



CHAMBER of COMMERCE
EASTERN CONNECTICUT



Request for Proposals:
Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut and the Thames River Innovation Place, Inc. seek Partner to Develop *Thames River Innovation Center*, a Regional Startup Incubator, Coworking, and Office Facility

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

The Chamber, in partnership with the Thames River Innovation Place, Inc. (TRIP), is developing the Thames River Innovation Center in a Qualified Opportunity Zone in downtown New London, Connecticut. The Center will offer integrated solutions for entrepreneurs, startups, growth-phase businesses, and small businesses in an incubator and coworking setting supported by professional organizations providing programming, networking, and outreach. Building on local natural assets, the Chamber's network of established businesses, and emerging industries such as offshore wind, Thames River Innovation Center will have a focus on "blue tech" business development, including the naval, maritime, and offshore wind industries.

It will provide the space, resources, and informal mentorship needed for businesses to succeed, bolstering the region's economic recovery post Covid-19, and launching the burgeoning renaissance in the region's urban center. Thames River Innovation Center, proximal to New London's deep-water port, will complete a business, research, and technology "triangle" at three crucial points on the Thames River, joining BioCT Innovation Commons in Groton and Foundry66 in Norwich. Startups at the Center may also draw upon regional strategic partnerships with the nuclear submarine manufacturer Electric Boat (a subsidiary of General Dynamics) and its supply chain companies, with Ørsted and Eversource in the area of offshore wind, and with researchers at the National Institute for Undersea Vehicle Technology, the United States Coast Guard Academy, Connecticut College and the University of Connecticut.

This project is currently supported by a matching grant from the Thames River Innovation Place, Inc. (TRIP), a program of CTNext LLC. Additional funding for the project will be sought from grants, public funding, and private sponsors during the project's planning phase, and release of portions of the CTNext grant (for construction, renovation and related expenses) is conditional upon reaching planning milestones and securing project funding from additional sources. The Chamber, working with TGBC business consulting firm, has completed a business plan that supports this development. The Chamber is also engaged with Londregan Commercial Real Estate Group to identify suitable space, approximately 24,000 sq. ft. in downtown New London. The Chamber of Commerce offices will be co-located at the Center.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

The Chamber and TRIP are seeking a design and operations partner for the Innovation Center with significant experience in operating successful coworking facilities and/or past success in providing startup incubation/acceleration programming. The ideal partner may also have experience within the "blue tech" naval, maritime and offshore wind industries, or experience in building community and supportive ecosystems amongst entrepreneurs of diverse backgrounds. Partners with experience in manufacturing supply chains, and support for minority-, immigrant-, or veteran-owned small businesses are also highly desirable. In this request for proposals, the Chamber and TRIP are encouraging innovative ways of



partnering with private, public, and nonprofit entities, and introducing new ways to support new business development in the Innovation Center's service area (southeastern Connecticut).

Opportunities for partnership include, but are not limited to the following:

- Development of the Innovation Center concept, layout and design
- Startup advising, incubation/acceleration and supportive programming
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives to support new entrepreneurs
- Advice and assistance in applying for U.S. EDA and other grant opportunities
- Branding; marketing services
- Tenant recruitment and/or investor development
- Project management of the Innovation Center buildout/renovation
- Facilities management and operations at the Innovation Center
- Manufacturing supply chain development, research and support
- Revenue-sharing management model

ABOUT THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF EASTERN CONNECTICUT:

The Mission of the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut, Inc. is to create and maintain a positive business climate that meets the needs of our members by supporting economic development and growth in the region. Representing approximately 1,400 members, the Chamber is a coalition of business and nonprofit leaders dedicated to securing and enhancing the economic vitality of Eastern Connecticut. Its primary coverage areas are New London County and Windham County, though the full membership represents every county in Connecticut, along with other states. The Chamber, based in Waterford, is governed by a 19-member Board of Directors and employs 11 staff.

ABOUT THAMES RIVER INNOVATION PLACE, INC.:

Thames River Innovation Place builds prosperity in the Thames River region through authentic innovation, collaboration, and diverse partnerships. Our group is an unprecedented alliance of public, private, and nonprofit sectors in the communities of New London and Groton in Southeastern Connecticut. Major institutions are collaborating to design a blueprint for the future of our communities, enhancing the Thames River region that serves as an economic artery to Groton and New London. TRIP has embraced the river and the Blue Tech/Economy that flows from it, as a centerpiece to the activities it funds. Thames River Innovation is supported by [CTNext](#).

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

June 25, 2021, 5pm

CONVERSATIONS, QUESTIONS, AND SUBMISSIONS:

Respondents are asked to provide a written statement of three pages or less speaking to the project criteria as outlined above, the respondent's ideas and vision for partnering in execution of the project, and the respondent's qualifications and relevant experience in performing similar work in the past. Additionally, respondents are asked to speak to their capacity to take on the work as described, in addition to or in lieu



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of respondent's other ongoing activities. In your response, please indicate a primary point of contact for follow-up conversation, including an individual's name, email and phone number.

The Chamber, TRIP and CTNext invite questions and conversations about this project directed to (860) 701-9113 for any interested firm, in advance of your final proposal submission. We require one electronic copy sent via email to the following contact: Megan Gilbert, Vice President, Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT, mgilbert@chamberect.com by 5:00 p.m. on the deadline date.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut and Thames River Innovation Place, Inc. will only respond to RFPs submitted by the deadline date. Responses received after this date and time shall not be accepted and shall be considered non-responsive. Responses will be shared for review with CTNext LLC, a State of Connecticut economic development entity and grant supporter of TRIP and the Thames River Innovation Center. This RFP in no way obligates CCEC, TRIP or CTNext to award an agreement, nor does it commit CCEC, TRIP or CTNext to pay any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal. CCEC, TRIP and CTNext reserve the right to award this proposal based on the initial evaluation of offers without discussions.