



Citi Foundation \$25MM Small Business Technical Assistance Request For Proposals
Frequently Asked Questions
Last Updated: 23 March 2021

1) What is this funding opportunity/Request For Proposals (RFP)?

The Citi Foundation has launched a \$25MM RFP to support nonprofit organizations that are providing direct technical assistance to small businesses owned by people of color that have been disproportionately impacted by the unprecedented health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Selected nonprofit organizations will receive an unrestricted grant of up to \$500,000.

2) Why is this RFP focused on providing technical assistance to small businesses owned by people of color that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19?

According to research published by the [National Bureau of Economic Research](#) (NBER) in June 2020, and reinforced by the [US Chamber of Commerce's Q1 2021 Small Business Index](#), small businesses owned by people of color have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, facing higher rates of closure and sharper declines in cash balances as compared to white-owned small businesses. Moreover, the research shows that Black-owned businesses closed at more than twice the rate of white-owned businesses and experienced declines in cash balances nine times as steep as white-owned businesses. Although Black-owned businesses have been impacted more than any other racial group, Latinx- and Asian-owned businesses have also experienced outsized closures and declines in cash balances in comparison to white-owned businesses.

3) What types of small business technical assistance is the Citi Foundation interested in supporting through this RFP?

The Citi Foundation seeks to support nonprofit organizations that are delivering direct technical assistance to help small businesses owned by people of color recover and rebuild. Technical assistance could include, but is not limited to, the following activities:

- **Financial and Application Assistance:** Help in identifying and completing applications for financial assistance programs, preparing financial documentation, referrals to lenders/other funders, and, in some cases, delivering grants or direct cash assistance programs
- **Human Resources:** Hiring and staffing, employee safety, compliance with federal and/or local employment laws (paid sick leave, minimum wage, etc.), help in completing benefits, relief and/or tax forms
- **Technology Solutions:** Broadband and computer access, e-commerce platforms, systems networking and remote office set-up, backup/redundancy disaster planning, cyber security, accounting software implementation, POS software implementation (for retail/restaurants)
- **Legal:** Compliance, contracts, lease review and negotiation, licensing, regulation and permits, buying or selling a business, payment disruptions/delays and collections, employment laws
- **Marketing and Communications:** Market and customer analysis, competitive analysis, digital, social, and community media, industry partnerships and referrals, brand/identity development,



collateral design, direct marketing assistance, earned media/press/PR planning, merchandising, signage/display development

- **Real Estate and Property Services:** Lease negotiation, relocation assistance, site acquisition, regulatory support, provision of office, work or community space
- **Strategic and Financial Planning:** Succession planning, mentoring/coaching, cash and debt management, implementing/upgrading accounting standards, data and documentation, operations and risk assessment, inventory and supply chain management, local market evaluation
- **Shared Services:** Accounting, payroll, benefits, administrative, and/or loaned executive

4) Do applicants need to be working within a specific geography to be eligible for this RFP?

To be eligible to apply, nonprofit organizations must be able to demonstrate that they are actively delivering technical assistance to small businesses owned by people of color that are located in at least one or more of the following geographies:

U.S. States & Territories	Eligible County(ies)
California – Northern Counties	Alameda; Contra Costa; Fresno; Kern; Kings; Marin; Merced; Napa; Sacramento; San Francisco; San Joaquin; San Mateo; Santa Clara; Sonoma; Stanislaus
California – Southern Counties	Los Angeles; Orange; Riverside; San Bernardino; San Diego; Ventura
Connecticut	Fairfield
Florida	Broward; Duval; Miami-Dade; Palm Beach
Illinois	Cook; DuPage; Elgin; Lake; McHenry; Will
Maryland	Montgomery; Prince George
New Jersey	Bergen; Essex; Hudson; Passaic
New York	Bronx; Kings; Nassau; New York; Queens; Richmond; Rockland; Suffolk; Westchester
Nevada	Clark
Puerto Rico	Territory-wide
South Dakota	Statewide
Texas	Collin; Dallas; Denton; Hunt; Kaufman; Rockwall
Virginia	Alexandria City; Arlington; Fairfax
Washington, D.C.	District of Columbia

5) What type of organization is eligible to apply?

Applicants must:

- Have IRS 501c(3) status and a Federal Employment Identification Number
- Have three years of audited financial statements. This may be covered by two audits that include two years of comparative financials and/or three individual audits. Applicants must provide a 2019 audit or later, or at least some part of the 2019 fiscal year must be audited.



- Have a mission to serve low- and moderate-income individuals and communities
- Provide direct technical assistance (as described in question #3) to small businesses owned by people of color that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19
- Have a current portfolio of small business technical assistance that falls within one or more of the Citi Foundation's target geographies as listed in question #4.

6) What type of organization will not be considered?

- Organizations not incorporated as 501c(3)
- Organizations that discriminate on the basis of race, sex, gender identity or expression, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status or other legally protected personal characteristics or status
- Religious or fraternal organizations (unless they are engaged in projects that benefit the entire community)
- Private foundations
- Organizations that require the use of a Fiscal Sponsor or Agent
- Organizations that don't meet the eligibility criteria noted in #5

7) Are current Citi Foundation grantees eligible to apply?

Yes. A current Citi Foundation grantee is eligible to apply; however, their application will need to demonstrate how additional support would enable the organization to dramatically enhance the impact it will have on small businesses owned by people of color, above and beyond the activities that the Citi Foundation is already supporting.

8) Can a local affiliate of a national organization apply?

Yes. Local affiliates of national organizations can apply.

9) Are audited financials a requirement?

Yes. At least three years of audited financial statements are required as part of the application. This may be covered by two audits that include two years of comparative financials and/or three individual audits. Applicants must provide a 2019 audit or later, or at least some part of the 2019 fiscal year must be audited.

10) What is the size and structure of the grant award?

One-year, unrestricted grants of up to \$500,000 will be awarded.

11) What can grant funds not be used for?

Grant funds cannot be used for political or lobbying purposes, including without limitation, independent expenditures.

12) Should grant proceeds be presented as restricted on the grantee's balance sheet?

No. Grants awards will be unrestricted, with the provision that no proceeds from the Citi Foundation can be used for political or lobbying purposes, including without limitation, independent expenditures.



13) What is the application process?

Nonprofit organizations interested in applying should request access to the online application by completing the registration [form](#).

If your organization is eligible to apply, you will gain access to the application within 3 business days of submitting the registration form. **Organizations interested in applying are encouraged to complete the registration form and, if eligible, access the application as early as possible.**

14) What is the submission deadline and award timeline?

Once an applicant has been granted access to the online portal, the applicant should submit a complete grant application online by **April 12, 2021 at 4PM ET**. The Citi Foundation reserves the right to ask clarifying questions. The Citi Foundation seeks to notify applicants of funding decisions by July 2021.

15) What is the grant term and what are the reporting requirements?

The Citi Foundation seeks to disburse grant payments in July 2021 and the grant period is 12 months from the date the grant is awarded. Selected organizations will be required to submit an interim report at six months and a final report upon completion of the grant via Citi Foundation's online grant portal.

16) What is the grant making timeline for this funding opportunity?

Date	Activity
March 4	RFP Issued
March 16 at 2PM ET	Informational Webinar
April 12 at 4PM ET	Application Submission Deadline/ RFP Closes
July	Grant Awards Announcement

17) Will there be any follow-up interviews/calls prior to final selection?

Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, we will not be conducting in-person site visits or interviews as part of the decision-making process for this RFP. Applications that are incomplete will be deemed ineligible and not reviewed. If an application is complete, but we have additional questions or need clarification to make a funding decision, we may reach out for additional information. This will be done on a case-by-case basis as needed.

18) Is there a preference for high-touch, deeper interventions with fewer small businesses served, or a low-touch approach engaging more businesses?

Through this RFP, we seek to support organizations providing high-touch services that enable small businesses to recover and rebuild from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand that this preference for high-touch services may limit an organization's ability to serve a high number of small businesses. We are prioritizing quality over quantity as it relates to technical assistance services.

19) Is an organization that provides technical assistance to nonprofit organizations considered eligible to apply?



Yes, so long as the nonprofits it serves fulfill the federal small business definition of annual revenues less than \$1M and fewer than 50 employees.

20) Does the Citi Foundation have any guidelines and/or strong preferences on the particular uses of the funds?

No. This program is designed to provide general operating support (or unrestricted grants) to organizations delivering technical assistance to small businesses owned by people of color with maximum flexibility to determine how best these grant proceeds should be deployed based on your organization's and your clients' specific needs – we recognize there is no one size fits all approach. In the section of the application that asks about why the infusion of unrestricted capital would be valuable to you, you have the opportunity to make a compelling case for how this infusion of funding would support your small business work.

21) This grant is for one year, does that mean it all needs to be spent in one year?

No. Since this grant is not restricted but general operating support, there are no specific budget deliverables that you will need to report on at the end of the grant. In addition, we understand that since this grant is being provided as general operating support, some of it may remain on your organization's balance sheet beyond the one-year grant period. Consequently, awardees will be released from a restricted grant requirement to report that all of the grant proceeds were spent at the end of the one-year grant period. This grant is an opportunity to invest in your organization's long-term financial health and ability to deliver maximum impact in the communities and for the small businesses you serve.

22) We do not have three years of audits – can we still apply?

No. Unfortunately, you would not be eligible to apply for this opportunity. The Citi Foundation's guidelines for general operating support proposals received via open RFP include three years' worth of audits, which helps us better understand and assess the organization's internal financial controls through third party evaluation. However, since issuing this RFP, we have received constructive and helpful feedback on this requirement and are consequently revisiting our grantmaking guidelines for the future.

23) Is there a minimum or maximum budget size that is required for an organization to apply?

No. There is no budget size requirement associated with this funding opportunity.

24) Will the Citi Foundation support organizations that have a fiscal sponsor?

No. Due to the nature of these grant being general operating support, we will not be funding fiscal sponsors or agents for this opportunity.

25) If a 501c(3) organization were to be the lead applicant, would it be possible to include another organization we work with as a partner in the application?

The Citi Foundation will be awarding unrestricted, general operating support grants to 501c(3) organizations that have the ability and the track record to directly deliver technical assistance to small businesses owned by people of color. We recognize that in some cases, organizations will be working with other organizations or sub-contractors to deliver a portion of that technical assistance.



There are three places in the application where you can include information about such partnerships:

- **Mission and Strategy:** How does the delivery of small business technical assistance fit into your organization's overall operations?
- **Leadership and Organizational Capacity:** How does your organization deliver small business technical assistance?
- **Small Business Technical Assistance Activities:** Please describe a small business client's experience in accessing technical assistance services from your organization

Please note that in this scenario, the Citi Foundation's grant relationship would be limited to the 501c(3) applicant/grantee, rather than the partners, and the lead 501c(3) would be responsible for all reporting and communications back to the Citi Foundation.

26) Not all of the businesses we serve are owned by people of color or have revenues of \$1 million or less. Are we eligible to apply?

Yes, so long as 51% or more of the small businesses you serve are owned by people of color and 51% or more of the businesses you serve fulfill the small business definition of having revenues of less than \$1M and fewer than 50 employees.

27) We are a nonprofit organization that would like to apply to this RFP for our own small business operation, a subsidiary social enterprise that meets the definition of a small business owned by people of color. Are we eligible to apply?

No. This RFP is specifically designed to support nonprofit organizations that are delivering technical assistance to a portfolio of non-affiliated or arms-length small businesses owned by people of color.

28) We are a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) that is part of a public university that utilizes the university's Sponsored Program Foundation to administer all grants and contracts. Are we eligible to apply?

Yes, an SBDC operating as a program within a university, and not separately incorporated, can apply for this grant opportunity through the nonprofit entity the university uses for grants and contracts.

29) Who do I contact for more information?

If you have further questions, please contact citifoundationrfp@citi.com