

Hello Alice / eBay Proposal

1. What is your first and last name? *

Rob Gordon

2. What is the best phone number to reach you if your application moves forward? *

858-848-5001

3. What is your email address? *

rob@action.associates

4. What is your gender identification? *

Male

5. What race(s) do you identify as? Select all that apply. *

Prefer not to say

6. Do you identify as LGBTQ+? *

No

7. Do you consider yourself to be an individual with a disability or disabilities? *

Yes

8. Do you have any military affiliation? *

None

9. What is your age range?

60-69

10. What was your path to business ownership?

Expanded my hobby into a business

11. Are you looking to raise money now?

Yes, but I'm not sure how yet

12. What is the name of your business? *

Baja Sierra Trading Company

13. What is your business's website?

BajaSierra.com

14. What is your business's Facebook page?

none yet for this business (emphasizing YouTube channel)

15. What is your business's Twitter handle?

none yet for this business (emphasizing YouTube channel)

16. What is your business's Instagram handle?

none yet for this business (emphasizing YouTube channel)

17. What year was your business founded? *

2022

18. What is your 9-digit Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN)? Please enter without any dashes. *

850574677

19. Please select your business industry:

Consumer Goods/Retail/E-Commerce

20. If Other, what is your business's industry?

What is your business address?

21. Street address

1337 Oliver Avenue

22. City

San Diego

23. State *

CA

24. Zip Code

92109

25. My business is a: *

Sole Proprietorship

26. If Other, how is your business structured?

27. How many employees does your business have? *

1 (Just Me)

28. What was your annual gross revenue for 2021? *

Pre-revenue

29. What is your expected annual gross revenue for 2022? *

Less than \$25k

Let's learn more about your challenges as a small business owner, and how we can help you:

30. Have you been turned down for a business loan from a traditional bank in the last 5 years?

No

31. How would you articulate your current business outlook?

My business is steady and I am confident we will stay afloat.

32. What is your top business goal in the next 5 years?

Monetize My Business

33. What is the biggest obstacle or challenge that your business faces now? *

Day-to-day operations

34. If selected as a grant recipient, which of the following do you plan to use this grant primarily for? *

Developing a new product or service

35. How long have you been selling on eBay? *

Less than 6 months

36. What category represents the majority of products you sell on eBay? *

Watches

37. If Other, what do you sell on eBay?

38. Which of the following describes the majority of the inventory you sell on eBay? Select all that apply. *

Pre-owned/Used

39. Are you a full-time or part-time seller? *

Part-time

40. Of your total business revenue, what percentage is generated through eBay? *

0 - 10%

41. How do you make a positive impact on the community through your core business? Select all that apply.

Support local suppliers and vendors

42. In addition to your core business proposition, does your company do anything more for the community? Select all that apply.

Host community gatherings

43. Does your business engage in sustainability practices? Select all that apply.

Reduce, reuse, recycle

44. Why did you become a small business owner? Why did you start selling on eBay? Please be as specific as possible. Max 300 words. *

As an adult with ADHD, that went undiagnosed most of my life, I am not sure I had any choice. Because of some unknowable combination of my profession as a contract project manager and my neurological condition (or difference) I've worked literally hundreds of different jobs in almost every industry.

This includes work with the U.S. Agency for International Development on a water project in rural Egypt and a nearly two-year assignment as an information technology consultant for Royal Dutch Shell in west Africa, and even a gig in Silicon Valley at the end of the dot com era where I rose to the level of Program Manager and at one time had 25 project managers reporting to me.

I have an undergraduate degree in the sciences, and a master's degree in government, but fate took me on a different path when I got a great job with a rapidly growing Fortune 500 corporation right after grad school,. Cubical life was not for me, however, and I learned I often thrive in conditions of rapid change and high uncertainty. This might be one reason I'm drawn to small business and frequently host real-world and online community meetings for small business - such as "San Diego Independent Business Professionals" I founded and "Hey Look, a Squirrel" for adults in San Diego with ADHD.

Like other small business owners and self-employed professionals I value "independence" - a basic American value but as I get older the project management contracts that provided income will likely become less frequent I am looking forward to this next chapter of selling physical goods and am actively organizing a business that will be highly efficient and able to scale.

45. What are your online selling goals and how are you working toward those goals?

Max 300 words. *

I have a huge (by my standards) inventory of vintage watches I've bought for the purpose of building this business. Buying watches started as a COVID hobby - like others with ADHD, I am somewhat "time blind" and kept thinking that if I bought just the right watch, it would cure my time blindness. This didn't work, but I still love watches so went from buying individual watches to buying entire stock lots of watches from Goodwill and Salvation Army auctions that I intend to test, repair, repackage and put up for sale on eBay. -I even took on some debt to buy these watches.

Having an online watch store is not my end goal, so why would I do this? There are characteristics of used watches that make them almost ideal for starting a business that sells anything. First, some consider them to be a "poor man's inflation hedge" - especially the models I've been buying like old classic Timex silver and gold-tone watches. Second, they are small and easy to ship and I want to set up highly efficient operations with a robust inventory database. Third, there are active communities of traders for watches on eBay, and for all intents and purposes eBay "is the market" when it comes to watches.

This means that watches can be used as a kind of conduit for setting up a business with positive cash flow and this will make it easier to incrementally branch out to selling other items - even setting up simple manufacturing processes. It will also help us start sourcing products from here in California and perhaps Mexico and other countries - and I have many ideas on products that would allow us to "move up the food chain including technology products.

46. How would you use a \$10,000 grant to establish or accelerate your business? Please describe how these steps will help you achieve your business goal(s) from the previous question. Please be as specific as possible. Max 300 words. *

This grant would help me build the business and improve operations in every area.

First, I could continue buying stock lots of watches and other items for resale- while at the same time being more targeting and selective.

Second, I have some fairly high-value watches that need repair, so developing relationships with local jewelers and cutting deals for touch repair jobs would allow these watches to “stay in the ecosystem” so eBay will continue to make money as they are sold and resold.

Third, I could buy any tools and technologies needed for operating the business or selling the watches and other products - this could include things like a microscope, a metal and diamond detector, software for inventory management and marketing, etc.

Forth, I could outsource some of the work. My 85-year-old neighbor (who says he has dementia though I can't tell) has started to help replace batteries and minor repairs - and seems to love it, so it would be nice to throw him a few bucks - and others who like this kind of work.

Fifth, this grant would also allow me to retire some of the debt I took on to buy these watches - a decision that may seem irrational to some, but “spending money” with my COVID loan allowed me to get some business credit which I didn't have before, but now that is nearly maxed out.

Finally, this money would “keep me going” so I could put some time and money into some non-profit and community projects related to small businesses and mental health.

.47. In what ways are you committed to learning and growth as an e-Commerce business? Please provide specific examples. Max 300 words. *

.I'm ABSOLUTELY committed to learning and growth with this e-commerce business. I have already learned, and become certified in Camtasia video editing software, and intend to produce short entertaining “selling” videos on a Youtube channel I'm setting up.. I also want to continue learning database technology- specifically the SQL language which I'm using to develop a custom inventory management system. A few years ago, I received a training grant from the California Department of Rehabilitation. but they proved to be completely incapable of managing a contract of this kind. As an alternative,, I continued this training on the Wyzant platform and was able to find tutors for about \$60 an hour so grant this would allow me to continue that training.

Since I still have some words left, let me share my favorite quote about learning. It is from "The Once and Future King" about King Arthur but this quote is from Merlin the Magician.

“The best thing for being sad,” replied Merlin, beginning to puff and blow, “is to learn something. That's the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honor trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then — to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing that the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you. Look what a lot of things there are to learn.”

48. We want to hear what makes you proud of your business. What's your biggest accomplishment to date? Max 250 words.

Actually, even though "selling" has not yet started in earnest, I am really proud of the "branding" work I have done so far, which is not my usual forte'. The name "Baja Sierra Trading Company" is from a now-defunct ski club I was a member of years ago that I always liked. It seems to invoke the spirit of early California and the old west and is also a small business homage to the great trading houses in history - like the Hudson Bay Company or the Dutch East India Company.

I got a really great vintage logo of a gold prospector drawn by some kid in Pakistan I hired on Fiver. Also on Fiver, I use several artists to develop a "squirrel" character with glasses who I plan on using as a sidekick on the Youtube channel I am setting up for selling. The character is named SAM which stands for "Synergistic Artificial Mind" and the story is that he is an artificial intelligence agent who scampers around the internet collecting information, and he will make funny comments about the watches or other items.

I am, also proud of the buying I have done - especially the bulk buying, but all this has been the fun parts. Perhaps the question that would be better for me is "what do you want to be proud of eventually" and I want to be proud of the database and efficient operations of the business.

49. Please declare if you and/or your company have any conflict of interest. Conflicts of interest are not limited to but may include a company employee's family member being employed by eBay or an eBay employee being financially invested in your company. *

No

50. If you selected "Yes" to conflict of interest, please explain. (If "No," please enter "N/A.") *

N/A

51. How did you hear about this grant program?

eBay communication