

2021 WeAspire Pitch Program

Official Application Rules



1. Objective

The Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD) is excited to announce that we will be accepting applications for the **2021 WeAspire Training and Pitch Competition**.

The competition is for DC residents who were previously incarcerated and/or justice involved (parole or probation) and seeking to build up a small business. New business owners will be required to attend 12 weeks of business preparatory training, and existing business owners will be required to attend 6 weeks.

DSLBD intends to allocate up to \$10,000 in pitch prize funding across pitch participants from the \$190,000 in available funding. Pitch prizes will be awarded by pitch operator Marshall Heights Community Development and Training Corporation.

2. Online Application

Apply at <http://bit.ly/ApplyAspire2021>.

3. Deadlines

There are two deadlines that applicants should monitor.

- **Eligibility Pre-review:** Applicants who complete their application by April 1, 2021 will receive a review of their application and an option to correct prior to the final deadline.
- **Final deadline:** The final deadline is **April 15, 2021 at 2 pm**.

4. Eligibility Requirements

Only current District of Columbia residents who were previously incarcerated and/or justice involved through parole or probation are eligible to apply.

We will ask all applicants to attest that they were previously incarcerated or justice involved, but will not request further details regarding the incarceration or underlying charges.

Participants should be aware that program participation will represent to the public that participants were previously incarcerated or justice involved.

Documentation that may be required to enter the program and/or receive funding:

Application Period: March 15, 2021 through April 15, 2021.
Issued by the Department of Small & Local Business Development (DSLBD).



- DC ID or other proof of residency information (if this is a barrier, please contact us at inno.ed@dc.gov and we will connect you with supportive resources)
- An IRS W9 form (we will provide one to be completed)
- Proof of business licensure (for existing businesses)
- Other documentation about the use of pitch prize funds as may be required by the operator organization

5. Restrictions on Allowable Uses of Funds

Pitch prize funds will be required to be used on business expenses for the named business.

6. Selection Process

A. Application Acceptance or Rejection

Following the closing of the application deadline(s), DSLBD will disqualify applications that do not comply with the instructions in the official rules. The Agency reserves the right to accept or deny any or all applications if the Agency determines it is in the best interest of the Agency to do so. The Agency shall notify the applicant if it rejects that applicant's proposal. The Agency may suspend or terminate any these rules pursuant to its own authority or any applicable federal regulation or requirement.

B. Selection Criteria and Review Process for Program Entrance

DSLBD intends to select pitch participants recipients through a competitive process. Applications that are submitted by the final deadline will be reviewed for completeness, and will be scored by a review committee. Scoring criteria:

- Commitment – including personal statement and friends/family statement 50%
- Clarity of idea and goals – 20%
- Clear benefit for Aspire participation & funding – 20%
- Creativity of business idea or business operations – 10%

C. Selection Criteria for Award of Pitch Funding

Pitch funds will be awarded on a competitive process. There will be a pitch for new businesses and a pitch for existing businesses. Announcement of pitch scoring criteria will be made to all Pitch Program participants prior to the competitions.

7. Pitch Program Acceptance Information

Notification announcements of selected pitch program participants for new businesses will be made by or around May 1-15, 2021. Notifications for existing businesses will be made before or by July 1, 2021.

Selected participants will be required to submit required documents confirming residence eligibility if they are not able to do so before selection. All materials to confirm eligibility must be received before participation in the pitch or receiving any funds. (See Section 4 for eligibility requirements.)

Eligibility to pitch in the final Aspire Pitch 2021 is dependent on active participation in the 6- or 12-week program and completion of the pitch prep sessions. Only individual businesses that meet these requirements will be allowed to enter the pitch to be awarded funds unless excepted by DSLBD in its discretion.

Only individuals and businesses that participate in the pitch will be eligible to receive pitch funding unless excepted by DSLBD in its discretion.

8. Reservations

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

A. Application Acceptance

Applications must be made through the online portal. DSLBD will not accept applications submitted via hand delivery, email, mail, or courier service unless accepted by DSLBD due to extenuating circumstances. DSLBD will not review late submissions or incomplete applications.

B. Reservations

Funding for any pitch prize is contingent on continued funding available for this program.

Publication of these Official Rules does not commit DSLBD to make any funding prize awards.

DSLBD reserves the right to issue addenda and/or amendments subsequent to the issuance of the Official Rules, or to rescind the Official Rules. DSLBD will post addenda or amendments in the online application (see below). Applicants are responsible to review and adhere to any Official Rules addenda or amendments. Funding for pitch prizes is contingent on continued funding from the for this program. The Official Rules do not commit the Agency to make any funding awards.

DSLBD may suspend or terminate an outstanding Official Rules pursuant to its own authority or any DSLBD federal regulation or requirement.

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.

DSLBD shall not be liable for any costs incurred by an applicant in the preparation of one or more applications for this Program. The applicant understands and agrees that all costs incurred in developing and preparing any application shall be the applicant's sole responsibility.

DSLBD may conduct pre-award on-site visits to verify information submitted in an application.

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DSLBD serves as their own reference in evaluating applications.

DSLBD may enter into negotiations with an program participant and adopt revisions of the participant's application that may result from the negotiations.

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, then the provisions of the applicable law or regulation shall control and it shall be the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance.

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