

DEPARTMENT OF SMALL AND LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT

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 the competitive application for the Fiscal Year (“FY”) 2026 Capacity Building grant. **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 Capacity Building grant on or about January 12, 2026 at 10:00 am ET.

The Department intends to award grants to programmatic providers, with a total of \$484,000.00 in available funding for FY 26.

The Capacity Building grant seeks to engage eligible District-based businesses to deliver targeted business development training and back-office services to select program participants from DSLBD’s We Aspire, Dream Accelerator, and District Capitalized grant program cohorts. To provide ongoing business support, participants of these programs will gain access to expertise and enhanced business development opportunities. This grant positions providers to deliver trainings to program participants.

The competitive application will open on January 12, 2026, and close on February 11, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time (“ET”). Applications will only be accepted through the online application system listed in the corresponding RFA that will be posted on DSLBD’s website.

Who can Apply?

To be eligible as a provider for the We Aspire and Dream Accelerator programs, applicants must be an active Certified Business Enterprise (CBE). Individuals applying on behalf of a CBE must be the CBE’s owner(s), authorized member(s), or authorized employee(s) of the CBE.

To be eligible as a provider for the District Capitalized program, applicants must be an active Certified Business Enterprises (CBE) or District based non-profit. Individuals applying on behalf of a CBE or non-profit must be the CBE’s owner(s), authorized member(s), or authorized employee(s) of the CBE. *Third parties cannot apply on behalf of a CBE.*

Additionally, applicants are 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 and 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 January 12, 2026 at: <https://dslbd.dc.gov/service/current-grant-opportunities>.

How can the Funds be Used?

Grant funds may be used to cover business expenses incurred from the effective date of the grant agreement through September 30, 2026 that are directly related to services and training for DSLBD program cohort participants. Other costs deemed reasonable by the Department may be approved by DSLBD in its sole discretion.

How Will Awardees be Selected?

Grant awardees will be selected through a competitive application process. A panel will review timely submitted and complete eligible applications and score them using the criteria outlined in the RFA, as well as the applicant’s past performance and submitted program plans and resumes. Top candidates will be invited to present their proposed programming to the panel and respond to interview-style questions. Scores from live presentations will inform the panel’s recommendations, which will then be delivered to the DSLBD Director for final selections.

The Director will approve all grant awards at the final stage. Announcements of selected awards will be made on or around March 28, 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 will also be listed on DSLBD’s Eventbrite page, on or around January 12, 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 January 12, 2026. DSLBD will not respond to questions over the phone. All questions must be submitted no later than February 4, 2026.

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.