

**DEPARTMENT OF SMALL AND LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

**NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

**ROBUST RETAIL GRANT PROGRAM**

**Fiscal Year 2026**

This Notice of Funding Availability (“**NOFA**”), in combination with the Request for Applications (“**RFA**”), which will be released when the grant opens, constitutes the full set of instructions to assist applicants with completing eligibility applications for the Fiscal Year (“**FY**”) 2026 Robust Retail Grant Program. **Applicants are required to read both documents in their entirety before applying.**

A robust retail sector is critical to maintaining neighborhood vibrancy, but many retail businesses are currently under threat of decline and closure due to the market realities of years past. In response to these market conditions, the District of Columbia (“**DC,**” “**D.C.,**” or the “**District**”) Department of Small and Local Business Development (“**DSLBD**” or “**Department**”) is offering awards under its Robust Retail Grant Program. These grants provide DC-based retail businesses with direct-to-business assistance to maintain their business operations and viability.

The Department is pleased to announce that it will begin soliciting applications for the FY26 Robust Retail Grant Program on or about December 1, 2025 at 9 a.m. Eastern Time (“**ET**”).

The Department intends to award up to fifty (50) grants of up to \$10,000.00, from the \$500,000 in total available funding for FY26.

**The Eligibility application will open on December 1, 2025, and close on January 20, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time (“ET”).** Applications will only be accepted through the online application system listed in the corresponding RFA that will be posted on DSLBD’s website.

**Who can Apply?**

To be eligible for this grant opportunity, applicants must meet the following criteria: Must be a for-profit, directly interact with consumers (which excludes, for example, establishments without customer space and “ghost kitchens”), independent retail business with fewer than twenty-five (25) full-time employees (“**FTE**”), and with a DC-licensed retail location. Businesses providing professional and personal services in retail locations that meet these requirements will also be considered.

Home-based and online only businesses and non-profit organizations are not eligible for this Grant Program.

Businesses that received a Robust Retail Grant in FY25 are not eligible to apply for a FY26 Robust Retail Award.

Applicants are also required to provide, among other items, a current Certificate of Clean Hands (“**CCH**”) from the District’s Office of Tax and Revenue (“**OTR**”), proof of an active Business

License from the District’s Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (“**DLCP**”), and a signed affidavit and attesting to compliance with applicable program conditions.

**How do I Apply?**

Instructions are included in the RFA, which will be available for download on DSLBD’s website on or before December 1, 2025. Applicants are required to read the full RFA at: <https://dslbd.dc.gov/service/current-grant-opportunities>.

**How can the Funds be Used?**

Grant funds may be used to reimburse business expenses incurred from October 1, 2025 – January 20, 2026 for expenses related to the maintenance of the awardee’s business operations and viability.

**How Will Awardees be Selected?**

Grantees will be selected through a lottery. At least 50% of the grants awarded will be evenly distributed across all eight (8) DC wards. All applicants who apply by or before the deadline and are found eligible will be entered into the lottery system.

The Director of DSLBD will approve all grant awards at the final stage. Announcements of selected awards will be made on or around February 3, 2026.

**Questions?**

DSLBD will hold virtual information sessions concerning the grant program. Details on information sessions will be provided in the RFA alongside a registration link, as well as listed on DSLBD’s Eventbrite page, on or around December 1, 2025. Applicants are highly encouraged to attend an information session.

Questions asked outside of the virtual information sessions must be submitted in writing to DSLBD at [DC.MainStreets@dc.gov](mailto:DC.MainStreets@dc.gov). DSLBD will begin answering questions after the grant opens on December 1, 2025. DSLBD will not respond to questions over the phone.

**Reservation of Rights**

DSLBD reserves the right to issue addenda, modifications, and/or amendments after the issuance of this NOFA or the corresponding RFA, or to rescind the NOFA or RFA at any time.