

FFY 2017 Ohio SBDC RFP - Appendix II: Program Requirements

1. SBDC Program Requirements:

Unless otherwise stated, all program requirements apply to both SBDC and SBDC Export Assistance Network locations.

2. SBDC Host Organization

Each proposal must be submitted by an eligible entity that will serve as the SBDC host. In addition to applying for grant funds, the host organization should actively participate in the supervision of the local SBDC. Host organizations should have a significant understanding of the local and regional needs of the business community and a history of experience and engagement in economic development and/or business assistance. The written proposal should briefly describe the host organization and:

- The organization's alignment with the goals of the SBDC Program;
- An overview of experience providing business assistance services or economic development to small businesses;
- A description of any unique qualities that make the organization particularly suited to host a local SBDC Program; and
- Should also outline any existing business service delivery models and how it assesses business community needs.

3. Service Territory

See Appendix I for the regional map.

The regional map was developed in conjunction with multiple other state economic and community development programs. The identified regions will serve as the primary regions for the governance of the activities and to coordinate collaboration between multiple state and local economic development programs. The regional map is not intended to limit the territory a center wishes to compete for service delivery.

As part of the proposal, applicants will be required to identify a primary service territory within the region(s) they wish to apply for funding. Applicants may apply for part of a region, an entire region, or parts of multiple regions. Applicants are encouraged to provide coverage for full counties. Exceptions may occur in densely populated regions or where county division is in the best interest of the businesses served.

Throughout the RFP process, prospective applicants are encouraged to work collaboratively with other prospective applicants to identify service territories and submit complementary proposals. The State Lead Center reserves the right to award funding to one or more applicants

in a region. In instances where more than one applicant is funded in a region, proposed territories overlap, or counties are left unserved, the State Lead Center will ask the applicants to negotiate coverage for the full region prior to awarding grant funding. If multiple awardees are unable to develop a regional coverage plan, the State Lead Center will make a final determination on regional coverage. In such cases, the Lead Center reserves the right to reallocate funding to best meet the needs of the business community.

In the proposal, each applicant must demonstrate their ability to provide full coverage to their requested service territory- keeping in mind the importance of accessibility and availability to the businesses they propose to serve. Each service center must strive to provide the highest levels of customer service and provide services as physically close as possible to small businesses through extension services utilizing multiple centers, satellite locations, circuit riders or virtual services, when necessary.

3.1 SBDC Export Assistance Network Territories:

Only one Export Assistance Network Office will be funded per region, with the exception of Northeast Ohio where it is anticipated up to two offices will be funded. In the proposal, applicants proposing to host an Ohio SBDC Export Assistance Network Office must demonstrate the ability to provide full coverage to the service territory as outlined in the paragraph above. Additionally the proposal must demonstrate the ability to:

- Service and promote state and federal level export initiatives in the region, including in-market research, Export Internship Program (EIP), International Market Access Grant for Exporters (IMAGE), etc.;
- Collaborate as a specialty service provider for all of the regional SBDC service centers; and
- Promote exporting as a growth strategy to businesses across the entire region.

4. Regional Awareness and Collaboration

Ohio SBDCs are expected to coordinate their services with other business assistance service providers, higher education programs, economic development, workforce, and community development-related programs. Ohio SBDC's main focus is to leverage the expertise of affiliated resources, avoid duplication of efforts and improve outcomes for small business clients. Affiliates may include but are not limited to: Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC), Minority Business Assistance Centers (MBAC), Manufacturing Extension Partnerships (MEP), Entrepreneurial Signature Program (ESP), Community Action Agencies (CAA), JobsOhio partners, Community Improvement Corporations, higher educational institutions, county and regional OhioMeansJobs centers, local county economic development organizations and others.

Technical proposals should demonstrate that the applicant has a high level of understanding of resources available to small businesses in the region. The analysis should identify where

services are specialized, duplicated, and if any gaps are present where small business services are evident. The applicant should also identify if the applicant has any formal or informal agreements, memorandums of understanding (MOU), or other structured arrangements with regional economic development affiliates or business assistance providers.

5. Facilities

Each proposed location for a center must meet U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) requirements (as outlined in the program announcement) to provide a safe, professional and accessible venue for staff and clients; office space with private meeting area(s); computer, internet access and other technology; adequate client parking. The center should be able to make reasonable accommodations to potential clients with disabilities. The SBDC program must be clearly and separately identifiable from the host or any other organization co-located with the SBDC. The SBDC should be identifiable through prominent signage and a separate and publicly listed phone number. Any proposed center location(s) must be clearly described and justified in the proposal. Additionally, if alternative off-site counseling locations are planned to be utilized by the center for service delivery, such locations must be noted. Copies of agreements for the use of space must be submitted with the application as an attachment.

5.1 Hours of Operation and Holidays

Centers are expected to remain open during normal business hours. Special consideration will be given to proposals that offer evening and/or weekend advising, training or mentoring programming. As part of the application, centers must also submit a listing of holidays and other dates the center will be closed. A holiday and planned closures document must be submitted as part of the application.

6. Staffing

Each proposal will be rated by the level of staffing proposed. Applicants proposing a higher level of staffing and demonstrating economies of scale will generally score higher in proposal evaluation. Each service center must be staffed by at least one full-time Center Director and combination of counselors, consultants, students and/or administrative staff to meet the needs of the local business community. Satellite offices are not required to be staffed on a full-time basis. As part of the RFP, each applicant will be required to fill out the “personnel worksheet” (See Proposal Instructions) and attach a resume of proposed staff and consultants. Additionally, the proposal should simply and clearly state the SBDC’s staffing plan and highlight time frames for filling any vacant and/or new positions.

6.1 Center Directors

Each applicant must identify an SBDC Director to lead local SBDC operations and service delivery. The director must: meet the minimum requirements of the SBDC Director position description as prescribed by the Ohio SBDC Program; be a Certified Business Advisor or achieve certification within six months; be pledged full-time (40 hours per week) to the SBDC Program delivery.

For a host proposing a standalone SBDC Export Assistance Network location, the SBDC Export Assistance Director should meet minimum requirements of the position of director as prescribed by the Ohio SBDC Program; be a Certified Global Business Professional (CGBP) or achieve certification within one year (CBA certification is not required); be pledged full-time (40 hours per week) to the SBDC Program delivery.

6.2 SBDC Export Assistance Network Staffing

At a minimum, applicants must propose a full-time Export Assistance Advisor/Director for each region. The staff member responsible for Export Assistance Network services shall be referred to as the Ohio SBDC Export Assistance Advisor or Director. Export Assistance Network staff should have strong administrative support to assist with full regional coverage.

6.3 Staff Qualifications

Minimum qualifications for Center Directors, SBDC Advisors and SBDC Export Assistance Directors/Advisors are outlined in the attached sample position descriptions.

6.4 Hiring

SBDCs and the SBDC Export Assistance Network must be staffed by employees of the SBDC grantee or consultants. The State Lead Center establishes minimum employment standards for Business Advisors and Center Directors (See sample employment descriptions in Appendix IV). The State Lead Center must provide prior written approval of all SBDC staff hires, and must be part of the interviewing process for all Center Directors.

Many SBDC hosts use position descriptions and job titles that differ from the standard of the Ohio SBDC program. When a center is preparing to post a position, the State Lead Center needs to have matching job descriptions that meet both the host's and the Ohio SBDC standards. A copy of the posting must be submitted to the State Lead Center for review and approval prior to the posting's publication. Hires made without the feedback and/or approval by the State Lead Center could result in the withholding of funds.

6.5 Use of Graduate Students or Interns

Use of paid graduate students and interns for service delivery is permitted. All students shall appear on the Budget if they are paid employees.

6.6 Use of Consultants

Programs are permitted to utilize consultants for service delivery. All consultants must have experience that clearly demonstrates expertise and ability to counsel small business clients. All consultants must be preapproved by the State Lead Center. As part of application, resumes for budgeted consultants must be submitted. The State Lead Center must receive notification for all changes in consulting personnel (hiring or dismissal). All consulting by *non*-CBA consultants, graduate students, or volunteers, must be supervised by a Certified Business Advisor.

6.7 Salaries

Salaries should be competitive and able to attract and retain qualified and impactful program staff. Sample salary ranges are included in the sample position descriptions.

7 Professional Development

7.1 Certified Business Advisor

All full-time SBDC Directors and Advisors must be a current Certified Business Advisor (CBA) or must become certified within six months of employment. The CBA program is an innovative, online learning certification program that certifies SBDC Advisors through focused instruction at the graduate level in accounting/finance, marketing, entrepreneurial assessment and human resource management. Upon successful completion of the online coursework and exams, attendees receive a certificate from The University of Toledo (UT), College of Business Administration (COBA)—Graduate Programs. CBA is administered by the SBDC Lead Center.

A potential SBDC Business Advisor or Director must meet the State established minimum qualifications, and must agree to participate in the state-mandated CBA process. The inability of a Center Director or Advisor to meet CBA certification within six months could place the applicant on probationary status and will result in withholding of funds. To learn more about CBA please visit: <http://sbdccba.com/>

7.2 Certified Global Business Professional

All SBDC Export Assistance Advisors/Directors will be required to achieve Certified Global Business Professional (CGBP) credentialing within one year of employment with the SBDC as an Export Assistance Advisor/Director. The inability of a SBDC Export Assistance Advisor or Director to earn the CGBP by such time will result in placing the applicant on probationary status and withholding of funds. While SBDC Export Assistance Advisors or Directors are not required to

earn CBA certification, they are encouraged to participate in the program. To learn more about the CGBP program please visit: <http://www.nasbite.org/?page=CGBPCredential>

7.3 Continued Professional Development

All SBDC staff members are required to take continuing professional development courses to maintain both CBA and CGBP certification(s), as applicable. Centers Directors should complete an individual professional development plan for all SBDC staff. The plan should ensure all SBDC staff will have access to continuously improve knowledge that will be beneficial to small business clients. Professional development plans and progress will be reviewed during annual site visits.

8 Clients

8.1 Knowledge of Market Sectors, Client Needs and Expectations

Each applicant must exhibit it has a systematic process to analyze the needs of the small business communities it intends to serve. Further, the applicant must demonstrate it utilized the results of the analyses to develop and deliver programs to meet identified needs. The needs analysis is not required to be a formal research effort, nor must it be a statewide analysis. It must, however, be designed to obtain information from relevant public, private, and educational institutions, as well as from owners of small businesses and entrepreneurs in order to identify and develop and focus the services the SBDC intends to offer.

8.2 Market Sector Focus

Each proposal must identify its specific market sector(s) (i.e. manufacturing, energy, retail, service, agri-business, etc.) and demographic focus (i.e. rural, women, etc.). The applicant must clearly identify its key strengths and how the applicant plans to share these strengths and its special market sector focus with the other members of the SBDC network. The market sector focus should be based on the strengths of the local economy, as well as the abilities and strengths of the local SBDC.

The proposal should include an analysis of the needs and expectations of both existing clients and the broader small business community. It should include a systematic process for evaluating customer knowledge. The process should clearly identify:

- The small business makeup of the service territory;
- Startup activity/needs;
- Client segments/market sectors;
- Key client requirements;
- Product/service features of importance to clients; and
- Any special emphasis or targeted market segments.

The analysis should not just present raw data, but rather should demonstrate an understanding of the clients it intends to serve and the needs of those clients.

8.3 Export Assistance Network Market Sectors

Proposals for an SBDC Export Assistance Network Office should conduct a similar analysis for the region it intends to cover. In addition to presenting a clear understanding of existing export activity in the region, the analysis should:

- Identify the needs of existing small business exporters in the region;
- Identify specific and unique barriers to exporting within the region;
- Provide a clear understanding of export potential of the region;
- Pinpoint market segments and potential export opportunities within specific market segments; and
- Address any targeted business sectors with significant opportunities for export promotion.

9. Service and Delivery

9.1 One-on-One Small Business Advising

All SBDC service centers shall provide timely, high-quality, in-depth and personalized one-on-one advising to small business owners and entrepreneurs. Advising is provided on a free and confidential basis to all clients. *This is the core of SBDC services.* Advising services generally include the following broad array of subject areas including:

- Access to Capital
- Human Resources
- Agribusiness
- Intellectual Property
- Accounting/Finance
- International Trade
- Business Planning
- Inventory Control
- Business Start-Up
- Common Legal Issues
- Buy/Sell Business
- Management/Leadership
- Cash Flow
- Market Diversification
- Commercialization
- Computer Systems
- Customer Relations
- Operations Analysis & Planning
- Engineering R&D
- Regulatory Compliance
- Strategic Planning
- Financial Analysis
- Tax Planning
- Franchising
- Technology
- Marketing
- Public Relations

9.2 Specialty Services:

SBDCs are strongly encouraged to offer innovative and specialized services to meet the needs of businesses within their service area or broader SBDC network. Specialized services may also be offered due to unique experience or skill sets of a SBDC's Director, Advisors and/or consultants. Specialized services should work to not duplicate the services of other economic development partners in the region. Written proposals should clearly identify a service delivery model and the services the SBDC intends to offer.

9.3 SBDC Export Assistance Network Services

SBDC Export Assistance Network Advisors and Directors should provide direct one-on-one advising on a broad array of topics related to helping businesses make their first international sale or helping existing exporters increase international sales and expand into new international markets. Topics should include, but are not limited to:

- Export Readiness Assessments
- Export Strategy
- Harmonized Code Identification
- Foreign Market Certifications
- Export Regulations
- Export Finance
- Logistics
- Market Research
- International Market Identification
- Export-related Business Planning
- Export Promotion
- Access to other State and Federal Export Programs

Proposals should clearly identify a service delivery model and the services the SBDC Export Assistance Advisor/Director intends to offer.

9.4 Service Restrictions

Unless licensed and authorized to practice law or perform services as a certified public accountant in the State of Ohio, no member of the Ohio SBDC network shall hold him/herself out to the public by words or by conduct as an attorney or certified public accountant, or practice as an attorney or certified public accountant.

The SBDC network may provide training regarding basic business law and may negotiate arrangements with law schools to offer clients access to supervised student legal clinics that are approved by the State Attorney General and licensing entity. The SBDC must make appropriate disclosures and disclaimers to that effect.

Members of the SBDC network cannot: (a) render legal consultation or advice to a client; (b) appear on behalf of a client in any hearing or proceeding or before any judicial officer or governmental body which is operating in its adjudicative capacity; (c) appear as a

representative of the client at a deposition or other discovery matter; (d) negotiate or transact any matter for or on behalf of a client with third parties; or (e) receive, disburse or otherwise handle a client's funds.

Members of the SBDC network cannot complete and sign reports assuring the accuracy of the numbers in either financial statements or audits. Such reports can only be executed by a Certified Public Accountant not on staff at the SBDC.

Members of the SBDC network may not make loans, service loans or make credit decisions regarding the award of loans. Such activities are prohibited.

9.5 Training

SBDCs are expected to present trainings, seminars, workshops etc. to its small business community. In addition to providing large groups of businesses with valuable knowledge, training can be utilized both strategically and tactically to market the program or manage large client bases by requiring course attendance before accessing one-on-one advising. Training may be used to generate program income.

While training is important, under no circumstances will an aggressive training calendar offset the primary center goal for quality, in-depth, long-term counseling.

Training events should be based on relevant in-demand topics that support both start-ups and existing business communities. The proposal should demonstrate awareness of other small business training programs that operate within their service territories. SBDCs should work to coordinate or eliminate duplicative trainings in the regions where they operate. Applicants will be required to submit a list of proposed trainings for the program year. No fewer than eight training events shall be proposed per center. Additionally, the proposal should clearly demonstrate a defined methodology for determining the training needs relevant to the market sectors identified through the client/market analysis.

9.6 Export Assistance Network Trainings

Export training events should be based on relevant in-demand topics that support both new to export and existing export businesses. The proposal should demonstrate awareness of other export training programs that operate within their service territories and coordinate or eliminate duplicative trainings. Applicants will be required to submit a list of proposed trainings for the program year. No fewer than four trainings should be proposed per center with at least two trainings focused on introductory importing training and two focused on advanced topics. Additionally, the proposal should clearly demonstrate a defined methodology for determining the training needs relevant to the market sectors identified through the client/market analysis.

11. Branding, Marketing and Outreach

Ohio SBDC recognition is incredibly important to the success of the program. Program data shows that the majority of our clients are led to their local SBDC by colleagues and referrals. Therefore, having a consistent image and message across all centers in the state is important. Each center must clearly identify itself as an Ohio Small Business Development Center or Ohio SBDC verbally, virtually and through printed materials. Under no circumstances should any materials purchased or produced in any part with program funds promote a host over the SBDC Program. However such materials should acknowledge the host and their contribution to the program. As such, the host logo may appear next to or under the SBDC Logo.

11.1 Logo requirements

Ohio SBDC requires that the Small Business Development Center logo prominently appear on all program materials. Additionally, the SBA logo and ODSA logo must appear in program materials as outlined in the SBDC branding guidelines. It is important that clients and the general public are aware of the SBDC Program and the role that SBA and ODSA serve. Therefore, all SBDCs must include the following acknowledgment of support statement on all materials produced in whole or in part with project funds:

“The Ohio Small Business Development Center (SBDC) program is funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. The SBDC is also funded in part by the Ohio Development Services Agency.”

For purposes of this requirement, the term “materials” includes, but is not limited to, press releases, brochures, pamphlets, handouts, reports, advertisements, books, curricula, websites, video or audio productions, and similar items regardless of the medium employed. The term “materials” does not include stationery or business cards and SBA’s logo may not be used on such items.

Where you use Project Funds to produce materials featuring editorial content, the following alternate acknowledgment of support statement:

“The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) program of Ohio is funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. The SBDC is also funded in part by the Ohio Development Services Agency. All opinions, conclusions, and/or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA.”

11.2 Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Each center shall implement a marketing and outreach program designed to build general awareness of the program and to inform small business owners, entrepreneurs and targeted

market segments of the services available through the center. While an annual marketing plan outline is not required with the application a grant awardee must submit a marketing and outreach plan to the Lead Center before the start of the program year. The plan should clearly indicate the ability of the center to communicate with existing and potential clients. The plan should identify various communication tools and channels the center plans to use to promote its services.

Regular communication regarding SBDC services, and its impact and accomplishments, with key stakeholders including funders, collaborators, the economic development community and legislators is required. In addition to being a strong source of referrals, program awareness in the communities served and with key decision makers is essential to continued funding of the program. Each funded center will be required to develop a detailed listing of stakeholder meetings planned for the upcoming program year. The plan should contain a detailed list of stakeholders, community leaders, economic development entities and legislators the Center Director plans to meet with over the course of the program year.

The marketing and stakeholder engagement plan will be submitted as requested by the State Lead Center before the start of the program year. It should clearly and succinctly demonstrate the applicant has the capacity and a plan to promote services within the communities it proposes to operate. SBDCs will be required to update the State Lead Center regarding stakeholder engagement as part of the monthly reporting requirement.

11.3 Success Stories

The Ohio SBDC Program leverages the success of clients we assist to promote the program to small businesses and important stakeholders. The program requires four quality success stories per center to be produced annually by SBDCs and two per SBDC Export Assistance Director. All success stories should meet the criteria outlined on and should be submitted through the online “Success Story Submission Form” located at: <https://development.ohio.gov/sbdcsuccessstories>.

The form is intended for use by SBDC Directors to describe the success of a small business being positively impacted by SBDC Services. Success stories should clearly describe economic impact and metrics. The success story should highlight the assistance of the local SBDC, partners and programs/services that are partially funded through the Ohio Development Services Agency. Each section has a template followed by a review self-check, which outlines criteria relevant to that section.

12. Case Management and Training Files

The Ohio SBDC Program requires the management of all client case files through its comprehensive online client management system, Center IC. Center IC is provided to all SBDCs

by the State Lead Center. A separate file shall be maintained for each client in Center IC. This file must consist of all documentation in regard to that client, as prescribed in the *SBDC Operations Guide*. This includes the SBDC Intake form or variant (Form 641) narrative notes from the initial session, as well as the notes from any follow-up sessions and any/all additional documentation attached to the client's file. To the fullest extent possible, all client files should be stored electronically within Center IC.

Each client case file shall use the client strategic counseling format in Center IC. Each file should document progress toward consulting goals as outlined and agreed upon. In addition, baseline economic indicators should be collected for all clients during the initial session. Each time the economic indicators are collected, they should be updated in the session notes. More specifics for each session type of activity are included in the Center IC manual.

All graduate student time devoted to client advising and research must be counted as SBDC counseling hours and must be supported with daily log sheets detailing activities. All entries must be made into Center IC based upon standards detailed in the Center IC manual. In all cases, the client file must contain the team's detailed log of counseling activities of each student. Faculty participation may also be entered and counted according to the Center IC manual. Faculty participation, or any student counseling, may be counted as match, with appropriate documentation. Reminder: All faculty and student advising must include a CBA review. Additionally, each faculty and student must have a separate login for Center IC. While counseling hours by students and faculty must be tracked, their time is not attributable to the SBDC Advisor or Director.