



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

PROJECT TITLE: SLC Smart City Startup Accelerator Program

PROJECT START: September 20th, 2021

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS RELEASE DATE: July 29th, 2021

PROPOSAL DUE DATE: September 3rd, 2021 to eda@us-ignite.org by 8pm Eastern.

Respondent ELIGIBILITY: This procurement is open to those Respondents that satisfy the minimum qualifications stated herein.

CONTENT OF THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

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I. INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS

US Ignite, a high-tech 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is seeking to contract with a proven startup accelerator group or sole proprietor (“Respondent”) to develop and administer an early-stage startup training program. The SLC Smart City Startup Accelerator Program (“Accelerator Program”) will provide training to early-stage entrepreneurs and startups focused on developing smart city applications and products in Salt Lake City, UT.

US Ignite is inviting proposals from qualified Respondents with a large entrepreneurship network and proven business development success to partner with US Ignite in administering this Accelerator Program. The Accelerator Program will provide state-of-the-art training for start-ups and small businesses to develop and grow these businesses into sustainable enterprises. This RFP will require Respondents to describe their proposed process, technical capabilities, and demonstrated experience with services and support necessary to plan and execute a startup training service.

The Accelerator Program' will be administered over the course of three (3) months beginning September 2021. The program will support a cohort of five (5) startups focused on developing smart city products and services. The Accelerator Program must be made accessible to participating groups online. Respondents may submit virtual or hybrid program models.

The awardee of this RFP will be granted a one (1) year fixed price contract for their services, with an option for up to two (2) additional years, for up to \$75,000 total.

II. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Accelerator Program is a key part of the “Accelerating Economic Development through Smart City Programs — Salt Lake City” project. This project is a partnership between US Ignite and Salt Lake City and is funded by the Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) under project number 05-79-06069.

The Accelerator Program will aid US Ignite in transitioning startup teams focused on developing smart city products and services from the ideation phase through startup growth stages, driving them to the growth and funding attraction level.

US Ignite supports building successful programs across communities and local industries that create new high-tech startups, high-skill jobs, and generate outside investment. To date, over 60 startup teams from our 30 partner communities have received app development, fundraising, and startup expansion training from our NSF-funded Smart Gigabit Communities (SGC) program and other programs.

Built on those US Ignite experiences, this RFP has been designed to help us meet the following activities:

- **Identify targeted follow-on mentoring options:** US Ignite would like to increase its capacity to assess the growth stage and the needs of startups. Activities/processes being considered include linking startup teams with accelerators, SBIR, VC, local state, and other funding and mentoring options.
- **Address both technical and business challenges at the seed stage:** US Ignite will connect teams to our smart city experts/network nationally, while profiling potential customer bases. US Ignite has an extensive network of partners representing government, corporate, and research interests, in addition to the 30 strong SGC partner communities looking for high-tech solutions, they can leverage to drive economic development and opportunities.

III. PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary GOALS of the Accelerator Program are to:

- A. Help teams develop their initial business idea into a Minimal Viable Product/Service (MVP).
- B. Mentor teams in the early phase of product development to define milestones, time and funding commitments, and deliver a validated solution with a defined product/market fit. This includes developing related educational resources for participating startups.
- C. Work with select startup teams to scale up their businesses, including growth in users, customers, and revenue, as well as grow their capacity to attract significant funding.
- D. Help to diversify Salt Lake City's economy by supporting entrepreneurship and innovation for startups and small businesses that create high-quality jobs in the region.

The OBJECTIVES of the Operator should include, but are not limited to:

- Identify, design, and launch the Accelerator Program for early-stage startups focused on smart city developments.
- Develop programming, including, but not limited to, business mentorship, workforce development and networking opportunities.
- Administer the Accelerator Program virtually or as a hybrid model over the course of 3 months.
- Provide opportunities for one-on-one mentoring with cohort members.
- Develop evaluation (“success”) metrics and final reports for the Accelerator Program.

IV. RESPONDENT PROFILE

The lead Respondent may be a non-profit organization, industry group, academic or research institution, private company, venture capitalist, accelerator manager, or sole proprietor. While the lead Respondent may be a sole proprietor or single organization, US Ignite welcomes joint ventures and partnerships, as there are elements to the proposal that require specific areas of expertise.

V. US IGNITE’S ROLE admin@us-ignite.org

US Ignite’s role will be to:

1. Identify entities eligible for the program within the high-tech sector.
2. Work with Operator and Salt Lake City to establish a program timeline.

VI. PROPOSAL FORMAT

Respondents should submit their Proposal as a document containing the information below. The document should be provided as a PDF file and should not be protected to the extent that printing, assembling, and separating sections of the document are prohibited. Documents should not exceed five (5) pages with 1 inch margins, and not less than 10 font size.

To apply to the RFP, proposals must be submitted to eda@us-ignite.org

Any questions regarding this RFP should be submitted by e-mail to eda@us-ignite.org with the subject:

SLC Smart City Startup Accelerator RFP, on or before **August 20th, 2021**. Questions received after this deadline may not be considered. All questions and answers made to US Ignite will be posted publicly on the US Ignite webpage at www.us-ignite.org

Proposal

Recommended guidelines for proposal submission:

- Cover Page (1 page) including:
 - Proposal Title
 - Respondent name (first and last)
 - Respondent contact information
 - Respondent affiliation (company, organization, institution, etc.)
 - Respondent location (city, state)
 - Summary of Response (500 words or less)
- Proposed approach and model, including examples of previous work, possible timelines, evaluation metrics, and mentoring (1 page)
- Community Impacts, including level of potential economic impact to the immediate community, employment placement and educational opportunities, level of integration/synergy of the project with the City (both businesses and residents), and knowledge of Smart City arena (1 page)
- Respondent qualifications and experience (1 page)
- Required assets, staffing support, and/or resources for implementation; budget information or costs that may be encountered (1 page)
- Supplemental information demonstrating applicants knowledge and understanding of the startup ecosystem in Salt Lake City (1 page)

Each Respondent submitting a proposal must demonstrate sufficient financial resources/capacity and relevant experience to manage and operate the Accelerator Program.

RFP Submission

All RFP responses must be received by **September 3rd, 2021 8:00pm** Eastern. All responses will be reviewed and evaluated in private. Any response received after the time stipulated may not be considered.

Responses should be submitted directly using this Submission Form and shall be in the format as described in this RFP. Respondents will receive an email from US Ignite confirming receipt of the response. The Evaluation Committee reserves the right to reject any and all responses and accept any responses as submitted or as modified, which in the opinion of the Committee, will be in the best interest of US Ignite.

VII. SELECTION CRITERIA

In addition to achieving the program goals and objectives, US Ignite will evaluate each proposal according to the criteria described below, taking into account the information provided in the proposal, references and any other information about the Respondent team and its performance available to US Ignite. Proposals that are not complete or do not conform to the requirements of this RFP may not be considered.

Scoring

Proposals will be evaluated across the following areas and assigned points up to the following maximum point amounts for each evaluation category:

Criteria	Points
1. Proposed Accelerator Program and Model	40
2. Qualifications and Experience	25
3. Community Impacts	20
4. Financial Strength, Independence and Capability	15
5. Statement on the startup ecosystem in Salt Lake City, UT.	5
Total Points	105

Criteria

To provide more clarity on the evaluation criteria, below is a guide to the criteria that will be used to evaluate Respondents and their proposals:

Proposed Accelerator Program and Model

1. Strength, creativity, and feasibility of the overall Accelerator Program and model.
2. Presentation of Accelerator workspace management, strategies, and equipment/operational support.
3. Support and education to startups, including access to industry partners, local ecosystems, one-on-one mentoring.
4. Level of and strategies to support financial sustainability.

Qualifications and Experience

1. Quality of information submitted in response to the RFP.
2. Credentials of the Respondent team, both lead and partners relevant professional experience, business acumen, level and depth of professional network with the Accelerator Program industry, such as universities, investors, technology organizations, youth and veteran services, industry groups, etc.
3. Evaluation of past projects and performance.
4. Past experience in public-private partnerships with an Accelerator or similar ventures.

We encourage applicants to demonstrate an understanding of how their experience and work will support diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the local startup community. See [Section IX](#) for additional information on US Ignite's commitment to equal opportunity in contracting.

Community Impacts

1. Level of potential economic impact to the immediate community such as the number, type and quality of jobs the Accelerator Program will produce, and economic impact dollars to be created.
2. Amount of follow-on funding and investment participating startups receive after completing the training.

3. Extent and level of engagement regarding workforce development, employment placement and educational opportunities.
4. Level of integration/synergy of the project with the City (both businesses and residents), from economic development perspectives.
5. Knowledge of Smart City arena.

Financial Strength, Independence and Capability

1. Respondent’s financial resources and business acumen.
2. Experience in receiving and managing grants or other funds.
3. Demonstrated ability to expend funds and implement programs in a timely fashion.
4. Level of funding that can be raised and invested in the startup teams graduating from the Accelerator Program.

Startup Ecosystem in Salt Lake City, UT

Statement demonstrating applicants understanding of the startup ecosystem in Salt Lake City.

VIII. REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) ANTICIPATED TIMELINE

The table below presents the major RFP solicitation milestones and related time periods:

Time Period	Major Milestones
July 29th, 2021	RFP Announcement
September 3rd, 2021	Due Date for Proposals
September 10th, 2021	Review Panel Selection of Accelerator Program
September 10th, 2021	Announce “Apparent Successful Contractor” and notify all Respondents
September 13th, 2021	Negotiate Contract
September 17th, 2021	Execute Contract

September 20th, 2021	Launch of Accelerator Program
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IX. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CONTRACTING

US Ignite is strongly committed to equal opportunity in the solicitation of business contracting to assure that persons or businesses doing business with or receiving funds from US Ignite are equal opportunity businesses and employers. US Ignite endeavors to do business with firms sharing US Ignite’s commitment to equal opportunity and will not do business with any firm that discriminates. US Ignite strongly recommends that persons and businesses doing business with US Ignite take positive steps toward diversity, expanding their sub-contracting solicitation base and offering opportunities to all eligible persons, businesses and organizations. The Respondent selected, and each of its subcontractors, shall comply with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Executive Orders 11246, 11375, and 12086; and any other applicable federal or state laws or regulations currently existing or enacted after the date of this RFP.

X. RFP CONDITIONS, TERMS & LIMITATIONS

By submitting its Proposal, each Respondent authorizes US Ignite to contact any and all other persons identified in its Proposal or in any inquiry conducted by or on behalf of US Ignite and to obtain the release of pertinent financial and other information, as well as to obtain verification of the information provided by each Respondent. US Ignite will not be responsible for any costs incurred by any Respondent for work performed in the preparation and production of a Proposal, including any requests for additional information, interviews or negotiations; nor for any work performed prior to written authorization from US Ignite to proceed. All proposals submitted will become the property of US Ignite.

After review of the submissions the US Ignite may request to meet with organizations prior to selection. If a proposer is invited to make a presentation to US Ignite, then the costs for such presentation will be the responsibility of the proposer. If conditions change between the time of the RFP release and completion of the review process, then US Ignite reserves the right not to select any vendor.

No contractual obligation on behalf of US Ignite whatsoever shall arise from the RFP process. This RFP does not commit the US Ignite to pay any cost incurred in the preparation or submission of any response to the RFP.

US Ignite may reject any or all proposals in whole or in part, waive a technicality in any proposal, make awards in a manner deemed in the best interest of US Ignite and, unless otherwise specified by the vendor, accept any item in the proposal. US Ignite reserves the right to award one or more contracts, if necessary.

This project will be partially funded with Federal funds from the United State Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration and therefore is subject to the Federal laws and regulations associated with that program.

XI. DISCLAIMERS

US Ignite reserves the right to withdraw this RFP at any time and for any reason, to issue clarifications, modifications and/or amendments. Receipt of materials by US Ignite or submission of any materials confers no right upon the proposer nor obligates US Ignite in any manner. US Ignite reserves the right to waive minor irregularities in materials presented, if such action is in the best interests of US Ignite. Any such waiver shall not modify the remaining RFP requirements or excuse the proposer from full compliance with the RFP requirements or excuse the proposer from full compliance with the RFP specifications and other contract requirements if the proposer is awarded a contract.

XII. DEFINITIONS

Awardee: The firm submitting a proposal under this RFP that is selected to administer The SLC Smart City Startup Accelerator Program (“The Accelerator Program”).

Cohort: A class of Program Eligible Enterprises selected to participate in the SLC Smart City Startup Accelerator Program curriculum of fixed duration.

Accelerator Program: An Accelerator Program will work with prospective entrepreneurs at the earliest stages of development to transform their ideas into minimum viable products. Examples of the types of services provided by a pre-accelerator include guidance on acquiring grant funding, establishing enterprise structure, protection of intellectual property, and developing pitch decks.

Program: The Salt Lake City Smart City Accelerator Program

Respondent: A firm or sole proprietor that submits a proposal in response to this RFP.

Smart City: Products and services that use emerging technologies to address issues that relate to city life, such as intelligent transportation technologies, augmented reality / virtual reality, 5G applications, Internet-of-Things, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and more.

XIII. ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND ON US IGNITE

Based in Washington, DC, [US Ignite](#) builds programs that bridge the public-private throughout the smart city ecosystem. We collaborate across a network of partners that draws from our experience working with large communications and technology organizations in the \$100 million Platforms for Advanced Wireless Research (PAWR) program and across more than 30 of our NSF-funded Smart Gigabit Communities (SGCs).

As a high-tech non-profit, US Ignite receives support from federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation, Department of Defense, and National Institute of Standards and Technology. We are proud to have support from the Knight and Mott Foundations, along with over 35 corporate partners.

As a trusted partner, US Ignite brings this entire smart city ecosystem together, successfully pairing financial investment with technical and organizational expertise. Through the public-private partnership programs we run, US Ignite is a catalyst for communications network advancement and innovation in smart city services powered by a new generation of technologies.