

New Orleans Business Alliance  
Kitchen Operator Request For Qualifications (RFQ)  
March 2, 2020

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## **Opportunity Overview**

**New Orleans Business Alliance, a non-profit, is issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) that seeks an operator for an FDA shared wholesale commercial kitchen with co-packing facilities to support food start-ups (referred to as “FDA Kitchen”).**

All quotes and proposals should be submitted to Attn: Norman E. Barnum IV, CFO 1250 Poydras Street, Suite 2150, New Orleans, LA 70113. One (1) electronic copy in PDF format must be submitted by 5:00 PM CDT on April 13, 2020, to nbarnum@nolaba.org with the subject line "NOLABA RFQ: Operator for FDA Wholesale Kitchen and Co-packing Facility."

The New Orleans Business Alliance reserves the right to accept or reject any proposals and/or any portions of proposals. All documents submitted are subject to the Louisiana Public Records Act (La. R.S. 44:1 et seq.). Any emails sent or received by Business Alliance employees are potentially subject to these laws. Unless otherwise exempted from the Public Records Act, senders and receivers of Business Alliance email or other records should presume that all information sent is a matter of public record, and are therefore subject to public inspection upon request. To comply with the Public Records Act, the organization keeps all hard documents and electronic correspondence in accordance with its Document Retention Policy.

Additional information may be obtained by contacting the New Orleans Business Alliance at 504-934-4572 or nbarnum@nolaba.org.

Submittals that are incomplete, unclear, or fail to comply with the requirements as outlined in the instructions may be rejected. NOLABA has the right to reject any proposal.

## **Costs and Ownership of Proposals**

All materials submitted in response to this request become the property of NOLABA. Selection or rejection of a proposal does not affect this right. All proposals submitted will be retained by NOLABA and not returned to Proposers.

All costs directly or indirectly related to preparation of a proposals responding to this RFQ, any oral presentations required to supplement and/or clarify a proposal, and any reasonable appearance which may be required by NOLABA in connection with this Request for Proposal, shall be the sole responsibility of the Proposer, and shall not be reimbursed in any manner by NOLABA.

## **Validity of Proposals**

All proposals shall be considered valid for acceptance until such time an award is made, unless the Proposer provides for a different time period within its proposal. However, NOLABA reserves the right to reject a proposal if the Proposer’s time period is unacceptable and the Proposer is unwilling to extend the validity of its proposals.

## **Confidential Information**

Only Information which is in the nature of legitimate trade secrets or non-published financial data may be deemed proprietary or confidential. Any material within a proposal identified as such must be clearly marked in the proposal and will be handled in accordance with the Louisiana Public Records Act, R.S. 44:1-44 and applicable rules and regulations. Any proposal marked as confidential or proprietary in its entirety may be rejected without further consideration or recourse.

An inquiry period may be set. In that event, it will be firmly set for all interested Proposers to perform a detailed review of the RFQ documents and to submit any written questions relative thereto. *Without exception*, all questions MUST be in writing by an authorized representative of the Proposer and received by the close of business on the Inquiry Deadline date set forth in the Schedule of Events. Inquiries shall not be entertained thereafter. Answers to questions that change or substantially clarify the RFQ shall be issued by addendum and provided to all prospective Proposers.

NOLABA reserves the right to change the calendar of events at any time. NOLABA also reserves the right to cancel or reissue the RFQ at any time and for any reason. If the Proposer needs to submit changes, addenda or withdrawals, a written request signed by an authorized representative of the Proposer, cross-referenced clearly to the relevant proposal section shall be submitted prior to the proposal opening, in a sealed envelope. Changes or addenda shall meet all requirements for the proposal.

NOLABA reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to waive administrative informalities contained in any proposal. Issuance of this RFQ in no way constitutes a commitment by NOLBA to award a contract. NOLABA reserves the right to accept and reject any or all proposals, or to cancel this RFQ if in the best interest of NOLABA to do so. NOLABA also reserves the right to refuse to enter into an agreement with a proposer after selection if the parties cannot agree on the terms of the contract.

### **New Orleans Business Alliance Background**

The New Orleans Business Alliance is the official non-profit organization tasked with leading economic development initiatives for Orleans Parish. We are a public-private partnership between the City of New Orleans and private investors from the local community. The vision of the Business Alliance is to reposition New Orleans as the next great American city for business investment, quality of life, and economic opportunity. We unify partners and stakeholders to design and build a solid economic foundation for New Orleans: a collaborative and business-friendly environment fueled by a unique culture and dynamism unmatched anywhere in the world.

The Business Alliance is expanding its industry focus on New Orleans' food sector, marketing the city's assets to spur growth and economic diversity.

The New Orleans economy continues to grow, and the city is one of the foremost food destinations in the U.S. and globally. However, even with our strong culinary heritage, the opportunity exists to grow the number of food-related businesses, creating a more significant economic impact in a vital local industry.

The Business Alliance believes that by leveraging the city's international food brand, its significant infrastructure, and natural resources, there are substantial business opportunities.

### **Summary of Ask**

**NOLABA is helping to facilitate the search for an Operator for a publicly-supported FDA kitchen that fosters and supports innovation, entrepreneurship, and equity for food manufacturing and third-party sale. The goal is to accelerate the commercialization of our entrepreneurs' concepts and provide more than just rentable kitchen space. The project envisions the FDA kitchen as a place to provide technical assistance, packaging/marketing help, cooperative purchasing, and product development, as well as meet the needs of food entrepreneurs within the market.**

The Business Alliance has identified and conducted analyses of targeted local kitchen facilities in the city that are anticipated to be made available for the FDA kitchen and incubator uses as described herein. We will facilitate a partnership between the Operator, the owner(s) of a facility and potential investors to support buildout and operations of the kitchen with a goal of establishing a FDA kitchen that meets the needs of current and future New Orleans food entrepreneurs.

All proposals must include:

- Evidence of the firm's qualifications to provide the above services
- Background and experience in working with underserved and marginalized clients
- Statement of the firm's understanding of work to be performed with timeline and budget
- Examples of public-private partnerships
- A preliminary business model highlighting the primary program and operating areas, revenue streams, and cost centers. The Business Alliance understand this information will be proprietary in nature and will be kept confidential.

Assumptions for the business plan should include:

- A fully equipped FDA compliant wholesale commercial kitchen up to 2,000 sq. ft. with the ability for two kitchens with a walk-in cooler, walk-in freezer and appropriate dry storage capability
- Loading dock
- Ample Parking
- A co-packing line, capper and labeler

### **Informational Scope**

The Business Alliance seeks qualifications from Vendors that have experience in providing management services in similar environments.

Initial assumptions and qualifications are that the Operator will:

- Oversee a publicly-supported, fully-equipped existing commercial and incubator kitchen, and work with the city to bring it to FDA compliance with a small co-packing facility.
- Have a track record of successfully operating an FDA kitchen and supporting food-based entrepreneurs.
- Work with food-based and culinary entrepreneurs from a range of backgrounds, including working with underserved, low-to-moderate income entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs of color.
- Demonstrate experience of either directly providing technical and financial assistance to culinary and food-based entrepreneurs to develop their concepts and products and take them to market and scale, or work with partner providers to do so.
- Show experience with engaging wider audiences in order to ensure the success of the kitchen beyond food entrepreneurs, including partner organizations, service providers, institutional stakeholders, and community members.
- Maintain the kitchen facility in accordance with the highest sanitary standards, including pest control measures and sufficient garbage disposal.
- Oversee the procedures and practices needed to comply with food safety regulatory requirements, including those on employee hygiene and practices, hand washing, use of gloves, safe food sources, safe food temperatures, cross-contamination, and equipment cleaning and sanitizing.
- Be responsible for management such as scheduling, equipment maintenance, state, local and federal licensing and inspections.
- Have the necessary business licenses, permits, and, insurance.
- Be responsible for collection, retention, and accounting of all monies from use of the FDA kitchen operation. The Operator shall maintain financial procedures and record-keeping under generally accepted accounting principles. The Operator shall make said financial records and supporting documents available for inspection, reproduction, and audit. The Operator shall be required to submit a "pro forma" financial statement for each year of any contract.
- Train New Orleans residents as kitchen employees to expand workforce opportunities.
- Identify rental capacity to regulatory representatives and not rent beyond the identified capacity. The Operator may not overbook, or schedule rentals in a manner such that it exceeds the designated capacity and causes operators to process with insufficient production space.

*(NOTE: This is not intended to be a complete list and may change based on submittals from interested parties.)*

### **Background**

### Nationwide Trends

- The number of commercial kitchens and food incubators nationwide has increased by more than 50 percent over the last five years. (Source: ROI-NJ.com)
- Consumers show preferences for specialty food brands with authentic connections to food traditions and histories.
- Food manufacturing is accessible to people with limited education and has a range of pay scales. Jobs in sub-sectors like packaging, warehousing, distribution, manufacturing, and processing can have salary ranges that are well above the living wage.
- Food manufacturing increases the expansion of local farms to meet increased needs.
- An increase in local sourcing also increased local food resiliency by supporting local farmers.

### New Orleans Trends

- The city lacks any FDA or USDA wholesale commercial kitchen that can help start-up food manufacturers. The closest FDA compliant kitchens are in Norco, La., (28 miles away) and another at the LSU Ag Center in Baton Rouge (80 miles away).
- New Orleans is one of the top food cities in the world. That public recognition primarily focuses on unique local cuisines and restaurants, not our food manufacturing capabilities.
- Each year multiple non-profit and community-based organizations create food pitch competitions that attract more than 50 start-ups/scale-ups. Winners often cite the lack of kitchen and manufacturing facilities as their number one barrier to success.
- The Business Alliance and partners are working to grow opportunities for local food entrepreneurs who would form a potential user base for FDA kitchen facility.
- The city has been a proving ground for economic opportunity, demonstrating that intentionality around equity and sustainability does not come at the cost of development and growth.

New Orleans Business Alliance and the City of New Orleans Office of Community and Economic Development have committed to growing food manufacturing programming, access to facilities, and opportunities in Orleans Parish. Our joint efforts align with the City's Master Plan and its food-related priorities, including:

- Establishing a food hub/aggregator
- Establishing a food incubator
- Establishing a meat and poultry processing plant



### **Use of Responses**

This RFQ may serve as the basis for selection of an Operator to manage the FDA kitchen and to create a new economic opportunity for New Orleans residents.

### **Timeline**

- RFQ Distribution March 2, 2020
- Conference Call for Questions Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 p.m. CDT
- Proposal Due April 13, 2020



1250 Poydras Street, Suite 2150  
New Orleans, LA 70113  
504.934.4500 [www.nolaba.org](http://www.nolaba.org)

Submit your RFQ to:

Norman E Barnum IV, CFO

1250 Poydras Street, Suite 2150

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If you have any questions or would like further clarification of any aspect of this request for proposal, please contact Norman Barnum at 504-934-4572 for process questions or Louis David at 504-934-4569 for substantive questions. We look forward to receiving your proposal.