

Request for Information

Statewide Economic Gardening Program (*GrowOregon*)

Purpose

In 2010, the Oregon Legislature passed HB 3644. This bill created a Statewide Economic Gardening Task Force (referred in this document as EGTF) composed of business leaders, economic development service providers, and policy makers, which was charged to assess Oregon's continuum of business development services with respect to growth companies, and develop recommendations regarding an economic gardening strategy to the 2011 Legislature. The purpose of this document is to outline a Request for Information (RFI) that will inform the EGTF as to what potential resources are available that could ultimately help implement a statewide Economic Gardening program, known as *GrowOregon*.

Background: Economic Gardening

As stated in the 2010 *Oregon Business Plan*, Oregon per capita income continues its long-term slide compared to other states, and Oregon's private sector has shed thousands of jobs. Oregon needs more living wage jobs and needs to bring in new wealth to the state. Given limited resources, Oregon also needs to achieve these goals through cost-effective tools. Economic Gardening (EG) focuses on assisting second-stage, traded sector companies that demonstrate potential for fast growth. Research shows that targeted investments in these types of companies is a very effective economic development strategy to create a positive net growth of new jobs for the state as well as the generation of new revenues.

Economic Gardening is a sustained, long-term strategy to grow jobs and create wealth by providing a suite of services to local high-potential second-stage companies. Consisting chiefly of advanced market research, market strategy and market intelligence, economic gardening services also include GIS analysis, website and search engine optimization, social media marketing, and CEO peer mentoring & networking.

What is the Proposed *GrowOregon* Program and How would it Operate?

The EGTF has found that Oregon has a broad business services ecosystem including Business Oregon, the Oregon Small Business Development Center Network and its 19 centers, business accelerators, nonprofit organizations such as the Oregon Entrepreneur's Network and Oregon Microenterprise Network, and others. While this ecosystem excels in many areas, the EGTF has found there is a significant opportunity to enhance resources for second-stage growth companies, particularly advanced market research and other economic gardening services.

In other states, municipal, regional and statewide economic gardening models have proven effective and efficient in delivery of EG services. The city of Littleton, Colorado used the strategy to more than double jobs and triple sales tax revenue over a 17 year period during which population grew only 30%.ⁱ The Portland-Vancouver Regional Partners, as well as the City of Beaverton, are employing a regional model with positive initial results. In 2010, the state of Florida's GrowFL program helped companies create more than 400 jobs at a cost of less than \$3,500 per job.ⁱⁱ

At this time, the Task Force envisions a 2 year statewide Economic Gardening pilot project. The pilot would serve targeted growth businesses identified throughout the State with marketing assistance using sophisticated tools and professional expertise. In addition to marketing assistance, the program would also provide resources to strengthen existing CEO peer networking programs and/or assist with the establishment of new programs if necessary. Finally, identified company needs that are outside of *GrowOregon's* focus would be referred to outside existing business assistance services that specialize in addressing these identified needs.

The program would initially be implemented through a JumpStart Team, a nationally-recognized program staffed by EG experts and coordinated through the Edward Lowe Foundation (<http://www.edwardlowe.org/>). At the same time, staff members of an Oregon Team will be assembled and further trained to take over the Grow Oregon operations from the JumpStart Team. The *GrowOregon* Team is expected to consist of a staff of 5 professionals: Program Director, Call Leader, and 3 specialists in areas such as marketing research, website and search engine optimization, social media development, and geographical information systems (GIS). Staff of the *GrowOregon* Team may or may not include employees of the program host organization, depending upon qualifications.

The *GrowOregon* program could be located with a partner experienced with entrepreneurial development, such as a university, state agency, or non-profit organization. The physical space needs of the program are expected to be very modest (up to 5 staff people), as much of its work will be accomplished virtually through the internet and in partnership with local economic development staff throughout Oregon.

To be successful, the *GrowOregon* program will need to develop partnerships with the existing network of private organizations and public agencies spread throughout Oregon. *GrowOregon* will capitalize on and collaborate with the local knowledge of these partners in the identification and relationship building with potential targeted companies within their respective jurisdictions.

Program Budget:

The program budget is anticipated to be between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000 for the two-year pilot program. Resources for this program are anticipated as follows: Approximately one-third resources provided by the State of Oregon, one-third through private and foundation grants, and one-third through federal funds. User fees will also be a portion of program income. Expense line items will include personnel, space/overhead, technology/internet, databases for market research, and travel. The goal of the program is to serve 100 targeted companies (50 through the JumpStart Team; 50 through the Oregon Team) in the 24-month pilot period. Outcomes to be tracked include the following:

- a. New customers and sales
- b. New markets accessed
- c. Revenue growth
- d. Employment growth including wage base and number of employees
- e. Portion of a-d attributed to services provided
- f. Customer satisfaction

NOTE: The program description above is conceptual and preliminary. The actual program actually implemented may be somewhat different.

Eligibility: Who Is Eligible to Respond to RFI

Nonprofit agencies, for-profit entities, government agencies, tribes, out of state entities, and collaborations are eligible to respond. Out of state entities must also maintain a physical office in Oregon.

Timeline Overview and Key Dates

Release date: (By 1/31/2011)

Concept letter due: 2/28/2011

Notification of Request for Full Proposal: 3/15/2011

Full Proposals Due: 5/15/2011

Notification of Successful Proposal: 6/15/2011

Work to commence: TBD (Likely Fall 2011)

Instructions for Submission of Responses to Request for Information:

Responses to this Request for Information may be e-mailed or mailed in hard copy.

Mailing Address:

Representative Jefferson Smith

Capitol Address: 900 Court St NE, H-486,

Salem, OR 97301

Email: rep.jeffersonsmith@state.or.us

For questions on this RFI, please contact Alex Tinker at alex.repsmith@gmail.com or 503-736-2555.

Statewide Economic Gardening Taskforce (EGTF)

Request for Information Questions:

Primary Contact Information:

Name:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Organization Contact:

Organization Name:

Address:

City:

State:

ZIP:

County:

Web site address:

Phone number:

Tax Status:

Tax ID Number:

Geographic Area Project will serve:

Proposal Information:

Project Title:

Proposal Summary: (In 3 or 4 sentences, summarize the proposal)

Applicant Information:

Provide a concise summary of the applicant's mission, its primary activities, and key staff to be involved in the project.

Primary applicant's current annual operating budget:

Request for Information: Narrative

Capacity and Experience (500 word maximum)

Please respond to the following questions:

1. Please describe your organization's history of partnerships and service to Oregon's business community
2. If your organization has experience with business incubation, please explain.
3. The EGTF anticipates a large percentage of referrals for the GrowOR program to come from partner organizations. What experience does your organization have in linking together and communicating with various different partners throughout Oregon? What connections does your organization have with existing Oregon economic development agencies?
4. What experience does your organization have in working with second-stage, growth businesses?
5. What experience does your organization have being the fiduciary agent of a program?
6. Describe the applicant's experience, especially as it relates to the delivery of Economic Gardening services, such as market research, search engine optimization, GIS mapping, CEO development, and entrepreneur strategy and support. In the case that this is a multi-partner response, the capacity and experience for each partner must be included, and their specific role in the project must be detailed.

Project Narrative (500 word maximum)

1. How would your participation in this project enhance the products and services, and service providers already assisting Oregon's entrepreneurs and growth businesses?
2. The housing agent will be responsible for reporting to multiple funding sources and stakeholders. What experience does your organization have in developing and remaining accountable to multiple stakeholders?
3. Please describe your anticipated deliverables and impacts.
4. How will you disseminate the information about the project's impacts?
5. Describe the ways in which your approach is collaborative and/or innovative.

ⁱ *Economic Gardening: Next Generation Applications for a Balanced Portfolio Approach to Economic Growth*

ⁱⁱ "GrowFL helps create 400+ jobs in 1st year", *South Florida Business Journal*, January 6, 2011