



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

**COVID-19 Relief And Recovery Grants
for Microenterprise Development**

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Notification Date: April 28, 2021

Application Due Date: May 12, 2021 at 11:59pm

Washington State Microenterprise Association

1. Purpose of Request and Program Overview: COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Grants for Microenterprise Development.

A. Overview

During the COVID-19 pandemic, nonprofit organizations (Microenterprise Development Organizations MDOs) that support the very smallest companies with business technical assistance and microloans have been working overtime serving more businesses with more services than they ever had under the best of conditions. These nonprofits have stretched their services to the limit, have lost staff, donations, rental income, funding for operations, grants and other sources of revenue. In so many cases, these nonprofits continue to operate and provide vital services with compassion to business owners that suffered under the pressure of government closures.

Thanks to the support from the Washington State Department of Commerce, WSMA is opening short term grant opportunities to strengthen Microenterprise Development Organizations (MDOs), Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) serving organizations, and others that provide businesses with technical assistance, training, and/or microloans to businesses with 5 or fewer employees in urban and rural parts of Washington State.

These grants are intended to provide immediate funds to stabilize these nonprofit organizations so that they can help the smallest businesses right now to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, steady their enterprises, prepare for economic recovery, and ensure they are ready to grow once the economy gets moving again.

Funding for eligible organizations adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic will be applied in two areas: 1) expenses incurred due to the pandemic between March 1, 2020-April 30, 2021 that were not covered by other public or private funding; and, 2) funding that is needed now for support to businesses that the organization has been inhibited from providing because of the COVID pandemic.

The grants approved under this contract may be used to pay expenses, including but not limited to rent, mortgage and utilities, technical assistance, and efforts to help prevent permanent closure of businesses.

The application period is short with a deadline of **May 12, 2021 at 11:59pm**, so we encourage you to review these Grant Guidelines as soon as possible.

B. Definitions

- *Microenterprise Development Organization (MDO)*: Organizations, including CDFIs, that predominantly provide business training, technical assistance and/or microloans. MDOs focus on 1-5 employee companies with an emphasis on serving limited income and marginalized communities. MDOs track metrics around businesses they serve and jobs created. MDOs are the primary technical assistance providers for solo-preneurs.
- *Embedded MDO*: MDO that provides business support services as outlined above, but within a larger organization.

- *Emerging MDO*: An organization that provides business support services and programming on a limited basis to 5 and under employee companies and seeks to grow these services into an MDO.
- *Resource Partner*: Organizations that provide vital business support services and referrals for business of all sizes. This could include local Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Development Centers, Economic Development Centers, libraries, workforce development partners, community colleges, lending institutions, or SCORE volunteers.
- *Collaborative Partner*: Organizations that support networks of providers offering broad technical assistance and support to geographic, industry-specific, demographic or other sectors of Washington state. This could include WA Workforce Association, WEDA, SBDC, AWB, etc.
- *Microenterprise/Microbusiness*: Employs between 1 and 5 people, including the business owner and requires less than \$50,000 in financing.

C. Timeline

April 28, 2021:	Notice of RFP
April 30, 2021:	Information Session #1
May 3, 2021:	Information Session #2
May 12, 2021:	Proposals Due at 11:59pm
May 31, 2021:	Applicants will be notified of funding decision(s)
June 30, 2021:	Project Completion and Two-Page Summary Due

2. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are Existing, Embedded, or Emerging non-profit Microenterprise Development Organizations (MDO) or other non-profit organizations in Washington State that support and provide business development services to microenterprises, underserved and under resourced communities in Washington State.

WSMA is committed to ensuring that equal opportunity is provided to Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), veterans, woman-owned enterprises, entrepreneurs with disabilities, justice involved and others. Grantees will be required to describe how their current and intended programs ensure diversity, equity and inclusion in their staffing, delivery of services and their sensitivity to the issues of race and gender.

3. Eligible & Required Use of Funds

This is an extremely short project period and funds must be **expended by June 30, 2021**. All applicants will be required to upload a Funds Request Form to the grant portal. See Page 7 of the Program Guidelines for the format required.

Funding for eligible organizations adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic will be applied in two areas:

- Expenses incurred due to the pandemic between March 1, 2020-April 30, 2021 that were not covered by other public or private funding; and,
- Funding that is needed now for support to businesses that the organization has been inhibited from providing because of the COVID pandemic.

Applicants can select up to four of the following categories:

- **Relief for Past Expenses:** Funds may be used for expenses incurred between March 01, 2020 - April 30, 2021 not recouped from other funders. Applicants will be required to attest in their application to decreased income and/or additional costs incurred in 2020 and 2021 (negative financial impact) resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Organizations with annual budgets over \$1M may apply for up to \$150,000
 - Organizations with an annual budget between \$500,000 and \$999,000 may apply for up to \$75,000
 - Organizations with an annual budget below \$500,000 may apply for up to \$50,000
- **Technical Assistance:** Programming during the period of this grant can include support for small businesses with business technical assistance of all kinds (including support for accessing federal and state loans/grants), assessing businesses' needs, and developing a plan for meeting the needs of these businesses in the future.
- **Training:** Provide one or two webinars, workshops, programs by June 30, 2021 that meets the needs of the businesses the organization serves.
- **Broad Initiatives:** Research based tools, strategies, initiatives, etc. that respond to gaps or opportunities in the recovering economy for business training, technical assistance, and/or financing services. These proposals would support rural, BIPOC, veteran, justice involved or other marginalized microbusinesses in Washington State. Funding will be awarded based on the quality of the strategies, the data upon which the strategies are premised, demonstrated relevance to the needs of the field, and the capacity of the organization to accomplish the goals of the initiative.

4. Budget Request

Application requests will be between \$5,000 and \$150,000. For Relief for Past Expenses Funds, please see Section 3 above. Applicants are encouraged to request the maximum your program requires. Applicants seeking technical assistance or training grants are encouraged to request a minimum amount of \$15,000 based on the services provided.

5. RFP Process

- In the interest of furthering equity, this RFP provides a single, low-barrier, online application. In rare circumstances, alternative forms are also available and can be obtained by emailing WSMA at lisa.wamicrobiz@gmail.com.
- Submittal is required by **May 12, 2021 at 11:59pm PST**, to facilitate the review and selection process.
- All proposals will be electronically submitted utilizing the WSMA grants portal located at <https://www.wamicrobiz.org/microenterprise-grant-opportunities>
- Proposals require an electronic signature.
- In extenuating circumstances, an official signed original with proper attachments will be accepted by mail up to May 12, 2021 at Washington State Microenterprise Association P.O. Box 1914, Olympia, WA 98507

- Proposals must provide all of the information in this RFP. Please answer each item. Incomplete proposals will be considered “non-responsive” and will not be considered for funding.
- Proposals should be prepared simply and economically, with an emphasis on completeness and clarity of content.
- WSMA assumes no responsibility for delays caused by any delivery method.
- Questions can be directed to Lisa Smith at lisa.wamicrobiz@gmail.com.

6. Selection Criteria

The following factors will be considered in selecting projects for funding:

- IRS 501c3 nonprofit status documented.
- Eligible applicant (see definitions above in Section B).
- Organizational ability to provide business training, technical assistance and/or access to credit services or financial support in Washington State.
- Demonstrated collaboration with relevant and diverse community stakeholders in planning, implementation, and evaluation of the work.
- Demonstrated ability to collaborate with other MDOs and Resource Partners (defined above) to meet the technical and financial needs of the business owners they serve.
- Ability to track and document recognized metrics and outcomes (technical assistance provided, businesses started, jobs created, etc.) in order to achieve economic impact.
- Organizational ability to reach and impact geographic areas and communities that have previously not been served by an existing or emerging MDOs.
- Organizations that serve microbusinesses in vital sectors for the economic recovery including but not limited to home building, childcare, energy, tourism, creative economy, and manufacturing, etc.
- Consideration will be given to organizations that have not already received federal or state relief funds.
- Priority given to organizations with capacity to work effectively with entrepreneurs of color, LGBTQ+, veterans, people with disabilities, rural, justice involved individuals and entrepreneurs from other marginalized communities.

7. Review and Selection

Each proposal will be independently evaluated. WSMA may adjust the weight given or the factors to be considered, if necessary. In the event this occurs, each proposal will be evaluated under the same factors. Consideration will be given to achieve geographic and demographic representation.

Projects that effectively establish need and can demonstrate substantial contribution to program outcomes including business and job creation, access to capital and leveraging of resources will be given preference.

8. Expectations - WSMA Grantees will:

- Execute a contract with WSMA to carry out proposed activities within the timeline established.
- Accomplish work outlined in the Scope of Work.
- Document request for Relief for Past Expenses Funds with Attestation

- Contact WSMA staff if problems occur that will inhibit work.
- All grantees must attend a WSMA grantee and partner event on one of two dates in June (TBA), administer the assessment to the businesses they serve by June 30, 2021.
- All grantees will prepare and submit a two page summary of strategies and a plan that responds to businesses' needs and other factors on or before June 30, 2021.

9. Reporting Requirements

All awarded grantees will be required to submit a two-page summary of their plan that responds to the business assessment results and other factors on or before June 30, 2021.

10. WSMA Grant Portal Tips For Success:

Why is the application period and grant portal only open for 15 days? Due to the limitations on the funding, WSMA does not have the ability to keep the application portal open any longer. It takes time to process all of the applications fairly, collect answers to reviewer questions, sign contracts, distribute payments, and complete required reporting in accordance with our funder.

Can we save our application in sections in your online grant application? Yes, however we encourage applicants to create and edit your answers in a separate document to copy and paste into the grant portal. Make sure your responses do not exceed the word count for each question. Once you are finished, paste your responses into the online form when you are ready to apply, so that you don't lose your work. However, the WSMA grant portal also allows applicants to save their work in draft form to come back to before submitting the final version.

Who needs to certify our application? The person ultimately responsible for this project should certify the application. This could be an executive director, board president, chief financial officer, etc.

The word count limit in each of the questions within the grant application are very limited. Can we attach additional documents that share our story? At this time we are not accepting additional documents for this RFP. We encourage you to be specific, clear and concise about your responses. The portal has a word count at the bottom of each question to assist you.

How will I know if my application was received? You will receive a confirmation email to the address you provided from noreply@smartsimple.com, which will also include a PDF of your full application for your records. You will also receive email communications as your application moves through the review process and if our reviewers require additional information.

How will I know if my application was awarded or declined? You will receive a confirmation email to the address you provided from noreply@smartsimple.com on or before May 31, 2021.

What should we use for our Requested Grant Amounts to upload to the grant portal? Please use the format below by copying to a new document (Word preferred) and saving to your computer. You can then upload this document to the portal using the upload graphic that appears after you click Save Draft (see instructions below).

What do we want to see in the Funding Request Form? For each category (Relief For Past Expenses, Technical Assistance, Training, and/or Broad Initiatives), please include a brief description of your expenses and the total amount you are seeking.

On the WSMA grant portal, under Finances: How do I access the upload button for the Requested Grant Amounts Form (see above)? You must first enter your total request amount and then click Save Draft. Once this is done, reopen the Finance tab and an upload graphic (file with up arrow) will appear and you will use this to upload your form.

COVID-19 Relief And Recovery Grants for Microenterprise Development Funding Request Form		
Organization Name:	Brief Description of Expenses	Relief & Recovery Funds Grant Request
Relief For Past Expenses <i>Note: Applicants will be required to attest in their application to decreased income and/or additional costs incurred in 2020 and 2021 (negative financial impact) resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.</i>		\$
Technical Assistance		\$
Training		\$
Broad Initiatives		\$
TOTAL REQUEST		\$

11. Information Sessions & Questions

- Questions regarding this RFP should be addressed to Lisa Smith, WSMA Executive Director at lisa.wamicrobiz@gmail.com.
- Teleconference Information Sessions will be held on **April 30, 2021 at 9:00am** and **May 3, 2020 at 12:00pm**. To participate in the teleconference dial (712) 770-4010, enter Access Code 238971 and follow instructions at the meeting time.