

# Request For Proposals

OPERATION BACKING BLACK BUSINESSES



PROPOSALS DUE BY: MAY 1, 2023

# I. Company Background/ Introduction

*Prosper Foundation “Prosper” is a nonprofit with a vision to build the most inclusive and thriving economy in the Southeast. Prosper works to align Jefferson County and accelerate progress towards a shared vision for transformational inclusive economic growth by connecting, convening people and organizations to align our efforts and invest in big, collaborative ideas that will help transform our economy. Prosper focuses specifically on job creation, job preparation, and job access and concentrates on economic mobility for young people, supporting Black-owned businesses, growing our HealthTech economy, and empowering women in Jefferson County.*

As part of this mission, Prosper is soliciting proposals to grant funds to any firm, corporation, or other business entity, public or private for the purpose of promoting the equitable economic development of the City of Birmingham and Jefferson County.

**Prosper is requesting proposals for creative, evidence-based approaches to advancing economic resilience and mobility in Birmingham through this Operation Backing Black Businesses (“OBBB”) Request for Proposal (“RFP”) process.**

By working with ecosystem partners, resource providers, and business owners, Prosper will directly support efforts towards building the most thriving economy in the Southeast. This process seeks to nurture talent and establish infrastructure that supports women-, minority-, and disadvantaged businesses. Focus is set on technical and tactical service and resource providers, with an explicit mission of working alongside and supporting targeted demographics within priority communities set forth by and in alignment with the City of Birmingham’s economic development efforts. An overarching intention of Prosper’s investments is to incorporate collaboration, facilitating partnerships with and between community organizations and individuals who share Prosper’s vision of inclusivity and resilience.

Consideration of RFP applicants is weighted upon an explicit focus on Prosper’s pillar of supporting Black-owned businesses, particularly those with employees or ambitions towards growth. There are three Objective Areas provided on the application for applicants to specify which approach they will take to satisfy this mission. A secondary consideration will be whether the approach proposed will serve one or more of the geographic priority areas. A previously established relationship in the area served is also taken into account.

## Objectives Areas

### a) Magic City Match Anchor Organization

Prosper is seeking an anchor organization to take up the mantle and build on the success of the pilot Magic City Match program administered in Mar-June 2022. The goal of this undertaking is to “match” Black-owned businesses to brick-and-mortar real estate in target corridors and business districts, providing funding and tools to fuel the resurgence of the city’s business corridors. The inspiration for this undertaking is the [Rubber City Match of Akron, OH](#) and [Motor City Match of Detroit, MI](#). Applicants for this objective will need to meet all application requirements and demonstrate capacity and experience with acting as fiduciary agents, administering programming, facilitating partnerships, business and real estate acumen, and consistency in reporting.

### b) Black-owned Business Service Provider Collaboration Efforts

Prosper is seeking collaborative efforts by service providers to support the growth of Black-owned businesses within Birmingham and Jefferson County. Applications must include a partner agreement signed by all participating organizations and/or firms, with a principal agent named for fiduciary responsibility. Examples of the types of partnerships that should apply include curricula, programming, or workshop facilitation, service suites, or incubation spaces by two or more entities that demonstrate consolidation of efforts and increase the capacity for participating firms, both those being served and those providing services. These efforts should also exhibit forecasted impact that exceeds what either of the partnering organizations have established from past individual efforts. Beneficiaries of services should include potential or existing registered Black-owned businesses with 51% or more ownership by persons identifying as Black/American Descendants of Slavery. Services must be focused on and measure revenue growth and expansion of employee capacity for said beneficiaries.

### c) BIG IDEAS

Prosper is seeking programs, processes, trainings, and other organization efforts or entities with a mission and focus towards driving the local economy in Birmingham and/ or Jefferson County with a lens towards equity and inclusion. The efforts should directly serve and impact the Black business community and demonstrate how funding will be used towards the immediate and sustainable impact on the larger

Black business economic landscape. We believe that our community has great ideas that can move our ecosystem forward.

### **Geographic Priority Areas**

- East Lake
- Ensley
- Five Points West
- Fourth Avenue Business District/ Civil Rights District
- North Birmingham
- Smithfield/ Elyton
- Woodlawn

### **Eligibility & Criteria**

#### A. Eligibility:

Funding will be awarded on a competitive basis through this RFP process. Applications are encouraged from the following:

- Alabama non-profit organizations (IRC Section 501(c)(3) entities preferred,)
- Faith-based organizations, and
- Relevant for-profit enterprises, specifically those with a social impact focus.

Partnerships are encouraged, and groups of organizations may apply as a consortium of partners with a unified application. The funding amount will be contingent upon the budget provided, intended use of funds, feasibility of the investment and associated return though compelling proposals of other funding amounts will be considered, especially with the addition of leveraged funding from other non-conflicting, verifiable sources. Grants and/or forgivable loans will be awarded to organizations with missions that align with Prosper's pillars and targeted priorities.

Prosper encourages participation of minority, women, disadvantaged business enterprises ("MWDBE") to the maximum extent possible. Prosper is committed to awarding contracts to firms that identify as MWDBE, that are dedicated to diversity, and that provide high-quality services. Prosper strongly encourages firms that are certified as MWBEs by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs ("ADECA") to submit responses to this RFP.

B. Criteria:

Funding will be awarded to applicants whose programs demonstrate:

- A mission-oriented focus on building and growing a more inclusive and equitable economy in Birmingham
- Alignment with one or more Prosper pillars and associated objectives
- A proven track record of success, especially in the communities the applicants serve or propose to serve
- Intimate understanding of the city’s economic landscape, including a data-defined problem and solution with measurable standards for success
- A compelling project plan to meet the proposal’s objectives, including work plan, budget, narrative, and leveraged resources to complement any grant funding that could be awarded
- Apparent fiscal sustainability and capacity to execute on the scope of objectives outlined in the project narrative and project work plan
- Ability and willingness to meet evaluation and reporting standards with explicit and transparent performance measures
- Clearly defined expectations of Prosper as a partner in this work

**Application & Program Timeline**

Prosper reserves the right to modify this schedule at its discretion. Notification of changes in connection with this RFP will be posted and made available on Prosper’s webpage at: [prosperbham.com](http://prosperbham.com) [direct link pending]

<b>Event</b>		<b>Date</b>
Phase 0	Issuance of RFP	Thurs, Feb 23, 2023
	RFP Information Session	Thurs, Mar 9, 2023
	Proposal Workshop #1	Thurs, Mar 23, 2023
	Proposal Zoom	Thurs, Apr 6, 2023

	Office Hours (by appointment only)	Thurs, Apr 20, 2023
	<b>Application Deadline</b>	<b>Mon, May 1, 2023</b>
Phase 1	Review of Written Applications	Mon - Tues, May 1-16, 2023
	Finalist Presentations	Mon - Fri, May 22-26, 2023
	Grantee Selections & Negotiations	Mon - Fri, May 29- June 9, 2023
	Awardee Announcement	Thurs, June 15 (Prosper Annual Meeting)
Phase 2	Performance Period	Mon - Fri July 3, 2023- Aug 1, 2024
Phase 3	Reporting and Accountability Assessments	Quarterly beginning October 2023 - Jan 2025

- *Selections will not be final until contracts have been fully amended and signed by all parties named with a fiscal responsibility within the MOU agreement.*

## II. Submission Overview

This grant is meant to surface Black-owned business service providers and Big Ideas from local entities meant to change the economic landscape and impact significant and distinct segments of the target population. Upon receiving notice of an award, organizations will work with Prosper’s Initiative Director to finalize an agreement, including a budget with clearly defined performance metrics, periodic reporting schedule, and data sharing agreements.

## Contents of Proposal Submission

- A) Completed application consisting of a series of short response questions.
- B) Budget narrative
- C) Supplemental application materials

### A. Application [[LINK](#)]:

Each applicant must complete a digital survey form consisting of a series of short response questions that provide insight into their organization and capability to perform the proposed services or facilitation. Applicants are asked to have the following information on hand. The application must be completed in one sitting. Once an application has been started, it cannot be saved to return and complete responses at a later time.

- Contact name, email, and phone of person completing the application
- Grant contact, if different from the person completing the application
- Organization name and industry
  - Organizational structure/ chart
  - # of employees
  - Will this project be managed by an individual, group, or department?
- Date of incorporation
- Years of active service
- Communities served, including baseline demographics
  - # of entities or individuals served (total and last year)
  - Racial breakdown of communities served
- Annual budget, revenue, and expenses

### B. Budget Narrative:

Applicants must download and complete the Budget Narrative Template as part of their application. [[LINK](#)]

#### i. Leverage

Grant applicants are encouraged but not required to include a detailed cost matching plan, with additional funds secured to benefit the proposed project budget. Leveraged resources procured by the applicant will be considered as a positive indicator for the application. This would include technical platforms or curriculum value as leveraged resources. For example, if an applicant's organization has access to a data system that is relevant and useful to the project objectives and it

has a subscription valued at \$25,000/year, that is a leveraged resource. Prosper will also consider the quantified value of volunteer hours and in-kind services to the project.

ii. Funding Restrictions

Funding for construction projects will not be provided. However, construction costs can be counted toward the overall leveraged costs total. Any equipment over \$5,000 will require prior approval from Prosper. All sub-contracts associated with the project must be submitted to Prosper in the quarter in which they are executed. Lead partners are responsible for auditing the performance of subcontractors and guaranteeing compliance with reporting criteria.

iii. Organizational Fiscal Sustainability

Applicants—or lead applicants for partnerships—will be asked to upload financial information to validate organizational capacity and fiscal sustainability as part of this application process. We only require financial information for the current fiscal year, but we encourage applicants to submit information for the past year and the future year projections if available. If the selection committee requires more information, you will be contacted.

This could include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Organizational budget (or the budget of the lead agency in the partnership)
- IRS Form 990s
- Profit and Loss Statement
- Recent audit reports (within the last two fiscal years)

All relevant financial information should be consolidated into a single pdf document or excel (or equivalent) workbook.

C. Supplemental Application Materials:

All applicants are required to submit a written proposal (10 pages or less) or slideshow presentation (15 slides or less) detailing the following:

- Brief background/ Statement of the Problem



- Description of Proposed Solution
- Partner roles
- Project timeline
- Scope of work with associated budget line items
- Success factors
- Estimated impact
- Potential challenges
- Evaluation metrics
- Additionally, applicants may feel the need to attach reasonably appropriate additional material relevant to the partnership or the application (i.e. audited financial statements, MOUs between partners, letters of recommendation, organizational charts or flow charts).

## V) Reservation of Rights

Prosper reserves the right to award agreements resulting from this RFP, which will be given to the highest rated proposal or proposals, based on the evaluation criteria set forth in this RFP. Nothing contained herein shall obligate Prosper to award an agreement on the basis of this RFP. Any agreement awarded is subject to compliance with all provisions of Federal, State, and Local Laws.

Prosper reserves the right to award all or any part of this funding, to accept or reject any or all proposals, and to waive any informalities or technical irregularities or omissions in the proposal. Prosper may award contracts in whole or in part, or cancel this RFP and solicit new proposals if, in the sole judgment of Prosper or its Board of Directors, the best interests and needs of Prosper will be served.

Except as provided elsewhere in this RFP, applicants shall bear all their costs associated with or relating to the preparation and submission of a proposal, including but not limited to preparation, copying, postage, delivery fees, expenses associated with any demonstrations or presentations which may be required by Prosper, or any other costs incurred in connection with or relating to its proposal. All such costs and expenses will remain the liability of the applicant, and Prosper shall not be liable in any manner whatsoever for the same or for any other costs or other expenses incurred by an applicant in preparation or submission of the proposal, regardless of the conduct or outcome of the selection process.

All copies and contents of the proposal, attachments, and explanations thereto submitted in response to this RFP, except copyrighted material, shall become the

property of Prosper regardless of the Applicant's selection status. Response to this RFP does not constitute an agreement between the Applicant and Prosper.

Prosper reserves the right to change this RFP prior to the due date. Prosper may in its absolute discretion, but without being under any obligation to do so, update, amend or supplement the information, assessment or assumption contained in this RFP. Changes will be communicated to those known to by Prosper to be submitting proposals. Changes to the deadline or other scheduled events may be made by Prosper as it deems to be in its best interest. Prosper is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and does not discriminate against vendors on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, national origin, disability, marital status, familial status, veteran status or any other basis protected under federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances. It is each applicant's responsibility to carefully review all the requirements of this RFP, including the scope of work, specifications and terms and conditions. Further, it is the applicant's responsibility to ask questions, request clarification, or otherwise advise Prosper if any language, specifications or requirements of this RFP appear to be ambiguous, contradictory, restrictive or if they limit applicants that could meet the requirements of this RFP to a single source.

## VI) Award Notices

Prosper does not guarantee that the full amount requested will be awarded to the selected applicant. Applicants who are awarded funds under this RFP, but not at the full amount requested, will be contacted to amend and revise their scope of services to develop project agreements as needed. This outreach will happen in approximately May-June 2023. Subject to the execution of an agreement to include a defined scope of services, project work plan, budget, and performance metrics, all funding will be disbursed in two installments. Funding amount will vary by project scope and purpose.

## VII) Administrative Policy Requirements

As an attachment to each project agreement, awardees will be asked to provide monthly performance reports to Prosper. Each project agreement will have clearly defined outcome metrics that are derived from project work plans and project narratives. If grant recipients are unable to deliver satisfactory progress or fail to report outcomes throughout the performance period, this may result in the loss of funding and project administration status. Prosper also reserves the right to perform an audit and site visits of projects at some point throughout the performance period.

## VIII) Performance Period

The performance period for grant recipients is between July 3, 2023 and August 2, 2024, and grant proposals should contain quarterly targets for the relevant progress metrics. Grant recipients will receive funds in two installments: 50 percent of funds at the beginning of the performance period and 50 percent upon delivery of satisfactory progress toward goal(s) by December 15, 2023.

### **Contact Information**

For questions or concerns connected to this RFP, we can be reached at:



Attn: Dee Manyama, Initiatives Director  
info@prosperbham.com