City of SACRAMENTO
Innovation & Economic Development

2026 Innovation Grant Program Q&A Responses

Guideline clarity: *As a point of clarity, at the time of application applicants are required to be registered and in good standing with the Secretary of State (SoS) and should have an active Business Operation Tax Certificate (BOTC or BOT) or exemption with the City of Sacramento. Links with information about both of these requirements can be found on the Resources tab of the Grants Management System.*
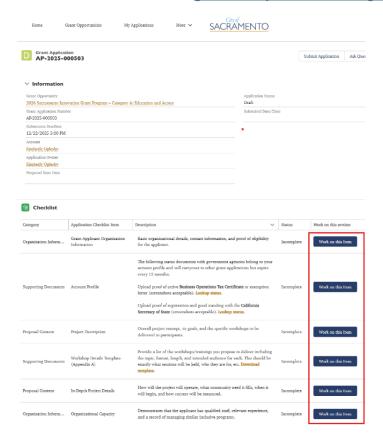
Online Questions by Category

Category A

For any of the categories, are advanced payments available?

>No. Grantees will be paid on a reimbursement basis and may request payment no more frequently than once a month.

What else do I need to do with my application?/ How do I complete a checklist item?

>Please complete each item in the checklist by clicking on the blue "**Work on this Item**" button, as indicated in the attached screenshot. Please also refer to the user guide or the application walkthrough from the information session. Users experiencing system malfunctions should email grants@cityofsacramento.gov.

Category B

Fiscal Sponsorship Questions: Some of these answers to the following fiscal sponsorship questions will depend on the terms of your fiscal sponsorship outlined via MOU or contract. Both organizations should be registered with Secretary of State (SoS) and have a Business Operations Tax Certificate (BOTC or BOT) or exemption, to be listed in the grant agreement with the City. It may be less complicated for the fiscal sponsor to contract with us directly, but if that is the case, you will want to make sure that is reflected in your application.

When using a fiscal sponsor, should the "lead organization" in the application be the fiscal sponsor or the operating project team?

The organization implementing the program should be the "lead organization." If a fiscal sponsor is involved, the role of the fiscal sponsor must be clearly stated/described in the application. This is especially important if the fiscal sponsor will be the only organization the City is directly contracting with. Fiscal sponsors, if any, will be included as a signing party of the contract.

Does the operating team need its own business operations tax certificate, or is the fiscal sponsor's certificate sufficient?

All organizations included as signing parties to the contract need to have an active BOTC or exemption and SoS registration. The City has contract language related to fiscal sponsorship where both the fiscal sponsor and implementing organization (operating team) sign. The implementing organization needs to be its own legitimate organization, including applicable certification, licensure, and registration.

Are MOUs required, or are letters of support sufficient?

In the context of fiscal sponsorship for contracting purposes, to understand the role of the fiscal sponsor, the City will require a copy of the MOU or contract that memorializes the role of the fiscal sponsor and implementing organization at the time of contracting. This is especially important in the context of insurance requirements. If the fiscal sponsor does not agree to include the implementing organization on their insurance, both the fiscal sponsor and the implementing organization will need to have their own insurance that meets the City's requirements.

If this question is in reference to what constitutes/demonstrates confirmation of potential partnership for the application, the City does not require either.

Is there guidance on the maximum percentage of the budget that can go to staff time to remain competitive?

There is no restriction on percentage of the budget that can go to staff time. In the scoring process, reviewers will take into consideration the type of program, associated costs, and whether or not the staff costs are in alignment.

Can subject-matter experts (curriculum contributors, design reviewers, technical consultants) be categorized as contracted services rather than staff time?

Yes if the services proposed are contracted by the proposing organization and not provided by employees of the organization.

Is any portion of the grant disbursed up-front, or is it fully reimbursable? If reimbursable, what is the invoicing frequency?

The grant is fully reimbursable with no portion of the funds advanced. Grantees will be paid on a reimbursement basis and may request payment no more frequently than once a month. Typically, status reports on grant-funded activities are also due with invoice requests.

Are the following allowable expenses: event venue costs, marketing materials, printed/digital pattern book production, and technical assistance/design licensing?

Please review the fundable activities in the guidelines on page 6. These expenses would likely be eligible but would also need to benefit participants of an eligible program.

For the 90% participant eligibility requirement, does working in Sacramento qualify, or must participants reside or be headquartered in Sacramento?

No. Proposed programming for Incubator and Accelerator or Innovation and Investment Readiness grants must commit to at least 90% of participants of grant funded activities having either a residence or business with an address within Sacramento city limits.

The remaining 10% of participants must either employ residents who live in the city limits, have a Business Operations Tax Certificate with the City of Sacramento, or demonstrate measurable business engagement in Sacramento city limits such as sales, contracts, or formal partnerships.

These participant requirements do not apply to Entrepreneur Education and Access Grant programming

For impact scoring, does the City prioritize: number of participants served, potential housing units enabled, or long-term pipeline development?

The application review criteria and scoring rubric is listed in the grant guidelines starting on page 6. It includes descriptions of each scoring category, how application details in each category will be generally viewed, and scoring tiers for each category.

Is it acceptable for curriculum development to occur after competition submissions are received (July/August), or is a near-final curriculum expected at time of application?

A fully developed curriculum is not required at the time of application. The City expects applicants to present a clear program design that includes the intended learning outcomes, a high-level curriculum framework, and major milestones within the 12-month grant period.

Reviewers will consider the applicant organization's expertise, experience, and demonstrated capacity to deliver the proposed program on schedule, within budget, and with impactful outcomes.

Our program vision is to create a youth focused micro accelerator/incubator that provides: Workforce readiness and career exploration, beauty and barber industry exposure, entrepreneurship skills, and direct placement pathways into jobs, training programs, or school for young adults ages 16–24. Want to confirm that this program concept aligns with the goals and intent of Category B: Incubator & Accelerator under the Sacramento Innovation Grant Program. Does this vision fit within the intended scope for Category B applicants?

Stated objectives of the City's Innovation Grant Program include:

- Expand the reach of entrepreneurial support organizations
- Increase opportunities for startups to grow Increase the number and viability of startups
- Increase VC investment in Sacramento
- Marketing broadly to change the perception of the ecosystem
- Foster and facilitate high-growth startups
- Encourage targeted collaborations
- Build key industry verticals

A youth-focused accelerator or incubator may be eligible under Category B if the program's primary purpose is entrepreneurial development. While workforce readiness and industry exposure can be part of a proposed program, Category B funding is intended for structured programming that helps participants develop, test, and advance a business concept through curriculum-based learning, coaching, and entrepreneurial skill-building.

Programs will be scored on how clearly they demonstrate alignment with Category B's intent, including whether entrepreneurial outcomes and innovation are central to the design.

In the grant guidelines it states that all project activities funded by this grant program must be open and advertised to the general public. Does that mean as part of our grant funded project we cannot offer an entrepreneurship class at a high school within the City of Sacramento, with the entrepreneurship class being offered to students of that school? It would be during school hours or during afterschool hours as a club sponsored by the school, so we would not be able to invite the general public.

The City's intent is that grant-funded activities remain as open and accessible as possible to the intended public participant group, such as youth or high school students in this case. A program offered only to students enrolled in one high school during the school day would generally not meet this intent. If possible, an afterschool program that could be attended by students from another school could be eligible.

Hello, I'd like clarification on location eligibility for the 2026 Sacramento Innovation Grant – Category B. Our main office is located just outside city limits (Arden-Arcade). Does eligibility depend on where the services are delivered, or must the applicant organization itself also be physically based within city limits?

If the business is not located within city limits, the programming (services delivered) must be provided in city limits.

The program guidelines specifically state on page 5: Applicants must operate from a fixed place of business within the Sacramento city limits, except if grant-supported programming is provided within the city limits. Entrepreneurship Education and Access Grant programming must be located within the Sacramento city limits.

In the Profile, for the Organization Type section, there was no option for Corporation, so I selected Partnership. Can you confirm if that is the correct choice?

Yes, it is. Unfortunately, options are limited with the current configuration of the application platform. Please select Partnership if you are not a non-profit or sole proprietorship.

Do you require a specific font, margin size, or formatting style for the uploaded document?

No. It just needs to be legible

Information Session Questions

*City staff provided **general tips** during the Zoom information session that may be useful for consideration for applying:*

- *Work on application questions included in the guidelines in a document outside of the platform and paste your answers in.*
  - *This is particularly helpful for spell check and questions that ask for character count*
- *Question spaces do not allow for formatting (they are plain text), so keep that in mind for items you may want to include such as bulleted lists*
- *Download and use the templates to ensure you include all the information the City is requesting in those documents*
- *Please do not wait until the last minute to submit your application. Aim to have your application complete at least one day before it is due.*
  - *Since this is a new system for the City, we don't know if the system may have glitches or run slower when many users are trying to submit last-minute applications.*
- *Applications will not be accepted after the deadline*

Questions

Sole proprietorships do not have to register with the Secretary of State. What should we upload there?

It is correct that sole proprietorships are not required to register with the Secretary of State (SoS). Sole proprietorships should upload a document stating their status. Sole proprietorships with a DBA or fictitious business name should upload their registration documentation from the appropriate county.

Sole proprietorships will need to have an active BOTC with the City.

Our organization is changing its name. Should we use the DBA name, the original non-profit name, or just use our EIN and explain somewhere that we will be using the non-profit arm?

Applicant organizations should use the organization's legal entity name which will be used to enter contract with the City. It should also match BOTC and SoS registration.

Non-profits will also need to provide proof of registration with the Attorney General's registry of charities in the pre-contracting phase.

Is there a letter of intent required to apply?

A letter of intent is not required to apply

Link to BOT exemption application for non-profits?

A BOTC exemption form can be found at the link below, including instructions on completion and submission.

https://www.cityofsacramento.gov/content/dam/portal/finance/Revenue/permits-and-taxes/BOT%20Exempt%20Application%20vFY2025.pdf

Organizations can also use the online application form and select nonprofit or exempt for the business type: https://sacramento.hdlgov.com/

Can you let us know what the biggest oversight or mistake folks make on this application? Anything we should double check before submitting?

A mistake often made by applicants is submitting the wrong documents in upload sections or submitting unique template that do not include information requested in the City templates.

Applicants are encouraged to double check any documents being uploaded to ensure the correct version is being submitted.

Applicants should confirm they are applying for the correct category in the online system.

Please answer questions succinctly, but provide a level of detail needed for reviewers to understand your program. For many description questions, one sentence won't be enough for City reviewers to judge a potential program answer.

When using AI tools like ChatGPT, review and edit all answers for clarity and accuracy before submitting.

Don't forget to read the guidelines!

Once you hit complete, can you make changes if you decide you want to change something?

Yes. Applicants can hit "Recall Submission" and to edit their application. Users will need to submit again after edits are complete. Please refer to the [user guide](#) or the [application walkthrough](#) for more in-depth explanation.

Is there a different application form for each type of funding category?

Yes, there is a different application form for each funding category. The questions are very similar, but there are differences. Organizations should confirm they are applying for the intended category in the application system.

How competitive are the grants? What % of applicants are awarded?

The Sacramento Innovation Grant Program is very competitive, and applicants are encouraged to submit their strongest projects. In some rounds, as few as 10% of applicants who applied were selected for funding.

For the workshop component in grant categories A & B, are different workshops hosted on the same day at one location allowed?

For Category A, hosting multiple workshops in the same day may be eligible but the overall program impact, budget, feasibility, participant recruitment, and more would be reviewed and scored taking a holistic view based on the published rubric. For Category B, it is allowed.

Are there any key outcomes or metrics that are expected from funded initiatives?

Applicants should propose the best metrics to track the impact of their programs.

For category A, workshop attendees will be one standard metric to track. The City also expects applicants will track information for program participants such as address, basic demographic information, and satisfaction with the training or workshop.

Example metrics for categories B and C include funding raised or revenue generated by companies, jobs created, graduation rates, new BOTC registrations, businesses started, participant learning, etc.

I presume this is a reimbursable opportunity. Money and expenses must be spent and then submitted for reimbursement?

As, stated in the program guidelines, Grantees will be paid on a reimbursement basis and may request payment no more frequently than once a month.

Can you provide an area map of Sacramento that shows the borders of the City?

City maps can be found here: https://www.cityofsacramento.gov/information-technology/gis/Map-Gallery

If you have a specific address you would like to check is within city limits, we recommend using this lookup tool: https://www.cityofsacramento.gov/mayor-council/Find-Your-District

Are stipends for youth taking on leadership roles an allowed expense?

Yes, since it would be compensation for their role as staff.

Are applications public?

The City does not plan to post or share organizations' applications outside of reviewers and panelists. 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. Please refrain from including confidential or proprietary information in your application.

How often can you invoice?

Grantees may invoice no more than once per month and no less than once per quarter.

As a follow up, how long does it take to process and pay invoices?

Complete and approved invoices are typically processed and paid within 30 days.

One of the keys to ensuring invoices can be processed efficiently is including all supporting documentation required by the City. These are items such as legible, itemized receipts, invoices, proof of payment to contractors, and other documentation to show funds were spent according to the contract.

Once the assigned City contract manager is satisfied with the level of documentation in an invoice package, they will submit it for payment. At that point, 30 days is the standard processing time for invoices.

Is the target population to serve youth or can this also include adults?

The City is not prescriptive about the target population for this grant program. Please include in your application what target population your program serves and why it is valuable.

Are collaborative or partnerships prioritized?

Not necessarily. The City received feedback on the grant program that scoring based on partnerships didn't necessarily lead to quality collaboration, so a category focused on partnerships is on longer including in the rubric.

However, since partnerships can positively contribute to organizational capacity, the City will consider the quality of any partnerships proposed and if they add to the objectives of your project.

Can the City help with recruitment by emailing their lists, posting to social media or the website?

The City may be able to assist in program promotion through social media, the City innovation webpage, and blog posts if enough lead time is provided.

For scoring purposes, the City is looking for marketing and outreach plans that can be executed without assistance from the City.

Will having applications for category A and category B hurt my chances of getting funded or getting the amounts I request?

The City will have separate review panels for each category, so the review of one application should not have an effect on the other.

Please be sure proposals are distinct and that there is no overlap in proposed activities for separate grants.

Helpful links from Information Sessions

Innovation Grant Homepage: https://Cityofsacramento.gov/innovationgrants

Grants Management System: https://grants.cityofsacramento.gov/

City of Sacramento Business Operations Tax Webpage: https://www.cityofsacramento.gov/finance/revenue/business-operations-tax

Examples of past awarded projects

2016/17 Cohort:

- The Entrepreneurs Showcase received a $100,00 Acceleration Grant to run its 8th annual Entrepreneurs Showcase Accelerator Program concluding in the Impact Global Venture Summit demo day event at the Golden 1 Center.

2018/19 Cohort:

- The Center at Sierra Health Foundation received a $99,750 grant to build a Networking and professional learning community to promote entrepreneurship and economic investment in Sacramento's communities of color.

2020 cohort:

- Inteligenca, Inc. received $97,049.30 to implement a workforce training accelerator helping close the cybersecurity talent gap for women through fast-track technical training,

mentorship, AI hands-on simulator, hand-on workshops, and internship opportunities, at a 70% faster rate than the traditional education path.

2023/24 cohort:

- Capitol Creative Alliance received a $15,000 Innovation Event grant to host a two-day conference as part of Sacramento Design Week. Programming for the conference included panels, workshops, lectures, and inspirational talks helping students and professionals skill up and build community in the local design industry.

- Advocacy Chiefs received a $187,500 Ecosystem Building grant to implement an application training and assistance program for companies looking to apply for Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs.

2025 cohort:

- StartupSac received a $57,304 Incubator and Accelerator grant to implement its FastTrac Entrepreneurial Training Program. This included a 12-week course for 20 aspiring entrepreneurs across two cohorts, focusing on under-resourced communities, including BIPOC and economically disadvantaged individuals.

- CleanStart received a $100,000 Incubator and Accelerator grant to implement The Deep Dive Accelerator – a six-month program targeting 6-8 clean-tech startups that have completed initial training and are in the post-seed funding stage. Designed to help companies achieve deeper product-market fit, the program includes intensive coaching, peer review, expert feedback, and preparation for scaling.