Business District Support (BDS) Program – Frequently Asked Questions

Question 1: What is the 38th Street THRIVE Cultural District and why does it have a special funding allocation?

Answer: The 38th Street THRIVE Strategic Development Plan (THRIVE Plan) was created by community members to guide the future of the 38th Street Cultural District, which stretches from Nicollet Avenue to Bloomington Avenue. Work on the plan began more than 10 years ago during a community gathering hosted by the former Ward 8 council member.

From 2019 to 2021, neighborhood organizations, businesses, community groups, and residents worked together to create a shared vision for the corridor. The THRIVE Plan was the result and was recognized by City Council in 2021. It outlines the community's goals and action steps for the next 10 years. It builds on the area's history while promoting a stronger community, sustainable economic growth, and recognition as a vibrant cultural destination.

In 2026, City Council approved a budget update of $1.2 million to help fund important projects from the THRIVE Plan. This includes a one-time award of $100,000 for events, marketing, and branding efforts. These funds will be distributed through the 2026 Great Streets Business District Support (BDS) grant program.

The THRIVE Plan is available to download on the BDS NOFA documents webpage.

Question 2: Are BDS applicants required to be non-profit?

Answer: Yes. Applicants must be nonprofit organizations to be eligible for the Business District Support Program. Eligible organizations may have either 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6) nonprofit status.

- **501(c)(3) organizations:** These are nonprofit organizations formed for charitable, educational, religious, or other public benefit purposes. Examples include community service organizations and charitable groups. Donations to these organizations are generally tax-deductible for donors.
- **501(c)(6) organizations:** These are nonprofit organizations formed to support businesses or improve a specific industry or business area. Examples include business associations, chambers of commerce, and trade associations. Their work often focuses on supporting local businesses and strengthening business districts.

Both types of nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for funding through the Business District Support Program.

Question 3: Are clean and safe ambassadors serving the Great Streets business district be an eligible use of funds?

Answer: Yes. Clean and safe ambassador services may be eligible for funding, depending on how the activities are structured and the outcomes they are expected to achieve.

The Business District Support Program is intended to fund activities that promote, advertise, improve, or develop an entire business district, rather than provide services to individual businesses. Staff time related to specific proposed activities may also be eligible, but general operating expenses are not.

Applicants proposing ambassador services should clearly explain how the activities will benefit the overall business district, attract customers, support local businesses, and create a welcoming environment for visitors. Applications should also identify specific activities, expected outcomes, and measurable deliverables that demonstrate the impact of the work.

Eligibility will be determined based on the proposed scope of work and how well it aligns with the goals of the Business District Support Program.

Question 4: Where can BDS-funded activities take place?

Answer: Proposed activities must take place within areas designated as eligible on the City's Great Streets Eligible Areas Map. The map identifies eligible commercial areas using three categories:

- **Blue:** Great Streets Eligible Areas
- **Orange:** Priority Eligible Areas
- **Purple:** Cultural Districts

Applicants can search for eligible locations by business address using the Great Streets Eligible Areas Map.

Applicants may also view the City's Cultural Districts Map.

Question 5: Can applicants partner with other organizations?

Answer: Yes. Partnerships are encouraged, particularly when an applicant needs additional experience, expertise, or capacity to complete the proposed activities.

Potential partners may include established neighborhood organizations, business associations, and community development organizations. Proposals should clearly describe each organization's role, relevant experience, and responsibilities for completing the proposed activities.

Question 6: Does the BDS Program fund workforce development activities?

Answer: No. The BDS Program does not fund workforce development activities such as job-readiness training, youth employment programs, or mentorship initiatives.

The program is intended to support activities that strengthen commercial districts and benefit businesses throughout an eligible service area.

The City offers separate workforce development resources for adults, youth, and young adults, including job training, career pathways, internships, and employment assistance. Additional information is available on the City's Workforce Development webpage.

Question 7: What application materials are required?

Answer: Applicants must submit the City's fillable Proposal Form and an Excel Budget.

If applying in partnership with another organization, the proposal should clearly explain each organization's role, relevant experience, and capacity to complete the proposed activities. A separate partnership agreement is not required as an application attachment unless otherwise specified in the NOFA.

Organizations selected for funding will enter into a performance-based contract with the City. The contract will include a Scope of Services outlining the approved activities, deliverables, and performance expectations.

Awarded organizations must also provide required insurance documentation and meet the City's contract requirements.