



**Fiscal Year 2024
Request for Applications
Robust Retail Grant Program**

Open March 21, 2024, through April 15, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET)

How to use this document to guide your application process:

This Request for Applications (“RFA”) is the full set of instructions to assist applicants with completing the Robust Retail grant application. **Applicants are encouraged to read this entire document before submitting an application.** A copy of this RFA and details on information sessions can be found at: <https://dslbd.dc.gov/robustretailgrant>.

This RFA outlines the following important sections:

1. **Objective**—What DSLBD seeks to accomplish through the grant
2. **Online Eligibility Application & Deadline**—Where and when eligible businesses must apply
3. **Eligibility & Documentation**—What businesses are eligible to apply and required paperwork
4. **Date Restrictions on Expenditures for Reimbursement**—Time period for grant expenditures
5. **Allowed and Disallowed Expenditures for Reimbursement**—How the funds can and cannot be spent
6. **Selection Process**—How DSLBD chooses awardees
7. **Award Information**—What happens if you are awarded a grant
8. **Important Legal Disclaimers**—Additional legal information and DSLBD’s reservation of rights
9. **Appendix A**—Eligible business types

1. Objective

A robust retail sector is critical to maintaining the vibrancy of DC neighborhoods, but retail businesses are still under threat of business decline and closure due to the market realities of the past years. In response to these market conditions, the Department of Small and Local Business Development (“**DSLBD**” or “**Department**”) designed the Robust Retail grant program to assist existing DC-based retail businesses with the maintenance of business operations and viability during the continuing small business crisis.

DSLBD, an agency of the Government of the District of Columbia (“**D.C.,” “DC”** or “**District**”), is excited to announce that it will begin soliciting applications for the Fiscal Year (“**FY**”) 2024 **Robust Retail Grant Program, beginning March 21, 2024**. Robust Retail grants are only for licensed retail businesses physically located within the District operating in a brick-and-mortar commercial space.

Retail businesses that apply and meet all eligibility requirements by the final deadline, April 15, 2024, by 2:00 p.m. ET, will be placed in a lottery for a Robust Retail grant. Businesses that received a Robust Retail Citywide award in FY 2023 are not eligible to apply.

The grant will operate as a reimbursement grant for eligible expenses incurred to maintain business operations and viability between October 1, 2023, through April 15, 2024.

Please note that grants to businesses are generally considered taxable income.

The FY 2024 Robust Retail Grant Program includes three different funding pools:

1. Citywide (“**Citywide**”) grants are open to all retail businesses in the District. 48 grants of up to \$10,000 are available.
2. Upper Georgia Avenue Main Street Corridor (“**Upper Georgia Avenue**”) grants are open to businesses located along the [Upper Georgia Avenue Main Street Corridor](#). Nine (9) grants of up to \$10,000 are available.

3. Deanwood Heights Main Street Corridor (“**Deanwood Heights**”) grants are open to business located along the [Deanwood Heights Main Street Corridor](#). Nine (9) grants of up to \$10,000 are available.

2. Online Eligibility Application & Deadline

Online Eligibility Application

All applicants must apply online using our online eligibility application survey <https://bit.ly/2024ROBUSTRETAIL>

Note: the survey link address must be typed in a search bar as written, including the exact lower case and capitalized letters.

Application Process

- A. Eligibility applications are due on or before 4/15/2024, at 2 p.m. ET (no exceptions).
- B. After the eligibility application closes, DSLBD will review all applications for eligibility. DSLBD may notify applicants of potential problems with their applications and may send requests for corrections via email on or around April 17, 2024. Applicants will be provided with a correction window of two (2) business days. All corrections must be received within the two (2) business day period in order to be entered into the lottery.
- C. DSLBD will run the lottery, which will only include eligible applicants.
- D. Anticipated awards will be awarded on or around April 23, 2024.
- E. Grant agreements with selected awardees will be signed on or around April 25 through May 3, 2024, pending submission of verifiable documentation of eligible expenses.

All applications and supporting documents must be submitted to DSLBD through the online application system. Incomplete applications may be rejected as incomplete.

All questions not asked in an information session or in an open office hour must be asked in writing to DC.MainStreets@dc.gov, no questions will be taken via

phone. The last date to ask eligibility questions with a guaranteed response before the final deadline is 4/11/2024, 2:00 p.m. ET.

The application submission final deadline is April 15, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. ET.

DSLBD will not accept late applications for any reason. No exceptions.

Grant Timeline	
Deadline for submitting application	April 15, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET
Eligibility corrections window	Two (2) business days from notification (anticipated date of notification is on or around April 17, 2024)
DSLBD runs the lottery	On or around April 22, 2024
Notification of award	On or around April 23, 2024
Awardee submission of required documentation to execute grant agreement	Within five (5) days of notification of award
Payment to awardees	Pending submission of required documentation, approximately on or around the weeks of May 6, 2024 - May 13, 2024

3. Eligibility & Checklist

To meet eligibility for the Citywide grant program, the applicant must be:

- A. A District-based retail business;
- B. A licensed for-profit public-facing seller of legal goods and services;
- C. Physically located in a brick-and-mortar commercial retail space in the District;
- D. An eligible business type as listed in Appendix A of this RFA;
- E. Not among the ineligible business types as listed in Appendix A of this RFA; and
- F. Provide all required documents and attestations in the checklist below.

Considerations when applying

- A. All applications will be considered for the Citywide funding pool. DSLBD will map each applicant's business address (to determine whether the business is located within the respective corridor's boundaries) and include applications for businesses located on the Upper Georgia Avenue or Deanwood Heights corridor in the relevant funding pool(s), as appropriate.
- B. Each independent location must have its own application. Businesses with more than one (1) licensed location in the District may submit a unique application for each licensed location to be entered into the lottery. In the event that multiple businesses with the same owner are selected via the lottery, only one (1) may be awarded a grant.
- C. Only one (1) application per licensed business location will be considered. For applicants who submit more than one (1) eligibility application *for the same location*, only the latest submitted application for that location will be reviewed and considered.
- D. Only complete applications that are submitted through the appropriate link(s) above by the deadline that meet all eligibility requirements will be entered into the respective lottery. DSLBD will run the lottery by using a random number generator.
- E. No application materials will be accepted outside of the application system or after the grant deadline.
- F. It is recommended that applicants submit their eligibility applications at least 24-48 hours before the final deadline to ensure that you can resolve any technical difficulties if they arise.

Required Documents and Attestations for Eligibility

Eligibility Documentation Checklist	
Required Items	
<p>1. Active DC Business Licensure(s) that are required for the type of goods/services provided</p>	<p>Must be searchable in the Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection’s (DLCP) Business License Look Up (https://scout.dkra.dc.gov) or uploaded to provide proof of alternative licensure if DLCP licensing is not required for the business type.</p> <p>The business address on the application must match the address on the business license.</p> <p>Note: The business license number is required, not the Certificate of Occupancy or “C of O” number.</p>
<p>2. The Corporate Registration File Number for Active DC Corporation</p>	<p>The Corporation must be in active status (not expired, rescinded, or revoked), and it can be verified at https://corponline.dkra.dc.gov.</p>
<p>3. Office of Tax & Revenue (OTR) Compliant Certificate of “Clean Hands” issued February 1, 2024, or later</p>	<p>Applicants can check their Clean Hands status and generate a notice of compliance (if compliant) for free at https://otr.cfo.dc.gov/page/certificate-clean-hands.</p> <p>Note: The Clean Hands Certificate must be issued for the name of the business, and the last four digits of the Employer Identification Number (EIN) must match the EIN submitted for the business. If there is any ambiguity, DSLBD will conduct a further review of public records.</p> <p>The Clean Hands document comes from OTR and is NOT the Certificate of Good Standing issued by DLCP.</p>

4. Employer Identification Number (EIN)	Available for free at IRS.gov
5. IRS W-9 Form - 2018 or later	Available at https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf
6. Recent photograph of the storefront with business signage	An uploaded photograph
7. For the Citywide funding pool, there must not have been a 2023 Citywide awardee	DSLBD will review applications and cross-reference them against the 2023 awardee list, disqualifying any applicants that were awarded an FY 23 Citywide grant for the Citywide funding pool. Depending on location, applicants may still be eligible for the Upper Georgia Avenue or Deanwood Heights funding pool.

Attestation Checklist	
Attestation	Description
1. Business Operation	Attest that the business is open and operating. <i>(Businesses that are not open AND operating are not eligible.)</i>
2. Retail Business	Attest that the business is in a commercial retail space and is not an e-commerce-only or home-based business.
3. Applicant is owner or authorized representative	Attest that the applicant is the business owner or an authorized representative applying with full knowledge of the business owner.
4. Independently Owned and Operated	Attest that the business is independently owned, operated, and controlled, meaning that the business manages and controls its day-to-day operations without being subject to control, restriction, modification, or limitation by another business enterprise(s) or by a not-for-profit business(es) that has or may have an ownership and/or financial interest in the business.
5. Qualified, Reimbursable Expenses	Attest that the business will be able to provide full receipts and documentation of \$10,000 of

	qualified business expenditures within one (1) week of award acceptance, with bona fide receipts that the expenditures were made between October 1, 2023 and April 15, 2024.
6. No Double Dipping	Attest that the business has not been reimbursed for these receipts by another DC Government or other business grant, and if awarded, will not request reimbursement for these same expenses from another grant source.
7. Accountability	Attest that the business has completed all reporting requirements for DSLBD and DC Government grants previously received and closed in the last two (2) years. <i>(Failure to complete reporting for previous DSLBD direct-to-small business grant rounds, including previous Robust Retail grants, will result in disqualification from this grant round.)</i>
8. Can Receive Electronic Funds	Attest that the business has a business bank account that can receive electronic funds transfers if awarded the grant.
9. Full Accuracy	Attest that all information provided in the application is true and accurate. Failure to honestly and accurately represent the factual truth in the attestations may result in being disqualified, forfeiture of an awarded grant, or greater penalties, as applicable.
10. Indemnification of District Government	If awarded, the applicant entity agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the government of the District of Columbia and its authorized officers, employees, agents, and volunteers from any and all claims, actions, losses, damages, and/or liability arising out of this grant or subgrant from any cause whatsoever, including the acts, errors or omissions of any person, and for any costs or expenses incurred by the District on account of any claim therefore, except where such indemnification is prohibited by law.

The above checklists cover ALL the required documentation and attestations used to determine an applicant's eligibility. All required documents and attestations must be submitted through the online eligibility survey by the deadline. All documentation is subject to verification.

Failure to demonstrate eligibility

Applicants who fail to provide complete and verifiable documents, information, and attestations, or who otherwise do not meet eligibility requirements, **will not be included in the lottery for the applicable funding pool(s).**

All documents and attestations provided for consideration of eligibility must be submitted through the online eligibility application system. False attestations may result in grant forfeiture and other penalties as appropriate.

Verifying Eligibility Documentation

DSLBD will review the submitted documentation, verify it within the appropriate District database, and ensure it meets the listed requirements. If there is any ambiguity, DSLBD will further review public records to verify the information submitted. DSLBD will not correct any errors, and all information must be accurate and correct by the deadline. When an applicant submits its required eligibility documentation, the applicant should ensure that information is consistent across all documents. For example, the business name should be the same on the Basic Business License, Corporate Registration, and the Certificate of Clean Hands.

4. Date Restrictions on Expenditures for Reimbursement

All business expenses reimbursed by the FY 24 Robust Retail Grant must have occurred between October 1, 2023 through April 15, 2024. All receipts must be dated between this period to be considered for reimbursement with the grant funds.

5. Allowed and Disallowed Expenditures for Reimbursement

Robust Retail Citywide grant program has allowed uses and disallowed uses of grant funds.

Allowed Uses

DSLBD will allow grant funds for the reimbursement of the business' expenses that cover the following:

- A. Employee Wages and Salaries
- B. Insurance
- C. Rent
- D. Utilities
- E. Inventory
- F. Cleaning Supplies
- G. New Delivery or Online Costs
- H. Taxes
- I. Debt Service

DSLBD will consider allowing other cost categories proposed by a business and will make a determination in its sole discretion.

Disallowed Uses

DSLBD will not allow the use of the grant funds for reimbursing disallowed costs which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Expenses incurred before October 1, 2023 or after April 15, 2024
- B. Expenses that are reimbursed by a different grant from DC government
- C. Any interior or exterior construction not permitted by DC Code
- D. Costs to bring legal charges against or to lobby or influence the District of Columbia government
- E. Any undocumented expense
- F. Donations or charitable giving to non-profits organizations
- G. Vehicle purchase
- H. Real estate purchase
- I. Any activity, goods, or products deemed illegal by the District of Columbia government
- J. Any activity, goods, or products deemed ineligible by DSLBD in its sole discretion

6. Selection Process

Application Acceptance or Rejection

DSLBD will not accept any applications after the closing of the application deadline(s). DSLBD will disqualify submitted applications that do not comply with the instructions in the RFA. DSLBD reserves the right to accept or reject applications if the Department determines it is in the best interest of the District to do so. DSLBD shall notify the applicant if it rejects an applicant's proposal. DSLBD may also suspend or terminate an outstanding RFA pursuant to its own grantmaking rule(s) or any other applicable District or federal laws or regulations.

Selection Criteria and Review Process

DSLBD will select grant recipients through a lottery process. Eligible applications will be assigned a number. DSLBD will use a random number generator to develop an ordered list of selected recipients. The Director of DSLBD will make the final determination and approval of grant awards.

For the Citywide Grant Program, at least half of the grants will be evenly split across all eight (8) District wards for at least three (3) grants in each ward. The remaining eligible grants will be entered into a citywide pool of all applicants. If there are insufficient eligible applicants from any ward, any remaining grants will be awarded from the citywide pool of all applications.

For the Upper Georgia Avenue grant program, nine (9) applications will be selected.

For the Deanwood Heights grant program, nine (9) applications will be selected.

7. Award Information

Grant Award Notification

Grant notification announcements of selected awards will be made on or around April 23, 2024. DSLBD will notify successful applicants of its selection decision by email and send a Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) to the selected grant recipients along with additional post-award instructions.

Selected grantees will need to complete reimbursement expenditure reporting for \$10,000 of qualified business expenses from October 1, 2023 through April 15, 2024,

and sign a grant agreement with DSLBD. The execution of grant agreements between the Department and the grantees is estimated to occur on or before the week of April 29, 2024.

Grant Award Acceptance

Applicants are expected to accept the award within three (3) business days from the date of NOGA and provide receipts within five (5) business days.

If agreements are unable to be executed within ten (10) business days from the date of NOGA, for any reason, then the grant may be forfeited. The grant agreement will require additional documentation and reporting, which will include electronic fund transfer information (an ACH form) for the business bank account and a final report. Grantees are required to prepare a final report providing a description of the impacts of the grant.

Expense Reporting Requirements

Applicants are required to submit proof of all expenses, to be reimbursed within five (5) days of Notice of Grant Award. DSLBD will reconcile receipt and expenditure documentation. If \$10,000 of allowable, reimbursable expenses cannot be reconciled from the provided documentation, the grant award may be forfeited.

Reimbursement Requirements

- A. Grantees must submit both proof of the expense and proof of payment for reconciliation. Proof of the expense may be submitted in the form of invoices and dated itemized receipts. Proof of payment may be submitted in the form of dated itemized receipts, dated payroll documentation, or bank/credit card statements. (Non-responsive information, such as expenses for which the business is not requesting reimbursement, balances, overdue notices, on bank/credit card statements may be redacted to protect the privacy of the business and is encouraged.)
- B. Uploaded receipts and documentation must be clearly legible.
- C. Receipts under \$500 must be batched into files of \$500 or more, with an included list of each receipt.
- D. All uploads must be accurately reflected in the budget chart.
- E. All expenses must be expenses for the business location applying for the grant.

Disbursement (Payment)

Terms of disbursement shall be determined after applicants are selected, but may

include the collection of additional documentation, such as an ACH payment documentation. DSLBD anticipates disbursing grant funds in one (1) lump sum to each selected grantee. The District of Columbia government pays all invoices within thirty (30) days of receipt of invoice. **This 30-day timeline starts after an executed grant agreement is in place, a recipient is fully registered to receive payment via the District’s payment systems or selected third-party payment systems, and the grantee successfully submits an invoice with all receipts and eligible proof of payment for the submitted expenditures.**

Modifications

Additional or modified information may be required as part of a final grant agreement. An awardee that cannot provide these and other requested materials by the required deadlines may be disqualified, and DSLBD may award the grant to another applicant that was not an initial lottery winner.

8. Important Legal Disclaimers

This section includes the following reservation of rights that DSLBD makes in releasing this RFA.

A. Contingent

Funding for this award is contingent on continued funding from the District. The RFA does not commit the DSLBD to make an award.

B. Application Acceptance

DSLBD will not review applications that do not comply with all instructions in the RFA or applications submitted after the closing of the deadline(s). DSLBD reserves the right to accept or deny any or all applications if the Department determines it is in the best interest of the District to do so. The Department may suspend or terminate an outstanding RFA pursuant to its own grantmaking rule(s) or any applicable District or federal laws or regulations. DSLBD will not accept applications submitted via hand delivery, email, mail, or courier service. DSLBD will not review late submissions or incomplete applications.

C. Notice of Funding Availability

DSLBD published the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) in the DC Register on March 29, 2024 and in the Office of Partnerships and Grants Funding Alert. The NOFA is available at <http://dslbd.dc.gov>.

D. Conflicts

In the event of a conflict between the terms and conditions of the grant application and any applicable District or federal 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.

E. Costs of Applications

Neither DSLBD nor the District of Columbia government shall be liable for any costs incurred by an applicant in the preparation of any grant applications. All costs incurred in developing and preparing any grant application shall be the applicant's sole responsibility.

F. Reservation of Rights

1. DSLBD reserves the right to issue addenda and/or amendments subsequent to the issuance of the NOFA or RFA, or to rescind the NOFA or RFA. DSLBD will post addenda or amendments in the online application (see below). Applicants are responsible for reviewing and adhering to any RFA addenda or amendments.
2. DSLBD may suspend or terminate an outstanding RFA pursuant to District or federal laws or regulations.
3. DSLBD may conduct pre-award on-site visits to verify information submitted in a grant application.
4. DSLBD serves as its own reference in evaluating applications and need not seek outside references. Grant decisions may reflect applicants' performance in managing previous grants.

5. DSLBD may enter into negotiations with an awardee and adopt a firm funding amount or other revision of the awardee's proposal that may result from the negotiations.

Appendix A – Eligible and Ineligible Business Types

(These are not exhaustive lists of eligible or ineligible business types. If applicant's business type is not listed, please email DSLBD at DC.MainStreets@dc.gov for a business type eligibility determination.)

Eligible Business Types

- Art Gallery
- Art Supply Store
- Bar or Tavern
- Bookstore
- Cards, Gifts, Party Store
- Clothing/Specialty Apparel Store
- Consignment Shop
- Convenience Store/Corner Stores
- Dry Cleaner
- Florist with On-Site Retail
- Furniture Store
- Grocery Store
- Gyms / Yoga, Dance, or Fitness Studios
- Hair Salon / Barbershop
- Restaurants
- Winery, Brewery, Distillery (with tavern or manufacturer license)
- Hardware Store
- Health care and healthcare adjacent businesses, such as (dentists, physical therapists, acupuncture, and chiropractor offices, etc.)
- Home Goods
- Jeweler
- Laundromat
- Nail Salon
- Pet Supply Store
- Pharmacy
- Printing & Signage Shop
- Specialty Shops
- Tuxedo/Dress Rental Shop
- Waxing Center
- Wine Shop

Ineligible Business Types

- Businesses that are franchises that are not independently owned and operated
- Childcare providers
- Nonprofit organizations
- Online only / e-commerce businesses
- Professional services (accountant, insurance, law office, etc.)
- Home-based businesses