

Request for Qualifications – Business Advisors
Responses Due by May 7, 2021 at 5:00 pm Pacific

Background

UC Davis Venture Catalyst, a unit within the Innovation & Technology Commercialization division of the Office of Research, has received an award from the Northern California Small Business Development Center Network to fund the launch and operation of a new tech-focused small business development center (SBDCTech @ UC Davis Venture Catalyst), which will expand its core programs to serve a broader set of biotech and agtech entrepreneurs and startups throughout the Sacramento Metro Area and north. The new center will focus on supporting technology commercialization and associated R&D activities and business operations by offering workshops, training, mentoring, and events. The goal of the program is to facilitate new business starts, assist existing startups, and enable capital infusion.

Project Description

Venture Catalyst is seeking business advisors to provide one-on-one business counseling, technical assistance, mentoring, and training services through the small business development center. Specifically, Venture Catalyst is interested in engaging qualified contractors with experience to address the scope of work in one or more of the following Service Categories.¹

Service Category 1 – Agtech Advisor-in-Residence

Consult directly with entrepreneurs and startups focused on developing products or services related to agriculture, food, agricultural engineering, and/or other agtech disciplines to support technology commercialization, customer discovery and validation, market and competitor assessment, business model creation, financial modeling, funding and exit strategies, ecosystem connections, and other business operations needs.

Develop and conduct a training workshop series covering topics related to preparing for investment and strategic partnership opportunities with a focus on setting startups up for engagement through a major agtech industry conference. Contribute to the creation and delivery of a separate workshop series focused on understanding investment capital stages and sources for agtech companies, building a funding strategy, developing compelling investor collateral, and delivering various forms of effective pitches.

Service Category 2 – Biotech Advisor-in-Residence

Consult directly with entrepreneurs and startups focused on developing products, services, platforms, or tools in biotech or medtech disciplines to support technology commercialization, customer discovery and validation, market and competitor assessment, business model creation, financial modeling, funding and exit strategies, ecosystem connections, and other business operations needs.

¹ Advisors will not engage in the practice of law – selected contractors who are qualified by experience and training to discuss legal issues may do so in a general way, but they must not engage in an attorney-client relationship and will be asked to make appropriate disclosures and disclaimers to that effect.

Contribute to the creation and delivery of a workshop series focused on understanding investment capital stages and sources for biotech companies, building a funding strategy, developing compelling investor collateral, and delivering various forms of effective pitches.

Service Category 3 – Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) / Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Advisor

Consult directly with startups to support strategic planning and proposal preparation for SBIR/STTR grant and contract opportunities with an emphasis on federal agencies funding agtech and biotech projects. In collaboration with Venture Catalyst staff, develop and conduct a training workshop series focused on understanding SBIR/STTR opportunities, building funding strategies, developing competitive proposals, and preparing for award compliance.

Service Category 4 – Intellectual Property (IP) Strategy Advisor

Consult directly entrepreneurs and startups commercializing technologies in agtech, biotech, and other related disciplines to provide guidance on IP strategy, protection, landscape assessment, and management.

Service Category 5 – Regulatory Compliance Advisor

Consult directly entrepreneurs and startups commercializing technologies in agtech, biotech, and other related disciplines to provide guidance on regulatory compliance and support planning and preparation for engaging with regulatory processes and agencies.

Selected advisors will be engaged as independent contractors and compensated for consulting and training services provided at an hourly rate of \$115.² It is anticipated that services will be delivered remotely through virtual meetings, conference calls, or other electronic communications. As pandemic restrictions ease, Venture Catalyst may facilitate access to meeting space on an as needed basis at its facility or partner facilities. Some services may be required to be provided in the evenings or on weekends to accommodate client needs and training workshop schedules.

All selected advisors must successfully pass the Norcal SBDC Business Advisor certification. Certification training is provided by the Lead Center and will include roughly 4.5 hours of instruction. Advisors will also be expected to track client engagement and report on the economic impact of the work being provided using the Neoserra Client Tracking Software.

The anticipated number of hours available in each Service Category over the 12-month performance period are provided below; however, it is important to note these may be modified based on client demand for services and the extent of training services required. One or more contractors will be selected to cover each Service Category.

- Service Category 1 = 464 hours
- Service Category 2 = 387 hours
- Service Category 3 = 155 hours
- Service Category 4 = 77 hours

² As part of the conflict of interest policy, selected advisors will be restricted from separately engaging clients served through the SBDCtech @ UC Davis Venture Catalyst program for a period of 60 days following termination or last date of service.

- Service Category 5 = 77 hours

Submittal Format and Process

Interested parties should provide a written narrative no more than five pages in length covering the following topics. In addition to the narrative, a resume or curriculum vitae (CV) may be attached to the submission package. **The package should be submitted in PDF format to venturecatalyst@ucdavis.edu no later than May 7, 2021 at 5:00 pm Pacific.**

1. Service Category(ies) for consideration
2. Professional background and experience, including years of experience in Service Category(ies) for consideration
3. Education, training, credentials and/or other technical qualifications
4. Experience advising entrepreneurs and startups, including number of clients served
5. Experience developing and providing technical training and workshops
6. Success in helping business clients accomplish specified goals, including outcomes achieved
7. Knowledge of resources in the small business, innovation, and entrepreneurship ecosystem
8. List of three or more professional references that can verify qualifications, experience, and outcomes

Selection Process

Written responses will be evaluated by Venture Catalyst staff and the most qualified candidates will be invited to participate in an oral interview. Reference checks may be used either as a factor in selecting the most qualified candidates or to select final candidates following the oral interview process. During the selection process, the greatest weight will be placed on items 2, 4, 5, and 6 above. The Venture Catalyst Senior Associate Director will make the final selection of advisors to be engaged in the program. It is anticipated that selected advisors will be notified by May 28, 2021.