



REQUEST FOR GRANT FUNDING

Skilled to Build Small Business Readiness Curriculum Facilitation & Technical Assistance Grant

The City of Charlotte's Economic Development Department invites qualified small business ecosystem partners to submit proposals to deliver both standardized curriculum facilitation and individualized technical assistance as part of the Skilled to Build Small Business Readiness initiative.

This funding opportunity is intended to establish a coordinated network of organizations capable of supporting businesses from foundational learning through individualized support. Applicants selected will be expected to provide both components for three years: (1) facilitate the complete City-provided curriculum once each year, and (2) provide technical assistance each year to small businesses based on identified needs. A business receiving technical assistance is not required to complete the curriculum.

1. Description / Overview

The City seeks experienced small business ecosystem partners with community relationships, facilitation expertise, technical expertise, and organizational capacity necessary to deliver a consistent, practical business readiness experience and individualized one-on-one support to Charlotte-area small businesses.

Selected organizations will be responsible for recruiting and enrolling participants for the curriculum, facilitating the City-provided curriculum, supporting participant engagement and completion, collecting required program data, and providing individualized technical assistance to small businesses. Technical assistance may be provided to businesses that completed the curriculum or to businesses referred to or identified for assistance independently of the curriculum.

The City will provide standardized curriculum, facilitator guide, participant materials, and required train-the-trainer instruction. **Applicants are not expected to develop the core curriculum, lesson plans, or facilitator materials.**

Each selected organization may receive a grant of up to \$375,000 for a three (3) year grant period. Grant payments will be structured annually and will be subject to the executed grant agreement, approved budgets, satisfactory performance, reporting requirements, and availability of City funds. The total amount awarded to any organization over the three-year period may not exceed \$375,000.



2. Program Context – Skilled to Build

Skilled to Build is a strategic initiative designed to help Charlotte-area small businesses and workforce prepare for economic opportunities associated with significant investments in transit and transportation infrastructure. These investments are expected to generate public contracting opportunities across construction, professional services, technology, maintenance, logistics, manufacturing, transportation, and other supporting industries.

Small businesses may face barriers to participating in public contracting opportunities, including limited procurement knowledge, capital readiness, bonding and insurance requirements, certifications, operational capacity, financial systems, and access to contracting networks.

The City will provide standardized business readiness training to establish a common foundation. The City recognizes that training alone may not be sufficient for every business. Some businesses will need one-on-one assistance to apply what they learned, while others may require technical assistance without participating in the curriculum. Selected organizations must therefore demonstrate the ability to provide both group-based learning and individualized, action-oriented support.

3. Grant Term and Funding

Item	Requirement
Grant Term	Three (3) years
Maximum Award	\$375,000 per organization; \$125,000 annually for three (3) years
Payment Structure	Annual payments based on an approved budget, grant agreement, satisfactory performance, and availability of funds
Curriculum Requirement	Deliver the complete City-provided curriculum once each year for three (3) years
Technical Assistance Requirement	Provide technical assistance during each of the three (3) years

Applicants should propose a realistic level of technical assistance that can be delivered within the requested award. The City will negotiate the final number of TA hours, annual targets, participant capacity, budget, and scope before award.



4. Scope of Work

A. Curriculum Facilitation

Selected organizations must deliver the complete City-provided small business readiness curriculum once during each year of the three (3) year grant period. The organization is responsible for implementation, participant engagement, facilitation, program administration, and reporting.

- Participate in the City's required train-the-trainer program.
- Develop and implement a participant recruitment and enrollment strategy in partnership with the City.
- Recruit and enroll eligible small business participants.
- Deliver all required curriculum modules and learning objectives using the City-approved facilitator guide and program standards.
- Maintain curriculum fidelity and obtain City approval before making substantive adaptations.
- Provide engaging, practical, and interactive learning experiences for adult learners.
- Manage scheduling, enrollment, attendance, participant communications, and logistical support.
- Support participant engagement, retention, and completion.
- Address reasonable participation barriers and provide appropriate participant support.
- Collect required participant and program data.
- Administer participant surveys and other evaluation activities required by the City.
- Document program activities, participant completion, and outcomes.
- Submit timely programmatic, performance, and financial reports.
- Participate in required City meetings, program coordination activities, facilitator learning opportunities, and quality assurance activities.

B. Individualized Technical Assistance

Selected organizations must provide individualized, action-oriented technical assistance during each year of the three-year grant period. Technical assistance should go beyond general education or group-based training and result in specific actions, deliverables, improvements, or milestones for each business.

Technical assistance may be provided to businesses that have completed the Skilled to Build Small Business Readiness curriculum, businesses that have not completed the curriculum, or businesses referred by the City or identified through the organization's approved outreach and engagement strategy.



Examples of Technical Assistance may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Conduct an initial assessment of the business' needs, capacity, and contracting readiness.
- Develop an individualized technical assistance plan with specific goals, activities, and milestones.
- Provide one-on-one advising, coaching, and technical assistance based on identified needs.
- Review and strengthen bid, proposal, capability statement, or other contracting materials.
- Develop or strengthen procurement readiness action plans.
- Assess and strengthen financial systems and practices.
- Prepare businesses for bonding, insurance, licensing, regulatory, or compliance requirements.
- Assist businesses with relevant certifications.
- Strengthen internal operational systems, controls, and organizational capacity.
- Develop or refine strategic growth plans.
- Prepare businesses to engage with prime contractors and other contracting partners.
- Facilitate strategic connections to contracting opportunities and prime contractors.
- Connect businesses to capital and financial resources.
- Refer businesses to City, nonprofit, procurement, workforce, and other resources when appropriate.
- Document services provided, participant progress, milestones, and outcomes.
- Adjust technical assistance as business needs evolve.
- Participate in check-in meetings and other City meetings/coordination activities to review lessons learned and identify issues.

C. Coordination Between Curriculum and Technical Assistance

The City expects selected organizations to operate the curriculum and technical assistance components as complementary services while recognizing that not every business will receive both. Applicants should describe how they will identify businesses that may benefit from additional support, how they will manage referrals, and how they will avoid making curriculum completion a prerequisite for receiving technical assistance. The organization should coordinate with the City and other ecosystem partners to avoid duplication and connect businesses to specialized resources when appropriate.



5. Curriculum Delivery Requirements

The City will provide a standardized curriculum, facilitator guide, participant materials, and train-the-trainer instruction. Selected organizations must deliver the curriculum as designed and may not substantially modify curriculum content, learning objectives, instructional sequence, or required components without prior City approval.

Organizations may supplement the City-provided curriculum with additional resources, examples, speakers, or activities when appropriate and approved by the City, provided supplemental content does not replace or materially alter required curriculum.

The City may establish quality assurance procedures, facilitator observations, participant feedback requirements, or other measures to ensure consistent delivery across organizations and program years.

6. Technical Assistance Model

Technical assistance must be individualized, practical, and responsive to each participating small business. Services should be tailored to the business's stage of development, capacity, goals, and identified barriers. The selected organization should focus on measurable progress rather than a prescribed number of meetings alone.

Applicants must propose the number of businesses they will commit to providing technical assistance to over the three-year grant period. The proposal must identify the total three-year commitment and anticipated number served for Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3.

7. Expected Deliverables

Curriculum Deliverables

1. Participate in the required City train-the-trainer program.
2. Maintain appropriate staffing for capacity purposes and effectively deliver the curriculum and technical assistance.
3. In partnership with the City, develop and implement a recruitment and enrollment strategy.
4. Deliver the complete City-provided curriculum once during Year 1, once during Year 2, and once during Year 3.
5. Maintain participant enrollment and attendance records.
6. Provide participant communications, scheduling, reminders, and logistical support.
7. Administer participant surveys and evaluation activities established by the City.
8. Document program activities, participant completion, and outcomes.



Technical Assistance Deliverables

1. Provide technical assistance during each year of the grant period.
2. Deliver one-on-one advising, coaching, and technical assistance.
3. Document technical assistance activities, hours, participant progress, milestones, referrals, and outcomes.
4. Provide referrals to additional City and community resources when appropriate.
5. Provide regular programmatic and performance reports to the City.
6. Participate in required meetings, coordination activities, and learning opportunities.

8. Potential Outcomes

The City recognizes that businesses will have different needs, levels of experience, capacity, and readiness. Applicants should describe how their combined model will contribute to measurable improvements. Potential outcomes include:

- Businesses recruited, enrolled, and engaged in curriculum programming.
- Curriculum completion and participant satisfaction.
- Business readiness and procurement readiness in areas such as certifications and contracting prerequisites, bonding, insurance and regulatory readiness, connections with contractors or contracting networks, etc.
- Other measurable improvements identified through individualized TA.

Selected organizations **will not** be expected to guarantee contract awards or other outcomes outside of their control. However, organizations should demonstrate how their curriculum facilitation and technical assistance approaches will contribute to measurable improvements in business readiness and capacity.



9. Eligibility Criteria

Eligible applicants must maintain a headquarters or established local office within the City of Charlotte and demonstrate a history of serving businesses in the Charlotte community for a minimum of three (3) years. Eligible applicants include:

- Small business support organizations
- Business district organizations
- Colleges, community colleges, universities
- Chambers of Commerce
- Other nonprofit organizations with demonstrated relevant expertise and capacity

Eligible nonprofit organizations must be organized as a 501(c)(3), 501(c)(6), or other nonprofit entity approved by the City as eligible to receive grant funding. For-profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

Collaborative proposals are encouraged when partnerships enable applicants to leverage complementary expertise, expand recruitment or technical assistance capacity, or provide specialized services that a single organization may not be able to provide independently. Collaborative proposals must identify a lead organization responsible for overall grant administration, coordination, reporting, fiscal management, and compliance with the grant agreement.

10. Required Organizational Documentation

- Documentation demonstrating that the organization has served the Charlotte business community for at least three (3) years, such as annual reports, program reports, or similar supporting documentation.
- Organizational structure and staffing information relevant to the proposed scope of work.
- List of current Board of Directors and/or Advisory Board members, including name, title, and year appointed to the board.
- Annual audit with two-year comparative financial statements, if applicable.
- Documentation of nonprofit status.
- Other organizational or financial documentation requested by the City during the application or award process.



11. Proposals Should Include

A. Organizational Capacity Statement (500 words or less)

Briefly describe the organization's experience, staffing structure, project management approach, and capacity to administer a three-year grant that includes both annual curriculum facilitation and ongoing technical assistance.

B. Relevant Experience and Demonstrated Outcomes (500 words or less)

Briefly describe relevant programs delivered, years of experience, and measurable outcomes. Include specific examples demonstrating experience with both adult learning/facilitation and individualized technical assistance.

D. Curriculum Delivery & Facilitation Approach (500 words or less)

Briefly describe how the organization will deliver the City-provided curriculum once annually for three years, create engaging learning experiences, support adult learners, maintain curriculum fidelity, recruit participants, and ensure consistent delivery.

E. Technical Assistance Approach & Expertise (500 words or less)

Briefly describe the organization's process for assessing business needs, developing individualized action plans, delivering one-on-one technical assistance, establishing milestones, documenting services, measuring progress, and determining when businesses have achieved identified milestones.

F. Data Collection & Performance Measurement Strategy (500 words or less)

Briefly describe how the organization will track curriculum enrollment, attendance, completion, TA hours, TA activities, participant progress, outcomes, referrals, participant feedback, and other required metrics.

G. Community Partnership & Referral Strategy (500 words or less)

Briefly describe existing and proposed partnerships that expand the technical assistance, resources, specialized expertise, contracting connections, and other services available to participating businesses.

H. Proposed Budget & Budget Narrative

Provide a three-year budget and narrative explaining how grant funds will support staffing, facilitation, participant recruitment and engagement, technical assistance, program administration, data collection, reporting, and other eligible activities. Provide annual budget estimates for Years 1–3. The proposed budget must not exceed \$375,000 for the three-year grant period.

Applicants should demonstrate alignment between the proposed budget, the number of curriculum cycles, anticipated participants, proposed TA hours, staffing, activities, and expected outcomes.



12. Evaluation Rubric

Evaluation Category	Points
Organizational Capacity & Staffing	15
Relevant Experience & Demonstrated Outcomes	20
Curriculum Delivery & Facilitation Approach	15
Technical Assistance Approach & Expertise	20
Data Collection & Performance Measurement	15
Community Partnerships & Referral Strategy	10
Budget & Cost Effectiveness	5
Total	100

Organizational Capacity & Staffing – 15 Points

Evaluates organizational capacity, staffing structure, qualifications of proposed personnel, project management approach, and ability to successfully administer the grant for three years.

Relevant Experience & Demonstrated Outcomes – 20 Points

Evaluates experience delivering small business training, adult education, technical assistance, advising, procurement readiness, or similar services and demonstrated success achieving measurable participant or business outcomes.

Curriculum Delivery & Facilitation Approach – 15 Points

Evaluates the quality, practicality, and effectiveness of the proposed approach for delivering the City-provided curriculum once annually for three years, engaging adult learners, maintaining curriculum fidelity, and ensuring consistent delivery.

Technical Assistance Approach & Expertise – 20 Points

Evaluates the organization's approach to assessing business needs, developing individualized action plans, delivering practical one-on-one assistance, establishing milestones, documenting progress, and addressing business-specific barriers. Evaluates demonstrated expertise in procurement readiness, government contracting, financial management, bonding and insurance, certifications, operations, strategic growth, and related areas.

Data Collection & Performance Measurement – 15 Points

Evaluates the applicant's ability to track enrollment, attendance, completion, TA hours, services, participant progress, outcomes, maintain records, and provide timely reports.



Community Partnerships & Referral Strategy – 10 Points

Evaluates existing relationships and expertise that can support participant recruitment, technical assistance, procurement readiness, prime contractor connections, and referrals to specialized resources.

Budget & Cost Effectiveness – 5 Points

Evaluates the reasonableness of the proposed budget and alignment of costs with staffing, annual curriculum delivery, proposed TA hours, participant capacity, activities, and expected outcomes.

13. Budget Requirements

Applicants must submit a detailed proposed budget and budget narrative for the full three-year grant period. The total proposed award may not exceed \$375,000.

The budget should identify anticipated costs associated with:

- Personnel costs
- Program administration
- Participant recruitment and outreach
- Participant engagement and support
- Program materials or supplies not provided by the City
- Technology or facility costs, if applicable
- Data collection and reporting
- Other eligible program expenses
- Administrative or indirect costs, if allowable

Applicants must provide separate estimates for Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 and clearly demonstrate how each annual budget supports the required curriculum delivery and technical assistance commitment.

Applicants must identify the anticipated number of participants to be served during each curriculum cycle, the proposed total technical assistance hours for the three (3) year period, the anticipated TA hours by year, and the relationship between the proposed budget and service capacity.



14. Grant Administration and Reporting Requirements

Selected organizations will be required to comply with all applicable City grant requirements and the terms of the executed grant agreement.

At a minimum, selected organizations will be expected to:

- Maintain accurate records of grant-funded activities and expenditures.
- Document curriculum enrollment, attendance, engagement, and completion.
- Document technical assistance provided, including hours, activities, participant progress, milestones, referrals, and outcomes.
- Submit quarterly programmatic and financial reports according to the schedule established by the City.
- Participate in required meetings and program coordination activities.
- Participate in required facilitator training and quality assurance activities.
- Provide documentation supporting reported activities, TA hours, expenditures, and outcomes upon request.
- Promptly communicate significant programmatic, financial, or operational issues to the City.
- Use grant funds only for eligible activities and expenses approved under the grant agreement.

The City may establish additional reporting requirements, performance measures, or program procedures during the grant period.

15. Conflict of Interest and Use of Grant Funds

Grant funds may not be used to provide services to businesses in which the grantee, its employees, board members, or affiliated organizations have a financial interest that creates an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

Grantees must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest and comply with all applicable City requirements regarding conflicts of interest, ethical conduct, and use of grant funds.

Grant funds must be used solely for eligible activities and expenses identified in the approved scope of work and grant agreement. Grant funds are not intended to provide direct financial assistance or grants to participating small businesses.



16. Access and Distribution

The Request for Grant Funding will be made available through an online application and marketed through City communications channels, including email, website, social media, partner networks, and other appropriate outreach methods.

Initial eligibility will be determined based on the organization's responses and documentation submitted in accordance with the eligibility requirements. Eligible applications will be evaluated by a Selection Committee using the evaluation rubric included in this Request for Grant Funding.

Based on reviewer scores and recommendations, the City may select one or more organizations to receive grant awards until the funds allocated for the grant program are exhausted. The City may consider the overall portfolio of selected organizations, complementary capabilities, geographic or community reach, participant recruitment capacity, technical assistance capacity, and the City's programmatic priorities when making final award recommendations.

The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, request clarification or additional information, negotiate proposed scopes and budgets, modify the amount of an award, or make no award if the City determines that doing so is in the best interest of the City.

Receipt of a grant award does not guarantee a specific number of participants, referrals, technical assistance clients, or future contracting opportunities.

Organizations selected through this funding opportunity will play a critical role in ensuring that Charlotte's small businesses have access to practical knowledge, trusted support, and individualized assistance necessary to prepare for future economic and contracting opportunities associated with the region's transportation investments.

17. Timeline

Activity	Date
Release Request for Grant Funding	September 22, 2026
Pre-Application / Information Session	September 29, 2026
Application Deadline	October 30, 2026
Eligibility Review	November 2 – 6, 2026
Selection Committee Review	November 9 - 20, 2026
Final Selection and Approval	November 25, 2026
Award Notification	December 1, 2026
Program Launch	Spring/Summer 2027

The City reserves the right to modify the timeline as necessary.



18. Application Submission and Deadline

Applications are due by 5:00 PM (EST) on October 30, 2026.

Applications can be submitted beginning September 22, 2026. Click here to submit your application:
[Facilitation and Technical Assistance Request for Grant \(RFG\)](#)

Contact Alban Burney, (704) 999-7333 or alban.burney@charlottenc.gov with questions.