



**Fiscal Year 2025  
Request for Applications  
ReFashion Pitch Competition  
(updated December 3,2024)**

**Eligibility Application Open November 18, 2024, through January 31, 2025, at 2:00 pm ET**

How to use this document to guide your application process:

This Request for Applications (“RFA”) is the full set of instructions for the application process. All applicants are encouraged to read this entire document before submitting an application. This RFA outlines the following important sections:

- 1. Objective** — What DSLBD seeks to accomplish through the pitch competition
- 2. Overall Eligibility & Documentation** — Who can apply, and the documentation needed to apply
- 3. Online Application & Deadlines** – Where and when applicants must apply
- 4. Competitive Portion** — The sections within the competitive portion of the application
- 5. Fiscal Year (“FY”) 2025 ReFashion Pitch Competition** — Overview of requirements to be eligible to receive an award at the ReFashion Pitch Competition event
- 6. Award Information** — What happens if you are awarded a pitch award
- 7. Restrictions on Allowable Uses of Funds** – How the funds can and cannot be spent
- 8. Important Legal Disclaimers** – Additional legal information and DSLBD’s reservation of rights
- 9. Questions** – Opportunity to register to receive information about the grant opportunity and drop-in sessions and obtain point of contact email address for questions
- 10. Appendices** – Overview of FY 25 ReFashion Pitch Competition dates to

remember

## **1. Objective**

The Department of Small and Local Business Development (“DSLBD” or the “Department”), a District of Columbia (the “District”, “D.C.,” or “DC”) Government agency, is excited to announce that it will begin soliciting applications for the FY 25 ReFashion Pitch Competition starting **November 18, 2024**.

The FY 25 ReFashion Pitch Competition is an opportunity for businesses to pitch a problem or opportunity in the sustainable fashion market with a viable solution. Pitch award will range between \$2,500 to \$6,000 per winner and will be held during National Small Business Week in May 2025.

This pitch competition encompasses two (2) distinct competition tracks:

- Fashion Empowerment
- Textile Alternatives/Upcycling

DSLBD intends to award approximately six grants, between \$2,500 and \$6,000, from the \$49,500 in total available programmatic funding for FY 25.

## **2. Overall Eligibility & Documentation**

Applicants must meet the following criteria to apply for this funding opportunity:

- Must be a DC-based business entity organized in the District as a for-profit entity with an active business license issued by the DC Department of License and Consumer Protection (“DLCP”);
- Hold a current and compliant Clean Hands Certification issued from the DC Office of Tax and Revenue (“OTR”) within the last 90 days;
- Provide a Federal Employer Identification Number (“FEIN”) for the business applying for the competition;
- Must be a DC resident;
- Must be able to participate in person at the pitch competition during National Small Business Week. Applicants may not send a representative to pitch at the competition.
- Must outline a problem or opportunity in the sustainable fashion market and explain how the business service or product provides a viable solution in this space;

- ~~Refer to note on footer. Be an early<sup>1</sup> or growth<sup>2</sup> stage fashion business on the following ReFashion pitch competition track:~~
  - ~~Fashion Empowerment~~
  - ~~Textile Alternatives/Upcycling~~

## **A. Required Documents and Attestations for Eligibility**

Applicants interested in applying for the FY 25 ReFashion Pitch Competition **MUST** submit the required documents and attestations outlined below in the application.

Required documentation will demonstrate:

- Proof of active (not expired) business (for-profit) licensure
- Confirmation of the business’s FEIN
- Current and compliant OTR “Clean Hands Certification”
- Proof of District residency
- Signed attestations
  - Attestations made on behalf of the applicant must be from:
    - The majority business owner(s) of the applicant for-profit entity; and
    - A legally authorized signatory
    - *Authorized members or authorized employees of the business and third-party support/consultants may be added to the application but cannot attest on behalf of an applicant.*

All information, documents, and attestations must be submitted in the Eligibility section of DSLBD’s online application portal (Alchemer) for review by **January 31, 2025 by 2:00 pm ET**. Applications that do not meet eligibility requirements and/or do not contain complete and/or verifiable documents, information and/or attestations will not be evaluated for further review in the Pre-Pitch Stage. If an applicant submits multiple applications, DSLBD will only review the last submitted application and automatically reject prior applications submitted by the same

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<sup>1</sup> ~~Early Stage: No less than one (1) year in business and under \$100,000 in raised capital or revenue generated.~~

<sup>2</sup> ~~Growth Stage: No more than five (5) years in business and under \$500,000 in raised capital or revenue generated.~~

*NOTE: As of December 3, 2024, the “Early and Growth Stage” eligibility is no longer a criterion for this funding opportunity.*

entity. False information may result in forfeiture of the opportunity to participate in the pitch competition and receive an award.

Follow the checklist below to ensure that you have all the required information and documents prior to completing or submitting an application.

Required Items	Description
DC Basic Business License	PDF/photo of the business license issued by DLCP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be searchable in the DLCP Business License database if a BBL, or must submit a copy of professional or alternative licensure</li> <li>• License must be in active status</li> <li>• Must be a for-profit entity</li> <li>• Business address on the business license must be in Washington, DC</li> </ul>
Federal Tax Identification Number (FEIN)	Available for free at <a href="https://www.irs.gov/">https://www.irs.gov/</a> . The FEIN must match the digits displayed on the “Clean Hands” document. Applicants may be asked to provide a verification letter.
Clean Hands Certificate	PDF of a current and compliant Clean Hands Certificate issued by OTR that shows the firm's business address on the document. Current and compliant Clean Hands Certificate must be issued by OTR within ninety days from the date of submission of application. FEIN on Clean Hands must match FEIN entered in the application system.
District Residency	PDF/photo of a non-expired DC driver’s license, voter registration card, or utility bill (must be current within the last 60 days)
Business Attestation	Business owner must attest to the truth of each statement below. Eligibility will be denied if an attestation is demonstrably false or not made by the majority owner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge the statement in the system by entering the applicant’s signature:</li> <li>• Entity is headquartered in Washington, DC,</li> </ul>

	<p>with its principal office located in the District.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicant entity (for-profit) meets the definition of a small business enterprise as outlined in the CBE Act.</li><li>• Applicant entity is current on all District and federal taxes and unemployment insurance payments.</li><li>• Applicant entity is not debarred or proposed for debarment as a result of any actions by the District of Columbia Contract Appeals Board, the Office of Contracting and Procurement, or any other District regulating agency.</li><li>• <del>Entity is an early or growth stage fashion business, as defined in the pitch competition eligibility requirements herein.</del> NOTE: This no longer applies as of December 3, 2024.</li><li>• Applicant certifies that the majority owners are District residents (51% or more) or 51% or more of the employees are District residents.</li><li>• Applicant is attesting the majority owner of the business agrees to deliver the pitch in person on behalf of the business at ReFashion Pitch Competition during National Small Business Week in May 2025 (exact date TBD).</li><li>• Applicant acknowledges its responsibility to self-report any material changes to the business (ownership change, address change outside of DC, or resident moves out of the District, etc.) to DSLBD at least one (1) week before the pitch competition.</li><li>• Applicants shown to have falsely attested may forfeit participation and awards in the pitch competition.</li></ul>
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Business Bank Account	The applicant must attest that the business has a business bank account that can receive an electronic funds transfer if awarded the grant.
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**B. Failure to Demonstrate Eligibility**

Applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be reviewed for consideration. 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.

**C. Additional Eligibility Documentation Required if Awarded**

If awarded a pitch award, additional documentation will be required, as outlined in Section 6: Award Information.

**3. Online Application & Deadlines**

The FY 25 ReFashion Pitch Competition is comprised of two stages with separate application processes and deadlines for each stage:

**Part One: Competitive & Eligibility Application Stage.**

The Competitive & Eligibility application will open on **November 18, 2024, and the deadline is January 31, 2025 at 2:00 pm ET.** The program team at DSLBD will review all submitted and completed applications for eligibility (documents, responses, and attestations) after the published application deadline.

**Part Two: Pre-Pitch Stage.**

DSLBD will select three (3) applicants from each pitch competition track (Fashion Empowerment and Textile Alternatives/Upcycling) for a total of six (6) participants chosen to compete at a live in-person pitch competition in front of a judges panel during National Small Business Week in May 2025.

**A. Part One: Eligibility & Competitive Application Stage**

Interested applicants must submit Eligibility & Competitive applications through the online application portal <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/8079920/FY2025->

[ReFashion-Pitch-Competition](#) by the deadline of January 31, 2025 at 2:00 pm ET. No exceptions.

If an applicant submits multiple applications, DSLBD will only consider the last submitted application and automatically reject prior applications submitted by the same entity. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed and will be rejected.

Applications will be reviewed after the published deadline and a review panel consisting of DC Government employees will review all **ELIGIBLE** applications.

The program team at DSLBD will collect the panel recommendations for the Director of DSLBD to make the final determination of six (6) selectees to proceed to the Pre-Pitch Stage. The six (6) selectees will pitch within their selected competition track at the ReFashion pitch competition during National Small Business Week 2025.

Non-selection letters will be emailed to applicants who did not meet eligibility requirements or did not qualify to proceed to the Pre-Pitch Stage after the six (6) selectees have been announced.

## **B. Part Two: Pre-Pitch Stage**

Three (3) applicants from each pitch competition track, for a total of six (6) selectees, will be selected to present at a live in-person pitch competition in front of a judges panel during National Small Business Week in May 2025.

FY 25 ReFashion Pitch Competition selectees will be announced in February 2025. The selectees will receive an email informing them that they have been selected to pitch at the ReFashion Pitch Competition event during Small Business Week 2025.

The six (6) selectees will pitch within their selected competition track at the ReFashion business pitch competition and will have three (3) minutes to present their pitch for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place prizes.

Selectees will be required to:

1. Attend Pitch Prep Sessions. Selectees will be required to attend one-on-one

pitch prep sessions during March and April 2025 with the DSLBD competition coordinator and will be provided feedback and guidance on their pitch presentation submission and support from other participants in preparing for the Pitch Competition, including pitch run-throughs and slide deck development. Pitch Prep Session dates will be announced after the list of selectees are all announced.

2. Attend a Made in DC Certified Info Session. Selectees must become a Made in DC certified businesses and will be required to attend a Made in DC info session to learn about the opportunities and resources of the Made in DC program. Date and time TBD.
3. Submit all designs/pitch decks before **April 30, 2025 at 2:00 pm ET**. Selectees will submit their pitch deck/designs into Alchemer, the online application system before the deadline of April 30, 2025 at 2:00 pm ET. No exceptions.

Only selectees that complete the requirements listed above will be allowed to participate and pitch in the ReFashion Pitch Competition. Additional Pre-Pitch Stage requirements may be added to the above list of obligations.

#### **4. The Competitive Portion of The Application**

The Competitive Portion is broken down into two parts (Pitch Competition Track and Narrative Questions) and corresponds directly to the scoring criteria listed in this section.

Applicants must choose one (1) of the following pitch competition tracks; applications with multiple tracks will be deemed to be ineligible.

##### **A. Competitive Application Portion: Pitch Competition Tracks**

<b>Textile Alternatives/Upcycling Track</b>	
Description	This track encourages the use of existing and recycled materials as the starting point for fashion design and the reduction of textile waste.
Who Can Apply?	Geared towards designers but open to all sustainable fashion-based business.
Track Objective	For this track, applicants are to design one (1) new, high fashion look using upcycled materials, such as thrifted textiles.



Evaluation	<p>The submissions will be evaluated based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity, design, and technical skills</li> <li>• The level of transformation from the original garment</li> <li>• The designer’s use of recycled materials</li> </ul>
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must submit one (1) full look only (no individual garments)</li> <li>• One (1) before and after photo (submissions may include sketches or renderings/photos of the design)</li> <li>• Short description of the concept, materials and process</li> <li>• The use of one (1) model, if selected to pitch, is allowed to showcase your work to the panel of judges</li> <li>• A pitch deck of no more than ten (10) slides for the pitch competition (PDF or PowerPoint).</li> </ul>

<b>Fashion Empowerment Track</b>	
Description	This track seeks to break down barriers fashion business and entrepreneurs face and empower them with the tools to realize their full business potential.
Who Can Apply?	<p>Fashion or apparel service businesses providing business development services to other businesses or entrepreneurs in the fashion economy. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small business development service provider (B2B)</li> <li>• Fashion workforce development provider</li> <li>• Reskilling or educational training service provider in the fashion economy (repairing, mending, tech training)</li> </ul>
Track Objective	For this track, the selectee must demonstrate how their business empowers other fashion-based business and/or entrepreneurs, or DC residents to succeed in the fashion economy in Washington, DC.
Requirements	A pitch deck of no more than ten (10) slides for the pitch competition (PDF or PowerPoint).

## **B. Competitive Application Portion: Narrative Questions**

### *Your Business Model*

1. Tell us about your business: What does your business do, tell us the “why” behind the business. How did the business come to be?
2. Who are your customers? Describe the market for your goods and services.
3. Where and how do you sell your product or service? Provide traction such as sales, customer sign-ups, or relevant data to the business’s success.

### *Viable Solution to the Market*

1. What is your unique selling position?
2. Why would people buy this product or service instead of another product or service?
3. What is your next step? Describe the business growth plan.

### *Sustainable Fashion Business*

1. Depending on which competition track you selected, explain how “Fashion Empowerment” or “Textile Alternatives/Upcycling” is incorporated into your core business model.
2. Explain how a pitch competition award will impact your business and help your business solve a problem or take advantage of an opportunity in the sustainable fashion market (i.e., intended use of funds).

Applicants may upload additional documentation online when responding to the narrative questions.

Scored Evaluation Criteria. A DSLBD review panel will evaluate responses using the following criteria that will be used to score applications. Applicants must complete the competitive portion of the application to be scored.

1. Applicant entity has a clear business model that identifies the business’s plan for generating profit and champions fashion sustainability. (25%)
2. Applicant entity offers a viable solution via a product or service (solves the customer’s pain point or fills a gap in the market). (50%)
3. Applicant entity is in the appropriate pitch competition track and

meets the track objectives outlined and other requirements within the competition track. (25%)

## **5. FY 25 ReFashion Pitch Competition**

The mission of the ReFashion Pitch Competition is to provide direct monetary support to small and local DC-based fashion businesses that foster innovation with the intent to reduce the fashion industry’s environmental impact through circular and sustainable business models, focusing on two (2) fashion sustainability areas —textile alternatives and fashion empowerment. This an opportunity for DC based fashion businesses to pitch their business to a panel of judges and outline a problem or opportunity in the sustainable fashion market with a viable solution resulting in a pitch award between \$2,500 to \$6,000 during National Small Business Week 2025.

Participants will prepare a pitch deck and will have three (3) minutes to pitch to a panel of judges who will evaluate their pitch on a scoring rubric. Pitch participants will pitch against other participating businesses in one (1) of two (2) tracks: Fashion Empowerment or Textile Alternatives/Upcycling.

Participant businesses must meet the following requirements to be eligible to receive a pitch prize award:

1. Pitch and successfully participate in the ReFashion Pitch Competition. All participants must pitch in the competition for their respective competition track. Participants must participate in all required activities set forth in the RFA.
2. Maintain an active and valid business license.
3. Maintain a business bank account that can receive an electronic funds transfer if awarded.

Participating business that do not participate and pitch in the pitch competition will not be eligible to receive a pitch prize award even if other requirements are completed.

## **6. Award Information**

### **A. Grant Award Notification**

DSLBD will send out Notice of Grant Award (“NOGA”) emails to ReFashion Pitch Competition awardees within one (1) week following the pitch competition.

### **B. Pre-Award Finalization**

NOGAs will include any contingencies, additional requirements, and processes for finalizing outstanding requirements. DSLBD may negotiate any required adjustments or changes with awardees from the proposal to the final award. Additional documentation requirements may apply. Awards to previous DSLBD grantees may be contingent upon the completion of previous grant reporting.

Grant awards may be forfeited if a grant agreement is not executed within 15 days after an awardee receives a NOGA and the cause for such delay is due to the awardee’s inability to meet the post-award requirements for any reason. Awardees must maintain eligibility and good standing from the time of award through the entirety of the Grant Period.

### **C. Formal Grant Agreement**

FY 25 ReFashion Pitch Competition awardees must sign an individual grant agreement with DSLBD after meeting all contingency and pre-award requirements. DSLBD anticipates executing grant agreements in May 2025. DSLBD will assign a point of contact for the grant who will serve as the Grant Coordinator. Awardees should anticipate regular communication with the DSLBD Grant Coordinator for purposes of the grant.

### **D. Grant Obligations for Awardees**

Competition awardees are required to become a Made in DC certified business. Additionally, the awardee must submit proof of its Made in DC certification to DSLBD into a grant reporting portal provided by DSLBD by **2:00 pm ET August 1, 2025**.

**E. Use of Funds Reporting:** Grantees will be required to provide supporting documentation and reporting on allowable expenditures during the Grant Period using a system stipulated by DSLBD.

Reporting will include the submission of a proposed budget (for DSLBD's approval) and documented expenditures within certain cost categories outlined under the grant agreement. Failure to submit documentation of proper expenditures may result in the delayed distribution of grant funds or require the return of funds to DSLBD.

Grantees are required to submit interim reporting as outlined in the individual grant agreement and prepare a final report by **August 31, 2025**, providing proof of appropriate expenditures and the impact of grant funds.

**F. Disbursement** (Payment): Terms of disbursement shall be determined in the grant agreement and will likely include the submission of additional documentation, e.g., IRS W-9, proof of insurance, registration in District payment systems, and ACH payment documentation.

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.

## **7. Restrictions on Allowable Use of Funds**

Pitch Competition awardees shall expend competition funds solely for the purposes of carrying out allowable uses or anticipated expenses, as described in the "Intended Use of Funds" application question, in order for the entity to operate long-term and remain a going concern.

All business expenses funded by the grant must be incurred during the **Period of Expenditure, from May 7, 2025, through August 31, 2025**. The use of Grant Funds must be accepted by DSLBD and may not be used for any of the disallowed uses below.

Allowed Uses: Grant Funds may be used for business expenses by the applicant entity, which include but are not limited to:

1. Employee wages and salaries for full and part-time employees,

2. Regulatory and licensing fees,
3. Insurance costs,
4. Commercial rent,
5. Inventory,
6. Utilities,
7. Equipment,
8. Debt service, and
9. Other costs proposed by the applicant and accepted by DSLBD in its sole discretion.

Disallowed Uses: Grant Funds shall not be used for any of the following:

1. Expenses incurred before May 7, 2025, or after August 31, 2025,
2. Expenses that are reimbursed by a different grant from DC Government,
3. Any interior or exterior construction not permitted by DC Code,
4. Costs to bring legal charges against the District of Columbia,
5. Any undocumented expenses,
6. Donations or charitable giving to non-profit organizations,
7. Vehicle purchases,
8. Real estate purchases,
9. Any activities, goods, or products deemed illegal by the District of Columbia government; and
10. Financing existing debt, including the payment of taxes owed, and
11. Any activities, goods, or products deemed ineligible by DSLBD in its sole discretion.

## **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 District. The RFA does not commit the Department to make an award.

### **B. Application Acceptance**

Applications must be submitted 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 <https://www.dcregs.dc.gov/>

### **D. Conflict**

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, the provisions of the applicable law or regulation shall control, and it shall be the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance.

### **E. Cost of Applications**

Neither DSLBD nor the government of the District of Columbia shall be liable for any costs incurred by an applicant in the preparation of one or more grant applications for the FY 2025 ReFashion Pitch Competition. The applicant understands and agrees that all costs incurred in developing and preparing any grant application shall be the applicant’s sole responsibility.

### **F. Ownership of Content**

DSLBD shall own any content developed for technical assistance purposes and paid through a DSLBD grant award. As such, DSLBD may retain, and reuse written or recorded materials and concepts at a future time.

### **G. Reservation of Rights**

- i. DSLBD reserves the right to issue addenda and/or amendments after the issuance of this RFA or the NOFA, or to rescind the RFA or the NOFA at any time. DSLBD will post addenda or amendments in the online application portal <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/8079920/FY2025-ReFashion-Pitch-Competition>. Applicants are responsible to

- review and adhere to any RFA addenda or amendments.
- ii. DSLBD may suspend or terminate an outstanding RFA pursuant to its own grant-making rule(s) or any DSLBD federal regulation or requirement.
  - iii. 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.
  - iv. DSLBD serves as its own reference in evaluating applications. Grant decisions will reflect applicants' performance in managing previous grants.
  - v. DSLBD may enter negotiations with an awardee and adopt a firm funding amount or other revision of the awardee's proposal that may result from the negotiations.

## 9. Questions

DSLBD will offer a virtual information session on **November 19, 2024** concerning the application process.

To register, visit:

<https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/aa8a2fbc-3531-48b9-84ad-ca8da0f06297@8fe449f1-8b94-4fb7-9906-6f939da82d73>

Additionally, DSLBD will hold up to three (3) drop-in Q/A sessions in December 2024 and January 2025.

To register, visit:

Virtual info session December 3, 2024

<https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/2e821603-2f17-4774-9a1f-b3743d3342f0@8fe449f1-8b94-4fb7-9906-6f939da82d73>

Virtual info session December 17, 2024

<https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/3960a0aa-be8c-49c0-8af9-35573584fe1d@8fe449f1-8b94-4fb7-9906-6f939da82d73>

Virtual info session January 7, 2025

<https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/77eadb5c-fb9c-4990-891d-02dabfd81474@8fe449f1-8b94-4fb7-9906-6f939da82d73>



Any questions not asked during the information or drop-in sessions must be submitted in writing to DSLBD via email at [Inno.ED@dc.gov](mailto:Inno.ED@dc.gov). DSLBD will not respond to questions over the phone. Applicants are highly encouraged to attend an information or drop-in session.

## 10. Appendix

### Appendix

<b>Dates To Remember</b>			
<b>Application Start Date</b>	<b>Info &amp; Drop-In Sessions Dates</b>	<b>Final Date to Submit Questions</b>	<b>Eligibility Application Deadline</b>
November 18, 2024	November 19, 2024  Drop-In Sessions December 3 and 17, 2024; January 7, 2025	January 30, 2025 2:00 pm ET	January 31, 2025, 2:00 pm ET

<b>Dates To Remember</b>			
<b>Pre-Selectees Announced</b>	<b>Pitch Prep/Info Session Dates</b>	<b>Final Date to Submit Pitch Deck/Designs</b>	<b>FY 25 ReFashion Pitch Competition</b>
February 28, 2025	March and April 2025	April 30, 2025 2:00 pm ET	May 2025