

CEDAR RAPIDS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIVISION
IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITY FUNDING PRIORITY LIST
March 2021

I. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT & FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATIONS

- A. Coordinate initial response to any site search data requests received by staff in the Economic Development Services Division.
 - i. Scope of response activity will include data requests made through Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) Requests for Information (RFI) and/or other project selection processes.
 - ii. Application tracking, timely reporting of outcomes to City staff, and overall performance measurement will be required components of program administration.

- B. Submit applications on behalf of Cedar Rapids companies seeking state economic development program awards:
 - i. Assist local companies with initial tasks required to determine eligibility for grant funding such as completing an IEDA Iowa Project Questionnaire (IPQ).
 - ii. Submit program applications for businesses relating to post-disaster recovery programs
 - iii. Submit program applications for businesses as part of ongoing response to COVID-19 disruption.
 - iv. Prepare and submit all required documents and supporting materials necessary to secure funding through grant applications.
 - v. Examples of past, relevant work include but are not limited to the following:
 - IEDA Redevelopment Tax Credits Program for Brownfield and Grayfield Sites
 - IEDA Workforce Housing Tax Credits
 - New Market Tax Credits (NMTC)
 - Iowa DOT RISE grants
 - Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) grant programs
 - Post-disaster recovery grants or loans
 - Any and all other applicable assistance programs relating to City economic development goals and objectives

- C. Provide general and specialized consulting services, including technical assistance to help guide companies through various economic development grant application processes. At a minimum, services provided shall encompass pre-planning for or evaluation of funding opportunities, process coordination for applicant, submittal of grant applications, communication with funding agency staff as well as compliance phase reporting when an award is received.

- D. Prepare grant applications to pursue economic development funding opportunities on behalf of Cedar Rapids as directed by City staff.

- E. Act as fiscal agent (as needed) for administration of grant awards.

II. SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- A. Create flexible small business support programming.
 - i. Any initiative(s) should seek to increase both the number of small businesses headquartered in Cedar Rapids as well as the percentage of total citywide employment resulting from small business growth.
 - ii. High value concepts should emphasize the following:
 - Develop generalized guidance on how to start a small business in Cedar Rapids, which includes a resource guide(s) and appropriate marketing materials.
 - Provide assistance to companies wanting to develop or enhance a business websites, engage in e-commerce or maintain digital marketing efforts

- Recognize and respond to changing market needs due to progression of the business cycle based on trends and conditions within the broader state or national economies.
 - Offer classes, business coaching and other in-person support service activities.
 - Utilize professional staff in service model that can act as dedicated points of contact to help answer questions or direct business owners to technical assistance or program resources when necessary.
 - Provide peer-to-peer networking opportunities and/or forums that promote exchange of best practices for small business owners.
 - Determine appropriate structure to offer customized services that respond to the unique needs of special populations.
 - Ensure assistance is available on a continuous basis and communicate through variety of channels to reach business owners.
 - Ensure Cedar Rapids businesses are represented in statewide initiatives to promote retail, restaurants and service providers by providing guidance and developing a review process to help business representation in existing marketing initiatives
 - Develop specialized programming to help mitigate the severe adverse impacts to storefront retail, independently owned retailers, dining, tourism and hospitality industries from the U.S. COVID-19 outbreak.
- B. Deliver comprehensive business development services that encourage retail business growth, especially program offerings that support the success of storefront establishments.
- C. Execute strategies to recruit individual retail franchisees to locate operations in Cedar Rapids.
- D. Work with the City of Cedar Rapids Economic Development Services team and local media partners to provide services and resource directories as a part of a crisis management strategy including:
 - i. Assembling small business assistance resources, developing a continued processing of reviewing resources and updating sources where businesses go naturally to get information (ex. local media partners like Gazette Communications).
 - ii. Provide relevant and accurate advice based on best practices or recommendations from authoritative resources
 - iii. Organize state recommended practices or mandates in an easy to use format for business reference.
 - iv. Coordinate and facilitate meetings with economic development partners that serve to develop support services and share information to response to immediate business needs.

III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MARKETING SERVICES

- A. Raise awareness and visibility of the development potential in Cedar Rapids Opportunity Zones.
- B. Assist City staff with RFPs for City-owned or controlled development sites:
 - i. Pursue marketing and promotion activities necessary to realize development goals and objectives.
- C. Support greater levels of private capital investment in Cedar Rapids' real estate sector by creating a program of developer recruitment.
- E. Create an action plan for business attraction marketing, including provision of marketing collateral, promoting location site-readiness in Cedar Rapids.
- F. Engage in corporate headquarters visits for interstate commerce companies on annual cycle, conducting in person or virtual meetings and other customer relationship management activities as appropriate, with executive management teams located outside of Cedar Rapids.

- G. By coordinating direct outreach for special projects, or as specific needs arise, help to enhance existing marketing communications reach for Economic Development Services Division staff to communicate with business owners within specific local areas of Cedar Rapids or to membership.
- H. Forward innovative solutions that make a positive contribution toward talent attraction, measurably expanding the size of the City's labor pool.
- I. Devise approaches to increase local labor force participation, especially within opportunity populations.
- J. Forward collaborative approaches promoting connection between stages of the educational system to retain young adult workers in Cedar Rapids, while helping guide them to higher-wage/higher skill occupations.
- K. Develop workforce solutions that sustain and increase the productivity of the local labor force through certification, apprenticeship, on-the-job-training, or other programming with expanded reach.
 - i. Efforts should emphasize in-demand occupations and technology workers and/or be relatable to the City's target industry clusters.
- L. Assist with the collection of data and continued data integrity of in demand occupational information for Cedar Rapids companies including, but not limited to occupational categorization, recruitment priorities, hiring considerations and education level requirements.
- M. Market City of Cedar Rapids workforce initiatives including but not limited to Urban Dreams and Gateways for Growth (ex. assist in the development and marketing of resources for employers to successfully recruit and retain marginalized populations)
- N. As part of a comprehensive recruitment and retention workforce strategy, assist with the promotion and development of cultural competency and DE&I training and discussion sessions.
- O. Assist with the development of a community education resource map and community asset mapping with a focus on how businesses can access resources or share information with their employees.
- P. Assist with marketing functions associated with City Business retention program:
 - i. Perform outreach to business community securing visits with Cedar Rapids employers
 - ii. Grow additional connections to industry through facilitation of visits with employers who have not previously participated in the *Cedar Rapids Business Survey*.
 - iii. Help to facilitate the participation of new companies in the City's Business Retention and Expansion Program.
 - iv. Perform other marketing, coordination or outreach tasks with the Cedar Rapids business community, under the supervision of the retention program administrator.
- Q. Promote international trade and exporting among local business community at the business-to-business (B2B) level.

IV. ENTREPRENEURS & STARTUPS

- A. Deliver technical assistance to entrepreneurs, startups, and growth stage companies through individualized consulting services.
 - i. At a minimum, technical assistance should draw on professional staff having direct experience in business management and leadership roles.
 - ii. Increase number of startup and early stage businesses operating in Cedar Rapids

- B. Operate business accelerator programming to provide companies access to mentorship, early stage capital, and a broad framework of support to encourage their development into stable, self-sufficient businesses that locate in Cedar Rapids.
 - i. Preference may be given to those efforts that demonstrate alignment with City target industries.
 - ii. Increase number of startup and early stage businesses operating in Cedar Rapids

- C. Offer comprehensive consulting services to support business plan and marketing plan development.

- D. Provide specialized business continuity planning services.

- E. Facilitate peer-to-peer networking for entrepreneurs as well as Business to Business (B2B) networking for startup companies.

- F. Create new venture development programming that aligns with City target industries.
 - i. Food and Bio Processing, Life Science (Healthcare), Logistics & Distribution, Financial Services, Manufacturing, Business and Professional Services or Retail.

- G. Focus on increasing outreach and entrepreneurship to opportunity populations.

- H. Bring new technology-based economic development projects and initiatives to Cedar Rapids in partnership with Iowa Public Universities and/or other stakeholders in the regional innovation system. Efforts should include a focus on cluster-based strategies for growth of industries already concentrated or with potential to concentrate in Cedar Rapids.

- I. Provide customized sales staff training and support services that allow companies already doing business in Cedar Rapids a means to improve revenue growth.

- J. Deliver a full range of consulting services that enable growth companies to scale effectively.

- K. Create initiatives that will increase the supply of Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) workers available to employers in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

- L. Map available resources for entrepreneurs and create a plan to market information to the community.