**CEDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

*ZOOM Virtual Meeting*

May 27, 2020

1. **Call to Order**

Kyle H. called the meeting to order at 1:10

Committee Members Present

Kyle Hanlon, BRPC

Chris Remold, Town of Great Barrington

Keith Girouard, Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network

Roger Bolton, Williams College

Shannon Zayac, MassHire Berkshires, Alternate

Ben Lamb, 1Berkshire

Tim Geller, Community Development Corporation of Southern Berkshire

Cynthia Pansing, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures

Deanna Ruffer, City of Pittsfield

Laurie Mick – PERC

Ben Sosne, Berkshire Innovation Center

BRPC Staff Present

Tom Matuszko, Executive Director

Laura Brennan, Senior Planner

Patricia Mullins, Program Manager

Alexander Valentini, Researcher

1. **Approval of Minutes from October 17th, 2019**

Keith G. moved to approve the minutes from the October 17th, 2019 meeting. Cynthia P. seconded the motion.

Roll Call

Roger B. – Yes

Keith G. – Yes

Ben L. – Yes

Ben S. – Yes

Shannon Z. – Yes

Deanna R. – Yes

Chris R. – Yes

Tim G. – Yes

Kyle H. – Yes

1. **Comments from the Public**

No comments from the public.

1. **Economic Development Administration (EDA) general update**

Laura B. gave an update on the Economic Development District (EDD) application that BRPC has pending with the EDA. EDA staff members have assured BRPC that it is not unusual for EDD applications to remaining pending for up to or over 18 months. Laura B. and Tom M. spoke recently with BRPC’s EDA Massachusetts representative, Debra Beavin, who confirmed that the application is still in the pipeline for acceptance.

Cynthia P. asked if there were any plans to update the EDD application considering the economic impacts of COVID-19. Laura B. said she believed the proper vehicle for such updates would be in the upcoming annual CEDS update. A portion of the funding requested in the EDA investment application would be used to expand the economic resilience section of the CEDS update and develop new data streams, which would inform the CEDS update.

1. **BRPC application for EDA Investment**

Laura B. explained that BRPC is preparing an application to the funding EDA has made available through the CARES Act. The current notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) differs from the typical EDA Investment NOFOs in several ways. First, less emphasis is being placed on the 24-month unemployment rate and per capita income economic distress criteria, given how drastically these figures have shifted due to COVID-19. Second, the match requirement has been changed from 1-to-1 federal to non-federal monies to 4-to-1 federal to non-federal monies. Additionally, EDA expects the average investment to be larger than the typical average investment.

Cynthia P. asked how the partner organizations listed in the application were selected. Laura B. explained that 1Berkhire, as the state-designated Regional Economic Development Organization, is the natural choice as the lead partner. The other partners were selected for their competencies in fields to which the funding will be applied. However, the list is not exhaustive and may be added to. Cynthia P. asked if sector leads should be included for the five clusters identified in the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0. Ben L. said that the appropriate leaders would be as follows:

* Hospitality and Tourism: 1Berkshire
* Advanced Manufacturing: Berkshire Innovation Center (BIC)
* Agriculture: Berkshire Agricultural Ventures (BAV)
* Creative Economy: Berkshire Taconic Foundation
* Health Care: No firm sector leader identified

Roger B. suggested that the application emphasized BRPC’s track record of working with many different organizations throughout the region, especially individual municipalities.

Roger B. asked if funding will be applied to programs and activities that BRPC would already be carrying out, in particular the update to the CEDS. Laura B. explained that the funding will be applied to either new programs or expansions of current programs. In the case of the CEDS update, the funding will be applied to expanding the economic resilience section of the update.

Tim G. said that COVID-19 should be mentioned more explicitly throughout the document. Cynthia P. agreed. Laura B. said she would do this.

Tim G. said that many of the people who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 make less than $40,000 a year. Because of this, the jobs offered on 1Berkshires’ The Jobs Thing would likely not apply to their experience and skill level. The application should mention the steps to be taken to help these people, specifically.

Tim G. asked if Laura B. could provide the Committee with a project budget and said he believed as much funding as possible should go to organizations providing technical assistance to local businesses. Laura B. said she could provide a tentative budget.

Deanna R. said that she believed EforAll and PERC should be included as partners in the application given that they typically work with low- to medium-income and minority entrepreneurs, who have been among the most affected by COVID-19.

Keith G. mentioned that the SBDCN is designated as a service delivery network for disaster relief. SBDCN would be pleased to support the BRPC application but hopes that efforts are coordinated in order to make the best use of funding. Laura B. agreed and said that part of the reason that the budget does not specify organizations to receive funding is due to the coordination efforts, which will occur once EDA funding is awarded.

Tom M. said that the CEDS Committee is a critical body for regional coordination, and there may need to be ongoing meetings for coordination purposes.

Roger B. said that the last paragraph on page 2 was vague in how it mentioned “cross-cutting issues” and should either be removed or expanded. Laura B. said that she could expand it to include the CEDS Committee’s role in monitoring such issues and coordinating activities between organizations that focus on such issues.

Tim G. suggests that more “problem-solving” language is used when describing how the competencies of various organizations will be coordinated and directed towards bounded issues. Cynthia P. agreed and said that the application could be more action oriented.

Deanna R. said that reference could be made to the Commonwealth’s reopening plan and the way in which the CEDS Committee will serve as a coordinating body to deal with the disruptions across sectors the plan will cause.

Roger B. moved to approve the application and to approve a letter of endorsement. Cynthia P. seconded the motion.

Roll Call

Tim G. – Yes

Chris R. – Yes

Deanna R. – Yes

Laurie M. – Yes

Cynthia P. – Yes

Shannon Z. – Yes

Ben S. – Yes

Ben L. – Abstain

Keith G. – Yes

Roger B. – Yes

Kyle H. – Yes

1. **Discussion of regional applications to CDBG-CV NOFA**

Pat M. explained to the Committee two competitive grant applications BRPC is submitting for CARES Act funding offered through the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The funding, which is approximately $10 million, can be used for assistance to microenterprises owned by low- and moderate-income business owners and social services.

BRPC is seeking two $850,000 awards, one for North County, led by the town of Adams, and one for South County, led by the town of Lenox. Both of these grants will be focused exclusively on assistance to microenterprises owned by low- and moderate-income business owners. The maximum yearly household income of a qualifying businessperson will be $47,200. The bulk of the work carried out by BRPC will be determining income eligibility of businesspeople and determining which business expenses may be reimbursed.

Roger B. asked what sorts of businesses in Berkshire County are likely to be beneficiaries of these programs. Pat M. explained that for the purpose of this program, a microenterprise is defined as a business that has five employees or fewer (headcount, not full-time employees), and has been in business since January 2019. This includes self-employed people and businesses without storefronts. Tim G. added that the employee criterion refers to current employees, so businesses which had more than five employees before COVID-19 would qualify if they now have five employees or fewer.

Tim G. asked how the public is going to be made aware of the funding, and how it will be distributed. Pat M. explained that this program will proceed similar to a typical CDBG program in terms of marketing and eligibility determination.

Tim G. asked if the funding can be used to technical assistance. Pat M. said that the funding cannot be used of this purpose and can only be used to make grants to eligible microenterprises. Tom M. and Laura B. suggested eligible microenterprises could receive technical assistance through the EDA investment. Pat M. agreed, as long as the timing works.

Tim G. asked what kinds of expenses BRPC can reimburse through this program. Pat M. said that operating expenses such as rent and utilities were eligible. Roger B. asked if these expenses covered wages. Pat M. said that they did.

Laura B. said that BRPC was awarded $45,000 from the Massachusetts Attorney General’s office to make grants to businesses with 10 employees or fewer. The maximum grant that may be awarded to a business is $3,000, and there is no income criterion with the program.

Tom M. asked if a letter of support from the Committee would be helpful for the CBDG application. Pat M. said that it would be appreciated. Tim G. moved to approve a letter of endorsement for the CBDG application. Ben S. seconded the motion.

Roll Call

Tim G. – Yes

Chris R. – Yes

Cynthia P. – Yes

Shannon Z. – Yes

Ben S. – Yes

Roger B. – Yes

Kyle B. – Yes

1. **Adjournment**

Cynthia P. moved to adjourn. Chris R. seconded the motion. Kyle H. adjourned the meeting at 2:14.