

East Side Small Business Technical Assistance Hub and Loan Fund Request for Proposals

Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs will see greater success when Technical Assistance & Investment partners on the East Side coordinate their efforts and collaborate.

Background and Summary:

In October 2024, Rooted Philanthropic led a learning trip to Atlanta, GA, bringing together Technical Assistance (TA) providers from the East Side of St. Paul to explore entrepreneurial ecosystem models and service delivery strategies. Attendees included entrepreneurs, business support organizations, government representatives, and funders, including The Mali Center, Latino Economic Development Center, Asian Economic Development Alliance, African Economic Development Services, Neighborhood Development Center, East Side Neighborhood Development Company, Women Venture, Hmong American Partnership, East Side Area Business Association (ESABA), the City of St. Paul, Ramsey County and funders: Rooted Philanthropic, East Side Funders Group, and the McKnight Foundation.

Key takeaways from the trip included **new insights on scalability**, a shared interest in **strategic service delivery**, and the establishment of **stronger relationships among stakeholders**. Since returning, participating organizations have been identifying **overlapping services and collaboration opportunities** to improve efficiency and create **innovative, locally tailored solutions** for East Side entrepreneurs as well as broadening the coalition to other organizations serving the East Side.

To build on this momentum, ESABA, on behalf of a coalition of service providers, seeks an **experienced consultant** to lead a **design process** for a **Small Business Technical Assistance and Loan Hub**. This consultant will facilitate conversations, foster learning and collaboration, and conduct research to assess current conditions and opportunities. The consultant will deliver a **comprehensive report** outlining a shared vision and implementation strategies to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Project Goals:

- **Enhance access to capital** by developing creative tools and fostering relationships between funders, technical assistance providers, and small businesses.
- **Streamline service delivery** through “matchmaking” approaches and seamless handoff protocols that leverage each technical assistance organization’s strengths without duplication.
- **Promote innovation** by integrating successful existing models with new approaches tailored to East Side entrepreneurs' needs.
- **Create synergy among service providers** including outreach to ensure businesses can access support efficiently and equitably without unnecessary competition.

Through this initiative, we aim to **remove barriers for East Side entrepreneurs**, maximize culturally and language appropriate services and local resources, and create a **thriving, interconnected ecosystem** that fosters business success and economic growth.

Proposals Due: **March 15, 2025**

Timeline: **one year** - Four phases of the work to take place in 2025:

- Convening and facilitation – Spring and summer
- Research, SWOT analysis and Smart Goals - Spring
- Discerning and reporting - Summer and Fall
- Design network solutions that intentionally meet the goals - End of Year
 - How do we launch, fund, and sustain tools to meet our goals?
 - How do we measure this overall work to know it's successful?

\$50,000 has been allotted for this consultancy.

Required Qualifications and Deliverables:

ESABA is seeking a community-based partner who can implement and manage this initiative. This partner can be either a nonprofit or for-profit entity or individual. Specific qualifications we are looking for include:

- Prior experience guiding effective program design in community and economic development
- Preferred: Prior experience in culturally competent and multi-language program design
- A Strong Base of Knowledge of the East Side, a plus – required ability to learn about What is the East Side and what does it need?
- Ability to create a Facilitation Plan and schedule for these deliverables:
 - Defining who we are: solidify who the WE is
 - Develop MOUs, to formalize commitment to the process
 - Identify the gaps in our service delivery - needed tools or roles for coordination
 - Initial input and research to design a roadmap to create the Small Business Hub
- High value on process that delivers those things with attention to:
 - Getting community and entrepreneurs involved in the conversation
 - Developing relationships and building stronger connections inside the group
 - Results we can reflect to our community
 - Transition and succession tools, a repository for the work to make it accessible
 - Identify next steps for considering Strategic Plan and Strategic Management

ESABA's Mission: Advocate Success for the Diverse East Side Business Community

For more information and to apply contact:

Paris Dunning, Executive Director, ESABA

paris@esaba.org

Cell 952-994-3746

work: 651-335-0986