



Request for Proposals (RFP)

Tenant/ Operator for Kitchen Incubator Program

For:

Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation

Project:

Development and Implementation of a Food and Beverage Kitchen Incubator

December 18, 2025

Summary:

The Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation (PAEDC) is seeking proposals from qualified candidate organizations/ individuals for the selection of a Tenant/ Operator to develop and execute a comprehensive business plan to launch and manage a kitchen incubator program. This program will help food and beverage entrepreneurs build capacity to open a restaurant or food truck, build a catering company, or sell products online. The program will integrate a commercial restaurant business. The primary goal is to identify, develop and implement a roadmap to pursue market opportunities for new food and beverage ventures, considering local demographics and economic assets.

This RFP seeks a tenant/ operator that will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the commercial kitchen/ incubator, delivering programming and developing sustainable business practices that foster culinary ventures.

Background:

In 2022, the PAEDC completed the renovation of a vacant building in downtown Port Arthur located at 549 4th St. for the purpose of creating a community and business development center that will include the provision of entrepreneurship and small business resources. The property is approximately 45,000 square feet of commercial space that includes a 2,542 square foot commercial kitchen and dining area.



The PAEDC intends to create a kitchen incubator in the 2,542 square foot space to provide a public health certified commercial kitchen space to food entrepreneurs. The commercial kitchen space is fully equipped with commercial-grade appliances to produce food products, allowing entrepreneurs to prepare products for retail, catering, or restaurant operations within a licensed facility.

Purpose and Objectives:

The City of Port Arthur is known for its diverse, multicultural population and unique culinary traditions. Many aspiring local entrepreneurs currently prepare food products from their homes or borrowed kitchens, limiting their ability to scale, obtain certifications, and access broader markets.

To support these individuals, the PAEDC seeks to establish a kitchen incubator that provides education, technical assistance, mentorship, and accessible commercial kitchen space. Kitchen incubators are increasingly recognized as effective tools in helping small food businesses and culinary entrepreneurs grow, formalize their operations, and contribute to local economic development.

The primary objectives of this initiative are to:

- Provide access to a certified commercial kitchen and necessary equipment
- Strengthening culinary entrepreneurship in Port Arthur
- Support the creation and expansion of food and beverage ventures
- Encourage small business development and job creation
- Leverage local cultural assets and culinary diversity
- Foster a sustainable operator-run program that aligns with community needs

Scope of Work:

The selected tenant/ operator will be responsible for the following tasks:

1. Program Development & Business Planning

- a. Develop a comprehensive business plan for the kitchen incubator, including operational model, program structure, pricing, revenue strategy, and long-term



sustainability plan.

- b. Define the types of services and programs to be offered (training, workshops, technical assistance, mentorship, kitchen access scheduling, etc.).
- c. Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for entrepreneurial success, program participation, revenue goals, and community impact.
- d. Incorporate findings from market research, demographic data, and culinary trends relevant to Port Arthur's multicultural environment.

2. Operations & Facility Management

- a. Manage the day-to-day operations of the 2,542-square-foot commercial kitchen, dining area, and any related shared spaces.
- b. Maintain the commercial kitchen equipment, ensuring it remains fully functional, clean, and compliant with health and safety regulations.
- c. Create and enforce kitchen usage policies, scheduling systems, and operational procedures for incubator participants.
- d. Ensure ongoing compliance with public health, safety, fire, food handling, and facility certification requirements.
- e. Provide regular reporting to the PAEDC regarding operations, usage metrics, issues, and program results.

3. Entrepreneur Support & Capacity Building

- a. Deliver training, technical assistance, and mentoring to food entrepreneurs covering topics such as licensing, food safety, business planning, marketing, menu development, and scaling operations.
- b. Assist participants in navigating regulatory requirements, including food manager certifications, cottage food laws, health department regulations, and business formation.
- c. Provide individualized business coaching to entrepreneurs preparing to open restaurants, food trucks, catering businesses, or online sales.
- d. Cultivate a culture of collaboration to encourage peer learning among incubator participants.

4. Market Research & Community Engagement



- a. Conduct regular market assessments to understand culinary trends, consumer preferences, and emerging food business opportunities within Port Arthur.
- b. Facilitate engagement with local entrepreneurs, cultural groups, food service workers, suppliers, and community stakeholders.
- c. Develop partnerships with local restaurants, grocers, food suppliers, training providers, and workforce agencies.
- d. Identify and map local culinary assets, challenges, and potential niches for new food ventures.

5. Workforce Development & Labor Pipeline Support

- a. Assess the local labor market to identify available talent and skill gaps in the food and beverage industry.
- b. Collaborate with workforce development organizations, job training programs, and educational institutions to provide pipeline opportunities for culinary jobs.
- c. Offer guidance and training to incubator participants on hiring, managing staff, and developing worker skills.
- d. Support workers and entrepreneurs in achieving self-sufficiency through skill development, certifications, and employment placement assistance when needed.

6. Financial Management & Capital Strategy

- a. Develop revenue models for kitchen rentals, classes, events, and other sources to ensure financial sustainability.
- b. Track program revenue, expenses, and financial projections; provide financial reports to the PAEDC as required.
- c. Identify and pursue funding opportunities, grants, sponsorships, or partnerships to strengthen the incubator's long-term viability.
- d. Assist incubator participants in accessing start-up capital, microloans, and small business financing.

7. Marketing, Outreach & Program Promotion

- a. Develop and implement a marketing and outreach strategy to attract food entrepreneurs and promote program services.
- b. Create promotional materials, social media content, and community engagement campaigns.



- c. Establish relationships with local and regional media outlets to highlight program successes.
- d. Organize events, demonstrations, workshops, or open houses to showcase the incubator and its entrepreneurs.

8. Reporting & Evaluation

- a. Collect and analyze program data including usage, participant progress, outcomes, and financial performance.
- b. Provide quarterly and annual performance reports to the PAEDC.
- c. Track long-term outcomes such as business launches, job creation, revenue growth, and community impact.
- d. Evaluate program effectiveness and recommend improvements to enhance services and results.

9. Tenant Responsibilities

- a. Operate as the Tenant under a lease or operating agreement with PAEDC, abiding by all property rules and financial obligations.
- b. Maintain liability insurance, required permits, and all operational licenses.
- c. Ensure the incubator operates in alignment with the mission and economic development goals of the PAEDC.

Commercial Kitchen Description:

The Commercial kitchen, approximately 2,542 square feet, will contain the following:

- One kitchen space, including cooking, prep, dry storage areas, worktop area, and freezer/ cooler
- One janitor closet
- Two gender neutral restrooms
- One dining area
- Commercial grade kitchen appliances such as cooler, freezer, 4-burner range, convection oven, combi oven, etc. (note: specific kitchen appliances are subject to change)



The commercial kitchen will not contain the following, and it will be an obligation of the Tenant/ Operator to provide onsite at their own expense:

- Provision of small-scale and commercial-grade kitchen equipment and utensils such as pots, pans, cooking utensils, mixing bowls, baking trays and sheets, etc.

Proposal Requirements:

Respondents should include the following in their proposals:

1. **Cover Letter** introducing the organization/individual
2. **Qualifications and Experience**
 - o Culinary operations, commercial kitchen management, or food incubator experience
 - o Entrepreneur support programming experience
3. **Proposed Operating Plan** describing how the Scope of Work will be executed
4. **Business Plan or Draft Framework**
5. **Staffing Plan** including key personnel
6. **Financial Plan**, including proposed revenue model and detailed cost of management
7. **Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy**
8. **Marketing and Outreach Plan**
9. **Three References**

Evaluation Criteria:

Proposals will be evaluated using the following factors:

- Demonstrated experience in culinary operations or business incubation



- Strength and feasibility of the proposed business/operating plan
- Capacity to manage day-to-day operations
- Experience working with diverse communities or small food entrepreneurs
- Financial sustainability and revenue model
- Clarity and reasonableness of the proposed management cost structure
- Quality of training and support services proposed
- Partnerships with local organizations
- Overall vision and alignment with PAEDC goals

Submission Instructions:

- Proposers must submit three hard copies of their proposal to the address below:

Attn: Krystle Muller
501 Procter St., Ste. 100
Port Arthur, TX 77640

- All proposals in response to this RFP are due no later than **5 p.m. CST on February 2, 2026**. Late proposals will not be accepted. Proponents are solely responsible for timely delivery of their proposals.
- Inquiries regarding this RFP should be directed to **Krystle Muller, Interim Chief Executive Officer** at kvillarreal-muller@paedc.org
- Deadline for questions is January 12, 2026.

Requests for Clarification:

The PAEDC may contact any one or more proponents to request clarification or further information without any obligation to contact other proponents. The PAEDC may, but is not obligated to, amend, or revise the proposal based on clarification or further information.