



Only in Seattle

The Office of Economic Development's Only in Seattle Initiative is a comprehensive approach to neighborhood economic development. With seed funding and expertise, Seattle's business districts have used Only in Seattle to tackle tough issues, attract new investment and care for their communities.

The Only in Seattle Vision:

To build a racially equitable and vibrant city by fostering neighborhood business districts that are centers of local commerce, community, and culture.

Our Mission:

By supporting community members to build partnerships, unite around a common vision, and take action, we enable districts to achieve neighborhood economic development priorities.

From business coaching, community festivals, and litter cleanup, to murals, outreach and real estate development, neighborhood business districts apply multiple strategies simultaneously to affect desired changes. The five core strategy areas that OIS uses are based on best practices and decades of experience:

- **Organization** - Neighborhood organizations, residents, property owners and business owners collaborate and work together toward a common vision for the business district.
- **Marketing & Events** – Local businesses are supported by marketing strategies and events that bring customers and emphasize a positive, consistent image of the district.
- **Business Development** - Businesses prosper because they are organized, supported by the community and they receive the assistance they need to strengthen and grow their business. New businesses move into the district that complement and improve the business mix.
- **Placemaking** - The physical environment of a commercial node is inviting and easily accessible by multiple modes of transportation. Real estate development involves community input and vision. Public spaces are maximized to enhance vibrancy and promote social interaction.
- **Clean & Safe** – The district is clean, and customers, employees, and visitors feel safe and welcome.

By 2025 we want Seattle's Only in Seattle business districts to be vibrant, engaged and racially equitable. By this we mean:



- **Vibrant** - Neighborhoods with a healthy ecosystem of strong businesses serving the community, equitable wealth creation opportunities, active public spaces and unique character.
- **Engaged** - Community led organizations and members have strong voices and the experience, tools and skills for self-determination to address their most pressing needs.
- **Racially Equitable** - Business owners of color and historically under resourced communities are benefiting from the city's growth.



How the program works

This initiative provides seed funding and support that can help a business district move ahead of its current state to a new level of organization and operations. Participating districts develop a strategic vision of where they want to be, an action plan to achieve that vision, and clear outcomes that are intended from the work.

Districts in the program work closely with an Only in Seattle staff member to set a pathway through the stages of organizational development and action planning and determine resources and supporting services needed.

Business district organizations in the program develop through the following stages:

Organizing – In this stage, districts are working on organizing (or reorganizing) stakeholders in the district to develop a shared vision and create a new action plan. Grants are generally for consultants and/or staff to conduct outreach, facilitate planning meetings, develop a plan and complete early projects that build momentum. Districts work through the following milestones:

- Establishing a representative stakeholder group.
- Create a Vision and Action Plan for the district that identifies early win projects.
- Develop a business directory and focus on inclusive outreach.

Transforming – In this stage, districts are implementing a current action plan that has been developed in the Organizing stage. The grants can cover staff, project costs, and/or consulting. More than one organization can receive a grant as long as there is a central hub for the vision and action plan with solid coordination and communication with and between all participating parties. Districts work through the following milestones:

- Establish organizational structure to implement the work with a representative board or committee.
- Implement Action Plan strategies and identify metrics to track progress
- Develop partnerships and deepen inclusive business outreach and engagement.
- Establish communication platform and strategies – neighborhood branding/ promotion, storytelling, info sharing
- Track commercial space and new development in the district
- Develop and track memberships with the business district organization



Sustaining – In this stage, districts have accomplished the milestones of the Organizing and Transforming stages and are moving toward financial and organizational sustainability with ongoing implementation of an action plan. Grants can cover staff, project costs, and/or consulting to help a district accomplish the following milestones:

- Strengthen the organization board, volunteers and staff
- Increase neighborhood level investments in the work, such as membership dues, donations, sponsorships, establishing a Business Improvement Area.
- Track and influence development projects in the business district
- Update or revise Action Plan to respond to neighborhood needs

Resources and Training

Training Curriculum

Staff and volunteers working on Only in Seattle projects will have access to several trainings to help them learn new tools and approaches to expand their work and connect with others in the city. Some trainings will be mandatory, and others are optional.

Mandatory Trainings:

- Racial Equity in Business Districts cohort training
- Operationalizing Racial Equity facilitated work sessions
- Inclusive Outreach Best Practices + business issue tracking
- For CDBG funds: How to manage and track CDBG funded business services and outreach

Other Foundational Trainings:

- How to influence development in your neighborhood
- Meeting facilitation and conflict resolution
- Developing resources and targeted funding strategies

Resources

Only in Seattle has assembled a variety of resources to support business districts in their journey through the stages of development. Districts will have an OIS staff person as their primary point of contact who will work with them to determine which resources to access and identify others that may be needed. Available resources are:



- Community Liaison support to improve outreach and build relationships with business owners of color
- Consulting support for nonprofit organizational development such as strategic planning, financial practices, board development, etc.
- Assistance in forming a Business Improvement Area (BIA), modifying an existing BIA's boundaries or rate payment structure, exploring the feasibility of a BIA, or BIAs interested in support to strengthen or improve operations.
- Neighborhood Market and demographic data
- Business technical assistance and financing services and referrals
- Peer-to-peer connections and learning events
- Affordable commercial tools and workshops
- Workforce/ employment resources

OIS staff will also work closely with business districts to assess their progress along the OIS stages, support them in meeting milestones, develop strategies to reach the next stage and support them in accomplishing early win projects. Much of the work includes making connections with other City staff and resources to help resolve issues faced by the neighborhoods and businesses.



Application Process

Comprehensive business district development can take many years to accomplish. Every year in the fall, there is a process to determine the annual awards for the upcoming year. If your district is currently receiving Only in Seattle funding and support and you are making reasonable progress in meeting milestones and advancing through the stages of development, you will not need to complete a full application each year. Instead, you will meet with your OIS staff person to evaluate your progress and develop a work plan and budget request for the upcoming year. There may also be an opportunity for City staff to visit the business district organizations to learn about your successes and challenges first hand.

Any districts seeking to join the program can complete a full application in the fall. New applications will be considered along with work plans and budget requests from participating districts to determine final grant awards for the upcoming year. Requests will be reviewed by multiple City staff from the OIS team as well as other departments such as SDOT, DON and OPCD to inform decisions and discuss collaboration opportunities.

Program Requirements

Target Area - Business districts will select geographic boundaries that will be the focus of the work.

Coordination – If multiple organizations are working together, there must be a clear plan for coordination, with one organization or individual identified as the lead for overseeing the implementation of the action plan.

Strong Stakeholder Participation – While the activities are overseen by a local lead organization or individual, no one agency can do everything. Public agencies, nonprofit organizations, area residents, businesses and property owners must share investments in and responsibility for strengthening their neighborhoods. Action Plans must be developed with the input and involvement of key stakeholders and each component of the plan must identify the organizations, staff or volunteers to take responsibility for ensuring implementation.

Impact and Long-Term Sustainability - The Action Plans should be focused on making an immediate impact in the district and developing infrastructure that will allow the work to be sustainable over time.

Investment - OED will make an investment of grant dollars, technical assistance, training resources and staff time in each participating business district. The grant funding can reimburse operating and direct costs incurred by the lead agencies and other agencies submitting joint



proposals. This can include staff costs, supplies, marketing, etc. Funding can also be used for physical improvement projects such as business district beautification.

One Proposal per Business District – As mentioned above, efforts in the district should be coordinated among community stakeholders. Therefore, we only want to receive one application from each commercial district. If we receive multiple applications from different groups in a district that are either unaware of each other’s work or are competing for the grant, we will require that the groups work together to develop shared priorities. The application can include funding for multiple agencies and the lead agency or individual will be responsible for coordinating the work of organizations involved.

Federal Funding Requirements - Part of the funding for this program is federal – Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Business districts receiving federal funds need to be located in primarily residential (as opposed to primarily industrial) areas and providing direct services to low-income microenterprises or businesses with low income customers. Business districts that do not meet this requirement can still be eligible to receive City General Funds. Business districts within the following neighborhoods potentially qualify for the federal funding: Central Area, Rainier Valley, Chinatown International District, Little Saigon, White Center, South Park, Delridge, and University District. Federal funding eligibility will need to be determined for each proposal.

Reporting Requirements – Business districts are required to keep track of outcomes in their contract, including a list of businesses receiving direct support. All reporting requirements will be included in the contract.

Code of Conduct - The Office of Economic Development’s Only in Seattle Initiative is committed to providing a friendly, safe and welcoming environment for all, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ability, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and religion (or lack thereof). Participants in Only in Seattle Initiative include City of Seattle staff, neighborhood and business organization staff, volunteers, board and committee members, businesses, residents and property owners involved in action planning and implementation of Only in Seattle action plans and projects. We invite all those who participate in Only in Seattle to help us create safe and positive experiences for everyone.

Contracting Process

Grantees will receive a one-year grant commitment and contract. Each year the investments are contingent upon the availability of funds for this program and the grantee’s satisfactory progress on activities during the previous year(s).



Public space projects can span over multiple years, especially for larger projects. These can be carried forward as long as the project is making progress. Public space awards that are not contracted or acted upon by the awardee within the year granted may be forfeit at OED's discretion. The awardee can reapply for the project at the next funding round when and if they become ready to move it forward. Public awards are often based on cost estimates; if actual project costs are lower than estimated, the unused funds will be maintained by OED.

Contracts need to be completed and signed before work is eligible for reimbursement. Contracts can be developed immediately after investment notifications in November. Contracts can no longer be back-dated. The contract will include specific activities, milestones and a budget based on an action plan that is accepted by OED and the district.

Protest Procedures

In the event that an unsuccessful respondent wishes to protest the decision, they must do so by submitting in writing the reason for the protest to the Director of the Office of Economic Development. Any such protest must be received within three (3) business days of receipt of notification of decision. The Director shall consider all the facts available and issue a decision within five (5) business days after receipt of the request for rehearing, unless additional time is necessary, in which case, the affected respondent will be notified of the delay. The decision of the Director will be final and conclusive. A request for reconsideration will be denied.

Questions about these Protest Procedures should contact Theresa Barreras:

theresa.barreras@seattle.gov or (206) 684-4505