



Jeannine MacDonald
Executive Director

Darlene Barber
Chair

**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
Cumberland Empowerment Zone Corp.
Grant Writing Services 2012**

I. PROPOSAL PARAMETERS AND GUIDELINES

- A. Submission Requirements.** All proposals must be presented in accordance with the requirements, format, and guidelines described in this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) document.
- B. Submission Deadline.** Interested entities must submit (3) copies of proposals no later than **4:30 PM, Friday, December 30, 2011**. Submittals should be addressed and delivered to:

Jeannine MacDonald, Executive Director
Cumberland Empowerment Zone Corp.
275 North Delsea Drive, 2nd Floor
Vineland, NJ 08360
(856) 696-5660, Ext. 202

The funding award for these services and project shall be made at the sole discretion of the Board of Directors of the Cumberland Empowerment Zone Corp. (CEZC). The CEZC is under no obligation to select any presented proposals. The CEZC may reject any or all applications. Funding is subject to all necessary approvals by federal, state and local agencies and their representatives.

- C. Interpretation and Addenda.** All questions, requests for interpretation, and comments shall be prepared in writing and submitted to Jeannine MacDonald at the above address. Answers to questions and clarifications from the CEZC, which will be sent to all parties having submitted questions, will be binding. Oral and other interpretations will be without legal effect.
- D. Funding.** The CEZC currently administers several grants from both public (ex., N.J. Dept. of Education, N.J. Dept. of Community Affairs) and private sources (ex., AT&T Foundation).

II. OVERVIEW

On April 16, 1998 the Federal government released rules for Round II of the Empowerment Zone Program. The Program targeted those communities with high levels of poverty and other indicators of social and economic distress, as defined by specific criteria in the rules. It was evident to representatives from

Cumberland County and the cities of Bridgeton, Millville and Vineland that because each of the cities constituted a small, urban area, the best chance each had for Empowerment Zone designation was to cooperate and submit an application jointly. The application was successful and in January 1999, Cumberland County became the first, county-led inter-municipal Empowerment Zone in the nation.

The CEZC was to receive \$100 million over a 10-year period and \$130 million in tax-exempt bond financing. Unfortunately, much of the Federal funding that was promised in conjunction with designation never materialized. The grant dollars actually received totaled \$25.6 million and the bond financing was somewhat complicated to use. Notwithstanding the decreased Federal funding, the CEZC was able to implement numerous economic and community development programs that have had a significant impact on its target communities. Over the last 10 years, the CEZC was able to build a substantial loan pool of \$6 million to assist local business; become a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI); and provide the catalyst for industrial park development, airport facility construction and social and community building initiatives. Among its many accomplishments, the CEZC has leveraged more than \$236 million in new investment into the County, becoming a key player in local economic development efforts. In addition, the CEZC has been very successful in accessing funding and services for the region, including but not limited to \$2.5 million in funding under the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (Round I); over \$5 million in public and private grant funding for education programs such as a 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program and a High School Success Program; and a successful county-wide partnership with the Small Business Development Center.

The Federal Empowerment Zone Initiative ended in July, 2010. With such a significant level of accomplishment, CEZC officials undertook a strategic planning process to sustain and expand the work of the Empowerment Zone Program. The CEZC is proud of its achievements during the 10-year Federal Empowerment Zone initiative. Notwithstanding funding challenges, the CEZC has and will continue to positively impact its target communities. The CEZC attributes its continuing success to the staff and Board's aggressive efforts to pursue wide-ranging support for its programs, as well as its strong partnerships with local organizations sharing similar missions and goals.

The CEZC continues to be an active participant in the County's economic development efforts. The CEZC actively pursues programs and funding opportunities that benefit this region. With strong business service and education programs, the CEZC's performance has established this organization as a trusted resource in administering programs and effectuating positive change.

III. REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

This Request for Qualifications is issued by the Cumberland Empowerment Zone Corp., a 501 (C)(3) tax exempt nonprofit corporation.

IV. ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED GRANT WRITING CONSULTANT

The designated grant writing consultant will work closely with the CEZC staff in drafting grant applications, in their entirety, for pursuit of funding opportunities which the CEZC deems appropriate. A grant writing services agreement will ultimately be negotiated between the CEZC and the successful respondent. Subject to these negotiations, and subsequent Board approvals, the role of the grant writing consultant shall include, but not be limited to, the following activities:

- Preparation of grant applications for submission to both private and public funders, including the federal government.
- Responsible, with the assistance of the CEZC staff, for drafting all aspects of the grant application, including Executive Summary, Needs Assessment, Program Description, Goals and Objectives, Evaluation Plan, and Budget Narrative, along with a sustainability plan.

V. MANDATORY SUBMISSIONS

Respondent's submissions must include the following core components in order to be considered responsive to this solicitation:

- The firm's general background and any experience with non-profit/government organizations or related entities.
- The depth of professional qualifications of the firm's principals and staff.
- Writing sample.
- A current client list.
- Detailed fee structure and timeframes.
- Any commendations letters, if available.
- Summary of expertise and experience in the area of grant writing, especially preparation of applications for federal government grants.
- Name and qualifications of individuals who will be assigned the responsibility of working with the CEZC contract.

Respondent's submissions must demonstrate professional qualifications, including, but not limited to the following:

- Ability to meet tight deadlines.
- Strong working knowledge of non-profit organizations function and needs.
- Knowledge and expertise in drafting grant applications for multiple specialties (i.e., housing, economic development, community revitalization, social services).
- Working knowledge and past experience preparing applications for grant funding from the federal government.
- Strong analytical and budgetary skills.
- Ability and experience drafting a detailed evaluation plan.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Strong working knowledge of Cumberland County, New Jersey.

VI. CONDITIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

All proposals in response to this request must meet the following conditions to be considered:

- Proposals must be received by the date and time specified; late proposals will be disqualified.
- In order to be considered for selection, applicants must submit a completed proposal. Incomplete proposals may not be considered.
- Proposals must include a cover sheet clearly stating the name of the applicant, address and telephone number of the applicant representative. The name and qualifications of staff responsible for working on CEZC grant applications should be included as well.

The CEZC reserves the right to request additional information from all applicants.

The CEZC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals submitted, and to negotiate portions thereof.

VII. APPLICATION RANKING CRITERIA

All submissions shall be initially reviewed to determine if they are responsive to the submission requirements. Those not meeting the minimum requirements set forth herein will be deemed non-responsive, and will not be subject to further review.

The responsive submissions shall be evaluated and ranked in accordance with the scoring criteria, based upon a 20-point system:

5 points – Understanding of the CEZC's program and concept, as well as knowledge of Cumberland County

5 points – Grant writing expertise and experience

5 points – Budgetary/Analytical skills and writing sample

5 points – Overall professional qualifications, experience and proven capacity of the organization and its key personnel and staff