

RESERVOIR SQUARE CAFÉ OPERATIONS AND TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT – REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Q&A

UPDATED 9/14/26

PLEASE NOTE: Some duplicative questions have been consolidated.

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GENERAL

What is the total funding available under this solicitation, and does MOED anticipate making one award or multiple awards?

No direct funding will be provided to the operator. Only one operator will be selected.

Will the award be paid on a cost-reimbursement basis or through advances, and on what schedule?

Not applicable.

May grant funds be used for equipment, furnishings, fixtures, and initial inventory, or are those the grantee's responsibility?

Not applicable.

Is a cash or in-kind match required?

Not applicable.

Is an indirect cost rate allowable, and if so, at what percentage or under what basis?

Not applicable.

Given that MOED is a government agency operating on WIOA and other public funds, would a faith-inspired (*but not required*) organization be considered as an operator?

Yes.

What is the anticipated occupancy date, and what café opening date should bidders build into their timeline?

The main building is scheduled to open in fall 2026. The café opening date will be negotiated with the selected operator and dependent on construction timelines, but will likely be in spring 2027.

Is MOED seeking a primarily coffee-focused concept, or may the selected operator propose a broader café concept offering breakfast, lunch, grab-and-go items, signature food items, and other food and beverage offerings in addition to coffee service?

MOED is open to broader concepts as outlined provided that coffee service remains part of the concept.

Will the selected operator have exclusive or preferred rights to food, beverage, and coffee sales within the Reservoir Square building, or will other food vendors, coffee providers, vending, or similar food-service options also be permitted? Will the selected operator be eligible for exclusive or preferred catering opportunities for MOED meetings, trainings, conferences, events, and other activities at Reservoir Square? Will the operator also be permitted to use the café's facilities to prepare catering orders for external customers, businesses, organizations, and events? Will revenues from catering or other food and beverage services for MOED meetings, events, trainings, or building partners, be retained by the operator under the same commercial arrangement as café sales?

The selected operator will be the only food/beverage establishment within the Reservoir Square building. No preferred or exclusive catering arrangements are proposed, but if the selected operator has capacity, catering opportunities may be available. Ability to access and use the café space outside of MOED business hours will be negotiated in the lease and operating contract. In all cases, the operator would retain the revenue.

The RFP states that approximately 250 MOED employees will be based at Reservoir Square and that the American Job Center may serve up to 50,000 Baltimore City residents annually. Does MOED have projected average daily visitor counts, anticipated employee attendance/occupancy, or historical visitor-volume information

from its existing locations that bidders may use in developing realistic café revenue projections?

In fiscal year 2025, MOED averaged 73 visits per day at its Eastside and Northwest Career Centers. Daily visitor counts for other MOED locations that will be consolidated at Reservoir Square, such as the Youth Services Division, are not available. Additionally, bidders should assume that Reservoir Square will host medium- and large-scale events, such as job fairs and partner convenings, on a regular basis, for which visitor volume is difficult to estimate. Anticipated daily employee attendance is estimated at approximately 50% as the building has 134 workstations available.

The café will also be able to serve the surrounding community, for which foot traffic estimates will evolve as the Reservoir Square development project continues. Additional information is available at the overall project's websites [here](#) or [here](#).

Will there be any availability for a site visit?

MOED will offer an opportunity for a site visit to all applicants. Registration details will be provided at the time of application receipt.

APPLICATION CONTENT AND PROCESS

Where an applicant uses a fiscal sponsor, should the sponsor or the applicant organization be named as the Applicant on the cover page, and which entity's signatory executes the certification? For the cover page field requesting years in business under the submitting corporate structure, should an applicant using a fiscal sponsor report its own tenure or the sponsor's?

The applicant organization's information should be provided in all cases.

Is attendance at the September 1 bidders' conference mandatory for a proposal to be considered responsive?

No

Is there a page limit for the narrative, and are attachments, resumes, letters of support, and financial statements excluded from that limit?

The narrative should be limited to 20 pages. Attachments of any kind are not included in that page limit.

Is a budget template provided, and over how many years should the budget and financial projections run?

No. No project budget is required.

Beyond the Application Cover Page, what additional forms, certifications, or audited financials must accompany the proposal?

A detailed list of required Documentation of Qualifications is provided on page 5 of the RFP, and a complete list of proposal requirements appears on page 12.

Page 12 directs applicants to use a provided Application Cover Page template. Please confirm where bidders may obtain the required cover-page template if it is not included with the RFP document.

The cover page is available here: <https://www.baltimorecity.gov/moed/news/public-notice-request-for-proposals-reservoir-square-cafe-operations-and-transitional-employment>.

In addition to the organizational annual budget and revenue documentation required by the RFP, does MOED expect bidders to submit a proposed café startup budget, operating budget, financial pro forma, or revenue/expense projections? If so, is there a prescribed format or template?

No.

What specific format or system does MOED expect for the 'sample report showing actual to planned performance' required in the Documentation of Qualifications? Is a template available?

The requirement refers to the organization's own existing reporting capacity and asks for a sample from its own program reports.

ELIGIBILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Is prior WIOA funding or Department of Labor grant experience a requirement, or is willingness and capacity to build compliant systems sufficient for a first time WIOA subrecipient? What onboarding, templates, or technical assistance does MOED provide to operators without this history?

The operator will not receive any direct funding and will not be required to possess or gain capacity to manage WIOA or other Department of Labor grant funds. MOED will meet with the operator on a biweekly basis to provide capacity building and continuous technical assistance, which may include assistance with WIOA reporting requirements.

The RFP lists scale capacity as a preferred, not required, qualification. Can MOED confirm that a strong, realistic first time expansion plan is an acceptable response, rather than requiring *existing* multi-site operations?

Yes.

Would an entity still be considered if there was a change in business operations such as new business and structure?

Yes, provided that the proposal can demonstrate that the organization has the requisite experience.

May a proposal be submitted by a team — for example, an experienced café operator partnered with a workforce development organization? If so, must the lead applicant be the entity with food service operating experience? Would that affect how the proposal is evaluated?

Yes, applicants may propose partnerships with other entities. In such cases, there is no specific requirement for the food service operator to be the primary applicant. Proposals from single applicants and from partnerships are evaluated by the same metrics and scored according to the same rubric.

The Operator Qualifications section lists café- or food-service-based workforce program experience as strongly preferred; however, the evaluation criteria on page 16 reference an organization being established as both a café operator and workforce-development program for at least three years. Could MOED clarify whether three years of workforce-development program experience is a minimum eligibility requirement, a scored preference, or a qualification that may be satisfied through an approved workforce-development partner/subcontractor?

This clause is worded to allow for proposals made by entities in partnership. The preference would be for an organization with café- or food-based workforce development experience, but for example, a workforce development organization with no café or food service experience would be eligible to apply in partnership with an experienced café or food operator. In that case, reviewers would evaluate whether each entity demonstrated at least three years of the relevant experience.

If an operator proposes an experienced workforce-development organization as a formal partner or subcontractor, may that organization's relevant workforce-development experience, participant outcome data, reporting systems, trauma-informed practices, and other supporting documentation be used to demonstrate the proposal team's workforce-development capacity?

Yes.

May letters of support addressing the workforce-development partner's experience satisfy the workforce-development component of the Letters of Support evaluation?

Yes.

The RFP requires a minimum of three years of experience operating a café location. Would an operator with more than three years of demonstrated experience operating food-service establishments satisfy this requirement, or must the respondent specifically demonstrate three years operating a café or coffee-focused establishment?

Yes, experience operating food service establishments satisfies this requirement.

What insurance limits and bonding, if any, will the selected operator be required to carry? What are the minimum required coverage limits for each type of insurance listed (professional liability and errors and omissions, commercial general liability, business automobile liability, workers compensation, and employee dishonesty)?

A list of required insurance coverage is provided on page of the RFP. Guidance regarding insurance limits and minimums is pending from the City's Risk Management department. This document will be updated as soon as that guidance is provided.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND TARGET POPULATION

Should bidders understand the transitional employment component to be youth-specific, or is the program open to adult participants as well?

The program will serve Baltimore City residents ages 18 and over.

The target population list is broad and not gender specific. Would MOED accept an operator whose core program and referral base are women only if they also identified with communities experiencing marginalization and/or significant work barriers (e.g. formerly incarcerated, working young parents, un/under-employed, recovering from gender-based violence and/or substance addiction)? Does MOED anticipate it would be able to refer a sufficient pool of women candidates? In short, would MOED be open to women only WFD participants?

MOED is not able to restrict the pool of program participants by sex or gender identity. Depending on participant needs and program capacity, MOED is open to the possibility of organizing individual cohorts for specific populations (e.g. women, youth ages 18-24, people in recovery, or similar).

What minimum number of weekly hours per participant is MOED contemplating, and is there a maximum hourly wage, number of hours, dollar amount, or other cap on MOED's wage subsidy per participant or cohort? Could MOED clarify whether cohorts

are expected to run continuously throughout the year, including whether the operator should anticipate any gaps between cohorts?

While these terms can be negotiated, MOED transitional employment programs have typically guaranteed 35 hours per week at minimum wage for each participant. We anticipate that cohorts lasting approximately three months each would run throughout the year with brief gaps between.

The RFP states that MOED will fully fund the wages of program participants. Will participants be employees of the café operator with wages reimbursed by MOED, or will participants be employed and paid directly by MOED or another entity? Please also clarify responsibility for employer payroll taxes, workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, and other employer-related costs attributable to program participants. If participant costs are reimbursement-based, what is the anticipated reimbursement process and payment timeline?

MOED will be the employer of record for program participants and manage all employee wages, payroll taxes, workers' compensation, and other employer-related costs.

Are any costs associated with the operator's management, supervision, coaching, curriculum development, training delivery, outcome tracking, or other administration of the transitional-employment program eligible for reimbursement or other workforce-development funding, or are those costs expected to be absorbed entirely by the café operation?

No funding will be provided to the operator or subcontractors under this contract.

In addition, will MOED cover participants' wages while they complete required ServSafe Food Handler, OSHA-10, or other required training, and are instructor/trainer costs eligible for funding?

MOED will fund the required ServSafe Food Handler and OSHA-10 trainings and cover participant wages. Additional proposed trainings may be eligible to be funded by MOED; if approved, such funding would be provided directly to the training provider rather than to the operator.

Does MOED have prescribed curriculum requirements or minimum instructional hours beyond the curriculum components identified in the RFP, or should bidders propose their own curriculum structure?

Bidders should propose their own curriculum structure.

How many transitional employment participants is the operator expected to serve annually, and what is the expected duration of each placement?

The selected operator will work closely with MOED to codesign, adjust, and improve the transitional employment program throughout the contract term. Ideally, the program will operate on a cohort model, with each cohort of 4-6 participants lasting approximately three months.

Who is responsible for participant recruitment, eligibility determination, case management, and supportive services — the grantee, MOED and American Job Center staff, or a shared model?

The expectation is that MOED will recruit candidates and then provide case management services to participants throughout their transitional employment experience. The operator will make the final participant selection from among the candidates referred by MOED, and provide a training and workforce experience program that combines on-the-job café/hospitality experience with a curriculum emphasizing essential and transferable skills.

Does the City's living wage ordinance apply to participant wages and to permanent café staff?

No.

How will participant-related performance measures be evaluated if MOED is unable to provide enough qualified referrals to maintain the anticipated cohort size?

Participant-related performance measures are unrelated to cohort size.

What is the funding source for this award, and do WIOA or other federal compliance requirements apply to participant eligibility, documentation, or reporting? What outcome measures will the grantee be held to, and at what reporting frequency?

This program will be supported by WIOA funds and subject to the common WIOA Performance Measures. MOED will require quarterly reporting on these measures as well as follow-up reports three, six, and 12 months after participant exit or graduation from the program.

The RFP states that no direct funding will be provided to the selected operator, while MOED will fully fund participant wages and certain ancillary participant expenses. If the prime café operator utilizes an approved workforce-development subcontractor to provide services such as training, coaching, workplace readiness, participant support, data tracking/reporting, employment transition services, or program administration,

are any of those subcontracted workforce-development costs eligible for reimbursement through WIOA or other MOED funding sources? If not, should bidders assume those costs must be supported entirely through café operating revenue and/or other leveraged funding?

No, MOED will not provide direct funding to any parties under this agreement, including subcontractors. Participants may be eligible to receive funding for training to obtain industry-recognized credentials; in such cases, participants will be individually approved for training expenses and funds will be directed to the training provider.

LEASE AND OPERATING CONTRACT

What is the initial award term, and are option or renewal years contemplated?

The initial term will be negotiated with the selected operator in conjunction with lease terms. MOED will propose an initial term of three years. Renewal options will also be negotiated. MOED will propose that renewal be contingent on the operator's meeting performance goals.

Will the selected operator retain 100% of café sales revenue, or does MOED anticipate any revenue-sharing, concession fee, percentage-rent, or similar arrangement in addition to the lease?

The operator will retain all revenue.

What are the expected hours of operation, and must they align with American Job Center service hours? Is there a minimum number of days per week the cafe is expected to operate?

The café will be open during MOED business hours (8:30 AM-4:30 PM Monday through Friday) and outside those hours as negotiated in the lease agreement and/or operating contract.

Will the café have street-level public access, or is access limited to building visitors and badged staff? Will the selected operator be permitted to operate before or after MOED's regular 8:30 AM-4:30 PM business hours and on weekends if commercially viable? If after-hours operation is permitted, will there be any additional security, building-access, or other costs charged to the café operator?

The space will be accessible from the main lobby and the street during MOED business hours and from the street outside those hours as negotiated in the lease agreement and/or

operating contract. Security arrangements and costs for any agreed-upon extended hours will also be negotiated in that process.

What is the anticipated lease structure, including base rent, percentage rent if applicable, CAM/common-area charges, utilities, maintenance obligations, and other occupancy costs? Is reduced rent, rent abatement, or another favorable occupancy structure being contemplated in recognition of the workforce-development component of the operation?

All lease terms are yet to be determined and will be negotiated.

If completion of the building or café space is delayed, will the operator's lease, rent, operating, and performance obligations commence only after the space has been delivered and is available for operation?

Yes.

Who is responsible for obtaining and maintaining the food service facility license and health department permits?

The operator will obtain and maintain permits and licenses in partnership with the developer,

Which specific performance goals or thresholds does MOED anticipate using to determine satisfactory performance and contract renewal?

This program will be supported by WIOA funds and subject to the common WIOA Performance Measures. Additional performance measures relating to contract renewal may be developed during the contract negotiation process.

SPACE SPECIFICATIONS

What is the square footage of the café space, and is a floor plan available to bidders? Has the café kitchen/service layout and related infrastructure already been designed as part of the building construction? If so, can MOED provide available floor plans, utility plans, equipment layouts, or specifications to bidders?

Approximately 2,000 square feet on the first floor will be dedicated to the café, which will feature 26-28 seats. A floor plan and an early conceptual rendering have been made available at <https://www.baltimorecity.gov/moed/news/public-notice-request-for-proposals-reservoir-square-cafe-operations-and-transitional-employment>.

Please clarify the anticipated delivery condition of the approximately 2,000-square-foot café space. Will the City/MOED deliver the space as a fully built-out or

substantially completed café, or will the selected operator be responsible for some or all tenant improvements and café build-out costs? If the operator is responsible for any portion of the build-out, please identify the major improvements expected to be operator-funded versus City/developer-funded, including architectural/engineering services, permitting, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, fire suppression, grease interceptor, flooring, walls/ceilings, lighting, millwork/counters, signage, and fixtures. If the selected operator is responsible for any portion of the café build-out or tenant improvements, will the City/MOED or developer provide a tenant improvement allowance, capital contribution, reimbursement, or other financial support toward those costs?

Café build-out will be completed during the contract and lease negotiation phase; the space will be fully built-out by the occupancy date. The selected operator is not expected to be responsible for build-out costs with the possible exception of branded signage or specialty equipment.

Will the selected operator have an opportunity to provide input regarding the final kitchen/service layout, equipment configuration, and operational design before construction is completed?

Yes.

How much time will be provided between delivery/access and opening for equipment installation, permitting, licensing, inspections, hiring, training, and other pre-opening activities?

The length of the pre-opening preparation period will be negotiated with the selected operator.

The RFP states that MOED may provide some operating equipment as budget permits and as negotiated. Can MOED provide a preliminary list of the furniture, fixtures, and equipment anticipated to be provided by the City/MOED and identify the major items the selected operator will be expected to provide?

A floor plan and an early conceptual rendering are available for view at <https://www.baltimorecity.gov/moed/news/public-notice-request-for-proposals-reservoir-square-cafe-operations-and-transitional-employment>, and offer a sense of the furniture and fixtures to be provided. Additionally, based on available funding, MOED currently plans to provide the following equipment:

- 2 Reach-In Refrigerators
- Sandwich/Salad Prep Refrigerator

- Convection Oven, Electric
- Countertop Gas Griddle
- Gas Floor Fryers
- Refrigerated Merchandiser
- Undercounter Refrigerator
- Espresso/Cappuccino Machines

Additionally, the RFP references the operator's responsibility for equipment upkeep, maintenance, and replacement coordination. Please clarify whether the operator will be financially responsible for capital replacement of equipment originally provided by MOED or whether capital replacement responsibility will be negotiated separately.

The operator will be financially responsible for capital replacement of equipment originally provided by MOED.

The following questions were added to this document on 9/14/26 and reference the floor plan as posted to the MOED website.

Does the red outline represent the complete café premises or only the customer-facing portion?

The red outline demarcates the entire café space. The customer-facing portion (as shown in the conceptual rendering) is on the left side. Toward the right are two restrooms, and behind them is the kitchen area.

Are any of the gray-shaded areas available for café use, storage, training, or staff operations?

No. The gray shaded areas are the MOED lobby, workspaces, and conference rooms.

Where are the kitchen, food-preparation, dishwashing, dry-storage, cold-storage, and receiving areas located?

These will all be located in the angular space behind the restrooms on the right side of the floor plan. Note the door demarcating it as a separate space.

Is there a staff break room space available in the building that the cafe staff would be able to utilize?

There is no designated break room for café staff, but one may be incorporated into the kitchen space.

What kitchen, plumbing, electrical, ventilation, refrigeration, and storage infrastructure already exists?

None. The space will be built out with standard infrastructure for a functioning café after the operator is selected.