



RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program

SMALL BUSINESS APPLICATION

Frequently Asked Questions

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Small Business Application Period

May 15, 2023 – August 15, 2023

**For questions about this application
contact the Rhode Island Small Business HUB:**

Email: risbHUB@skillsforri.com

Phone: 401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)

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ABOUT RI REBOUNDS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

What is the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program?

The RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program is designed to support small businesses that have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This program is funded through Rhode Island's allocation of the State Fiscal Recovery Fund and managed by RI Commerce. Program operation and implementation are being led by Skills for Rhode Island's Future (SkillsRI).

Eligible small businesses (CLIENTS) can receive technical assistance valued up to \$10,000 through matched VENDOR(S). SkillsRI will pay VENDORS directly for services they provide.

Who are the entities responsible for the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program?

- *The State of Rhode Island's Office of the Governor and RI General Assembly*, through its FY23 budget, enacted \$10M in funding for the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program.
- *Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (RI Commerce)* is the state entity responsible for managing the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance funds. For information about the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program, visit: [About Rhode Island Commerce](#).
- *Skills for Rhode Island's Future (SkillsRI)* is the organization tasked by RI Commerce with implementing the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program. For more information about SkillsRI, visit: [About SkillsRI](#).
- *Rhode Island Small Business HUB (HUB)* is a federally funded initiative of SkillsRI responsible for implementing the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program. For more information about the HUB, visit: [About RI Small Business HUB \(HUB\)](#).

Why is SkillsRI operating this program for the State of Rhode Island?

SkillsRI is a state-wide nonprofit agency focused on economic and workforce development in Rhode Island. After a competitive RFP process, SkillsRI was selected by RI Commerce to implement and operate the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program.

SkillsRI manages the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program through its RI Small Business HUB (HUB) division. The HUB is designed to work exclusively with Rhode Island small businesses. During the COVID-19 pandemic, SkillsRI supported 1,300+ small businesses with small grants for hiring incentives and provided direct technical support.

What is the source of funding for the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program?

The Technical Assistance Program is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLRFP0136 in connection with State Fiscal Recovery Funds awarded to the State of Rhode Island by the US Department of Treasury.

What type of services can I receive as an eligible small business?

- Accounting & Bookkeeping
- Legal Advice & Services
- Marketing, Communications, Branding & Public Relations
- Customer Data & User Experience Analytics
- Strategic & Business Planning
- Human Resource & Payroll Services
- Information & Computer Technology
- Website Development Support
- Business Funding Pitch & Grant Writing
- Supply Chain & Procurement
- E-Commerce

SMALL BUSINESS ELIGIBILITY

What is the purpose of the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program?

This program is designed to support small businesses negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligible small businesses can receive services valued at up to \$10,000 in technical assistance across various areas.

The RI Rebounds Program is designed specifically for small businesses by matching you with professional, qualified business service vendors to help you stabilize, strengthen and scale your business. Eligible businesses include those with under \$2 million in annual revenue.

Who is eligible to apply?

Any small business owner who meets the eligibility criteria and can self-attest to the following conditions is eligible for the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program:

- I am the owner or authorized agent of the small business in Rhode Island applying for this program.
- My business has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Negative impact is defined in the FAQ.
- My business, or 501(c)(3) nonprofit, was established to do business in Rhode Island prior to October 1, 2021.
- My business has gross receipts or sales of less than \$2 million in 2020 or 2021, excluding any COVID-related financial assistance.
- My business has not been permanently closed. Small businesses that were seasonally closed are eligible.
- My business is not owned by a nationally or regionally owned franchise.
- I am not an employee of SkillsRI, and/or my business does have a conflict of interest with SkillsRI or RI Commerce.

- My business and/or I have not been convicted of bribery or attempting to bribe a public official or employee of SkillsRI, RI Commerce, or the State of Rhode Island.
- My business and/or I are not engaged in any illegal activity under Federal, State, or Local law.
- My business and/or I have never defaulted on an award from SkillsRI, RI Commerce, or the State of Rhode Island.
- My business and/or I have not been convicted of bribery or attempting to bribe a public official or employee of RI Commerce or the State of Rhode Island.
- My business and/or I are not debarred, suspended, or proposed for debarment by any agency or instrumentality of the federal or state government.
- My business has not filed (in the past 7 years), and I am not considering filing for federal bankruptcy or state receivership.
- My business is not a government-owned entity, or a K-12 school district.
- I am not a state-level elected official subject to R.I. Gen. Laws § 36-14-5.
- My business is not solely formed for lobbying or political organizing.
- My business and/or I am not involved in any lawsuits, litigation, claims, investigations, or proceedings of any kind pending, threatened, or to my knowledge asserted against me that could materially and/or adversely impact my participation in the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program.
- I understand and acknowledge that RI Commerce and Skills for Rhode Island's Future will verify information provided in this application along with the attestations contained in this section and any statement made that is determined to be knowingly false may result in the requirement that costs for any provided services be repaid and/or further investigated by the State.

If you have any questions about the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program or small business eligibility requirements, please call the RI Small Business HUB at **401-249-2222** or email risbHUB@skillsforri.com.

APPLICATION PROCESS

When does the application for Small Businesses open?

The RI Rebounds Small Business Technical Assistance application will be available on May 15, 2023. All applications will be online. You can apply online at <https://bit.ly/SmallBizApp-Eng>.

What information and documentation are required for my application?

Depending on your type of business, you may be required to upload the following documents:

Documents	Business Legal Structure	Upload
W-9 Form (IRS)	All Applicants	Required
Photo ID	All Applicants	Required
Proof of Address	All Applicants	Required

Applicants agree to self-attest to all eligibility requirements; however, all applications may be subject to random audits prior to processing and may require proof of COVID-19 hardship.

I have a small business, but I am not sure if I have all of the documentation needed to complete my application, what should I do?

If you have a question regarding the application process, please call the HUB at **401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)** and ask to speak with a Program Coordinator.

I have not yet started my business, but I would like support getting it running. Can I still apply?

Eligible applicants for RI Rebounds must have been an established business in the State of Rhode Island prior to October 1, 2021. However, you may be eligible for other services through the RI Small Business HUB. Please visit the RI Small Business HUB section of the FAQ for more information.

I am a sole proprietor; can I apply to receive technical assistance?

Yes, sole proprietors can apply. If you are registered under a trade name/DBA, you may be required to submit your local municipality registration.

Is a business owner eligible to apply for more than one business?

Yes, if the same person owns two business entities, you are eligible to apply separately for each entity if each business meets the qualifications. You will need to complete a separate application for each business entity.

Can I apply for more than one technical assistance service?

Under the RI Rebounds program, small business owners can apply for more than one service, however, the total value of services provided cannot exceed \$10,000.

Does accessing services through RI Rebounds, RI Commerce, SkillsRI or the RI Small Business HUB cost any money?

No, applying to any of these programs is at no cost to the small business owner. If someone is charging you to complete an application, please report them to the HUB by calling **401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)**.

Who pays the VENDOR for the technical assistance they provide me?

SkillsRI will pay the VENDOR directly. Once a service has been completed based on the Statement of Work, the VENDOR will be required to submit an invoice and we will ask you to sign an attestation indicating that all services in the invoice were provided in alignment with the approved Statement of Work.

I am the executive director of a nonprofit organization; are nonprofit organizations eligible to receive technical assistance?

Yes, nonprofit organizations are eligible, provided they meet all other eligibility criteria. The organization must be physically located in Rhode Island and have gross receipts or sales of less than \$2 million in 2020 or 2021.

I own a franchise of a national brand; can I apply to receive technical assistance?

In order to be eligible, the applicant business must not be owned by the national or regional franchisor or chain or be owned by an entity that is not headquartered in Rhode Island.

- **Example 1:** An eligible applicant: A restaurant is a franchise of a national chain, but the owner is a Rhode Island business entity not the national franchisor.
- **Example 2:** An ineligible applicant: A gym is part of a regional franchise and is owned by a business entity headquartered outside Rhode Island.

How will I know if I have been approved to receive technical assistance?

Once you submit your application, you will receive an email within 5 business days that will indicate one of the following: (1) you have been approved; (2) your application is incomplete; or (3) your application has been denied. You may also log into your account anytime to review the status of your application. If your application is incomplete, you will have an opportunity to correct any deficiencies.

Once I have been approved, what are the next steps?

Once your application has been approved, a Small Business Program Coordinator will contact you to schedule an intake meeting to discuss your business needs. Once your technical assistance needs have been established, we will begin matching you with a VENDOR who will meet with you to outline a Statement of Work designed to meet your goals.

If I have any questions about application process, who should I contact?

Please contact the Rhode Island Small Business “HUB” staff at risbHUB@skillsforri.com or call **401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)**. Our HUB staff speak English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and other languages available upon request.

If I applied as a technical assistance vendor, may I also apply to receive other technical assistance services?

Vendors may apply for the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program; however, the technical assistance requested must be different from the service(s) the vendor is providing.

GETTING MATCHED WITH A TECHNICAL SERVICE PROVIDER

How do I get matched with a technical assistance VENDOR?

The HUB will match a small business with a pre-qualified VENDOR who offers the required services. The matching process will be as follows:

- **STEP 1:** Once your application has been approved a HUB staff member will schedule an initial intake meeting with you to review your technical assistance needs.
- **STEP 2:** Based on this initial assessment, you will be matched with up to three potential VENDORS. The VENDORS will respond with cost, and time to complete the Statement of Work.
- **STEP 3:** A HUB staff member will select the VENDOR based upon lowest cost, and factoring in time to complete the project if relevant.
- **STEP 4:** There will be a meeting to finalize/review the Statement of Work with the CLIENT, VENDOR, and HUB. If agreed to by all parties, the Statement of Work will be executed by all three parties. The Statement of Work will include services to be provided, timeline for completion and fee schedule.
- **STEP 5:** SkillsRI will pay the VENDOR directly once we receive confirmation from the Small Business that all the terms of the Statement of Work were satisfactorily completed.

Is there a cap on the amount I can receive through services provided by RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program?

Yes, a Small Business may only receive support, funding, goods and/or services in an amount not to exceed \$10,000 in the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance program. This includes services received between February and August 2022 as part of the phase I technical assistance program.

Small Businesses may only receive a total of \$30,000 in combined grants and services from the following RI Rebounds programs: Ventilation Program, Technical Assistance Program, Small Business Direct Grant Program and/or Take it Outside Program.

What if the cost of the technical assistance I need is more than \$10,000?

Each eligible small business is entitled to technical assistance valued up to \$10,000. If the services a business requires are greater than \$10,000, there are a few things that can be done:

- The HUB will work with VENDORS to review the services requested and pare down the Statement of Work (SOW) to fit the budget.
- The Small Business may be able to access additional free services from the Small Business HUB (separate funding) or from one of its networked partners if services are available. These options will be explored at the time of developing the Statement of Work.
- Small Businesses may be eligible for other municipal, state, or federal funding. These options will be explored at the time of developing the Statement of Work.

The HUB will ensure that whatever decision is made, it will be approved by both the Small Business and VENDOR prior to starting any work.

Will everyone who applies receive services?

No, everyone who applies must meet the eligibility requirements and will be a first come, first serve basis.

My initial request has been completed and I have not yet reached the \$10,000 limit and I have some additional needs. Do I have to reapply?

No, if you have not reached the \$10,000 maximum allowable assistance, you can work with a HUB Program Coordinator to discuss your needs and together, can work towards another Statement of Work with a VENDOR that can provide the new services required for your business.

Am I required to pay back the cost of these services?

No, all approved services to eligible small businesses will be paid for through this program. You are not required to pay back the costs of the approved services you received.

Who do I contact if the VENDOR I am working with is unresponsive or is not meeting my needs?

Please contact the HUB immediately at risbHUB@skillsforri.com or call **401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)**.

Is the value of the services received taxable?

In-kind services received may or may not be subject to taxation, depending on the specific circumstances and applicable tax laws. To determine the tax implications of in-kind services received in Rhode Island, it is recommended to consult with a tax professional or accountant familiar with state and local tax laws.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

If my application is approved, do I get a check for \$10,000?

No, when your small business is approved for this Technical Assistance Program, you do not receive a check. The program is designed to pay a qualified VENDOR to provide services valued up to \$10,000 in technical assistance across a variety of areas. These services must be provided by an approved technical assistance VENDOR. SkillsRI will pay the technical assistance VENDOR directly upon completion of their services.

What is an approved technical assistance VENDOR?

Technical assistance VENDORS are experts across key areas of small business, including legal, marketing, HR, IT, data analysis, communications and more that have been pre-qualified by SkillsRI to provide services to small businesses through the RI Rebounds Program. All VENDORS have been vetted by SkillsRI through an RFQ process and are held to the highest standards of business.

What do I do if I applied but have not heard anything about my application?

The HUB will take up to 5 business days to process your application. You may also log into your account to learn the status of your application. If you have not received an email or update regarding the status of your application after 5 business days, contact the HUB at risbHUB@skillsforri.com or call **401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)**.

What if I need help completing the application?

There is an application guide to help walk you through the application form. Please visit www.risbHUB.com to access the Application Guide. If you need additional assistance accessing or completing the application, please contact the HUB at risbHUB@skillsforri.com or call **401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)**.

I do not have access to a computer to apply, is there a paper version of the application?

No, the application can only be submitted online. However, the application is also formatted for smart phones. If you need assistance, please call the HUB at **401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)** and ask to speak with a Small Business Program Coordinator.

What if I made a mistake in my submitted application?

Any errors on your application will be noted by HUB staff, and you will receive an email with instructions on the next steps. If you feel you made an error, such as providing the wrong email address or you were denied based on incorrect information, please contact the HUB immediately at risbHUB@skillsforri.com or call **401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)**.

What happens if I get interrupted during the application process?

Should you need to step away from your application for any reason, your application will automatically be saved. To return to your application, simply sign back in with the username and password created at the time you began your application.

I applied but was told I was denied. Is there a reconsideration process?

If you have been denied, you will receive an email from the Small Business HUB explaining the reason for the denial. If you feel your application has been wrongly denied, you can send us an email requesting reconsideration by contacting us at risbHUB@skillsforri.com or calling **401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)**.

Most common reasons why an applicant is denied:

- We could not verify your business address in Rhode Island.
- We could not verify your EIN/SSN.
- You did not provide a valid W-9 Form (IRS Form).
- You did not provide a valid photo ID.

I applied but was asked for additional information; why?

At the time of submission, every applicant must provide supporting documentation. If this information is not included, we cannot determine if your business is eligible and will need to request this information. All documents must be uploaded via our secure application portal.

Are the application and services available in multiple languages?

Yes, the application is available in both English and Spanish, and we have multilingual staff available to support small business owners who are also English language learners. All materials and resources for the program will also be available in multiple languages. Our “HUB” staff at risbHUB@skillsforri.com or call **401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)**. Our HUB staff speak English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and other languages available upon request.

Do you provide accommodation for business owners with disabilities?

Yes, we provide accommodation for business owners with disabilities. We encourage you to contact a Small Business Program Coordinator by calling **401-BIZ-2222 (401-249-2222)** to discuss your needs.

Additionally, 711 is available to assist an individual who is hearing impaired with placing and facilitating their call [Relay Calls: Types and How to Make a Call \(askjan.org\)](http://askjan.org).

Once my application is approved, when can I begin working with the VENDOR?

We recommend that you do not begin any work until the Statement of Work is approved by SkillsRI.

If my business or organization is approved, will you share my information with any state or federal agencies?

Yes, SkillsRI is required to report all businesses’ names and demographic information to RI Commerce. If a business owner does not want to share this information with RI Commerce, we encourage you not to apply.

DEFINITIONS & VOCABULARY

2021 Form 990 (IRS): Form 990 is the primary tool the IRS uses for gathering information about tax-exempt organizations, educating organizations about tax law requirements, and promoting compliance. Organizations also use Form 990 to share information with the public about their programs.

2021 Tax Return Schedule K-1: Schedule K-1 is an IRS tax form used by partnerships, S-Corporations, and estates and trusts to declare the income, deductions, and credits that partners, shareholders, and beneficiaries have received in the tax year. Individual taxpayers transfer the financial information on their K-1s to their tax returns.

2021 Tax Returns Schedule C: Schedule C is an IRS tax form for reporting profit or loss from a business. Schedule C is typically for people who operate sole proprietorships or single-member LLCs.

Application Guide: This is a visual guide to help Small Businesses complete the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Application. The application guide can be found on www.risbHUB.com.

Approved: A Small Business who has been “approved” means they have been qualified to receive technical assistance under the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance program.

COVID-19 Negative Impact: This is defined as having experienced one of the following as a result of the pandemic:

- Forced to close or curtail business operations.
- Delayed or disruption of supply chain.
- Increased cost.
- Forced to layoff workers.

FAQ: This is an acronym for Frequently Asked Questions. An FAQ addresses the most frequent questions people may have and is helpful at all stages of the Small Business journey. FAQs start with a question and then answer it concisely.

Grant: A grant is one of many different forms of federal financial assistance. It is a way for the government to fund ideas and projects to provide public services and stimulate the economy. Grants support critical recovery initiatives, innovative research, and many other programs. The grant for RI Rebounds is to support critical recovery initiatives to help small businesses recovering from the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

HUB: This is an acronym used by Skills for Rhode Island’s Future to abbreviate its RI Small Business HUB initiative. The HUB an initiative of Skills for Rhode Island’s Future that operationalizes the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program. The mission of the HUB is to *Empower Small Businesses to Fuel our Rhode Island Economy.*

Matched: Under the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program, “matched” refers to a Small Business who has been matched with a technical assistance VENDOR. A “matched” Small Business and VENDOR does not constitute an approved contract.

Matching: Under the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program, “matching” refers to the process the HUB staff will perform to best match a Small Business with a technical assistance VENDOR. During the “matching” process, a Small Business may select from more than one VENDOR.

Photo ID: Under the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program, you are required to provide a valid photo ID (e.g., driver’s license, state ID, Military ID).

Pre-Qualified: Under the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program, “pre-qualified” refers to the status of a VENDOR who has successfully completed the request for qualifications (RFQ) application. Being a pre-qualified VENDOR does not guarantee funding under the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program.

Proof of Business Address/Proof of Residency: Under the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program, Small Businesses must be located in Rhode Island. Typical proof of business address includes: a copy of a utility bill, lease, mortgage statement, landlord verification, business license, or articles of incorporation should work. For sole proprietors, a valid, current driver's license will suffice if your business address is your home address.

Revenue Loss: Revenue loss occurs when a company makes less from operations than expected due to external and internal factors. The loss of potential customers, restrictions on business and changes in the market can all lead to significant revenue loss. For the purposes of RI Rebounds, small businesses must demonstrate revenue loss due to the impact of COVID-19. Please refer to question #1 under "Eligibility" for a list of documents that can prove revenue loss for this grant.

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation: This is the official full-service economic development organization for the State of Rhode Island, serves as a government and community resource to help businesses expand in, and relocate to, Rhode Island.

RI Commerce: This is the acronym commonly used to refer to the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation.

RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program: The RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program is designed to support small businesses that have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This program is funded through Rhode Island's allocation of the State Fiscal Recovery Fund and overseen by Rhode Island Commerce. Program operation and implementation is being led by Skills for Rhode Island's Future (SkillsRI).

Rhode Island Small Business HUB: The Rhode Island Small Business HUB (HUB) is an initiative of Skills for Rhode Island's Future that will operationalize the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program. The mission of the HUB is to *Empower Small Businesses to Fuel our Rhode Island Economy.*

Skills for Rhode Island's Future: This is a state-wide, 501(c)(3) nonprofit economic and workforce development organization that was awarded a contract from RI Commerce to manage and operate the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program. Skills for Rhode Island's Future, aka SkillsRI, will manage and operate the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program under its Rhode Island Small Business HUB division.

Small Business: A Small Business under the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program is small business that applies and has been approved to receive technical assistance. A Small Business will be matched with a VENDOR to receive technical assistance. A Small Business applicant must meet the criteria set forth in the Eligibility section of this FAQ. A Small Business may also be referred to as CLIENT for contracting purposes.

SkillsRI: This is the acronym commonly used to reference Skills for Rhode Island's Future.

SOW: This is the acronym used to reference a Statement of Work.

Statement of Work: A Statement of Work (SOW) is a document that provides a description of a given project's requirements. It defines the work being provided, project deliverables, timelines, work location, and payment terms and conditions.

Submittable: This is the online software portal used by the RI Small Business HUB to create, issue, and collect Small Business applications and any necessary documentation required to process an application. The portal is the only means by which an application or supporting documents can be submitted.

Technical Assistance: Technical Assistance is the process of providing targeted business support to an organization with a development need or problem. It is an effective method for building the capacity of an organization.

VENDOR: A VENDOR, also known as a supplier, is an individual or company that sells goods or services to someone else in the economic production chain. Under the RI Rebounds Technical Assistance Program, VENDORS will need to be pre-qualified before they are allowed to provide services to Small Business.

W-9 Form (IRS): Form W-9 is a commonly used IRS form for providing necessary information to a person or company that will be making payments to another person or company. One of the most common situations is when someone works as an independent contractor for a business. When you are hired as a contractor for a business or begin work as a freelancer, you will be asked to complete a W-9 and provide it to the business that will be paying you.