.

Evaluation Criteria and Process

All submitted qualifications that meet the requirements listed below will undergo an evaluation process conducted by a review committee made up of City and County staff, and community members. The review committee will evaluate all qualifying submissions based on demonstrated understanding of the scope of services and requirements from this RFQ. Respondents may be invited to participate in an interview.

Timeline

| Activity | Date |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| RFQ release | November 15, 2023 |
| RFQ deadline for responses | January 5, 2024 |
| Review of proposals | January 12, 2024 |
| Notice to proposers | January 12, 2024 |
| Interviews | TBD |
| Select provider | January 16, 2024 |

Submittal Requirements

All proposals must be sent in electronic form to kdecker@hmbcity.com no later than 5:00 p.m. on January 5, 2024. Late submittals will not be considered. Proposals shall be typed and shall not exceed 10 pages of written material not including the cover, table of contents or resumes of pertinent staff. Responses must be organized as follows:

1. Cover letter including organization profile and contact information.
2. Qualifications and capabilities. Provide a description of your overall capacity and capability to perform the work outlined in the scope of services.
3. Proposed approach. Please provide a description of how you would go about conducting the work and activities as outlined in the scope of services.

4. Proposed three-year budget. Please provide cost estimates (direct and indirect expenses) for conducting work and activities as outlined in the scope of services. Provide a brief description of key staff involved, including resumes.
5. Past record of performance. Please provide a description of three relevant past projects with response to such factors as quality of work, impact and outcomes achieved, project management and control of costs. Please provide contact names and numbers for the listed projects.

Applicant must agree to submitting the following documentation, if selected:

- Business License. The successful applicant (once selected) must obtain a Half Moon Bay business license before beginning work on the project. More information can be found at <https://halfmoonbay.hdlgov.com/>
- Certificates of Insurance. The successful applicant must provide general liability insurance with coverage limits of no less than \$2,000,000, automobile liability with coverage limits of no less than \$1,000,000, and workers' compensation.
- W-9 Form.

Inquiries

There is no bidders' conference scheduled in association with this request for proposals. Questions may be submitted in writing to the project manager, Karen Decker (kdecker@hmbcity.com) or the City's economic development consultant, Erica Wood (ericakwood929@gmail.com). The deadline for submitting questions is December 15, 2023, at 5pm.

Appendix A –Relevant Resources

[Coastside Recovery Initiative Report](#)