



2020 Request for Applications Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q - Are OIS staff available to review our applications, answer our questions, or help us if we have trouble with the online application?

ANSWER: Yes – feel free to contact us (see contact info below)! We can provide guidance and feedback on your application and answer other questions. We will do our best to help you. Keep in mind that we may not always be available, especially at the last minute. It is best to contact us at least several days before the application is due. We may not be reachable over the weekends or in the evenings.

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2. Q - How do I decide what stage of development my business district is in (Organizing, Transforming or Sustaining)? Will it reflect poorly on us, or will we be disqualified if we choose the wrong stage?

ANSWER: You will not be disqualified for applying for the “wrong” stage. Feel free to email or call us to help you determine which stage you are in, which can save you time preparing your application. If you are confused by the descriptions of each stage and/or the milestones listed for each stage, it is safest to select the “Organizing” stage.

3. Q - Where can I get funding for an individual project or event in my district?

ANSWER: If your project or event is part of a larger business district plan, it can be part of your application. The Only in Seattle Initiative is designed to strengthen community-based organizations to grow and serve their districts better. One-time events or projects that are not part of an action plan are not generally the focus of this program.

The Department of Neighborhoods continues to provide its Neighborhood Matching Fund grants, the Office of Arts and Culture has granting programs, and there are other opportunities from the City as well, depending on your project. This website has a summary of many granting sources at the city.
<http://www.seattle.gov/services-and-information/grants-and-funding>

4. Q - How do you determine what is a neighborhood business district?

ANSWER: A neighborhood business district should have a mixture of residents, businesses and others using the district such as employees or shoppers. In your proposal, you tell us about your business district – the geographic boundaries, the businesses, the people served, etc. The City has also created a few different ways of classifying neighborhoods districts such as the designated Urban Villages, neighborhood commercial zoning, etc. We look at all the information as well as our own knowledge of the area.

5. Q - If my district was in the program this year, do we need to submit a proposal each year?

ANSWER: No. For the 2020 application, districts that are currently receiving funding for their action plans do not need to complete the application. They will go through a separate process to evaluate their progress and they will submit a work plan and budget request. These districts are not guaranteed to continue receiving funding.

6. Q – What is a typical grant size?

ANSWER: Grants vary by organizational stage, size of the business district organization and complexity of the work. Grants can be from \$10,000 to \$200,000. Organizing grants are generally in the \$20,000 - \$50,000 range. Transforming grants are in the \$30,000 - \$200,000 range and sustaining grants can be from \$10,000 to \$200,000.

7. Q – Our community has created a vision/neighborhood plan/or other such planning process. This vision/plan is still relevant to our business district. Can we use this as our “Strategic Vision” or do we need to create a new one? Alternately, our business association/chamber has a mission statement. Is that an acceptable “Strategic Vision?”

ANSWER: The Strategic Vision should be broadly shared, compelling and build on your district's individual strengths. If there was a community process to develop a vision that continues to feel relevant to your stakeholders, that is probably a broadly shared vision. If you have reached out to all major stakeholders in the district and have agreed on the vision, this can also demonstrate that it is broadly shared. The “Strategic” part of the vision is intended to make it specific to your district and be directly driving the strategies in your plan. The following example shows how the vision ties to specific strategies and planning processes. It is not very specific to the neighborhood, however. The XYZ business district has a two-fold vision:

First, we envision the business district as a pleasant and convenient one-stop shopping location for residents of the surrounding neighborhoods. To this end, we recruit businesses that round out the district's offerings, we promote sufficient density of businesses and residents to provide a “critical mass”, and we seek to promote shopping locally.

Secondly, we envision XYZ as a region-wide destination for dining, entertainment and the arts. To this end, we promote our district regionally and try to make it as hospitable as possible for visitors.

This vision statement was developed at a day-long, facilitated assessment and visioning session in May 2003. The session was attended by a mix of business owners, property owners, and neighborhood activists. It is consistent with the 1999 Neighborhood Plan vision for the XYZ residential urban village as a vibrant, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented community that maintains its historic small-town scale. The business district vision has stood the test of time remarkably well, and it has provided important direction to the Business Association as well as to individual businesses and property owners.

Here is another example: ABC's vision is to support an economically vibrant, sustainable, and culturally diverse ABC Business District. Our goal is to support equitable development of the ABC area, to preserve diversity and affordability and create economic opportunities for businesses and residents in this changing area. Our vision is a holistic, long-term plan that includes organizing businesses and residents, developing the capacity and political capital of local businesses, creating economic development opportunities, and developing affordable commercial and residential projects within this neighborhood business district.

This vision grew out of several community/stakeholder processes over the last decade or more including the Neighborhood Planning process conducted by the City in 1999, the Action Agenda of 2005, and through a number of stakeholder meetings ABC conducted three years ago with business and community leaders in the area. Most recently, the City's 2009 Neighborhood Plan Update process reconfirmed that this vision is supported by the larger community. This vision is articulated at community planning and visioning processes and the BA posts it on their website, brochures and other promotional materials.

8. Q – Does the City have a list of businesses in my district that you can provide to me?

ANSWER: We might be able to provide a list of business licenses, but we will not have time to do this before the grant deadline. If you are trying to provide the number of businesses in your district, it is best to estimate the number based on your best guess.

9. Q - Where can I find demographic data about my district?

ANSWER: OED has some data collected for business districts that have been in the OIS program. Contact us if you have not received your report.

ANSWER: Several data resources are listed on the Only in Seattle pages of the OED website under Business Districts, Tools & Funding: <http://www.seattle.gov/economicdevelopment/business-districts/tools-and-funding#finddata>

[Policy Map](#), listed on the page, is a free and easy to use resource for a quick snapshot of demographic data.

ANSWER: Census data can be accessed through King County's Localscape website. To search for your neighborhood, select Neighborhoods in the drop down menu at the top of the screen and type your neighborhood in the search box. <http://localscape.property/#kingcountyassessor>

10. Q - The application mentions that Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are restricted to low-income neighborhoods or for low-income microenterprises. How do you determine if my neighborhood or businesses are eligible? If I am not in a low-income neighborhood, can I apply for funding?

ANSWER: In general, CDBG funds need to be used in neighborhoods that are “primarily residential” and where at least 51% of people served are low or moderate income, based on federal income guidelines. However, there are many other eligibility options and requirements and every district must be reviewed individually to determine if and how CDBG funds can be used. CDBG funds are a large portion of the funds available but not the only fund source. There are also City general funds that have different requirements and can be used in neighborhoods that are not low-moderate income. If you think OIS is a good fit for your district, please consider submitting a proposal. It is our job to figure out how to use the funding to serve the top proposals. The following neighborhoods potentially qualify for the federal funding: Central Area, Rainier Valley, Chinatown International District, Little Saigon, Capitol Hill, White Center, South Park, Pioneer Square, Delridge, University District and Lake City.