

Only in Seattle Initiative RFA Frequently Asked Questions

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

A – 2000 census data by neighborhood is available on DPD’s website:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Research/Population_Demographics/Census_2000_Data/Data_Maps_for_Locally_Defined_Areas/DPDS_007017.asp

DPD has not compiled 2010 census data by neighborhood. Information about the data, links to the census website, and Seattle information that has been compiled are available here:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Research/Population_Demographics/Overview/

Q - The RFA mentions that federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are restricted to low-income neighborhoods. How do you determine which neighborhoods are eligible and if I am not in a low-income neighborhood, can I apply for funding?

A - 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.

Q - How do I decide what tier to apply for? Will it reflect poorly on us, or will we be disqualified if we apply for the wrong tier?

A - You will not be disqualified for applying for the “wrong” tier. Last year, many districts received funding or services within a different tier than the one for which they applied. For example, districts submitted a Tier I proposal, were not competitive at that level, but were a good fit for Organizational Development consulting. The applications for Tiers I and II require much more information and time to prepare than Tiers III and IV. Feel free to email or call us to help you determine which tier is the best fit, which can save you time preparing your application.

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

A – The OIS Initiative replaced OED’s former Neighborhood Business District granting process, which funded more individual projects. We no longer provide grants to business districts outside of the OIS

RFA process. If you meet the definition of an “established” district, you can apply for a single project, event, or other one-time cost if it would help your district reach a higher level of operations.

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

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

A – 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 of the information as well as our own knowledge of the area.

Q - If my district was in the program in 2013, do we need to submit a proposal each year?

A – Yes. Granting remains competitive each year and all districts must submit a proposal to be in the program. For districts that received grants last year, there are a few differences in the information requested. The proposal instructions specify the different information requested for current and new grantees.

Q – If we are interested in BIA Support (Tier V) and Capacity Building and District Visioning Support (Tier IV) in addition to a Tier I or Tier II application, should we submit separate requests or just one application

A –One application should be submitted for the entire district. Please indicate on the cover page which tiers you are applying for and complete the corresponding applications for those tiers

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?”

A – 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 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.

Q – Does the funding for façade improvements require Davis Bacon/prevaling wage compliance?

A – No. This funding does not have the typical requirements of federal, state or city general funds. The funding is not CDBG. The requirements for funding are determined by the Seattle Investment Fund LLC, which is overseeing the use of OED's allocation of New Markets Tax Credits.

Q – Can we request funding to do planning, design or visioning for façade improvement?

A – The committee is interested in funding projects that will be implemented. If you already have funding in place for implementation but need funding for final design work, it's possible the committee would be interested in funding it, depending on how well it meets all the criteria.

Q – Can we submit a proposal for a façade project that is already underway? The funding would be used to reimburse our organization for costs already expended.

A – The committee overseeing the façade improvement proposals is interested in funding projects that will be implemented. It's possible the committee would be interested in funding a project that is already underway, depending on how well it meets all the criteria.

Q – I am a property owner in a business district and I am interested in applying for the façade improvement funds. Can I submit a proposal on my own, or do I need to submit in partnership with my local business association?

A-Façade improvements applications must be part of an Only in Seattle Initiative proposal. So it is best to contact your local chamber, merchants association or Business Improvement Area to determine if your district is applying for an Only in Seattle Initiative grant. If you are not sure who to contact, OED might be able to provide contact information for you.