

Cheyenne Chamber/LCCC
“Small Business Challenge Grant”
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

I. Company Overview

The Small Business Challenge Grant is a collaborative project between the Greater Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce and the Laramie County Community College (LCCC) Center for Entrepreneurship (CFE). For many years the Chamber has been the driving force behind this unique opportunity for local businesses. This year Laramie County Community College joins the Chamber to bring an even stronger program to our community.

This collaborative project includes both monetary and in-kind contributions from the Laramie County community to assist a small business in their continued success. This year the Challenge Grant committee consists of seven (7) members including four (4) from the Chamber's Small Business Council and three (3) from LCCC. A business owner who applies must submit a written proposal and be available for an in-person presentation if chosen as a top candidate.

The Grant committee is seeking proposals from small businesses, defined as a business with 50 employees or less, interested in receiving financial and in-kind assistance to take their business to a new level of growth. This might mean the purchase of new equipment, moving a home-based business to an outside location, or streamlining an inventory process. There is a great deal of flexibility as to the growth strategy a particular company might choose. Please see the selection criteria for detail about submissions. The submitting organization must have been in business between two (2) and four (4) years for consideration (businesses in operation no earlier than October 1, 2005 and no later than October 31, 2007).

II. Situational Analysis

The goal is to provide growing concerns with a foundation for success through not only financial and technical assistance but ongoing resource support. On a larger scale this project will lead to greater interaction among our community's businesses and contribute to economic development for the area.

III. Scope of Work

The winner of the Challenge Grant will be provided many resources to assist in the ongoing success of his/her business. The term of the grant is one year (January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2010). During this term the winning business owner will be expected to:

- Provide a timeline of activities that outline the growth path, then meet monthly with the grant coordinator to assess status.
- Meet at the start of the term, then bi-monthly with the sponsor advisory team for input and updates. (Every other month this will be combined with the coordinator meeting so only one monthly meeting is required.)
- Attend monthly Chamber luncheons.
- Speak at two Chamber luncheons to share business story.
- Attend two classes of his/her choice at LCCC or send an employee for additional training (workshops and classes within the *Workforce and Community Development Department*).

IV. Selection Criteria

The following material must be submitted in full by January 8, 2010 at 5:00pm to be considered for this Challenge Grant.

- Proof that the company has been in business at least two (2) years but no longer than four (4) years (in operation no earlier than October 1, 2005 and no later than October 31, 2007).
- Proof of appropriate insurance.
- At least one year of historical financial information (such as a tax return) and a one year budgeted projection based on current conditions and award of the Grant.
- Narrative strategic plan outlining goals for the company and how this Grant will assist the company in achieving said goals, including a timeline of activities to reach one year goals.
- At least two letters of reference that demonstrate the company's commitment to customer service and good business practices.

If chosen as one of the top submissions, candidate will be asked to present his/her plan to the Grant committee in a 15-minute presentation.

V. Award

Please see the attached list of sponsors and cash and in-kind awards. Sponsors are subject to change. Cash awards may only be used for capital improvements, not operational funding.

VI. Process of Evaluation and Timeline

Timeline is subject to modification

November 6: Copy of RFP made available to partners and related agencies, marketing for program is implemented.

November 6 - January 8: The Small Business Development Center is available to assist with questions regarding the RFP and related materials. Applicants must contact the SBDC directly. Contact information follows.

January 8, 2010: Deadline for all submissions by 5:00pm – no late proposals accepted. Please submit an original and one copy to the Cheyenne Chamber office at the Depot.

January 20-27, 2010: Top submissions will be invited to present their plan before the committee.

February 5, 2010: Winner of Challenge Grant for 2010 will be announced at Chamber luncheon (winner will be notified earlier in the week).

VII. Request for Proposal

All information provided will remain confidential within the grant committee and will not be released, in any form, to other individuals or to the public.

The list of questions below represents the key areas to address in the narrative portion of the submission, but is not meant to be all-inclusive. Feel free to add additional information as you build your own submission.

There is a ten (10) page limit to the proposal, not including any financial attachments.

Organizational overview

- What is the mission of the business?
- Describe the products and/or services that your business provides.
- How and why was the business founded?
- How long have you owned the business?
- What is the legal form of the business (sole proprietor, LCC, Corp)?
- What is your overall vision of what the business will look like and accomplish within the next three years?
- Provide a list of current employees and the role of each, including the owner.
- Are there currently outside advisors that the business owner utilizes for outside expertise?
- Provide a brief overview of your current operational processes: Hours you are open/available for customers? Who are your suppliers (if any)? How do you monitor quality? What training is provided for employees (if any)? How are you handling risk management?

Market Analysis

- Describe what you consider to be your strongest competitive advantage.
- Describe the current competitive environment from the owner's perspective: What businesses might be direct competitors? Which might be indirect competitors? What do they do well, and perhaps not so well?
- Current location of the business. If this will change, why? What part will location play in attracting customers?
- Describe your average customer: age, gender, where they live and work. What do you estimate their income level to be?
- If the customer is another business, discuss the average business customer: size of company (# of employees, sales if known, location).
- How often does the average customer buy from you (what is the buying cycle)? How large is your current market? Is it growing or shrinking?
- What is your current marketing strategy? Why did you choose that strategy?
- Include discussion about pricing strategy, distribution (if applicable), customer service, and advertising.
- Discuss your future expansion and growth plan and how this grant will assist your process.

Industry Experience Related Questions

- Describe your familiarity with your market. Has your business developed as you expected when you opened/took over this business?
- What have been some of the biggest challenges you have faced since starting your business? How have you handled those challenges?
- Provide a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis based on your marketplace. (Strengths and weaknesses are usually internal to your company; opportunities and threats are usually market/industry based.)

Program Related Questions

- Why are you applying for this grant?
- Describe how this grant would assist you in accomplishing a company goal(s).
- Describe the objectives, strategy and/or tactics you would implement to reach said goal using the monetary and in-kind donations of the grant as well as organizational resources.
- Who would be responsible for managing the timelines and budget for this project?

Budget Related Questions

- Provide a short narrative that outlines your opinion about your financial situation, to date. What do you see as difficulties? What has gone well? How will this grant fit in with your current financial objectives?
- Please provide one to two years historical financial data.
- Please provide a one year, month-by-month, budgeted cash projection (including any grant benefits).
- How does your company currently handle accounts receivables?
- What is your credit policy? Do you accept credit cards, cash, checks, trade, and accounts?

Miscellaneous Questions

- Add any additional information you believe is relevant to this submission.
- Do you have any concerns with this project?

Contact for assistance or questions with proposal guidelines:

Anya Petersen-Frey, Regional Director
Wyoming Small Business Development Center
307-632-6141 or apeter35@uwyo.edu

See next page for a complete list of
2010 Small Business Challenge Grant
SPONSORS



THANK YOU

Small Business Challenge Grant
Taking It To The Next Level



2010 SPONSORS

MHP McGee, Hearne & Paiz, LLP
Certified Public Accountants and Consultants
\$2500 in-kind accounting assistance

WEB SERVICES WyomingTribuneEagle
\$2500 in-kind advertising/design: on-line media

WyomingTribuneEagle
\$2500 in-kind advertising: print media

BURNS INSURANCE
The Right Choice!
Free insurance audit

Western Vista FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
helping you get there!
\$1,000 merchant services, business checks

Greater Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce
Free membership - value to \$500

WYOMING BUSINESS REPORT
\$2500 in-kind advertising package

CHEYENNE THE CW **CBS 5 NewsChannel**
\$2000 in-kind for interview, time spots, and commercial production



\$1500 in-kind commercial printing



\$1000 in-kind training and classes



\$1500 in-kind advertising package

Wyoming BUSINESS COUNCIL
\$2,500 CASH sponsorship



\$1500 in-kind accounting services



\$2500 in-kind business legal services

Cheyenne LEADS
Free membership - value to \$2,000

WYOPS WYOMING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES LLC
\$2500 in-kind technical and website services

Cheyenne-Laramie County Joint Powers Board
\$2500 CASH sponsorship

BRESNAN Advertising Services
\$2500 in-kind advertising package

WESTERN SKY DESIGN LLC
\$1500 in-kind graphic design services

TRADER'S Shopping • Entertainment • Community News
\$2500 in-kind advertising for print media

WYOMING ENTREPRENEUR.BIZ
\$1000 in-kind consulting

ALIGN Organizational Development and Training
\$2500 in-kind consulting services

Total Value of Sponsorships: \$41,250