City of SACRAMENTO

City of Sacramento
Economic Gardening 2.0 Program
Notice of Funding Opportunity

Posted: Monday, March 9, 2025

Priority Questions Due By: Monday, March 30, by 4:59 p.m.

Applications Due By: Monday, April 20, by 4:59 p.m.

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ECONOMIC GARDENING APPLICATION GUIDELINES

“Economic Gardening 2.0” is an economic development program designed to provide sophisticated market research and customized small business technical assistance to qualifying local companies poised for growth. The City of Sacramento partners with the National Center for Economic Gardening (NCEG: https://economicgardening.org/) and Berkeley Strategy Advisors (BSA) to implement this program.

Participants receive executive-level market intelligence and growth strategy consulting culminating in eligibility for a matching reimbursement grant of up to $50,000 to support growth strategy implementation.

Program Outline
This program takes place in two main phases. In the first phase, companies receive 40 hours of services from the NCEG's team of research experts. These seasoned researchers leverage sophisticated corporate databases, GIS systems, Search Engine Optimization and Web marketing tools that provide the CEO with data and conclusions about key issues for each individual company. BSA provides program administration and technical advisory support throughout the program.

When research is complete, companies then move to the second phase of Economic Gardening, where they take what they’ve learned from NCEG and develop a project for business growth, funded in part by matching grants from the City of Sacramento.

Participants will receive tailored advisory services from NCEG & BSA which may include:

1. Data-driven growth strategy development
2. Business model evaluation and competitive positioning refinement
3. Market expansion and entry analysis
4. Financial modeling and capital allocation planning
5. Hiring strategy and organizational growth planning
6. Grant project scoping, modeling, and feasibility analysis
7. Ongoing technical assistance and strategic advisory support during grant project implementation

Eligible Grant Project Activities
The City encourages grant funding for projects that directly support business growth, capacity expansion, and market competitiveness. Eligible activities may include:

1. **Digital presence and marketing enhancements**
   Website upgrades, e-commerce development, SEO, branding, and digital marketing strategy.
2. **Workforce expansion and talent development**
   Hiring new staff, workforce training, and professional development to support growth.
3. **Facility expansion or relocation within Sacramento city limits**
   Securing, expanding, or improving commercial space to increase operational capacity.
4. **Equipment and technology investments**
   Machinery, tools, or technology upgrades that increase production capacity or efficiency.
5. **Strategic, financial, and operational planning**
   Business planning, financial modeling, growth strategy development, and market expansion plans.

6. **New product or service development**
   Research, prototyping, testing, and commercialization support.
7. **Professional advisory services**
   Specialized consulting or technical expertise that directly supports project implementation and measurable growth outcomes.

[1] **Note:** Any projects that involve construction, alteration, demolition, installation, or repair work done under contract and paid in whole or in part out of public funds will be subject to paying contractors a prevailing wage. To learn more about prevailing wage requirements, visit: https://www.dir.ca.gov/public-works/prevailing-wage.html

Leadership Expectations

To get the most out of this program, the company CEO must be available to participate in a program orientation, the initial discovery call and all subsequent meetings with NCEG specialists. It is also highly recommended that an additional staff member empowered to make decisions for the company be present in case they need to serve as back-up for further NCEG meetings.

The City anticipates the following timeline for Economic Gardening engagement. The exact timeline will depend on the complexity of the research questions undertaken by NCEG specialists and the projects grantees implement with grant funds:

- Program orientation (3 hours) and welcome mixer – July 2026
- Discovery Call with NCEG specialists (1.5 hours) – July 2026 (depending on company availability)
- NCEG specialists research on companies' behalf and communicate via email on finalizing research questions – August 2026
- Company officers meet with NCEG specialists 4-6 times for research debriefs (1 hour each) – September to Oct. 2026 (depending on company availability and complexity of research question)
- Companies work with program administrator to finalize grant proposal – November 2026
- Contracting begins with City of Sacramento – December 2026

Grant funding is reimbursement-based and expenses cannot be incurred before the contract with the City is executed. If a company is unable to execute a contract with the City within six months of completing the NCEG consulting, the company forfeits their eligibility to grant funds.

Grantees will have 12 months to expend funds once the contract is executed. Participants will be required to submit quarterly progress reports and spending reports until grant funds and matching funds are spent. For three years following the full expense of grant and matching contract funds, participants will submit annual progress reports.

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria to have an application scored:

- Be a for-profit, privately held company headquartered and operating in the city of Sacramento
- Have between approximately $1 million and $50 million in annual revenue

- Generate approximately 25% or more of revenue from the export or sale of goods and services to markets outside the county of Sacramento
- Employ at least 5 but no more than 99 employees (including the owner) at the Sacramento headquarters
- Demonstrate growth in employment or revenue for at least 2 of the past 5 years

Submission Process and Timeline
Applicants must complete all required questions included in the online application. Application questions and scoring criteria can be reviewed in Appendix A. The City will only accept applications submitted on the City's Grant Management System at (**https://grants.cityofsacramento.gov/grants/s/**).

This schedule may be altered at any time at the sole discretion of the City of Sacramento:

- Application open: Monday, March 9, 2026
- Applicant information session: Week of March 16, 2026
- Questions accepted until: Monday, March 30, 2026, at 4:59 p.m.
- Answers to questions posted: Week of April 6, 2026
- Application deadline: Monday, April 20, at 4:59 p.m.
- Awardees notified: May/June 2026
- Orientation and NCEG Engagement begins: July 2026

All questions regarding this grant solicitation can be directed through the city's grants management system. An addendum addressing questions submitted by the deadline will be posted on the City's website (cityofsacramento.gov/EconGardening). To ask a question, users must be logged in and click the "Ask a question" button at the top right-hand of the screen. Responses to questions submitted by the deadline will be posted on the grant category application page and City website.

Application Review Process

1. Staff and the consulting team will review applications for minimum eligibility.
2. A review panel consisting of outside experts and City staff will score the applications and make recommendations to staff for selection.
3. Selected companies will be notified of final decisions in the second quarter of 2026.

Rejection of Applications
The City of Sacramento may, at its sole discretion, determine not to award any grant in response to this request or to negotiate with any grantee in any manner necessary to serve the best interests of the City. No applicant shall receive any compensation for preparing any grant application.

Public Records
All applications and application materials are public records. All information received from an applicant, whether received in connection with a grant application or in connection with any grant funded activities performed, will be disclosed upon receipt of a request for disclosure

pursuant to the California Public Records Act. Application scores may also be disclosed.

Amendments

The City reserves the right to revise or amend any part of this solicitation by issuing an addendum up to the due date/time for submittal. If necessary, due to the revisions or amendments, the due date for applications may be postponed.

Appendix A – Application Questions and Scoring Rubric

Application Questions

Basic Information

1. Company Name (As filed with Secretary of State)
2. Business Address (Must be a commercial address within the Sacramento city limits)
3. City
4. Postal Code (Zip Code)
5. Business Phone
6. Is your business publicly owned or privately owned?

Contact information

For the Economic Gardening program, a primary contact is requested who can be available for all (or most) key activities and is empowered to make decisions for the business. The company CEO is recommended. Please provide that individual's contact information below

7. Primary Company Contact Name
8. Primary Company Contact Title
9. Primary Company Contact Email Address
10. Primary Contact Office Phone Number
11. Primary Contact Cell Phone Number

Business Information

12. In 50 words or fewer, please describe your business.
13. Which industry does your business operate in and what is your primary NAICS code?
14. How many years has your business been in operation?
15. What was your annual revenue in each of the following years: 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 (Profit and loss statements for 2023 and 2024 must be uploaded).
16. What was your preliminary or estimated revenue in 2025? (Provide preliminary profit and loss statement for 2025).
17. Did you reach over $1M in annual revenue for 2025?
18. Approximately what percentage of revenue was generated from sales or services provided outside of Sacramento county?
    1. 0-20%
    2. 21-30%
    3. 31-40%
    4. 41-50%
    5. 51% or more.
19. How many full-time employees does your business currently have?
20. How many part-time employees does your business currently have?
21. Please upload documentation that verifies your current employee count.
22. How many of your current employees work from your Sacramento headquarters?
23. How many days a week are employees required to work in person, at the Sacramento headquarters?

Leadership Team Questions

24. Can the CEO commit to participating in required meetings throughout the program timeline? (Yes/No)
25. Please provide the qualifications and experience of the team member(s) that will engage with the Economic Gardening process or upload their resume(s) below. (300 words max)
26. Describe one major strategic decision your company made in the past 2–3 years. What data informed the decision and what changed as a result? (300 words max)
27. Describe one area where your company is seeking to adjust strategy based on third-party research or recommendations. (150 words max)

Business Model and Strategic Readiness

28. Do you have a current business plan? (Yes/No) [If answer is yes] Please upload a copy to provide background and context.
29. Describe your current business model, including your value proposition, current primary customers, and sources of company revenues. (300 words max)
30. Who are your primary competitors and how does your company differentiate itself? (250 words max)
31. Describe your company's growth strategy for the next 2–3 years. What strategies are you actively implementing in your operations, what industry challenges are limiting your growth, and where would outside expertise be most valuable? (500 words max)
32. Describe one product, service, or process improvement implemented in the past three years and the measurable impact it had on revenue, customers, or operations. (250 words max)

Community Impact and Inclusive Practices

33. Describe your company's practices related to workforce diversity and supplier selection. (250 words max)

34. How does your business engage with the Sacramento community beyond day-to-day operations? (250 words max)

Program Fit and Commitment

35. How do you anticipate Economic Gardening will help your company identify and prioritize new growth opportunities? Please describe up to three areas where data-driven market intelligence, research insights, or strategic analysis could inform your company's expansion, market positioning, or revenue growth decisions. (250 words)

36. Confirm that your company can commit to the full program timeline and understands that grant funding is reimbursement-based and contingent on contract execution. (Yes/No)

Scoring Rubric

1. Leadership Capacity & Commitment - 30 Points
(Aligned to Questions 25–28)

Purpose: Determine if company leadership has the authority, availability, and experience required to effectively participate in a high-touch strategy program.

Excellent (24-30 points)

- CEO confirms participation.
- Leadership demonstrates strong experience using data, market research, or outside advisors to guide major decisions.
- Clearly articulates openness to adjusting strategy based on third-party research and evidence.

Good (15-24 points)

- Senior leader with strong authority identified; CEO involvement is present though partially delegated.
- Some experience using outside expertise or data to inform decisions.
- Demonstrates understanding of program expectations and engagement requirements.

Fair (8-14 points)

- Leadership identified but authority or engagement depth is somewhat unclear.
- Limited evidence of prior strategic decision-making informed by external input.

Poor or Inadequate (0-7 points)

- No clear decision-maker identified or no demonstrated understanding of program requirements.
- Primary participant lacks authority or has limited availability.
- Minimal evidence of readiness for an intensive advisory process.

2. Strategic Growth Readiness & Market Traction – 40 Points
(Aligned to Questions 29–33 and relevant financial data in Questions 15–24)

Purpose: Evaluate whether the company demonstrates a clear understanding of its business model and market position, shows measurable execution or growth traction, and is actively implementing or deciding on scalable growth strategies.

Excellent (31-40 points)

- Clearly articulates business model, value proposition, target customers, and revenue sources.
- Demonstrates measurable revenue, employment, or operational growth in recent years.
- Identifies specific strategies currently being implemented or actively decided upon.
- Clearly explains industry challenges or constraints and how outside expertise could unlock growth.
- Market opportunity extends meaningfully beyond Sacramento County and shows scalability.

Good (21-30 points)

- Business model and competitive positioning are mostly clear.
- Some evidence of execution traction or measurable improvement.

- Growth strategy is active but scalability or constraints are not fully articulated.

Fair (11-20 points)

- Business model described at a high level with limited depth.
- Growth strategy is more aspirational than operational.
- Limited measurable evidence of recent execution or traction.

Poor or Inadequate (1-10 points)

- Business model, competitive position, or growth strategy are unclear or inconsistent.
- Minimal evidence of execution or readiness to scale.
- No meaningful understanding of the business model, market position, or growth opportunity is demonstrated.

3. Community Impact & Inclusive Practices – 10 Points
(Aligned to Questions 34–35)

Purpose: Confirm that the company operates in alignment with City values related to inclusive economic growth and community engagement.

Excellent (9-10 points)

- Demonstrates intentional and consistent workforce diversity practices and supplier inclusion efforts.
- Actively engages with the Sacramento community beyond core business operations.

Good (7-8 points)

- Has implemented inclusive practices and demonstrates some community engagement.

Fair (5-6 points)

- Some informal or limited inclusive practices or engagement efforts.

Poor (0-4points)

- Minimal evidence of inclusive practices or community engagement.
- No demonstrated consideration of inclusivity or community impact.

4. Program Fit & Commitment – 20 Points
(Aligned to Questions 35-36)

Purpose: Confirm that the company understands the Economic Gardening program and can meaningfully engage in the program as structured.

Excellent (16-20 points)

- Clearly identifies business challenges directly aligned with Economic Gardening research and strategy tools.
- Strong understanding of program requirements.

Good (11-15 points)

- Identifies relevant challenges and demonstrates general understanding of program structure.

Fair (6-10 points)

- Challenges identified are loosely connected to program services.
- Partial understanding of program requirements.

Poor or Inadequate (0-5 points)

- Limited understanding of program design or expectations.
- No demonstrated alignment with program structure or participation requirements.