

55553

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Acquisition and Contract

FROM: Honorable Robert P. Astorino
Westchester County Executive
Hon. Michael B. Kaplowitz, Chairman
Westchester County Board of Legislators
Robin Schlaff
Director, Office for Women

DATE: February 28, 2017

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

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 a term commencing on January 1, 2017 and continuing through December 31, 2017, for an amount not-to-exceed \$84,032, payable quarterly pursuant to an approved budget.

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:

- 20-25 workshops/seminars for 400 women;
- 150 one-on-one technical assistance sessions; and
- financial resource counseling and referrals to 100 women.

During the previous contract term, about 350 women participated in workshops/seminars, approximately 450 one-on-one technical assistance sessions were held and about 150 women utilized resource counseling.

The goals and objectives of the proposed Agreement will be tracked and monitored by 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 fifteen 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.

Attached for your consideration is a proposed Resolution.

RESOLUTION

Upon a communication from the Westchester County Executive, the Chairman of the Westchester County Board of Legislators, and the Director 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 03/20/2017 LISA MARIJAJ, SECRETARY