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**Fiscal Year 2025**

**Business-to-Business (B2B): Service Provider Grants**

**Request for Applications**

**Eligibility Application: Open January 17, 2025, through February 28, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. ET**

**Competitive Application: By Invitation to All Eligible Applicants**

**­**

**How to use this document to guide your application process:**

This Request for Application (“**RFA**”) contains the full set of instructions for the application process. **Applicants are encouraged to read this entire document before submitting an application.** This RFA outlines the following sections:

1. **Objective -** What DSLBD seeks to accomplish through the grant
2. **Online Application & Deadlines -** Where and when applicants must apply
3. **Eligibility & Documentation -** Who can apply, and the documentation needed to apply
4. **Restrictions on Allowable Uses of Funds -** How the funds can and cannot be spent
5. **Narrative & Budget Questions -** The competitive application
6. **Scoring & Scoring Criteria -** How the review committee will score the application
7. **Selection Process -** How DSLBD will determine awardees
8. **Award Information -** What happens if you are awarded a grant
9. **Important Legal Disclaimers -** Additional legal information and DSLBD’s reservation of rights
10. **Questions** – Schedule of information session(s)
11. **Appendices** – Specific Service Areas

**1. Objective**

The Department of Small and Local Business Development (“DSLBD” or the “Department”), an agency of the Government of the District of Columbia (“DC,” “D.C.,” or the “District”), is excited to announce that it will begin soliciting applications for the **Fiscal Year (“FY”) 2025 Business-to-Business (“B2B”) Service Provider Grants**, beginning **January 17, 2025**.

Grant recipients will provide services to support other local businesses across several cohort programs, including group workshops and webinars, consultations with individual businesses, payor/servicer support to program participants, and other business development-related initiatives. Program schedules of awarded service providers will be coordinated with DSLBD program staff.

FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grants are limited to DC-based small businesses or non-profit organizations that are majority owned by DC residents and provide business training, professional development, business reentry and entrepreneurship capacity-building, program support, and technical assistance for several DSLBD programs that assist entrepreneurs and promote equitable entrepreneurship.

DSLBD intends to award approximately ten (10) to fifty (50) grants between $500 and $50,000, on a rolling basis per service area, from the $400,000 in total available programmatic funding for FY 2025. Applicants may apply for funding in the service areas detailed in Appendices B-G.

FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grants will benefit the District by offering local businesses and Certified Business Enterprises (“CBE”) a wider range of hyper-local expertise and additional business development opportunities.

The programs, outlined in Section 11, are housed within DSLBD’s Innovation & Equitable Development (“Inno.ED”) Division and are aimed at removing barriers to entrepreneurship. Several initiatives outlined in Appendix A, including WeAspire, Dream Pitch, Dream Tank, District Capitalized Hub, and Just Cannabusiness, require service providers across several categories in FY 25 (October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025).

**2. Online Application & Deadlines**

The FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant application is comprised of **two parts, each with separate application processes and deadlines**:

**Part One: Eligibility Application.**

The Eligibility Application will open on **January 17, 2025, with a deadline of February 3, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. ET.** If applicable, applicants will be provided with a correction window of two (2) business days, as needed, once all eligibility applications have been reviewed. This correction window is reserved only for applications with eligibility-related errors (e.g., those missing documents required under Section 3C of the RFA). No corrections will be accepted after the two (2) business day window**.**

**Part Two: Competitive Application**.

Eligible entities invited to this stage will be provided a two (2) week window to submit their Competitive Application. The timeframe corresponding with the Competitive Application period is tentatively scheduled for February 3, 2025, through February 17, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. ET.

Applicants will only be required to meet eligibility once. Once the competitive application opens, applicants may then apply to a maximum of two (2) service areas during the Competitive Application process by submitting one (1) application for each service area of their choice.

Before and upon gaining access to the competitive application, applicants must:

1. Meet eligibility requirements, as determined by DSLBD; and
2. Upload their proof of eligibility email received from DSLBD for each competitive application submitted.

**Application Alerts**

Entities exploring or applying for FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grants are encouraged to subscribe to application alerts at <https://bit.ly/B2BApplicationAlertFY25>. DSLBD will email any updates about changes to the application process and/or forms, as well as clarification on the RFA, as needed.

**A. Eligibility Application Link and System (Part One)**

Interested applicants may submit eligibility applications for different FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant opportunities here: <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/8131942/FY25-B2B-Service-Provider-Grant-Application>

Applicants may submit only one (1) Eligibility Application; DSLBD will not review partial or incomplete applications. Interested applicants must submit all required documentation in the online system by February 3, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. ET to be considered in the Eligibility Application process. Applicants who submit materials outside Alchemer will not be considered. Applicants who timely submit their application by the eligibility deadline will be provided with a correction window, as needed, of two (2) business days after all initial applications are reviewed.

Applicants failing to meet the eligibility requirements by this deadline will not be invited to apply in the competitive application system.

**The final date for interested applicants to submit questions related to the Eligibility Application process and receive a guaranteed response before the final deadline is January 29, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. ET.**

**The Eligibility Application is due by February 3, at 2:00 p.m. ET. No exceptions. DSLBD will then offer a two (2) business day correction window after all applications have been reviewed.**

**B. Competitive Application Link and System (Part Two)**

Applicants deemed eligible via the Eligibility Application process will be provided the link to the Competitive Application portal within the Alchemer application system. DSLBD will only accept, review, and score complete competitive applications submitted through Alchemer from eligible applicants. Applicants must submit all application materials during the Competitive Application stage using the Alchemer application system; DSLBD will not accept any Competitive Application materials outside of the Alchemer application system or after the final deadline of the Competitive Application stage.

*Alchemer is a third-party platform that offers customer service assistance for login and IT-related issues for your application. Alchemer provides 24/7 email support and telephone support from 6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. MT (Monday-Friday) for its the US and Canada. For more information regarding Alchemer Support, please visit:* [Alchemer Support | Alchemer Help](https://help.alchemer.com/help/alchemer-support-hours)**.**

**The two (2) week window and final deadline corresponding with the Competitive Application stage is tentatively scheduled from February 17, 2025, through February 28, 2025. The final window will be announced before eligible applicants receive their invitation to apply to the Competitive Application.**

**3. Eligibility & Documentation**

Only DC-based for-profit and non-profit entities that are majority owned by a DC resident(s) and compliant with all District laws are eligible to apply for the FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grants. The individual completing the application’s attestations must be the majority business owner if the applicant is a for-profit entity, or the executive director (a legally authorized signatory) if the applicant is a non-profit entity. The entity’s authorized members or employees and/or third-party support may be added to the application but cannot attest on behalf of the entity. If applicable, an applicant entity’s proposed subcontractors may be required to provide attestations at a later date, if the applicant entity is awarded a FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant.

Required documentation must demonstrate:

* Active DC residence by the majority owner(s) of the business or nonprofit entity.
* Active DC Business Licensure(s) issued by the Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (“DLCP”) required for the type of goods and/or services offered by the applicant entity, or active alternative licensure(s) if DLCP licensing is not required for the business type; any licensure(s) must correspond with the address in the application.
* Occupational and Professional Licensure, if applicable.
* Corporate Registration File Number and Good Standing Status,as determined by DLCP’s CorpOnline database.
* Compliance with DC tax and licensing laws, demonstrated by a compliant Certificate of Clean Hands (“CCH”) from the DC Office of Tax and Revenue (“OTR”).
* Federal Employee Identification Number (“FEIN”).

**A. Additional Eligibility Documentation Required for Awardees**

Awardees of a FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant must provide additional documentation as outlined in Section 8 of this RFA. At a minimum, applicants must demonstrate proof of commercial general liability insurance and, if applicable, workers’ compensation insurance, automobile liability insurance, and cyber security insurance. Other insurance requirements may apply. Non-profit applicants must provide copies of their most recent federally filed Form 990 and board of directors roster.

Grantees receiving $20,000 or more must provide additional financial management documentation, including a financial audit, a balance sheet, and local and federal tax returns spanning the past three (3) years. Additional documentation requirements may apply.

**B. Failure to Demonstrate Eligibility**

Applicants who do not meet eligibility requirements will not be invited to apply for Part Two of the DSLBD B2B Service Provider Grant Program (i.e., the Competitive Application process).

Applicants must submit all documents and attestations through the appropriate online application system. Grant forfeiture and other penalties, as appropriate, may result upon the submittal of false documents and/or attestations during any part of the application processes.

**Applicants interested in applying for a DSLBD FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant MUST submit the documents and attestations outlined below during the Eligibility Application process. These documents and attestations must also meet the below mentioned status criteria to be considered by DSLBD during this stage.**

**C. Required Documents and Attestations for Eligibility**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Required Items** | **Description** |
| 1. Respondent Identity Confirmation | For the person completing this application, please upload a PDF/image file to document your identity. Allowable documentation includes non-expired, government-issued copies of: Driver’s License, Non-Driver Identification Card, or Passport. |
| 1. Corporate Registration File Number and Good Standing Status for Active DC Corporation | The Corporation must have a registration file number and that is active/in good standing (e.g., not expired, rescinded, or revoked), which can be verified at <https://corponline.dcra.dc.gov>.  *Sole proprietors must attest to their status as a sole proprietor.* |
| 1. Active DC Business License Number | The principal office reflected on the license must be in the District and searchable within the DLCP Business License Search platform (<https://scout.dcra.dc.gov>). Applicants can upload proof of alternative licensure if DLCP business licensing is not required for the business type. Further documentation/licensure(s) must be provided if the type of good/service provided by the entity requires an additional regulatory license. The license issued for the entity must match the entity’s address in the application.  Please note: The **business license number** is required, not the Certificate of Occupancy or “C of O” number.  *Conditional licenses are not considered active licenses for purposes of this application.* |
| 1. Occupational and Professional License(s) | The DLCP’s Business and Professional Licensing Administration Occupational and Professional Licensing (“OPL”) supports the District’s non-health occupational and professional boards, commissions, and programs, enforces regulations, and offers licenses in more than 125 occupational and professional categories. If your profession falls under one of the occupational and professional licensing categories, you must also submit a copy of your non-expired license with your application. Those categories can be found here: <https://dlcp.dc.gov/node/1623071>.  Additionally, alternate licensure may be issued by other DC authorized licensing entity e.g., an attorney may have a license from DC Bar, or a child care facility from OSSE. |
| 1. OTR Compliant CCH issued December 16, 2024, or later. | Applicant entities can check their Clean Hands status and generate a notice of compliance (if compliant) for free at <https://otr.cfo.dc.gov/page/certificate-cleanhands>. Applicants must obtain a valid CCH to upload with their application. DSLBD will confirm the validity of the certificate through <https://mytax.dc.gov>.  Note: The CCH issued to the business must match the business entity’s legal name, and the last four digits of the FEIN must match the FEIN submitted for the business. If there is any ambiguity, DSLBD will conduct additional review of public records. The Clean Hands document comes from OTR and is **NOT** the Certificate of Good Standing issued by DLCP. |
| 1. FEIN | Available for free at <https://www.irs.gov/>. The last four digits of the FEIN must match the digits displayed on the relevant CCH. |
| 1. Requested Attestations | The business owner and/or non-profit executive director must attest to the truthfulness of each statement below. If an attestation is demonstrably false or not made by the majority owner/executive director, eligibility will be denied:   1. The individual completing the applicant entity’s attestations is the 51% or more majority owner (for-profit) and/or executive director (non-profit) of the applicant entity. 2. Applicant entity is headquartered in Washington, DC, with its principal office located in the District. 3. Applicant entity (for-profit) meets the definition of a small business as outlined in D.C. Official Code § 2–218.32. 4. Applicant entity is compliant with D.C. Official Code § 1–328.15, which concerns eligibility requirements for receiving grants. 5. Applicant entity has properly reported all grants received from the District in the past two (2) years. 6. Applicant entity is current on all DC and federal taxes and unemployment insurance payments. 7. Applicant entity is not debarred or proposed for debarment because of any actions by the DC Contract Appeals Board (“CAB”), the Office of Contracting and Procurement (“OCP”), or any other District contract regulatory agency. 8. If awarded, the applicant entity agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the District 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. |
| 1. Full Accuracy | Applicant entities must attest that all information provided in the application is true and accurate. Applicants who fail to honestly and accurately represent the factual truth in their attestations may be disqualified, forfeit an awarded grant, or suffer greater penalties, as applicable. |
| 1. U.S. Department of the Treasury State Small Business Credit Initiative (“SSSBCI”) Attestation (only if applying for a District Capitalized Hub service area). | Applicant entities must attest that entity an/or persons proposed to provide technical assistance services are trained and self-certified to provide legal, accounting, financial advisory, communication and/or photography services. |

The above checklist covers ALL required documentation, information, and attestations that applicants must submit so that DSLBD can determine their eligibility. Applications that fail to provide complete and verifiable documents, information, and attestations in the application system by the final eligibility deadline **will** **be deemed eligible and therefore barred from the Competitive Application stage.**

**4. Restrictions on Allowable Use of Funds**

All DSLBD FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant funds must be expended solely for the purposes of carrying out allowable uses. All expenses funded by the grant must be expended during the “Period of Performance,” which is the date of the grant agreement’s final execution through September 30, 2025.

The proposed use of FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant funds must be acceptable to DSLBD. Allowed and disallowed uses of grant funds are generally spelled out below, and more specific terms regarding the use of grant funds will be outlined in each grant agreement.

1. **Allowed Uses**

Funds may be used for the types of expenses listed below:

1. Compensation for services provided by the business or organization’s owner or staff named in the eligibility and/or competitive application, as it relates to the FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant Program. Staff must be W2 employees of the business or organization for the entity to use grant funds to compensate these services.
2. Materials or specialized software required for the relevant proposed by the grantee in the grantee’s approved Program Plan pursuant to the FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant Program.
3. Tangible assets (e.g., software licenses such as QuickBooks or Canva) purchased for DC-based entrepreneurs participating in the program.
4. Pitch Prize and stipend micropayments related to the FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant Program.
5. Event operation expenses related to the approved cohort programs held pursuant to the FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant Program, such as event space rentals, audio-visual equipment, and supplies.
6. Expenses related to DSLBD-approved subcontracts with CBE partners entered in support of the FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant Program; expenses related to these contracts must not exceed 49% of the total approved costs.
7. Other costs proposed by the applicant and accepted by DSLBD in its sole discretion, related to the provision of services and initiatives in support of the FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant Program.
8. **Disallowed Uses**

Funds shall not be used for the following expenses:

1. Financing or paying off existing debt (i.e., credit card, lines of credit, loans, tax obligations, etc.), whether for business or personal use.
2. Expenses incurred outside of the Period of Performance.
3. Expenses reimbursed by another, separate grant disbursed by DC Government to the awardee.
4. Personal expenses, or other expenses unrelated to the purposes explicitly identified in the grant agreement.
5. Food (except food expenses incurred while attending professional development conferences outside the Washington, DC metropolitan area related to the performance of the grant program and approved in the grant agreement).
6. Alcohol or alcohol-related paraphernalia (e.g., wine glasses, mixers, and beer taps).
7. Payments to a professional fundraiser to raise funds for the grantee.
8. Donations or charitable giving to nonprofit organizations.
9. Vehicle purchases or leases.
10. Real estate purchases or payment of the business or organization’s commercial rent.
11. Costs related to DC or federal government lobbying efforts.
12. Costs related to lawsuits against the District or federal government.
13. Any activity, goods, services, or products deemed illegal by the District.
14. Any activity, goods, services, or products deemed ineligible by DSLBD in its sole discretion.
15. Expenses incurred without prior DSLBD approval.

DSLBD will compare grantees’ proof of grant fund expenditures with approved costs set forth in the applicable grant agreement and disallow costs that do not comport with program requirements. DSLBD will only approve the disbursement of grant funds to awardees who maintain insurance coverage required pursuant to this grant program for the entirety of the relevant grant term, which includes the Period of Performance.

**5. Narrative & Budget Questions for the Competitive Application**

The Competitive Application is divided into five (5) sections which correspond with the scoring criteria listed in Section 6 of the RFA. Applicants can upload additional documentation within the Competitive Application, if needed. Application questions remain consistent across each service area.

Applicants will select a service area at the beginning of the Competitive Application to access the competition for that service area. Applicants can apply to a maximum of two (2) service areas and should submit one competitive proposal per service area.

The narrative and budget questions listed in the Competitive Application portion are listed below:

**A. EXPLAIN YOUR PROPOSED PROGRAM OR SERVICES (NO POINTS)**

1. Provide an introductory overview or summary of your proposal, highlighting key aspects of your program or service.

2. Identify any proposed partners or subcontractors external to the applicant entity and the proposed relationship of the partner or subcontractor. Subcontractors must be CBEs. The applicant’s subcontracting plan must be pre-approved by DSLBD through the proposal and award process if no CBEs exist to perform the work the applicant intends to subcontract.

**B. JUSTIFY YOUR PROPOSED COSTS AS GENERALLY COST-EFFECTIVE AND IMPACTFUL IN MEETING THE SERVICE AREA’S GOALS (TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS = 30).**

1. Summarize the budget for each proposal in narrative form. The budget narrative must include a per-unit justification for line items within the budget proposal (e.g., hourly rates for providers, proposed subcontractors, cost-per-participant, cost of materials or software, etc.).

2. For each proposal, explain how the requested budget and/or proposed costs (i) is reasonable for the identified tasks and deliverables, and (ii) aligns with the allowable costs in Section 4 of this RFA.

3. Explain how the proposed budget items are cost-effective, impactful, and a responsible use of Government funds for each proposal submitted.

**C. EXPLAIN HOW THE PROPOSAL ALIGNS WITH THE GOALS OF THE RELEVANT SERVICE AREA(S) AND CAN REALISTICALLY MEET PROJECTED TIMELINES AND PROJECT GOALS.**

**(TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS = 30)**

1. Identify whether the proposed program or service corresponds with a specific initiative under the FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant Program or is available to participants across multiple programs.

2. Provide a detailed work plan, including goals, objectives, tasks, activities, deliverables, outcomes, timelines, etc., for each service area proposal submitted.

3. Explain your business or organization’s ability to complete all the proposed tasks and activities, submit all deliverables, complete reports, and expend the requested budget and/or proposed costs by September 30, 2025, or earlier, for each proposal submitted.

**D. EXPLAIN PAST PERFORMANCE IN THE PROPOSED SUPPORT AREA. (TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS = 30)**

1. Identify who will directly operate the proposed program and/or service, including the individual(s)’ relevant experience and credentials. If the program or service operator is a DC-based subcontractor or partner, please detail the subcontractor or partner’s relationship to the applicant entity and their role in operating the proposed program or services.

2. For applicants that will subcontract portions of their proposed program and/or service, provide a subcontracting plan and verify the applicant entity will subcontract with entirely with CBEs, unless there are no CBEs available to perform the specific work and/or tasks the applicant seeks to subcontract. If there are no CBEs to perform the work and/or tasks for which the applicant seeks to subcontract, describe your efforts to identify and engage CBEs.

3. Describe your business, organization, and/or any proposed subcontractors’ past performance in related projects.

4. What professional or industry-related progress have you achieved in the past three (3) years that can speak to the potential level of success with this proposed program or service? Additionally, explain how a grant for the proposed program or service will produce results for communities served within the relevant service area.

5. Describe any previous programs and/or services that you implemented that have addressed needs within each service area(s) to which you applied. Overall, how did your previous experience(s) inform the design of this proposed project?

6. Explain how your expertise aligns with the proposed program and/or service’s topic area. Describe how your project team will adapt any relevant previous experience to this project, if the proposed project is the first time your entity has ventured into such an industry topic.

7. Has your entity previously run a program with similar goals? If so, explain the specific data and metrics you/your entity collected and/or used to measure success? Please provide specific data on any outcomes you/your entity achieved and any significant challenges you/your entity encountered during these previous endeavors.

**E. EXPLAIN HOW YOUR PROGRAM OR SERVICE WILL PROVIDE SUSTAINABILITY FOR DC-BASED ENTREPRENEURS AND BUSINESSES. (TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS = 30)**

1. Explain how the proposed project will benefit DC-based entrepreneurs and/or businesses participating in the programs outlined in Appendix A of the RFA.

2. Explain how the proposed program or service will directly impact entrepreneurs and/or businesses’ ability to successfully and sustainably operate in the District.

3. Explain how this project supports micro, resident-owned, and disadvantaged DC- based businesses, with a focus on how the project broadens equitable access to entrepreneurial success and factoring in the accessibility considerations explicitly outlined in Section 9G of the RFA.

4. If applicable, describe your plan for transitioning program activities and responsibilities to other stakeholders once funds from the FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant are expended.

**F. ADDITIONAL UPLOADS**

1. Applicants must submit resumes for key personnel identified in the proposal. **(Required)**

2. Applicants may submit a capabilities statement. **(Recommended)**

3. Applicants may submit a slide deck of no more than fifteen (15) slides to supplement their full proposal. **(Optional)**

4. Applicants may submit up to three (3) letters of support or reference letters of any kind, including coalition letters with multiple signatories. **(Optional)**

5.For the District Capitalized Hub service area **ONLY**, applicants shall submit the following **(Required)**:

A. A mission statement for the business.

B. No more than one marketing/collateral resource that includes the applicant’s business website and social media handles.

C. A revenue statement covering the last twelve (12) months.

D. Credentials related to the relevant District Capitalized Hub technical assistance subjects for each staff or subcontractor proposed to provide services (*see* Appendix E).

E. If the applicant proposes to utilize subcontractors, a subcontracting plan that shall include: (i) name of subcontracted entities; (ii) subcontractor(s)’ capacity statements; (iii) subcontractor(s)’ proposed scope of work; (iv) the percentage of project work for which each subcontractor will be responsible; and (v) whether the subcontractor(s) is a Socially-Economically Disadvantaged Individual (“SEDI”) business. The subcontracting plan, alongside the relevant applicant’s proposal, shall be compliant with other applicant criteria stipulated in the RFA. An applicant’s proposed subcontractors will be subject to the same review criteria set forth in this RFA as the applicant. Applicants intending to utilize subcontractors in their proposed project must also prioritize and demonstrate efforts to retain SEDI-eligible subcontractors.

**6. Scoring Criteria**

The following criteria will be used to evaluate all eligible applications. Applicants are encouraged to review their submissions against these scoring criteria before submitting a final application.

**A. SUMMARY OF THE OVERALL PROPOSAL. (NO POINTS)**

1. Grant reviewers will provide a narrative summary of overall strengths and weaknesses of the proposal.

2. If applicable, grant reviewers will confirm that (1) the applicant’s proposed subcontracting expenses are no more than 49% of the total budgeted costs, and (2) all proposed subcontractors are CBEs.

**B. ARE THE PROPOSED BUDGET LINE ITEMS GENERALLY COST-EFFECTIVE AND IMPACTFUL IN MEETING THE SERVICE AREA’S GOALS? (TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS = 30)**

1. Does the applicant’s proposed costs align with her or his narrative proposal, and is the applicant’s proposal scalable[[1]](#endnote-2) to different funding amounts?

2. Are the proposed costs reasonable in light of the services proposed and aligned with allowable costs as outlined in the RFA?

3. Are the proposed costs specifically cost-effective, impactful, and a responsible use of DC Government funds?

**C. DOES THE PROPOSAL MEET THE OUTLINED GOALS OF THE IDENTIFIED PROGRAM AREA(S), AND IS IT REALISTIC IN ITS PROJECTION OF TIMELINES AND GOALS? (TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS = 30)**

1. Does the proposal contain a detailed work plan with projected timelines that are scalable, realistic, and congruent with the relevant service area’s requirements?

2. Does the proposal and its work plan meet the stated goals of the relevant service area?

**D. DO THE PROVIDERS AND ANY PROPOSED SUBCONTRACTORS HAVE PAST PERFORMANCE IN THE PROPOSED SUPPORT AREA? (TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS = 30)**

1. Does the proposed individual provider(s) have relevant experience and expertise for the proffered tasks? Please note that the applicants should have submitted resumes for key personnel, including service providers for the proposed program or service, in their proposals.

2. Has the business or organization exemplified measurable past performance in the relevant service area?

**E. CAN THE APPLICANT’S PROPOSED SERVICES SUPPORT DC-BASED BUSINESSES PARTICIPATING IN THE NAMED PROGRAMS(S)? (TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS = 30)**

1. Will the proposed activity directly help participants in the WeAspire, Dream Pitch, Dream Tank, District Capitalized Hub, and/or Just Cannabusiness programs outlined in Appendix A operate successful businesses?

**F. DOES THE OVERALL PROPOSAL CHAMPION MARGINALIZED BUSINESSES THAT BUILD COMMUNITY AMONGST ENTREPRENEURS? (TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS = 30)**

1. Does the proposal demonstrate specific support for micro, resident-owned, and disadvantaged DC-based businesses, with a focus on broadening equitable access to entrepreneurial success, including the accessibility considerations outlined in Section 9G of the RFA?

**7. Selection Process**

DSLBD will select grant recipients through a competitive application process. A panel, comprised of agency partners, members of the public, and DC government employees, will review and score timely submitted eligible applications.

DSLBD’s Program Team will review the panel’s recommendations and report them to the Director of DSLBD, who will then make the final determination regarding grant awardees.

**8. Award Information**

**A. Grant Award Notification**

FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grants will be reviewed and awarded on a rolling basis per service area. Service area awardees will also be notified of their award on a rolling basis; some service area awardees may receive notice earlier than others. DSLBD anticipates emailing Notices of Grant Award (“NOGA”) for selected applicants during, tentatively, the second quarter of FY 2025 (March 2025).

Applicants who are not awarded a FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant will be notified no later than one week after awardees receive their initial award notifications.

**B. Pre-Award Finalization and Insurance**

NOGAs will list any contingencies and additional requirements and describe the relevant budget categories and finalization process(es), deliverables, and scope of work. DSLBD may negotiate the proposed program details and final award with awardees. Failure to meet contingency requirements may result in the award being forfeited.

Awardees will be required to submit proof of insurance, which will include, at a minimum: Commercial General Liability Insurance with a waiver of subrogation indemnifying the District government; worker’s compensation insurance (if applicable); and automotive insurance (if applicable). Other insurance requirements may apply.

Nonprofits will be required to submit copies of their board of directors roster and most recent Form 990s.

For applicants that are previous DSLBD grantees: FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant decisions may be contingent upon applicants’ completion of reporting requirements relevant to their previous grant(s). If an awardee’s grant agreement cannot be executed fifteen (15) days after the issuance of the corresponding NOGA due to the awardee’s inability to meet post-award requirements for any reason, grant funds may be forfeited.

Awardees must maintain their eligibility status at the time of the award and throughout the entire Period of Performance. Eligibility status is based on compliance with items outlined in Section 3 of the RFA, as well as additional requirements set forth in this section.

Other pre-award requirements may apply.

**C. Formal Grant Agreement**

Selected applicants must sign an individual grant agreement with DSLBD after meeting all contingency and pre-award requirements. The Department anticipates the grant agreement signing period to occur in the second quarter of FY 2025 (March 2025).

**D. Additional Survey Assessment**

After grant agreements have been finalized, DSLBD anticipates surveying awardees in support of its program evaluation process.

**E. Grant Coordinator Contact**

DSLBD will assign a point of contact for the grant who will serve as the Grant Coordinator. Grantees should anticipate regular communication with the DSLBD Grant Coordinator for the grant.

**F. Grant Reporting**

Grantees must submit additional documents and will be subject to additional reporting requirements during and after the Period of Performance, using reporting system(s) as stipulated by DSLBD. For example, grantees must describe its grant program expenditures during the Period of Performance pursuant to the approved budget described in the grant agreement, alongside relevant documentation (e.g., receipts).

Grantees who fail to submit documentation of approved expenditures may be required to return grant funds corresponding with such unverified expenditure(s). Grantees may also be subject to reporting requirements related to grant activity data and deliverables.

Grantees must submit interim reporting, as outlined in the individual grant agreement, and prepare a final report by October 30, 2025, providing metrics detailing their expenses and the grant’s impact.

**G. Disbursement (Payment)**

Disbursement terms shall be determined after the selection of awardees. Terms may be informed by the collection of additional documentation, such as an Internal Revenue Service (“IRS”) W-9, additional proof of insurance, registration in District payment systems, and ACH payment documentation. Disbursement schedules will be outlined within the grant agreement.

The Government of the District of Columbia shall pay properly submitted invoices in accordance with D.C. Official 2-221.01 *et seq*. Notwithstanding the foregoing, DSLBD reserves the right to request additional information or clarification from a payee or grantee under the grant agreement.

**H. Modifications**

Final grant agreements may require addendums or modifications. An awardee who cannot comply with final grant agreement terms and/or provide other requested materials by the date outlined in the NOGA may be disqualified from their specific grant program, and DSLBD may award the grant to another applicant.

**9. Important Legal Disclaimers**

This section includes DSLBD’s reservations set forth in the RFA.

**A. Contingent**

Funding for this award is contingent on continued funding from the District. This RFA does not commit the Department to issue an award.

**B. Application Acceptance**

DSLBD will not review applications that do not comply with all instructions in the RFA. The Department 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 grant-making rule(s) or any applicable federal regulation or requirement.

Applications must be submitted through the Alchemer online portal. 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 and the Office of Partnerships and Grant Services (“OPGS”) Funding Alert. The NOFA is available at: <https://www.dcregs.dc.gov/>

**D. Conflicts**

In the event of a conflict between the terms and conditions of the grant application and any applicable federal, state, or local law or regulation, or any ambiguity related thereto, 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 DC Government shall be liable for any costs incurred by an applicant in the preparation of any grant application(s) for a FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant. All costs incurred in developing and preparing any grant application shall be the applicant’s sole responsibility.

**F. Ownership of Content**

DSLBD is considered an owner of any content developed for technical assistance provisions paid through a DSLBD grant award. As such, DSLBD may retain, and reuse written or recorded materials and concepts at a future time.

**G. Accessibility**

Assistance provisions should be accessible to attendees of all literacy levels, which includes providing content at an 8th-grade reading level and definitions of industry terms. In-person classes or workshops will be held at ADA-compliant locations. Business attendees may request language access accommodations through email or registration for activities funded through this grant. Requests for language and American Sign Language (“ASL”) interpretation must be forwarded immediately to the DSLBD Grant Coordinator. 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 business owners who confirm their participation and need.

**H. Reservation of Rights**

1. DSLBD reserves the right to issue addenda and/or amendments after the issuance of the NOFA or RFA, or to rescind the NOFA or RFA. DSLBD will post addenda or amendments in the online application portal (see below). Applicants are responsible to review and adhere to any RFA addenda or amendments.

2. DSLBD may suspend or terminate an outstanding RFA pursuant to any other applicable local, state, or federal regulation or requirement.

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. 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.

**10. Questions**

DSLBD will offer virtual information and drop-in question and answer sessions. To register, go to: <https://dcnet.webex.com/weblink/register/rbc26243d0b3fbb515bf2bbbb56a335ca>

**11. Appendices**

**Appendix A. Brief Program Descriptions**

DSLBD operates multiple programs for DC-based entrepreneurs and small businesses. Service providers may support one or more programs when awarded a service area. Programs are often iterated from year-to-year; applicants are encouraged to read the current program descriptions below, even if they are familiar with programs from previous years. An implementation timeline will be coordinated across service areas and in concert with DSLBD program staff to support program participants.

The programs below have a strong focus on micro, resident-owned, and/or disadvantaged businesses. Micro businesses are considered businesses with ten (10) or less employees. Disadvantaged businesses are those businesses with owners that are either socially disadvantaged because they have faced chronic, non-fleeting instances of prejudice or bias without regard to their qualities as an individual, over which they have no control, due to their identity as a member of a group or economically disadvantaged because of diminished opportunities that have precluded these individuals from successfully competing in the open marketplace. Relatedly, please review the Accessibility considerations set forth in Section 9G of the RFA.

***Programs Directly Supported through the Business-to-Business Grants***

• **WeAspire.** The WeAspire program provides business development support for returning citizens who are DC residents. A returning citizen is defined as someone who is or was justice-involved, meaning they were previously incarcerated, on parole, or on probation. DSLBD will onboard program participants through a competitive process. Businesses participating in WeAspire are often, but not exclusively, early-stage businesses. Participants will receive stipends for completing business development milestones. The program will include core cohort requirements, stipend pitches, as well as additional training opportunities. In FY 2025, DSLBD anticipates a cohort of 25 to 50 aspirants.

• **Dream Pitch.** Dream Pitch is a training and pitch program for resident-owned microbusinesses with five or fewer employees located in DC Wards 7 and 8. DSLBD will onboard program participants through a competitive process. Residents of the relevant DC Ward must have majority ownership of business. The businesses must have or achieve appropriate licensure, and only the majority owner may participate in the pitch program. Businesses participating in Dream Pitch require appropriate licensure to participate but can occupy any stage and industry provided they meet the location, residency, and size requirements of the program. Following cohort trainings, participants will compete in Ward-based pitches, and the top winners will be invited to participate in the Battle of the Wards pitch competition. DSLBD anticipates a cohort of 40 to 60 Dreamers in FY 2025.

• **Dream Tank.** The Dream Tank is a pitch competition for small businesses and entrepreneurs in Wards 7 and 8. The Dream Tank is an opportunity for participants to pitch their business to a panel of judges and a live audience for a chance to win $75,000. The purpose of Dream Tank is to help Ward 7 and 8 businesses grow and be sustainable while promoting economic progress and learning new ways to be creative with their businesses.

• **District Capitalized Hub**. The District Capitalized Hub is a “hub-and-spoke model” through which DSLBD serves as the central coordinator and gateway to: 1) engage targeted eligible DC-based *business beneficiaries*; 2) process their requests for financial management guidance or funding; 3) connect them to appropriate technical assistance (TA) from providers so that the businesses can prepare for, apply to and/or leverage an award from one or more targeted financing programs; and 4) track, in real time, the technical assistance provision and the impact it has on helping eligible beneficiaries achieve their financing goal.

• **Just Cannabusiness.** Just Cannabusiness is an initiative to support DC-based businesses and residents seeking to enter the regulated medical cannabis market through the expansion of the DC Medical Cannabis Program. Businesses in the regulated market face numerous barriers and increased risks, as fewer traditional business supports are available to their businesses. DSLBD cannot estimate the number of residents and businesses interested in support but estimates between one hundred (100) to two hundred (200) businesses may receive conditional licenses from the regulatory authority.

***Programs that coordinate with or support services provided through B2B Grants***

• **Made in DC.** Made in DC is a certification program for businesses that are resident owned, or with a majority of DC resident employees, and make, design, assemble, or manufacture products in DC.

**Appendix B. Reentry & Entrepreneurship Service Area**

DSLBD seeks service providers to facilitate class offerings and technical assistance and support on reentry services and entrepreneurship. Proposals should include a specific and detailed curriculum defining the barriers between reentry and entrepreneurship for returning citizens, entrepreneurship training, networking, mentoring and coaching, and more.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Class Topic Area** | **Program(s)** | **Core** |
| Reentry & Entrepreneurship | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep | Core |
| Business Principles & Ethics | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep | Core |
| Customer Relationships & Management | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep | Core |
| Entrepreneurial Personality or Business Mindset | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep | Core |
| Personality Types | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep | Core |
| Barriers to Reentry | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep | Core |
| Criminogenic Thinking | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep | Core |
| Mentorship & Coaching | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep | Core |
| The Art of Networking | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep | Core |

**Proposals for Reentry & Entrepreneurship should include:**

• A list of facilitators with a minimum of one (1) year experience leading the above referenced core classes (or similar).

• Scalable proposals, detailing the applicant’s suggested program(s) and service(s).

• Proposed length of the program(s) or service(s) as defined by time in session minutes, days, and weeks.

• Proposed instructional format (e.g., in-person, virtual, hybrid) for program(s) or service(s).

• Proposed minimum and maximum program participant counts.

• Proposed business industry stage for participants best served by the program(s) or service(s).

• Proposed program(s) or service(s) office hours and/or follow-up opportunities (sustainability) for participants.

•Proposed program or service deliverables, including workbooks, worksheet materials, PowerPoint presentations, videos, and other resources.

• Details on how the proposed program(s) or service(s) will benefit participants’ entrepreneurial journeys.

• Examples of technical skills from similar previous projects.

• Insight on how the applicant supports economic growth and restoration in the reentry community.

• The importance of reducing recidivism by offering returning citizens economic empowerment opportunities through entrepreneurship.

**Appendix C. Business Classes and Workshop Services Area**

DSLBD seeks multiple business class providers to support program participants in the preparation for cohort-based business training, ranging in a variety of formats and topics, to support DC-based entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Proposals for business classes can be submitted in the following business class categories:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Business Class Category** | **Program(s)** | **Core** |
| Business Basics | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep, Dream Pitch, Dream Prep | Core |
| Data & Analysis | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep, Dream Pitch, Dream Prep | Core |
| Human Resources | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep, Dream Pitch, Dream Prep | Core |
| Regulatory Compliance | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep, Dream Pitch, Dream Prep | Core |
| Marketing & Sales | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep, Dream Pitch, Dream Prep | Core |
| Financial Management | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep, Dream Pitch, Dream Prep | Core |
| Building Management | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep, Dream Pitch, Dream Prep | Core |
| Entrepreneurial Self-Care | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep, Dream Pitch, Dream Prep | Core |
| Other | Aspire Incubator, Aspire Prep, Dream Pitch, Dream Prep | Core |

Classes and workshops may be classified as core to and required for some DSLBD programs, and/or may cross-cut program areas as elective courses for businesses in many programs. DSLBD will require that some classes be recorded and the recordings shared with DSLBD for the Department’s reference and/or businesses’ benefit. There is no cap on proposed funding amounts; applicants are encouraged to be mindful that justifying costs as allowable, impactful, and reasonable is part of the competitive program.

**Proposals for Business Classes and Workshops should include:**

• A list of facilitators with a minimum of one (1) year experience facilitating the above core classes (or similar).

• Scalable proposals for the applicant’s proposed program(s).

• Proposed business class or workshop.

• Proposed length of the business class(es) or service(s), as defined by time in session minutes, days, and weeks.

• Proposed instructional format (e.g., in-person, virtual, hybrid) for program(s) or service(s).

• Proposed minimum and maximum program participant counts.

• Proposed business industry stage for participants best served for the program(s) or service(s).

• Proposed program(s) or service(s) office hours and/or follow-up opportunities (sustainability) for participants.

• Proposed program or service deliverables, including workbooks, worksheet materials, PowerPoint presentations, videos, and other resources.

• Insight on how the proposed program(s) or service(s) will benefit the participants overall in their entrepreneurial journey.

**Appendix D: Speaker’s Bureau Service Area**

DSLBD seeks multiple DC-based, DC-resident entrepreneurs to be speakers on varied topics of entrepreneurship that can inspire other entrepreneurs. Real-life experiences of entrepreneurs breathe life into training opportunities and support deeper networking. These stories can include successes, mistakes, processes, lessons learned, and more.

Speaker’s Bureau proposals are for at least one (1) session—live virtual session or in-person session—and anticipated to be funded at $500 per speaker. At minimum, audience members should be provided a one-page form per speaker to share their reflections about each speaker. Sessions are for 1 hour (60 minutes).

**Proposals for Speaker’s Bureau should include:**

• Description of the proposed talk.

• Biography of the speaker.

• Identified lessons audience members should receive.

• Expected benefit to entrepreneurs.

• Specific proposed deliverables describing the one-page reflection form.

**Appendix E. Elective Service Area**

DSLBD seeks multiple DC-based, DC-resident entrepreneurs and business owners to provide a variety of business and entrepreneurial trainings/classes in our Elective Service Areas on uncommon yet innovative, new, or trending business topics. The topics will be available to participants in our WeAspire, Dream and Just Cannabusiness programs. Sessions may be facilitated virtually or in-person. Applicants will be required to facilitate two (2) 60-minute sessions on their proposed class topic and should anticipate receiving grant funds up to $1,000 for both sessions, if selected. Selected applicants must ensure that program participants complete a one-page reflection form following their training/class session.

**Proposals for Elective Service Areas should include:**

• Description of the class topic.

• PowerPoint Presentation.

• Pre & Post Test.

• Expected benefit to entrepreneurs.

• Specific proposed deliverables describing the one-page reflection form.

For example, Elective Service Area classes may cover the following topics:

* Artificial Intelligence;
* Global Entrepreneurship;
* Technology Entrepreneurship;
* Fashion Design & Business;
* Product Development; or
* Social Entrepreneurship & Sustainability

**Appendix E: District Capitalized Hub Service Area**

For the District Capitalized Hub, DSLBD will use DC-based, DC-resident for-profit technical assistance providers (nonprofits are excluded) with expertise in financial advisory, accounting, legal, and communication services and photography related to pitching for funding opportunities. For an additional overview on this service area, please see Section 11, Appendix A.

Technical service **subject areas** include:

1. Financial advisory services.
2. Accounting.
3. Legal services that support businesses ready for funding and contracting opportunities.
4. Communication services related to pitching for funding opportunities.
5. Photography services related to pitching for funding opportunities.

DSLBD is seeking qualified, experienced providers who can provide guidance in one or more **service delivery formats**:

1. Webinars: The provider will develop content and support the core objectives and takeaways indicated by DSLBD. DSLBD will arrange the web conference service (e.g., Teams or WebEx) and handle marketing and outreach to attendees. Some webinars may be open to the public. Providers will create companion content for the webinar, including a presentation deck, resource list, and one-page form for participants to share recommendations post-webinar. DSLBD will review and approve materials in advance of the scheduled session. The provider’s developed content can be used by DSLBD in the future, independent of the FY 25 B2B Service Provider Grant Program.
2. Group Training: Group trainings will be offered to those eligible entrepreneurs and/or businesses that could benefit from small group guidance and/or in-person sessions. Class size will vary from 10 to 50 attendees. The duration of training sessions will vary from 1 to 3 hours. Most, if not all, trainings will be conducted in-person. DSLBD will arrange the location and handle marketing and outreach to attendees. Terms surrounding content provision will be the same as those for the above mentioned “Webinar” offerings.
3. Individual Consultations: Consultations will be offered to eligible group training participants. Consultations will generally last 60 minutes. Some clients may schedule a series of consultations. Service providers will supply written guidance to participants and post-consultation recommendations.
4. E-learning Course Content: Providers will develop e-learning course content based on core objectives and takeaways designated by DSLBD, ensuring that e-learning modules are presented in interactive formats. DSLBD will own the content developed by service providers. E-learning course content will be used in e-training sessions that are 10-30 minutes long.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Service Delivery Formats** | | | |
| **Subject Areas** | Group training in- person | Webinars | Consultations with individual owners | Content for  E-learning courses |
| Financial Advisory Services | • | • | • | • |
| Accounting Services | • | • | • | • |
| Legal Services | • | • | • | • |
| Communication Services | • | • | • |  |
| Photography Services | • | • | • |  |

**Appendix F: Non-Dilutive Capital Support for Regulated Cannabusinesses**

DSLBD seeks a service provider to facilitate lending or similar non-dilutive capital support to businesses in or entering the regulated cannabis market. Cannabusinesses have limited lending and banking opportunities and traditional access to capital support. As such, there is a need for non-dilutive capital to support the development and retention of locally owned new Cannabusinesses. DSLBD is accepting proposals with budgets up to $50,000.

Proposals for Non-Dilutive Capital Support should include:

• A demonstrated understanding of and compliance with the DC and federal regulatory landscape related to state-regulated cannabis markets.

• A plan for ensuring access to non-dilutive capital for DC-based businesses in or entering the regulated medical market.

• Risk mitigation efforts for ensuring that businesses receiving funding are DC-based and are in or entering the regulated DC cannabis market.

• A proposed outreach plan to DC-based cannabis entrepreneurs.

• Description of the provider’s anticipated ability to provide non-dilutive capital to DC social equity applicants with the Alcohol Beverage and Cannabis Administration.

**Appendix G: Pitch Micropayment Provider Service Area**

DSLBD seeks service providers to support the issuance of micropayments to Dream Pitch participants and participant stipends based upon the accomplishment of program participation and milestones to WeAspire participants. Service providers should ensure the safe transfer of allotted funds and ensure documented receipt of micropayments. Other programs may also have micropayments.

There is no cap on proposed funding amounts; applicants are encouraged to be mindful of justifying costs as allowable, impactful, and reasonable. Proposed budgets for micropayments should not include the actual amount of capital awarded to program participants, only the operating budget of costs to operate and facilitate micropayments.

**Proposals for Micropayment Management should include:**

• Scalable proposals for one or multiple programs.

• Proposed format for secure management and transfer of funds.

• Proposed format for complete tracking of payment receipts.

• Technical skills and examples of similar projects.

• Specific proposed deliverables.

1. Scalable is defined as the ability to adjust one’s proposal either up or down if the awarded grant amount if greater than or less than the amount applied for. For example, a scaled up or down proposal may require the applicant to reduce or increase number of persons served, amend the cost per person for proposed service(s), or reconfigure resources to meet the awarded cost amount. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)