



**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS for
TRAINING CONSULTANTS for**

\$aveUSA (a tax-time savings program) in

New York City, NY; Newark, NJ; San Antonio, TX; Savannah, GA; and Tulsa, OK

The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City (Mayor's Fund), in partnership with the Center for Economic Opportunity, is requesting Statements of Qualification from organizations or individuals willing to serve as \$aveUSA Training Consultants to deliver comprehensive training, including technical assistance, for \$aveUSA program partners in one or all of the program cities where this program will be implemented.

The \$aveUSA Program will be offered to eligible tax filers at Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites in New York City, Newark, San Antonio, Savannah and Tulsa. Participants will receive a 50 percent match from the Mayor's Fund, up to \$500, if they direct deposit at least \$200 of their tax refund into a "\$aveUSA Account" and maintain the initial deposit for approximately one year.

Please submit one original and four copies and an electronic version of your entire response to this Request for Statement of Qualification, including all attachments, by **3:00 PM, November 29, 2010**. Submissions should be addressed to:

\$aveUSA Program – Training RFQ
Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC
253 Broadway, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10007
E-Mail proposals to: SIF@cityhall.nyc.gov

Hard copies must be submitted by U.S. Postal Service or express mail service. Hand delivered proposals will not be accepted. The submission should not exceed 3 pages in length, not including attachments. Responses received after the date and time specified will be considered late and may not be accepted or reviewed.

Questions regarding this request can be submitted to SIF@cityhall.nyc.gov, with subject heading \$aveUSA Training Consultant RFQ. **Questions received by Friday, November 17, 2010 will be responded to by Wednesday, November 22, 2010.** Responses will be posted on the CEO website under Social Innovation Fund (<http://www.nyc.gov/ceo/sif>). Please visit this website regularly for additional information and any addenda to this RFQ. The responses to submitted questions, update notices, and addenda posted on the website are official updates to this RFQ. It is the responsibility of the applicant to read and adhere to the responses to questions, update notices, and addenda posted on the website when responding to this RFQ. The Mayor's Fund is not liable for any costs incurred in the preparation of Statements of Qualification.

A. Overview

The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City (The Mayor's Fund) is seeking appropriately qualified Training Consultants to deliver comprehensive training and technical assistance for \$aveUSA program partners in one or all of the program cities – New York City, NY; Newark, NJ; San Antonio, TX; Savannah, GA; and Tulsa, OK. The \$aveUSA program helps low-income individuals and households save during the tax season through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program¹.

The Mayor's Fund is currently selecting sub-grantees to serve as \$aveUSA program partners – hereafter referred to as "Implementation Partners" – in the program cities. Training Consultants will conduct trainings for Implementation Partners and their staff and volunteers on promoting the \$aveUSA program and targeted technical assistance to maximize take-up rates and account opening procedures. The Mayor's Fund in conjunction with OFE will provide Training Consultants with the curriculum for the trainings and will provide train-the-trainer sessions to familiarize selected Training Consultants with the material. Training Consultants will be selected by Implementation Partners and will be expected to customize training curriculum to reflect the individual Implementation Partner processes.

The Mayor's Fund seeks to ensure that Implementation Partners and their staff and volunteers are well-trained in the importance of asset building initiatives, the terms and conditions of the program, and most effective marketing and promotion strategies (including key behavioral economics principles) to prospective participants. A key element to the successful implementation of \$aveUSA is standardized training and technical assistance aimed specifically at ensuring consistent implementation within and among participating sites of best practices in sales and marketing techniques.

The train-the-trainer session will be held the week of December 13, 2010 in New York City; with the first staff training in January 2011 (additional sessions may be required). Training Consultants will be needed throughout the tax season (January 14 – April 15, 2011) to conduct periodic quality control site visits of program partners and provide supplemental training where necessary.

This Request for Qualifications will enable the Mayor's Fund and CEO to identify a pool of Training Consultants sufficiently qualified to deliver the training and technical assistance in either one or multiple cities. Implementation Partners in each city can select their assistance providers from this pool of pre-qualified \$aveUSA Training Consultants.

B. Introduction

The \$aveUSA program was designed to test whether low-income households can be encouraged to save a portion of their tax refund, for at least one full year, if presented

¹ The VITA Program offers free tax help to low- to moderate-income people who cannot prepare their own tax returns. Certified volunteers sponsored by various organizations receive training to help prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country. VITA sites are generally located at community and neighborhood centers, libraries, schools, shopping malls, and other convenient locations. Most locations also offer free electronic filing.

with the right incentives; and to evaluate the effects of doing so, on important financial outcomes such as long-term saving, total asset holdings, and debt.

\$aveUSA is to be offered to eligible tax filers at VITA sites in New York City, Newark, San Antonio, Savannah, and Tulsa during the 2011, 2012, and 2013 tax seasons. Participants will receive a 50 percent match, up to \$500, if they direct deposit at least \$200 into a “\$aveUSA Account” and maintain the initial deposit for approximately one year. Implementation Partners within each city will be required to operate VITA sites and enroll individuals (approximately 2,000 each year) into the \$aveUSA program, during the 2011 through 2013 tax seasons. Subsequently, research activities will continue for approximately two additional years.

Participants will be required to open the account at the tax site and contribute via direct deposit using IRS Form 8888 to split their tax refund. Implementation Partners selected to operate \$aveUSA will be required to develop partnerships with financial institutions to hold the accounts, and to create systems to facilitate account opening at the Implementation Partner site.

In New York City and Tulsa, Implementation Partners will participate in a random assignment research evaluation; as such, additional research steps will be required. Eligible tax filers at the selected VITA sites in these cities who are interested in the \$aveUSA Account will be assigned at random — with procedures developed by the Mayor’s Fund — to either a program group, eligible for the \$aveUSA match, or a control group (also called the “business as usual” group), not eligible for the match but still informed of various other existing savings options.

C. Requirements and Scope of Services.

The Mayor’s Fund seeks appropriately qualified individuals or organizations to deliver comprehensive training and technical assistance for Implementation Partners in one or all of the \$aveUSA cities where this program will be implemented. While the Mayor’s Fund will provide Training Consultants with a training curriculum, Training Consultants will be expected to work with Implementation Partners to become knowledgeable about all aspects of \$aveUSA implementation including but not limited to: process flow at the VITA sites, account opening procedures of all partner financial institutions, participant data collection processes, marketing opportunities and touch points for the account.

In select cities, Training Consultants will be expected to learn and train on the goals and implementation methods of a random assignment evaluation. The Mayor’s Fund will separately train Implementation Partner staff on the random assignment. However, Training Consultants will be expected to be familiar with this training content and be able to answer basic questions from Implementation Partner volunteers and staff regarding the research process.

The following describes the expectations of Training Consultants:

- A. Train and communicate with Implementation Partner staff and volunteers on sales techniques for promoting the \$aveUSA account to tax filers;

- B. Work with Implementation Partner management to incorporate account promotion and account opening into site operations to ensure highest possible take-up;
- C. Train Implementation Partner staff and volunteers on efficient ways to streamline the account opening and random assignment processes (where applicable) including:
 - a. Presenting a standardized engagement plan to consistently communicate with each filer;
 - b. Streamlining information provided to filers to help them make the best financial choice; and
 - c. Supporting data collection procedures in collaboration with the Mayor's Fund and local Implementation Partner staff
- D. Provide a series of reports (schedule to be determined) during the program planning phase and the tax season, specifically focusing on:
 - a. Training session feedback: account for staff in attendance, outline issues raised, appropriateness of training materials, etc.
 - b. Tax season feedback: assessment of site operations, participant data collection processes, asset specialist performance, etc.
- E. Serve as the Mayor's Fund liaison when designated, namely by conducting periodic site visits and offering appropriate technical assistance during the tax season.

Selected Training Consultants, in conjunction with the Mayor's Fund, will be expected to develop appropriate solutions to any issues raised in the reports. Training Consultants may be asked to conduct subsequent training sessions which will incorporate findings from these periodic reports.

Training Consultants will work closely with the Mayor's Fund and Implementation Partners to meet the particular needs of the project. Conference calls and meetings may take place throughout the program development stage, at launch, during the program period, and post tax season.

All training materials and resources provided at the training will be developed by the Mayor's Fund and will be the property of the Mayor's Fund.

D. Types of Permissible Applicants

The Mayor's Fund is seeking proposals from entities that have a successful track record in developing and conducting effective trainings with customer service staff and managers. Familiarity with tax preparation and/or asset-building programs is highly desirable. Eligible applicants include: not-for-profit organizations, states and local governments (and other political subdivisions), educational institutions, private firms, as well as individuals.

Please note that entities selected as Implementation Partners cannot serve as Training Consultants.

E. Anticipated Duration of the Contract (including possible renewals) & Calendar

The Mayor's Fund will identify an approved list of Training Consultants based on their capacity to conduct training sessions as described in the above Scope of Services. Information about approved Training Consultants will be provided to local Implementation Partners in each program city. Implementation Partners in each city can select their Training Consultant from this pool of pre-qualified \$aveUSA Training Consultants.

Training Consultants can apply to provide the training for one or all of the Implementation Partners. Implementation Partners will contract with Training Consultants directly. Cost estimates will be provided to Implementation Partners based on trainer responses to this solicitation, but all final budgets must be agreed upon between contracting parties.

It is anticipated that the term of this contract will be between December 2010 to June 2011 (exact start and end dates will be determined by the Mayor's Fund and selected Implementation Partners). Training Consultants will be expected to attend a "train-the-trainer" session the week of December 13th in New York City, lasting one and one-half days. Actual training days in the \$aveUSA cities will be finalized once the Implementation Partners have been selected, with the expectation that the Training Consultant will be available as follows:

- Tulsa & New York City: Minimum 2 full days of training
- Newark, San Antonio, Savannah: Minimum of 1 full day of training

The Training Consultant should be available for the entire tax season to provide any additional trainings if necessary and to conduct site visits during the season.

F. Anticipated Available Funding

All payments will be administered by the Implementation Partner. The Mayor's Fund anticipates contract amounts will not exceed \$20,000 per Implementation Partner. Training Consultants can apply to provide the training for one or all of the Implementation Partners (to be determined shortly). Contracts will include curriculum development (working closely with the Mayor's Fund), training delivery, follow-up site visits, reports, supplemental training sessions, and follow-up meetings.

Greater consideration will be given to proposals that offer more competitive costs in combination with a high-quality training implementation plan. Anticipated budget items include personnel expenses, travel expenses, and supplies. Please note that the Mayor's Fund will maintain all ownership rights of any and all work products developed under this contract.

Contract awards are contingent on funding availability. There is a possibility of the contract being renewed for the 2012 and 2013 program years, depending on the performance of the Training Consultant and available funding. This assessment will be made and notice given to Training Consultants with sufficient time prior to the tax season.

G. Statement of Interest Requirements

In order for the Mayor's Fund to become familiar with your entity, please provide the following information:

- I. **Applicant Profile and Prior Experience:** Please provide a general overview of your organization or business and identify members of your team who will be dedicated to managing the project/relationship and providing training. Describe successful previous experience in providing the services outlined above, or similar services. Any specific experience related to marketing of savings products or other asset building products, tax preparation, development and delivery of training courses, as well as experience working with the target clients, should also be noted. Applicants should also describe pedagogical techniques that will be relevant to this program. Please feel free to share key lessons learned from prior experience that may be applicable here.
- II. **Training Program, Approach and Implementation Plan:** This section should discuss the major aspects of your implementation plan. Please provide a brief description of how the training will be delivered and assessed, and the use of feedback from training sessions to define ongoing technical assistance delivery. Be as detailed as possible with regard to operational issues and specifically address the requirements outlined in the Scope of Work. Please include a brief description of how you plan on managing the site visits.
- III. **Cost and Price:** This section should include a description of the proposed cost and prices. All pricing information shall be limited solely to this section of your proposal. Upon request, you shall substantiate your proposed prices. Budgets of selected Training Consultants will be made available to Implementation Partners. If selected by an Implementation Partner, final budgets must be agreed upon between both parties. All budgets should reflect costs per Implementation Partner. The budget should include:
 - a. Staff rates (with mention of job titles) with estimated time required for training preparation, delivery, site visits, and follow up;
 - b. Travel costs (attending the "train the trainer" session in New York City, transportation and travel costs to Implementation Partners (if proposing to be a national training partner, etc.);
 - c. Utilities & telephone;
 - d. Training Supplies and Equipment; and
- IV. **References:** Applicants should provide two references who can speak to the institution's work with innovative asset building programs focusing on low-income populations. Include: Organization name, address and contact persons.

E. Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria

The Mayor's Fund will review proposals to ensure capacity to offer the \$aveUSA Account training as outlined in the Scope of Work. Implementation Partners in each city can select their assistance providers from this pool of pre-qualified \$aveUSA Training

Consultants. Applicants should indicate their desire and capability to serve one or all of the Implementation Partners (and address this under the budget section).

Statements of Qualifications will be rated on a scale of 100 points and will be based on the following criteria.

Experience	25 points
Training Program, Approach and Implementation Plan (as it relates to the Scope of Work)	60 points
Cost and Price	15 points