

DEPARTMENT OF SMALL AND LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

WARD 8 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND GRANT PROGRAM

Fiscal Year 2026

This Notice of Funding Availability (“**NOFA**”), in combination with the Request for Applications (“**RFA**”), which will be released when the grant opens, constitutes the full set of instructions to assist applicants with completing applications for the Fiscal Year (“**FY**”) 2026 Ward 8 Community Investment Fund (“**Ward8CIF**”) Grant Program. **Applicants are required to read both documents in their entirety before applying.**

The District of Columbia (“**DC,**” **D.C.,**” or “**District**”) Department of Small and Local Business Development (“**DSLBD**” or “**Department**”) is pleased to announce that it will begin soliciting applications for the FY26 Ward8CIF Grant Program on or about **May 8, 2026 at 2:00 pm Eastern Time (“ET”).**

To increase the ease of doing business in the District, the FY26 Ward8CIF Grant Program will support Ward 8-based businesses by offering funding opportunities that promote equitable access to capital, sustainable business growth, and long-term success.

The Department intends to award approximately forty-eight (48) grants,¹ with a total of \$430,000 in available funding for FY26. Each funding opportunity is discussed below.

- A. **Ward8CIF BOSS.** DSLBD intends to award approximately twenty-five (25) grants up to \$8,000 each from \$200,000 in available funding to eligible Ward 8-based businesses that have completed the required Back Office Support Session (“**BOSS**”) training hosted by the DSLBD Innovation and Equitable Development Division (“**Inno.ED**”). The grant funds will reimburse eligible businesses for expenses incurred to maintain business operations and viability.
- B. **Contract and Procurement Ready.** DSLBD intends to award approximately twenty-three (23) grants up to \$10,000 each from \$230,000 in available funding to active Certified Business Enterprises (“**CBE**”) based in Ward 8 that have completed a Contract and Procurement training session hosted by the DSLBD Business Development Division. The grant funds will reimburse eligible businesses for expenses incurred to maintain business operations and viability.

The competitive application will open on May 8, 2026, at 2:00 pm ET and close on June 8, 2026, at 2:00 pm ET. Applications will only be accepted through the online application system listed in the corresponding RFA that will be posted on DSLBD’s website.

¹ The maximum amount of allowed expenses is included in each funding opportunity description. However, the number of grants awarded, and the actual amount of each award will depend on the value of eligible expenses applicants submit during the reporting phase of the grant, once awarded.

Who can Apply?

To be eligible for this grant opportunity, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a for-profit business with fewer than twenty-five (25) full-time employees (“FTE”);
- Complete the required training session for the funding opportunity;² and
- Maintain an actively licensed business with a physical location in Ward 8.

To be eligible for the Contract and Procurement Ready pool, applicants must also be an active CBE.

Businesses or business owners that received Ward8CIF awards in FY25 are ineligible to apply for the FY26 Ward8CIF Grant Program.

Applicants are also required to provide, among other items, a current Certificate of Clean Hands (“CCH”) from the District’s Office of Tax and Revenue (“OTR”), proof of an active Business License from the District’s Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (“DLCP”), and a signed affidavit attesting to compliance with applicable program conditions.

How do I Apply?

Instructions are included in the RFA, which will be available for download on DSLBD’s website on or before May 8, 2026. Applicants are required to read the full RFA at: <https://dslbd.dc.gov/service/current-grant-opportunities>.

How can the Funds be Used?

Grant funds may be used to reimburse business expenses incurred between October 1, 2025 and August 1, 2026 for expenses, as deemed reasonable by the Department, related to the maintenance or growth 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 awardees will be competitively selected through a randomized lottery process. Additional details regarding the lottery selection process will be discussed in the RFA.

The Director of DSLBD will approve all grant awards at the final stage. Announcements of selected awards will be made on or around July 22, 2026.

Questions?

DSLBD will hold virtual information sessions concerning the grant program. Details on information sessions will be provided in the RFA along with a registration link, and they will also be listed on DSLBD’s Eventbrite page, on or around May 8, 2026. Applicants are highly encouraged to attend an information session.

Questions asked outside of the virtual information sessions must be submitted in writing to DSLBD at Inno.ED@dc.gov. DSLBD will begin answering questions after the grant opens on May 8, 2026. DSLBD will not respond to questions over the phone. All questions must be submitted no later than June 3, 2026.

² Additional details regarding the BOSS and Contract and Procurement training sessions will be available in the RFA.

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.