



**Fiscal Year 2024 DSLBD
Business to Business: Service Provider Grants
Request for Applications
Last Updated: October 24, 2023**

**Proof of Eligibility Application Open October 24 – November 21, 2023, at 2 p.m. EST
Competitive Application Submissions By Invitation to Eligible Applicants**

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.** It outlines the following important sections:

- 1. Objective**—What DSLBD seeks to accomplish through the grant
- 2. Online Application & Deadlines**—Where and when applicants must apply
- 3. Eligibility & Documentation**—Which entities are eligible and needed paperwork
- 4. Restrictions on Allowable Uses of Funds**—How the funds 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 decides awardees
- 8. Award Information**—What happens if you are awarded a grant
- 9. Important Legal Disclaimers**—Additional DSLBD legal reservations
- 10. 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 (the “District”), is excited to announce that it will begin soliciting applications for the Fiscal Year 2024 **Business to Business: Service Provider Grants** starting October 24, 2023.

Look for Business to Business Grant information sessions at <https://bit.ly/B2BINFO2023>. Outside of an information session, **send all questions in writing to Inno.ED@dc.gov. No phone calls will be accepted.**



The Business to Business Grants are for DC-based (1) small, for-profit businesses or (2) DC-based nonprofit service providers to provide a range of training, program support, and technical assistance across several DSLBD programs that support entrepreneurs and equitable entrepreneurship.

The programs, outlined in Section 10, are housed within the DSLBD Innovation & Equitable Development (“Inno.ED”) Division and are aimed at removing barriers to entrepreneurship. Several initiatives outlined in Appendix A, including WeAspire, Dream Pitch, and Just Cannabusiness, require service providers across several categories in Fiscal Year 2024 (October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024).

DSLBD is requesting applications for some core services to support across several cohort programs, including payor support to program participants, and separately some program-specific service providers to specialize in areas of support on specific programs. Program schedules of awarded service providers will be coordinated with DSLBD program staff.

The Business to Business Grants will benefit program participants by offering a wider range of hyper-local expertise and further support opportunities for local businesses and CBEs to grow past performance in business development.

DSLBD intends to award around 10-50 grants between \$500.00 and \$50,000.00 on a rolling basis per service area pulled from the \$400,000.00 in total available programmatic funding for Fiscal Year 2024. Applicants may apply for funding in the service areas detailed in Appendices B-J.

2. Online Application & Deadlines

The application will be in two parts with separate application systems and deadlines for each part:

- A. Eligibility Application, due November 21, 2023, at 2 p.m. EST (no exceptions)
- B. Applicants will be provided with a correction window of two (2) business days, as needed, once all eligibility applicants have been reviewed.
- C. Competitive Application, applicants will be provided with a two (2) week window when the application portal opens to applicants deemed eligible through the eligibility application. A final deadline to submit the competitive application will be announced.

Applicants will only be required to meet eligibility once; then they may apply to several service areas by submitting separate applications per service area when the competitive application opens. Before gaining access to the competitive application, Applicants must:

- meet eligibility requirements as reviewed and approved by DSLBD before gaining access to the competitive application, and
- then upload the proof of eligibility approval email for each competitive application submitted.

A. Eligibility Application Link and System

Applicants may apply for eligibility across all grant opportunities here: <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7577604/Business-to-Business-2024>.

Applicants may submit multiple eligibility applications; DSLBD will automatically reject prior applications from the same entity with multiple submissions and only consider the last submitted application. Eligibility must be met with all required documentation submitted in the online system by November 21, 2023, at 2 p.m. EST. Applicants will be provided with a two-day correction opportunity after all initial applications are reviewed. Applicants failing to meet the eligibility requirements by this deadline will not be eligible for this grant opportunity or be invited to apply in the competitive application system.

The last date to ask eligibility questions with a guaranteed response before the final deadline is November 16, 2023, at 2 p.m. EST.

The final eligibility deadline is November 21, 2023, at 2 p.m. EST. No exceptions.

DSLBD will offer a two (2) business-day corrections window after all applications have been reviewed.

B. Competitive Application Link and System

Applicants deemed to be eligible by the eligibility deadline or by meeting the corrections deadline with appropriate corrections will be sent the link to the Zoom Grants application system. Only complete competitive applications from applicants deemed to be eligible and submitted through Zoom Grants will be accepted and scored. All application materials must be entered or uploaded using the application system. No competitive application materials will be accepted outside of the application systems or after the grant's final deadline.

Zoom Grants is a third-party provider that offers customer assistance for login issues, issues with saving your application, and other IT-related issues for your application. Zoom Grants provide technical support Monday–Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. EST. Reach out to Zoom Grants at any time during the application period if you have technical difficulties by emailing Questions@ZoomGrants.com.

The final competitive applications’ two (2) week window and final deadline will be announced with the invitation for eligible applicants to apply to the competitive application.

3. Eligibility & Checklist

Only DC-based for-profit and nonprofit entities compliant with applicable District laws are eligible to apply for the Business to Business Grants. The individual completing the application attestations must be the majority business owner(s) for-profits or the nonprofit’s Executive Director, a legally authorized signatory. *Authorized members or authorized employees of the business and third-party support may be added to the application but cannot attest on behalf of an applicant.* Required documentation must demonstrate:

- Active DC Business Licensure(s) that are required for the type of goods/services provided
- Corporate Good Standing issued by the Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (“DLCP”), which includes active DC incorporation
- Compliance with DC tax and licensing laws as demonstrated by a compliant Clean Hands Certificate
- Federal employee identification number (“EIN”)

A. Additional Eligibility Documentation Required If Awarded

If awarded, additional documentation will be required as outlined in Section 8 of this RFA. At a minimum, applicants will need to demonstrate proof of commercial general liability insurance and, if applicable, workman’s compensation, automotive insurance, and other insurance requirements may apply. Nonprofit applicants will also need to provide copies of their most recent Form 990 (filed with the federal government) and board roster. Grantees receiving \$20,000.00 or more will need to provide additional financial management documentation, including a financial audit, a balance sheet, and the past three (3) years of local and federal tax returns. Additional documentation requirements may apply.

B. Failure to Demonstrate Eligibility

Applications from applicants who do not meet eligibility requirements will not be invited to apply for a DSLBD Business to Business Grant (i.e., the Competitive Application process). 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.

Applicants interested in applying for a DSLBD Business to Business Grant MUST submit the required Eligibility Documents and Attestations outlined below in the application by the eligibility application deadline and meet the status criteria.

C. Required Documents and Attestations for Eligibility

Required Items	Description
1. Corporate Registration File Number for Active DC Corporation	The Corporation must be active (not expired, rescinded, or revoked), and it can be verified at https://corponline.dcrd.dc.gov .
2. Active DC Business License Number	The principal office must be located in the District and searchable in the DLCP Business License Look Up (https://scout.dcrd.dc.gov) or uploaded to provide proof of alternative licensure if DLCP basic business licensing is not required for the business type. Additionally, if the type of good/service provided by the entity requires an additional license from a regulatory entity, that documentation must be provided as well.
3. Office of Tax & Revenue Compliant “Clean Hands” Certificate issued October 15, 2023, or later	Applicants can check their Clean Hands status and generate a notice of compliance (if compliant) for free at https://otr.cfo.dc.gov/page/certificate-clean-hands . Applicants must download a Clean Hands Certificate to upload with their application. DSLBD will confirm the validity of the certificate through https://mytax.dc.gov .
4. Employment Identification Number	Available for free at IRS.gov . The last four digits of the EIN must match the digits displayed on the “Clean Hands” document.
5. Required Attestations	The business owner and/or nonprofit Executive Director must attest to the truth of each of the

statements below. If an attestation is demonstrably false or not made by the majority owner/Executive Director, eligibility will be denied.

- A. Applicant is the 51% or more majority owner (for-profit) and/or Executive Director (nonprofit) of the applicant entity.
- B. Entity is headquartered in Washington, DC, with its principal office located in the District.
- C. Applicant entity (for-profit) meets the definition of a small business as outlined in DC Official Code § 2–218.32.
- D. Applicant entity is compliant with DC Official Code § 1–328.15, Eligibility requirements for receiving grants.
- E. Entity has properly reported on all grants from the District government in the past two (2) years.
- F. Applicant entity is current on all District and federal taxes and unemployment insurance payments.
- G. 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 contract regulating agency.
- H. If awarded, the applicant entity agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the government of the District of Columbia 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.
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The above checklist covers ALL the required documentation used to determine an applicant’s eligibility. Applications that fail to provide complete and verifiable documents, information, and attestations in the application system by the final eligibility deadline **will not be eligible to apply to the competitive application.**

4. Restrictions on Allowable Uses of Funds

DSLBD Business to Business Grant funds have allowed uses and disallowed uses. All expenses funded by the grant must occur during the “Period of Performance,” which is the date of the grant agreement’s final execution through September 30, 2024.

The proposed use of funds must be acceptable to DSLBD and will be outlined in individual grant agreements.

A. Allowed Uses

The funds may be used for any of the following:

1. Compensation for services provided by the owner or staff of the business or organization, who are named in the application. Staff must be W2 employees.
2. Materials or specialized software required for the proposed service provision of the approved proposal.
3. Tangible assets purchased for DC-based entrepreneurs participating in the program (such as software licenses like Quickbooks and Canva).
4. Pitch Prize and stipend micropayments.

5. Event operation expenses such as event space rentals, audio-visual equipment, and supplies.
6. DSLBD-approved subcontracts with Certified Business Enterprise (“CBE”) partners, which may not exceed 49% of the total approved costs.
7. Other costs proposed by the applicant and accepted by DSLBD in its sole discretion.

B. Disallowed Uses

The funds shall not be used for any of the following:

1. Financing existing debt, including payment of taxes owed.
2. Expenses incurred outside of the Period of Performance.
3. Expenses that are reimbursed by a different grant from the District government.
4. Personal use or other uses not related to the purposes identified in the grant.
5. Food (except food while attending professional development conferences outside the Washington, DC metropolitan area).
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 purchase.
10. Real estate purchase.
11. Lobbying the Government of the District of Columbia.
12. Lawsuits against the Government of the District of Columbia.
13. Any activity, goods, services, or products deemed illegal by the Government of the District of Columbia.
14. Any activity, goods, services, or products deemed ineligible by DSLBD in its sole discretion.
15. Expenses incurred without prior DSLBD approval.

DSLBD will review proof of fund expenditures against approved cost categories in an awarded grant and will disallow costs that do not comply with the requirements. Funds are only approved during periods in which an awarded grantee maintains required insurance coverage.

5. Narrative & Budget Questions of the Application

The competitive application is divided into seven (7) sections, which correspond directly to the scoring criteria listed in Section 6 of this document. There are options for uploading additional documentation.

These questions remain static across service areas.

Applicants will be requested to select a service area at the beginning of the application to access the competition for that service area. If applying to multiple service areas, applicants should submit multiple competitive proposals, one per service area.

A. Explain Proposed Service Provision (No Points)

1. Provide an introductory overview or summary of the proposal highlighting key aspects.
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. If there are no CBEs available to conduct the work, the applicant's subcontracting plan must be pre-approved by DSLBD through the proposal and award process.

B. Justify the proposed costs as cost-effective overall and impactful in meeting the goals of the service area. (15 points) *Complete the budget proposal in the budget tab of the application to include proposed cost categories. This section does not apply to Speaker Bureau applicants.*

1. Summarize the budget proposal as a narrative. The narrative must align with the itemized costs listed in the budget tab of the application. Include a description of the per-unit basis for the budget proposal for line items (e.g., hourly rates for providers, cost-per-participant, cost of materials, and space rentals).
2. Explain how the proposed cost categories are reasonable for the proposed activities and align 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.
4. Explain how the budget and program are scalable if awarded more funds or less funds than the amount proposed.

C. Explain how the proposal meets the outlined goals of the identified program area(s) and is realistic in the projected timelines and project goals. (15 points)

1. Explain if the proposal is geared towards a specific program(s) or proposed as being available to participants across multiple programs.

2. Provide a detailed work plan outlining each major activity of the proposal.
3. Provide a list of proposed deliverables and a timeline to deliver each deliverable.
4. Explain how the proposed activity will align with DSLBD program scheduling with multiple service providers per program.
5. Explain the capacity of your business or organization to complete all the proposed tasks, submit all deliverables, and expend the budget by September 30, 2024, or earlier.
6. If awarded a lesser amount than proposed, please share which portion(s) of your proposal you recommend to be funded and why. Discuss scalability up or down.

D. Explain past performance in the area of support proposed. (10 points)

1. Explain who will be directly operating the proposed project and their relevant experience and credentials. If a DC-based subcontractor or partner, detail that relationship. Resumes must be uploaded in the section for “additional documents.”
2. If subcontracting, detail the subcontracting plan and verify the specific subcontracting plan is 100% Certified Business Enterprises unless there are no CBEs available to perform the work. If there are no CBEs to perform the work, describe efforts to identify and engage CBEs.
3. Detail past performance of your organization and any subcontractors for related projects. Capability statements may be uploaded in additional documents.
4. Explain your expertise related to the proposed topic area. If this is a new content area for your entity, describe how your project team will approach adapting your other experience to this project.

E. Explain how the proposed services targeted to support businesses within the named programs(s) grow their DC-based businesses. (5 points)

1. Explain how the proposed project will benefit DC-based entrepreneurs entering the WeAspire, Dream Pitch, and/or Just Cannabusiness programs outlined in Appendix A.
2. Explain how this service will directly impact the businesses’ ability to operate successful businesses in the District.

F. Explain how this proposal will champion businesses that are facing barriers and build community amongst entrepreneurs. (5 points)

Explain how this project supports micro, resident-owned, and disadvantaged DC-based businesses with a focus on broadening equitable access to entrepreneurial success, including accessibility considerations as outlined in 9G.

G. Additional Uploads

1. Applicants must submit resumes for each of the key training or other 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 15 slides to help demonstrate their full proposal. (Optional)
4. Applicants may choose to submit up to three (3) letters of support or reference letters of any kind; letters may be coalition letters with multiple signatories. (Optional)

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 required)

1. Grant reviewers will detail an overall narrative summary of strengths and weaknesses of the proposal.
2. Grant reviewers will confirm that the proposed subcontracting is no more than 49% of the total budgeted proposal and that the proposed subcontractors are CBEs.

B. Are the proposed budget line items cost-effective overall and impactful in meeting the goals of the service area? (15 points, 5 points per question)

1. Do the cost categories align with the narrative proposal, and is the proposal scalable to different funding amounts?
2. Are the proposed costs reasonable for the proposed services and in alignment with the allowable costs as outlined in the RFA?
3. Are the proposed costs specifically cost-effective, impactful, and a responsible use of Government funds?

C. Does the proposal meet the outlined goals of the identified program area(s), and is it realistic in the projected timelines and project goals? (15 points, 5 points per question)

1. Does the proposal contain a detailed work plan and deliverable proposals with projected timelines that are scalable, realistic, and connected to the proposed service area requirements?
2. Do the work plan and deliverable requirements meet the stated goals of the proposed service area?

3. Did the proposal demonstrate that the project team has the capacity to complete all the proposed tasks, submit all deliverables, and expend the budget by September 30, 2024, or earlier?

D. Do the providers and any proposed subcontractors have past performance in the area of the support proposed? (10 points, 5 points per question).

1. Including submitted resumes, do the individual providers proposed to conduct the work have relevant experience and expertise for the proposed tasks?
2. Including capability statements, if provided, does the business or organization have direct or closely related past performance for the proposed service area?

E. Are the proposed services targeted to support businesses within the named programs(s) to grow their DC-based businesses? (5 points)

Will the proposed activity directly support participants in the WeAspire, Dream Pitch, and/or Just Cannabusiness programs (outlined in Appendix A) in operating a successful business?

F. Does the overall proposal champion businesses that are facing barriers and build community amongst entrepreneurs? (5 points)

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 accessibility considerations as outlined in RFA Section 9: G?

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 using the above criteria.

DSLBD's Program Team will review the panel reviewers' recommendations and report them to the Director of DSLBD, who will make the final determination of grant awards. DSLBD anticipates selecting a mix of different direct service providers per individual service areas.

8. Award Information

A. Grant Award Notification

DSLBD intends for grants to be reviewed and awarded on a rolling basis by service area. Some service area awardees will receive notices earlier than other service area awardees. DSLBD anticipates emailing Notices of Grant Award (“NOGA”) for selected applicants throughout the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2024 (January-March 2024).

DSLBD will notify all applicants who are not awarded a service area no later than one week after the initial notification is made to selected applicants.

B. Pre-Award Finalization and Insurance

Notices of Grant Award will include any contingencies, additional requirements, and processes for finalizing budgets, budget categories, deliverables, and scopes of work. DSLBD may negotiate with awardees on adjustments from the proposal to the final award. 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, workman’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 roster and most recent Form 990s. Other pre-award certifications may apply. Failure to meet contingency requirements may result in the award being forfeited.

For previous DSLBD grantees, the current award may be contingent upon the completion of previous grant reporting. If agreements are unable to be executed 15 days after a Notice of Grant Award due to the awarded grantee’s inability to meet the post-award requirements for any reason, the grant funds may be forfeited.

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

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 signing grant agreements between DSLBD and the grantees throughout the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2024 (January-March 2024).

D. Additional Survey Assessment

DSLBD anticipates further survey assessment of awardees following the finalization of grant agreements to support program evaluation.

E. Regular Grantee Coordination with Grant 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.

D. Grant Reporting

The grant agreement will require additional documentation and reporting during and following the grant period using reporting system(s) stipulated by DSLBD. This will include an approved budget and expenditures within the cost categories outlined under the grant with appropriate documentation (receipts and similar proof of expenditures made). Failure to submit documentation of proper expenditures may result in a requirement to return funds not properly accounted as expended on allowable costs. This will also include demonstration and data for grant activities and deliverables required under the grant.

Grantees are required to submit interim reporting as outlined in the individual grant agreement and to prepare a final report by October 30, 2024, providing proof of appropriate expenses made and impacts of the grant.

E. Disbursement (Payment)

Terms of disbursement shall be determined after applicants are selected but may include the collection of additional documentation such as an 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 pays all approved invoices within 30 days of receipt of invoice. **This 30-day timeline starts after an executed grant agreement is in place, a recipient is fully registered to receive payment via the District's payment systems or selected 3rd party payment systems, a purchase order number has been successfully created, and the grantee successfully submits an eligible invoice in the required system.**

F. Modifications

Additional or modified information may be required as part of a final grant agreement. An awardee that cannot provide these and other requested materials by the date outlined in the Notice of Grant Award, may be disqualified and DSLBD may award the grant to another applicant.

9. Important Legal Disclaimers

This section includes the 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

Following the closing of the application deadline(s), 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 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 on October 14, 2022, and the OPGS Funding Alert. The NOFA is available at <http://dslbd.dc.gov/>.

D. Conflicts

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. Costs 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 any grant applications for a Business to Business 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 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 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. 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 in previous years. A timeline for implementation will be coordinated across service areas, and in concert with DSLBD program staff to support program participants navigating several service offerings.

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, review Accessibility see Section 9: G.

Programs Directly Supported through the Business to Business Grants

- **WeAspire.** The Aspire program provides business development support for DC-resident returning citizens. 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 in any industry. Participants will receive stipends for completing milestones for their business development. The program will include core cohort requirements, stipend pitches, as well as options to participate in additional training. In FY2024, DSLBD anticipates a cohort of 20-25 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. Majority ownership of a business must be by residents of the Wards, businesses must have or achieve licensure, and only the majority owner may participate in the pitch. Businesses participating in Dream Pitch require licensure to pitch but can be at any

stage and any 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. In FY2024, DSLBD anticipates a cohort of 40-60 Dreamers.

- **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, with fewer traditional business supports available to their businesses. DSLBD cannot estimate the number of residents and businesses interested in support, but estimates between 100-200 businesses may receive conditional licenses from the regulatory authority.

Programs that can coordinate with or support services through the Business to Business Grants

- **Made in DC.** Made in DC is a certification program for businesses that are resident-owned or with a majority of employees who are residents that make, design, assemble, or manufacture products in DC.
- **District Capitalized.** District Capitalized is a suite of programming to support increasing access to capital opportunities and education for DC-based businesses. This includes a regular Money Mondays webinar series, consultations with financial service providers, funding opportunities (grants, loans, and lines of credit), written guidance, and other resources.
- **DC Kiva Hub at DSLBD.** DC Kiva Hub at DSLBD is a program with Kiva, a nonprofit microlender that provides crowdfunded loans. Through the DC Kiva Hub, eligible DC-based business loan applicants receive technical assistance to help prepare their loan application, develop their online crowdfunding pitch, manage their crowdfunding campaign, and troubleshoot loan repayment issues.

Appendix B. Storytelling and Videography Service Area

DSLBD seeks service providers to support storytelling for programs and program participants, including written and verbal descriptions, photography, and videography covering participant and provider journeys throughout each program. The stories of entrepreneurs can form the core of their marketing plans, pitches for funding, and serve

as powerful educational and inspirational opportunities for other entrepreneurs, customers, and others.

Proposals for storytelling should include:

- Scalable proposals for one or multiple programs
- How the service provider supports and helps tell stories
- Technical skills and examples of similar projects
- How the service provider supports building community
- Specific proposed deliverables, such as video content or similar content
- The benefit to entrepreneurs from the proposal

Appendix C: Pitch Preparation & Pitch Coaching Service Area

DSLBD seeks service providers to support program participants in the preparation of varied styles of business pitches, including investor pitches, crowdfunding pitches, and short pitches. This includes public speaking support and individualized coaching. Pitching a business is a defined skill, and different styles of pitches require businesses to hone different skills as well as the actual business plan.

Proposals for pitch preparation should include:

- Scalable proposals for one or multiple programs
- How the service provider supports confidence building
- Technical skills and examples of similar projects
- Service provider theory of what makes a business pitch strong
- An approach to coordinating with other service providers
- Specific proposed deliverables such as group trainings, coaching sessions, workbook materials, etc.

Appendix D: Cohort Management and Wrap-Around Support Service Area

DSLBD seeks service providers to provide direct support to program participants to assist with retention by supporting and taking attendance, sending standard program reminders, troubleshooting program participation barriers, creating a cohort experience within programs, and tracking participant milestones and successes. Specifically, for the WeAspire program, DSLBD seeks a cohort manager to further support connecting participants with additional social services available in the city as needed. Cohort managers champion the business and the entrepreneur.

DSLBD anticipates 2-4 cohorts, which could have separate cohort managers or single cohort managers for the WeAspire Program and 2-3 subsections of the Dream Program. Therefore, DSLBD anticipates making one or more awards for cohort management.

Proposals for cohort management should include:

- Scalable proposals for one or multiple programs
- How the service provider proposes to create a cohort experience
- Technical skills and examples of similar projects
- How the service provider builds connections with individual entrepreneurs
- An approach to coordinating with other service providers
- Specific proposed deliverables such as tracking milestones, attendance, and supporting program retention

Appendix E: Pitch Day Onsite Event Management Service Area

DSLBD seeks service providers to prepare and manage onsite logistics for the Dream Pitch and several Aspire mini-pitches. Dream Pitch will consist of three (3) total pitch days, one for each Ward 7 and 8, and one final Battle of the Wards Pitch for top prizes. Aspire is anticipated to have 4-6 stipend-supported mini-pitch days for participants to continue to build their business stories and pitches overtime. Other programs may also have mini-pitches. DSLBD will coordinate with the onsite manager to determine final locations for all pitches, which can include free or rental spaces.

Proposals for event management should include:

- Scalable proposals for one or multiple programs
- Proposed process for managing both small and large pitch events
- Technical event management skills
- An approach to coordinating with other service providers
- Specific proposed deliverables

Appendix F: Pitch Micropayment Provider Service Area

DSLBD seeks service providers to support micropayments to Dream Pitch participants and participant stipends based upon program participation and milestones to Aspire 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 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

Appendix G: Business Classes and Workshops Service Area

DSLBD seeks multiple business class providers for a variety of formats and topics to support DC-based entrepreneurs in introductory and upskilling classes for business management. For classes to be meaningful and impactful, they must be memorable; and to be memorable, entrepreneurs must attend and be engaged. DSLBD will work with selected instructors to set the schedule of classes across all providers to ensure opportunities for participants. Classes may be core classes 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 that the recordings be shared with DSLBD for the Department’s reference and/or for sharing with businesses. 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.

DSLBD seeks classes or workshop proposals on the following topics as well as novel classes or workshop proposals not contemplated below:

Class Topic	WeAspire	Dream Pitch	Cannabusiness
Business Mindset	Core	Elective	Elective
Business 101	Core	Elective	Elective
General Business Planning & Plan Development	Core	Core	Elective
Regulated Cannabis Business Planning & Plan Development	Elective	Elective	Core
Food & Beverage Business Planning & Plan Development	Elective	Core	Elective

Commercial Space Leasing or Purchasing	Elective	Elective	Core
Introduction to Regulated Cannabis	Elective	Elective	Core
Preparing for Equity Investment	Elective	Elective	Core
Regulatory Compliance & Risk Mitigation	Elective	Elective	Core
Marketing 101	Elective	Core	Elective
Tax Basics	Elective	Elective	Elective
Strategies for Growth & Exit	Elective	Elective	Elective
Business Financial Management Basics	Core	Core	Core
Other topics as proposed	Elective	Elective	Elective

Proposals for classes and workshops should include:

- Scalable proposals for one or multiple programs
- Proposed class or workshop topic
- Proposed length of the class in time (minutes) and days if a proposed series of classes
- Proposed instructional format (e.g., in-person group training, webinar, and an interactive workshop)
- Ideal number of entrepreneurs
- Ideal industry(ies) and/or stage of business(es)
- Description of virtual or in-person, if in person proposed location(s)
- Office hours or follow-up opportunities for participants
- Expected benefit to entrepreneurs
- Technical skills and examples of similar projects
- Specific proposed deliverables including a takeaway workbook, worksheet materials, or other resource materials

Appendix H: Non-Dilutive Capital Support for Regulated Cannabusiness Businesses

DSLBD seeks a service provider to facilitate lending or similar non-dilutive capital to businesses in or entering the regulated cannabis market. Lending, banking, and traditional access to capital support are limited for cannabis businesses, with a need for non-dilutive

capital to support the retention of local ownership of new businesses. Accepting proposals up to \$50,000.00.

Proposals for Non-Dilutive Capital Support should include:

- Demonstrated understanding of and compliance with the DC and federal regulatory landscape related to state-regulated cannabis markets
- Plan for ensuring access to non-dilutive capital for DC-based businesses in or entering the regulated medical market
- Risk mitigation for ensuring that businesses receiving funding are DC-based and are in or entering the regulated DC cannabis market
- Proposed outreach plan to DC-based cannabis entrepreneurs
- Anticipated ability to provide non-dilutive capital to DC social equity applicants with the Alcohol Beverage and Cannabis Administration

Appendix I: Speakers Bureau Service Area

DSLBD seeks multiple DC-based entrepreneurs to be speakers on varied topics of entrepreneurship that can inspire and level-set 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. Speakers Bureau proposals are for at least two (2) sessions—one with a live audience and one recorded—and anticipated to be funded at \$250.00 per session, capping at \$500.00 per speaker. At minimum, a one-page takeaway sheet for audience members about the talk should be provided per speaker.

Proposals for Speakers 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 takeaway sheet

Appendix J: Innovative Proposals for Services Non-Contemplated by this RFA

DSLBD is accepting innovative proposals for services not contemplated by this RFA that applicants believe would be of significant benefit to the listed programs of WeAspire, Dream Pitch, and/or Just Cannabusiness. DSLBD may, but is not required to, make awards from this service category, but welcomes unique funding proposals not otherwise contemplated.