



Disadvantaged Business Development Program

Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2027	
Lead Division: Business and Community Development	
☐ New	☒ Revised 7/1/2026
☒ Grant	☐ Loan ☐ Tax Credit ☐ Technical Assistance

Introduction

Background Information: The Disadvantaged Business Development (DBD) program is designed to support capacity building of non-profit organizations in providing financial and technical assistance to businesses in (a) economically disadvantaged communities, (b) underserved markets, or both (a) and (b). The funding is intended to promote investment and job retention and creation by increasing access to capital and business development training opportunities.

Program's Purpose: The program is designed to support businesses in (a) economically disadvantaged communities, (b) underserved markets, or both (a) and (b) through direct assistance to nonprofit organizations as well as providing capacity building.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants: DBD applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a not-for-profit organization, to include nonprofit entities, units of government, educational institutions, community organizations, foundations, Tribal entities, or non-profit entities acting as a fiscal agent on behalf of another organization.
- Provide business financing, training, and/or technical assistance to the businesses in (a) economically disadvantaged communities, (b) underserved markets, or both (a) and (b).
- Have demonstrated professional capacity, financial stability and viability, and a demonstrated need.

Eligible Use of Funds: DBD grants can fund the following activities. Costs are only eligible to be applied to grant and matching fund expenses after WEDC approval.

- Operational expenses related to the project and provision of technical assistance to businesses.
- Funding to businesses related to the project.

Matching: Matching funds are not required.



Available Incentives

FY27: \$500,000

Award Sizes: The minimum DBD grant amount is \$15,000. The maximum DBD grant amount is \$50,000.

Awards per Applicant: Applicants may receive one award per fiscal year.

Activities and Expected Outcomes

Assist 10 organizations which will assist 398 businesses.

Impact: Build capacity of non-profit organizations and businesses in (a) economically disadvantaged communities, (b) underserved markets, or both (a) and (b) in Wisconsin. The funding is intended to promote investment and job retention and creation by increasing access to capital and business development training opportunities via our non-profit partners.

Metrics: As a capacity building program, performance reporting metrics for DBD are focused on measuring the connection of the project to the community. DBD program metrics include the following list, and each project will include one or more of these metrics in its reporting requirements depending on the project's specified use of funds.

- Pass-Through Businesses Assisted (Financial)
- Pass-Through Businesses Assisted (Technical)
- Pass-Through Leverage
- Leverage – Total

Application Guideline

Timeline: The Disadvantaged Business Development program has a continuous application process.

Review Considerations: WEDC may take the following into account when considering a DBD award:

- Ability to promote investment and job retention and creation in (a) economically disadvantaged communities, (b) underserved markets, or both (a) and (b).
- Ability to increase access to capital and business development training opportunities.
- Extent to which the applicant organization is owned or managed by individuals representing their communities.

How to Apply: An interested applicant should contact a WEDC Account Manager to determine if their project is right for the program. Upon review of the project, and alignment with eligibility criteria, an applicant will be invited to submit their application through Network Wisconsin.

Award Process: A WEDC underwriter will be assigned to review each recommended award and go through the award review process.



Performance Reporting: Recipients must submit periodic reports on project activities and the number of businesses technically assisted where applicable, and any other contract deliverable.

WEDC annually selects awards on a sample basis for an audit. All backup to the performance report and financial records must be maintained by the Recipient for at least three (3) years after the last performance report is due.

WEDC may impose additional reporting requirements to evaluate project performance and to ensure compliance with contract deliverables.

Revision History

Program Inception – Fiscal Year 2012

- 07/01/2017: Simplified program due to transition of Minority Business Chambers to Key Strategic Partners during FY18.
- 07/01/2018: Simplified eligibility criteria to expand qualifying organizations.
- 07/01/2019: Clarified performance reporting requirements.
- 04/23/2020: Authorized use of grant funds to provide direct financial assistance to businesses during the public health emergency.
- 07/01/2020: Changed program name; eliminated temporary provisions of public health emergency initiative.
- 07/01/2022: Expands program description to include disabled and capacity-building for nonprofits; Adds Ally Grant Pilot.
- 07/01/2023: Removes Ally Grant Pilot.
- 07/01/2026: Updates program language.