

**February 9, 2024**  
**Rhode Island Commerce Corporation**  
**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

Solicitation Number: **RFP-2328**  
ADDENDUM NO. 1  
Questions & Answers

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
**NEW ATTRACTIONS & DESTINATIONS RFP ROUND 2**

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (“Corporation”) seeks proposals from qualified firms for new attractions & destination events. The goal of this initiative is to provide seed funding for the development of new attractions or new recurring events located in Rhode Island. Special consideration will be given to those proposals that drive visitation from out of state during the shoulder and off-season (October – May) and propose events that operate yearly. Requests for funding should be focused on event production with no more than 10% of the allocation to administration and/or advertising for the events. Applications must include a marketing strategy and trackable metrics. Funds cannot be used for construction. This RFP will be funded with a \$2.27 million grant from the United States Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration that the Corporation has received to support travel, tourism and outdoor recreation sectors in the State.

**Question #1:** If the grant is awarded to develop a new attraction or new recurring event, can the awarded organization charge a ticket fee?

**Answer #1:** Recipients of a grant may charge visitors or attendees an admission or ticket fee.

**Question #2:** To clarify, RFP-2328 is not for business – is it for regional tourism boards, municipalities, and non-profit organizations?

**Answer #2:** As indicated in the RFP, for-profit businesses are not eligible. Eligible entities include (1) regional tourism boards, (2) municipalities, and (3) non-profit organizations.

**Question #3:** If you're seeking funding for a new tourist attraction (not a specific event), but you can only ask for 10% to be used for advertising/administration, what exactly can EDA/Commerce funds support? Is it operating expenses for the tourist attraction? Is it staffing to run the tourist attraction? Looking for clarification on allowable expenses for an attraction vs. an event.

**Answer #3:** Up to 10% of the grant can be applied to administration or marketing. Administration refers to general staffing costs, costs associated to managing the grant, postage/shipping, meetings, travel, reporting, etc. Marketing refers to the promotion of an event or attraction. The grant may be applied to staffing, operations, technology, supplies, creative, equipment, etc., up to the total amount of the grant.

**Question #4:** Does “administration” refer to the administration of the grant (billing, reporting, etc.), or does it refer to the staffing of the tourist attraction?

**Answer #4:** Please refer to Answer #3.

**Question #5:** Regarding the ISBE % requirement: If you are not an MBE, WBE, or Disability Business Enterprise, and you are not hiring contractors as part of the funding request from RI Commerce, our

assumption is that would make your ISBE % rate 0. How common is it to have applicants submit requests with a 0% ISBE rate?

**Answer #5:** If a Proposer has ISBE participation, it may fill out the ISBE Participation Form per the RFP to receive additional points during the RFP scoring process. If a Proposer does not have ISBE participation, the ISBE % rate is 0. Each Commerce RFP process is unique and ISBE participation rates fluctuate.

**Question #6:** In the RFP, it states that you are to email over the request. However, later in the RFP, it states that the ISBE participation rate, as well as the MBE, WBE, and Disability Enterprise Participation Plan, needs to be delivered in a signed, sealed envelope with our proposal. Can you please clarify if that needs to be delivered in person, or if that can be attached to an email?

**Answer #6:** The forms can be submitted electronically.

**Question #7:** Could you please clarify that an event proposed for the RFP does not need to be a "new" event? While new events are clearly qualified in the RFP, the language seems to also allow existing yearly events.

**Answer #7:** This initiative aims to provide seed funding for the development of new attractions or new recurring events located in Rhode Island. An existing event could introduce a new initiative that may be eligible for funding.

**Question #8:** If an organization received funding in round 1 when the maximum grant hovered around \$100,000, why would they not be qualified in round 2 for up to another \$100,000?

**Answer #8:** Per the RFP, if the Proposer received funding in the 1st round of this RFP, then that precludes the Proposer from receiving funding in this second round.

**Question #9:** Why is "Marketing" limited and combined with "Administration" for a total of 10%? We have not seen this in previous grants. Any quality event produced needs marketing support, and you are requesting a marketing strategy. Capping Administration in all grants at 10% is already challenging, so to add Marketing within the same 10% will make Marketing more difficult.

**Answer #9:** The administration and marketing cap is consistent with the grant program's first round. Up to 10% of the grant may be used for marketing. Proposal submissions with documented additional marketing expenditures over and above what may be included in the requested amount is encouraged.

**Question #10:** Can this RFP be submitted as a proposal for multiple events or just one?

**Answer #10:** Only one grant will be awarded per entity, however, the proposal may include a series of events that will occur over an extended period.

**Question #11:** While the RFP highlights the summer and fall, are winter events acceptable?

**Answer #11:** Per the RFP, special consideration will be given to those proposals that drive visitation from out of State during the shoulder and off-season (October – May) and propose events that operate yearly.

**Question #12:** Would you consider funding an event that was originally awarded an earlier grant, i.e. a "Three Nights of Lights" application?

**Answer #12:** Please refer to Answer #8.

**Question #13:** Should we lump all our events into this RFP or make one for each event? We perform several large festivals across the state and are planning a large brewers' conference this August.

**Answer #13:** Please refer to Answer #10.

**Question #14:** Can one entity apply for multiple grants?

**Answer #14:** Only one grant will be awarded per entity.

**Question #15:** If an entity was awarded a grant of \$100,00 in the last round, could they apply for an additional \$100,000, since the cap is now \$200,000?

**Answer #15:** Please refer to Answer #8.

**Question #16:** Is there an actual application to submit? Or is it just a Word document answering the "Technical Proposal Elements" from Page 8 of the proposal, plus the certification and W9 attachments? Also, the cover form populates all the fields when you try to type.

**Answer #16:** There is no standard application or form for the grant. Proposers are encouraged to answer the question and provide content as required within each section of the RFP.

**Question #17:** We noticed that Round 1 grant awardees are precluded from applying for Round 2 funding even though Round 2 is double the Round 1 max amount.

WaterFire Providence was awarded a Round 1 max grant of \$100,000 which allowed us to produce a series of events which successfully attracted tourists to Providence during the desired "shoulder" off-season. We would have never applied to Round 1 had we known that Round 2 amount would be doubled the Round 1 max amount.

Can Round 1 awardees apply for Round 2 subject to a \$100,000 max grant which would create balance between both Rounds?

**Answer #17:** Please refer to Answer #8.

**Question #18:** The RFP states that the maximum grant amount to any one organization is \$200,000. Is there a minimum amount (i.e. a request amount below which a proposal will not be considered)?

**Answer #18:** There is no minimum amount requirement for this RFP.

**Question #19:** Would you please provide a more comprehensive definition of the "administrative expenses" that should be no more than 10% of the budget? Is staff compensation for program design, planning, promotion, and delivery & logistics considered an allowable program expense not bound by the 10% limit? Is there a distinction between administrative expenses related to the running of the organization and the administration/delivery of the program?

**Answer #19:** Up to 10% of the grant can be applied to administration or marketing. Administration refers to the process or activity of managing the grant, including billing, postage/shipping, meetings, travel, reporting, etc. Marketing refers to the promotion of an event or attraction. The grant may be applied to staffing, operations, technology, supplies, creative, and equipment up to the total amount of the grant.

**Question #20:** We are considering applying for the upcoming New Attractions and Destinations RFP. We already receive funding from RI Commerce through the Innovation Network Matching Grant, which concludes at the end of March, and we're hoping to seek funding through that program again in

2025. Would applying for this RFP prohibit us from submitting for the Innovation Network Matching Grant in 2025 as well?

**Answer #20:** It does not preclude.

**Question #21:** The proposal should be focused on "event production". Can you provide more details as to what qualifies as event production?

**Answer #21:** Event Production is the financial and administrative management involved in developing an event that may include the creation of exhibits, staging, staffing, operations, etc.

**Question #22:** It says that funds can not be used for construction. Can you define what that means? For example if we are installing temporary art exhibits or stages for a performance is that defined as construction?

**Answer #22:** Construction would include the building of a permanent structure or acquisition of a property.

**Question #23:** When will the awards be granted?

**Answer #23:** The selection process is expected to take approximately 30 days from the closing of the RFP. Awardees will be informed at the conclusion of the selection process.

**Question #24:** Can you provide copies of proposals that were previously submitted and approved so that we can use this as a general template?

**Answer #24:** While we are unable to include previously approved proposals in this addendum, the list of awards made during the first round can be found at, <https://commerceri.com/mckee-administration-announces-events-and-attractions-rfp-recipients/> . If you are seeking documents from the Commerce Corporation, please submit a request online: <https://commerceri.com/apra/>.

**Question #25:** Can you define what you mean by sustainability of an event?

**Answer #25:** The purpose of the grant is to provide seed funding for the development of an ongoing or annual event that will recur or an attraction that will operate in perpetuity. The RFP requests a plan to sustain the event or attraction beyond the funding provided from the New Attraction and Destination Grant funding.

**Question #26:** What do you mean by equity of the event?

**Answer #26:** The equity of the events proposed refers to the impact of the event on the benefiting destination or region, as described within the RFP. RI Commerce is seeking a self-sustaining event that will continue, and the producer's projection regarding the impact or key performance indicators (KPIs) should be noted in the response. For instance, projected attendance, exposure, jobs, or other key performance indicators could be mentioned. All defined impacts should be measurable. Equity is a vital principle of sustainable tourism that ensures fairness in access, use, and distribution of goods and benefits from tourism development, meeting the needs of both current and future generations.

**Question #27:** Please define partners, Do you mean subcontractors or financial donation partners?

**Answer #27:** Partners are those individuals or groups with a formal agreement to jointly manage and operate the event or attraction.

**Question #28:** Please advise what the following acronyms are: ISBE, EDA and UEI?

**Answer #28:** ISBE, EDA, and UEI have the following meanings:

EDA means the United States Economic Development Administration

ISBE means a small business enterprise that is owned and controlled by one or more individuals who are women or minorities as defined by R.I. Gen. Laws § 37-14.1-3 or a small business enterprise that is owned and controlled by one or more individuals with disabilities as defined by R.I. Gen. Laws § 37-2.2-2.

UEI means Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), a UEI number is the authoritative identification number provided by the U.S. government, used to identify businesses awarded federal grants, awards and contracts.

\*\*\*End of Addendum \*\*\*