The RITES Project – Request for Application

Application Deadline: 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on March 17, 2017

Request For Applications (RFA)

The COGIC Urban Initiatives, CUI, with support from the Georgia Micro Enterprise Network, GMEN, and the Small Business Administration, is requesting applications from Certified COGIC Congregations to become **Reentry from Incarceration Through Entrepreneurship Services Project Sites, or RITES Sites**. RITES Sites will host and facilitate in-person small group workshops designed by CUI & GMEN to introduce participants to **The RITES Project** self-employment opportunities and materials. In addition, partner organizations will: connect program participants with local, accessible resources; submit timely reports on workshop attendance and participant referrals; and regularly participate in a "community of practice" with other awardees to assist with the evaluation of this initiative and help to build a body of evidence regarding its effectiveness. **Application Deadline:** Applications are due March 31, 2017 by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time and must be submitted electronically.

CUI & GMEN Overview

The Georgia Micro Enterprise Network, a statewide business association located in Atlanta, Georgia has received funding through a grant from the Small Business Administration to provide entrepreneurial training services to ex-offenders through a unique initiative, **The Reentry from Incarceration Through Entrepreneurship Services Project or the RITES Project**. GMEN will provide a grant of $10,000 to the COGIC Urban Initiatives to participate in these trainings, to provide these trainings to churches and faith based institutions across the country and to host these trainings at COGIC national conventions from October 2016 – September 2017.

The COGIC Urban Initiatives is the social justice arm of the Church of God in Christ. Its five point strategy to improve conditions in low income and impoverished communities include Education, Business and Economic Development, Crime Reduction, Family Restoration and Financial Literacy. The RITES Project will merge two of these initiatives, Economic Development and Reentry and Crime Prevention. The purpose of the CUI Reentry is to assist residents of correctional facilities in becoming productive citizens upon release. CUI Reentry provides crisis intervention counseling, mentorship and human services assistance. CUI Reentry experts will

participate in the RITES Summit and will provide training seminars, workshops and materials during national conferences held across the country.

The CUI will work with GMEN to replicate the RITES Project as they have done with a previous partnership that brought the SBA led **Small Business Sunday** model to COGIC communities across the country. The COGIC Urban Initiatives has received a Strategic Alliance Memorandum from the Small Business Administration to work with SBA Resource Partners to provide information to its members about business development services.

Program Overview

CUI & GMEN, with support from The Small Business Administration, is launching **The RITES Project** – a new initiative to help Formerly Incarcerated Individuals assess opportunities to pursue self-employment and build their skills and connect with resources that will enable them to generate income through working for themselves in a variety of ways.

Creating and owning a business has long been heralded as a path to financial success and economic mobility. In fact, business equity is the second largest source of household wealth behind home equity. For Formerly Incarcerated Individuals (FII) self-employment and business ownership can be a factor to contribute meaningfully to their family economic security. Many face insurmountable challenges when they return to their communities; unemployment, lack of asset, few networks, which is one reason many re-offend. Those looking for employment face unique hurdles that can prevent them from successfully attaining their goals, and many may do not know where to connect with resources to help them reach economic viability.

The decision to pursue a new venture is not one to be taken lightly and **The RITES Project** curriculum covers five steps: 1.) A careful consideration of the potential and perils of working for yourself; 2.) Exercises to help develop the self-employment idea; 3.) A realistic overview of what it takes to pursue a self- employment opportunity; 4.) Guidance to help avoid pitfalls and 5.) Ways to find support and services.

The RITES Project will address these unique hurdles for Returning Citizens with multiple offerings:

- **The RITES Project**: *Five Simple Steps to Get You Started* **Toolkit** – This publication will provide an overview of the opportunities available to "work for yourself" and information about what individuals should know about the advantages and challenges of a variety of income-generation opportunities. Within the Toolkit, worksheets and exercises will guide Returning Citizens through the thought process and initial steps to decide whether to start and how to begin to prepare for an entrepreneurial opportunity, and will point them towards services and programs that can provide the hands-on support and training that can help them to launch their own microbusinesses.

- **The RITES Project Workshop** – The workshop can be offered in Churches by selected partner congregations. This community networking workshop will bring together individuals from the criminal justice community, the small business community, resource and support organizations and Formerly Incarcerated Individuals. The Workshop will connect them with local resources and programs to help them achieve their self-employment or income generation goals. Partner congregations will be selected through a competitive application and funding process with funding awards of between $500 - $1,000.

- **Become a RITES Site** – Congregations can provide transportation and reunification assistance to Returning Citizens by hosting events at their Churches when individuals are released. These reunification services can include opportunities to share employment, business and other resources with participants.

In order to successfully implement The RITES Project program, grantees will perform the following activities:

- Conduct local outreach and marketing, jointly with CUI & GMEN, to register partner organizations and formerly incarcerated individuals to the workshop via mail or email.
- Identify, refer, and connect workshop participants to at least two local services and programs that can help them achieve their self-identified employment and income generation goals. Services and programs can include financial capability classes or coaching, microbusiness development training or microfinance support, business boot camps, employment services, entrepreneur mentorship programs, workforce development or vocational training.
- Utilize CUI & GMEN-provided forms and processes to solicit feedback directly from workshop participants, and within two weeks of workshop completion, provide reports on attendance, referrals and connections made for participants. In addition, provide brief narratives on at least two participants' goals, concerns, questions, prior experience, and motivations—these narratives will be used by CUI & GMEN to identify specific individuals to follow up with in order to build a program story bank.
- Assist CUI & GMEN in creating a "Community of Practice" through regular participation in conference calls or virtual discussions with CUI & GMEN and other grantees to share and respond to challenges, successes, and opportunities in delivering the program.
- Participate in virtual onboarding training.

In addition to funding, CUI & GMEN will provide in-kind investments and technical assistance to support and enhance **The RITES Project** activities. They include:

- Program promotion through the CUI & GMEN network and marketing channels.

- Generating reports on registered participants, program outcomes, and grantee partner progress for use in program implementation, or to supplement grantee communications and fundraising efforts.

- **The RITES Project** Toolkit publication, PowerPoint presentation and facilitator notes for the workshop, and webinar training for workshop facilitators, programmatic templates, and reporting forms.

- Marketing support with standardized templates for marketing materials, maintenance of program website and story bank with participant narratives.

- Information about and connections to other relevant CUI & GMEN programs that can support participant success.

- Access to **The RITES Project** community of practice.

Eligibility Information

 Applicant must be a Certified COGIC Congregations or partner with a Certified COGIC congregation. Preference will be given to Churches who are CUI Certified at the time of filing their applications.

Review Criteria

In evaluating qualifying applications, CUI & GMEN will pay particular attention to the following criteria:

- How effectively will the organization execute the project plan (20 points)
- How effective will the organization be in creating (sustaining) strong connections with local resources that can provide desired support services to participants? (20 points)
- How does the organization demonstrate possessing the expertise, resources, and capacity to implement the proposed project successfully? How do the designated staff and/or volunteers demonstrate competency in facilitating interactive workshops with the target audience? (15 points)
- How does **The RITES Project** fit with the overall mission or programs of the organization? (15 points)
- Is the timeline for your project reasonable and clear and does your staff and organization have the experience to meet the milestones listed on your timeline? (5 points)
- What is the specific geographic area(s) you will serve and what is the degree to which your project will be serving low-income or vulnerable Returning Citizens? (10 points)

•   Does the budget ensure the proper level of staffing and reasonable costs to achieve the proposed project results? (5 points)

Grant Award Information

Potential Award Range: $500 - $1,000 grants awarded to up to 10 partner organizations

Grant Period of Operation: April 1, 2017 – September 1, 2017.

Proposal Type: The RITES Project Partner Grants

Application Process

Applications must be submitted electronically by March 31, 2017 11:59 p.m. Eastern time.

All applicants will be notified regarding the status of their application no later than April 15, 2017.

Please send any questions to: ewilson@cogic.org or rharrison@cogic.org.

RITES Project Application – To be returned electronically to ewilson@cogic.org

SECTION 1: Project Plan

- **Project Goal and Organizational Mission** (2500 characters)
  What is the community need your organization seeks to address? Please provide information on how **The RITES Project** fits with your organizational mission or existing job placement, workforce development, entrepreneurship, or microbusiness development program goals.

- **Increase in the Number of People your Project will serve** (2500 characters)
  To what extent will this project provide your organization with an opportunity to expand or deepen your reach within your community? What are the specific activities that will allow you to reach that goal? Please list past experiences in expanding projects to more people while maintaining project fidelity.

- **Plan and Key Project Milestones** (5000 characters)
  How will your organization implement a program to achieve the programmatic goals and outcomes? What are the dates related to key project milestones? How long do you see this project being maintained beyond the funding period?

- **Consistent implementation** (2500 characters)
  How will the organization assure that the room space and reliable internet access needed for the workshop are consistently available?

SECTION 2: Community Served

- **Geography** (2500 characters)
  What are the specific areas (neighborhoods, cities, counties) the proposed program will serve? CUI & GMEN is seeking applicants from across the country, representing diverse communities with large concentrations of formerly incarcerated individuals with household incomes below $40,000/year.

□ **Population Demographics** (2500 characters)

CUI & GMEN's target population is Formerly Incarcerated Individuals with household income below $40,000/year. How do the demographics of your community match these target demographics?

SECTION 3: Organization Resources

 □ **Experience of Individuals Involved in the Leadership and Execution of Project** (5000 characters)

Please provide details on how the experiences of the organizations and individuals associated with the program are relevant for the execution of the proposed program. Who will be the program lead?

 □ **Critical Partnerships or Collaborations** (2500 characters)

Are there critical partnerships or collaborations with other organizations for the program?

 □ **Captured Metrics** (2500 characters)

As noted in the grantee activities and reporting requirements sections, the grantee will provide reports on attendance, referrals and connections made for participants, as well as brief participant narratives. Please describe your organization's prior experience providing reports and narratives like this on a regular basis and within established timelines.

 □ **Budget Line Narrative** (8000 characters)

How will you utilize the funds? Under this current Request for Applications, CUI & GMEN is not making grants directly to individuals. Grant funds may only be used for execution of the grant (including overhead) and no funding may be used for political or lobbying purposes.

 □ **Grant Amount Requested from CUI & GMEN** (dollar figure)

 □ **Amount of Project Funding from Other Sources if available** (dollar figure)

 □ **Total Project Budget** (dollar figure, equal to "Grant Amount Requested" + "Amount of Project Funding from Other Sources")