

CITY OF CORAL GABLES TECHNICAL WORKSHOP GRANT (September 3, 2020)

The City of Coral Gables is respectfully requesting from Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners to fund under the Coronavirus Relief Fund the proposed “Technical Workshop Grant” to improve the local businesses capabilities to mitigate the financial impacts created by the COVID-19 health crisis.

Introduction

The City of Coral Gables is one of a few original planned communities in the State of Florida. The City is located within easy access to the County’s major employment centers and economic hubs (Miami International Airport, PortMiami, and Network Access Point of the Americas) and is the home of the University of Miami. In 2019, the City’s estimated population was approximately 51,000. Coral Gables economy is comprised of a locally and internationally diverse businesses environment, which includes more than 150 multinationals, 8,200 businesses, and 20 consulates and foreign government offices.

Need Assessment:

During the past eight (8) months, the City’s business community has been devastated by the financial disaster created by the COVID-19 health crisis. In July 2020, the downtown area was experiencing one of its highest vacancy rates (10.9%) in years; many jobs were lost in the hotel and leisure, retail and restaurant sectors of our local economy. Restaurants had to readjust their business model to meet the State, County and CDC guidelines designed to protect the health of our residents and visitors. In addition, many small businesses including restaurants were not technologically prepared to successfully implement new business processes to meet the County’s New Norm. To address this problem, the city initiated a series of technical assistance webinars to improve the business community’s technological capabilities, which would enable them to communicate more effectively with their customers and supply chain. Presently, more than 300 business owners and interested stakeholders have participated in the technology and retail webinar series in the past three (3) months. We hope to continue this webinar series and other similar activities with the approval of this grant.

Technology Workshop Grant Program Goal:

The overall goal of the “Technical Workshop Grant Program” is to provide the technological tools and methodologies readily available in the market to improve the business community’s communication and/or interactions with customers and suppliers in an efficient and cost-effective manner; upgrade their business processes to mitigate the current financial impacts created by the COVID-19 health crisis; retain and retool their existing workforce; and establish a resilient and adaptable business process to current and/or future disasters or crises.

Technical Workshop Grant Program Objectives:

The following provides the basic overall objectives of the program.

1. Deliver a webinar series that is educational and provides practical and affordable technological tools for the businesses community to efficiently communicate with their customers and suppliers in a cost-effective manner.

2. Provide small businesses with tools and technologies to help them retain and improve the skills of their workforce and mitigate the impacts created by the COVID-19 health crisis in a cost-effective manner.
3. Expand the existing relationship between government, industry, academia and nonprofits to improve the technological capabilities of small businesses that have been financially devastated by the COVID-19 health crisis.
4. Educate and inform businesses on the different technologies readily available in the market to improve their business practices and communication with customer and suppliers.
5. Promote business best practices and technologies that are going to make our business community more resilient and adaptable as we enter the second and third phase of the reopening of our economy and the implementation of Miami-Dade County's New Norm guidelines to mitigate the financial impacts created by the COVID-19 health crisis.
6. To provide the retail business community with tools to improve their communication, financial, and capacity building strategies.
7. Transition the City's economic development efforts from an information phase to the introduction of business tools to further the re-opening of the local economy.
8. Provide new ideas and lessons learned from other communities to make their respective businesses more resilient and adaptable during and post-COVID-19.
9. Respond to questions regarding their respective business models.
10. List of key opportunities for small retail businesses to thrive post-COVID-19.

Technical Assistance Team:

The "Technical Assistance Team" is composed of City of Coral Gables professional staff (Information Technology, Economic Development, Legal, Planning and City Manager's Office), Consultants, University Professors, Silicon Valley Partners, technology nonprofits and local technology experts.

1. City of Coral Gables Professional Staff. The multi-disciplinary staff will be assembled from the following City departments: Information Technology (IT), Economic Development, Emergency Management, Legal, Planning and City Manager's Office. The group is composed of experienced and skillful professionals in their respective fields with extensive knowledge on the application of technology, economic development initiatives, business processes, and planning principles. The IT and Economic Developments leads will be the Program Managers for this grant.
2. The business consultant will be Ms. Syama Meagher, Owner and Chief Retail Strategist of Scaling Retail. Since 2007, The Consulting Team has had a continued professional relationship with the City of Coral Gables. The firm's initial assignment was a workshop presentation for

the business community on Digital Marketing and Social Media. Thereafter, the city hired Syama to work on Instagram branding, develop a toolkit, and image and font guidelines that are currently used by the city. In 2018, Syama presented a three (3) part Holiday Workshop Series, in which she worked with our retailers and restaurateurs on “Customer Demographics and Psychographics, Branding and Marketing.” At the end of this program, micro-grants were awarded, via an application process and selection committee to businesses that participated in the workshop series.

Ms. Meagher will work with the Department to present the business workshops for small business community to expand their communication, financial and capacity building strategies in anticipation of the re-opening of phases II and III our local economy. In addition, other business tools will be introduced to make their business operations more fluid and resilient to meet the current COVID-19 health crises, and other disasters and/or crisis in the near future.

3. **The City’s Technology Partners.** The City will leverage its strategic smart city partnerships with STEM organizations, researchers and subject matter experts in industry, government, academia and nonprofit, to add capacity and gain insight from successful use cases of business technology during the pandemic. Strategic tech partners will include University of Miami (UM), Florida International University (FIU), Miami-Dade Beacon Council’s Technology Committee (MDBC-TC), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce), the Global City Teams Challenge (GCTC) NIST volunteer coalition, TechCARES nonprofit coalition and other partner organizations from Silicon Valley, and local providers of business technology services and platforms.

Proposed Projects:

The proposed Small Business Recovery Workshop Webinar series centers around a series of online webinars, each followed up by a one (1) hour post-workshop question and answer session. Panelists for the webinar are to be determined. There is opportunity for partnership on the series with both the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce (CGCC), Business Development District (BID), and Coral Gables Community Foundation, as they have partnered with the Department’s prior workshops.

The proposed Small Business Technology Workshop Webinar series centers around a series of online webinars, each followed up by a one (1) hour post-workshop question and answer sessions, and a website where relevant support material and knowledge tools will be provided online, including: video recordings, support documentation, presentations, tech partners information, links to technology tools, online training, eCommerce applications and other valuable resources: www.coralgables.com/businessstechnologywebinar. Webinar panelists will include:

- Dr. Sara Rushinek, distinguished professor of business technology at University of Miami, and Women in Technology Hall of Fame inductee. Dr. Rushinek helps the local business community with technology consulting and university internships.
- Mr. Roland Saer, CEO of Seeed, a digital transformation and eCommerce agency in Miami. Seeed is a business partner of leading eCommerce tech providers like Square, Shopify, Bigcommerce, Miva, and Google. Mr. Saer specializes in improving efficiency and productivity by using software and technology.
- Ms. Lan Jenson, distinguished technology expert, CEO of the Silicon Valley technology nonprofit Adaptable Security and founder of the TechCARES initiative, that helps small and medium businesses stay safe, secure and profitable during the pandemic.

- Other fellow members from the Miami-Dade Beacon Council’s Technology Committee, a team that supports the innovation ecosystem of our communities including SMBs, incubators, accelerators, co-work spaces, technology, eCommerce and entrepreneurship education programs.
- Other fellow members from the Global City Teams Challenge (GCTC), an initiative launched by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST, U.S. Department of Commerce) to encourage smart city and technology stakeholders to develop and deploy standard-based solutions that are replicable, scalable, interoperable, and that provide measurable benefits for cities and communities.

Scope of Services:

The Scope of Services will be determined with each vendor individually once the “Technical Workshop Grant” is approved by Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners. The Contract with the vendors will be provided to Miami-Dade County once the contracts are executed with the vendors.

Schedule:

Each workshop is one-hour in length with a one-hour post workshop Q&A session to review the handout and questions. The follow up will likely be held one week after the workshop. Support material, valuable tools, information and video recordings will be provided online after each workshop.

Budget:

The following is the proposed budget estimate for the subject grant.

- A. Business Process Workshop: \$48,750
 - 1. Consultant Fees (Est. Five (5) Webinars) – \$15,000
 - 2. In-house Reimbursement -\$12,500
 - 3. Small Business Process Implementation Grant - \$21,250

- B. Business Technology Workshop: \$48,750
 - 1. Consultant Fees (Est. Five (5) Webinars) - \$20,000
 - 2. In-house Reimbursement - \$12,500
 - 3. Small Business Equipment and Software Grant - \$16,250

- C. Reserved for Administrative Cost - \$2,500

The Technical Workshop Grant is for \$100,000.