



Legislation Text

File #: 2022-2023, **Version:** 1

BACKGROUND: This legislation authorizes the Director of the Department of Development to waive the request for proposal requirements of Columbus City Code Chapter 329 and to enter into a contract with EcoMap Technologies, Inc. in an amount up to \$39,550.00 for the purpose of maintaining a comprehensive web-based, single-stop internet platform (portal) that aggregates information assets from websites relevant to Columbus's small business ecosystems and to market the portal to the public.

In 2018, the department facilitated the Columbus Small Business Ecosystem Assessment that was commissioned by Mayor Ginther and Columbus City Council. The assessment identified the following gaps/opportunities:

1. Limited awareness in the small business community of available resources.
2. Need for support for businesses in the post-launch phase.
3. Limited coordination across entrepreneur support organizations.
4. No center of gravity for Main Street businesses.
5. Limited peer networking opportunities.
6. Need for an advocate for immigrant business owners.

Ordinance 1366-2021, passed by City Council on June 21, 2021, authorized a contract for services with EcoMap Technologies, Inc., in an amount up to \$77,500.00, to develop a small business portal to meet all needs except need number 6 as identified in the assessment and subsequently detailed in the Columbus Small Business Agenda that was released to the public in December 2019. By streamlining access to resources, small businesses benefit from this service in a number of ways including: 1) access to relevant resources across the entire business lifecycle, 2) having real-time access to stakeholders and service providers, and 3) have the ability to provide the public with up-to-date self-sourced and self-maintained profiles of local businesses at no cost to the small businesses. These are major shortfalls of the current ecosystem, pre and post pandemic.

Entering into a second contract with EcoMap will provide for maintenance of the small business portal that will serve to meet needs identified in the Columbus Small Business Agenda that was released to the public in December 2019. By streamlining access to resources, small businesses benefit from this services in a number of ways including: 1) access to relevant resources across the entire business life-cycle, 2) having real-time access to stakeholders and service providers, and 3) having the ability to provide the public with up-to-date self-sourced and self-maintained profiles of local businesses at no cost the small businesses.

This portal will continue to serve as another key component along with the Architect/Builder Framework to operationalize and democratize the Columbus Small Business Agenda resulting in truly collaborative and inclusive entrepreneurship-based economic development for the City of Columbus and its partners.

EcoMap Technologies, Inc., founded in 2018, is a software company that uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to build custom platforms that help support communities such as local resource databases and small business navigators. The database helps entrepreneurs find resources for their startups, small businesses and nonprofits within their local community.

CONTRACT COMPLIANCE: The vendor's number is 035642 and contract compliance is pending.

WAIVER OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS: A waiver of the request for proposal requirements outlined in Columbus City Code Chapter 329 is being requested because EcoMapTechnologies, Inc. is one of only a very limited number (two) of vendors nationwide with custom subscription services that meets or exceeds the needs of our small business ecosystem as detailed under the Columbus Small Business Agenda - the strategic document and strategy for inclusive small business growth and development. EcoMap Technologies provides small business resource identification, curation, aggregation, and navigation services at a significantly reduce cost with more features than all potential competitors surveyed. A previous contract with EcoMap provided the platform buildout and annual subscription.

FISCAL IMPACT: The funding of \$39,550.00 has been allocated from the Economic Development Division's 2023 General Fund Budget.

To authorize the Director of the Department of Development to enter into a contract with EcoMap Technologies, Inc. in an amount up to \$39,550.00 to maintain a comprehensive web-based platform; to waive the competitive bidding requirements of Columbus City Code Chapter 329; and to authorize the expenditure of up to \$39,550.00 from the 2023 General Fund Operating Budget. (\$39,550.00)

WHEREAS, EcoMap Technologies, Inc. founded in 2018, is a software company that uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to build custom platforms that help support communities such as local resource databases and small business navigators. The database helps entrepreneurs find resources for their startups, small businesses and nonprofits within their local community; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 1366-2021, passed by City Council on June 21, 2021, authorized a contract for services with EcoMap Technologies, Inc. to develop a small business portal in an amount up to \$77,500.00; and

WHEREAS, entering into a second contract with EcoMap Technologies, Inc. will provide for maintenance of the small business portal that will serve to meet needs identified in the Columbus Small Business Agenda that was released to the public in December 2019; and

WHEREAS, it is in the City's best interest to waive the competitive bidding requirements to enter into this contract because EcoMap Technologies, Inc. is one of only a very limited number (two) of vendors nationwide with custom subscription services that meets or exceeds the needs of our small business ecosystem and EcoMap is the developer of the current small business portal; and

WHEREAS, it has become necessary in the usual daily operation of the Department of Development to authorize the Director to enter into contract with the EcoMap Technologies, Inc. to maintain the small business portal that will serve to meet needs identified in the Columbus Small Business Agenda; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That City Council finds it in the best interest of the City to waive the competitive bidding provision of Chapter 329 of Columbus City Code to enter into this contract.

SECTION 2. That the Director of the Department of Development is hereby authorized to enter into contract with EcoMap Technologies, Inc. in an amount up to \$39,550.00 to maintain a database service.

SECTION 3. That for the purpose stated in Section 2, the expenditure of \$39,550.00 or so much thereof as may be needed, is hereby authorized in Fund 1000 (General Fund), Dept. 44-02 (Economic Development), in Object Class 03 (Contractual Services) per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

SECTION 4. That the funds necessary to carry out the purpose of this ordinance are hereby deemed appropriated, and the City Auditor shall establish such accounting codes as necessary.

SECTION 5. That the City Auditor is authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all contracts or contract modifications associated with this ordinance.

SECTION 6. That this ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.