**Request for Proposals (RFP)**

**CatalystQ– The Catalyst for Minority Business Excellence in Queen Anne’s County**
**Queen Anne’s County Economic & Tourism Development (QACETD)**

**Release Date:** 7/18/2025

**Submission Deadline:** 8/4/2025

**Contact:** Heather Tinelli

**Email:** htinelli@qac.org

**I. Introduction**

Queen Anne’s County Economic & Tourism Development (QACETD) invites proposals from qualified entities to deliver innovative and impactful services for the continuation and expansion of its minority business training accelerator program, now titled **CatalystQ- The Catalyst of Minority Business Excellence in Queen Anne’s County.**  This initiative seeks to build and strengthen the ecosystem for minority entrepreneurs and small business owners in Queen Anne’s County, Maryland.

**II. Background**

Launched in 2023 as a pilot program, the former minority business training accelerator program provided five minority entrepreneurs with targeted support, training, and micro-grants to develop and launch their businesses. Funded through the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund, the program demonstrated success in fostering business creation, equity, and economic growth.

With renewed funding, QACETD is expanding its business accelerator efforts and seeks a qualified partner to implement a dynamic suite of services that address key barriers faced by minority entrepreneurs, including access to capital, business knowledge, legal and regulatory compliance, and networking.

**III. Eligible Applicants**

Proposals are welcomed from a range of qualified entities, including:

* Non-profit organizations
* For-profit entities
* Trade associations
* Institutions of higher education
* Co-working space operators

Applicants must have demonstrated experience and successful outcomes with supporting underrepresented entrepreneurs, and the capacity to implement training, mentorship, and technical assistance initiatives.

**IV. Scope of Services**

QACETD seeks proposals that include a combination of the following eligible services for underrepresented entrepreneurs:

**Technical Assistance Areas:**

* Accounting & Bookkeeping (required)
* Legal Advice & Services (required)
* Marketing, Communications, Branding & Public Relations (required)
* Customer Data & User Experience Analytics
* Strategic & Business Planning (required)
* Human Resources & Payroll Services (required)
* Information & Computer Technology (IT)
* Website Development Support
* Business Funding Pitch & Grant Writing
* Supply Chain & Procurement
* E-Commerce
* Fostering Innovation and Technology Adoption

**Entrepreneur Support Services:**

* Providing physical space for co-working and/or programming
* Entrepreneurship and Business Start-Up Training (required)
* Mentorship Programming and Networking Opportunities (required)
* Workshops addressing critical business topics (suggested)
* Assistance Registering a Business
* Training and Assistance with Licensing Processes
* Access to Capital & Banking Education (required)
* DEDI Directory Registration Preparedness
* Business Readiness for Government Contracting
* Translation Services

The scope for this RFP is broad to allow for creativity and customization, but the expectation is a thoughtful, comprehensive, and well-executed proposal that aligns with the needs of our minority entrepreneurs in Queen Anne’s County. The program is expected to serve between 5-10 participants. It is proposed that the program be a 3-6 month program.

QACETD encourages applicants to propose additional workshop topics that support the goals of business growth, capacity-building, and increased visibility and connectivity for minority entrepreneurs.

**V. Funding & Budget**

QACETD will award up to $100,000 to one or more organizations to implement the CatalystQ- Minority Business Training program through December 2025. This funding also includes small mini grants to participants for further professional assistance with services such as accounting, legal, certificates, etc. Proposals should include a detailed budget with clear justification of costs. Preference will be given to cost-effective and high-impact models.

**VI. Proposal Requirements**

Each proposal must include:

1. Cover Letter
2. Organizational Background and Qualifications
3. Proposed Work Plan and Timeline
4. Description of Services, including Target Business Stage(s)
5. Budget and Budget Narrative
6. Key Personnel and Organizational Capacity
7. Past Performance and References

**VII. Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated on the following:

* Alignment with program goals
* Capacity to deliver services effectively
* Innovation and equity-driven approach
* Budget clarity and cost-effectiveness
* Experience serving minority entrepreneurs
* Measurable outcomes and evaluation plan

**VIII. Proposal Submission & Contact information**

Proposals must be submitted via mail with one original and one digital version (PDF) on a flash drive by [8/4/2025] to:

Queen Anne’s County Economic & Tourism Development

425 Piney Narrows Road

Chester, MD 21619

The package should be clearly marked “Proposal for CatalystQ Program Attn: Heather Tinelli.”

Questions about the Scope of Work or requests for additional information should be directed to: **Heather Tinelli @ htinelli@qac.org**. Questions via telephone or other methods will not receive responses, as email provides the best opportunity for tracking and accountability.

Late submissions will not be accepted.

**IX. Timeline**

RFP Release Date: 7/18/2025

Deadline for Questions about the Proposal: 7/25/25

Responses to Questions will be posted on choosequeenannes.com on 7/28/2025

Proposal Submission Deadline: 8/4/2025

Selection Interviews for selected proposals (Candidates will be notified if selected) : 8/8/2025

Contract Award & Project Start Date: 8/15/2025

**X.** **Equal Opportunity**

All qualified persons, firms and proposers will receive consideration without regard to age, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), Women-Owned Enterprises (WBE), and Veteran-Owned Enterprises are encouraged to apply.

Queen Anne’s County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

**XI.** **Queen Anne’s County Standard Operating Policies**: Procurement Policy #400-010

It is the responsibility of the proposer to review and adhere to all of Queen Anne’s County Procurement Policies, #400-010. The policies can be located at <https://www.qac.org/593/Procurement>

**XII.** **Debarred, Suspended and Ineligible Contractors**

The consultant certifies by submission of a proposal that it is not a debarred, suspended, or ineligible contractor by any Agency of Federal or State government. No proposal received from a debarred, suspended, or ineligible contractor will qualify for an award.

**XIII.** **Acceptance of Consultant Proposals**

The Queen Anne’s County Commissioners reserve the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive any nonmaterial irregularities in the proposal, to accept or reject any item or combination of items and accept any proposal which benefits the people of Queen Anne’s County. Queen Anne’s County reserves the right to negotiate with any, none, or all the proposing vendors.