

Request for Proposals (RFP)

ICMM-Funded Independent Evaluation of CCI's InSPIRe Pilot (Western North Carolina)

1. Issuer and Funding Overview

Funder / Convener: Institute of Consumer Money Management (ICMM)

Program Partner / Operator: Carolina Community Impact (CCI)

Funding Range: \$35,000 – \$50,000 (fixed-price contract)

ICMM invites proposals from qualified researchers or firms to conduct an independent mixed-methods evaluation of InSPIRe — the Insurance Supplement Program for Inclusive Recovery, a pilot led by CCI. The program aims to strengthen financial resilience among small businesses in Western North Carolina impacted by Hurricane Helene, with a focus on equity and recovery among rural, low-to-moderate-income (LMI), and minority- or women-owned enterprises.

2. Program Overview

InSPIRe provides supplemental insurance-style grants (\$3,000–\$5,000 each) to small businesses experiencing post-disaster losses not covered by traditional insurance. Approximately 30–50 grants will be disbursed during the pilot period, with some recipients receiving “Grant-Plus” packages that include technical assistance or lending options. Program administration and data tracking will occur through platforms such as Submittable and Salesforce. The evaluation will inform the scalability of InSPIRe and its potential as a model for inclusive recovery.

3. Research Questions

The evaluator will help ICMM and CCI understand both the *immediate impacts* of the InSPIRe pilot and the *long-term potential* of supplemental insurance-style models for small business resilience.

The following research questions should guide the evaluation:

1. Program Impact and Outcomes:

- a. For example, to what extent did InSPIRe grants help small businesses recover from losses associated with Hurricane Helene, how were the funds used (e.g., payroll, repairs, debt repayment), and how did outcomes vary by location (rural vs. urban), income level (LMI), and business ownership (minority- and women-owned)?

2. Insurance Coverage Landscape

- a. For example, what is the broader landscape of disaster insurance products available to small businesses (types, costs, coverage levels, adoption rates, business models) and what are the common insurance coverage gaps and barriers to adoption, particularly among rural, LMI, and minority-owned businesses?

3. Program Experience and Design Feedback

- a. For example, what were small businesses' experiences navigating insurance coverage, disaster recovery, and financial assistance, including the InSPIRe grant process? How could we design future recovery programs to better support equitable and timely assistance?

4. Lessons for Sustainability and Future Innovation

- a. What did this pilot reveal about the viability, sustainability, and scalability of supplemental insurance-style models for small business recovery, including financial mechanisms (e.g., public-private funding, tourism taxes, membership premiums, monthly loan payment round-ups)? How can findings inform a future Resilience Playbook or guidance for policymakers, funders, and CDFIs?

4. Scope of Work

The evaluator will conduct a mixed-methods evaluation that integrates survey data, interviews, and administrative program records.

The core tasks include:

1. Designing evaluation instruments (surveys, interview guides) aligned with ICMM and CCI metrics.
2. Collecting data at three points: baseline, endline, and 3-month follow-up.
3. Conducting qualitative interviews with a representative sample of grantees.
4. Integrating administrative data from program systems (losses, insurance payouts, grants, CRM data, outreach).
5. Analyzing outcomes including coverage gaps, grant utilization, business continuity, jobs retained, and capital leveraged.
6. Preparing interim and final deliverables for dissemination.

5. Suggested Timeline

- Contracting & Kickoff – within 2–3 weeks of award
- Month 1 – Workplan + finalized instruments
- Month 2–8 – Baseline data collection, monitoring, interim memo (around Month 4)
- Month 8–9 – Endline survey + qualitative interviews
- Month 11–12 – 3-month follow-up, final analysis, and report delivery

6. Deliverables

- Workplan & Evaluation Instruments (Month 1)
- Interim Memo (Month 4)
- Final Working Paper (20–25 pages, publication-ready)
- Presentation Deck (summary for dissemination)
- De-identified Dataset & Codebook

7. Budget and Payment

Total contract value: \$35,000–\$50,000, inclusive of all labor, travel, incentives, and software.

Suggested milestone payments: 50% upon contract signing; 50% upon delivery and acceptance of final deliverables

8. Data Access, Ethics, and Security

CCI will provide access to relevant program data (e.g., claim portal records, CRM exports). The evaluator must ensure secure data storage, IRB/ethics compliance, and informed consent. All participant data must be de-identified before submission. Ownership of data and reports remains with ICMM and CCI; evaluators may publish derivative analyses with written approval.

9. Minimum Qualifications

Applicants must demonstrate:

1. Expertise in mixed-methods program evaluation.
2. Experience with small-business, disaster recovery, or equity/LMI populations.
3. Capacity to deliver a publication-quality working paper and data report.
4. Familiarity with North Carolina or Appalachian contexts (preferred).
5. Proficiency with CRM and data systems (Salesforce, Submittable, etc.).

10. Proposal Requirements

Proposals (Items 1-4) should not exceed 6 pages (excluding team qualifications & appendices) and include:

1. Cover Letter – Including a brief summary of your proposal
2. Technical Approach – Concise description of proposed methodology & analysis
3. Workplan & Timeline – key milestones/deliverables and responsibilities.
4. Budget & Justification – narrative + itemized table.
5. Team Qualifications – short bios/CVs (max 2 pages per person).

Optional Appendices: sample instruments, relevant past work, or references.

11. Proposal Submission

Submission Email: InspireResearch@ccifund.org

Deadline: November 17, 2025 by 5:00pm EST

Q&A Window: Written questions due November 10; responses by November 12.

Anticipated Award Date: December 20, 2025

12. Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Technical Quality & Methodological Soundness
- Team Experience & Past Performance
- Feasibility & Timeline
- Equity & Community Competence
- Data Ethics & Security
- Value & Budget Alignment

13. Reporting Expectations

The final report should provide actionable insights for CCI, ICMM, and the broader financial inclusion community. It should address equity impacts, small-business outcomes (continuity, job retention, and resilience), and recommendations for scalable supplemental insurance models.

About CCI:

Carolina Community Impact (CCI) is a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) established in 2018 that empowers small business owners and communities across North Carolina. With a focus on providing flexible loans, technical assistance, and housing counseling, CCI is committed to helping entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses and create jobs, contributing to a thriving, resilient economy. For more information about Carolina Community Impact and its services, visit www.ccifund.org.

About ICMM:

The Institute of Consumer Money Management (ICMM) is a 501c3 non-profit organization based out of Raleigh, NC since 2014. Our primary objective is to enhance financial stability for Low-to-Moderate Income (LMI) individuals by funding actionable and measurable research projects. These projects will operate in both the applied and academic arenas, with the ultimate goal of improving the financial skills and long-term wealth-building prospects of the LMI population. For more information about the Institute of Consumer Money Management and its services, visit <https://icmmnc.org/>.

14. FAQs

Q1: Who can apply?

Universities, independent researchers, and qualified evaluation firms with experience in mixed-methods research, disaster recovery, and equity or small-business contexts.

Q2: What is the funding range?

\$35,000–\$50,000, inclusive of labor, travel, incentives, and software.

Q3: What is the expected timeline?

The evaluation runs approximately 9–12 months, with a final report due three months after grant completion.

Q4: What data access will be provided?

Evaluators will receive appropriate access to program data, including grant records, CRM exports, and claim information.

Q5: What are the required deliverables?

At minimum: a finalized workplan, interim memo, final working paper, slide deck, and de-identified dataset.

Q6: What is ICMM's role?

ICMM funds the evaluation. CCI operates the pilot and provides program data. The evaluator functions independently.

Q7: How do I submit my proposal?

By email to the address above, following the format and page limits described in Section 9.