RFP-CASE-462835 — Trusted Connector

Question Number	Question	Answer
1	Eligibility: Is a for-profit limited liability company eligible to submit a proposal as a primary applicant under the "other mission-aligned entities" language in the Qualifications section?	Yes. For-profit limited liability companies (LLCs) are eligible as primary applicants under the "other mission-aligned entities" provision (Section I-C).
2	Geography: May a proposal serve a defined local area, such as a single city or a small group of communities, and is there a minimum number of entrepreneurs a bidder must propose to reach?	Yes. Proposals may serve a defined geography, population, industry, or community, including a single city or a small group of communities (Sections I-C and II-A.5(e)). The RFP does not establish a minimum number of entrepreneurs; Bidders estimate their reach and the basis for that estimate (Section II-A.5(e)).
3	Partners: May a bidder name partner organizations as subcontractors, may one organization be named as a subcontractor in more than one proposal, and what is the process and timing for MEDC approval of subcontractors?	Yes. Subcontractors must be listed in the proposal (Section II-A.8), and subcontracting requires MEDC's prior specific written consent (Section IV-A.10). The Bidder remains responsible for all contractual activities (Section IV-B). The RFP does not address one organization being named as a subcontractor in more than one proposal or the timing of MEDC approval.
4	Federal good standing: Does an active Unique Entity Identifier satisfy the requirement for an Attestation of Good Standing with the Federal Government, or is a specific form required?	No. A UEI does not by itself satisfy the requirement; Section II-A.1 lists the UEI and the federal attestation separately. No form is prescribed. A signed attestation from an authorized representative confirming the organization is not suspended, debarred, or otherwise excluded from federal awards or contracts is acceptable; an active SAM.gov registration may be included as support (Section II-A.1).
5	Insurance: Is the $1,000,000 errors and omissions coverage required at the time of proposal submission, or only upon award?	Only upon award. Errors and omissions insurance of not less than $1,000,000 is a Contract requirement (Section IV-A.9); proof of coverage is not required at proposal submission.
6	Prior experience: For the track record requirement, does experience delivering outreach and enrollment for a corporate or nonprofit program count as relevant prior experience?	Yes, if the Bidder shows how that experience aligns with the RFP objectives, such as engaging hard-to-reach populations, building trusted relationships, identifying needs, and making referrals, with relevant outcomes (Section II-A.6).
7	Audit requirement: Section II-A.1 of both RFPs requires 501(c)(3) organizations to provide an attestation of two years of third-party financial audits. Is this mandatory for all nonprofit bidders, including organizations that have not otherwise been required to obtain independent audits? If alternatives are permitted, what financial documentation would MEDC accept?	The two-year third-party audit attestation applies to 501(c)(3) Bidders (Section II-A.1). A 501(c)(3) Bidder that was not required to obtain a third-party audit may instead submit CPA-reviewed financial statements or IRS Form 990s for the same period.
8	Fiscal sponsorship: May a nonprofit participate through a fiscal sponsor? If so, must the fiscal sponsor serve as the applicant and contract holder, with the nonprofit delivering the proposed services?	Yes. The fiscal sponsor must serve as the Bidder and contract holder and is responsible for all contractual obligations (Section IV-B). Describe the arrangement in the proposal, identify any separate entity delivering services as a subcontractor (Section II-A.8), and include a copy of the fiscal sponsorship agreement with the Technical Proposal.
9	Audits under fiscal sponsorship: Would the fiscal sponsor's two years of third-party financial audits satisfy the requirement, or would the organization delivering the services also need its own audits? What documentation would be required to establish the sponsorship arrangement?	Yes. The Section II-A.1 requirements, including the audit attestation or alternative documentation, apply to the fiscal sponsor as the Bidder; the sponsored organization does not need its own audits. Include the fiscal sponsorship agreement with the Technical Proposal. Fiscal sponsor fees must be identified in the Price Proposal, and combined sponsor fees and indirect costs may not exceed 15% of MTDC.
10	Subcontractor requirements: If fiscal sponsorship is not permitted, may a nonprofit participate as a subcontractor under a qualified lead bidder? Would the two-year audit requirement also apply to that subcontractor?	Yes, with MEDC's prior specific written consent (Sections II-A.8 and IV-A.10). The two-year audit attestation applies only to the Bidder, not to subcontractors (Section II-A.1).
11	Applying for both opportunities: May the same organization submit separate proposals for, and receive awards under, both RFPs if the scopes of work and budgets are distinct and do not duplicate services or costs?	Yes. An organization may submit proposals under more than one of these RFPs, but only one proposal per RFP. Each proposal is evaluated separately under that RFP's criteria (Section III-D).
12	Are Michigan-based for-profit businesses eligible as prime bidders under the category of "other mission-aligned entities," provided they demonstrate established trusted relationships with their target entrepreneurial communities?	Yes. For-profit limited liability companies (LLCs) are eligible as primary applicants under the "other mission-aligned entities" provision (Section I-C).
13	May a prime bidder partner with established community organizations as subcontractors to deliver trusted outreach and high-touch engagement?	Yes. Subcontractors must be listed in the proposal (Section II-A.8), and subcontracting requires MEDC's prior specific written consent (Section IV-A.10). The Bidder remains responsible for all contractual activities (Section IV-B).
14	Are reasonable costs for operating, configuring, and maintaining a technology platform eligible as part of a Trusted Connector services proposal, provided the primary deliverables are entrepreneur engagement and verified referrals?	Yes. Reasonable technology platform costs may be included in the Price Proposal if they directly support the RFP deliverables, such as engagement, referral coordination, outcome tracking, and reporting. Identify and justify these costs (Section II-B); inclusion does not guarantee approval.
15	May existing software developed before the contract remain the intellectual property of the contractor, subject to the contract's licensing, reporting, and data-access requirements?	The RFP has no intellectual property clause; final terms will be set in the executed Contract. Any work product developed by Contractor in performance of this Agreement shall be the sole property of the MEDC and the MEDC shall have the right to copyright or otherwise protect its rights in, and ownership of, the work product.
16	Does MEDC require a specific case-management system or data format for recording entrepreneur referrals, outcomes, and follow-up activities?	MEDC will provide report templates and metric definitions to selected contractors; reporting requirements will be defined in the executed agreement. Reports are uploaded to the MEDC Salesforce portal, with email as a backup. Bidders should describe their proposed data collection methodology (Section II-A.5(f)). Progress reports are submitted quarterly (Section IV-D).
17	May bidders propose cross-regional or statewide services focused on a specific underserved entrepreneurial population rather than one geographic region?	Yes. Bidders may define their focus by geography, population, industry, or entrepreneurial community (Sections I-C and II-A.5(e)).
18	What expectations apply to referrals or coordination with organizations currently funded through MEDC's Trusted Connector network and Small Business Support Hubs?	Trusted Connectors must coordinate with the Small Business Support Hubs and other statewide and regional providers, make referrals to specialized providers, and avoid unnecessary duplication so services function as a connective layer, not a parallel system (Sections I-D.2–3 and II-A.5(b)–(c)).
19	Please confirm if for-profit businesses are eligible to apply?	Yes. For-profit limited liability companies (LLCs) are eligible as primary applicants under the "other mission-aligned entities" provision (Section I-C). (See Q1.)
20	Other than the description of "hard-to-reach small business" - please confirm if there are any target entrepreneurs (or industries) in mind?	No specific industries are targeted. The RFP focuses on hard-to-reach Michigan entrepreneurs and small businesses, particularly in underserved and economically or geographically isolated communities (Sections I-A and I-B). Bidders define the population they will serve (Section II-A.5(e)).
21	Would small business real estate developers be a qualifying entrepreneurial group?	Yes, if the Bidder shows how the population aligns with the program's focus on underserved or hard-to-reach small businesses. The RFP does not restrict eligibility by industry.
22	Are matching funds required or encouraged? If no matching funds are proposed, will it negatively impact scoring?	No. The RFP does not establish a minimum match or leverage requirement. The selected Bidder must document the leveraged funding sources identified in its proposal (Section I-D.7). Leveraged funding is not a technical evaluation criterion (Section III-D).
23	How is the 15-pts for "target population & reach served" scored? What is the criteria to earn full points?	Target Population & Reach Served is worth 10 points (not 15) and is scored on the response to Section II-A.5(e): the primary geography, population, industry, or community served and the basis for estimating entrepreneurs reached and served (Section III-D). Sub-criteria are not published.
24	Are two years of independent financial audits required as a condition of eligibility? If not, may a bidder submit its most recently reviewed financial statements, prior year federal tax filings, and an attestation explaining the financial records available?	The two-year third-party audit attestation applies to 501(c)(3) Bidders (Section II-A.1). 501(c)(3) Bidders that were not required to obtain a third-party audit may instead submit CPA-reviewed financial statements or IRS Form 990s for the same period.
25	Are there any other financial documents MEDC would accept in place of two years of audited financial statements?	Yes. 501(c)(3) Bidders that were not required to obtain a third-party audit may submit CPA-reviewed financial statements or IRS Form 990s for the same period (Section II-A.1).
26	Must the financial reporting, grant management, fraud prevention, and whistleblower policies be formally adopted by the proposal deadline, or may they be adopted before contract execution?	No. Financial reporting, grant management, and fraud-prevention policies must be formally adopted and in place by the proposal deadline. The proposal must describe them (Section II-A.1), and the selected Bidder must maintain them and provide them to MEDC on request (Section I-D.8). A whistleblower policy is not required by the RFP.
27	Does "other mission-aligned entities" in Section I-C include a Michigan for-profit consulting LLC that meets the experience and capacity requirements?	Yes. For-profit limited liability companies (LLCs) are eligible as primary applicants under the "other mission-aligned entities" provision (Section I-C). (See Q1.)

Question Number	Question	Answer
28	Can an eligible lead organization include a community-engagement LLC as a subcontractor? Which good-standing, UEI and financial-control requirements would apply separately to that subcontractor?	Yes, with MEDC's prior specific written consent (Sections II-A.8 and IV-A.10). The Section II-A.1 documents are required of the Bidder only. For subcontractors, provide the firm name, address, contact person, description of the subcontracted work, and information on its organization and abilities (Section II-A.8).
29	How should a bidder document relevant work its proposed project manager completed through previous employers or client engagements? Must the business-assistance outcomes requested in Section II-A-6 have been delivered under the bidding entity itself?	Describe the project manager's prior work, including work for previous employers or clients, in the biography and resume under Project Staffing (Section II-A.7). Section II-A.6 covers the Bidder's own prior projects and outcomes.
30	What are the anticipated start date, contract duration and payment structure?	The estimated term is January 1–December 31, 2027, which MEDC may extend, subject to available funding (Section IV-A.1). Invoicing and reimbursement are quarterly; payment is made after the MEDC Contract Manager approves invoices demonstrating the work was appropriately performed (Section IV-A.2).
31	Is there a minimum match or leveraged-funding requirement under Section I-D-7, and can documented in-kind support count?	No. The RFP does not establish a minimum match or leverage requirement. The selected Bidder must document the leveraged funding sources identified in its proposal (Section I-D.7). The RFP does not address in-kind support.
32	Could you please clarify whether Small Business Support Hubs or organizations currently partnering with Small Business Support Hubs are eligible to apply for the Trusted Connector Grant?	Yes. Small Business Support Hubs and their partners may submit proposals. Each proposal is evaluated on its own merits under Section III-D, independent of other MEDC programs or awards; MEDC may consider a Bidder's prior performance with MEDC (Section II-A.6). Services must avoid unnecessary duplication (Section I-D.2).
33	[Reference: Section I-D, Deliverables #2–3; Section II-A, Question 5(b–c)] Can MEDC clarify whether Trusted Connector awardees may provide direct technical assistance to entrepreneurs in addition to making referrals? If permitted, how should awardees distinguish these activities from services funded through other MEDC programs to avoid duplication?	Yes, on a limited basis. Light technical assistance tied to needs identification and referral is permitted, and technical assistance provided is a reported measure (Section I-D.6). Services must function as a connective layer alongside the Small Business Support Hubs, not a parallel service-delivery system, and must avoid unnecessary duplication (Sections I-B, I-D.2, and I-D.3). Bidders must explain how duplication will be avoided (Section II-A.5(b)).
34	[Reference: Section I-D, Deliverable #6; Section II-A, Question 5(f)] Are awardees required to track and report all performance metrics listed in the RFP, or may they select metrics relevant to the businesses and populations they serve? For example, would metrics related to patents or technology commercialization be optional for organizations primarily supporting traditional small businesses?	No. Track and report each measure in Section I-D.6 that applies to the businesses served; where a measure (for example, patents acquired) does not apply, report zero. Bidders may also propose additional measures (Section II-A.5(f)).
35	[Regarding Section II-A, Technical Proposal, Question 5(f)] Can MEDC provide examples of the methods, tools, or reporting practices previous Trusted Connector grant recipients have used to track and report program outcomes? Additionally, are there specific reporting formats, templates, or measurement standards that MEDC recommends or requires?	MEDC will not share prior-recipient examples. MEDC will provide report templates and metric definitions to selected contractors, and reports are uploaded to the MEDC Salesforce portal, with email as a backup. Bidders should describe their proposed data collection methods (Section II-A.5(f)).
36	[Reference: Section I-D, Deliverable #7] Does MEDC require applicants to provide matching funds or demonstrate a minimum amount of leveraged funding? If not, what documentation is expected to demonstrate other funding sources supporting the proposed project?	No. The RFP does not establish a minimum match or leverage requirement. The selected Bidder must document the leveraged funding sources identified in its proposal (Section I-D.7). Documentation should identify each funding source and amount.
37	[Reference: Section II-B, Price Proposal] Can MEDC clarify which expenses are allowable under the Trusted Connector contract, including personnel, outreach, technology, travel, and administrative costs? Are there any limitations on indirect or administrative expenses?	Indirect costs are limited to 15% of modified total direct costs (MTDC), consistent with the federal de minimis rate (2 CFR 200.414(f)); federally negotiated or previously approved rates do not apply because these are not federal funds. The RFP does not list allowable expense categories or otherwise cap administrative costs. All costs must be shown in the Price Proposal expense schedule by service and activity (Section II-B).
38	[Reference: Section II-A, Question 5(e); Section II-B, Price Proposal] Has MEDC established minimum expectations or benchmarks for the number of businesses served, referrals completed, or cost per company served? Additionally, how does MEDC define a company as having been successfully served for reporting purposes?	No. The RFP does not establish minimum benchmarks for businesses served, referrals, or cost per company. Bidders estimate reach (Section II-A.5(e)) and cost per company served (Section II-B). Success is measured by meaningful connections to services, capital, and opportunities, not reach alone (Section I-B).
39	Are current Trusted Connector program awardees eligible to submit proposals under this RFP?	Yes. Each proposal is evaluated on its own merits under Section III-D, independent of other MEDC programs or awards; MEDC may consider a Bidder's prior performance with MEDC (Section II-A.6).
40	May an organization submit multiple proposals targeting different populations or geographic areas? If permitted, does the $200,000 maximum award apply collectively to the organization?	No. Each legal entity may submit one proposal under this RFP; that proposal may address multiple populations or areas (Section II-A.5(e)). The $200,000 maximum applies per organization (Section I-B).
41	Can Trusted Connector funding be used to expand the outreach, navigation, referral, and follow up capacity of an organization that already provides entrepreneurial or small business support services?	Yes, if the activities align with the RFP deliverables and avoid unnecessary duplication of services available elsewhere in the ecosystem (Sections I-D.2–3).
42	Can an organization apply individually for the Trusted Connector Grant and also be a part of a Regional SBSH application too? Or does one negate the other?	Yes. An organization may submit a Trusted Connector proposal and also participate in a Regional SBSH application; one does not affect the other. Each proposal is evaluated on its own merits under Section III-D, independent of other MEDC programs or awards; MEDC may consider a Bidder's prior performance with MEDC (Section II-A.6).
43	Can this grant be used to help fund organizational capacity for research to spearhead a capital project that will benefit entrepreneurs and small businesses tremendously once it is launched?	No. Funding supports outreach, engagement, needs identification, and referrals to existing resources (Sections I-A and I-D). Research or capacity-building for a future capital project is outside the scope.
44	Partnerships: When a proposal includes a lead bidder and one or more partner organizations, which factors does the Joint Evaluation Committee weigh most heavily—for example how responsibilities are divided, each partner's track record, or the length of the relationships among them?	Partnership proposals are evaluated on the same criteria in Section III-D. The RFP does not weight individual partnership characteristics, such as relationship length. Bidders should describe each organization's role, relevant experience, and how the partnership supports delivery.
45	Evaluation: Are the seven scoring criteria applied to the proposed team as a whole, or to the lead bidder alone?	The criteria are applied to the overall proposal, including the lead Bidder and any partners or subcontractors (Section III-D). The lead Bidder remains responsible for all contractual requirements (Section IV-B).
46	Letters of support: Section 6 asks for the contact information of a responsible official for each prior project. Will MEDC also consider letters of support or referral from past clients and community partners? If so, is there a limit on length or number of attachments, and are they scored?	Letters of support are not requested or scored. Attachments should be limited to those required by the RFP or essential to understanding the proposal (Sections II and III-C). MEDC can accept a maximum of 30 MB per email, and PDF format is preferred. Larger submissions may be sent in multiple emails, with each subject line identifying the sequence (e.g., "message 1 of 3") (Section II-C). The Technical and Price Proposals may be submitted in a single email, provided they are separate, clearly labeled documents, using the subject line "RFP-CASE-462835 Technical and Price Proposals" plus the company name (Section II-C).
47	References: Are there any requirements on the type of organization or the size of a prior program that can serve as a reference, or may references come from corporate partners, financial institutions, and other community organizations?	No restrictions apply. For each qualifying project, provide a description, costs, dates, and the name, address, and phone number of the client's responsible official (Section II-A.6).
48	Do you have a specific target number of businesses that should receive services? If so, what are the targets for each RFP?	No. The RFP does not establish a target number. Bidders estimate the number of entrepreneurs reached and served (Section II-A.5(e)) and companies served (Section II-B).
49	Do you have targets for types of assistance (1 on 1, group, referrals, etc.)?	No. The RFP does not establish targets by type of assistance.
50	What entity bears the responsibility of recruiting business participants related to the services?	The selected Contractor is responsible for identifying, engaging, and referring hard-to-reach entrepreneurs (Sections I-A and I-D.1).
51	If the MEDC is responsible for recruiting business participants, what is the budget and plan for recruitment?	Not applicable. MEDC is not responsible for recruiting participants; the selected Contractor is (see Q50).
52	If the service provider is responsible for recruiting business participants, is there separate funding available for the cost of recruitment?	No. Recruitment costs must be included in the Price Proposal expense schedule (Section II-B).
53	[Re: financial audit requirement] Please advise if this requirement for all entities regardless of revenue requirement, or if this requirement is for 501(c)3's only.	The requirement applies only to 501(c)(3) organizations, regardless of revenue (Section II-A.1).
54	[Re: financial audit requirement] Please specify if Chambers of Commerce designated as a 501(c)(6) do not need to submit audited financials.	Correct. The two-year audit attestation applies only to 501(c)(3) organizations (Section II-A.1); 501(c)(6) chambers of commerce are not required to submit audited financials.
55	Section II-A requires 501(c)(3) bidders to attest to two years of third-party financial audits. Will MEDC accept a CPA review for a prior year in which the organization fell below the audit threshold, together with documentation that the current year's audit is in progress?	Yes. A CPA review or IRS Form 990 is acceptable for any fiscal year in which the organization was not required to obtain a third-party audit (Section II-A.1).

Question Number	Question	Answer
56	Are organizations currently funded as Small Business Support Hub partners eligible to bid as Trusted Connectors, provided the proposed target population and activities are distinct from and not duplicative of the SBSH scope of work?	Yes. Each proposal is evaluated on its own merits under Section III-D, independent of other MEDC programs or awards; MEDC may consider a Bidder's prior performance with MEDC (Section II-A.6). Services must complement the Hubs and avoid unnecessary duplication (Sections I-D.2–3).
57	May a lead bidder subcontract with community partners, including tribal organizations, to carry out outreach within a defined region? If so, may subcontract costs include stipends for those partners?	Yes. Subcontractors must be listed in the proposal (Section II-A.8), and subcontracting requires MEDC's prior specific written consent (Section IV-A.10). The Bidder remains responsible for all contractual activities (Section IV-B). The RFP does not address stipends; any subcontract costs must be shown in the Price Proposal (Section II-B).
58	Within a Trusted Connector award, may the contractor provide light technical assistance directly, or are funded activities limited to outreach, needs identification and referral?	Yes, on a limited basis. Light technical assistance tied to needs identification and referral is permitted, and technical assistance provided is a reported measure (Section I-D.6). Services must function as a connective layer alongside the Small Business Support Hubs, not a parallel service-delivery system, and must avoid unnecessary duplication (Sections I-B, I-D.2, and I-D.3).
59	Will MEDC consider geographic distribution, including the Upper Peninsula, when selecting awardees?	MEDC may consider geographic distribution, including the Upper Peninsula, in its best-value award determination (Sections I-A and III-D, Step III). Proposals are scored on the criteria in Section III-D.
60	MEDC's RFP describes Trusted Connectors as a "connective layer" working alongside Small Business Support Hubs rather than as a parallel service-delivery system. For regions operating a collaborative SBSH model with shared intake, referral, navigation and specialized service providers, would MEDC prefer Trusted Connector proposals to be coordinated at the regional level, or for individual organizations within a SBSH Hub to submit complementary proposals tied to the same regional SBSH infrastructure?	Either approach is acceptable; the RFP does not prefer one. Proposals should show how services complement existing SBSH infrastructure, avoid duplication, and expand access for hard-to-reach entrepreneurs, and are evaluated on the criteria in Section III-D.
61	Applicant eligibility: Does the reference to "other mission-aligned entities" include Michigan-based, for-profit LLCs that can demonstrate the required qualifications and capacity?	Yes. For-profit limited liability companies (LLCs) are eligible as primary applicants under the "other mission-aligned entities" provision (Section I-C). (See Q1.)
62	Subcontracting opportunities: Can a qualified primary bidder include a for-profit company such as RETURN as a proposed subcontractor for specific services, including business-needs assessments, resource navigation, referral coordination, and progress tracking?	Yes. The RFP does not restrict subcontractors by tax status. Subcontractors must be listed in the proposal (Section II-A.8), and subcontracting requires MEDC's prior specific written consent (Section IV-A.10).
63	Participation requirements: What documentation, insurance, or additional approvals would be required of a proposed subcontractor, and at what stage must MEDC's written approval be obtained?	The Section II-A.1 documents and insurance are required of the Bidder/Contractor (Sections II-A.1 and IV-A.9). For subcontractors, provide the firm name, address, contact person, description of the subcontracted work, and information on its organization and abilities (Section II-A.8). Subcontracting requires MEDC's prior specific written consent (Section IV-A.10); timing is not specified.
64	Indirect Cost Rate: What is the maximum allowable or required MEDC indirect cost rate for budget calculations under this application?	Indirect costs are limited to 15% of modified total direct costs (MTDC), consistent with the federal de minimis rate (2 CFR 200.414(f)). Because these are not federal funds, federally negotiated or previously approved rates do not apply. Show indirect costs in the Price Proposal (Section II-B).
65	Firm Rates vs. Contract Award Execution: Exhibit A and Section II-B state that quoted rates must remain firm for the duration of the contract. Will MEDC allow budget and staffing adjustments during the final contract negotiation phase based on the actual award amount granted?	Yes. Line-item budget adjustments to reflect the final award amount may be made prior to contract execution. Once the Contract is executed, quoted rates are firm for its duration (Sections II-B and III-L).
66	Financial Audit Requirements: Section II-A(1) requires nonprofit applicants to provide an attestation of two years of third-party financial audits. Would MEDC accept alternative financial documentation, such as independently prepared financial statements, CPA-reviewed financial statements, or other financial accountability records, from organizations that have not completed two years of formal independent audits?	Yes. 501(c)(3) Bidders that were not required to obtain a third-party audit may submit CPA-reviewed financial statements or IRS Form 990s for the same period (Section II-A.1).
67	Audit Period: Must the required financial audits cover the two most recently completed fiscal years, or would audits from any two previous fiscal years satisfy this requirement?	The RFP does not require specific years. Bidders should provide documentation for the two most recently completed fiscal years available.
68	Number of Awards: Given the anticipated $2 million allocation and $200,000 maximum award per bidder, does MEDC anticipate selecting approximately 10 contractors, or could additional organizations be selected depending on the proposed contract amounts?	The RFP does not set a number of awards. The allocation is up to $2,000,000, with a maximum of $200,000 per organization, and MEDC may select one or more Bidders (Sections I-A and I-B).
69	Geographic Coverage: Can applicants propose serving a defined geographic region, such as Southeast Michigan, or will broader geographic coverage receive additional consideration during the evaluation process?	Yes. Bidders may define a primary geography (Section II-A.5(e)). Breadth of geographic coverage is not a scoring criterion (Section III-D).
70	Target Population: Can applicants primarily focus on a specific underserved population, such as Latino and Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs, while remaining accessible to other underserved small businesses?	Yes. Bidders may focus on a defined population or entrepreneurial community (Sections I-C and II-A.5(e)).
71	Subcontracting: Can nonprofit applicants engage independent consulting firms to deliver core activities such as needs assessments, resource navigation, referrals, and performance tracking? Are there any limitations on the percentage of contract funding allocated to subcontractors?	Yes. Subcontractors must be listed in the proposal (Section II-A.8), and subcontracting requires MEDC's prior specific written consent (Section IV-A.10). The Bidder remains responsible for all contractual activities (Section IV-B). The RFP does not limit the share of the budget that may be subcontracted.
72	Performance Expectations: Does MEDC have minimum annual expectations for the number of entrepreneurs served, needs assessments completed, or referrals made under a $200,000 contract, or should applicants establish their own performance targets based on their proposed service model and demonstrated capacity?	Bidders establish their own targets. The RFP does not set minimum benchmarks for entrepreneurs served, assessments, or referrals; Bidders estimate reach (Section II-A.5(e)) and cost per company served (Section II-B).
73	Allowable Costs: Are there any restrictions or percentage limitations on project management compensation, independent contractor fees, administrative expenses, community outreach, technology, or indirect costs within the proposed contract budget?	Indirect costs are limited to 15% of modified total direct costs (MTDC), consistent with the federal de minimis rate (2 CFR 200.414(f)); federally negotiated or previously approved rates do not apply because these are not federal funds. The RFP sets no other percentage limits on cost categories. All costs must be shown in the Price Proposal expense schedule (Section II-B).
74	Would Trusted Connector grant funding allow a regional SBSH 2.0 Hub-and-Spoke collaborative to contract with an external public relations or communications firm to develop and implement a coordinated awareness and outreach campaign specifically designed to reach underserved and hard-to-reach entrepreneurs, increase their awareness of available business support services, and drive engagement with the regional network? If so, would these contracted services be considered an eligible program expense?	Yes, if the services directly support Trusted Connector objectives: reaching underserved and hard-to-reach entrepreneurs, increasing awareness of resources, and facilitating meaningful connections. Identify the firm as a subcontractor (Section II-A.8) and justify the costs in the Price Proposal (Section II-B).
75	Are the services meant to stay contained in one MEDC region? Will companies located outside the Region boundary need to be excluded from reporting?	Services are not limited to one MEDC region. The Bidder must serve the geography, population, industry, or community stated in its proposal (Section I-D.5); the RFP does not address reporting on businesses outside that area.
76	How much overlap is expected with SBSH 2.0 service providers?	Services should complement SBSH 2.0 providers, not duplicate them. Trusted Connectors function as a connective layer alongside the Hubs (Sections I-B and I-D.2–3).
77	Can our proposal be geographically focused that overlaps our footprint as an organization or does it have to be a statewide proposal?	Statewide coverage is not required. Proposals may focus on a defined geography, population, industry, or community (Sections I-C and II-A.5(e)).
78	Is the $200,000 maximum per proposal or per organization? Can one proposal serve multiple communities or regions, or should it focus on one defined population or geography?	The $200,000 maximum applies per organization (Section I-B), and each legal entity may submit one proposal under this RFP. A proposal may serve multiple communities or focus on one population or geography (Section II-A.5(e)).
79	How does MEDC define "hard-to-reach"? Are there specific populations or geographies you want prioritized?	Hard-to-reach entrepreneurs are those outside the support ecosystem due to access and navigation gaps, especially in underserved and economically or geographically isolated communities (Section I-B). No populations or geographies are prioritized.
80	Will organizations that received FY25 Trusted Connector funding get any preference or scoring consideration?	No. The RFP provides no preference for prior recipients; proposals are scored on the criteria in Section III-D. MEDC may consider a Bidder's prior performance with MEDC (Section II-A.6).

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81	Can funds pay for direct technical assistance, or are services limited to outreach, needs identification, and referrals? Where do you draw the line between connecting people to services and duplicating them?	Yes, on a limited basis. Light technical assistance tied to needs identification and referral is permitted, and technical assistance provided is a reported measure (Section I-D.6). Services must function as a connective layer alongside the Small Business Support Hubs, not a parallel service-delivery system, and must avoid unnecessary duplication (Sections I-B, I-D.2, and I-D.3). Ongoing or specialized assistance available from a Hub or other provider should be referred.
82	What counts as a “meaningful connection” for reporting? Does a referral count only once the entrepreneur has actually engaged with the provider, and how should we track that?	The RFP does not define "meaningful connection." The Bidder must provide evidence that services or referrals led to meaningful connections to services, capital, or growth opportunities, using its proposed methodology (Sections I-D.6 and II-A.5(f)).
83	Will MEDC share a list of the Small Business Support Hubs and their coverage areas, along with a referral process or shared platform?	Yes. The list of Small Business Support Hubs and their coverage areas is available at https://www.michiganbusiness.org/services/small-business-support-hub/sbsh-finder/. The SBSH 2.0 program uses an established referral tracking process, and selected Contractors will coordinate referrals with the Hubs (Section I-D.3).
84	Are all the measures in Deliverable 6, including patents and technology commercialized, expected from every bidder, or only the ones that fit the population being served?	Only those that apply. Track and report each measure in Section I-D.6 that applies to the businesses served; where a measure (for example, patents acquired) does not apply, report zero. Bidders may also propose additional measures (Section II-A.5(f)).
85	Are language access and translation costs allowable?	Yes. Reasonable language access, translation, and interpretation costs that directly support outreach, engagement, and referrals may be included; identify and justify them in the Price Proposal (Section II-B).
86	Could you please clarify whether an applicant may propose a service area limited to the municipal boundaries of a single city, rather than an entire county or region?	Yes. Bidders may define the geography they serve; the RFP sets no minimum service-area size (Sections I-C and II-A.5(e)).
87	Would a current SBSH hub be eligible and competitive to apply for additional funding to expand services under SBSH 2.0?	No. This RFP funds Trusted Connector services, not Small Business Support Hub services (Section I-A).
88	Would a hub be eligible to apply for a grant that would allow us to expand the scope of services and capacity in these underserved areas?	No. This RFP funds Trusted Connector services, not Small Business Support Hub services (Section I-A).
89	Each grant opportunity states that technical assistance is directed to helping Michigan small businesses. Must small businesses receiving assistance under each grant be physically located in Michigan? Or, if they are located outside of Michigan, can they register in LARA to fulfill the Michigan requirement?	Yes. Services are for entrepreneurs and small businesses located in Michigan (Section I-A); a business located outside Michigan does not become eligible by registering with LARA. Cannabis-related businesses, gambling activities, adult-oriented businesses, and activities prohibited by federal or state law are ineligible for MEDC support.
90	Reference Section IV - the Contract Terms and Conditions, item 2) Payments. Section states that “payments under the contract will be made monthly and after receipt and approval by the MEDC Contract Manager of billing statements/invoices demonstrating that the work for which payment is being requested was appropriately performed.” Why is there not a set grant dollar amount being awarded in each of the grant opportunities?	Invoicing and reimbursement are quarterly; payment is made after the MEDC Contract Manager approves invoices demonstrating the work was appropriately performed (Section IV-A.2).
91	If payment is made as stated in T&Cs above, what are the expected payment terms? Net 15 or Net 30? Is there an opportunity for remedy if an invoice is not approved for payment?	Payment timelines will be established in the executed Contract. Invoices are submitted quarterly and paid after MEDC Contract Manager approval (Section IV-A.2); disputed charges will be resolved with the Contractor before the affected charges are approved.
92	Does a privately owned visitor center with many community connections fit the requirements of a mission-aligned entity?	Possibly. A privately owned visitor center must demonstrate a track record of engaging hard-to-reach entrepreneurs and the capacity to identify needs and connect businesses to resources (Section I-C). Community connections alone do not satisfy the qualifications.