

# Program Guidelines

Application Deadline

January 31, 2014

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## Overview

The New York City Department of Small Business Services' Avenue NYC Grant Program targets the economic base of the neighborhood – the local commercial corridor. Managed by SBS' Neighborhood Development Division (NDD), the Avenue NYC Grant Program funds nonprofit economic development organizations (local development corporations, merchants associations, and other organizations) in all five boroughs to execute commercial revitalization activities in the districts they serve. The goal of the program is to create the conditions under which businesses can thrive and residents can enjoy access to a vibrant mix of goods and services.

In Fiscal Year 2015, SBS will fund nonprofit economic development organizations to carry out one or more initiatives within five project categories:

- Business Attraction
- Façade Improvement Management Program
- Merchant Organizing
- Placemaking
- Capacity Building

Please review the details of each of these programs below for information on eligible activities and funding levels. Applications for Avenue NYC are available online at [www.nyc.gov/avenuenyc](http://www.nyc.gov/avenuenyc).

As part of the Avenue NYC Program, organizations funded in Fiscal Year 2015 will also have the opportunity to participate in capacity building and best practice sharing initiatives with other organizations implementing similar projects.

## Requirements

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

**Applicants must be:**

- Nonprofit economic development organizations operating in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods in any of the five boroughs of New York City (see Income Eligibility Criteria below);
- Incorporated as a nonprofit in New York State;
- Compliant with annual State and Federal filing requirements that are pertinent to their type of organization, including New York State Charities Bureau filings.

### PROJECT SCOPE CRITERIA

**Proposed commercial revitalization projects must:**

- Operate within defined geographic boundaries of a commercial corridor;
- Target commercial corridors as a whole. Projects cannot provide individual business assistance, such as one-on-one business plan development assistance;

- Address the needs of small and medium-sized businesses operating in the geographic area;
- Include outcomes that address commercial needs of local residents

## INCOME ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Organizations applying for Avenue NYC funding **must** target areas that are designated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as low- or moderate-income neighborhoods. Designation prescribes that at least 51% of the residents in the census tracts included in the commercial area must be low- and moderate-income persons living in households with incomes below 80% of the median household income (\$47,100 for a 4-person household in 2000). To determine your census tract, visit the New York City Census FactFinder:

<http://gis.nyc.gov/dcp/pa/address.jsp>

To learn more about Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) eligibility and to view the city's census tracts that are CDBG eligible, visit the Department of City Planning's (DCP) online Census Report:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/resource/censustractreport.shtml>.

If your organization has not contracted with Avenue NYC in the past two fiscal years, please contact SBS to determine your target area's CDBG-eligibility.

## CONTRACTING & COMPLIANCE

Organizations applying for Avenue NYC funding must be prepared to enter into a registered contract with the City of New York. The contract term will begin on July 1, 2014 and end on June 30, 2015. The length of time required to register a contract varies and is contingent upon the timeliness and completeness of contracting materials submitted by organizations.

Applicants must ensure that their organization is current and compliant with **contracting requirements** as soon as possible, including but not limited to registration with the New York State Charities Bureau, recent audited financial statements, updated VENDEX questionnaires with the Mayor's Office of Contract Services, and current general liability, workers compensation and automobile insurance. To review New York City's required contracting materials and contracting steps, please visit [www.nyc.gov/avenuenyccontracts](http://www.nyc.gov/avenuenyccontracts).

Additionally, organizations that are awarded Avenue NYC funding must comply with **program-specific requirements**. Organizations will be required to participate in project scoping meetings with their contract manager before the beginning of the fiscal year, attend one orientation session, participate in monthly check-in calls with their SBS contract manager, complete quarterly reports, undergo a mid-year evaluation, host SBS representatives for a site visit, and participate in 'best practices' workshops.

## PAYMENTS

Organizations awarded Avenue NYC grants are reimbursed for contract expenses once the contract has been registered with the New York City Comptroller's Office. Avenue NYC organizations are expected to begin their projects on July 1, 2014, in advance of funding reimbursement, and must submit requests for payment of program expenses incurred on a monthly basis beginning in August of 2014, regardless of when the contract is registered.

## Program Timeline

| TIMELINE                 | 2013     | 2014    |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 2015    |          |       |       |     |      |
|--------------------------|----------|---------|----------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|---------|----------|-------|-------|-----|------|
|                          | December | January | February | March | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December | January | February | March | April | May | June |
| Open Application Period  |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |
| Application Evaluation   |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |
| Project Scoping Meetings |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |
| Awards Announced         |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |
| Orientation              |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |
| Contract Paperwork Due   |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |
| Monthly Check-In Calls   |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |
| Payment Requests         |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |
| Quarterly Reports        |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |
| Site Visit               |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |
| Mid-Year Evaluation      |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |         |          |       |       |     |      |

*\*\*This timeline is for estimation purposes only. The actual length of time required for the contracting process may differ from this plan.*

# Project Guidelines

Local nonprofit organizations may apply for funding in one or more of the following Avenue NYC project categories. Avenue NYC funding is project-based, meaning that funded organizations are expected to set measurable deliverables with specific outputs and outcomes, and deliver completed projects at the end of the contract term.

## PROJECT EXPECTATIONS

Generally, organizations that receive Avenue NYC funding have **realistic**, **well-planned**, and **measurable** deliverables. When completing the FY 2015 Avenue NYC Application, keep the following questions in mind.

### Realistic

- Do the stated deliverables form a cohesive project plan that is appropriate for the commercial corridor?
- Does the organization have the capacity to execute these deliverables in a timely manner?
- Do the deliverables clearly dictate what the Avenue NYC funds will be used to accomplish?

### Well-Planned

- Has the organization thought through and identified the activities it must complete in order to successfully execute each project deliverable?
- Do the deliverables and activities support a greater vision for the commercial corridor?
- How does the project plan for fiscal year 2015 build upon past accomplishments and push the envelope for the future?

### Measurable

- How will the organization measure its success in fiscal year 2015?
- What tangible outputs will the organization track as evidence that the deliverables have been completed?
- Has the organization identified the overall outcome, or impact on the commercial corridor, that completing the project plan entails? How will the organization measure these outcomes?

Awards will be competitive and based on the strength of the proposal and, if applicable, the quality of the work performed under previous contracts with NDD. While funding is generally awarded at \$25,000 per project, NDD may award grants in an amount of up to \$50,000 per project based on the availability of funding, the strength of the overall application, and the quality of the project design.

# Application Evaluation

## APPLICATION REVIEW & RANKING SYSTEM

Applications will be reviewed by committees comprised of representatives from NDD. The committees will judge each application on a competitive basis by project area. For instance, applicants for the Business Attraction category will be judged against other applicants for the Business Attraction project area only. All organizations applying for the Avenue NYC program will be evaluated on three criteria and rated on a corresponding point scale

### **Existing Organizational Capacity | 40 points**

Organizations will be evaluated on their ability to meet contractual obligations, their experience delivering high-quality projects, and the sustainability of commercial revitalization activities. Evaluation of organizational capacity will be based on dedication of human resources to the project, the organization's experience in related commercial revitalization activities, and the organization's past experience in executing contracts with the New York City Department of Small Business Services.

### **Strength of the Avenue NYC Project Proposal | 50 points**

Proposals will be rated on the overall strength of the project. Strong proposals are those that demonstrate in-depth planning and a comprehensive overall design. Evaluators will assess the extent to which proposals effectively and logically articulate the organization's specific approach. Proposals should set clear targets and define objectives. NDD will favor proposals that are innovative and build significantly upon previous initiatives, and will also consider the care with which an organization completes the application.

### **Viability of the Proposed Avenue NYC Budget | 10 points**

Proposed budgets will be rated against the activities laid out in the project proposal and will be assessed for the alignment of resources to activities and the practicality of resource allocations. Evaluators will consider additional sources of revenue listed for the project as well as how the proposed project budget contributes proportionally to the organization's overall operating budget, taking into account distribution of expenses, reliability of other income, and diversification of revenue. Please refer to the Budget Page Instruction Sheet for additional information.

## Questions

You can access the Avenue NYC Application on the program's webpage [www.nyc.gov/avenuenyc](http://www.nyc.gov/avenuenyc). All other inquiries can be directed to [avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov](mailto:avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov).