FISCAL YEAR 2026

LAUNCH TO LEGACY PROGRAM

OFFICIAL INSTRUCTIONS ADDENDUM #1

Date of Addendum: July 21, 2026

PUBLIC NOTICE
The Fiscal Year 2026 Launch to Legacy Program Official Application Instructions & Program Details are modified as set forth in this Addendum. The original Official Application Instructions & Program Details document and any previously issued addenda remain in full force and effect, except as modified by this Addendum, which is hereby made part of the Official Application Instructions & Program Details. Applicants shall take this Addendum into consideration when preparing and submitting the relevant Application

Section	**Description of Change**
Overview	Update "Dream Accelerator" to "Dream program(s)" and "We Aspire programs" to "We Aspire program". Remove the requirement that businesses be located in Wards 7 and 8 to be eligible. The requirement has been updated to require that licensed businesses be located in the District. Remove the requirement that business owners reside in Wards 7 and 8 to be eligible. The requirement has been updated to require that the applicant business owners reside in the District.
Program Eligibility	Remove the requirement that business owners reside in Wards 7 and 8 to be eligible. The requirement has been updated to require that the applicant business owners reside in the District. Remove the requirement that businesses be located in Wards 7 and 8 to be eligible. The requirement has been updated to require that licensed businesses be located in the District. Update "Dream Accelerator" to "Dream programs".

Required Eligibility Documents	Remove the requirement that businesses be located in Wards 7 and 8 to be eligible. The requirement has been updated to require that licensed businesses be located in the District. Remove the requirement that business owners must reside in Wards 7 and 8 to be eligible. The requirement has been updated to require that the applicant business owners reside in the District. Update “Dream Accelerator” to “Dream program”.
Required Items Chart	Remove the requirement that business owners must reside in Wards 7 and 8 to be eligible. The requirement has been updated to require that the applicant business owners reside in the District. Remove the link to the Master Address Repository system. Remove the requirement that businesses be located in Wards 7 and 8 to be eligible. The requirement has been updated to require that licensed businesses be located in the District.

2026 Launch to Legacy Program

Official Application Instructions & Program Details

Last Updated: July 21, 2026

Overview

The District of Columbia ("DC" or the "District") Department of Small and Local Business Development ("DSLBD") is excited to announce that we will begin accepting applications for the **2026 Launch to Legacy Program** (the "Program"), advanced business development training for alumni microbusinesses of the Dream program ~~Accelerator~~[1] and We Aspire programs, starting July 20, 2026 at 2:00 pm Eastern Time ("ET").

[1] *As of July 21, 2026, the strikethrough text has been removed as it is no longer applicable. This applies to strikethrough text throughout this Amended Launch to Legacy Program 2026 Official Application Instructions & Program Details. With respect to this update, the Launch to Legacy Program 2026 Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to clarify that applicants are eligible if they completed any variation of the Dream program or We Aspire program from FY22-FY25.*

Eligible microbusinesses must be open and operating a **licensed business in the District ~~Ward 7 or 8~~**[2], the applicant business owner must be a District **~~Ward 7 or 8~~**[3] **resident owning 51% or more** of the business, and the majority owner applicant must have participated in and completed the Dream program ~~Accelerator~~[4] and/or We Aspire programs. *This Program is only for for-profit businesses.*

[2] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to remove the requirement that applicant businesses be located in Ward 7 and 8, and incorporate the requirement that applicant businesses be located in the District.*

[3] As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to remove the requirement that applicants be residents of Ward 7 or 8, and incorporate the requirement that applicants be District residents.

[4] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to clarify that applicants are eligible if they completed any variation of the Dream program or We Aspire program from FY22-FY25.*

Applicants accepted into this 4–6-week business development training program will receive targeted support to strengthen and grow their businesses, with a focus on long-term sustainability.

The Launch to Legacy Program builds on the foundational training provided in the Dream programs ~~Accelerator~~[5] and We Aspire programs, offering advanced support that prepares entrepreneurs to scale, stabilize, and solidify their long-term business legacy. The Program focuses on strengthening systems, improving financial readiness, enhancing marketing strategies, and refining operational practices.

[5] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to clarify that applicants are eligible if they completed any variation of the Dream program or We Aspire program from FY22-FY25.*

Program participants will receive business development training on several topics from local service providers, including:

- Vision & Goal Setting
- Business Scalability
- Strategic Marketing Foundations
- Financial Management
- Leadership & Team Building

Participants who complete the Program will be eligible to receive a stipend of up to $3,500 to support the continued growth and sustainability of their business. The Program is designed to reinforce the knowledge and skills gained throughout the Dream programs ~~Accelerator~~[6] and We Aspire programs and to help strengthen long-term business development.

[6] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to clarify that applicants are eligible if they completed any variation of the Dream program or We Aspire program from FY22-FY25.*

Program Eligibility

Applicants for the 2026 Launch to Legacy Program must meet the following criteria:

- The applicant must be a District ~~Ward 7 or 8~~[7] resident;
- The applicant must be the majority business owner (owning 51% or more of the business);
- The business must be open and operating;
- The business must be licensed and located in the District ~~Ward 7 or 8~~[8];

- The business must be a for-profit business;
- The majority business owner must have participated in and completed the Dream ~~Accelerator~~[9] program and/or a We Aspire program in Fiscal Year ("FY") 2022–FY2025;
- The applicant must not be a current participant in the Dream ~~Accelerator~~[10] program or a We Aspire program; and
- The applicant must not be a provider or grantee under the Capacity Building Grant in FY26.

Multiple participants per business are not accepted.

[7] As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to remove the requirement that applicants be residents of Ward 7 or 8, and incorporate the requirement that applicants be District residents.

[8] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to remove the requirement that applicant businesses be located in Ward 7 and 8, and incorporate the requirement that applicant businesses be located in the District.*

[9] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to clarify that applicants are eligible if they completed any variation of the Dream program or We Aspire program from FY22-FY25.*

[10] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to clarify that applicants are eligible if they completed any variation of the Dream program or We Aspire program from FY22-FY25.*

How to Apply

DSLBD will begin accepting applications for the Program on July 20, 2026 **submit your application here:** https://des.dslbd.dc.gov/.

All applications and supporting documents must be submitted using the online application system. Incomplete applications and those submitted after the deadline will not be reviewed. Applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements listed in this document will not receive a competitive review.

Application Deadlines

All applications must be submitted by **August 3, 2026 at 2:00 pm ET**. **No Exceptions.**

There are other deadlines that applicants should monitor.

Program Application Deadlines

1st COURTESY ELIGIBILITY REVIEW	QUESTIONS	APPLICATION DEADLINE
JULY 27TH	JULY 29TH	AUGUST 3RD AT 2PM ET

Courtesy Eligibility Review: DSLBD will provide a courtesy review for applicants who start applications by or before the courtesy eligibility review deadline. During this review, DSLBD staff will review and provide feedback on the responses to eligibility requirements only. If the application does not meet the eligibility requirements, DSLBD will notify the applicant of non-compliance issues. The Applicant may use DSLBD's feedback to resolve non-compliance issues and submit by August 3,2026 at 2:00 pm ET.

DSLBD will conduct courtesy eligibility reviews on a rolling basis. DSLBD will not provide feedback on the applicant's competitive responses.

Information Sessions: DSLBD will offer multiple (virtual) information sessions to support applicants in understanding these Official Application Instructions and provide an opportunity to ask questions live. Register for an information session here: Information Session Registration

Questions: All questions must be asked by the question deadline, July 29, 2026, to receive a guaranteed answer. Questions asked after the deadline cannot be guaranteed a response prior to the application deadline.

All questions must be emailed to inno.ed@dc.gov or asked during an information session. **No phone calls will be accepted.**

Required Eligibility Documents

Program-eligible microbusinesses must be open and operating a **licensed business in the District ~~Ward 7 or 8~~**,[11] the applicant business owner must be a District **~~Ward 7 or 8~~**[12] **resident owning 51% or more** of the business, and the applicant majority owner must have participated in and completed the Dream program ~~Accelerator program~~[13] and/or a We Aspire program in FY22–FY25. All required eligibility documents must be submitted using the online application

system.

[11] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to remove the requirement that applicant businesses be located in Ward 7 and 8, and incorporate the requirement that applicant businesses be located in the District.*

[12] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to remove the requirement that applicants be residents of Ward 7 or 8, and incorporate the requirement that applicants be District residents.*

[13] A*s of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to clarify that applicants are eligible if they completed any variation of the Dream program or We Aspire program from FY22-FY25.*

Required documentation will demonstrate the following:

- Identity of the majority business owner (verified via valid or non-expired DC Driver's License, DC Non-Driver's Identification Card, or Passport)
- Proof of residency in the District ~~Ward 7 or 8~~[14] (verified via utility bill, bank statement, paystub, or formal government letter)
- Proof of majority ownership (verified via Articles of Incorporation, Operating Agreement, or Trade Name Registration (for sole proprietors only))
- Proof of active business license
- Proof of business operation status (verified via business bank statement, revenue summary, or point of sale ("POS") report)

[14] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to remove the requirement that applicants be residents of Ward 7 or 8, and incorporate the requirement that applicants be District residents.*

All information and documents must be submitted using the online application system in the eligibility section for review. Applicants who do not meet eligibility requirements will not be evaluated. Only one application is allowed per applicant. Applications can be saved in the online system, allowing applicants to return and make edits before final submission. False information may result in Program forfeiture.

Use the checklist below to ensure that you have all the required information and documents prior to submitting an application.

REQUIRED ITEMS

PHOTO ID

DESCRIPTION: Valid photo ID for the majority owner/applicant.

APPROVED DOCUMENTS:

- DC issued Driver's License, OR
- DC issued Non-Driver Identification Card, OR
- Passport.

NOTES:

- ID must be active and not expired.
- ID from states other than DC are not accepted.

PROOF OF DISTRICT ~~WARD 7 OR 8~~[15] RESIDENCY

DESCRIPTION: Documentation to prove applicant's residency in the District ~~Ward 7 or Ward 8.~~[16]

APPROVED DOCUMENTS:

- Utility bill, OR
- Bank statement, OR
- Paystub, OR
- Formal government letter verifying residency.

NOTES:

- Document must be dated within 90 days of August 3, 2026.
- Deed, Lease Agreement, and Water Bill are not accepted documents.
- The applicant majority business owner's name and address, and the document date must appear on the document.
- ~~Use the Master Address Repository system to verify the address ward location https://developers.data.dc.gov/marviewer/home.~~[17]

PROOF OF MAJORITY OWNERSHIP

DESCRIPTION: Document that displays the identity of the majority owner of the business entity.

APPROVED DOCUMENTS:

- Articles of Incorporation, OR
- Operating Agreement, OR
- Trade name registration (sole-proprietor).

NOTES:

- The owner's information must be visible.
- Must have an Articles of Organization file number.

Employment Identification Number (EIN)

DESCRIPTION: EIN, also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number, is used to identify a business entity.

APPROVED DOCUMENTS:

- Enter the EIN in the system

NOTES:

- Available for free at www.irs.gov
- If Sole Proprietor, please provide the social security number of the majority owner

Valid DC Business License

DESCRIPTION: PDF of the Business License issued by the DC Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection ("DLCP") or appropriate licensing authority.

APPROVED DOCUMENTS:

- Basic Business License ("BBL"), OR
- Professional Business License, OR
- Alternative Business License (if applicable).

NOTES:

- Must be searchable in the DLCP Business License database if a BBL, OR must submit a copy of professional or alternative licensure.
- License must be in active status.
- If a BBL is not required for the business type, DSLBD will verify that a BBL is not required by DCLP.
- Address on the business license must be located in the District ~~Ward 7 or 8.~~[18]

Certificate of Clean Hands

DESCRIPTION: PDF of the Certificate of Clean Hands issued by the The Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR)

NOTES:

The CCH must:

- Be issued within the last 90 days of the application deadline.
- Demonstrate no outstanding liability with the District.
- Be in the name of the business in the application.
- Match the business address in the application.
- Have the last four digits of an Employer Identification Number ("EIN") that matches the EIN provided in the application.

This document demonstrates that the named entity has no outstanding liability (particularly with OTR and the Department of Employment Services ("DOES")) within the District on the date of issuance. The CCH has a Notice Number, which DSLBD will use along with the entity's Federal Tax

Proof of Business Operation Status

DESCRIPTION: Documentation to prove business operation status.

APPROVED DOCUMENTS:

- Business Bank Statement, OR
- Revenue Summary, OR
- POS Report.

NOTES:

- The document must be dated within 90 days of August 3, 2026.
- The applicant business name and address, and the document date, must appear on the document.

View all requirements for your business at the time of application. If you have any questions, please email Inno.ED@dc.gov or register for an information session.

[15] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to remove the requirement that applicants be residents of Ward 7 or 8, and incorporate the requirement that applicants be District residents.*

[16] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to remove the requirement that applicants be residents of Ward 7 or 8, and incorporate the requirement that applicants be District residents.*

[17] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to remove the ward verification link, as applicants are not required to be residents of Ward 7 or 8.*

[18] *As of July 21, 2026, the Official Application Instructions & Program Details have been amended to remove the requirement that applicant businesses be located in Ward 7 and 8, and incorporate the requirement that applicant businesses be located in the District.*

Selection Process

DSLBD will select Program participants through a competitive application process. A review panel of community partners will review all **ELIGIBLE** applications received by the submission deadline of **August 3, 2026.**

The Program team will review the panel recommendations, and the Director of DSLBD will make the final determination of Program participants.

Competitive Application Questions

The application is broken down into three (3) sections and corresponds directly to the scoring criteria listed in the *Selection Process* section.

Business Operations & Infrastructure

1. Do you have a defined product or service offering that is currently available for sale? If yes, please provide a link to the website, menu, service list, or product catalog.

2. Do you have documented processes for delivering your product or service? This may include standard operating procedures ("SOPs"), fulfillment workflows, service delivery steps, or any documented process your team follows to consistently serve customers. *Required documentation: one sample SOP, workflow diagram, or process outline.*

3. Do you have at least one active revenue stream? *Required documentation: Revenue summary, POS report, or invoice list (specific amounts may be redacted).*

4. Do you maintain basic financial records — including income, expenses, and receipts? *Required documentation: Proof of bookkeeping system, accounting software dashboard, or tracking spreadsheet.*

Customer Base & Market Activity

1. Have you served at least one paying customer in the last 6 months? *Required documentation: One anonymized invoice, receipt, or customer contract.*

2. Describe your target customer group and explain how you identify them. Describe the demographic or behavioral profile of your intended customer, the problem you solve for that group, and how you determine who to market or sell to.

3. Do you have at least one active marketing or outreach channel? This may include a social media account, an email newsletter, a website, physical marketing materials, or any consistent means of reaching

potential customers. *Required documentation: Link to active social media profile, email signup page, or sample marketing material.*

Growth Capacity & Program Fit

1. Describe the specific business goals you intend to work on during the Program. What do you want to achieve by the end of the Program?

2. Explain how you will make the time and capacity to implement new systems, strategies, or processes introduced during the Program.

3. Describe your ability to participate fully in coaching sessions and complete assigned work between sessions. What, if any, constraints should the Program team be aware of?

Financial Stability Indicators

1. Explain your business's financial plan or budget for the next six months and how you developed it. *Required documentation: Six-month budget document or written financial plan.*

2. Do you have a business bank account with regular deposit and withdrawal activity? *Required documentation: Redacted bank statement showing recent deposits and withdrawals.*

3. Explain your ability to provide basic financial documentation if requested by Program staff or DSLBD during the Program. Participants may be asked to describe what records you currently maintain, in what format, and how quickly you could produce them upon request. *Participants are not required to provide this financial documentation at the time of application.*

Program Acceptance & Attendance Details

Invited participants must do the following to continue in the Program and receive stipend funding:

- **Maintain active participation and an attendance rate of at least 85% in the full Program.** Participants are required to attend all regular Program activities, such as classes and cohort activities. Absences must be pre-

approved. Barring emergencies, participants must contact the designated attendance manager in advance and notify the manager of an upcoming absence. An 85% attendance rate of required activities is required to remain in the Program and receive a stipend. No exceptions.

Restrictions on Allowable Uses of Stipend Funds

Stipend funds cannot be used for the following purposes:

- Personal use (residential rent, mortgage, utilities, fuel, or mileage)
- Debt (i.e., pre-existing debt, financing, or paying off personal expenses or taxes)
- Personal entertainment (i.e., vacations, sporting events, concerts, restaurants, etc.)
- Any other use restriction, as determined by DSLBD, in its sole discretion

Allowable Uses of Stipend Funds

Stipend funds must be used on business expenses, including but not limited to the following:

- Business rent or mortgage for a commercial space
- Office equipment (including home-based businesses)
- Employee wages or payroll
- Business insurance
- Business regulatory licenses and fees
- Business software and technology (i.e., a point of sale ("POS") system, subscription services, web hosting and design, etc.)
- Business utilities for a commercial space
- Business inventory (e.g., raw materials, cost of goods sold, packing materials, etc.)
- Any other expense deemed allowed, as determined by DSLBD, in its sole discretion

Program Impact Reporting

Launch to Legacy Program participants shall complete an impact report documenting the following:

- Business Plan or Growth Strategy Plan created during the Program;
- An explanation of how Program funds helped the business operate, grow, and/or pivot; and
- Any additional reporting requirements requested by DSLBD.

Additional reporting requirements will be communicated by DSLBD through a Program Award Impact Reporting Acknowledgement form. The form will be provided by DSLBD to Program participants during scheduled class time.

Reservations

This section includes reservations that DSLBD makes in releasing application rules.

A. Contingent

1. Funding for any stipend is contingent on sufficient and continued funding for this Program. The Official Rules do not commit the Agency to make any funding awards.

B. Application Acceptance and Costs

1. Applications must be made through the online portal. DSLBD will not accept applications submitted via hand delivery, email, mail, or courier service. Only in extenuating circumstances will exceptions be considered.
2. Applications that do not comply with all instructions listed in the Official Application Instructions will not be reviewed.
3. DSLBD reserves the right to accept or deny any or all applications if DSLBD determines that it is in the best interest of the District to do so.
4. DSLBD reserves the right to suspend or terminate participation and/or stipends if information provided in eligibility documentation cannot be verified in a timely manner.
5. DSLBD may enter into negotiations with a Program participant and adopt revisions of the participant's application that may result from negotiations.
6. DSLBD shall not be liable for any cost incurred by an applicant in the preparation of one or more applications for this Program.
7. The applicant understands and agrees that all costs incurred in developing and preparing any application shall be the applicant's sole responsibility.

C. Ownership of Content

1. Applicants participating in the Launch to Legacy Program accept that class sessions and cohort networking events will be photographed and video recorded and consent to be photographed and/or recorded. If a participant does not wish to be photographed or recorded, he/she/they must inform DSLBD at the start of the Program.
2. DSLBD is considered the owner of any content developed for technical assistance purposes and paid through an award. As such, DSLBD may retain and reuse written or recorded materials and concepts at a future time.

D. Accessibility

1. Attendees of a Program-related business event may request language access accommodations when registering for the event. Requests for language and American Sign Language ("ASL") interpretation must be forwarded immediately to a DSLBD staff member involved in the Program. If requests are made at least ten (10) business days prior to the activity start date, DSLBD will arrange for language and ASL interpretation services for event organizers who confirm their participation and need.
2. In-person classes, workshops, or events funded by the District will be held at ADA-compliant locations or will offer virtual attendance options.

E. Conflicts

1. In the event of a conflict between the terms and conditions of the Program application and any applicable federal or local law or regulation, or any ambiguity related thereto, the terms of the applicable law or regulation will control, and it shall be the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance.
2. The Program application shall be governed and interpreted under the laws of the District and any applicable federal laws without regard to conflict of law principles. It shall be the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance.

F. Reservation of Rights

1. Funding for stipend awards is contingent on continued funding available for this Program.
2. Publication of these Official Rules does not commit DSLBD to make any prize or stipend awards or otherwise provide funding under this Program.
3. DSLBD reserves the right to issue addenda, modifications, and/or

amendments subsequent to the issuance of the Official Rules, or to rescind the Official Rules.

4. DSLBD will post addenda, modifications, or amendments in the online application (see below). Applicants are responsible for reviewing and adhering to any Official Rules addenda, modifications, or amendments.
5. DSLBD may suspend or terminate outstanding Official Rules pursuant to its own authority or any DSLBD or federal regulation or requirement.
6. DSLBD may conduct on-site business visits to verify information submitted in an application. The Department's access and ability to verify such information shall not be unreasonably withheld.
7. DSLBD serves as its own reference in evaluating applications; it is not required to consult with outside parties and may consider applicants' performance and conduct in previous competitions.