



Request for Proposals (RFP)

Think Big Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program

Purpose

Think Big is seeking proposals from qualified Project Management firms or independent contractors to manage the Think Big Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program, funded through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) under the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA).

The selected firm or individual will lead, coordinate, and manage Think Big's CEJA-funded Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program, ensuring that all project objectives, deliverables, and reporting requirements are met on schedule and within scope.

Overview

Think Big's Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program is a CEJA-funded initiative designed to equip minority-owned, women-owned, and small emerging contractors with the tools, training, and support to succeed within Illinois' growing clean energy economy.

Through entrepreneurial education, technical assistance, and business development coaching, the program helps participants gain the knowledge and capacity needed to become licensed, bonded, and contract-ready for clean energy opportunities.

The firm or individual will oversee program planning, coordination, and evaluation; manage communication with CEJA partners and funders; and ensure Think Big delivers measurable outcomes related to equitable economic advancement and minority business participation in the clean energy sector.

Scope of Work

The Project Management Firm will:

- Lead overall direction, execution, and evaluation of the Think Big Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program.
- Manage the implementation of CEJA-funded entrepreneurial education and contractor development cohorts.
- Develop timelines, work plans, and deliverables aligned with DCEO and Think Big objectives.
- Coordinate project partners, instructors, mentors, and subcontractors to ensure timely completion of goals.
- Oversee project budgets, compliance documentation, and monthly reports.
- Supervise communication, outreach, and engagement with program participants.
- Represent Think Big in regional, state, and CEJA-related meetings and stakeholder sessions.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration and alignment among CEJA-funded partners.
- Ensure quality control, accurate documentation, and consistent data collection across all project phases.
- Prepare final reports summarizing project performance, outcomes, and recommendations.

Performance Requirements

The firm or individual must:

- Launch and manage at least two Clean Energy Contractor Incubator cohorts during the contract term.
- Maintain a 100% participant completion rate with documented participant impact metrics.

- Submit monthly progress reports detailing deliverables, outcomes, and expenditures.
- Implement and maintain a risk management plan to ensure timely performance and compliance.
- Conduct monthly reviews with Think Big leadership and funder representatives.
- Provide a final comprehensive project report summarizing outcomes, metrics, and lessons learned.

Qualifications

- Proven experience directing or managing grant-funded projects, preferably in the workforce, small business, or clean energy initiatives.
- Familiarity with CEJA, DCEO, or related public grant programs.
- Demonstrated success managing complex partnerships and multi-phase deliverables.
- Excellent organizational, leadership, and communication skills.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively with public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders.
- Experience working with underrepresented, minority-owned, or women-owned business populations preferred.

Contract Term

- Type: Independent Contractor or Firm Agreement
- Term: Six (6) months, renewable based on performance and funding availability.
- Compensation: Negotiable based on experience and scope of services.
- Reports To: Think Big Chief Executive Officer
- Location: Rockford, Illinois (Hybrid on-site and remote as needed).

Bid Submission Requirements

Please submit a proposal that includes:

- Qualifications and Experience.
- Understanding Think Big's mission and proposed approach to the work.
- Description of your organization, structure, and key personnel.
- Examples of similar projects or partnerships with measurable impact.
- Statement describing your commitment to diversity and community inclusion.
- A narrative describing the bidders' experience in business and working with contractors and entrepreneurs.
- A detailed service delivery plan addressing the scope and performance requirements.
- A proposed budget and pricing structure.
- Documentation of past performance including outcomes from similar projects.
- At least three professional references with contact information.
- Statement of availability and potential start date.

Submission Instructions and Timeline

Please submit proposals electronically to sheila@thinkbig815.org with the subject line: *Think Big Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program RFP Submission*. Provide the information and attachments requested as outlined above in the Bid Submission Requirements Section. Submit all required documents by the deadline: November 30, 2025 (by 5:00 PM CDT)

RFP Schedule

RFP Release: November 1, 2025

Questions: All questions must be submitted in writing to the contact person listed above by November 14, 2025. Responses to all questions will be posted publicly by November 25, 2025.

Anticipated Start Date: January 2, 2025

Think Big is a minority and women led entrepreneurial incubator and business accelerator located at 1311 North Main Street, Rockford, Illinois. We serve as a catalyst for economic empowerment, innovation, and collaboration by equipping small business owners with education, coaching, and capital access.

Think Big is committed to engaging vendors that reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. Our Diverse Vendor Program provides equitable access for underrepresented business owners and ensures that everyone without exception has the opportunity to participate in economic growth.