

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
(Rutgers Informal Bid)**

**PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS INCUBATOR/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING SERVICES**

**Program Development Study for an International Food
Incubator and Innovation Center in Greece**

November 14th 2019

**For
Rutgers University – New Brunswick**

INTRODUCTION

Background

For the past several years, Greece has been in a severe economic crisis. Youth in Greece, defined for our purposes as under the age of 40, are reluctantly leaving their homeland in search of better employment and living opportunities. However, the crisis offers tremendous opportunity for innovative ideas and systemic changes that can help Greece utilize its national strengths and natural resources to reduce youth unemployment and drive economic growth. Seeking to activate the potential of Greek youth, many entities, as large as the European Union and as small as local non-governmental organizations, are encouraging young people to take the lead in their country's recovery.

New Agriculture for a New Generation (NeAGen): Recharging Greek Youth to Revitalize the Agriculture and Food Sector of the Greek Economy

Through a generous grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), the NeAGen team of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and its Greece-based program partners—the Agricultural University of Athens (AUA) and the American Farm School (AFS)—have examined a select group of agrofood sub-sectors, as well as the overall existing agrofood infrastructure in Greece. The primary goal was to create a bold implementation plan to engage youth, expand capacity, and create pathways to employment. The team conducted 16 sectoral studies, two feasibility studies on farm and food processing incubators, an e-commerce study, and a study on identifying young people as potential new farmers (<https://greece.rutgers.edu/resources-publications/sectoral-studies/>). The studies' findings were subjected to a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to help synthesize the collective insights and develop priorities and programming recommendations.

The implementation phase of the New Agriculture for a New Generation (NeAGen) project, made possible also through a grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and of which the establishment of a Food Incubator and Innovation Center (FIIC) is a key part, will build upon the research, partnerships, and networks developed in the planning phase and begin to implement the actual support systems and infrastructure that are needed to catalyze a revitalized Greek economy.

Overview of Project Concept

This project is specifically designed to increase young farmers' and entrepreneurs' abilities to develop and bring new products to market, as well as to create new untapped markets and opportunities. Given that the core mission of the FIIC is economic development, and specifically to increase opportunities for youth employment, it is anticipated that the establishment of this center will have a positive employment and economic impact.

Building on the success of the Rutgers Food Innovation Centers (foodinnovation.rutgers.edu), Rutgers and its partners are exploring the feasibility of developing a similar, but customized program/facility to be located in Greece. Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS), AUA, AFS and regional and national partners desire to create an incubator model (facility, programs and services) as a pilot program, in continental Greece. This incubator will provide practical, hands-on knowledge that helps entrepreneurial youth establish viable careers/businesses in agriculture, value-added agricultural products, food and related areas. It is anticipated that the center will provide programs in training, business development, exporting, marketing/sales, product development, and small-scale manufacture of food products, as well as a full range of other services/programs for new product and enterprise development will be identified by this study.

Business incubators have been proven successful in supporting the growth and viability of start-up businesses and in helping to overcome early failures. Accordingly, the European Commission fully supports the establishment of business incubators as a priority instrument of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), reflected in the regulatory framework for the new 2014-2020 programming period.

The model for the FIIC center will be similar to the Rutgers Food Innovation Center South (RFIC-S) incubator located in Bridgeton, NJ (foodinnovation.rutgers.edu). This facility houses shared-use food processing space for a broad array of products and processes, marketing capabilities and technical laboratories, distance learning and educational programming, and administrative space for staff as well as clients. The RFIC-S facility enables new companies to be formed and provides a vast array of resources and technologies to existing food companies as well. It also provides significant training in business development and food safety. This facility is designed for use by farmers and cooperatives, startup food companies, existing small and mid-sized food companies, and retail and foodservice establishments who are assisted from concept to commercialization. They are enabled with services that allow product prototypes to be tested and evaluated, and to have products produced in a state-of-the-art food processing facility that meets the regulatory standards of local, state and federal agencies. **While the Rutgers Food Innovation Center serves as the model, the facility in Greece will be purpose-built for its region and the markets it will serve.**

Development of the FIIC will be funded as part of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation grant for the NeAGen project.

Vision

With the rapid changes in global agri-food, both in terms of new technologies, industry consolidation, changing consumer demands and the global challenges for a sustainable agri-food system, the Greek agri-food industry needs a catalyst to unlock its resources and move towards sustainable economic growth. The proposed FIIC, will serve as the foundation of a comprehensive hub where, industry, academia, and government can further develop the nation's agri-food industry – the “triple helix” of the future. This will be the one-stop shop, where innovators, entrepreneurs, researchers, and industry leaders, will develop ideas into viable businesses and innovations. Importantly, it will be where young entrepreneurs and incumbent workers will be trained to become the future leaders in a revitalized agri-food system.

This vision is well overdue for the Greek agri-food industry. The success of the FIIC will be linked to its positioning within the entrepreneurship ecosystem to generate not only food innovation spin-offs, but also in its ability to create a strong food and agricultural cluster that disseminates knowledge upstream and downstream the agri-food value chain. This concept attains the long-term vision of the NeAGen program for the agri-food industry in Greece: to develop a new industry paradigm that creates opportunities for employment and new business success.

Additional information on these programs can be found at:

<https://greece.rutgers.edu/>

<https://www.generationag.org/en>

<http://foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/>

SCOPE OF WORK

Assess the need/demand for the proposed food technology incubator, identify programs and services to be offered, criteria to identify an optimal location, and effective business, financial, operational and management models and plans. The study team will conduct the five project tasks described below, over two Project Periods (PP).

STUDY AREA

The study area for this project is continental Greece. The NeAGen FIIC team has started an assessment of locations and will provide the related input to the study team.

SUBMISSION OF WORK PRODUCTS

Interim work products for each task will be submitted to the NeAGen FIIC project team for review/evaluation/comment on a mutually agreeable schedule. Final drafts of deliverables will be submitted to the NeAGen FIIC project team for review/evaluation/comment. When final revisions are completed, the team leadership will formally sign-off on deliverable as accepted.

STUDY TIMELINE

The study is envisioned as an eight-month process with two Project Period deliverable milestones. The order of conducting the tasks in each PP will be determined by the consultant with approval by the FIIC project team.

Project Period 1: Start Date: March 15, 2020 – Deliverable Date: May 31, 2020

Task 1. Evaluate the Market for the Food Innovation Center Concept

Task 2. Develop Location Criteria and Evaluate Study Areas

Project Period 2: Start Date: June 1, 2020 – Deliverable Date: November 15, 2020

Task 3. Identify Programs and Services that will Meet Project Goals

Task 4. Develop Management and Operations Plans

Task 5. Develop a Business Plan and Identify Sources of Funding and Service Support

Task 6. Prepare Detailed Implementation Plan

BUDGET

Provide a detailed budget for each task which includes personnel assigned to task, estimated hours, hourly rate, travel, and other costs associated with completing each task. A total budget is also to be provided that summarizes project costs.

COMPLIANCE WITH RUTGERS UNIVERSITY TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Consultant is required to comply with Rutgers University Terms and Conditions which can be found at: <https://procurementservices.rutgers.edu/.../university-procurement-terms-and-conditions-v1jun18pdf>

Project Period 1: March 15, 2020 – May 31, 2020

Task 1. Evaluate the Market for the Food Innovation Center

The consultant (s) will identify the market and potential demand for a food technology incubator through:

- Examine and synthesize economic and demographic data, industry sector studies that have already been conducted by the NeAGen team (<https://greece.rutgers.edu/resources-publications/sectoral-studies/>), as well as other related accessible studies conducted by public or private entities.
- Conduct surveys, interviews and focus group meetings with stakeholders in the food and agriculture sectors, business leaders, and those in the entrepreneurship ecosystem such as other business incubators, to determine demand for an FIIC and to identify programmatic needs.
- Explain sampling approach for collecting data, as well as analytical approach for assessing the data.
- Use the data to characterize business start-ups, the entrepreneurial climate of the region, the demand/need for incubation services, the incubation resources currently available and the gaps that exist, identification of programs and services that meet the needs of the FIIC beneficiaries, identification of general innovation ecosystem capabilities/resources and positioning of the proposed food incubator in the entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- Summarize findings in a report justifying scale, content and resources for the FIIC.

Task 2. Develop Location Criteria and Evaluate Study Areas

As stated previously, the study area for this project is continental Greece. The NeAGen FIIC team has started an assessment of locations and will provide the related input to the study team.

As part of this task, the following items should be addressed:

- Develop a check list of location selection criteria and guidelines for optimizing program effectiveness and impact, such as available agro-food infrastructure, concentration of food/ag businesses, regional priorities and development efforts, presence of large universities with relevant programs, transportation infrastructure, and existing networks and resources that can contribute to incubation services support, amongst others.
- Describe your process for identifying, analyzing and weighting location selection criteria.
- Use the location selection criteria to evaluate and provide recommendations on the study areas.
- The deliverables for this task are location selection criteria that include evaluation guidelines and weighting parameters as well as an evaluation of the study areas resulting in a recommendation for the structure (one or more), number of (1-3), location and scale of the FIIC. This information will be used by the NeAGen FIIC planning team to inform future site selection decisions, in combination with the functional brief that will be developed during task 3.

Project Period 2: June 1, 2020 – November 15, 2020

Task 3. Identify Programs and Services that will Meet Project Goals

A key to a successful incubator is the development of programs that truly meet the needs of its stakeholders. To that end, a broad spectrum of programmatic issues are to be examined as a result of information gathered during surveys, interviews and focus group meetings with stakeholders in the food and agriculture sectors, business leaders, and other business incubators in the region (Task 1). Specifically, the following information is to be provided:

- Description of target beneficiaries.
- Types of business and technical support services that food/ag entrepreneurs and small/mid-size businesses need;

- Detailed descriptions of programs and services to be delivered by the center to meet these needs and distinguish it from similar programs in the area;
- Description of a virtual incubator program;
- Estimation of projected costs to develop, manage, and deliver business and technical support services and programs;
- Based on the above, collaborate with the Architect's team and develop a facility functional brief and building program to be used as a basis for the design.
- Plan for creating collaborative relationships with other business and technical service providers in the region and broader EU (i.e. EBN, ERDF) to establish a robust resource network.
- Provide a clearly defined vision, mission and objectives of the incubator program
- Summary of research findings of best practices and benchmarking of similar incubation programs (i.e. EC-BIC and ERDF incubator facilities/programs).
- Monitoring system to collect and record statistics and other relevant information about the activity of the incubator and its clients. The goal of gathering this information is to assess whether resources were invested effectively and efficiently, and whether they contributed towards achieving strategic objectives.

Task 4. Develop Management and Operations Plans

The consultant will identify critical issues related to operation and management issues and develop effective management and operational plans. Areas of investigation will include:

- Develop a staffing plan which includes positions, skill sets needed, and responsibilities.
- Develop an organizational chart for the management of the center and its operations
- Develop client selection criteria
- Write and deliver management and operational plans that addresses these areas and others identified by the consultants.

Outcomes of this task will be used to define a stable management structure and operational plan that will allow the incubator to effectively and efficiently operate and meet its objectives.

Task 5. Develop a Business Plan and Identify Sources of Funding

A key component of this project will be to identify options for business models for the FIIC. This will involve:

- Evaluate business model options based on cost, legal considerations, effectiveness in accomplishing stated goals, and ability to address demonstrated demand/need of the targeted stakeholder groups.
- The optimal business model will be selected based on the above information and input from the project team and advisory board.
- The consultant will then develop a business plan for this model, including:
 - An estimate of the required funding for the programmatic aspects of the project to be brought successfully through the planning, development and operational (what will it cost to operate the programs including salaries) stages.
 - This information will also be combined with that of the Architect and Engineering firm (see information next section) to develop the preliminary budget for construction and operation of the physical facility.
 - Identify sources of funding and key partners for capital and program development/ implementation;
 - Estimate project cash flows in the context of organization, market, and program development;
 - Conduct an analysis of financial shortfall and funding strategy for long-term operational support from public-private sources to cover this shortfall;
 - Estimate projected Returns on Investment (ROI);
 - Deliver a well-defined business and financial plan (including a 5 year pro forma) that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the center.

- The business plan should also address the criteria for FIIC to apply for and meet EU/BIC Certification (EBN) requirements. See criteria at:
https://ebn.eu/sharedResources/organisations/1/Quality/Approved_EUBIC_Criteria_Feb2017_F1.pdf

Task 6. Prepare a Final Report and Implementation Plan

A detailed strategic plan for the successful development and implementation of the proposed Food Incubation and Innovation Center will be produced that incorporates all of the information described in Tasks 1-5. This will also include an implementation plan with timing of key milestones from inception through implementation. The final plan will be of professional quality and design and in both English and Greek.

CONCURRENT ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING ACTIVITIES

An architectural and engineering firm will be engaged in an overlapping time frame as this planning project, to:

- a) apply site requirements from a construction perspective. The findings for the location criteria and evaluation will be combined with those of the A&E firm by the NeAGen FIIC project team to create a comprehensive description of the location requirements from both programmatic and physical infrastructure perspectives and result into the said location(s) recommendation; b) develop a preliminary design and documentation for a proposed facility. Given that the design of the facility will depend on the activities to take place there and the functional brief, the A&E firm will be available to participate in focus group meetings. Per task 3 description, findings of programmatic needs – functional brief and program descriptions- will be provided to the NeAGen FIIC team as soon as they are complete, who will then review and provide the information to the A&E firm so as to inform the design work the firm needs to do.

QUALIFICATIONS

The consultant team shall include member(s) who have experience in business incubation and/or developing successful business development models in the **food/ag sector is required**. Knowledge of the Greek food and agricultural industry and European Union markets/demand for food and agricultural products is essential. Familiarity with food safety regulations and training and certification requirements is important. The scope of work for this study will have two deliverable dates: May 31, 2020 and November 15, 2020.

1. The Consultant must have a minimum of 7 years of experience in similar work as requested. Must demonstrate considerable knowledge and experience with the establishment, development and operation of business incubators or proven extensive experience related to business development and entrepreneurship. Experience with developing business incubator plans - including financial projections, programming and implementation strategies in the food sector, is required.
2. The consultant team shall include a member(s) based in Greece with knowledge of the Greek food/ag sector and business incubation environment, and a history of demonstrated collaboration with the team on similar projects.
3. Provide examples of similar studies/projects undertaken for similar services in size, scope and complexity, especially projects undertaken in the EU and/or Greece in the food sector, specifically.
4. The Consultant must demonstrate knowledge of the issues of the food and agricultural sectors in Greece and a solid understanding of the needs of entrepreneurs in these sectors.
5. Provide at least three (3) references from clients, as may be specifically applicable to the work in this RFP. Ensure that titles, phone numbers, and email addresses are current.
6. Provide resumes, curricula vitae, or statements of prior experience and qualifications of all staff and/or sub-contractors proposed as members of the project team.

7. If not covered in the items above, provide any other relevant information regarding your knowledge of the market or other unique qualifications for completing this project.
8. Provide Firm's contact person, address, telephone number, email address.

SUBMISSION AND SELECTION PROCESS

- Responses to this RFP are to be submitted by **5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time on January 13, 2020** in PDF format to Jessica Paolini at jessica.paolini@rutgers.edu and Effie Lazaridou at effie@generationag.org
- RFP Responses must be in both English and Greek.
- Questions are to be sent to Jessica Paolini at jessica.paolini@rutgers.edu by **Dec. 2, 2019**. Responses to all questions will be posted on the <http://bit.ly/proposalsfic> by Dec. 6, 2019.
- Responses will be evaluated based on strength of team qualifications and experience, cost, and approach to completing tasks. Top group of candidates will be notified the end of January 2020 and will then be interviewed by either in-person meeting, webex, or phone. The final selection will be made by mid-February 2020.