PROGRAM GUIDELINES

OVERVIEW

The Department of Small Business Services (SBS) helps unlock economic potential and create economic security for all New Yorkers by connecting New Yorkers to good jobs, creating stronger businesses, and building vibrant neighborhoods across the five boroughs. To help achieve this mission, we are (re)launching the fifth round of Neighborhood Challenge, a competition designed to invest in community-based development organizations (CBDOs) to partner with technology companies to create and implement tools that address specific commercial district issues. The competition seeks to make awards of up to $100,000 to fund innovative ideas that use data and technology to improve operations, target services, or address local public policy challenges.

SBS, along with partners New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) and New York City Business Assistance Corporation, are proud to offer the Neighborhood Challenge innovation competition. Since 2012, Neighborhood Challenge and its preceding competition, BID Challenge, have received nearly 240 project proposals and funded 27 of those projects, with those awards totaling $1.7 million invested in New York City neighborhoods. Past projects have included storefront improvements, district marketing campaigns, public art installations, business attraction initiatives, and public space activation. These winning programs and initiatives are currently being implemented in business corridors across the five boroughs: http://neighborhoodchallenge.nyc/.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

This competition is open to community-based development organizations (CBDOs) with missions to improve, manage, and maintain a New York City commercial district.

Proposal teams must include a lead applicant nonprofit CBDO and a technology company. Proposed projects should be digital or data-driven capacity building solutions that enhance the lead applicant's operational efficiency and ability to meet the needs of its stakeholders within the commercial district. Proposed projects must be implemented within one year.

Lead applicants are nonprofit organizations that target a New York City commercial district or neighborhood. Additional eligibility criteria include:
- Incorporated as a nonprofit in New York State and in compliance with the New York State Charities Bureau.
- Operate in the five boroughs of New York City.

- Have a dedicated economic development budget under $2,000,000. Potential applicants with operating budgets over $2 million must partner and co-apply with another organization with a budget under $2 million from a different neighborhood.

Technology companies that are part of proposal teams should:
- Propose a digital or data-driven capacity building solution that enhances the lead applicant's operational efficiency and strategic decision making, and/or strengthens direct stakeholder engagement and assistance.
- Be endorsed or supported by a relevant third party (e.g. client, incubator, partner, etc.).
- Propose a solution that has some novel aspect, and that is potentially scalable or generalizable to multiple commercial districts or CBDOs.
- Not hold exclusive ownership rights of the data used and/or collected as part of the proposed solution.
- Have a physical presence in NYC.

All lead applicants must consider the New York City and/or New York State agencies that may need to be involved in project implementation and must establish contact and/or agreements with those agencies in advance of applying for Neighborhood Challenge funding.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Neighborhood Challenge 5.0 is intended to spark new ideas and approaches to building organizational capacity by implementing technology tools that address challenges in New York City commercial districts. Projects should aim to leverage additional talent, partners, and resources both inside and outside of City government to achieve wide-ranging outcomes.

We recognize that technology solutions could have many applications to make commercial districts smarter – we are primarily focused on exploring digital or data-driven technology solutions that meet the following use cases:
- Improves operational efficiency and service delivery (e.g. tracking and coordinating program inputs, outputs, and impacts).
- Strengthens direct stakeholder engagement and assistance (e.g. capturing and sharing historic data and trends on topics like fines and inspections, rent and property values, or pedestrian counts, and using this data to build or strengthen program delivery).
- Enhances organizational capacity (e.g. aggregating data and program activities, moving paper-driven processes online, or automating manual processes)

Generally, tools and solutions may assess, measure, or address issues in the following areas:
- Capital construction impact mitigation
- Community engagement and stakeholder outreach
- Management of public space and streetscape amenities
- Quality of life conditions and tracking
- Real estate development and land use changes
- Retail/office vacancy tracking and commercial leasing
- Sanitation and district maintenance
- Small business assistance and promotion
- Street vendor siting and fine reduction
- Sustainability and energy efficiency
- Transportation, transit, and parking

You can access the application document and instructions from the Neighborhood Challenge website (www.nyc.gov/neighborhoodchallenge). Instructions for completing the required sections of the application are as follows:

- **Vision:** Discuss the specific commercial corridor challenge(s) that your project seeks to address. Explain your theory of how the project would solve that challenge. Discuss how the project fits into your broader, longer-term goals for the commercial district and community.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Include a step-by-step outline of your project, with the month in which each step will occur. It may help to create a visual timeline summary and then have a detailed explanation on another slide.
- **Outcome/Impact:** Include short-term (over the one-year period) and longer-term outcomes. Describe specific metrics you will use to evaluate the project. What numbers would you look for to know that the project succeeded? Make sure to discuss the impact on the commercial district, as well as the neighborhood as a whole.
- **Project Team & Key Stakeholders:** Include the members of your proposal team, partner organizations, and other key stakeholders, and describe their role in project execution. Include any government agencies that would need to be involved in or give approval on project components, and briefly explain the status or your discussions with them so far.
- **Budget:** Provide an overview of the personnel services, other than personnel services, and operating expenses for the project. If your project budget exceeds $100,000, indicate where additional funds will be sourced to complete the project.

APPLICATION REVIEW & RANKING SYSTEM

Awards will be made on a competitive basis. Project proposals will be reviewed by a committee comprised of SBS and NYCEDC staff and practitioners from the aforementioned issue areas.

Projects will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- **Commercial District Challenge** – The project clearly articulates a critical and significant challenge to commercial district management that it will address.
- **Innovation** – The project demonstrates innovation in addressing an identified commercial district challenge.
- **Impact** – The project will have a measureable impact on the commercial district or district management operations, as well as the challenge it is intended to address. It will serve as a catalyst that has the potential for long-term sustainability and positive economic impact.
- **Organizational Capacity** – The proposed budget and project team appear capable of undertaking a project of this scope, and the implemented project will result in increased organizational capacity of the lead applicant.

SELECTION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The grantee selection process consists of three phases:

1. **Expression of Interest:** The period for the expression of interest has ended. Interested nonprofits and technology companies are still welcome to submit a full proposal.

2. **Full Proposal:** In the full proposal, lead applicants will be asked to provide an overview of the vision, implementation timeline, outcomes and impact of the project, project team and key stakeholders, as well as the project budget. You can access the application document and instructions from the Neighborhood Challenge website (www.nyc.gov/neighborhoodchallenge). Completed applications are due by 11:59 p.m. on May 14, 2017.

3. **Pitch Competition:** Selected finalists will participate in the Neighborhood Challenge Pitch Competition in mid-June 2017. Winners will be selected by a panel of judges at the Finalist Pitch Competition.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Frequently asked questions we have received so far include the following:

Participation
- Can I still participate if I didn't attend the kick off or submit an expression of interest? *Yes, all eligible CBDOs and tech companies are welcome to form proposal teams and submit a proposal by the deadline.*

Partnerships
- Can my CBDO or tech company work with more than one proposal team? *Yes.*
- Can CBDOs partner with any tech company, or do they have to be in the kick off participant booklet? *CBDOs can partner with any tech company that meets the eligibility criteria.*
- How can I find an M/WBE certified tech company for my partner? *Check out the City's online directory of certified businesses: http://mtprawvwsbswtp1-1.nyc.gov/.*
- If I partner with another CBDO, are we both grantees, or is there a lead applicant and subcontractor relationship? *The grant is awarded to one lead nonprofit organization, with that organization responsible for spending funds as spelled out in the proposal budget. Proposal teams that include multiple CBDOs must select a lead applicant to serve as the entity that will contract with SBS and receive the grant funds.*
- Could a CBDO partner with both a tech company and another company that isn't a nonprofit to complete the project? *Yes. We welcome multiple project partners if needed for the project to be successfully implemented.*
- How can a technology company find an appropriate Community Development Org to partner with for this challenge? *We can send the list of CBDOs and tech companies that RSVP'd for the Neighborhood Challenge Kick-off event on March 28th – which includes their contact information and the commercial district challenges they are looking to address. Beyond that, we can provide suggestions during coaching sessions.*
- How many CBDOs can collaborate on a single application? Can a tech company submit several applications in several neighborhoods? *We welcome as many project proposals from CBDOs as they wish to submit. Note: a tech company cannot submit an application on its own. The lead CBDO must submit the application. A tech company can definitely partner on multiple projects in multiple neighborhoods, but we are ultimately looking for customized solutions and proposals that speak to the unique conditions, operations, and capacities of commercial districts and partner CBDOs.*

Eligibility
- Is the $2million threshold total budget or just assessment for Business Improvement Districts? *The threshold is for just assessment revenue for Business Improvement Districts.*
- Am I less competitive if my budget is under $2million and I don't partner with another CBDO? *No.*
- Are CDBO's expected to be managing or have plans to manage a commercial district? (I.e. can this

simply be an independent project for a particular district?) *We expect that the lead applicant CBDO has day-to-day experience providing services to stakeholders in a commercial district.*

- Does the license type of the company matter? For example, are B-corporations eligible? *No, the type of formal business structure does not matter. B-corporations are welcome to collaborate as members of a project team. The lead applicant does have to be a nonprofit community-based development organization that meets the eligibility criteria laid out in our program guidelines (accessible on www.nyc.gov/neighborhoodchallenge).*

Project and Application Guidelines

- Can tech companies build on existing work? *Yes.*
- If my tech company has a product or service innovation that will be applicable to many of the challenges can I submit one application or do I have to apply separately to each one? *A tech company cannot submit an application. The lead CBDO must submit the application. In the application submitted by the lead CBDO, the proposed solution may address as many commercial district challenges that the CBDO is ultimately looking to address assuming they can all be operationalized within the 1 year time-frame.*
- How is the tech company paid? *The tech company is listed as a subcontractor on the project budget and paid by the lead applicant CBDO in the amount determined by the proposal team's project budget.*
- How is compensation determined? *It is determined by the members of a proposal team (tech company and CBDO) based on the project scope and needs.*
- Is the tech company or secondary CBDO required to submit all of the attachments listed in the instructions or is this requirement only for the lead CBDO? *The lead CBDO must submit all of the attachments listed in the application documents. The proposal team partners – tech company and any other CBDO must submit just the members of the Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers of the company or organization. For each proposal team member that will be working on the project, indicate their role, responsibilities, and time allocation.*
- What kind of third parties can endorse tech companies? *Any third parties that speak to the tech company's experience and expertise in this sector.*
- How can I access data sources available through the city? *All public data is available on nyc.gov/opendata. If there are open data sets you are looking to use for your proposed solution that have not yet been made available, you should state this in your proposal and we will work with the Mayor's Office of Data Analytics (MODA) to help make such data available.*
- Will this be a fully reimbursed grant or will there be any upfront funding? *This will be a fully reimbursed grant. No upfront funding will be available.*
- When are selected projects anticipated to commence? Summer 2017.
- Can I get feedback or guidance on my project idea? *Yes, NYC Department of Small Business Services or Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation staff are available to provide feedback on your project idea and proposal. 30-minute sessions are available from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. and 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. during the week of April 24 and May 1, 2017. Send us an email at NeighborhoodChallenge@sbs.nyc.gov to reserve your spot. Coaching sessions will be assigned on a first come, first served basis.*