

DEPARTMENT OF SMALL AND LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Robust Retail Grant Program

Fiscal Year 2025

This Notice of Funding Availability (“NOFA”), in combination with the corresponding Request for Applications (“RFA”), which will be released when the program application opens, constitute the full set of instructions to assist applicants with completing eligibility applications for the Fiscal Year (“FY”) 2025 Robust Retail Grant Program. **Applicants are encouraged to read both documents in their entirety before applying.**

A robust retail sector is critical to maintaining our neighborhoods’ vibrancy, but many retail businesses are currently under threat of decline and closure due to the market realities of years past. In response to these market conditions, the District of Columbia (“DC,” “D.C.,” or the “District”) Department of Small and Local Business Development (“DSLBD” or “Department”) is offering awards under its Robust Retail Grant Program. These grants provide pre-existing DC-based retail businesses with direct-to-business assistance to maintain their business operations and viability.

DSLBD is excited to announce that the FY25 Robust Retail Grant Program will feature the two following awards: (1) 2025 Robust Retail: Citywide Grant and (2) 2025 Robust Retail: North Capitol Main Street Corridor Grant. These awards are described in more detail below:

A. 2025 Robust Retail: Citywide Grant

DSLBD intends to award up to \$10,000 per business to forty-eight (48) businesses from a total of \$480,000 in available funding for FY25. Businesses may be located anywhere in DC.

B. 2025 Robust Retail: North Capitol Main Street Corridor Grant

DSLBD intends to award up to \$10,000 per business to nine (9) businesses from a total of \$90,000 in available funding for businesses located on the North Capitol Main Street corridor in FY25.

The eligibility application will open on February 24, 2025, and close on March 31, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time (“ET”). Each grant program will operate as a reimbursement grant, awarded via lottery, to retail businesses located within DC that meet all eligibility requirements. Businesses that received a Robust Retail Grant in FY24 are not eligible to apply for any FY25 Robust Retail Award.

Final Deadline

The final deadline to submit the eligibility application is March 31, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. ET. Applications will only be accepted through the online application system listed in the corresponding RFA that will be posted on DSLBD’s website.

Who can apply?

Only for-profit, consumer-facing, small, and independent retail businesses, with fewer than twenty-five (25) full-time employees (“FTE”), and with a licensed retail location, including those businesses providing professional and personal services in retail locations, will be considered. Review the RFA on DSLBD’s website for more information on all eligibility requirements.

Home-based and online only businesses and non-profit organizations are not eligible for this Grant Program.

How can the funds be used?

Grant funding may be used to reimburse awardees for expenses, as deemed reasonable by DSLBD, that were incurred between October 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025 related to the maintenance of the awardee’s business operations and viability. Examples of allowed and disallowed uses are detailed in the full RFA available on DSLBD’s website during the application period.

How will awardees be selected?

Grant recipients will be selected through two (2) separate lotteries: Robust Retail: Citywide Grant Lottery and Robust Retail: North Capitol Main Street Corridor Grant Lottery. For the Robust Retail: Citywide Grant Lottery, at least 50% of the grants awarded will be evenly distributed across all eight (8) DC wards. For the Robust Retail: North Capitol Main Street Corridor Grant Lottery, grants will only be awarded to businesses located along the North Capitol Main Street Corridor. All applicants who applied by or before the deadline and are found eligible will be entered into the lottery system.

The Director of DLSBD will approve all grant awards at the final stage. Announcements of selected awards will be made on or around April 14, 2025.

How do I apply?

Instructions are included in the RFA, which will be available for download on DSLBD’s website on or before February 24, 2025. Applicants are encouraged to read the full RFA at <https://dslbd.dc.gov/service/current-grant-opportunities>.

Questions?

DSLBD will hold virtual information sessions to provide an overview of the grant application process. Applicants are highly encouraged to attend a virtual information session. Details on information sessions will be listed on DSLBD’s Eventbrite page on or around February 24, 2025 at: <https://bit.ly/eventbriteslbd>.

Questions asked outside of an in-person information session must be submitted in writing to DSLBD at DC.MainStreets@dc.gov. DSLBD will begin answering questions after the grant opens on February 24, 2025. DSLBD will not respond to questions over the phone. **Applicants are highly encouraged to attend an information session.**

Reservation of Rights

DSLBD reserves the right to issue addenda, modifications, and/or amendments after the issuance of this NOFA or the corresponding RFA, or to rescind the NOFA or RFA at any time.