



Regional Economic Development Inc.

December 9, 2021

City of Columbia
701 E. Broadway
Columbia, MO 65201

RE: ARPA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING REQUEST

CoMo Cooks is a shared commercial kitchen. We believe all good cooks deserve a chance to turn their recipes into reality, regardless of background, income or status. We aim to increase entrepreneurial success by providing accessible, inclusive, and affordable kitchen space for starting and expanding local food-based businesses.

The project benefits the community in the following ways:

- Encouraging the growth of local food entrepreneurs by reducing barriers and creating opportunities for those without easy access to a commercial kitchen, including those who have been impacted by racial, social, and economic inequality
- Creating quality jobs that support upward economic mobility for the residents of Columbia and Boone County
- Providing a space that can be used for business incubation, workforce development, food safety classes, retail, workshops, and other training opportunities

In 2018, REDI and The Loop CID in partnership developed the CoMo Cooks shared commercial kitchen. In March 2021 the kitchen became operational in the location at Mizzou North. Due to the disposition of Mizzou North by the University of Missouri, REDI is now working to secure a permanent location for the shared kitchen opening in Spring 2022.

Page 2, continued

We are requesting \$100,000 in ARPA funds for the purpose of space renovations in a new location, purchasing additional equipment, and increased program offerings to include marketing assistance, pop up retail opportunities, business coaching, workshops, and training.

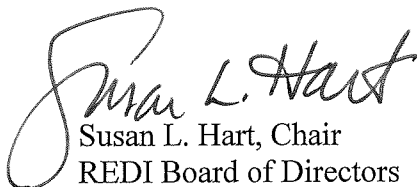
Since our operations began in March 2021, we have served 14 clientele and currently have three additional startups in the process of onboarding. More than three-fourths of our clients are women-owned businesses and over half represent minority-owned businesses.

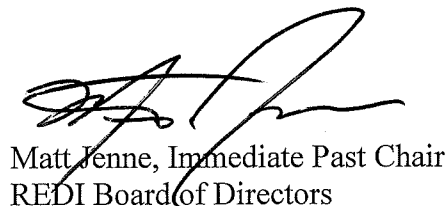
Our food-based industries suffered during the pandemic and the CoMo Cooks project supports those businesses to make sure this essential industry becomes more resilient and develops essential workforce skills for all in our community.

This unique workforce development initiative serves the citizens of Columbia which is not currently being provided by any other entity. These funds would help the CoMo Cooks project ensure a long term sustainable workforce program in our community for food-based entrepreneurs.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,


Susan L. Hart, Chair
REDI Board of Directors


Matt Jenne, Immediate Past Chair
REDI Board of Directors

/slh