



## Boston Contracting Opportunity Fund FAQ

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### Summary

In 2021, the City of Boston established the Boston Contracting Opportunity Fund to build pathways for Boston-based certified women, minority, veteran, and small and local businesses in accessing City Contracting by addressing the need for access to capital. This fund, administered annually by the Department of Supplier Diversity, **provides grants up to \$15,000** to increase the availability of certified businesses in the priority sectors that the City regularly contracts with.

We expect to open additional grant rounds in the coming year. Information from your submission may be used to inform future grant round reviews.

*Interpretation, translation, and disability accommodation services are available to you at no cost. If you need them, please contact us at [supplierdiversity@boston.gov](mailto:supplierdiversity@boston.gov) or (617) 635-4511 by **April 21, 2023**.*

### Important Dates

- April 10, 2023 - Grant Application Opens
- Thursday, April 27, 2023 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 am - [Virtual Information Session](#)
- **May 5, 2023 at 12pm - Grant Application Due by 12pm!**
- June 2023 - Grant award notifications
- July 2023 - Disbursement of funds
- February 2024 - Grant follow-up reports due

## Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must meet the following criteria to be considered for the grant:

### A. Certified Business with the City's Department of Supplier Diversity

Applicants must be a Certified Business with the City of Boston's Department of Supplier Diversity. Please note that Certification is distinct from receipt of a business certificate from the City Clerk's office.

Applicants who are not yet Certified are also eligible to apply for this Fund! **However, they must be eligible for Certification and submit a separate and complete Certification application before the Fund closes at 12pm on Friday, May 5, 2023.**

Businesses that are certified through the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) must complete a simple cross-certification form in order to certify with the City of Boston.

Learn more about the required certification application materials can be found at: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/supplier-and-workforce-diversity/get-your-business-certified>

Start a certification or cross-certification application online:

<https://bostonopendata.knack.com/vendor-cert#menu3/>

### B. An active for-profit business located within the City of Boston:

- |               |                            |  |
|---------------|----------------------------|--|
| ❖ Allston     | ❖ East Boston              | ❖ North End                            |
| ❖ Back Bay    | ❖ Fenway / Kenmore         | ❖ Roslindale                           |
| ❖ Bay Village | ❖ Hyde Park                | ❖ Roxbury                              |
| ❖ Beacon Hill | ❖ Jamaica Plain            | ❖ South Boston                         |
| ❖ Brighton    | ❖ Leather District         | ❖ Seaport / South<br>Boston Waterfront |
| ❖ Charlestown | ❖ Longwood Medical<br>Area | ❖ South End                            |
| ❖ Chinatown   | ❖ Mattapan                 | ❖ West End                             |
| ❖ Dorchester  | ❖ Mission Hill             | ❖ West Roxbury                         |
| ❖ Downtown    |                            |  |

### C. Business engaged in an Industry Sector that the City regularly contracts

Applicants must be engaged in business sectors for which the City regularly contracts externally. This year, we are prioritizing the following sectors based on the City's largest spending areas. *Please note that preference will be given to businesses that have previously bid on City contracts and/or clearly outline how grant funds will support their ability to submit future responsive bids.*

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ❖ Waste collection & management | ❖ Design & architectural services |
| ❖ Snow removal & landscaping    | ❖ Food and dining services        |

- ❖ Plumbing & HVAC services
- ❖ Electrical work
- ❖ General contracting services
- ❖ Roofing, siding, and flooring
- work
- ❖ Insulation, drywall, masonry, and weatherproofing work

Across each of these sectors, we will be seeking to incentivize the growth of businesses that advance the clean energy needs of our City.

#### D. Commit to providing supporting documentation for grant expenditures

If awarded the grant, businesses must be able to provide receipts dated for purchases equaling the grant amount. Failure to provide a project final report may result in future grant applications being rejected.

- a. What expenses are eligible?
  - i. Bonding & Insurance
  - ii. Consultant Services
  - iii. Equipment & Inventory
  - iv. Financial Management Software & Services
  - v. Payroll
  - vi. Professional Licensing & Certifications
  - vii. Rent & Utilities
  - viii. Storage space
  - ix. Other Operating Capital

#### E. Be in good standing with the City of Boston

Businesses in good standing do not owe any back taxes for property, personal property, or motor excise to the City of Boston Treasury Department. All potential finalists will be verified by the Treasury Department regarding their status before the grants are announced. No action is needed on the applicant's part if they do not owe taxes to the City of Boston.

### Requirements for Submission

#### I. Complete Application

The review process will begin once we receive your complete application package. A complete application includes a detailed capacity-building plan & budget proposal, and documentation confirming a Boston business address. **Incomplete application packages will not be processed.**

##### A. Capacity Building Plan

Applicants must demonstrate how grant funding will specifically be used for capacity-building activities **and provide a detailed budget proposal on how funds will be used to achieve their capacity-building plan and increase their ability to bid on City contracts.** These activities can include but are not limited to expanded rental or storage space, equipment and/or inventory purchases, business bonding & insurance, consulting services, financial management software/services, acquiring professional licensure or

certification, and other operating capital (payroll, rent & utilities).

## B. Documentation / Attachments

1. **Required: Proof of a Boston business address** (e.g., a Boston business certificate, or a signed lease, business permit / license / title, utility bill in which the business is named directly, or other home office documentation).
2. **Optional:** Any documentation that outlines your proposed budget
3. **Optional:** Any materials you would like to share about your business, such as a business plan, pricing structures, examples of previous work performed, special licensing, etc.
4. **Optional:** Upload copies of previous bids or material supporting your history of bidding on City or government contracts.

## Evaluation Criteria

- A. The applicant meets all eligibility criteria and submitted a complete application (as outlined above).
- B. The capacity building plan is specific and includes a detailed budget. There is a clear connection established between the applicant's receipt of grant funding and their business' capacity to submit bids for City contracts.
- C. The applicant either has a demonstrated history of bidding on City contracts, or
- D. If the applicant has not previously bid on City contracts, they clearly explain the barriers to submitting a bid and have outlined how grant funds will support their ability to submit future responsive bids.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: Is there anything I can prepare before starting the application?**

A: Yes, the best thing you can do is start your certification application with our office [here](#) if you are not currently certified. You can also prepare your written plan for how our grant will help increase your business' capacity. Email us at [supplierdiversity@boston.gov](mailto:supplierdiversity@boston.gov) if you have any questions.

### **Q: Once the application is completed, what is the expected time frame for follow up?**

A: The grant application closes Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup> at 12 pm and our goal is for you to hear back from our office by the end of May 2023.

### **Q: What are the priority sectors?**

A:

- Waste collection & management
- Snow removal & landscaping

- Design & architectural services
- Food and dining services
- Construction - Plumbing & HVAC services
- Construction - Electrical work
- Construction - General contracting services
- Construction - Roofing, siding, and flooring work
- Construction - Insulation, drywall, masonry, and weatherproofing work

**Q: Can you further define the types of businesses that you consider part of each priority sector?**

**Waste collection & management:** garbage collection, destruction, and processing; operation of dumps; hazardous waste collection and disposal; sludge disposal sites; chemical detoxification; scrap and waste materials; trucking; hauling; other waste removal services.

**Snow removal & landscaping:** Street and sidewalk snow clearing, salting and plowing services; the regular installation or maintenance of outdoor landscaping, such as watering, mowing, or tree removal, not including the initial design and planning of the landscape; other snow clearing or landscaping services.

**Design & architectural services:** Design services; architectural services; landscape counseling and planning; landscape architects; interior design services; community engagement services related to design projects.

**Food and dining services:** Food products include food manufacturing, brokering, and retail sale of food (non-restaurant). This also includes the production of materials incidental to the production or packaging of food products. Dining services include contract food services, portable and semi-portable concession stands, vending machines, and the supplies and equipment required for such services.

**Construction - Plumbing & HVAC services:** Plumbing, heating, and air conditioning contractors; plumbing contractors; Fire sprinkler system installation; Irrigation sprinkler system installation; mechanical contractors; refrigeration repair service.

**Construction - Electrical work:** General electrical contractor; telephone and telephone equipment installation; security systems installation; fire detection and burglar alarm systems installation.

**Construction - General contracting services:** Contractors that manage the construction, renovation, remodeling and build-outs of commercial projects.

**Construction - Roofing, siding, and flooring work:** Flooring contractor; roofing, siding, and sheet metal work; floor laying and floor work; roofing contractor.

**Construction - Insulation, drywall, masonry, and weatherproofing work:**

Fireproofing; water proofing; insulation, buildings; corrosion control installation; acoustical and ceiling work; plastering, plain or ornamental; siding contractor; framing contractor; drywall; stucco; stone masonry; bricklaying; exterior wall system installation.

**Q: What does capacity building mean? What are some examples?**

A: Applicants must demonstrate how grant funding will specifically be used for capacity-building activities **and provide a detailed budget proposal on how funds will be used to achieve their capacity-building plan and increase their ability to bid on City contracts**. These activities can include but are not limited to expanded rental or storage space, equipment and/or inventory purchases, business bonding & insurance, consulting services, financial management software/services, acquiring professional licensure or certification, and other operating capital (payroll, rent & utilities).

**Q: Does my business need to be up and running to submit an application?**

A: Yes, the business needs to be established and not in the planning phase in order to [get certified](#) with the City's Supplier Diversity Program.

**Q: What does it mean to be a "Certified Business?"**

A: Through this review process, the City of Boston's Department of Supplier and Workforce Diversity identifies small or local (SBE/SLBE) businesses including those that are owned by women (WBE), minorities (MBE), veterans (VOSB/SDVOSB). [Learn more about the Certification process and submit an application.](#)

**Q: Is there help available for submitting my Certification application?**

A: Yes! We conduct virtual Certification Office Hours every Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Click [here](#) to join and drop in with your questions!

**Q: I already submitted a Certification application but have not heard back. What should I do?**

A: If you already submitted a complete Certification application to the City of Boston's Department of Supplier and Workforce Diversity, then you may apply for this Fund. No further action is needed.

**Q: I submitted an application to renew my Certification but have not heard back. What should I do?**

A: If you submitted an application to renew your Certification, then you may apply for this Fund. No further action is needed.

**Q: I am already certified through the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office (SDO). Does that count?**

A: If you are certified with the [Massachusetts SDO](#), then you would only need to cross-certify with the City of Boston's Department of Supplier and Workforce Diversity. Please complete our simple [cross-certification form](#).

**Q:What are the benefits of Certification?**

A: Business Certification offers many advantages for business owners, including visibility, business resources, and streamlined access to contracting opportunities! Certified businesses are included in the [City of Boston's Certified Business Directory](#), which is available to the public. Certified businesses are eligible for cross-certification with the [Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office](#) (SDO). Certified Businesses also receive notice of networking events such as Contract Opportunity Fairs, Workshops and Clinics, and Contract Information Sessions. Additional resources for Certified Businesses could include access to capital, assistance with business planning, marketing, and financial management. For purchases under \$50,000, City buyers must consult the [Certified Business Directory](#) when solistancing quotes. Departments also use the Certified Business Directory to outreach to vendors and suppliers for small projects that don't need to be advertised publicly. For example, Certified Businesses will be invited via email to bid on an "event." Additionally, businesses that wish to submit bids for contracts included in the City of Boston's Sheltered Market Pilot Program must be certified. Lastly, notification of the City's contracts may be emailed directly to Certified Businesses.

**Q: I have a business certificate from the Boston City Clerk's office. Is this the same as Certification?**

A: No, a [certificate to do business in the City of Boston](#) through the City Clerk's Office is different from our Business Certification. Boston businesses need to get a certificate through the City Clerk's office and need to renew it every four years.

**Q: What does it mean to be "in good standing with the City of Boston"?**

A: Businesses in good standing do not owe any back taxes to the City of Boston Treasury Department. All potential finalists will be verified with the Treasury Department regarding their status before the grants are announced. No action is needed on the applicant's part if they do not owe taxes to the City of Boston.

**Q: How do I obtain a Vendor ID to do business with the City of Boston?**

A: Businesses may request a Vendor ID from the City of Boston's [Procurement Office](#). Read our [guide to setting up a Vendor ID](#). Vendors should review the payment information they have on record and make any necessary changes.

**Q: What do I do if I can't find my Vendor ID?**

A: You can email [vendor.questions@boston.gov](mailto:vendor.questions@boston.gov) for assistance in obtaining your Vendor ID.

**Q: Can I apply for the Fund if I have previously received funding from the City of Boston?**

A: Yes! Receipt of previous forms of funding from the City of Boston does not disqualify you from applying for this Fund.

**Q: Can restaurants/catering restaurants apply?**

A: While all businesses may apply, preference will be given to businesses in the sectors listed above. The 'Food and dining services' sector is primarily focused on businesses that regularly provide food products and dining services for institutional customers through ongoing contracts.

Food products include food manufacturing, brokering, and retail sale of food. This also includes the production of materials incidental to the production or packaging of food products.

Dining services include contract food services, portable and semi-portable concession stands, vending machines, and the supplies and equipment required for such services.