



Office of Economic Development's Small Business Development Program

Small businesses are vital to Seattle's healthy and thriving economic development. They are stewards who invest in our neighborhoods and our neighbors, inspire our young people to dream and pursue new opportunities, and provide pathways to opportunities for diverse communities at all income levels. Over 90% of businesses in Seattle have between 1 and 50 employees, and Seattle consistently ranks in the top five U.S. metro areas for small business jobs. Small businesses are essential to Seattle's past, present, and future.

Accordingly, the City's Office of Economic Development (OED) works directly with small businesses to understand their priorities and challenges. We connect small businesses to resources that help them grow and remain competitive. We assist in four primary areas: outreach and engagement; business consulting; financing; and problem solving and advocacy.

Outreach and Engagement

Active outreach and engagement is the foundation of our work with Seattle's small business community. We accomplish outreach and engagement in different ways, such as 1-on-1 business visits, business focus group discussions and meetings with business district and business support organizations. Frequent communication with Seattle's small business community informs our work and helps us provide services grounded in actual needs. We also pay particular attention to tailor our efforts to ensure outreach and engagement with small businesses owned by women, minorities and other historically underrepresented communities.

Business Consulting

We connect small businesses to consulting resources that help sharpen management skills and explore new opportunities for growth. We offer resources for a wide range of businesses --- from the early stage entrepreneur looking to launch their company to the established business looking to attain the next level of growth.

- Receive no cost 1-on-1 business consulting with a particular focus on business planning, financial management and marketing
- Access classroom training and counseling, with specialized assistance available for early stage, low-income and immigrant owned entrepreneurs

Financing

We connect small businesses to alternative financing options offered by local nonprofit lenders. These community lenders offer greater flexibility than banks in evaluating loan requests and structuring loan terms:

- Grow Seattle Fund
- Business Impact Northwest (BINW)
- Craft3
- Mercy Corps Northwest
- Rainier Valley Community Development Fund (RVCDF)

Problem Solving and Advocacy

We help small businesses navigate through the City regulatory process to resolve a variety of issues. We also advocate on behalf of small businesses to ensure that their input is taken into account on regulatory and policy issues. The following describes different ways in which we support small businesses on problem solving and advocacy issues:

- Starting a business
- Managing impacts from construction projects
- Contracting with the City
- Coordination & communication with other City departments
- Resolving outstanding permit and zoning issues
- Developing new policies to address concerns raised by small businesses