



SSBCI Southeast Manufacturing Cohort: Request for Proposals (RFP)

Updated February 2024

I. Overview of Opportunity

The expansion of the [SSBCI program](#) is promising news for small and midsize manufacturers and makers, particularly those run by people of color and women. But without intentional intervention, SSBCI funds and technical assistance dollars will flow through the path of least resistance, benefiting organizations and businesses that are well-established and have the immediate capacity to receive support, falling short of the program's SEDI goals. Further, SSBCI is still an unknown program to many small and mid sized manufacturers.

To address this challenge, the [Urban Manufacturing Alliance \(UMA\)](#) is building practitioner cohorts in multiple regions of the country - creating local ecosystems to **better connect SSBCI dollars and technical assistance to manufacturing businesses, particularly those with SEDI ownership**. These cohorts will encourage new, collaborative relationships between lenders and businesses, as well as stronger networks of ecosystem partners. UMA will convene these stakeholders and facilitate resource flow and partnership building to ensure SSBCI funds flow to small manufacturers, particularly those owned by people of color and women.

Our first regional focus is the Southeastern US and includes: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia, West Virginia. We anticipate selecting 1-3 proposals from this region.

II. Value to Participants

We anticipate selected regions will benefit from cohort participation in the following ways:

- **Personalized technical assistance:** Each local team will receive an individualized action plan crafted in collaboration with UMA staff and national advisors. Action plans may include new product offerings, marketing efforts, new partnerships, etc. Teams will also receive personalized coaching and implementation support as part of the cohort, valued at over \$50,000 in year one.
- **Peer network:** Have the opportunity for peer learning and exchange with other cohort members in your region and others across the country, creating a comprehensive network.
- **Manufacturing ecosystem mapping and engagement:** Document and visualize the manufacturing ecosystem in your region, including makerspaces, contract manufacturers, university and community college programs, technical assistance providers, and more.



- **Showcase your success:** UMA will collect a set of metrics to capture learnings and impact in your region of focus. Additionally, UMA will create success stories and cohort profiles that will be shared on local and national platforms.
- **Funding support:** In addition to the in-kind technical assistance provided, each team will have the opportunity to receive a participation stipend of up to \$10,000 at the end of year 1 that can be distributed to any NGO partners involved in the project. We also have funding to supplement travel expenses for an in-person gathering for selected cohort members. If cost is still a barrier to participation, we encourage you to submit an application with that note and we will work with our funders to see what we can do.

III. Who Should Apply?

UMA is inviting applications from regional teams seeking technical assistance and a national peer learning network to help ensure that state SSBCI funds flow to manufacturers most in need. The strongest applications will involve the SSBCI state program manager, a designated SSBCI lender, a technical assistance provider, and a manufacturing-focused organization. Any of the following entities can be the lead applicant for your state and we encourage your core team to include some combination of the following:

- State-level SSBCI program manager
- SSBCI administering/contracted entities
- At least one SSBCI approved lender
- CDFIs or other community-based lenders
- Local or regional economic and community development entities
- Manufacturing-focused organization, such as:
 - Manufacturing extension partnerships (MEPs)
 - Manufacturing associations
 - Community or business support organizations who directly interface with manufacturers or SEDI businesses
 - Made-In or Local Business Support organizations whose members are primarily product-based

IV. Participant Commitment & Expectations

- Participate actively in virtual community
 - Year 1: Selected participants are expected to fully participate in monthly virtual calls and advisory meetings with UMA. **We estimate approximately 2-3 hours of engagements per month per person.**
 - Potential for extension into Year 2: Quarterly virtual meetings
 - Respond in a timely manner to requests from UMA and cohort members
- Complete data reporting, progress updates and feedback to UMA on quarterly basis
- Participate in at least one in-person cohort gathering with travel stipend provided by UMA

V. Timeline

- RFP & [application](#) released: early January 2024
- Virtual Information Session recording available [here](#)
- FAQ posted on our website here:
<https://www.urbanmfg.org/project/se-manufacturingcohort-rfp/>
- UPDATED [Application](#) **deadline: March 8, 2024** by midnight ET
- Selected participants notified in March and launch of the cohort planned for **April 2024**
- One year cohort engagement with the opportunity to extend for an additional 1-2 years

VI. Terminology

- **Manufacturer / Manufacturing** - We broadly define manufacturing as the use of labor and/or technology to transform raw and/or recycled materials into finished goods. This includes *artisan manufacturing, advanced manufacturing, additive manufacturing, and contract manufacturing*. This definition includes makers and small product-based companies and cuts across all product categories, including food and beverage, apparel, furniture, household products, body/hair care products, and more.
- **Urban** - Despite our name, we are not focused only on urban areas for this project. We welcome applicants with a broad range of geographic focus areas including rural, exurban, suburban, and urban areas.
- **SEDI** - The US Treasury defines SEDI as business enterprises owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDI). See page 9 of the [SSBCI Capital Program Policy guidelines](#) for a detailed description of who qualifies as SEDI. Each [State has a lending goal](#) for this category of business that, when met, allows for additional federal funding.

VII. Application & Questions

- The application can be accessed here: <https://forms.gle/gkH5rhP7bVwpgTXn8>
- Please submit any questions to Laura@urbanmfg.org

VIII. Application Questions

A. II. Statement of Purpose (Word count limit - 250 per question)

1. Briefly tell us why you seek participation in this cohort.
2. What is your geographic focus? Are there specific regions or counties you want to focus on? Applicants must include at least two counties in their geographic focus.
3. Tell us why you have selected each partner organization to include in your application.
4. What are your goals for and anticipated successes at the end of this engagement?
5. Attach relevant SSBCI supporting materials including program guidelines, maps, marketing materials, regional planning documents, etc.

B. **Current State** What connections to manufacturers in your region do you or your partners currently have?



1. What have been pain points or barriers to serving manufacturers to date?
2. Describe your current commitment to SEDI communities. How do you currently reach and support SEDI business owners?
3. Which lenders have been most engaged with SSBCI thus far? What was your local SSBCI deployment (not your award amount from Treasury) in 2023?
4. Anything else you would like to share with us?