



## GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Department of Small Business Services (SBS) supports community-based economic development organizations throughout the city in order to create the conditions under which local businesses can grow and thrive. To help achieve this mission, SBS is launching the latest round of *Neighborhood Challenge*, a competitive grant initiative designed to encourage **innovative projects** that address commercial district challenges, generate community and economic impacts, and receive local recognition upon implementation. The competition awards **catalytic investments** of up to \$100,000 to Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and other Community Based Development Organizations (CBDOs) with economic development budgets under \$2 million.

Since 2012, the *Neighborhood Challenge* and its preceding competition, *BID Challenge*, have received nearly 160 project proposals from CBDOs across New York City. Twenty organizations have been awarded grants totaling over \$1.1 million for innovative projects including storefront improvements, district marketing campaigns, public art installations, business attraction initiatives, and public space activation. These winning programs and initiatives are currently being implemented in business corridors across the five boroughs.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

### BID Applicants must:

- Be incorporated BIDs located in New York City with annual assessments less than or equal to \$2,000,000
- Demonstrate timely submission of audited financial statements and annual reports to SBS in the previous fiscal year

### CBDO Applicants must:

- Be incorporated as a nonprofit in New York State and be in compliance with the New York State Charities Bureau
- Be operating in the five boroughs of New York City
- Have a dedicated economic development budget under \$2,000,000

**Partnerships:** This competition is also open to community-serving organizations that do not have a dedicated economic development budget but are able to demonstrate an implementation partnership with a CBDO or BID and a plan for community and economic impacts. **All applicants** must consider the New York State and City agencies that may need to be involved in project implementation and must establish contact and/or agreements with those agencies in advance of applying for Neighborhood Challenge funding.

Small and/or new organizations are encouraged to propose project budgets that are within their capacity to realistically execute within the 1 year project timeline.

BID / CBDO Economic Development Budget	Award Amounts
Less than \$500,000	Up to \$50,000
\$500,000 - \$2,000,000	Up to \$100,000

## PROJECT CATEGORIES: INNOVATION THROUGH COMPETITION

*Neighborhood Challenge* grants will be awarded to BIDs and CBDOs that present the most inventive and impactful economic development and revitalization programs that would otherwise not be achieved due to limited organizational capacity and/or funding. *Neighborhood Challenge* is intended to spark new ideas and approaches to common neighborhood and commercial corridor issues. Projects should aim to leverage additional talent, partners, and resources both inside and outside of City government to achieve wide-ranging outcomes.

*Neighborhood Challenge* grant proposals should focus on one of the following two project categories:

- Corridor and Civic Space Activation: Proposed initiatives should enhance the economic vitality of a commercial district through placemaking and public space planning and activation efforts. Ideal projects include a mix of programs, events, and/or installations that physically enhance the corridor, collectively provide both short- and long-term impacts, and that ultimately improve the vitality and promote the unique profile of a particular location or entire commercial district.
- Property Activation and Development: Projects include real estate analysis, feasibility studies, and development plans, ideally paired with an immediate private space activation component, that target underutilized properties that show promise to be near-term and/or long-term local economic catalysts.

## APPLICATION REVIEW & RANKING SYSTEM

Awards will be made on a competitive basis. Project concepts and applications will be reviewed by a committee comprised of SBS and EDC staff and practitioners/leaders from the aforementioned project categories. Projects should aim to leverage additional talent, partners, and resources outside of City support to achieve wide-ranging outcomes. Projects will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- **Business Challenge** – The project clearly articulates a critical and significant challenge to businesses within a specific commercial district that it will address, and the solution falls within one of the project categories.
- **Innovation** – The project demonstrates innovation in addressing an identified commercial district challenge.
- **Economic Impact** – The project will have a measureable impact on the local economy, as well as receive local recognition upon implementation. It will serve as a catalyst that jumpstarts new neighborhood initiatives or activities that have the potential for long-term sustainability and positive economic impact.
- **Community Impact** – The project will provide a community benefit and be visible and accessible to the intended audience.
- **Organizational Capacity** – The proposed budget matches with the organizational budget tiers, and the presented staff appear capable of undertaking a project of this scope.
- **Catalytic Investment** – The requested funding will provide the resources necessary to complete a project and encourage additional investment in the community as a result of the project.

## SELECTION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The grantee selection process consists of two phases:

- 1. Project Concept:** Applicants submit a brief project concept summary that outlines the project's Vision, Implementation, and Outcome/Impact, as well as a project budget and list of staff members and others that will oversee the execution of the project. Respondents are strongly encouraged to partner with neighboring BIDs, CBDOs, local institutions, small businesses, government agencies, and other community stakeholders on their project proposals. Applicants may submit multiple project concepts. Neighborhood Challenge project concepts must be submitted via the web form accessible here: [http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/html/neighborhood\\_development/NDD\\_Neighborhood\\_Challenge\\_Project\\_Application.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/html/neighborhood_development/NDD_Neighborhood_Challenge_Project_Application.shtml), no later than **11:59 p.m. on Sunday, November 1, 2015**.
- 2. Detailed Proposals and Pitch Competition:** Invited organizations will submit a detailed application illustrating the project's Vision, Implementation Timeline, Outcome/Impact, Partnerships, and Budget, along with a list of members of the Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers of the applicant organization(s), relevant letters of support or proof of additional resources being added to the proposed project, and operating budgets for FY2015 and FY2016. In addition, the organizations will deliver a brief pitch presentation on their proposal to a panel of judges at the Finalist Pitch Competition. The judging panel then selects the winners of Neighborhood Challenge grants. Key dates for this phase include:
  - Invitations sent to participate in phase two: by November 23, 2015
  - Detailed proposals due: January 11, 2016
  - Finalist Pitch Competition: Week of January 25 – 29, 2016