

March 25, 2024

**Rhode Island Commerce Corporation  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

Solicitation Number: **RFP-2333**

ADDENDUM NO. 1

Questions & Answers

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF SECOND STAGE FOOD BUSINESSES IN  
RHODE ISLAND**

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (“Corporation”) seeks proposals from qualified firms to provide a State-level feasibility and needs assessment of second stage food businesses. Rhode Island’s Food Strategy, Relish Rhody and the State’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Ocean State Accelerates, have identified the growing cluster of scaling food businesses as a strategic investment priority. The selected proposer will assist the Corporation by identifying challenges and opportunities for “second stage” food businesses to grow and thrive in the State.

**Question 1: Does the client envision that “estimates of economic impact” will include multiplier analysis? If so, please do share any preferences or requirements about how this multiplier analysis should be conducted.**

**Answer 1:** Yes, a multiplier analysis will be a helpful indication of the economic impact of the second-stage food business cluster in Rhode Island to understand their contribution to jobs and income.

**Question 2: What are the specific states that comprise the “Northeast region”, in the client’s definition? (This relates to RFP mentions of the region in Economic Analysis 2B, and Landscape Assessment 3A and 4D).**

**Answer 2:** For the purposes of this project, the Northeast region includes Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, and New York.

**Question 3: Advisory Council: What will the consultant’s role be in selecting members of the Advisory Council? How often would the client like the Advisory Council to convene in the course of this research?**

**Answer 3:** Members of the Advisory Council will be selected by the Corporation with recommendations from the consultant. The Advisory Council will convene at least 4 times over the course of the project as needed to inform the research, engage important stakeholders, and share and disseminate findings.

**Question 4: Does the client (or partners) have a working definition ‘2nd stage food business’ that will serve as the starting point for this work? If so, please share.**

**Answer 4:** The Edward Lowe Foundation has defined 2nd stage businesses for Michigan’s Economic Development Corporation as “10-99 employees with annual revenue between \$1 million and \$50 million” with an “upward growth trend” ([Michigan Business](#)). This is a working definition; however the Corporation does not have a firm definition of “second stage food businesses” and is looking to the selected proposer to help define these parameters within the context and needs of Rhode Island’s food economy. The Advisory Council will play an important role in helping to define the cluster with the consultant.

**Question 5: Can you say more about what you hope to learn from Economic Analysis point 2D: ‘Identifying high margin, low output food products and potential growth and needs of businesses with these products.’?**

**Answer 5:** The Corporation wants to learn what types of food products are most likely to be growing in the years to come and how the Corporation can prepare to help support the businesses producing those foods as they scale.

Ultimately, the economic analysis should assist the Corporation in strategies that will help to create more jobs and have a positive impact on Rhode Island's food economy.

**Question 6: Can you say more about what you hope to learn from Landscape Analysis 4B: 'Identifying and map affordable infrastructure and real estate options for small and scaling food manufacturing businesses in Rhode Island.'?**

**Answer 6:** Affordable space for independent and/or shared food manufacturing appears to be a common theme for scaling food & beverage businesses in Rhode Island. This research should indicate potential real estate facilities (existing or almost shovel-ready) for individual businesses, a co-manufacturing facility and/or other affordable infrastructure needs that arise from interviews with key interest holders.

**Question 7: What is the most important next step that this report/these recommendations should enable?**

**Answer 7:** This report will inform Rhode Island Commerce's policy priorities and investment in the growth, expansion, and retention of 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage Food Businesses in Rhode Island.

**Questions 8: Does Commerce RI know how many food businesses are sole proprietorships, and how many are MWBDEs (or the RI equivalent)?**

**Answer 8:** No, as sole proprietorships are not required to register with the Secretary of State, there is no State-level sole proprietor data available. Few food businesses in Rhode Island have their MBE and/or WBE certification.

**Question 9: How closely does RI Commerce work with the leaders of the New England Feeding New England initiative?**

**Answer 9:** The Director of Food Strategy works very closely with the New England Feeding New England initiative and New England Food Systems Planning Partnership as [a core state partner](#).

**Question 10: The RFP mentions this "*these successful ventures have relocated to neighboring states or closed.*" Does Commerce RI have a list of these that we could access to better understand any other barriers?**

**Answer 10:** The Corporation and Advisory Council can provide contacts to relocated businesses to the selected proposer. The Corporation has anecdotal information from intermediaries.

**Question 11: Does Commerce RI have a list/ contact info for food-related businesses?**

**Answer 11:** The Corporation has a working, but not exhaustive, database of businesses who exist in the food supply chain.

**Question 12: Would Commerce also be interested in understanding if there are opportunities that could draw in second-stage food businesses from other states?**

**Answer 12:** The main objective of this study is to understand and support the needs of Rhode Island businesses to keep industry in the state.

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