

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Lindsay H. Kurrle, Secretary

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To: Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee

From: Lindsay H. Kurrle, Secretary, Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Re: CRF Request for Call Center Contract

Date: July 24, 2020

Total Amount Requested: \$250,000. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) is seeking funding to contract with Maximus for a call center to provide technical assistance to Vermont employers applying for Economic Relief Grants.

Response to the Pandemic: Since March 2020, ACCD has led a variety of Vermont's economic mitigation and relief efforts curing the pandemic. ACCD staff, partners, and volunteers have been required to assess the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and develop a proposal to put federal relief dollars into the hands of businesses who were adversely impacted. ACCD was appropriated \$76 million for economic recovery grants to be disbursed to employers in our state. Administering this grant program requires robust technical support and assistance to those applying, far exceeding the capacity of existing ACCD staff. We have utilized 21 call agents for one month in support of this effort and anticipate the need for additional call agents and continued support to help with applications and to assist our existing staff through the earlier of September 6, 2020 or when the grant funds run out.

Urgency of Request: Prior to the economic relief legislation that was passed, ACCD did not have the resources or the infrastructure in place to deliver this grant program. In addition to building a grants management system, ACCD estimated demand for technical assistance would far surpass existing resources. As soon as the grants were announced in early July, 1000's of impacted businesses began applying for grants. Without the assistance of outside call agents, we would not have been able to appropriately and timely provide applicants with assistance. Continued assistance is required to enable ACCD to continue to effectively administer the grant program.

