

# **WeAspire** Returning Citizen Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Grants Official Request for Applications (RFA)

Open September 15, 2019 through November 1, 2019  
Issued by the Department of Small & Local Business Development  
Updated 9.15.2019

# WE ★ ASPIRE



**FY 2020 Grants  
for Building the  
Returning Citizen  
Business Ecosystem**

Look for paperwork boot camps & grant information sessions at <http://bit.ly/DSLBDeventbrite>.  
Outside of an information session, send all questions in writing to [Inno.ED@dc.gov](mailto:Inno.ED@dc.gov).

## **How to use this document to guide your application process.**

This Request for Applications (RFA) is the full set of instructions for applicants to understand how to complete the application. All applicants are encouraged to read this entire document. It outlines the following important sections:

### **1.Objectives**

What DSLBD seeks to accomplish through the grant.

### **2. Application & Deadline**

Where eligible organizations can submit an application online.

### **3. Restrictions on Allowable Uses of Funds**

How the funds can & cannot be spent.

### **4. Eligibility**

What organizations are eligible to apply & the needed paperwork.

### **5. Narrative Template**

The competitive application.

### **6. Scoring Criteria**

How the review committee will score the grant narrative.

### **7. Selection**

How DSLBD decides awardees.

### **8. Award Information**

What happens if you are awarded grant.

### **9. Important Legal Disclaimers**

DSLBD legal reservations in addition to those listed above.

## **Questions?**

*DSLBD's Innovation and Equitable Development (Inno.ED) division will hold multiple information sessions throughout the grant period as advertised via the DSLBD Eventbrite at: <http://bit.ly/DSLBDeventbrite>.*

*All other questions will be answered via email only by DSLBD's Inno.ED staff Kate Mereand or Virginia-Marie Roure via the [Inno.ED@dc.gov](mailto:Inno.ED@dc.gov) email address. Please submit all questions not asked in an information session to [Inno.ED@dc.gov](mailto:Inno.ED@dc.gov).*

## 1. Objective

The Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD) is excited to announce that that we are seeking applications for the 2020 **WeAspire: Returning Citizen Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Grant** beginning September 15, 2019.

The grants are to grow and expand the mix of resources available to returning citizen business owners and aspiring owners within the District.

WeAspire exists to create supports for returning citizen business owners and aspiring owners and is founded on three community-sourced principles:

**Meeting people where they are**  
**Building a community**  
**Building community wealth**

WeAspire programming continues to grow and DSLBD is looking for initiatives that encompass these three principles while pushing forward to meet changing community need.

Programming can take shape in several ways:

1. One-time or multi-time activations/events, such as skill-building workshop(s), coaching, commercial opportunities, training(s), or networking event(s);
2. Entrepreneurship training series culminating in business licensing for new entrepreneurs;
3. Creating pipeline access to pro-bono/low-bono professional services (like accounting, legal, marketing, coaching, website development, or business development); or
4. Other proposed ideas as accepted by the Department.

DSLBD intends to award up to 10 grants, of between \$25,000 and \$150,000, from the \$250,000 in total available funding for FY2020. At least one (1) grant award will be for an entrepreneurship training series culminating in business licensing for new entrepreneurs.

## 2. Online Application & Deadline

Apply at <https://www.zoomgrants.com/zgf/2020WeAspire>

Only applications submitted through the online system will be accepted and scored. No application materials will be accepted outside of the application system.

*Zoom Grants is a third-party provider that offers 24-hour customer assistance for log-in issues, issues with saving your application, and other IT related issues for your application. Reach out to Zoom Grants at anytime during the application period if you have technical difficulties by emailing [Questions@ZoomGrants.com](mailto:Questions@ZoomGrants.com).*

The last date to ask questions about the grant application is October 28, 2019, 2 pm.

**The final deadline is November 1, 2019, at 2 pm. No exceptions.**

Grants will be reviewed between November 1, 2019 and December 15, 2019. Notifications to applicants are anticipated by December 15, 2019.

### **3. Restrictions on Allowable Uses of Funds**

Grant funds have several restricted uses. *Allowed uses are at the discretion of DSLBD and will be part of grant award negotiations at the point of notice of grant award.* The "Period of Performance" is after January 1, 2020 and before August 30, 2020, or a shorter period based on grantee insurance coverage. All expenses funded by this grant must occur during this time and the grantee must carry general liability coverage.

The proposed use of funds must be accepted by DSLBD, and will be outlined in individual grant agreements per grantee.

#### **Disallowed Uses**

The funds cannot be used for any of the following uses:

1. Financing existing debt, including payment of taxes owed
2. Expenses incurred outside of the period of performance
3. Expenses which are reimbursed by a different grant from DC Government
4. Personal use or other uses not related to the business identified in the grant

### **4. Eligibility Checklist**

Only appropriately licensed for-profit businesses or non-profit organizations are eligible for funding. Those with significant connections to DC and to the returning citizen community in DC will be prioritized.

Applicants who do not meet eligibility requirements will not be awarded a grant. All documentation must be appropriately uploaded to the "Eligibility Documentation" tab of the Zoom Grants application. Applications missing or with incorrect eligibility documentation will not be scored

Applicants who complete eligibility documentation by October 15, 2019 will receive a courtesy review of their eligibility.

This checklist covers the required documentation used to determine applicants' eligibility. Applications that do not provide these documents will not be scored. Need help with your eligibility paperwork? You can attend a Grant Paperwork Bootcamp as advertised via the DSLBD Eventbrite: <http://bit.ly/DSLBDeventbrite>

Eligibility Checklist	
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Employment Identification Number (FEIN).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An FEIN is available for free on the IRS website <a href="http://www.irs.gov">www.irs.gov</a></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Dun & Bradstreet Number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free registration at <a href="https://www.dnb.com/duns-number/get-a-duns.html">https://www.dnb.com/duns-number/get-a-duns.html</a></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Scanned copy of valid DC Business License and valid business license number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scanned copy of business license must be a PDF, not an image file, and enter the business license number in Zoom Grants</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Operating Budget OR Profit and Loss Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The budget and/or profit and loss should be for the organization's current fiscal year</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> 2016, 2017, and 2018 annual IRS tax return filings for the organization OR attestation that the organization was not in operation and thus not required to file	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If tax returns are not available for the years listed, an attestation within Zoom Grants stating the organization was not in operation/required to file taxes is required</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Current with DC taxes, fees, and fines—DSLBD must be able to confirm "Clean Hands" status for the applicant business with the Office of Tax & Revenue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anyone can check their Clean Hands status for free at <a href="https://otr.cfo.dc.gov/page/online-clean-hands-application">https://otr.cfo.dc.gov/page/online-clean-hands-application</a></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Master Supplier Form, including ARIBA Supplier Number (ANID), from Office of Contracting and Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master supplier form can be downloaded at <a href="https://ocp.dc.gov/publication/pass-master-supplier-form">https://ocp.dc.gov/publication/pass-master-supplier-form</a></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Current IRS W-9 reflecting the business FEIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>W-9 must be signed, dated, and the address must match the address listed on the business license <a href="https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf">https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Proof of current General Liability Insurance, or intent to purchase general liability insurance if awarded a grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DSLBD cannot provide carrier recommendations – grantees must have coverage during grant activities</li> </ul>

## 5. Narrative Questions of the Application

The full narrative is submitted within the Zoom Grants application system. We have listed the narrative questions here. If you wish to propose multiple types of programming you will need to submit an application for each idea.

Please note that special formatting (such as bullet points) will not carry over to Zoom Grants when copy and pasting.

1. Please select the type of programming you are proposing:
  - a. One-time or multi-time activations/events, such as skill-building workshop(s), coaching, commercial opportunities, training(s), or networking event(s)
  - b. Entrepreneurship training series culminating in business licensing for new entrepreneurs
  - c. Creating pipeline access to pro-bono/low-bono professional services (like accounting, legal, marketing, coaching, website development, or business development)
  - d. Other proposed ideas as accepted by the Department
2. Please briefly describe your proposed programming; include activities, frequency, location, estimated participation numbers, and approximate timeline. (No need to go into a detailed budget or detailed work plan, we'll ask for that under the Proposed Work Plan tab.)
3. What are the goals and outcomes for this programming? How do you measure success?
4. How would your programming impact returning citizen business owners; what tangible or intangible benefits would they gain through participating?
5. Describe how your programming contributes to the mix of resources available to returning citizen business owners?
6. Would your programming be for participants in the business stages of ideation, those already launched, those growing, or other stage of business? If other, please describe.
7. Describe your outreach plan for publicizing your proposed programming and for recruiting participants.
8. Tell us about your experience working with – and your commitment to – District-based returning citizen business owners or issues related to returning citizen entrepreneurship.
9. Briefly describe your team. Who is going to make this proposed programming a reality and how will they do so? No more than a paragraph per team member please.
10. The final report will require an assessment of current resources for returning citizen business owners and next steps for growing the ecosystem. Briefly describe how you would approach analyzing strengths, needs, and recommendations for propelling the returning citizen business ecosystem forward.
11. What do you feel makes your proposed programming stand out as solving a need for returning citizen business owners?

**Next please upload a work plan and budget (page limit: 3) under the Work Plan and Budget tab to provide a breakdown of proposed programming activities and budget.**

## 6. Scoring Criteria

The following criteria will be used to evaluate all applications.

1. Does the proposed work plan and budget amount align with the type of programming proposed? (10 points)
2. Are the programming activities and goals reasonable and achievable within the approximate proposed timeline and budget (10 points)
3. Does the proposed programming fill a gap and demonstratively impact returning business owners or the returning citizen business ecosystem? (20 points)
4. Does the outreach and recruitment plan appear logical and efficacious? (20 points)
5. Does the programming team appear to have the experience necessary to complete the work? (10 points)
6. Does the programming team have experience in working with returning citizen business owners? (10 points)
7. Does the proposed assessment and analysis for the final report appear practical and useful? (10 points)
8. Is this an impactful use of public funds to support the overall public interest? (10 points)
9. Bonus: Are returning citizens leading the programming or activities? (5 points)

## 7. Selection Process

DSLBD will select grant recipients through a competitive application process. A review panel may be composed of agency partners, members of the public, and DC Government employees to review eligible applications received by the submission deadline and score them against the above criteria with respective weight.

The DSLBD program team will review the panel reviewers' recommendations and the Director of DSLBD will make the final determination of grant awards. Applicants who best demonstrate that they are qualified to achieve the program objectives of WeAspire will be awarded the grant(s).

## 8. Award Information

Grant notifications will be made on or around December 15, 2019. All other applicants will be notified of the decision no later one week after the initial notification is made to selected applicants.

Selected applicants will need to sign an individual grant agreement with DSLBD. The agency anticipates signing grant agreements between DSLBD and the grantees by January 15, 2020. If agreements are unable to be executed by January 15, 2020 because the awarded grantee cannot meet the post-award requirements for any reason, then the grant funds may be forfeit. The grant agreement will require additional documentation and reporting. This will include an approved budget and only costs outlined under the grant with appropriate documentation (receipts) will be accepted as proof of appropriate expenditures.

Grantees are required to prepare a final report by September 21, 2020, providing a proof of appropriate expenses made and impacts of the grant.

Terms of disbursement shall be determined after applicants are selected. We anticipate most grants will be disbursed in one sum prior to performance of grant activities. DC Government pays all invoices within thirty (30) days of receipt of invoice. **This timeline does not start until after an executed grant agreement is in place, a recipient is fully registered to receive payment in DC Government payment systems, a purchase order number has been successfully created, and the grantee successfully submits their invoice on the DC Vendor Portal.**

Additional information may be required as part of a final grant agreement. An awardee that cannot provide these and other requested materials by January 15, 2020 may be disqualified and DSLBD may award the grant to another applicant.

## 8. Important Legal Disclaimers

This section includes reservations that DSLBD makes in releasing this RFA.

### A. Contingent

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

### B. Application Acceptance

Following the closing of the application deadline(s), DSLBD will not review applications that do not comply with all instructions in the RFA. The Agency reserves the right to accept or deny any or all applications if the Agency determines it is in the best interest of the Agency to do so. The Agency 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 made through the 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 OPGS Funding Alert. The NOFA is available at <http://dslbd.dc.gov/>.

### D. Reservations

Funding for any grant award is contingent on continued grantor funding.

Publication of Request for Applications does not commit DSLBD to make any awards.



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 to review and adhere to any RFA addenda or amendments. Funding for this award is contingent on continued funding from the grantor. The RFA does not commit the Agency to make an award.

DSLBD may suspend or terminate an outstanding RFA pursuant to its own grant making rule(s) or any DSLBD federal regulation or requirement.

DSLBD reserves the right to accept or deny any or all applications if DSLBD determines that it is in the best interest of the District to do so.

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

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

DSLBD serves as their own reference in evaluating applications. Grant decisions will reflect applicants' performance in managing previous grants.

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.

In the event of a conflict between the terms and conditions of the grant application and any applicable federal or local law or regulation, or any ambiguity related thereto, then the provisions of the applicable law or regulation shall control and it shall be the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance.