



Avenue NYC Program Proposal Guidelines

Introduction

While many of the City's neighborhood development programs focus on housing and social services, the New York City Department of Small Business Services' Avenue NYC program targets the economic base of the neighborhood – the local commercial corridor. Avenue NYC provides funding for non-profit economic development organizations (local development corporations, merchants associations and other organizations) throughout the five boroughs to carry out commercial revitalization activities in the districts they serve. The goal of the program is to create the conditions under which businesses can thrive and residents can enjoy access to a vibrant mix of goods and services.

In Fiscal Year 2010, SBS will fund nonprofit economic development organizations to carry out one or more initiatives under Avenue NYC's eight project categories:

- Business Attraction
- Business Improvement District (BID) Formation/Expansion
- Façade Improvement Management Program
- Merchant Organizing
- Neighborhood Economic Development Planning
- Placemaking
- Special Commercial Revitalization Initiatives
- Website Development

Please review the details of each of these programs below for information on eligible activities and funding levels. Applications for Avenue NYC are available online at <http://www.nyc.gov/avenuenyc>.

As part of the Avenue NYC Program, organizations funded in Fiscal Year 2010 will also have the opportunity to participate in technical assistance and capacity building initiatives with other organizations carrying out similar projects.



Requirements

ORGANIZATIONAL CRITERIA

Applicants must be:

- Nonprofit economic development organizations operating in any of the five boroughs of New York City;
- Incorporated as a nonprofit in New York State;
- Compliant with annual State and Federal filing requirements that are pertinent for their type of organization, including New York State Charities Bureau filings.

PROJECT SCOPE CRITERIA

Proposed commercial revitalization projects must:

- Operate within defined geographic boundaries;
- Target commercial corridors as a whole and cannot provide individual business assistance, such as one-on-one business plan development assistance;
- Consider the needs of small- and medium-sized businesses operating in the geographic area.

INCOME ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Organizations applying for projects other than BID Formation/Expansion and Neighborhood Economic Development Planning must target areas that are designated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be low- or moderate-income neighborhoods. Designation prescribes that at least 51% of the residents in the census tracts included in the commercial area must be low- and moderate-income persons living in households with incomes below 80% of the median household income (\$47,100 for a 4-

person household in 2000). To determine your census tract, visit the New York City Census FactFinder: <http://gis.nyc.gov/dcp/pa/address.jsp>

To learn more about Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) eligibility and to view the city’s census tracts that are CDBG eligible, visit the Department of City Planning’s (DCP) online Census Report: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/resource/censustractreport.shtml>.

CONTRACTING & COMPLIANCE

Organizations applying for Avenue NYC projects other than Website Development must be prepared to enter into a registered contract with the City of New York. The contract term will begin on July 1, 2009 and end on June 30, 2010. The length of time required from the start of the contracting process to contract registration varies and is contingent upon the timeliness and completeness of contracting materials. Applicants are encouraged to assure that their organization is current and compliant with all contracting requirements as soon as possible.

To review the required contracting materials and contracting steps, please visit www.nyc.gov/avenuenyccontracts.

Additionally, organizations that are awarded Avenue NYC projects will be required to complete SBS-designed quarterly reports on their activities and progress. All Avenue NYC-funded organizations will be evaluated based on their performance at the end of each quarter.

TIMELINE	2009											2010					
	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
Application Process																	
Awards Announced																	
Contracting Process*																	
Quarterly Reports Due																	
Contract Term																	

*This timeline is for estimation purposes only. The actual length of time required for the contracting process may differ from this plan.

PAYMENTS

Organizations awarded Avenue NYC projects will be able to seek payments on their contract once it has been registered with the New York City Comptroller’s Office. Organizations receiving funding are expected to move forward on their projects in advance of receipt of funding.

Project Categories

Local nonprofit organizations may apply for one or more of the following Avenue NYC projects. Avenue NYC funding is project-based, meaning that funded organizations are expected to set measurable goals and deliver completed projects at the end of the contract term.

Awards will be competitive and based on the strength of the proposal and, if applicable, the quality of the work performed under previous contracts with SBS. While funding is generally awarded at \$25,000 per project, SBS may award grants in an amount of up to \$50,000 per project based on the availability of funding, the strength of the overall application and the quality of the project design.

BUSINESS ATTRACTION

Selected groups will create a baseline census of businesses and commercial real estate in their commercial district and maintain accurate and up-to-date information on commercial property available for development, sale or lease. Groups will use this information to engage in business attraction efforts, liaise with real estate brokers, property owners and managers to facilitate sales and leasing of available ground- and upper-floor space. Groups will be expected to fill vacancies over the term of the contract, reduce the area's vacancy rate and/or impact the retail mix of the street in a measurable way.

Business Attraction activities include:

- Creation of commercial databases of properties for sale or lease, property owners and other relevant information to assist with the sale, leasing or development of property;
- Organization of community planning sessions to determine local shopping and retail preferences;
- Analysis of the retail mix and business growth opportunities based on current and changing conditions and demographics;
- Coordinated events with the real estate community and property owners to showcase vacancies;
- Outreach to prospective businesses that meet the area's retail preferences and establishment of an ongoing rapport with the business community.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) FORMATION/EXPANSION

Selected groups will spearhead planning and outreach efforts for the formation of a new or expansion of a current Business Improvement District (BID) to deliver supplemental sanitation, security and/or marketing services to a targeted commercial area. Groups will be expected to complete a requisite number of steps in the BID formation/expansion process during the project term. A comprehensive explanation of those steps can be found in SBS' "Starting a Business Improvement District: A Step-by-Step Guide" (available online on SBS' website at <http://nyc.gov/html/sbs/html/neighborhood/bid.shtml>).

Project Categories (continued)

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Avenue NYC's Façade Improvement Management Program is open exclusively to groups that have or will have dedicated funding for capital costs ("hard" construction costs) of façade improvement activities from sources other than SBS. Funding through Avenue NYC will only cover costs related to design, program administration or marketing of the program ("soft" costs).

As part of the Façade Improvement Management Program, SBS requires funded groups to use the services of a design consultant and produce "model" storefronts that exhibit a combination of the four following elements:

- Open mesh security gates where gates are used;
- Retractable or "faux" retractable awnings where awnings are used;
- High quality storefront signs that meet New York City Building Code regulations;
- An exterior finish (paint or other material) that is appropriate and sensitive to the overall building and neighboring structures.

MERCHANT ORGANIZING

Selected groups will lead the planning, outreach, and organizing efforts for the creation of a new merchant association or the revitalization of an existing organization in their area. Groups will be expected to develop a plan for organizing merchants and accomplish concrete organizing milestones within the contract year.

Merchant Organizing activities may include:

- Recruiting members and keeping business owners engaged;
- Hosting regular meetings with business owners to develop short- and long-term goals, determine organization structure and plan projects;
- Creating committees, designating roles to business owners, and/or establishing membership dues;
- Leading the association's incorporation;
- Publicizing the group to local businesses and residents.

Organizations receiving funding for this project will be expected to plan and execute at least one initiative that may be related to sales, promotions, or other types of district development projects.

Project Categories (continued)

NEIGHBORHOOD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Selected groups will develop a comprehensive neighborhood economic development plan that assesses the strengths and weaknesses of their commercial district, creates a vision for that district based on the analysis, and identifies short and long term activities that will help the group achieve that vision. Included in those activities can be planning for any commercial development sites strategically located along the corridor, new business targets, and infrastructure improvements. The plan should lay out activities that can be feasibly implemented over a specific period of time, identifying discrete milestones and steps required to implement those projects.

Groups receiving awards for Neighborhood Economic Development Planning will be required to present their final product to SBS staff at the end of the fiscal year.

PLACEMAKING

Selected groups will design a comprehensive program that focuses on creating or enhancing a sense of place that captures or reinforces the unique character of the commercial corridor. Placemaking is not narrowly district marketing (i.e. restaurant guide distribution, banner campaign), but rather a more inclusive approach to promoting a lively and vibrant commercial district or solidifying an area's reputation as a commercial destination.

Groups will be expected to design a program that capitalizes on the unique social, retail and physical attributes of the commercial space while incorporating the needs and concerns of community stakeholders, including but not limited to business owners, property owners, consumers, residents, tourists, and, if applicable, community organizations.

The Placemaking project entails:

- Developing a new or solidifying a current placemaking strategy that identifies unique attributes of the targeted commercial district;
- Planning and executing projects that take advantage of or capitalize upon unique or distinct characteristics of the area.

All Placemaking proposals must clearly describe the overall strategy for creating a sense of place in the commercial district and ensure that any discrete marketing initiatives are directly related to that strategy.

Project Categories (continued)

SPECIAL COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION INITIATIVES

Selected groups will carry out an innovative program that draws on the strengths and distinctiveness of their respective commercial districts and produces a measurable improvement in the commercial life of the community. Special projects are those that do not duplicate services available elsewhere nor fit into one of the other Avenue NYC project categories. Possible Special Commercial Revitalization Initiatives may include joint projects with multiple organizations, growing new or emerging organizations through capacity building and/or unique technical assistance programs, or any other creative commercial revitalization venture.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

Selected groups will receive a professionally designed website for their merchant association, local development corporation or Business Improvement District. These groups will receive website design and development services and a series of trainings on how to manage and update a website. The following are examples of previous websites created:

www.churchavenue.org, www.washington-avenue.org.

Groups selected to receive a website will be required to:

- Complete all written content by deadlines—Although SBS will provide direction and examples of successful websites, it will be the responsibility of each group to develop the written content for their website in a timely manner;
- Obtain high quality photographs for the website—Eye-catching photographs are one of the most important features of a website. As a part of the project, organizations are required to obtain high-quality photos;
- Attend all trainings related to the website—While SBS has ensured that a user-friendly website management system is being used for each website, it is essential that every organization attend all of the trainings provided during the program;
- Maintain the website—All organizations applying for the project should have the resources and staff capacity needed to maintain a website on an on-going basis.

The project funds the creation of a website. No funding will be provided directly to the group. After the website is created, groups will be responsible for the annual costs of hosting the website (hosting costs average \$240/year).



Application Process

Organizations interested in applying for Avenue NYC must submit an application to SBS. **Applications must be received BY EMAIL to avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov by 5:00 p.m. no later than Friday, April 10, 2009.** Fax or post mail submissions will not be accepted. All applications will be subject to a completeness review and organizations will be sent confirmation of receipt of their proposals as soon as the application has been processed.

Applicants are encouraged to contact SBS with any questions well in advance of the deadline. For questions, please contact Andrea Buteau by email at avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov.

APPLICATION REVIEW & RANKING SYSTEM

Applications will be reviewed by committees comprised of representatives from SBS. The committees will judge each application on a competitive basis by project area. For instance, applicants for the Business Attraction category will be judged against other applicants for the Business Attraction project area only.

All organizations applying for the Avenue NYC program will be evaluated on three criteria and rated on the corresponding point scale:

Evaluation Criteria	Total Possible Points
Existing Organizational Capacity of the Group	40 points
Strength of the Avenue NYC Project Proposal	50 points
Viability of the Proposed Avenue NYC Budget	10 points

Existing Organizational Capacity | 40 points

Organizations will be evaluated on their ability to meet contractual obligations, their experience delivering high-quality projects and the sustainability of commercial revitalization activities. Evaluation of organizational capacity will be based on dedication of human resources to the project, the composition and structure of the Board of Directors, the organization's experience in related commercial revitalization activities, and the organization's past experience in executing contracts with the City of New York.

Strength of the Avenue NYC Project Proposal | 50 points

Proposals will be rated on the overall strength of the project. Strong proposals are those that demonstrate in-depth planning and a comprehensive overall design. Evaluators will assess the extent to which proposals effectively and logically articulate the organization's specific approach. Proposals should set clear targets and define objectives. SBS will also favor proposals that are innovative and/or build upon previous initiatives. SBS will also consider the care with which an organization takes to complete applications.

Viability of the Proposed Avenue NYC Budget | 10 points

Proposed budgets will be rated against the activities laid out in the project proposal and assessed for the alignment of resources to activities and the practicality of resource allocations. Evaluators will consider additional sources of revenue listed for the project as well as how the proposed project budget contributes proportionally to the overall operating budget, taking into account distribution of expenses, reliability of other income, and diversification of revenue.

Please refer to the Budget Page Instruction Sheet for additional information.

Application Process (continued)

APPLICATION INFORMATION SESSIONS

Groups interested in applying for the Avenue NYC program are strongly encouraged to attend one of three information sessions:

- Wednesday, March 18th from 2:00PM to 4:00PM
- Tuesday, March 24th from 2:00PM to 4:00PM
- Thursday, April 2nd from 10:00AM to 12:00PM

During this session, SBS staff will provide a comprehensive overview of the program and walk applicants through the application process. All sessions will be held at the offices of the New York City Economic Development Corporation, located on the 4th Floor of 110 William Street in Lower Manhattan.

Please RSVP for the information session by emailing avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov.

SUBMITTAL PROCESS

All completed applications (including budget page and all other attachments) must be submitted in electronic form via email to the New York City Department of Small Business Services at avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov. Organizations with questions on completing the application should direct their inquiries to SBS via email at avenuenyc@sbs.nyc.gov. Questions will be answered within one business day.

Applications must be received via email by **Friday, April 10, 2009, at 5:00PM** to be considered for FY2010 funding.

In your submission email, include the following documents as attachments. Each document should be labeled/named (saved as) exactly as specified in the table below:

Attach the following documents to your submission email:	Label/Name of Document:
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Avenue NYC application	FY2010 Application
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Avenue NYC application budget page	FY2010 Application Budget
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed Staff/Volunteer/Board List	FY2010 Personnel List
<input type="checkbox"/> FY2008 actual operating budget	FY2008 Operating Budget
<input type="checkbox"/> FY2009 current operating budget	FY2009 Operating Budget
<i>For organizations applying for the Façade Improvement Management Program, include photos of completed façades and/or potential façades for inclusion in the program</i>	<i>Indicate if each photo was taken before the façade was improved, after the façade was improved, or is a rendering of what the improvement will look like</i>