

Community Development Block Grant- Public Services Funding Program Policy Principles for FY 2018

MISSION

It is our purpose as an innovative public agency to promote economic self-sufficiency to ensure the full participation of all Boston residents in the city's economic vitality and future. It is also our purpose to be an advocate, clearinghouse, and laboratory for "best practices" in literacy, beginning at birth; lifelong learning; job training/placement; and support services so Bostonians may fulfill their educational and employment aspirations.

OVERVIEW

In February 2017, the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development (OWD) intends to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for FY 2018 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Public Services funding. Each year, the City of Boston receives CDBG funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the Department of Neighborhood Development (DND). The funds are primarily used for affordable housing and economic development activities. However, up to 15% of the funds may be used for "public services" activities. As the City's workforce development agency, OWD manages this portion of the funding on behalf of DND.

The public services component of the CDBG is intended to provide services for low-income individuals and families with a goal of moving them out of poverty towards economic security. Toward this end, CDBG funds support a range of services from after school academics to counseling services for adults with barriers to employment. For the upcoming FY 2018, OWD proposes to continue its priorities on programs and services aimed at employing people in career sectors that provide them with long-term economic stability. Employment programs, when combined with post-secondary education and critical wrap-around support services, are capable of promoting sustained, significant change in the lives of low-income people.

This document offers policy principles highlighting program and service priorities for FY 2018, including the extent and kinds of impact the CDBG funds will have on its participants. The policy principles will guide the development of the upcoming RFP.

GOAL

The goal of Boston's CDBG Public Services funding is to ensure that low-income Boston residents are connected to a continuum of education, workforce development, and economic security programs to increase the capacities and skills necessary to obtain career-oriented employment that lead to economic stability.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The policy principles address Boston's widening wage and skill gaps for low-wage and low-skilled workers and the need to develop a talent pipeline for employers.

- Investment in programs that place individuals on a continuum of quality education, training, workforce development, and economic security. This continuum is defined as high school diplomas/HiSET attainment, matriculation into post-secondary education or industry-recognized training programs, placement into jobs with demonstrated career paths, and/or access to income maximization programs¹ that stabilize individuals and families with barriers.
- The use of career pathways models that provide a clear sequence and connection between education and training programs and jobs that allow participants to progress from one level to the next to improve their career prospects.
- The use of work-based training that provides maximum opportunities for participants to gain employment skills that meet employer needs.
- The inclusion of bridge programs designed to accelerate credentials and skill building, such as use of contextualized and integrated curriculum and instruction.
- A high degree of coordination of wrap-around support services which address a wide range of individual and family needs. These can include but are not limited to financial literacy, ESOL/ABE, immigration, income maximization, mental health, childcare, transportation, and individual case management and free or low cost legal representation all with the goal of helping participants obtain and retain jobs and/or achieve economic security.
- Investment in comprehensive assessment processes that value a high degree of customer involvement and customization in program choice.
- The use of partnerships and collaborations are strongly encouraged to ensure that there are no gaps in a continuum of programs and supportive services to address a wide range of barriers of various populations.
- The use of systematic follow up on participants once they have been placed in a job or education/training program, on a regular basis and offer of further services.
- Preference will be given to programs offering an employment, education, and economic security continuum with an integrated approach, where individuals can take advantage of multiple services to help them become economically self-sufficient. These services must be provided in house or through strong collaborations that make each of the three easily accessible and available to CDBG participants.
- OWD proposes to continue its investment of a percentage of CDBG resources in the Adult Literacy Initiative, a partnership with the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

MAJOR CHANGE FOR FY 2018

To optimize our grant dollars, OWD intends to award grants in the amount ranging from a minimum of \$35,000 to a maximum of \$100,000 to successful applicants. This may result in significantly fewer grants distributed than at present.

TARGET POPULATIONS

¹ *Income maximization is defined as any public or private benefits that are not earned through wages from employment. These can include but are not limited to SNAP, TAFDC, EITC, SSI, SSDI, alimony, child support, unemployment insurance, pension/retirement, disability benefits...etc.*

- Low-income persons living in Boston, including youth, adults, and seniors, defined by HUD as individuals with incomes at or below the 80% of Area Median Income (AMI). (For example, based on 2016 guidelines, a family of 3 would need to make no more than \$65,750 annually. Guidelines may be changed to 2017 guidelines if those become available during program period).
- Preference will be given to re-entry or court-involved individuals; out-of-school youth; seniors; persons with disabilities; homeless individuals; documented immigrants; English Language Learners; dislocated workers; long-term underemployed or unemployed individuals.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

OWD intends to demonstrate the impact of CDBG funds by having a set of standardized outcome indicators and metrics to measure the effectiveness of CDBG programs. As we have done in the past, OWD will accept other evidence-based outcomes you would like to track in addition to required outcomes, especially those that demonstrate steps towards reaching the required outcomes.

- Placement and retention into jobs.
- Placement into post-secondary education and skills training leading to jobs.
- Increased income from access to cash-equivalent benefits, wage from employment and other financial empowerment metrics.

PROPOSED BIDDER COMPETENCIES

- Demonstrated ability to train and place low-income individuals in growing industries with the opportunity for advancement and wage progression.
- Staff expertise and experience engaging employers and post-secondary institutions in program development and implementation activities.
- Demonstrated ability to assess participant needs, coordinate service provision, and ensure that there are no gaps in support.
- Staff expertise in conducting effective program management, including assessment and data systems that measure progress and allow programs to be adjusted as necessary to maximize success.
- Staff expertise in successfully providing participants with access to income maximization programs and/or referring participants to programs that they may be eligible for – and following up with them on an on-going basis to ensure success.
- Ability to partner with other organizations to allow provision of a full set of education, workforce development, and economic security experiences for participants.
- Ability to provide culturally and linguistically competent programs and services.
- Experience working effectively with partner organizations to connect individuals to resources.
- Evidence-based, scalable, and cost-effective intervention with opportunities for leveraging additional resources.