

**17778**

**TO:** Honorable Members of the Board of Acquisition and Contract

**FROM:** Diane G. Balistreri  
Coordinator, Office for Women

**DATE:** March 15, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Authority to exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy an agreement with the Women's Enterprise Development Center, Inc. to provide a microenterprise training program pursuant to Section 3(a)(xxi) of the Westchester County Procurement Policy

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Authority is hereby requested from your Honorable Board to exempt from the Westchester County Procurement Policy an agreement with the Women's Enterprise Development Center, Inc. (the "Center") for the provision of microenterprise training and assistance to poor and minority women to assist them in reaching economic self-sufficiency, for the period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011, for an amount not-to-exceed Fifty-Nine Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety Dollars (\$59,790).

Ordinarily under Section 5(b) of the Westchester County Procurement Policy, the County is required to solicit written quotations from no fewer than three entities customarily providing the requested services. However, the Center is uniquely qualified to run this kind of program. While there are other microenterprise programs in the County, no other entrepreneurial training program focuses specifically on women, although needs assessment research has shown that women face greater obstacles in setting up and maintaining businesses.

The need for this training for women is great. Self-employment through entrepreneurship provides low-income women with the opportunity to step out of poverty, to supplement low wages earned in the job market, to capitalize on talents and experience, to remove themselves from the welfare rolls, and to become self-sufficient.

The proposed Agreement will serve a public purpose by providing women with the training necessary to become economically self-sufficient. The skills learned by participants enable them to depend less on government entitlements or not at all. Some graduates augment their

low incomes with entrepreneurship, while others are able to support themselves entirely. Some even hire staff, creating new avenues for employment for Westchester residents.

The goals and objectives of the proposed Agreement are for the Center to provide:

- 25 workshops/seminars for 850 women
- one-on-one technical assistance to approximately 125 women
- financial resource counseling and referrals to 250 women
- peer support groups for 16-20 women
- 2 microenterprise fairs

During the previous contract term, nearly 1,000 women participated in workshops/seminars, 127 women received one-on-one technical assistance, over 450 women utilized resource counseling, and 27 women received peer support.

The goals and objectives of the proposed agreement will be tracked and monitored by the Westchester County Office for Women, which will be responsible for monitoring the Center's performance under this Agreement by means of site visits, as well as their quarterly statistics and narratives. The effectiveness of this program will be determined in a variety of ways. By the end of the proposed contract term, 65-95 women will have completed the entrepreneurial training; 60-90 will have completed business plans; and 50-70 women will have opened their own businesses. Of the 850 anticipated workshop participants, besides gaining business information, more than 90% will return positive evaluations. At least 75% of women participating in the Microenterprise Fairs are expected to increase their sales and customer base. For example, in 2010:

- 89 women completed the training, and of those graduates:
  - 86 women completed business plans
  - 69 women opened their own business
- 100% of women who participated in the Microenterprise Fairs increased their sales and customer base

In addition, the Center will track outcomes of graduates for up to two years after completing the course. Outcome data will be reported to the Office for Women.

The Center provides a program consisting of recruitment and assessment; 60+ hours of entrepreneurial training; life skills seminars, and paired work with a volunteer mentor from the women's business community. The Center also provides post-training seminars, ongoing technical assistance, and access to capital.

The Center has successfully performed this service under previous contracts with the County since the beginning of 2001. Women that have graduated from the program over the past ten years have included socially and economically disadvantaged women, displaced homemakers, Latina women, and child care providers. Approximately two-thirds of the total graduates have since successfully started businesses. In the years that the Center has been funded through the Office for Women, your Board has determined that it was in the best interests of the County to exempt those contracts from the Procurement Policy requirements because of its unique focus.

Under the Westchester County Procurement Policy Section 3(a)(xxi), your Honorable Board may determine "by resolution passed prior to commencing such procurement, that compliance with

this policy would not be in the best interests of the County.” For the reasons set forth above, it is proposed that the best interests of the County would be served by entering into this agreement.

Accordingly, a resolution to exempt the procurement of the proposed Agreement with the Center is hereby submitted for your Honorable Board’s consideration.

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 4-7-2011 - JOMARY VIEIRA, SECRETARY

# RESOLUTION

Upon a communication from the Coordinator of the Office for Women, be it hereby

**RESOLVED**, that pursuant to Section 3(a)(xxi) of the Westchester County Procurement Policy, it is hereby determined that application of the procedural requirements contained therein, including the necessity of soliciting written price quotations, is neither cost effective nor expedient, and accordingly, not in the best interests of the County in connection with the procurement of an agreement for microenterprise training and assistance to poor and minority women to assist them in reaching economic self-sufficiency, with the Women's Enterprise Development Center, Inc., 1133 Westchester Avenue, Suite N-220, White Plains, New York 10604.

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 4-7-2011 - JOMARY VIEIRA, SECRETARY