



Request for Proposals for Feasibility, Marketing, and Business Consulting for Cooperative Enterprise Startups in West Tennessee

Option 1: Popular Education (*Maximum \$10,800*)

Option 2: Technical Assistance (*Maximum \$11,250*)

Option 3: Popular Education and Technical Assistance (*Maximum \$22,050*)

Issuance: 11/27/23

Co-Op Academies: Academy 2024

Responses Due: 12/20/23

SDGG Program Deadline: 9/30/24

Expected Cooperative Clients: 5 - 10

Email Responses To: Benny Overton, Co-Director, benny@sec4cd.org

I. Purpose

The Southeast Center for Cooperative Development (SEC4CD) is seeking proposals from qualified technical assistance providers to provide services to entrepreneurs in the development of cooperative enterprises. Worker-owned cooperatives (co-ops) are for-profit businesses that are collectively owned and democratically managed for the benefit of workers. SEC4CD is committed to providing support to socially disadvantaged groups (SDGs) in starting and running successfully cooperatively owned businesses. SEC4CD has partnered with the USDA through their Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant to provide technical assistance to new cooperative enterprises in West TN near the new mega-site development, Ford's BlueOvalCity.

II. Background

SEC4CD's mission is to increase economic opportunities and benefits by creating and strengthening cooperative businesses and networks that grow an equitable economy. In September 2023, USDA awarded SEC4CD the Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant (SDGG) to implement programming in West Tennessee in the areas surrounding Ford's BlueOvalCity.¹ As part of this grant, SEC4CD received funds to provide professional services for its client cooperative startups in the Co-op Launch Services program.

The SDGG provides funding to develop and implement projects that promote sustainable development. The program defines SDGs as "groups of people who have been subjected to racial or ethnic discrimination or who have been denied access to equal opportunities because of their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, marital status, or sexual orientation."

SEC4CD provides funding for technical assistance to help entrepreneurs start and run successful cooperatively owned businesses. Technical assistance can include, but is not limited to, feasibility planning, business management, marketing, and co-op training.

¹ "SEC4CD Awarded \$175,000 from USDA SDGG for Cooperative Development in West Tennessee," November 2, 2023. <https://www.co-opsnow.org/blog/2023/10/24/sec4cd-awarded-175000-from-usda-sdgg-for-cooperative-development-in-west-tennessee> (last visited 11/15/23).

III. Scope of Work

Technical assistance providers should submit an example work plan and budget for providing one or more of the following services to entrepreneurs in the development of up to five cooperative enterprises:

- **Feasibility planning:** Assist entrepreneurs in developing sector-specific market and competitor analyses and an operational assessment of their startup costs and process.
- **Business management:** Provide training to entrepreneurs on business management, including budgeting, recordkeeping, and accessing capital.
- **Marketing:** Assist entrepreneurs in developing marketing plans to promote their cooperative enterprises through market analysis, branding, and marketing strategies.
- **Democratic Culture training:** Provide training to entrepreneurs on a variety of topics related to cooperative enterprise development, such as cooperative governance, conflict resolution, and democratic member engagement and decision-making.

Work plans should address one of these options:

- **Option 1:** Popular Education: Description of curriculum delivered in two Co-Op Academies:
 - A 1-hour general overview session for the Co-Op Academy (sessions run between Feb - April 2024)
 - A 3-hour workshop description
- **Option 2:** Technical Assistance: Description of services generally rendered to startups, up to 25 hours of specialized support
- **Option 3:** All of the above

Timeline:

Academy (1-hour presentation) sessions run between Feb - April 2024.

3-hour workshops between April and August 2024

Specialized support will be provided before August 30, 2024.

IV. Selection Criteria

Eligibility

To be eligible to submit a proposal, the technical assistance provider must:

- Have a proven track record of providing technical assistance
- Demonstrate specialized knowledge in one or more of the technical assistance
- Be willing to travel to Mason, Brownsville, and Stanton, Tennessee as needed

Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Experience:** The technical assistance provider's experience in providing technical assistance to small and minority-owned businesses, or SDGs in the development of cooperative enterprises.
- **Team:** The qualifications of the technical assistance provider and their team.
- **Approach:** The technical assistance provider's approach, including methodology, timeline, and budget.
- **Partnerships:** The technical assistance provider's network of partners that can provide additional resources to cooperative entrepreneurs.
- **Familiarity and/or willingness to learn** about worker co-ops or self-directed work groups.

V. Submission Details

Deadline:

Proposals must be submitted by December 20, 2023.

Submission of Proposals:

Cover letters must include:

1. The name, address, phone, and email of the person authorized by Applicant to discuss the Applicant's proposal; and
2. The Applicant's tax identification number.

Please include the following information about your organization:

1. Years in business;
2. Description of organization background, especially relevant cooperative experience;
3. Applicable state licensing; and
4. Sample work or descriptions of work completed in the last 3 years similar in scope.

Proposals must be submitted electronically to benny@sec4cd.org.

Contact Information:

For more information please contact:

Benny Overton

Co-Director

benny@sec4cd.org