GENERATION WEST VENTURES

Co-packer RFP checklist

For brands getting ready to find and qualify a beverage co-packer or co-manufacturer.

This checklist follows the same questions Vanessa, GWV's AI-powered intake specialist, walks through on the RFP. You can answer "not sure yet" to anything you have not decided. Nothing is required before you start. If you would rather talk it through, email ben@genwest.ventures or start with Vanessa at https://genwestbev.com/#rfp

Generation West Ventures is a beverage commercialization consultancy based in Indianapolis & Nashville. Co-man sourcing and qualification is one of our core services. Our sourcing is category-agnostic, vetted, and scale-ready. We find the right production partner, negotiate the deal, and manage the relationship.

Why these questions matter

The RFP gives the team enough detail to see which services fit and what a first conversation should cover. Most answers can be rough. It helps to know your category, a rough idea of package and can size, a ballpark of year-one volume, and your target timeline. If you do not know them yet, we will work through them together.

This usually takes about ten minutes with Vanessa.

Brand checklist

Work through these in order. For each item, jot a short answer, a range, or "not sure yet."

1. **Name**

The name of the main contact for the RFP.

2. **Email**

The best email for the team to reach you. The team follows up by email first.

3. **Address**

Your business address, or at least city and state. This helps match geography for co-manufacturers and freight. City and state is enough.

4. **Phone (optional)**

A phone number you would like on file. Phone is optional. The team follows up by email first.

5. **Is the product currently sold in the U.S.?**

Is it on sale in the U.S. today, or is it still pre-launch? A product already selling may have velocity data that helps size runs. Pre-launch is completely normal.

6. **Product category**

Pick the closest of: hard seltzer or flavored malt, RTD cocktail, THC or cannabis, functional or adaptogen, prebiotic or probiotic soda, non-alcoholic spirit, protein or performance, energy or nootropic, kombucha or fermented, flavored sparkling water, craft beer or cider, coffee or cold brew RTD. If you sit between two, pick the one that drives production most, such as whether it contains alcohol.

Why it matters: category decides which facilities can make the product, what licenses and rules apply, and what processing makes sense. A facility that runs non-alcoholic sodas may not be able to run alcohol, and the other way around.

7. **Product type**

In one plain sentence, what is the product? Examples from the RFP walkthrough: “A 5% ABV vodka soda in a slim can.” “A zero-sugar prebiotic cola.” Include whether it contains alcohol, caffeine, hemp-derived ingredients, or dairy if you know. This tells the team the base, alcohol or not, and likely processing.

8. **Known allergens**

Does the formula contain any of the major U.S. food allergens: milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soy, or sesame? Or none that you know of? If the formula is still in development, “not sure yet” is fine.

Why it matters: many co-manufacturers screen allergens because of shared lines and changeover cleaning. Knowing early avoids surprises.

9. **Beverage package type**

What package do you want: can, glass bottle, plastic bottle, or something else? Cans are the most common for RTD and seltzer. Common options also include plastic (PET) bottles and, for some products, cartons or pouches. The package choice limits which facilities can run the product.

10. **Can size (if you are using a can)**

What can size are you thinking? 12 oz standard (355 mL) and 12 oz slim or sleek are the most common starting points. Others include 16 oz, 19.2 oz, 24 oz, and smaller formats such as 8.4 oz or 250 mL. If you are not sure, say so. The team can help you choose based on price point, category, and which lines are available.

Why it matters: each line is set up for certain can sizes. Size also affects cost per unit, the ingredient needed per can, and how the product looks on the shelf.

11. **Processing needs**

Do you know how the product needs to be processed to be shelf stable? For example cold fill, hot fill, tunnel pasteurization, or aseptic. Or not sure yet? You do not need to know yet. The right choice depends on the formula, such as acidity, alcohol, carbonation, and dairy or protein content. Not every facility offers every process. The team can help work it out from the formula. This checklist does not tell you which process you must use.

12. **Packaging configuration**

How will it be sold: single cans, 4-packs, 6-packs, 8-packs, 12-packs, variety packs, or cases only? This decides secondary packaging, such as carriers, trays, and shrink wrap, and the cost that goes with it.

13. **Estimated annual volume, in units**

Roughly how many units a year do you expect in year one? Think of it as number of SKUs times cases per SKU times units per case. Illustration only, not a forecast: 3 flavors at 1,000 cases each, with 24 cans per case, is 72,000 cans. If you have sales data, use it. If you do not, give a range or say "not sure yet."

Units, such as cans or bottles, are the common denominator across facilities. If you only know cases, note the units per case so the team can convert. Volume mainly helps match you to the right size of facility. Very small runs and very large runs are served by different kinds of partners.

14. **Number of flavors**

How many flavors do you plan to launch with? Many brands start with a small number and add flavors later. Each flavor adds ingredient, changeover, and inventory complexity.

15. **Number of SKUs**

How many SKUs total? A SKU is each distinct product and package combination, so one flavor in a 12 oz can and a 16 oz can is two SKUs. A flavor sold as a single can and also in a variety pack may count differently. The team will help count if you are unsure.

Why it matters: minimum run sizes are often set per SKU. More SKUs can mean more total volume needed to hit minimums.

16. **Timeline and production readiness**

Where are you today, and when do you want product on shelf? Stages: idea only, bench-top samples, formula finalized, packaging designed, or ready to run. If you have no formula yet, that is fine. This tells the team whether the first step is sourcing, formulation support, or contract work.

17. **Anything else the team should know (optional)**

For example, your target retail channels, price point, or any concern about cost, quality, or timing, and what you have already tried.

18. **Terms**

The last step of the RFP is agreeing to the Terms and Conditions on genwestbev.com. Read them there. This checklist is not legal advice and does not interpret the Terms.

Before you send it

Recap your answers: name, company, email, category and product type, package, can size, processing, configuration, annual volume, flavors, SKUs, and timeline. Fix anything that is off, then send the RFP. The GWV team reviews it and follows up by email at the address you give. Email is also the fastest way to reach us: ben@genwest.ventures. If you want to send a deck, spec sheet, or formula summary, email it there. Do not paste a full formula into a web form or chat.

If you are not a brand

Vanessa also takes inquiries from other visitor types. The essentials are:

- Co-manufacturer: name, company, email, city and state of the facility, packaging formats and can sizes you run, processing capabilities (cold fill, hot fill, tunnel pasteurization, aseptic, other),

categories you run (including alcohol and THC licensing status if relevant), line speed or capacity ranges, open capacity and when it opens, minimum run sizes, certifications held, and anything else.

- Supplier: name, company, email, what you supply (cans, ends, cartons, trays, labels and sleeves, raw materials, flavors, packaging components, other), regions served, minimum order quantities, typical lead times, certifications, and anything else.
- Flavor house: name, company, email, specialties (flavors, extracts, emulsions, functional ingredients), categories served, whether you do custom development, development timeline, minimums, allergen and certification information, and anything else.
- 3PL or logistics: name, company, email, warehouse locations, services (warehousing, fulfillment, distribution, cold chain), temperature control capability, alcohol or THC handling status if relevant, minimums and pallet or storage models, and anything else.

How to start

We start with a conversation, not a contract. Email ben@genwest.ventures, start with Vanessa at https://genwestbev.com/#rfp, or use the guide form at https://genwestbev.com/co-packer-rfp-checklist/

Generation West Ventures, Inc. · Indianapolis & Nashville · ben@genwest.ventures · https://genwestbev.com/

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